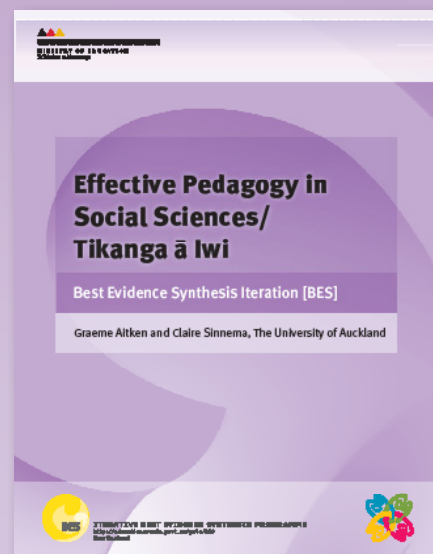


Facilitate effective inclusion of learners with special needs

This is one of a series of cases that illustrate the findings of the best evidence syntheses (BESs). Each is designed to support the professional learning of educators, leaders and policy makers.



BES cases: Insight into what works

The best evidence syntheses (BESs) bring together research evidence about ‘what works’ for diverse (all) learners in education. Recent BESs each include a number of cases that describe actual examples of professional practice and then analyse the findings. These cases support educators to grasp the big ideas behind effective practice at the same time as they provide vivid insight into their application.

Building as they do on the work of researchers and educators, the cases are trustworthy resources for professional learning.

Using the BES cases

The BES cases overview provides a brief introduction to each of the cases. It is designed to help you quickly decide which case or cases could be helpful in terms of your particular improvement priorities.

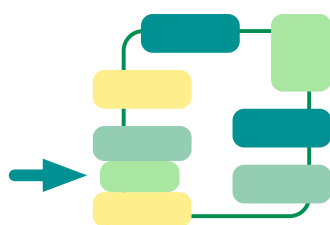
Use the cases with colleagues as catalysts for reflecting on your own professional practice and as starting points for delving into other sources of information, including related sections of the BESs. To request copies of the source studies, use the Research Behind the BES link on the BES website.

The conditions for effective professional learning are described in the Teacher Professional Learning and development BES and condensed into the ten principles found in the associated International Academy of Education summary (Timperley, 2008).

Note that, for the purpose of this series, the cases have been re-titled to more accurately signal their potential usefulness.

Responsiveness to diverse (all) learners

Use the BES cases and the appropriate curriculum documents to design a response that will improve student outcomes



The different BESs consistently find that any educational improvement initiative needs to be responsive to the diverse learners in the specific context. Use the inquiry and knowledge-building cycle tool to design a collaborative approach to improvement that is genuinely responsive to your learners

Facilitate effective inclusion of learners with special needs

This case contrasts effective and ineffective approaches to the inclusion of learners with special needs. Effective approaches to inclusion accelerate the learning and improve the well-being of learners with special needs, while also benefitting other learners and teachers. The contexts were an early childhood and a junior school setting. The case highlights contrasting views about disability that have implications for learners, educators, families, and wider communities.

See also BES Case 2: *Develop inclusive practice through a social studies programme.*

Facilitative inclusion for Ian and his peers

Source

Rietveld, C. M. (2002). *The transition from preschool to school for children with Down Syndrome: A challenge to regular education?* Unpublished doctoral thesis, Education Department, University of Canterbury, Christchurch.

Rietveld, C. (2003). *Parents, preschools/schools and professional: Impact of relationships on children's inclusion.* Paper presented at the Child and Family Policy Conference, Dunedin.

Rietveld, C. (2004, 23 November). *Contextual factors affecting inclusion during children's transitions from preschool to school.* Paper presented at the CHILDforum 8th annual New Zealand Early Childhood Research Symposium, Wellington.

Introduction

This case highlights how pedagogical approaches impact on outcomes for learners with and without impairments, particularly on participatory outcomes but also on cultural identity, skills, and affective outcomes. It contrasts the lack of inclusion experienced by Ian (who has Down syndrome) when at kindergarten with his "inclusion as an equal same-status participant engaging in a full range of roles" when at school (p. 8). It also highlights how the pursuit of participatory outcomes for Ian promoted positive outcomes for his non-impaired peers in terms of their ability to engage with others and solve problems.

Learner/s and learning context

The focus child in this case was Ian, a five-year-old boy with Down syndrome, who was observed as he made the transition from kindergarten to school.

Pedagogy

In the transition from kindergarten to school, Ian experienced markedly different pedagogical approaches:

- At kindergarten, he experienced 'illusory inclusion': he was treated as an object, and as an object of charity.
- At school, he experienced 'facilitative inclusion': he was able to participate in reciprocal equal-status, relationships and engage in the full range of roles on offer.

Outcomes

At kindergarten, Ian experienced illusory inclusion, which restricted his ability to participate with his peers and to engage in meaningful learning interactions. In contrast, at school he experienced genuine inclusion and became a valued participant of the class and the school community. The following two examples highlight the outcomes of these two distinctly different pedagogical approaches:

Example 1: Illusory inclusion at kindergarten

Ian and William are looking at the same book. Ian labels all the zoo animals correctly. William ignores Ian's vocalisations and makes up a story about the animals. William incorrectly labels the camel a kangaroo. Ian points out and says, "Monkey." Another child looks on. William says to the child, "I'm not reading you a story. I'm reading Ian a story." William's mother arrives. William hands the book to Ian and says to his mother, "I'm reading Ian a story." His mother asks, "Are you?" William and his mother depart. [Observer comment: No farewell greeting to Ian.]

After a similar incident on another day, the teacher rewards the typically developing child for reading to Ian: "That was very kind of you."

Example 2: Inclusion at school

Block corner [developmental] time. Each of the four children present including Ian, has made their own house. Ian puts a car in Alex's house.

Alex to Ian: "No. Not in my house – in your [emphasised] house." Ian takes the car out, puts it in his own house, and says to Alex, "In there. See."

Alex to Ian: "Yes. You need to make a roof ... like this ... like this, Ian." He shows Ian. Ian adds blocks in the same way Alex is showing him.

Alex to Ian: "See the roof, Ian." Ian repeats, "Roof."

Alex to Ian: "The house is all complete. It's a good house."

Ian to Alex: "Thank you." Ian adds some blocks to the house ...

Alex to Ian: "We need to make a new road now." Ian repeats, "Road."

Outcomes

In example 1, William did not learn to relate to Ian; he ignored Ian’s vocalisations (even when appropriate), which sent Ian a message that his contributions weren’t valid.

In example 2, Ian was exposed to concepts such as ‘roof’ and ‘road’ and shown how to construct these, and he learned about property (‘mine’ and ‘yours’). Alex learned how to give Ian information to solve a problem.

Facilitative inclusion was associated with the following outcomes:

- meaningful gains in terms of culturally valued skills, for example, literacy and enhanced social skills;
- classmates responding respectfully to diversity;
- participation in a richer social context that facilitated ongoing development; for example, after-school visits to friends, being selected by peers for specific activities – Ian became part of the peer culture.

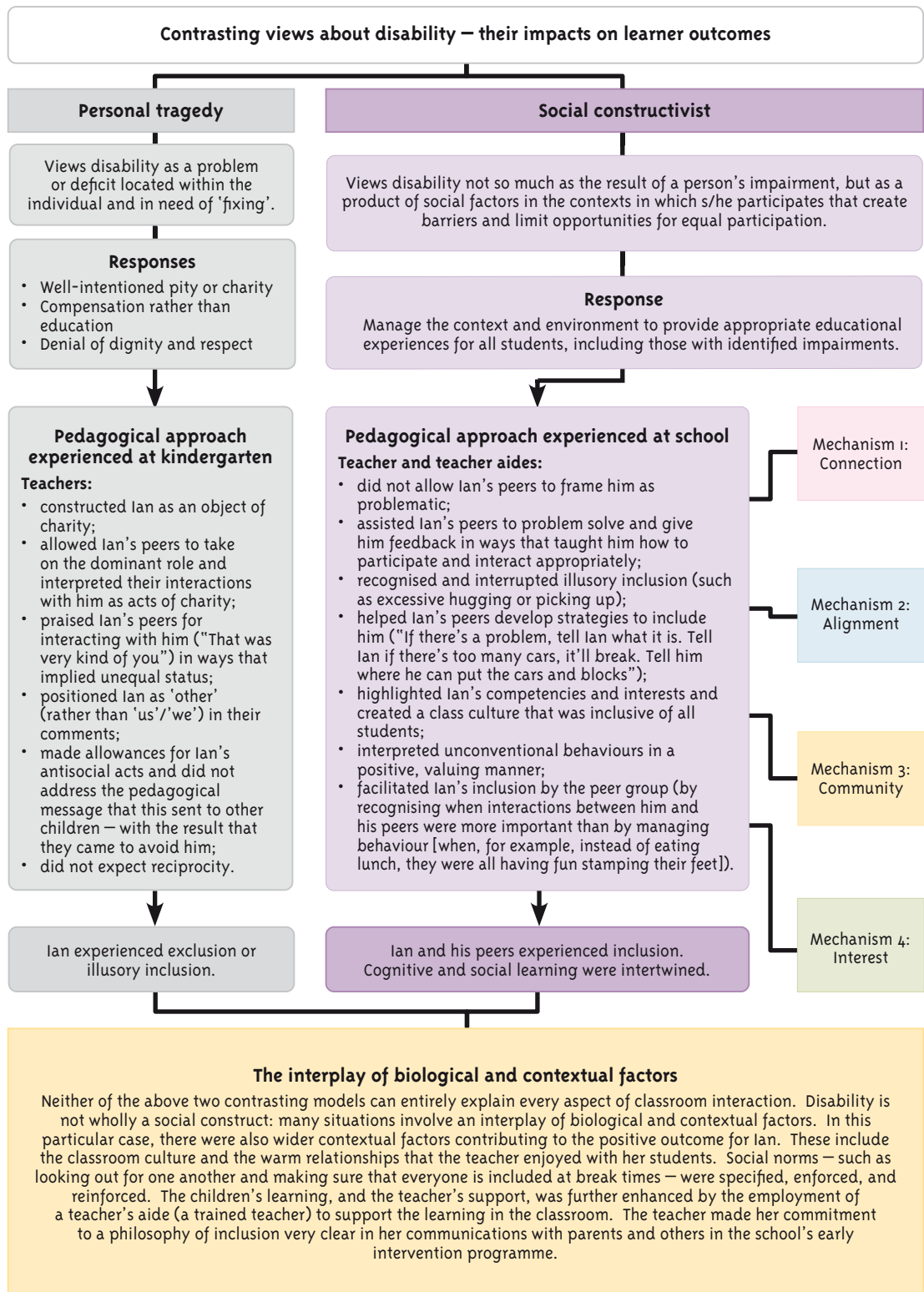
The outcomes were positive, not only for Ian, but, also for the whole group of learners.

Crucial to achieving outcomes inclusive of all children was a *social construction model* of disability rather than a *deficit, personal tragedy, or medical model*. The theories of disability underpinning the pedagogical approaches used by Ian’s teachers and teacher aide directly impacted on his experience of school and his learning. Their approach recognised that social and cognitive learning are intertwined and that relationships are central to the scaffolding of learning.

How the learning occurred

<p>Community</p> <p><i>Build and sustain a learning community</i></p>	<p>The teacher and teacher aide avoided framing Ian as problematic. Instead, they showed his peers how to solve problems and give feedback in ways that encouraged the development of inclusive, productive relationships.</p> <p>The teacher recognised the inappropriateness of excessive hugging and picking up. She interpreted some of Ian’s unconventional behaviours positively, in ways that valued him. There was an emphasis on building respectful relationships.</p>
<p>Alignment</p> <p><i>Align experiences to important outcomes</i></p>	<p>The teacher recognised that experiences supporting Ian’s inclusion in a peer group were important and had to take precedence over other considerations. This can be seen in her decision not to intervene when Ian and his peers were having fun together stamping their feet when they were meant to be eating their lunch.</p>
<p>Connection</p> <p><i>Make connections to students’ lives</i></p>	<p>The teacher helped the students develop language strategies that would include Ian. (For example, “If there’s a problem, tell Ian what it is. Tell Ian if there’s too many cars, it’ll break. Tell him where he can put the cars and blocks.”)</p>
<p>Interest</p> <p><i>Design experiences that interest students</i></p>	<p>Ian’s competencies and interests were highlighted in a class culture that was inclusive of diverse children’s interests.</p>

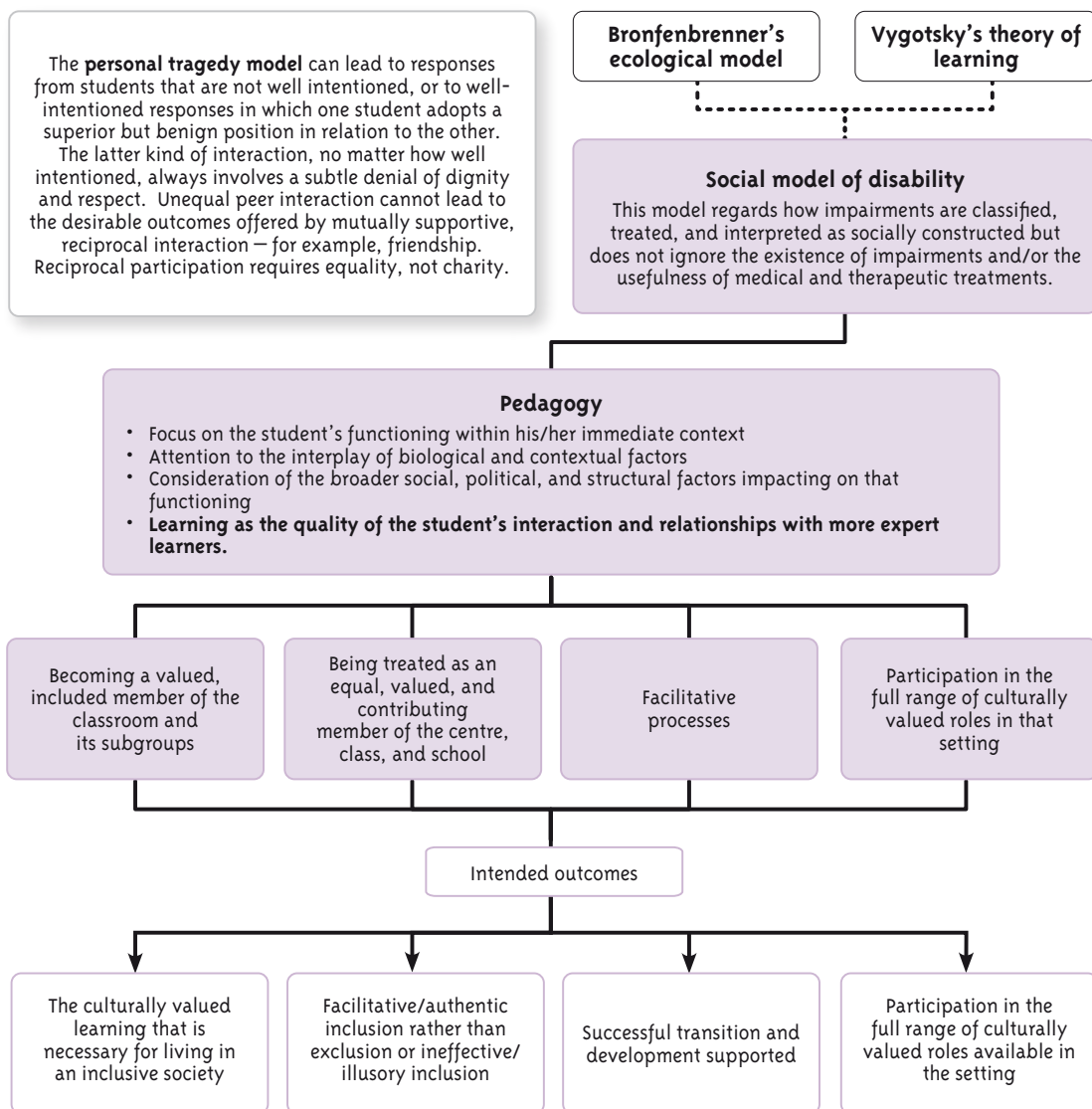
How the learning occurred



Implications for pedagogy

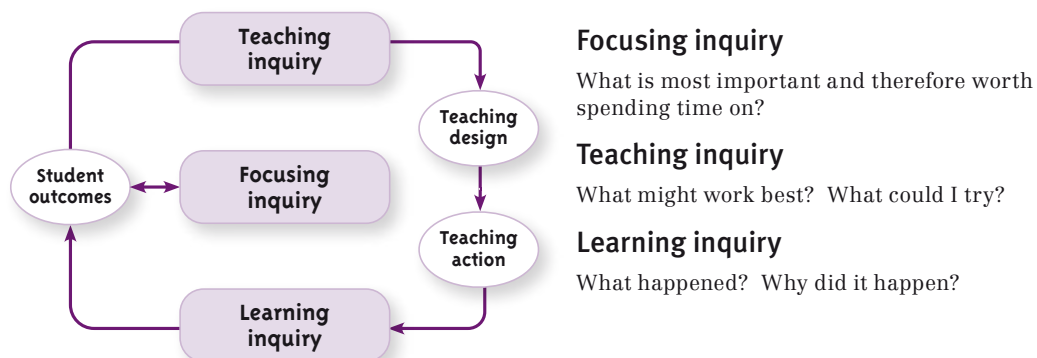
These findings highlight the significant impact that contextual factors have on outcomes for learners with impairments. Such factors include teaching/learning practices, beliefs, support, and the nature of the school and the wider system of which it is part. It is important that teachers recognise the interplay of biological and contextual factors and that interactions and relationships create a pattern of facilitative inclusion for all learners, rather than a pattern of exclusion, which may be active (such as teasing) or passive (such as ignoring). Educators should be able to distinguish between facilitative/authentic inclusion, in which learners participate with equal status and engage in the full range of roles that are typical in the context, and ineffective/illusory inclusion, in which, for example, some are assigned inferior roles.

Implications for pedagogy



The above diagram is an interpretation of Rietveld C. (2004, 23 November), pp. 4–5.

The evidence presented in this case can be used to inform teachers' inquiries into their own practice.



Suggested questions:

- Why is inclusion as a valued participant in the peer culture of the classroom essential for optimal learning? Have you given attention to how learners with impairments participate in the peer culture?
- Do your pedagogical practices reflect a 'personal tragedy' or 'social constructivist' model of impairment? Where are the fundamental differences between these two models?
- How could you facilitate the inclusion of a child with an intellectual impairment in your classroom?

Inquiry