Inclusive education: a tame solution to a wicked problem?
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Abstract

Realising a vision of an educational system that is accessible to all, fosters participation, enables belonging, and results in powerful learning is not easy. This difficulty is caused by the pervasiveness of exclusionary pressures in education that have the potential to confound and constrain efforts towards greater inclusivity. While South Africa has policy and legislation to promote access to education for learners, and secure support for their diverse learning needs, there is still evidence of exclusion from and within schools. This chapter proceeds from the premise that an understanding of the problem of educational exclusion is necessary to ensure that inclusive education is imagined as a reform initiative to promote social justice. Given the complexity and intractability of educational exclusion, I use the concept of a 'wicked problem' to explore some of the workings of exclusion in education, with particular, though not exclusive, reference to South Africa. Wicked problems are problems that are complex, dynamic, multi-faceted and intractable. I argue that given the complexity of the problem of educational exclusion, we cannot afford a 'tame' or watered down idea of inclusive education that is merely concerned with ways of 'accommodating' learners with additional support needs in ordinary classrooms. Instead, inclusive education needs to be a social and political project that is bold enough to identify and challenge the impediments to meaningful inclusion and make the radical changes necessary to ensure quality education for all.

1. Introduction: Inclusion, exclusion and wicked problems

As an academic involved in teacher education, and interested in the promotion of socially just and inclusive education, I believe in the transformative power of education and expect it to make a difference to individuals, communities and

societies. However, I see schools playing "a major role" (Ferri & Connor, 2006, p.11) in the reproduction of the very inequalities they are supposed to erase. Perhaps this is why inclusive education captures my attention. As a white South African woman schooled in a system that segregated by race and dis/ability, I find the vision for an inclusive education system that addresses the many exclusionary practices and pressures of a previously divided and discriminatory education system compelling. It offers an imagination of schools where *all* learners are welcomed and supported in accessing the deep and powerful knowledge that represents the 'goods' of education. My years of high school teaching and school leadership offered many opportunities to work first hand with the possibilities of more inclusive education. These possibilities included subject choices that went beyond the traditional disciplines, teaching strategies that promoted epistemological access for learners who previously might have been deemed to need 'special education', and a variety of arrangements to give learners access to learning materials and assessment.

Drawing impetus from the human rights movement in the 1960s, and the growing awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, parents, activists and academics began questioning the practice of segregated special education for children with disabilities and 'special needs'. An article by Lloyd Dunn in 1968, calling for the abolition of separate classes and the inclusion of "the retarded" (p.5) in general education classrooms, became a seminal idea in what is now known as inclusive education. Variously described as an ideology (Brantlinger, 1997), a field of study (Slee, 2011), or bandwagon (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995), the impact of inclusive education has been felt in education systems across the world. UNESCO has taken up the cause of inclusive education (UNESCO 1994, 2005, 2009) and many countries, including South Africa, have sought to give effect to inclusive education through policy or legislation. Defining and characterising inclusive education is fraught. There has been useful scholarly work that has attempted to capture the discursive breadth of the concept (for example, Dyson (1999)). Debates rage over whether inclusive education is best understood as a broad education reform issue, concerned with all children vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation, or whether 'special needs' and disability should be its focus (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006). With reference to the understanding of inclusive education, Slee (2011) argues for a hierarchy of questions. First, he says, should come questions about "the power

relations articulated through the structures, processes and culture of schooling" (p.157) and a "recognition of the unequal social relations that produce exclusion" (p.39). These questions, he maintains, need to be addressed before the policies, reorganization, strategies and resources needed to pursue inclusive education. Failure to ask the first questions first results in the child seeking inclusion perpetually being positioned as "an outsider and potential burden" (Slee, 2011, p.157).

It is with this injunction in mind that I turn my attention in this chapter first to educational exclusion. For as much as my experience in schooling convinced me of the possibilities of inclusive education, I also found promoting inclusivity to be a Sisyphean task against the mountain of exclusionary pressures that the education system presents. Ferri and Connor (2006, p.13) affirm that real change will only happen "if we begin to think critically about all kinds of exclusions and how they work in tandem". It seems that all kinds of educational exclusions have become commonplace. It is difficult to imagine an education system in the globalised, competitive world that is not exclusionary in some way. Exclusion might be seen as necessary (Dorling, 2011; Slee, 2011) at certain levels of the education system for various reasons, one of which is economic efficiency as limited fiscal resources demand choices about who will get what education. So families, faced with the high direct and indirect costs of education, may be forced to make choices that result in one or more children not attending school (Meny-Gibert & Russell, 2012). Countries, too, make choices about where in their education systems to invest. When countries implement free universal primary education, children from poor families who are unable to afford secondary school fees find themselves excluded (Lewin, 2009). The pressure of competitiveness might also necessitate exclusion. When schools are set up to compete with each other using pass rates as the measure of success, self preservation could lead to the admission of learners "without significant academic problems" (Ferri & Connor, 2006, p.11) and the avoidance of "low-attaining, troublesome, or 'needy' children" (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick & West, 2012). The South African Schools Act specifically prohibits entrance testing for school admission (Republic of South Africa, 1996) and this provision may go some way towards mitigating exclusion at admission. Once learners are admitted, though, there is a significant risk of drop-out, particularly in the 16–18 year range, when schooling is no longer compulsory (Meny-Gibert & Russell, 2012).

Linked to this are deeply held beliefs about who is deserving of certain kinds of education. Education is often thought of as a finite commodity, and in a zero-sum way of thinking, including children who might need additional support means 'less' for the rest. In my encounters with parents who hear about inclusive education, I have found deep concern expressed that 'our' children's education would be compromised if they had to share the teacher's time/expertise with 'those' children (Walton & Lloyd, 2011). This is borne out by Ferri and Connor (2006, p.162) in the context of the United States of America, where the fear has been expressed that "the rights of "regular" students who make up the majority are said to be endangered by a *resource-grabbing* minority" (emphasis mine). The exclusion of 'someone else' reflects "a hierarchy of valuing in which some characteristics and cultures are more welcome than others" (Ainscow et al., 2012, p.8). Those with a vested interest in the preservation of the status quo in education may sit comfortably with a discursive commitment to educational inclusion, but still wish their own children to enjoy a "segregated and advantaged status", convinced that in practice, inclusion is "impractical or impossible" (Brantlinger, 2003, p.54). Whatever the rationale, exclusionary pressures and practices are prevalent and pervasive in education systems worldwide.

Educational exclusion is a complex issue, reflecting unequal social and economic relations and embedded values, beliefs and traditions. 'Exclusion' is difficult to define, given that the term is so "evocative, ambiguous, multi-dimensional and elastic" (Silver, 1994, p.536). A useful account of the ways in which exclusion has been conceptualised is offered by Silver (1994). She suggests three 'paradigms' of exclusion, all of which have some traction when thinking about educational exclusion. The first paradigm is 'Solidarity', and it focuses on exclusion as a result of the solidarity of particular national or cultural ties. In South Africa, our history of apartheid education reflects this paradigm, as educational exclusion was administered on the grounds of race. Exclusion from school on the grounds of race is now unconstitutional, although still perpetuated, often by proxies for race, like language (Sayed, Subrahmanian, Soudien, et al., 2007). The second paradigm, 'Specialization', reflects an Anglo-Saxon liberalism and is based on the assumption of individual difference. We see educational exclusion operating within this paradigm

where individual differences are seen as the (benign) reason for the in- or exclusion of some learners from certain schools. This might be on the grounds of their individual talent (performing arts or sports academies, or schools for the 'gifted') or lack of talent (necessitating 'remedial' or 'special' education). Silver's third paradigm is that of 'Monopoly', in which exclusion "arises from the interplay of class, status and political power and serves the interests of the included" (p.543). Educational exclusion in this paradigm in South Africa may be associated with discriminatory measures like school fees, language policies, the expectation of assimilation into a dominant cultural order, and the promotion of the idea of 'standards' from which to judge deviance (Sayed, et al., 2007). Silver acknowledges that these three paradigms are "ideal types" (1994, p.544) and that exclusion cannot simply be defined against its opposite – integration or inclusion. This point is elaborated by Popkewitz and Lindblad (2000) who contest the analytic and empirical distinction between inclusion and exclusion as well as by Sayed et al. (2007), who say that it is dangerous to categorise inclusion and exclusion as binary opposites. This chapter, in its way, is an attempt to re-insert some issues of educational exclusion into the discourse of inclusive education.

Despite legislation and policy in South Africa that supports inclusive education, educational exclusion persists at the point of access, through school cultures, policies, governance structures and through the curriculum (Sayed et al., 2007). While educational exclusion may have become endemic in many education systems, including South Africa's, it can also be challenged and resisted. It is, after all, socially produced and can be analysed and addressed as a social problem. It is also, however, a particularly persistent and pernicious problem, and one that seems to defy the well intentioned policies and programmes instituted to address it. It is thus a particular type of problem, requiring analytical tools that account for its complexity. Where social problems are "dynamically complex, ill-structured, public problems" (Batie, 2008, p.1176), they have become known as "wicked problems" (Rittel & Webber, 1973). It has been over forty years since Rittel and Webber (1973, p.160) published their description of the characteristics of "wicked problems", noting that these problems are 'wicked' in the sense that they are "malignant", "vicious", "tricky", and "aggressive". Tame problems, by contrast, are "definable", their "mission is clear" and their "solutions are findable". While Rittel and Webber's work is certainly

dated, the idea of the wicked problem has been productively taken up in a number of fields, including healthcare, poverty, crime, environmental management, and food production (Batie, 2008). Researchers in the field of education have also recently found the concept useful, with Southgate, Reynolds and Howley (2013) considering the teaching practicum as a wicked problem, and McCall and Skrtic (2009) engaging with disproportionality in special education as an instance of a wicked problem.

It is my contention that the idea of the wicked problem as presented by Rittel and Webber (1973) is particularly generative in thinking about exclusion both from and within schooling. First, it offers a valuable space to understand and interrogate exclusion, and how it is entrenched and perpetuated. Too often, I would argue, inclusive education discourse makes exclusion almost invisible in the clamour to find 'what works' for teachers, learners and education managers at various levels. Second, the 'wicked problem' provides a conceptual repository for the conflicting and competing voices of those concerned with inclusion and exclusion, by showing the complexity of the problem, the challenge of the solution and the ultimate interconnectedness of problem and solution.

Analysing educational exclusion as a wicked problem builds on the work of others who have explored this issue both in South Africa and internationally. These authors include Sayed et al. (2007) who studied educational inclusion and exclusion in South Africa and India, recommending that "A key starting point of effecting inclusion is to address the nature, form and content of the policies designed to overcome exclusion" (p.x). Lewin (2009) identified 'zones of exclusion' when examining patterns of access in Sub-Saharan Africa. These zones show educational exclusion to be a nuanced phenomenon, with different factors exerting pressure towards exclusion in different countries, and at different stages in the schooling cycle. Unlike other countries in the region, the pressure to leave school early in South Africa is not felt as acutely at the end of the primary school cycle, but rather in the grade 10 and 11 years. This is confirmed by researchers like Fleisch, Shindler and Perry (2012) and Meny-Gibert and Russell (2012). Together, these studies attest to the "scale of the problem of exclusion" (Sayed et al., 2007, p.4). Too often, however, it is *inclusion* that is positioned as the problem, or at least a challenge in education (Engelbrecht, 2006). While not wanting to diminish the very real obstacles confronting the

implementation of inclusive education, I would contend that much can be gained by shifting the discourse to locate the problem within the many forms of educational exclusion, as will be discussed below.

2. The wicked problem of educational exclusion

It is my contention that educational exclusion bears many of the hallmarks of wicked problems, in that it poses a complex, dynamic, multi-faceted and intractable challenge to the realisation of an inclusive and socially just education system. Rittel and Webber (1973) described ten characteristics of wicked problems and I suggest that these offer a useful framework in which to explore educational exclusion in South Africa. While I believe that a case can be made that each of the ten characteristics are relevant to educational exclusion, I have chosen to focus on five. These are that wicked problems have no definitive formulations; that they are unique; that they can always be considered as symptoms of other problems; that solutions to them cannot be true or false, but good or bad; and that there is no test of a solution to them, with each attempt at a solution counting significantly. Thinking about solutions is inextricably bound up with thinking about problems, and I want to integrate thinking about inclusive education as a solution to the problem of educational exclusion. While conclusive solutions to wicked problems are likely to remain rare, I concur with Head and Alford (2013, p.2) that "it is possible to frame partial, provisional courses of action against wicked problems". In this light, I make my case that inclusive education can be seen as a solution to the problem of various kinds of educational exclusion, provided that inclusive education is not "tamed" (Slee, 2009) and designed in a way that ensures that nothing fundamental has to change (Ferri & Connor, 2006). In the sections that follow, I use the characteristics of wicked problems to discuss educational exclusion further:

2.1   There is no definitive formulation of educational exclusion

The first way in which educational exclusion is a wicked problem is that there is no definitive way to formulate the problem. This is because, as Rittel and Webber (1973, p.161) say, "The information needed to *understand* the problem depends upon one's idea for *solving* it" (original emphasis). In other words, we can't progress

in understanding the problem apart from identifying the solution, because once we have finally and comprehensively defined the problem, we have also identified the solution. There are a number of ways to illustrate this, and here I consider a few questions to show that any particular lens on the problem of educational exclusion presupposes a solution:

Exclusion from what?

Answering this question forces us to define our object of analysis – are we concerned with exclusion from schooling altogether, in what Morrow (2007) and others call issues of 'formal access' to education? If so, we are concerned in South Africa with out-of-school children and young people who have variously been numbered at 280 000 (DoE 2001); 386 000 (Fleisch et al., 2012) and 200 000 (DBE, 2010). Here we might look further, to understand whether these numbers represent absolute non-enrolment, that is, children who will never enrol in school, or point-in-time non-enrolment, accounting for children who may enrol late, drop out early or do not enrol for a particular year. Fleisch et al. (2012, p.531) maintain that in South Africa, the number of children who never enrol is in fact "very small, at less than 1% of all children between the ages of 7 and 15". Nevertheless, if formal access is how we understand the problem of educational exclusion, we are already presupposing a solution that is concerned with making this access possible through various means. If, however, we understand the problem of educational exclusion as more than formal access, and consider that children with formal access may be excluded from the goods of education (i.e. enjoying what Morrow (2007) and others call 'epistemological access'), then we are already presupposing a different solution. Our focus shifts to issues of teaching and learning, and the quality, rather than availability, of schooling. Educational exclusion may also refer to exclusion from the ordinary (sometimes called 'mainstream') classroom, in which case we might direct our gaze more specifically to intervening in the processes whereby some children are deemed to have 'special' learning, behavioural or physical needs which have to be met in 'specialised' settings. We might also consider the problem of educational exclusion as exclusion from a peer group or particular school community, and in so doing, begin to suggest solutions in terms of school cultures, bullying and addressing discriminatory attitudes.

Exclusion for whom?

Implicit in the formulation of the problem of educational exclusion from the perspective of *who* experiences it is another set of possible solutions. *The Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025* (DBE, 2010) suggests that learners of school going age who are not in school tend to come from poor households, sometimes with no parents, live in remote locations, or have special educational needs that cannot be met in local schools. Each of these problem identifiers specifies the direction in which a solution can/should be found: in poverty alleviation, infrastructure or transport development and building capacity for support of special needs in local schools. Lewin (2009, p.157) recognises learners who experience "silent exclusion". These learners may be enrolled in school, but attend infrequently and have low achievement in relation to national curriculum expectations for their age. Other predictors of exclusion include being out of the age range for a cohort, usually being overage (Lewin, 2009); gender and race (Fleisch et al., 2012) report that coloured boys are significantly more likely to be out of school in South Africa); pregnancy or being a mother (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012) and geographical location (Fleisch et al., 2012).

This discussion is not meant to be exhaustive. What it is designed to show is that wherever we focus our gaze to understand the problem, we are already implicitly orienting ourselves towards a solution. Any number of fruitful questions could lead to considerations (unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter) of the problem of educational exclusion. These might be *Who excludes?* – a question that would require us to consider overt and covert agents of exclusion, and to confront privilege, vested interests, prejudice and discrimination; or *How is exclusion perpetuated?* – a different question which would take us to the means of educational exclusion, and direct our attention to tests, curricula, infrastructure, and exonerating policies which require only 'reasonable accommodations' to be made; or *Exclusion when?* – a question that grapples with the points in schooling where exclusionary pressures are most acutely felt. The complexity of educational exclusion quickly becomes apparent as we try to understand the problem, and it becomes clear that in order to amass the information needed to define the problem, some "orientation of a solution concept" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.161) is required.

2.2 Educational exclusion can be a symptom of another problem

Identifying the level at which a problem is best formulated is a particular challenge of wicked problems. Starting with Rittel and Webber's (1973, p.165) premise that "every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem", we can see that educational exclusion can be seen to be part of societal exclusion more generally, which, in turn, are manifestations of the effects of particular configurations of political and economic power. In South Africa, exclusion both from schools, and from quality schooling can be seen as a symptom of the wider and more general problems of poverty and inequality (Fleish, 2007; Meny-Gibert & Russell, 2012; Taylor, van der Berg & Mabogoane, 2013). Broad and more general formulations of the problem, however, make addressing it difficult. Conversely, addressing the problem at too low a level is also ill-advised by Rittel and Webber (1973, p.165) on the grounds that "marginal improvement does not guarantee overall improvement". This seems counter intuitive to the idea that systemic improvement can be achieved by the cumulative effect of small scale interventions. Thus while the efforts of individual schools and organizations to combat educational exclusion may be lauded (see Walton and Nel (2012)), they represent little more than individual solutions to a systemic problem (Geyer & Walton, forthcoming). And while individual learners may be benefitting from particular schools' measures to mitigate exclusionary pressures (like providing financial assistance) or practices (like making access arrangements for specific learners with disabilities), these do not translate into systemic improvement. This echoes a concern voiced in the more general context of school improvement by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p.4–5), who note that gains resulting from interventions in individual schools "almost always disappear" once intervention teams and key leaders leave, or when "the overworked and isolated staff finally run out of steam". *Ad hoc* interventions may thus have immediate contextual relevance, but the risk is that they may not be sustainable.

The challenge, then, of addressing educational exclusion is to find the right level/s to formulate the problem. In Dieltiens and Motala's (2012, p.4) schema of educational exclusion being at the nexus of teaching and learning factors, household and society factors and policy factors, we have the problem formulated at societal, governmental, school and classroom and domestic levels. While this represents a comprehensive

account of educational exclusion, it begs the question of whose responsibility it is to address the problems. *White Paper Six,* South Africa's policy on inclusive education (DoE, 2001, p.18), clearly identifies teachers as pivotal in the inclusion endeavour, saying that, "Classroom educators will be our primary resource for achieving our goal of an inclusive education and training system". Teachers, though, may not be willing or able to assume this role. In a Johannesburg primary school, teachers exonerate themselves from responsibility for learner underachievement by identifying the parents as the problem (Nel & Walton, 2013). One says, "...the parents don't play their part, they don't even bother to go that extra mile". Others complain that parents do not come for meetings, and when they do attend they do not "follow up". According to these teachers, parents also do not assist with homework, and they "can't spell or read". Teachers may also deflect responsibility for inclusive education to the 'department' (Walton & Lloyd, 2011) or to specialised support personnel (Nel, Engelbrecht, Nel & Tlale, 2013). The contention that the solution to the problem lies elsewhere works to indemnify individual actors in the education system from responsibility to address instances of exclusion, but, perversely, where individuals are proactive, their efforts are negligible in effecting systemic and sustainable change. So do we give up and resign ourselves in the face of the intractability of the problem of educational exclusion? Certainly not. The following characteristics of wicked problems refer to the challenges of finding solutions.

2.3 The uniqueness of wicked problems

The problem with wicked problems is that each problem is essentially unique, and that despite similarities with other problems, there will always be characteristics that distinguish a wicked problem from others that seem similar. So the problem of educational exclusion in South Africa will be, at least in some respects, different from educational exclusion in other sub-Saharan countries (Lewin, 2009), and differ between and even in provinces in South Africa (Fleisch et al., 2012). This makes transferring solutions difficult, because, as Rittel and Webber (1973, p.165) say, "one can never be certain that the particulars of a problem do not override its commonalities with other problems". Educational exclusion in the developing world has particular characteristics as a result of the legacy of colonialism and the impact of globalisation. In contexts where mass access to quality education, defined by

Lewin (2009, p.151) as "attendance, achievement, and progression and completion at appropriate ages", remains an elusive target, meeting the additional support needs of children with disabilities may be a distant concern. Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2010, p.33) even suggest it may be "idealistic" for first world countries and donor agencies to expect countries in the developing world to "adopt inclusive education as a policy prescription to address system failure and individual disadvantage". These authors raise concerns about the "export of first-world thinking" (p.30) to address the problems of educational access in developing countries. So, for example, small classes and the availability of specialised resources are prescribed for the effective implementation of inclusive education (Mitchell, 2008). The reality in many developing countries is that of large classes, and lack of basic resources.

This characteristic of the wicked problem of educational exclusion is vexatious, particularly when combined with the previous characteristic that highlights the difficulty in identifying where best to formulate the problem. Idiosyncrasies are increasingly apparent at lower levels in the system, as the more closely we focus on specific contexts, the more we become aware of the nuance of difference in the 'particulars' of the problem. This poses a conundrum in that solutions that are fine-tuned to meet the particular exclusionary pressures of a specific context may be at too low a level to result in significant systemic change. The challenge in going forward is to ensure that inclusive education is conceptualised and operationalised as a systemic reform issue, with implications for whole school development. This means that leadership and administration, pedagogy, assessment, teacher development, intersectoral collaboration and stakeholder involvement need to be affected by a move towards greater inclusivity. This shift in view, from inclusive education as a response to individual 'support needs' to one that demands responsiveness to diversity in its many forms is necessary if we are to begin to dismantle educational exclusion.

2.4 The solution to the problem of educational exclusion cannot be true or false, but good or bad (or better or worse)

The very nature of a wicked problem, as opposed to a tame problem, precludes its solution being true or false, right or wrong. At best, some solutions are better or worse than others, and judgments made about this rest on particular ideological assumptions (Rittel & Webber, 1973). It is at this point that I focus on inclusive education as a solution to educational exclusion. As discussed above, inclusive education is hardly a unified concept and debates rage over what it is or should be, as well as over which actors and issues are or should be within its providence. South Africa (not uniquely) has coupled inclusive education with special education and has set it up as a directorate in its own right within the Department of Basic Education. This choice, I argue, is both good and bad. The good part is that a drive for greater inclusivity, especially (although not exclusively) for learners deemed to have 'special needs' or 'barriers to learning', is advocated by people who can focus on this issue. The concerns of learners with disabilities cannot remain invisible when there are people with the resources and mandate to secure their educational access and achievement. Miles and Singal (2010) share this position with regard to the Education for All movement where they note the "continued exclusion of disabled children from the international agenda and planning" (p.5) and see that inclusive education has a particular role in the "championing of marginalised groups" (p.11).

On the other hand, as Miles and Singal acknowledge (2010), when inclusive education is conceived separately from wider issues of educational access, there is "a danger that disability could become further separated from more mainstream debates, and perceived as an issue for 'specialists' (p.5). This is where I see some of the 'bad' of South Africa's positioning of inclusive education as a solution to educational exclusion. First, the fact that it is a *separate* entity has the potential to marginalise concerns about marginalisation. In drives for curriculum reform and improved educational outcomes measured by standardised assessments, inclusive education can easily become another programme to be implemented or resisted, depending on how actors at various levels in the system engage with the policy. And herein we find some of the challenge that inclusive education has in solving the problem of educational exclusion. As discussed above, education as we know it and

practice it has many exclusionary features. To 'include' the previously 'excluded' into current systems may require such an investment of resources and effort that the newly 'included' will always be marked as the outsider. So instead of engaging at a deep level with first order questions (Slee, 2011) of who benefits from current arrangements and whose interests are served by the way we do things in education, inclusive education in South Africa finds itself concerned with second order questions of resources and reorganisation. I thus argue that by positioning inclusive education as a discrete entity, those concerned with inclusion are badly positioned to ask: How do we radically and fundamentally reconstruct education in ways that are premised on the necessity for inclusion? Instead, their task is to ask and answer: What 'accommodations' and arrangements must be made to include learners with certain identity markers into the current system? There is a real danger that inclusive education is reduced to a list of 'accommodations' to be made for learners deemed to have additional support needs, rather than a challenge to exclusionary pedagogies and practices.

The second aspect of my disquiet regarding the positioning of inclusive education in South Africa as a solution to educational exclusion is that it is firmly linked to *special education*. This is exemplified by Rembe (2012, p.11) who says that, "The policy on inclusive education" is "usually understood as special-needs education". Coupling inclusive education with special education is problematic for a number of reasons, not least of which is the ambivalence it suggests about the place of separate special education in the country. The continuum of services approach (ordinary schools, full-service schools and special schools, depending on 'level of support' required) suggested by current South African policy might be pragmatic, even expedient in the light of current realities, but it may not promote inclusion. Teachers in ordinary schools may be unwilling to see it as their responsibility to promote the epistemological access of *all* their learners if they believe that some learners belong in a 'specialised' school further along the continuum. This is confirmed by the Gauteng province's Inclusion Strategy (GDE, 2011, p.12) which notes that "a great number of learners are unnecessarily refer[red] to special schools". Narrowing inclusive education to a special education concern also has the potential to obscure the intersectionality of 'special needs' and disability with other identity markers. Disability is always embedded within the lived experience of gender, class, race,

rurality and socio-economic status (Ferri & Connor, 2006). Isolating disability means that we risk ignoring the compounding effects of disadvantage. In addition, schools may congratulate themselves as being inclusive by admitting children with disabilities or 'special needs', but overlook the overt or covert exclusion of children who, for example, are LGBTQIA+[i], represent a religious minority, or are migrants.

In judging solutions, Rittel and Webber (1973) remind us that ideology will influence how good or bad we deem a solution to be. The role of ideology in issues of inclusive education has been well interrogated by the late Ellen Brantlinger (1997) and others, and is beyond the scope of this chapter. I would suggest, however, that the solution of inclusive education tends to be judged according to two main perspectives. The first is the optimism of those who identify and commend incremental 'progress' towards greater inclusivity. Within this orientation, any efforts, however small, are recognised as part of the ongoing process of inclusive education. This 'something is better than nothing' approach is appealing, and possibly necessary, given the enormity of the task. It lends itself to a discourse of "checklists" for the "incorporation of inclusive approaches" (UNESCO, 2005, p.31), lists of indicators (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), and, in South Africa, goals and milestones (DBE, 2011). As a result, facts and figures can be reported (see, for example, Surty (2013)) with the satisfaction of knowing how successful implementation has been. The second lens used to judge the solution of inclusive education is a more critical theoretical approach. Impatient with what can be seen as an assimilationist endeavour, Slee (2011, p.107) exemplifies this critique by saying:

> Inclusive education … is not achieved through charitable dispensations to excluded minorities. It is not about the movement of people from their tenancy in the social margins into unchanging institutions. Integration requires the objects of policy to forget their former status as outsiders and fit comfortably into what remain deeply hostile institutional arrangements. There is an expectation that they will assume an invisible presence as they accept the dominant cultural order.

In this critical tradition, many of the strategies associated with the implementation of inclusion, like curriculum differentiation, assessment accommodations and support provision through classroom facilitators, can be shown to perpetuate labelling and entrench the marginalisation of learners that inclusion was supposed to abolish. This, then, links to the next characteristic of the wicked problem – that solutions

cannot be tested, because once implemented, a series of (possibly unintended) consequences result.

2.5 There is no test of a solution to the problem of educational exclusion, with every attempt to solve it counting significantly

A characteristic of wicked problems is that "any solution, after being implemented, will generate waves of consequences" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.161). This can be illustrated both in terms of systemic interventions, and the specific domain of inclusive education. In South Africa, the 'solution' to the problem of the epistemological exclusion of learners that results from underperforming teachers with poor content and pedagogical knowledge is a combination of annual national standardised assessments, a content rich and rigorously paced curriculum (the Curriculum and Assessment Policy, (CAPS)), and, in some cases, scripted lesson plans. There are a number of (unintended) potential consequences of these initiatives, all of which resonate with findings from similar interventions internationally. These include the marginalisation of learners who cannot keep up with the pace and demands of the curriculum, or meet the standards demanded by assessment. As a result, these learners are labelled as deficient in some way (Bacon & Ferri, 2013). The deprofessionalisation of teachers occurs as their work is reduced to a list of "simple techniques" that can be prescribed and performed by teachers with minimal training (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p.25).

A specific focus on inclusive education reveals exclusion as the perverse consequence of inclusion. We hear of schools who talk about the "inclusion learners" when referring to learners admitted according to an inclusion policy, and these learners are often taught separately from their peers (Walton & Nel, 2012). Despite well intentioned acts of inclusion and support, 'refugee' learners in a Durban school experience marginalisation and exclusion (Sookraj, Gopal & Maharaj, 2005). Young mothers return to school but encounter school cultures and practices that conspire to marginalise them, and ultimately to push them out of school (Bhana & Ngabaza, 2012; Chigona & Chetty, 2008). Engelbrecht (2006, p.260) finds "discriminatory practices towards 'outsiders' and those who are 'different'" in schools, noting that "... children with disabilities [...] are viewed by both teachers and learners as 'different'"

and that "[t]hey are bullied". Significantly, many of these consequences then become 'wicked problems' in their own right.

Related to this characteristic is Rittel and Webber's contention that wicked problems do not allow for trial and error attempts at solution. This is because there are irreversible consequences to every action. Thus "every trial counts" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.161). At the individual level, learners have one life each, and (ideally) one turn at being in any particular grade. We cannot treat lightly the responsibility for each child's experience in a grade. A learner who joins a school which claims to be inclusive, and who finds herself subject to bullying by peers and epistemological marginalisation because teachers are not pedagogically responsive to her learning and support needs, doesn't get the year back to try it again elsewhere. The year is gone. She might change schools or change teachers, but the traces of the failure of the inclusion effort will be difficult to eradicate. As Slee (2010, p.2) reminds us, "exclusion and inclusion are about real people who ought not to be abstracted". At a systemic level, money spent on a solution can never be unspent. Changes to policy and practice can (and should) be made, but not without acknowledging that a price has been paid for previous solutions, irrespective of how successful they were.

A number of policy and programme initiatives in South Africa seek to promote inclusivity. These include updating the National Strategy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), providing in-service development opportunities for teachers, considering post provisioning norms for full-service/inclusive schools, and developing curricula for learners with intellectual disabilities. These are necessary but not sufficient measures to realize genuine inclusive education in the country. To address the exclusion that is associated with Silver's (1994) Monopoly paradigm, we need to ask 'Who benefits' from current arrangements (Slee, 2011), and so identify who is privileged or disprivileged by schooling practices. School zoning, for example, perpetuates privilege by securing access to well functioning schools in more affluent areas to affluent children living in those areas. Post provisioning norms disprivilege learners in poorer, usually rural schools. Gateway subjects like Mathematics and Science cannot be offered, resulting in the *de facto* exclusion of learners from many fields of further study. These examples serve to illustrate the point that trying to implement inclusive education without acknowledging and addressing the problem

educational exclusion will, in the overall scheme, be a frustrating, if not futile, exercise.

3. Conclusion

The problem of educational exclusion results in a response at two extremes. One is that the sheer complexity and extent of the problem convinces us that exclusion is inevitable, and we become paralysed in the face of the enormity of the task of addressing it. The other is that we fail to grasp the wickedness of the problem, and treat it as a tame problem that can be solved by the conscientious implementation of programmes at school and classroom level. The title of this chapter asked if inclusive education was a tame solution to a wicked problem. I then offered a discussion of educational exclusion through some of the characteristics of wicked problems, with a focus on inclusive education as a solution to the exclusion and marginalisation of learners, particularly those deemed to experience barriers to learning. I conclude by asserting that if we continue to tame inclusive education by reducing it to a series of strategies and interventions that we have to add to our educational endeavours, we are guilty of not recognising the wickedness of the problem of educational exclusion. However, if we are willing to engage critically with the matrices of power and privilege that sustain educational exclusion, and can envision education where exclusion is neither necessary nor inevitable, inclusive education may offer elements of a solution that begins to match the problem. South Africa is one of the second generation inclusive education countries (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2011) and finding a way forward for inclusive education means resisting the simplification of the problem of educational exclusion, and refusing to be satisfied with an inclusion that merely tinkers on the edges of our pedagogies and practices. It seems that pursuing inclusivity in South Africa and beyond should not be a focus on the inclusion of previously excluded individuals defined by their 'barriers to learning', and the recruitment of a myriad of strategies to facilitate their access. Instead, we need to identify, confront and dismantle policies and practices, which, intentionally or not, perpetuate the advantage of some to the disadvantage of others.

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[i] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and other minorities