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Newly qualified teachers' experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy in schools located in high poverty environments

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine Newly Qualified Teachers' (NQT) experiences of enacting an inclusive pedagogy in high poverty school contexts in Scotland. One approach for supporting teachers' practices with regard to inclusion is known as inclusive pedagogy. However, there is limited research into NQTs' experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy in their teaching. This cross-case study was conducted with seven NQTs in three schools located in high poverty environments. Qualitative data were collected through narrative observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective diaries. The findings indicate that the NQTs in their efforts to implement an inclusive pedagogy, adopted practices that were consistent with the principles of an inclusive pedagogy and these practices related to teaching strategies, additional support and working with others. The study extends an existing corpus of knowledge on inclusive pedagogy.

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Introduction

This study is concerned with understanding Newly Qualified Teachers' (NQTs) experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy to support learning for all children and young people in high poverty school contexts. It is important to gain an appreciation of these experiences, as many new teachers report feeling unprepared to work with diverse learner groups (Ravet and Mtika 2021; UNESCO 2020; Cochran-Smith et al. 2016, Forlin, Keen, and Barrett 2008). In addition, teaching in schools located in high poverty environments brings challenges for teachers. Poverty has been recognised as a barrier to educational achievement and affects children and young people's engagement with school (Mtika, et al. 2024; Gorski 2016).

To address concerns associated with teaching and learning for children and young people from diverse backgrounds (e.g. poverty), many countries have produced education policies that promote inclusive education. These countries have also signed up to the United Nations' agenda for inclusive and equitable education for all (UN 2015). Similarly,

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within the European Union, the European Council adopted the 2018 *Recommendation on Common values, Inclusive Education, and the European Dimension of Teaching* which underscores a commitment to fostering inclusive education in member states (Commission of the European Union 2018). In Scotland, the policy landscape positions teachers and teacher educators as important contributors in responding to increasingly diverse learner groups (GTCS 2021). The Scottish Government has also recognised poverty as a barrier to educational attainment (Scottish Government 2022) and has committed funding to target support for pupils in local authorities and schools with the highest rates of primary-aged pupils living in poverty (Scottish Government 2016). It is worth noting that, within the Scottish context, inclusive education extends beyond supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to include a broader interpretation that incorporates all children and young people, including those with additional support needs (ASN) and other social barriers such as poverty.

While research on inclusive education has highlighted positive academic achievement for all learners (e.g. Demeris, Childs, and Jordan 2008), there is currently limited empirical evidence on how implementing inclusive pedagogy affects learner outcomes in schools located in high poverty environments. There is a lack of consensus in the literature for supporting newly qualified teachers and relatively few studies provide guidance on how to prepare NQTs to adopt an inclusive pedagogy. This study draws on and extends research that has focused specifically on NQT experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Spratt 2013; Spratt and Florian 2015). The study examines NQTs' experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy within their classroom settings as beginner teachers working in high poverty school contexts in Scotland.

Inclusive pedagogy

Inclusive education has different conceptualisations and can assume different meanings in different contexts (Nilholm 2021; Slee 2014). For example, a person-centred approach to inclusive education (Forest and Pearpoint 1992) can function at the level of the individual learner and recognises differences between learners and respect for the dignity of individuals. In contrast, school reform approaches to inclusive education operate at the level of the school (Ainscow 1991). These recognise the impact of school structures in relation to the pursuit of inclusion and, in contrast to person-centred approaches, tend to underplay differences between individual learners (Florian 2014). Such an analysis helps articulate some of the complexity around conceptualising inclusive education. Notwithstanding such challenges, in this paper we adopt Göransson and Nilholm (2014) definition of inclusive education as 'meeting the social/academic needs of all pupils' (269) within mainstream schools. By focusing on both the social and academic aspects of inclusion, this definition in keeping with the broader aims of education for all (UNESCO 2020).

One approach for supporting teachers to enact inclusive education to meet the needs of all learners is through what has come to be known as inclusive pedagogy (Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012; Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). Inclusive pedagogy takes a socio-cultural perspective on learning and is concerned with achieving positive educational outcomes for all learners. Underpinned by a commitment to addressing learner differences without marginalising or stigmatising any pupil, inclusive pedagogy requires

teachers to adopt a relational approach, working with others to remove 'intersecting barriers to inclusion' (Pantić and Florian 2015, 345). However, some researchers have argued that inclusive pedagogy can be difficult to achieve for some learners (e.g. Lindsay et al. 2014).

Inclusive pedagogy is guided by three principles: (1) differences between learners should be expected in any conceptualisation of learning; (2) teachers must believe they can teach all learners; and (3) teachers develop creative and new ways of working with others (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). An essential aspect of inclusive pedagogy is that it focuses not only on what a teacher does but *how* they respond to diversity in the classroom, *how* they group pupils and *how* they use craft knowledge in ways that do not stigmatise or marginalise any pupil (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). However, researching whether inclusive pedagogy is being enacted can be difficult due to a lack of knowledge of the nuances of different school contexts. To address this methodological dilemma, Florian and Spratt (2013) developed the Inclusive Pedagogy Approach in Action (IPAA) framework.

The IPAA framework enables researchers to replace judgements about what inclusion is and whether it is occurring by exploring whether a principled stance is enacted in relation to the three principles of inclusive pedagogy. The IPAA links these three principles to observable teaching practices and offers a way of moving beyond a description of observable actions towards a deeper analysis of the different ways in which teachers develop an inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Spratt 2013). The framework enables any links between the principles of inclusive pedagogy, and how they are used, to be documented.

Context of the study

This study took place in Scotland within a policy context orientated towards enabling positive educational outcomes for all learners including those living in poverty. The Scottish Government has provided funding towards addressing inequalities in education through the Scottish Attainment Challenge (Scottish Government 2022), designed to support schools serving areas of high levels of poverty. Within this policy context, teachers are viewed as important stakeholders in mitigating the so-called poverty-related attainment gap (Scottish Government 2016). Moreover, initial teacher education (ITE) programmes are expected to prepare teachers with the appropriate qualities to make a positive difference for all children and young people. As part of this policy landscape, the National Framework for Inclusion provides a coherent approach to supporting and preparing teachers to respond to inclusion (Scottish Universities Inclusion Group 2022).

Teacher preparation in Scotland is situated in higher education institutions (HEIs) where student teachers complete either a four-year undergraduate degree or a nine-month Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). During their studies, student teachers work towards the Standard for Provisional Registration, a mandatory requirement for registration with the GTCS (2021). Immediately after completing their studies, NQTs participate in a Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS). This scheme guarantees NQTs (called 'probationer' teachers in Scotland) with a one-year teaching post within one of Scotland's local authorities. During this period, they work towards achieving the Standard

for Full Registration under the GTCS. However, little is known about the experiences of NQTs aiming to create an inclusive pedagogy in their induction within the current policy context.

Our study focussed on NQTs undertaking their Teacher Induction Scheme in high poverty school environments. It draws on the IPAA framework, to identify and highlight tangible examples of how NQTs operationalise an inclusive pedagogy. The study aims to contribute to an expanding body of research in and for the preparation of new teachers to develop an inclusive pedagogy in their teaching practice (e.g. Florian and Rouse 2009; Graham et al. 2019; Robson et al. 2021). Our research was guided by the following question:

> How do newly qualified teachers implement an inclusive pedagogy in high poverty school contexts?

Method

Cross-case study design

We adopted a cross-case study to examine how NQTs implement an inclusive pedagogy in schools located in high poverty environments. Seven NQTs, undertaking their induction year took part in the study and each served as their own case in terms of data collection. Four of the NQTs were placed in two primary schools and the other three were placed in the same secondary school.

All the participants had completed their PGDE Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at the same Scottish university. Their ITE was underpinned by the three principles of inclusive pedagogy (i) differences must be accounted for as an essential aspect of human development; (ii) teachers must believe they can teach all children; and (iii) teachers continually develop creative new ways of working with others (Spratt and Florian 2015). As part of their ITE, the research participants were encouraged intentionally to acknowledge, support, and incorporate the diversity of different backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and abilities in their teaching.

The three school profiles were linked to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), a relative measure of deprivation across Scotland (Scottish Government 2016). Areas of high deprivation fall within the 1–40 SIMD categorisation. All three schools in the study were recipients of the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) from the Scottish Government to help close the poverty-related attainment gap. Table 1 provides profiles of the seven NQTs and their induction school contexts.

Before undertaking data collection, we ensured all necessary ethical procedures were in place. Research ethics approval for the study was obtained from the host university. We followed appropriate protocols including voluntary participation, right to withdrawal, privacy and confidentiality, and anonymity (BERA 2018). While there was the potential that research participants might have felt exposed to some degree of career risk by being observed and interviewed, we reassured them that they we were not assessing their progress in their Induction Year. Rather, we had a specific focus on their implementation of an inclusive pedagogy. In presenting findings from the study, we use pseudonyms for our participants.

Table 1. Summary of research participants and induction school profiles.

Newly Qualified Teachers ($N = 7$)	Gender	Induction Scheme School	School Profile
Amy Helen	Female Female	School A (Primary)	Located in an urban area. Approximately 80% of pupils from SIMD 1–40 backgrounds. Approximately 40% of pupils recorded as having Additional Support Needs (ASN). Pupil teacher ratio 16:1 with an average class size of 25 pupils. Attendance 91.9% but below the national average 94.5% in 2018/2019.
Hilda Simon	Female Male	School B (Primary)	Located in an urban area. Approximately 90% of pupils from SIMD 1–40 backgrounds. Approximately 90% of pupils recorded as having Additional Support Needs (ASN). Pupil teacher ratio 15:1 with an average class size of 25 pupils. Attendance 92.3% but below the national average 94.5% in 2018/2019.
Colin Eve Hilary	Male Female Female	School C (Secondary)	Located in an urban area. Approximately 80% of pupils from SIMD 1–40 backgrounds. Approximately 40% of pupils recorded as having Additional Support Needs (ASN). Pupil teacher ratio 13:1. No data available for average class size. Attendance 82% but below the national average 90.7% in 2018/2019.

Data collection

Data were collected through narrative observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective audio diaries to gather participants' experiences of enacting an inclusive pedagogy in three high poverty school environments. The approach to the narrative observations required all members of the research team (teacher educators) to undertake training by observing the same pre-recorded video of a lesson independently and making a narrative account. Discussion then followed, to develop a shared understanding of how to ensure relevant data were collected.

During the narrative observations of the NQTs' practice, each researcher sat through approximately 30 minutes of two lessons and recorded, in as much detail as possible, what they saw and heard the NQT do and say. For example, a researcher observing a NQT in an ICT class noted that:

> A pupil said [to Eve], 'everything keeps disappearing [from my computer screen]!' Eve replied, 'don't worry - tell me what's happened…'. Eve was supportive and talked continually to explain how to adjust, edit and use the tools. She modelled this again and reassured the pupils. (Extract from Observation 2, Eve, School C)

Data were recorded on an observation template. The narrative observations were then used to inform the follow-up, post-observation, semi-structured interviews.

Each interview was conducted on the same day after each lesson observation to elicit further information. The following provides an example of how the interview linked with the observation:

Interviewer: I noticed that you set your classroom up in a circle for group work. Can you tell me why you set your classroom up like this?

Hilda: I like to encourage a lot of group work and interactive work, interactive learning, lots of discussion surrounding our learning. And I just feel like it really aids each learner differently. I also try to do mixed ability [groupings] and strategically place them. I also give them some choice as well so that they feel comfortable at their group, and they feel willing to learn. (Extract from follow up interview with Hilda, School B, following Observation 1)

Each participant was also required to audio-record a reflective diary for one week. Each participant used the same four reflective questions to structure their entries: (1) What were you aiming for today in terms of inclusion? (2) What worked well and why do you think this? (3) What did not go so well and why do you think this? (4) What, if anything, might you do differently next time? The following extract is an illustration of data collected:

> In terms of inclusion, I was trying to ensure that everyone could share their ideas and that we weren't just having some of the more dominant and literary able pupils taking over the conversation. So once the topic had been introduced and I was asking for ideas, I got the class to break into small groups of three or four pupils and asked them to discuss their ideas together before we came back as a whole class (Extract from reflective diary, Amy, School A).

All data collected were transcribed verbatim and shared with the research team prior to data analysis.

Data analysis

The data analysis was divided into three phases. First, we conducted within-case analysis of each participant's data to understand the individual context and nature of their experiences. In step 1, all transcribed data were mapped against the IPAA Framework (Spratt and Florian 2015) to elicit findings from the three data sets: observation data, interview data and reflective diary data for each participant. In step 2, we integrated the findings from each of the three data sets to elicit aspects of inclusive pedagogy that the NQTs focus on during their Induction Year. From this, we created a mini-case summary for each of the seven participants. Finally, during step 3, we conducted a cross-case analysis to identify any replicating patterns found in all of the NQTs' teaching practices (for example, all the NQTs worked with others). Figure 1 depicts the stages undertaken during the data analysis process.

Step 3 provided a window into the experiences of the participants in relation to their approach to implementing an inclusive pedagogy.

Findings

Across the seven participants, we found practice examples that were consistent with the principles of an inclusive pedagogy. Using person-centred approaches, based on their knowledge of their pupils in their individual classroom contexts, the NQTs' practices were based on the three conceptual themes of *teaching strategies*, *additional support* and *working with others*.

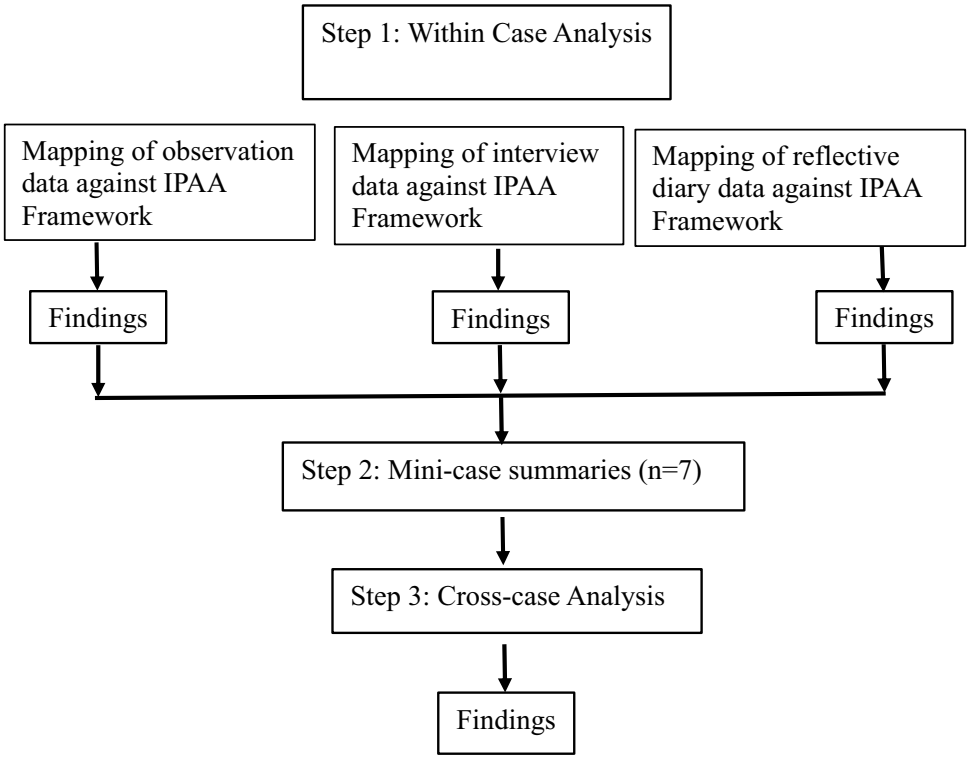

Figure 1. Data analysis diagram.

Teaching strategies

Regarding the first principle of inclusive pedagogy 'difference is accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning' (Florian and Spratt 2013, 124), we found examples from all the NQTs in terms of the teaching strategies they adopted to include all learners.

Scaffolding

Some of the NQTs implemented a scaffolding approach, which involved, through discussion with the whole class, opportunities for pupils to familiarise themselves with the key learning to be developed. They then provided opportunities for learners to talk to each other in pairs or small groups about the intended learning, before refocusing the learners to share the insights from their discussions with the whole class. After familiarising the learners with the key learning, the NQTs then encouraged the learners to complete an activity. This is illustrated in the following observations:

> Hilda invites the children to go over what they were talking about the previous day. She uses positive language 'we had a wonderful conversation about our new topic, and all of you were working so hard, the hardest I've seen'. The children then chat to each other for a short period before Hilda refocuses them and invites the children to share what they can remember. She

> then asks them to draw a labelled diagram based on yesterday's work and using the ideas they have just discussed. (Hilda, Observation 1)

> [Amy] pauses the video on Buddhism and says, 'that means they meet up at special temples'. The video continues playing. She pauses and says, 'that means that in the temple there is a great, big statue of Buddha; this is a tiny model of one'. (Amy, Observation 1)

The scaffolding approach was intended to increase pupil participation and encourage them to learn from and with each other with the support of the teacher.

Revisiting previous learning

Similarly, the NQTs provided opportunities for all pupils to revisit previous learning to ensure the learners were familiar with work already taught before progressing with the new learning. Where appropriate, the NQTs would make necessary modifications to the planned learning to meet the needs of all the learners, as highlighted in the following interview excerpts:

> I do a week plan where it's introduction and build upon. Then the following week, we can go back and revisit it just to make sure everyone's okay with it. So, we did the introduction yesterday. I had a look to see how they were getting on; they were getting on well. I thought, let's give them a challenge to see how they [progress]. . . But [then] I realised . . . it was a step too far. . .. (Simon, Interview 1)

> I was just trying to get them to think about what we've done before. So, even if it's a new topic, I would always try and link it to something we've already done just to get their brain thinking about it . . . they're bad at remembering. I could say something to them and ten minutes later, they won't remember. By repeating it more than once, they tend to remember it. (Colin, Interview 2)

Revisiting previous learning enabled the NQTs to have a better understanding of pupils' learning and, where necessary, the teacher provided further support.

Verbalising thinking

Another teaching strategy implemented by some of the NQTs was to encourage the learners to verbalise their thinking. This strategy was in response to the difficulty some learners experienced with literacy. To enhance the learners' engagement with the planned learning, the NQTs recognised the value of providing opportunities for them to engage in purposeful talk prior to writing. This was illustrated in the following examples in the reflective diaries:

> . . . pupils who struggle with their writing were doing a lot of verbal work to get them to verbalise what they would like their poetry lines to be and then, where possible, getting them to practice and sound out some of the simpler words and discussing with them words that they're coming up with. (Amy, Reflective Diary)

> The groups worked well so they all had a wee chat. The ones who didn't quite understand . . . [then] understood . . . The fill-in-the-blanks activity at the end worked well because they were able to work as a team; they were able to talk about it and they were able to engage with their learning. (Colin, Reflective Diary)

By encouraging the pupils to verbalise their thinking, the NQTs were endeavouring to increase their participation and mitigate against inadvertently marginalising some learners.

Interdisciplinary links

To support the learners to make connections with their learning across the curriculum, some of the NQTs tried to include overt interdisciplinary links within their lessons. The following remarks from the interviews provide examples of how NQTs tried to support learners to make connections:

> I think interdisciplinary learning intertwines quite nicely with science: they're always going to have to write a sentence or they're going to have to figure out a maths equation in science . . . so I think it's good linking them together because it kind of connects it all to help their understanding. (Helen, Interview 2)

> I'm not teaching them content they're not aware of; they've done it with subject specialists [other curricula areas] and I'm now looking at the same topic through a debate. So, I'm asking them to think about building arguments for and against, listening to other people, and taking that on board. (Hilary, Interview 2)

Underpinning this teaching strategy was an assumption that not all the pupils would make relevant connections between curricular areas. By making curricular links visible to the whole class, this provided all of the learners with an opportunity to participate in the planned learning.

Linking to everyday activities

The NQTs also recognised the importance of making overt links to everyday activities as the foundation for experiential learning to support all the learners. Two of the NQTs remarked:

> I set them [an enterprise activity] for homework to go into the shops and look at cards so that they had real cards to look at. And I said, 'go home and look out your birthday cards and your Christmas cards . . . '. Looking at cards, doing research about different styles of humour cards, Valentine's cards, birthday cards, and looking at what the card market is. (Eve, Interview 2)

> I just think it brings the learning home a bit more. Like it can be, enzymes are quite hard because they're not something that you see. You don't see them, and you don't notice them every day. So, if you can connect it to something that they see every day, then it means they understand it a little bit more. So, like the washing machine, they all wash their clothes, they all have heard of Ariel. So, it's just linking it back to prior learning. (Colin, Interview 1)

By connecting school learning with everyday activities, such as shopping, the NQTs hoped to build from these familiar experiences, as the starting point for subsequent learning.

Chunking lessons

Another important teaching strategy adopted by the NQTs was chunking lessons into smaller parts. This involved developing shorter segments of lessons to make them more

accessible and provide multiple opportunities to revisit the key learning as the lessons progressed. Two NQTs reflected upon this during an interview and in the reflective diary, noting:

> It's just to break it up a bit . . . so, they should have a title, an aim, a method, a conclusion. So, I think if I can break the lesson into those bits, when they come to write it up, they'll be like, 'oh, I did this at the method bit and that's where they write their method'. Or like, 'this is the bit that I did in the conclusion part of the lesson, so I can write my conclusion'. (Colin, Interview 2)

> There was a nice chunking of the lesson. We had a bit of a recap, we had a bit of writing, a bit of discussion and then we had a video clip. So, there were different activities that were short, snappy, quite focused and kept to the movement of the lesson . . . We got through quite a lot for this class because, due to their varying abilities, some of them write faster than others, some of them take a little bit longer to process what we're doing. (Hilary, Reflective Diary)

The illustrative practices of *scaffolding; revisiting previous learning; verbalising thinking; interdisciplinary links; linking to everyday activities; and chunking lessons*, as used in relation to the teaching strategies, were based on the NQTs' knowledge of the learners in their classroom settings and were appropriate to their contexts.

Additional support

Linked to the first principle of inclusive pedagogy, 'difference is accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning' (Florian and Spratt 2013, 124), we found pedagogical practices that arose from the participants' efforts to modify the learning environments to help all learners participate in the life of the classroom.

Use of visual images

Some of the NQTs used different visual aids such as videos, pictures or photographs, and drawing on the board as additional support, as noted in both lesson observations and interviews.

> Then [the NQT] shows a picture of Buddha, and says, 'this is what people think he looked like, and this is what monks believe he looks like. We are going to watch a little video . . . so you can learn more'. The video continues playing . . . After the video, she shows a book. (Amy, Observation 1)

> I try to think about ways that I could make it more engaging for them. For the girl who struggles with literacy and another child in the class who has English as an additional language, and has very little English, I tried to make it very visual on the board. (Hilda, Interview 1)

By making use of visual images to support learners who struggled with literacy, the NQTs also intended to make the planned lesson more engaging for all pupils.

Reading aloud

In a similar vein, some of the NQTs made efforts to read aloud and/or provided technology to enable learners to look up words they did not understand, as noted in the reflective diary entries.

> I read the questions off the whiteboard, so everyone was included. So, the ones who couldn't read so well could listen to what was being asked of them, and the ones that could read well were just able to get on with the work. (Colin, Reflective Diary)

> In terms of inclusion, everyone has access to a computer. Pupils that require the Google chrome extension *Read&Write* [are supplied with it] … which allows them to change the colour of the screen, to maybe have words read out [text-to-speech]. It has a functioning dictionary; it has highlighting tools. Then they have access to that and that assists in their reading and writing. Everyone has access to this, not just certain pupils. Once more, all pupils are given plans so in terms of inclusion everyone should be able to access all the sites that they need to online. They should be able to read and write on the computer successfully. (Hilary, Reflective Diary)

By reading aloud, the NQTs hoped this additional support would not only make the planned learning more accessible for targeted pupils but also benefit everyone in the class.

A teacher's station

Another practice for providing additional support involved the NQTs creating what they referred to as a *teacher's station*. The use of a teacher's station required the NQTs to create a designated space in the classroom where they could provide additional support by working with small groups and/or individual pupils during the planned lesson. The NQTs commented on this during interviews. For example:

> Quite often, what will happen with some pupils, they will come back to me, and we'll do further work at the whiteboard or round a table [that acts] as a teacher station …..(Amy, Interview 2)

> I do my teacher's station … So, I'll be doing a worksheet alongside them but once they have become more independent, I let them do the worksheet by themselves …..(Helen, Interview 1)

Learning from 'mistakes'

Some of the NQTs endeavoured to create supportive and nurturing environments where the learners were encouraged to see learning from 'mistakes' and asking for help as opportunities for learning.

> I don't mind if you make mistakes … it is okay to make mistakes: we can always fix the mistakes and make it right. (Simon, Observation 1)

> I make sure that I notice them and that they know that I'm noticing that they need more support, even without them having to come up and say [something] to me. I like to have that relationship with them, and I like them to feel they're not being missed out. (Hilda, Interview 2)

Creating a culture of learning from mistakes offered an opportunity for the NQTs to provide individual pupils with additional support. However, this required the NQTs to have fostered a positive rapport with the pupils.

Working with others

Linked to the third principle of inclusive pedagogy, 'teachers develop creative and new ways of working with others' (Florian and Spratt 2013, 124), our findings highlight the NQTs' development of intraprofessional working. The term intraprofessional working is used here to note that the NQTs, during their induction, were working in their classroom setting with other teaching professional. In Scotland, Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) are paraprofessionals who support learning and teaching within the curriculum and the personal development of pupils with additional support needs. We found examples from all seven NQTs,

> To make sure all the children were included, I tried to include the children who are not so confident with reading and writing by using my Pupil Support Assistant in the class to support that group and read through the questions with them. (Hilda, Reflective Diary)

> The children will be with me and then the PSA will be listening along to what is going on . . . then if there are pupils [indicating they need assistance] with thumbs to the side or thumbs down, I'll work with them whilst the PSA goes around and double checks everyone's getting on with their work . . ..(Simon, Interview 1)

By working with the PSA, the NQTs shared plans for the intended learning to enable the PSA to provide some additional support for targeted learners.

> When I do have the PSA in the classroom, I try and make the most of her . . . usually either to challenge pupils . . . or she sometimes takes out groups that need support on something that I don't have time to do in class . . . having some of them get that extra support is helpful. (Helen, Interview 1).

This intraprofessional working with PSAs was a means to help the NQTs to bridge the principles of inclusive pedagogy with their classroom practice.

Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to examine NQTs' experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy to support learning for all children and young people in high poverty school contexts. The findings show how NQTs endeavoured to mobilise readily available teaching strategies, additional support and working with others for the benefit of all pupils rather than providing something additional or different for some pupils who experience difficulties (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). Such examples of how NQTs begin to put into practice inclusion in high poverty school environments point to a potential for initial teacher education to create opportunities through which student teachers (future NQTs) can envisage where they might start doing in terms of learning to implement inclusion during practicum. This may go some way towards addressing concern expressed in the literature about the limited guidance available on how to realise inclusive pedagogy in a classroom setting (Florian and Spratt 2013; Spratt and Florian 2015).

Our finding that NQTs fostered intraprofessional connections with Pupil Support Assistants to support inclusion relates to the third principle of inclusive pedagogy that asserts the relational nature of an inclusive pedagogy in responding to learner differences (Pantić and Florian 2015). This finding underscores the importance of foregrounding relationality in, and for, an inclusive pedagogy. It would, therefore, seem beneficial to focus support for NQTs (and student teachers during practicum) by providing opportunities for them to develop creative ways of working with others. This agrees with our previous findings (Graham et al. 2019), which indicated that the nature of co-practice relations in schools for student teachers was poorly conceptualised and understood.

Through identifying concrete examples of teaching strategies and working with others, our study offers insights into NQTs' experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy in high poverty school contexts. By encouraging NQTs to reflect on *what* and *how* they implement their teaching strategies and ways of working with others to support inclusion, it may be possible to enable them to develop a more nuanced appreciation of the *how* of inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). As such, mentors and teacher educators may need to support NQTs to reflect on what they bring to their teaching contexts, and to explore how what they bring can be built upon to support inclusion of all learners. This is not to suggest a standardised approach; rather it requires sensitivity to context and an understanding that inclusive approaches may look different in different classroom settings.

While the findings highlight how the NQTs mobilised readily available teaching strategies, additional support and working with others for the benefit of all pupils, this does not currently indicate the impact that implementing an inclusive pedagogy has on learner achievement in schools located in high poverty environments. Our possible next step is to investigate how NQTs might mobilise pupil voice, not addressed in the study reported here, to co-construct inclusive pedagogies that may contribute to learner gains.

To conclude, this study has demonstrated examples of NQTs' experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy in high poverty context school environments. By turning attention to what NQTs can do and underscoring the need for NQTs to reflect on how such strategies support inclusion, this study adds to an expanding body of knowledge on inclusive pedagogy.

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