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An international scoping review on inclusive education from multiple perspectives: co-creating inclusive experiences in shared occupational situations

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ABSTRACT

A human rights approach to inclusive education acknowledges that every learner has a fundamental right to access educational opportunities. For this scoping review, inclusion is defined from an occupational perspective as a concern with what people do together. The purpose of the study was to investigate the ways people can act to influence inclusion from the viewpoint of children, under the age of 18, parents, classroom and therapy staff and others. Children is defined as all children under the age of 18. Twenty-six studies representing 14 countries met the inclusion criteria. The findings focus on shared occupational situations, the extent to which these situations can be changed (their changeability) and the ways the social context shapes children's experiences of more inclusive schooling. The findings suggest the need to shift to a more nuanced understanding of inclusive practices, while acknowledging the diversity of such practices within specific cultural contexts internationally.

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1. International development of inclusive education

Inclusive schools teach children skills to engage with each other and do things together, in classrooms, playgrounds and other places, disregarding differences in abilities, gender, race and class, and language (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2014; UNESCO 1994). This perspective contrasts with the historical practice of categorising and labelling children with disabilities so that their particular learning needs could be catered for via specialist pedagogy and services (Armstrong and Armstrong 2019; Snipstad 2019). The underlying notion of that approach appears 'norm driven' (Hollenweger 2014; Snipstad 2019), whereby children who deviate too far from the norm were effectively excluded from regular schools.

Global transformation towards inclusive education was sparked by the United Nations Conference in Salamanca, in 1994, which marked a move away from biomedical views of

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deficits, impairments, and disabilities (Hollenweger 2014). However, some countries changed their laws years before this global initiative. Notably, the United States passed the 'Education for All Children Act' in 1978, followed by the 'No Child Left Behind' Act in 2002 (Frolek Clark 2013), aiming to include as many children as possible into mainstream schooling. Similarly, New Zealand enacted a special education legislative framework in 1989, which mandated the right of all students to attend their local schools and learn alongside their peers, regardless of impairments or disabilities (Simmons Carlsson, Hocking, and Clair 2007; Thomson 2013). Efforts to enact inclusive education tend to be contextualised within local systems and vary across socio-historical and cultural contexts (Booth and Ainscow 2016; Slee 2013). That is, they are shaped by national and local policies, historical developments and experiences, and cultural values, reflecting unique societal facilitators and barriers to welcoming all children.

The right to education without discrimination of any kind is mandated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2006) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). These conventions provide guidance and principles to ensure the rights of children with disabilities in education and society, while emphasising children's right to express their views, feelings, and wishes in all matters affecting them, and for their views to be taken seriously. The human rights approach to education acknowledges that every learner has a fundamental right to access educational opportunities. Nonetheless, it also recognises that various socio-political, historical, and cultural factors can either facilitate or hinder an individual's access to these rights in practice (Armstrong and Armstrong 2019).

Teachers are at the front line of enacting inclusive education in accordance with children's rights. Their understanding ranges from knowing that inclusive education involves students with disabilities being educated alongside students without disabilities through to delivering education that supports and welcomes diversity among *all* learners (Miller et al. 2020; Mooney and Lashewicz 2015). Understanding students' learning differences and appreciating their skills and strengths (Miller et al. 2020) is extended through involvement in and communication about inclusive education to family and community members, and accessing further knowledge, expert experience, and resources. Collaborating with and building bridges to families, experts, and other people relevant to a child has been identified as a key factor in achieving inclusive education within social, educational, and health literature (Echsel et al. 2019; MacArtney and Morton 2013; Miller et al. 2020).

To understand children's and classroom staff's everyday experience of inclusive education, John Dewey's (2008) idea of classes as associated living offers valuable insights. The term associated living encompasses social spaces, collaborative practices, and communication. Dewey (2008) saw education as an agent of societal transmission of civilisation and humanity. That is, by communicating habits of doing, thinking, and feeling, ways of interacting socially are passed on from the older to the younger, preparing children to be citizens who can actively participate in democracy (Dewey 1937). Regarding this study, social change is related to inclusion of all children in regular educational settings, thus building diverse and more inclusive societies (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) 2009). Diversity in a classroom is an essential aspect of doing and being together, in that, as Dewey suggested, it enriches social spaces, collaborative practices, and communication. Classrooms are thus viewed as social

institutions wherein diverse students and classroom staff learn and problem-solve, do projects together, and act cooperatively as a community (Williams 2017).

1.1. Perspectives on how to enact inclusive education

Literature suggests principles can support implementation of inclusive education, but also reveals gaps in knowledge. A comprehensive review of 65 grey and scientific articles on organising interdisciplinary school-based support services, including rehabilitation professionals, classroom and special education teachers (Anaby et al. 2019) identified that most services target students with disabilities, and take place at school, rather than reaching out to families and communities. In addition, services are targeted towards specific diagnostic groups rather than the whole spectrum of children, risking overlooking some children and failing to recognise diversity.

Another limitation of the research to date is that outcome evaluations of services at school have been generally limited to the perspective of schools or focused on outcomes for children with medical diagnoses, neglecting outcomes for the broader school community (Hollenweger 2014; Holt, Bowlby, and Lea 2019; Messiou 2017; Somma and Bennett 2020). Anaby et al. (2019) emphasised the need for more comprehensive evaluations that include the perspectives of families and children as service users, as well as teacher and family-related outcomes. The research also reveals that current services tend to prioritise educational achievement, overlooking ‘context-related’ understandings of children’s diversity and the extent to which they engage and do things together in an inclusive education setting (Berryman and Eley 2019).

The summarised evidence suggests that contextual variables influence children’s experiences of inclusion or exclusion. Accordingly, efforts to promote inclusive education increasingly focus on children in their social context at school. Some factors identified as key for increased participation are overall flexibility in adapting learning situations and asking students for their solutions for adapting activities to do and be together with their peers (Asbjørnslett, Engelsrud, and Helseth 2015; Asbjørnslett and Hemmingsson 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere and Watkinson 2010; Woodgate et al. 2020). However, a coherent understanding of the highly contextual variables in conceptualising inclusive education and ways of collaborating to enact inclusive situations has not been achieved, despite research efforts reported across the social, educational, and health sciences. What is evident is that developing a shared understanding of inclusive practice is an ongoing process, involving collaboration of diverse stakeholders at school and recognition of their different skills and experiences (Anaby et al. 2019; Echsel et al. 2019; Missiuna et al. 2012; Mooney and Lashewicz 2015).

Recognising the need to focus on the skills and experiences of all stakeholders as they collaborate to create inclusive schooling, the approach informing this review was to view each school and its classes as an associated living unit (Dewey 2008). That is, rather than an educational or disability lens, a transactional lens was employed to call attention to the things children and adults do together, including collaborative and shared social experiences, and communication within the class and school community. Interactions amongst children, parents, classroom staff, school leaders, and therapists are contextualised within structural, environmental, and cultural components, guided this review. The review aimed to investigate inclusive education, exploring the range of stakeholder perspectives

as to the ways that people can act to influence inclusion in shared occupations. For purposes of this review, inclusion was defined from an occupational perspective as a concern with what people do together, where it happens, and its personal, social, and cultural meanings, as well as the socio-cultural, political, economic, geographic, and historical contexts that promote or inhibit such actions (Hocking 2009). The research question was: 'From an occupational perspective, what actions support and hinder inclusive education from the viewpoint of children, parents, classroom and therapy staff, and others?'

2. Methods

Scoping studies aim to explore the state of research activity (Colquhoun et al. 2017) in order to 'summarise findings from a body of knowledge that is heterogeneous in methods or discipline' and 'identify gaps in the literature to aid the planning and commissioning of future research' (Tricco et al. 2018, 467). A scoping review was appropriate to answering the research question, as bringing an occupational perspective to the literature was a novel approach. The review process was conducted methodically within a review team of three experienced researchers and the first investigator. Covidence (Veritas Health Innovation 2021), a Cochrane Collaboration tool that supports administration, was used to manage the data and review process, including a record of decisions about literature in – or exclusion. The procedure was sequenced according to the six stages outlined by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010). Stage one, establishing the research question, was outlined in the Introduction. The scoping review protocol has been published on the Open Science Framework OSF <https://osf.io/yz2ek/>.

2.1. Identifying relevant studies

Our intention to canvas perspectives on inclusive education generated by diverse research disciplines required searches across education and social sciences-oriented databases (Eric, Sage and Scopus) along with health-oriented databases (PsycInfo, MEDLINE and CINAHL). The diverse conceptualisations of inclusive education apparent within different research disciplines suggested that different ontological frameworks and research foci needed to be taken into account, which demanded multiple search terms (Schuelka et al. 2019). To establish a search string representing different experiences, pilot searches were conducted from October 2021 to January 2022. The development of search strings was discussed with and supported by the supervision team, librarians from Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and Zuerich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) universities, and two PhD student peers.

Abstracts, titles, keywords, and full-text excerpts were scanned from several articles to generate initial search terms and to understand and describe the underlying concepts. Subsequently, pilot searches on all databases and identification of relevant papers further supported the iterative development of search terms and concepts, resulting in identification of five overarching concepts, represented by specific search terms and related terms as outlined in Table 1.

To represent different perspectives, two separate searches were conducted. One included the term 'teacher perspectives' and a second search used terms for other perspectives (i.e. parents, therapists, principals, assistants). Both searches were conducted

Table 1. Search concepts and search terms.

Concept	Search term ^a	Related terms ^a
Representation of context	school	education
Specification of context	inclusive	Special, diverse
Focus on children at school	children	pupil, student, learner
Specification of children	disability	impairment, handicap
Representation of perspectives	perspective	perception, experience, meaning, voice, view, meaning

^aBoolean operators were applied for search terms in all data bases.

across all databases. Children's perspectives were represented in the concept 'focus on children at school', centred on primary school aged children. Primary schools provide a more inclusive setting where children learn most subjects together in one class. At the secondary level, some national school systems separate students into different tracks based on their learning abilities (Strello, Strietholt, and Steinmann 2022). The search was limited to peer reviewed publications. The pilot searches revealed a high discrepancy between the number of articles published in the two sections, with far fewer publications representing the perspective of children, parents, school leaders, therapists, and others. To balance this discrepancy different time limits were set for each section, with a narrower range representing teachers' perspective (2016–2022) than was applied to parents, therapists, and others (2010–2022).

2.3. Study selection

A total of 7063 study titles and abstracts were imported into Covidence, owing to the broad scope of the literature. After removing 2749 duplicates (Figure 1), the research team screened the abstracts and titles of the remaining studies in a two-step approach. In step 1, two members of the review team (AE and CS) independently screened approximately 760 article titles and abstracts against the in- and exclusion criteria. Conflicts were resolved by a third reviewer (MJ). With more clarity regarding the in- and exclusion criteria and calibration of two of the review team, in step 2 AE and CS continued screening, requiring a single vote for each study. All included studies from step 2 were reimported for a second screen. The team (AE, CS) continued to screen in pairs to further refine in- and exclusion criteria for full text reviews, resulting in 374 articles for full text review. In- and exclusion criteria regarding context and understanding of inclusion and disability perspectives were further refined during conflict resolution and discussed with the whole team, eliminating a further 348 articles. Twenty-six studies met all inclusion criteria. The following Criteria were finally established (Table 2):

2.4. Data charting and analysis

The process of data extraction (charting) and analysis occurred in two distinct phases (Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien 2010). During the initial phase, study characteristics were extracted by AE into a Microsoft Excel sheet. The categories in the spreadsheet were tested using 3 studies and approved by the review team, ensuring the significance and comprehensiveness of the extracted characteristics.

The nature of the research question suggested thematic analysis, in which scientists typically search for patterns of meaning across the data set (Braun et al. 2019). Therefore,

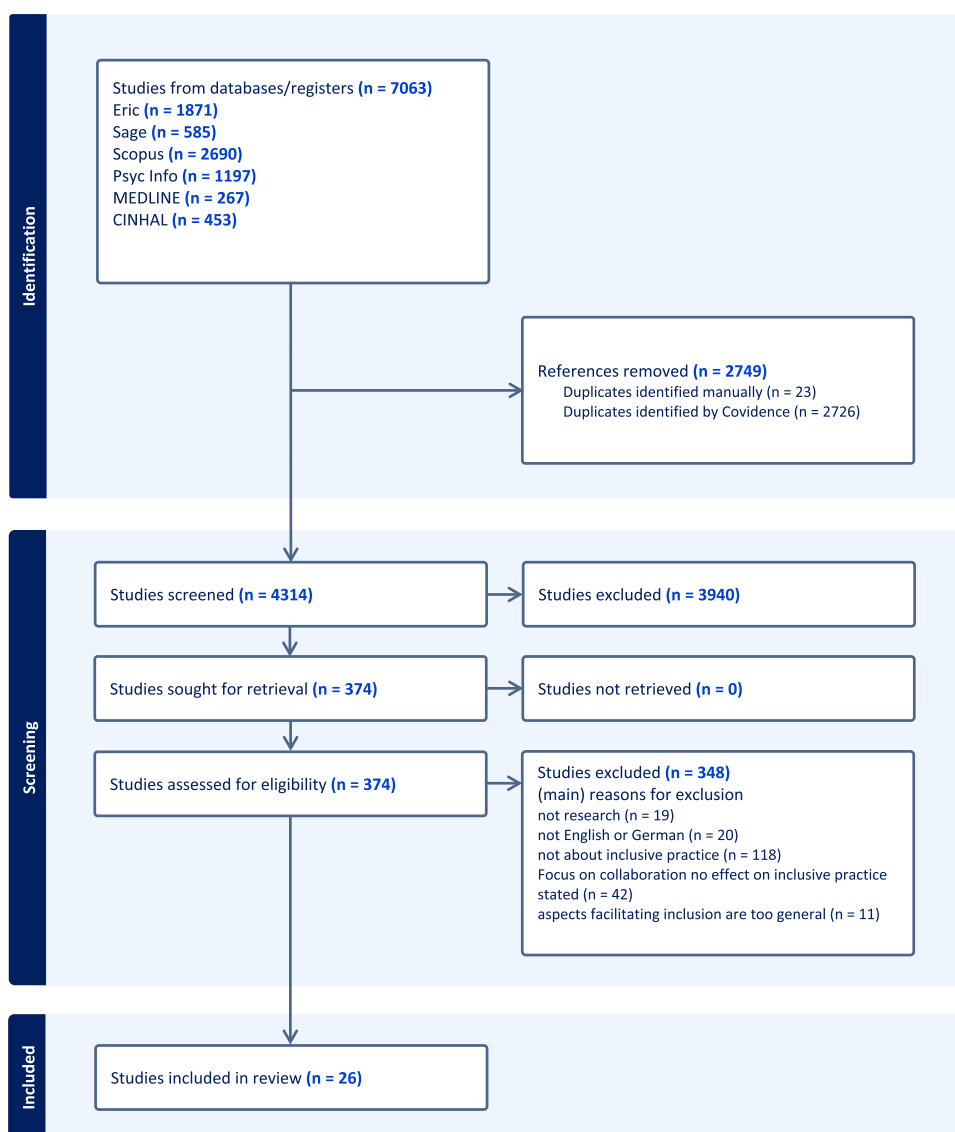


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart.

the second phase addressed the analysis of the findings and discussion in each of the 26 included articles in a process-oriented way. The analysis adhered to the systematic steps outlined by Terry and Hayfield (2021) and Braun et al. (2019) entailing: familiarisation, coding, grouping, initial theme generation, developing and reviewing themes, and naming and defining themes. The review team (AE, CS, and MJ) collaborated to code an article, refining the coding process. Atlas.ti was utilised for data organisation, coding, and code grouping. After the initial coding, the codes were grouped, and preliminary themes were developed by AE and then reviewed iteratively with the team (CH, CS, MJ). This process ultimately led to the naming and defining of the themes collectively.

Table 2. In- and exclusion criteria representing context A, inclusion B, children C, disability D, perspectives E.

3 A) In- and exclusion criteria context school	
Inclusion	Exclusion
Studies in regular or mainstream primary schools, in some countries, primary school includes kindergarten Studies at schools that are financially accessible to all children of the community (public schools) Diversity aspects Broader settings including, family, health and education, need to specifically mention inclusive practice at school Studies researching both separate and mainstream settings, if the mainstream setting is clearly visible.	Studies in special education settings separate from regular schools Studies at private schools that are not accessible to all children Studies at high schools Studies with university students Studies in early intervention contexts, On-line teaching Inclusive education theories not related to specific classroom strategies specific group of children without transfer to all children Single focus in policy School transitions Articles written in language other than English or German
3 B) In- and exclusion criteria specification on inclusion	
Inclusion	Exclusion
Studies in schools open to diverse children Described classroom strategies addressing all children Specific subject teachings such as physical education, music education when targeting inclusion, doing together and co-occupation or Focus on academic achievements to the benefit of all students Attitudes of teachers are included when enhanced inclusive practice is mentioned Student involvement in adapting teaching strategies	Studies using the term 'inclusion' in separate settings Validation studies (psychometric properties of an instrument) Focus on academic achievements
3 C) In- and exclusion criteria focus on children at school	
Inclusion	Exclusion
Articles focusing on diverse children Collaboration for inclusion among classroom staff, therapists, parents, children and others to enact inclusive practice (there can be only part of the group such as parent and classroom staff) Doings together/co-occupation among children, children and classroom staff at school (in class and on the school ground). Children aged between 4-13years (with or without disability) Wider age group: results must show specified group aged between 4-13years	Articles with a primary focus on school politics Studies focusing primarily on academic achievements of children Younger than kindergarten (toddler, early intervention) older than primary school
3 D) Specification of children: disability	
Inclusion	Exclusion
Studies with children with and without a disability being at school together Studies describing collaboration to enact inclusive situations at school Intervention studies focusing on social interaction and participation Inclusive teaching strategies are evident Diverse diagnoses with a focus on participation and social interaction	Articles with a primary focus on gender, religion, or ethnic groups Studies focusing on COVID 19 Intervention studies focusing on functional aspects Separative teaching strategies are evident Diverse diagnoses with a focus on enhancing individual functional skills
3 E) In- and exclusion criteria: perspectives	
Inclusion	Exclusion
Single or multiple, perspectives /views /experiences /perceptions of parents, children with and without disabilities, teacher, therapists, classroom assistants or principal or other in class about inclusive education and towards including a child with a disability Retrospective experience of adults with a disability (back to primary school-age)	Other stakeholders: politicians

Table 3. Perspectives represented in studies included in the review.

Perspectives reported in each article	Number	Total (n)
Single perspective		
Children	7	15
Parents	6	
Teachers	2	
Two perspectives		
Children-teacher	2	3
Teacher-SEN coordinator	1	
Three perspectives		
Children-teacher-assistant	1	4
Children-parent-personal support worker	1	
Teacher-SEN coordinator-assistant	1	
Children-teacher-assistant	1	
Four perspectives		
Parent-teacher-therapist-SEN coordinator	1	3
Parent-teacher-principal-SEN coordinator	1	
Children-parent-teacher-assistant	1	
Five perspectives		
Children-parents-teachers-principals-therapists	1	1

3. Findings

The search retrieved 7063 articles representing all targeted perspectives: 5146 articles from education and social science data bases and 1917 from health-related databases. The reduced timespan for teachers' perspectives resulted in a relatively even numbers of articles, with 48% (3382) focusing more on teacher perspectives and 52% (3681) articles representing others' perspectives. Although 'children' was a basic term used in the search, the extent to which their perspectives were represented was unclear until the full-text screening process.

3.1. Description of the included studies

Of the included studies, 25 were qualitative; the 26th used a mixed methods approach (Schwab, Wimberger, and Mamas 2019). An overview of all articles, including authors, year of publication, place of data gathering, discipline (social, health, education), method and methodology, participant sample, and perspective represented, is presented in Appendix A. Most studies were conducted in Europe ($n = 13$) followed by USA/Canada ($n = 6$); Australasia ($n = 4$); Africa ($n = 2$); and Asia/China ($n = 1$), (see Appendix 1 for specific countries).

As detailed in Table 3, the majority of the studies focused on a single perspective, a smaller number included two, three and four perspectives. Only, one study provided a comprehensive view with perspectives from children, parents, teachers, principals, and therapists (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018)

An adult perspective was more prevalent ($n = 36$), primarily the teachers, compared to the views of children aged 5–17 ($n = 13$) see Table 3 and study overviews in the Appendix representing all studies.

Of the 14 reporting children's views, five listened to children with and without disabilities, whereas nine investigated children with disabilities including autism; cognitive, sensory, and speech and language impairments; physical disabilities; and social-emotional, seizure, genetic, and unspecified SEN disorders. See Appendix 1 for details.

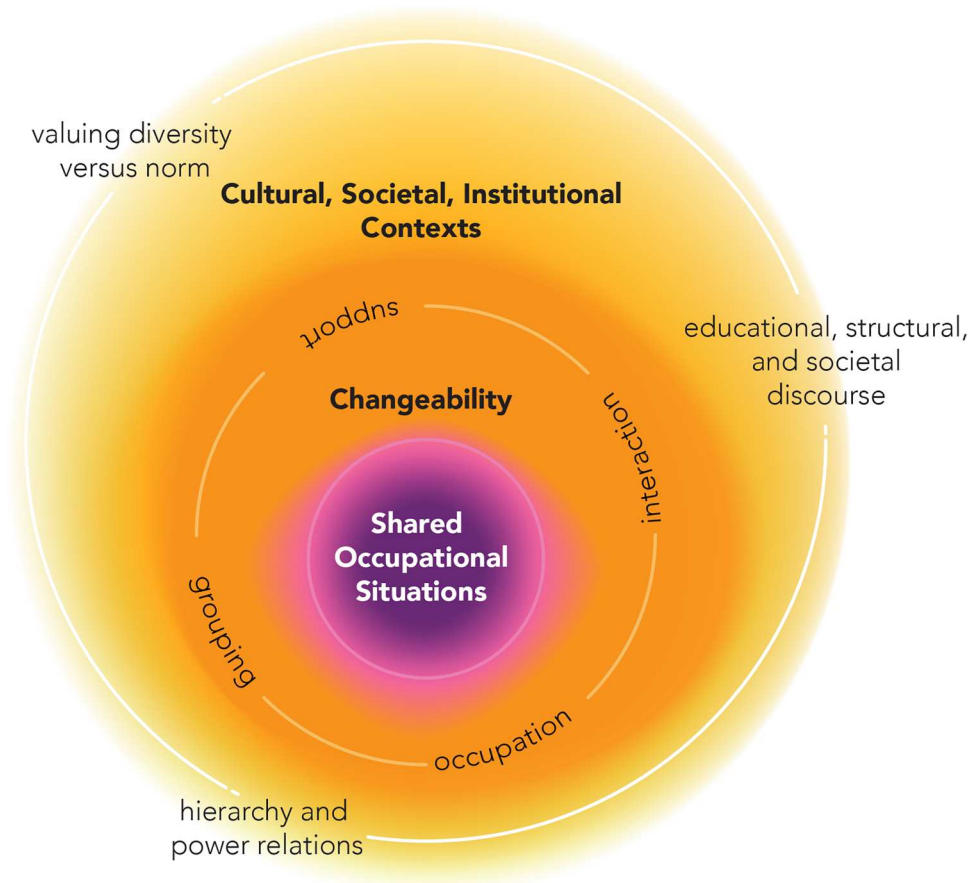


Figure 2. Visual representation of the three complementing, fluid and interdependent themes and subthemes.

One study took a retrospective approach with adult students reflecting on their school experiences (Vandenbussche and De Schauwer 2018).

3.2. Findings from the qualitative analysis

The actions that promote inclusive experiences take place in- and outside the classroom where children do things with each other (engage in occupations) in different group constellations, with and without adults. The findings revealed that ‘doing together’ at school involves doing different things; occurs at different times and places, and in different groups; and requires different skills, with these various strands coming together in the concept of ‘shared occupational situations’ (Theme 1). Those situations can be changed through actions that facilitate inclusive experience, either deliberately (planned) or as spontaneous actions that shift some aspects of a situation (unplanned) (Theme 2). Further, societal contexts shape the actions that occur in shared occupational situations in educational settings, all leading to experiences of inclusion or exclusion (Theme 3), see Figure 2 for a visual representation of the three themes.

3.2.1. Theme 1: shared occupational situations

A shared occupational situation is one in which two or more people are doing something together, such as working on a group project (Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019) or participating in team sport (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Maher 2017; Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Harrington 2011). In schools, the number of people engaged in a shared occupation ranges from two, for example a student withdrawn from the class by a remedial teacher (Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Tiernan, Casserly, and Maguire 2020; Strogilos and King-Sears 2019), to all children engaged in the same lesson (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019). Shared occupational situations come together in diverse ways. The findings within this theme are sequenced from more outcome-oriented, teacher-centred, and competitive situations, with more rules and structures, towards outcome-open, child-centred, collaborative, less structured situations that are more inclusive.

Outcome-oriented situations are exemplified by teachers delivering a lesson to children grouped at tables according to their academic abilities (Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Maher 2017; Majoko 2016), in the belief that those seated at the 'less able table' would 'quickly work out where the pecking order is' and aspire 'to move up', thus creating a situation that excludes children with special educational needs who cannot 'work at the same pace' (Efthymiou and Kington 2017, 14) or perform at the required level (Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Maher 2017). Equally, lessons that are 'mainly non-interactive/non-dialogic' with the intent of supporting academic rather than social learning can result in students with special education needs (SEND) 'not socially interact[ing] with their teacher or peers' (Efthymiou and Kington 2017, 16).

Similarly, when occupational situations such as basketball games (Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Thoren, Quennerstedt, and Maivorsdotter 2021), which divide children into teams, are run as high-performance competitive activities, only the players whose skills and efforts contribute to winning are rewarded (Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Harrington 2011; Maher 2017). Players who are less able or whose actions impede team success do not receive comparable rewards (Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Thoren, Quennerstedt, and Maivorsdotter 2021). Children who are unable to learn or perform the requisite skills engage less in competitive situations (Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Maher 2017; Thoren, Quennerstedt, and Maivorsdotter 2021), although it is unclear whether they are actively excluded by others or self-exclude (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018; Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Majoko 2016; Pereira et al. 2010; Schwab, Wimberger, and Mamas 2019; Wang and Florian 2019; Zitomer 2016). Self-exclusion likely relates to getting 'laughed at, because they cannot perform a physical task during a team game as well as their age-peers' (Maher 2017, 10). However, children with disabilities also report feeling involved in competitive situations when observing their peers (Pereira et al. 2010), which might be interpreted as inclusion.

Illustrating a more inclusive outcome, Dimitrellou and Male (2020) described a situation where students chose the topic for their group assignment. Collaboration was supported by prepared materials with structured steps that aligned with their interests and learning preferences, an approach supported by Efthymiou and Kington (2017), Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad (2019) and Zitomer (2016). Students valued that this type of child-centered group work 'gives them more ideas,' expressed joy in 'giving

ideas to others,' and 'like help[ing] each other out' (Dimitrellou and Male 2020, 6), enabling diverse contributions, positive peer relations, and inclusive experiences (Gaffney 2020).

Engaging in even less structured shared occupational situations, such as a school dance, free sport time, or arts and crafts, offers opportunities for children to interact more freely. Examples include child-facilitated recreational activities such as 'playing cards together' (Gaffney 2020) and 'being around each other and joking' (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018). Such situations are facilitated by the nature of the occupation children choose to do and the opportunities afforded by the environment (Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Majoko 2016; Mortier et al. 2010a, 2010b; Vandenbussche and De Schauwer 2018). Pereira et al. (2010, 602) stressed that children with disabilities being supported by friends during playtime can experience inclusion by 'watching others play football', 'knowing what they did' and 'supporting their best friend'.

However, within open, less structured child-centred shared occupational situations, children can face challenges: they can 'find nobody to play with at recess' (Lindsay and McPherson 2012, 6) or be exposed to bullying and exclusion (Harrington 2011), often by children unacquainted with them (Majoko 2016; Pereira et al. 2010). Children also recounted 'their peers engaged in both implicit and explicit forms of social exclusion (verbal and physical bullying)' (Lindsay and McPherson 2012, 105). Implicit social exclusion also occurs due to lack of opportunities to interact socially, such as 'kids not having a lot of time to talk to me or me to them' because of differences in their bus schedules (Lindsay and McPherson 2012, 105).

Across the articles, four components of shared occupational situations are apparent: what is being done (the lesson, sports game, playing), the way the situation is organised (child-centred, structured, outcome-oriented, competitive), who is participating (mixed ability groups of children, team members, spectators, friends, teacher aids), and how their actions (helping, giving ideas, watching, answering, bullying) support or hinder inclusive experiences. Framing shared occupations as situations brings both the human and non-human context into view, with attention given to the interaction of the human actors, transactions in spaces, resources, and actions the context affords. Theme two highlights how these shared occupational situations can be changed in ways that facilitate inclusive experiences.

3.2.2. Theme 2: changeability of shared occupational situations

The changeability of shared occupational situations refers to the extent to which aspects of a situation can be modified and the ease with which changes can be implemented. The concept of changeability emphasises the potential for transforming and adapting various elements within a given context, reflecting the capacity of a situation to undergo change and acknowledging that different factors within a situation can be shaped, influenced, adjusted, and restructured to enhance inclusive experiences.

Referring to theme one, some shared occupational situations, such as playground play, grant children the freedom to choose how they interact, what they do, and where they engage within designated playtimes. Conversely, certain situations are more regulated, like taking an exam with predetermined start and end times, along with specific tasks to engage in. Both situations can be changed to facilitate inclusive experiences. Various approaches to bring about these changes were reported in the literature.

Fifteen articles outlined that changes may be planned (deliberate) actions, perhaps with resources prepared in advance (Hummerstone and Parsons 2021; Mortier, Van Hove, and Schauwer 2010b; Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Lowrey et al. 2017; Maher 2017; Majoko 2016; Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Mortier et al. 2010a, 2010b; Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019; Pereira et al. 2010; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018; Tiernan, Casserly, and Maguire 2020; Zitomer 2016). Alternately, changes may happen more spontaneously, in response to something that happens in the moment (e.g. a child ‘gets lost’ and cannot continue the set task), as described in nine articles (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Gaffney 2020a, 2020b; Hodges et al. 2020; Lowrey et al. 2017; Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Mortier et al. 2010a, 2010b; Schwab, Wimberger, and Mamas 2019; Vandenbussche and De Schauwer 2018), or because of some feature of the context (e.g. mixed grade classrooms providing more options in how children are grouped), as emphasised by Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire (2019). These approaches to changing things to promote inclusion are organised in four clusters: occupation, grouping, support, and interaction. Again, the changeability is diverse, therefore support is not limited to children with diagnosed disabilities. Rather, it extends to various actors involved in the school setting, including classroom staff, parents, and non-disabled children as conveyed by a number of authors (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018; Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Harrington 2011; Hodges et al. 2020; Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Mortier, Van Hove, and Schauwer 2010b; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018; Pereira et al. 2010).

Ways in which changing the occupation facilitates in – or exclusion: The changeability of occupations is threefold: adapting occupations or equipment (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018; Maher 2017; Pereira et al. 2010; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018; Thoren, Quennerstedt, and Maivorsdotter 2021); focusing on different roles (Pereira et al. 2010); and thinking differently about occupation (Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018). Adapting occupations might mean adapting the speed of movement (walking instead of running) (Maher 2017; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018), equipment, such as a different ball (Thoren, Quennerstedt, and Maivorsdotter 2021), or the provision of communication aids, to strengthen children’s engagement (Hodges et al. 2020; Pereira et al. 2010). Teachers described that ‘creativity and time [were] required to plan and collaborate with others’ or to ‘modify activities, for a student with CP’ (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018, 160). Shared occupational situations are changeable when allocating roles to children according to their diverse skills. For example, soccer games provide skilled roles as a player, goalkeeper, coach, referee, observer, water person. Children contribute according to their abilities: ‘The teacher calls me and asks me to be the referee in the game. I have to concentrate very hard ... I like to be the referee’ (Pereira et al. 2010, 602).

Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald (2018) proposed a fundamentally different approach, moving away from common characterisation of Physical Education (PE) as competitive and requiring specific skills such as running fast or jumping high, by taking the stance of people being active. This mindset opened

students’ awareness of the scope of being active, facilitating their sensitivity to diversity. ... that by doing it this way they would start to see how TPM skills (thinking, people and movement) cross over into many different activities, ... having transferable skills to making connections with familiar skills, for example, students who recognised that bowling, cricket, and

fishing all were linked to including principles relating to aiming and being accurate. (Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018)

Further, students individually self-directed their skill acquisition to activities they chose to learn. This brought a shift towards learning and improving skills required for an activity, thus ‘reducing the anxiety associated with demonstrating their ability, or lack of, in front of the entire class’ (Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018, 353). The three dimensions of the changeability of occupations demonstrate that, through deliberate reflections, shared occupational situations can be transformed to promote inclusive experiences.

How grouping can facilitate experiences of in – or exclusion: One common educational strategy groups children by academic ability, putting lower-performing children together (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Efthymiou and Kington 2017). Placing less able children at separate tables or having them leave the classroom with a special education teacher or assistant can hamper interactions with other students, stigmatising and marginalising them (Efthymiou and Kington 2017). However, in some situations, children with disabilities experience success working at their competence level in ability groups (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019), highlighting diverse preferences among students.

Mixed-ability groups are more often used for more creative shared occupational situations, such as art and drama (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Strogilos and King-Sears 2019; Vandembussche and De Schauwer 2018; Zitomer 2016), but less in science (M Gaffney 2020). Situations in multi-grade classrooms, naturally incorporate diverse abilities within a single classroom setting, providing classroom-staff greater flexibility to organise shared occupational situations to meet children’s needs effectively, benefiting them academically and socially. Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire (2019) illustrated this, recounting ‘having a younger child who can work with an older group ... or an older child working with a younger group ability wise, but it’s [differences are] not so noticeable’ (624). In general, employing flexible and intentional grouping capitalises on the heterogeneity in a classroom, supporting inclusion (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Tiernan, Casserly, and Maguire 2020).

How support can facilitate experiences of in – or exclusion: Support is a highly flexible way of modifying shared occupational situations (all articles). However, before support is provided, children want others to gain a profound understanding of their challenges and strengths (Hummerstone and Parsons 2021; Mortier et al. 2010a; Mortier, Van Hove, and Schauwer 2010b). Adequate support is characterised by the amount and nature of support given and how it is tailored to meet children’s differences in specific learning situations (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018; Hummerstone and Parsons 2021; Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Mortier, Van Hove, and Schauwer 2010b). Support can also be provided through collaborations among teachers, assistants, children, parents, therapists, and other experts. That implies ‘people having to know what’s going on ... also there’s the expertise of being able to go to someone like Cerebral Palsy Education Centre and say, ‘Look, we’re having difficulties. What do you reckon?’” (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018, 161).

Providing the right level and kind of support requires collaboration, pooling resources, and leveraging diverse perspectives and expertise (Dimitrellou and Male

2020; Hummerstone and Parsons 2021; Lowrey et al. 2017; Maher 2017; Scorgie 2015; Thoren, Quennerstedt, and Maivorsdotter 2021). Collaboration among all those engaged in school activities engenders a more comprehensive understanding of children's individual learning, enabling knowledge sharing, strategies, and resources to more effectively address diverse learning. In addition, children experience situations as more inclusive when receiving support from their peers (Gaffney 2020; Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Pereira et al. 2010), 'in the playground I can do everything ... or almost everything, but my friends help me with the things I can't do' (Pereira et al. 2010, 60).

Consistent, accountable, and equitable classroom staff attending to the needs of all children promotes inclusion (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Harrington 2011; Hodges et al. 2020; Schwab, Wimberger, and Mamas 2019; Strogilos and King-Sears 2019), suggesting that specific types of support are particularly effective in fostering inclusive experiences. Further, children generally wish to contribute to finding solutions (Pereira et al. 2010), developing strategies (Lowrey et al. 2017) in keeping with their competences.

How interaction can facilitate experiences of in – or exclusion: Positive changes occur when teachers, children, and others recognise a child's struggle to showcase their full potential and draw on their tacit knowledge and creative improvisation (Lowrey et al. 2017; Mortier et al. 2010a; Mortier, Van Hove, and Schauwer 2010b; Schwab, Wimberger, and Mamas 2019; Zitomer 2016). Inclusive outcomes are enhanced by remaining attentive and alert to seizing opportunities to adapt and negotiate shared occupational situations in the moment, such as a teacher 'whispering' the solution in the ear of a memory-impaired child (Gaffney 2020, 470), thus respecting the child's dignity while providing the necessary support for the child to engage in the situation.

Having diverse children in a class supports acquisition of competencies contributing to inclusive practices (De Schauwer et al. 2009; Mortier et al. 2010a, 2010b; Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018; Zitomer 2016). For instance, in a classroom with a hearing-impaired child, peers stepped in to use sign language with a non-signing teacher, thus playing a significant role in promoting inclusive experiences for both their classmate and the teacher. Further, children were observed to spontaneously adapt 'the rules of the game to include their peers with physical limitations' (Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019, 11). These examples show that children and classroom staff make on-the-spot decisions to act in ways that facilitate inclusion.

Teachers can also invite children to be active partners in creating inclusive situations through collaborative problem-solving, learning how to think as a class, and engaging all students (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018; Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Mortier et al. 2010a; Mortier, Van Hove, and Schauwer 2010b; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018; Vandembussche and De Schauwer 2018; Zitomer 2016). For example, teachers might shift from 'always had to have something ready and the students with disabilities were off to the side, 'here's an activity for them, they are going to be here, and here's a box for them' to 'children in class being involved in the activities and in the right way. So, I think modifying less but allowing the kids [in the class] to adapt it for them' (Morrison and Gleddie 2021, 452).

Classroom staff often feel inadequately prepared for the diversity of children and their associated diagnoses (Hodges et al. 2020; Hummerstone and Parsons 2021; Morrison and

Gleddie 2021), with uncertainty about children's competencies and potential undermining their confidence in responding to barriers (Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Hodges et al. 2020; Hummerstone and Parsons 2021; Lowrey et al. 2017; Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018; Wang and Florian 2019). Further, classroom staff feeling sorry for children lowers expectations of their performance (Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Schwab, Wimberger, and Mamas 2019). Children desire equal treatment (Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Schwab, Wimberger, and Mamas 2019) but suffer when pushed beyond their capabilities (Hodges et al. 2020). Disrespecting their abilities and laughing at mistakes fosters bullying and experiences of exclusion (M Gaffney 2020; Maher 2017; Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019).

3.2.3. Theme 3: aspects of societal contexts shaping shared occupational situations

This theme captures the beliefs, attitudes, practices, rules, policies, legislation, and so on that influence shared occupational situations. For example, shared occupational situations are directly influenced by how children and classroom staff interact (Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Mortier et al. 2010a, 2010b), or having children with mixed abilities in the same class (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019). These aspects reflect a situation where, from a societal perspective, individual academic achievement is valued over collaboration and where the notion of 'winners and losers' is normalised (Efthymiou and Kington 2017, 14).

Valuing diversity versus norms: Normative standards and approaches in teaching can result in subtle forms of exclusion and othering in the classroom, with children with disabilities perceived as different from the majority of children and expected to adjust to their peers' levels of performance (Hummerstone and Parsons 2021; Maher 2017; Majoko 2016). This can create significant challenges, with children with disabilities experiencing 'a lot of pressure', and reporting 'it is kind of too hard' (Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019, 10) to keep up with the speed, quality, or amount of work others produce. Conformity to normative standards discourages children with disabilities from contributing to shared occupational situations when their efforts are diminished (Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Hodges et al. 2020; Lindsay and McPherson 2012; Scorgie 2015; Tiernan, Casserly, and Maguire 2020). In addition, 'skills-driven, success-oriented' and competitive values in teaching hinder 'participation-oriented, co-operative learning' where children can 'learn leadership' (Morrison and Gleddie 2021, 452), and develop a supportive peer culture to facilitate inclusive experiences in shared occupational situations (Morrison and Gleddie 2021; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018). In contrast, by fostering collaboration, schools can create environments or situations that require diverse contributions, encouraging students to collaborate and support each other (Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Gaffney 2020), thus promoting inclusive experiences for all learners (Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019; Wang and Florian 2019; Zitomer 2016).

Hierarchy and power relation: The act of categorising children based on their disabilities creates divisions among learners (Schwab, Wimberger, and Mamas 2019) and reinforces hierarchies, leading to stigmatisation and marginalisation of specific

individuals or groups (Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Scorgie 2015). School cultures underpinned by concepts of superiority and inferiority give some children a greater status than others, increasing the risk of patronising behaviours (Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Maher 2017; Scorgie 2015). This happens subtly, when classroom staff focus on high achievers while singling out children who are less capable. Children with disabilities have reported feeling nervous and upset in situations where peers think they are better than them (Dimitrellou and Male 2020).

Perceptions of superiority and inferiority also apply to adults. For instance, children perceive hierarchy among classroom staff and attribute classroom teachers more power than special education teachers or class assistants (Maher 2017; Strogilos and King-Sears 2019). Hodges et al. (2020) found that parents, too, were aware of a school culture being a social construct, as parents of typically developing students had negative attitudes towards students with disabilities, including concerns that their children were being negatively influenced or were receiving less support from teachers. They have been found to oppose implementing whole class strategies unless their child directly benefits, adding pressure to rationalise curriculum adjustments (Hodges et al. 2020). Further, placing conditions on a child's participation reinforces a sense of hierarchy, where certain individuals are considered more deserving or suitable for inclusion. The resultant conditionality of attendance in regular classes makes children with disabilities and their families vulnerable to exclusion (Vandenbussche and De Schauwer 2018).

In contrast, schools promoting diversity can create inclusive and supportive environments where all are welcomed, respected, and valued (Hodges et al. 2020; Hummerstone and Parsons 2021), by designing education for learner variability 'to hit all children in every way', although that 'can be tricky to navigate' (Lowrey et al. 2017, 230). Flexible organisation has been found to facilitate awareness of diversity amongst classroom staff (Efthymiou and Kington 2017), so they work with variability in instructing and teaching to support all children's learning (Lowrey et al. 2017; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018). Efthymiou and Kington (2017) and Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald (2018) have shown that student-centred approaches that address diverse children's learning abilities can facilitate safe and non-discriminatory school environments.

Educational structures and societal discourse: Structurally, education systems often have curricula and instructional materials designed for typically developing children and lack accommodations supporting the educational progress of all children (Bourke-Taylor et al. 2018; Casserly, Tiernan, and Maguire 2019; Dimitrellou and Male 2020; Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Michael Gaffney 2020; Hodges et al. 2020; Lowrey et al. 2017; Maher 2017; Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019). Consequently, 'access to the curriculum remains out of reach' for many learners (Mukhopadhyay, Mangope, and Moorad 2019, 13), creating a mismatch between the requirements of the curriculum and meeting all children's abilities. Additionally, standardised national or provincial exams may not adequately accommodate the diverse abilities of learners (Efthymiou and Kington 2017; Hodges et al. 2020; Lowrey et al. 2017; Petrie, Devcich, and Fitzgerald 2018). They often fail to consider the unique needs and strengths of children with disabilities, resulting in unfair evaluations and further marginalisation. Characteristics such as disability, gender, and ethnicity make segregation and marginalisation more likely (Scorgie 2015).

Resolving these barriers means challenging preconceived notions and assumptions about disabilities, actively promoting equal opportunities, and recognising and valuing all children's contributions (Vandenbussche and De Schauwer 2018). This debate is framed as: 'full participation does not seem a matter of individual responsibility, but it is linked to the structures and discourses in society' (Vandenbussche and De Schauwer 2018, 974). Such an open discourse in society supports diversity being visible, 'incorporate[s] democratic thinking,' and emphasises human-centred values 'supporting academic, social and personal advancement of students' (Efthymiou and Kington 2017, 18).

Children and adults co-create experiences of inclusion by engaging in shared occupational situations situated in temporal, cultural, socio-political, and institutional contexts. Ways of children engaging with each other in shared occupational situations (theme one) and the changeability of situations to facilitate inclusive experiences (theme two) are agents in promoting inclusive experiences. However, as schools are part of society, societal influences on learning and the way these influences shape experiences of inclusion has been described in theme three. The three themes complement each other and are fluid and interdependent.

4. Discussion

This scoping review investigated inclusive education from an occupational perspective, including the views of children, classroom staff, parents, and others (e.g. principals, therapists). It found that despite the abundance of research worldwide addressing inclusive practice, researchers often overlook the dynamic nature of learning situations (theme 1) and how they might be changed to transform shared occupational situations (theme 2) into more inclusive experiences for diverse learners (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2014; Hollenweger 2018; Naraian 2016). However, drawing on international literature representing diverse viewpoints (Appendix 1), disabilities, and ways of doing together at schools the findings suggest a shift from a dualistic inclusion/exclusion perspective to a more nuanced understanding of inclusive and exclusive experiences. In emphasising that human doing is always shaped by the societal environment over time (theme 3), the findings align with Dewey's (2008) pragmatic philosophy, in which people are understood to engage in shared occupational situations, reciprocally transacting with the environment to shape each other's experiences, the environment, and our world.

Theme one elucidated the notion of shared occupational situations and how they create in- or exclusive experiences through the occupations themselves, how they are organised, who participates, and people's actions. Theme two, the concept of changeability, underscores the capacity to reshape, influence, adapt, and restructure shared occupational situations to enhance inclusive experiences for diverse learners. The third theme captures the impact of beliefs, attitudes, practices, rules, guidelines, policies, and legal frameworks represented in societal factors on shared occupational situations. This can encompass educational practices, schools' approaches to embracing diverse children or adhering to particular norms for admissions, or the integration of rights-based principles (UNCRPD, UNCRC) aimed at building inclusive societies and lived diversity in communities and schools.

Considering shared occupational situations in terms of what activities are chosen, how they are organised, who engages, where and when they happen, and how they can be changed provides opportunities to purposefully design inclusive experiences in education settings. This shift transitions from mere theory to the realm of tangible opportunities to create inclusive practices that, as Dewey (2008) proposed, embrace diversity and involve children and adults doing things together in order to learn with and from each other. That aligns with current global and educational developments towards inclusion, which require schools to embrace all diversity dimensions, inclusive of disability or special educational needs, giftedness, culture, nationality, migrant status, gender, sexual orientation and so on, of both children and adults, within a single classroom (Cerna et al. 2021; Messiou et al. 2022).

The recommendations of the European Agency for Special Need Education align with the notion of shared occupational situations by proposing ‘spaces’ providing ‘opportunities for learners to discover talents in a range of areas beyond academic learning’ (Agency for Special Needs & Education 2018, 13). However, the recommendations lack clarity on the practical doing and interactions within these spaces, as well as how the organisation of educational activities could be tailored to accommodate children’s varying learning capacities (Hollenweger 2018). The findings of this review also align with Loreman, Forlin, and Sharma’s (2014) assessment framework, derived from international literature, for effective inclusive education. It differentiates inputs, processes, and outcomes. Their classroom and school practices and ‘experiences of inclusion’ closely relate to shared occupational situations and aspects identified as changeable, including teaching methods and approaches, classroom resources, ‘collaboration and shared responsibility’ and ‘support to individuals’ (175).

Research worldwide is resourceful in presenting strategies towards inclusive practice, for specific diagnoses and groups, progressing to meet multi-dimensions of diversity. However, these strategies often overlook the dynamic nature of learning situations and their changeability in transforming shared occupational situations in facilitating inclusive experiences for diverse learners. By starting with the needs and interests of all learners more learner-led approaches will evolve (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2014; Hollenweger 2018; Naraian 2016).

5. Conclusion

Inclusive education is commonly recognised as a process of promoting reform in educational culture, policy, and practice in order to eliminate barriers to education for all children (Bacon 2019). The complexity of that endeavour prompted Felder (2022) to characterise ‘inclusion as an objective that can never be fully achieved, with the result that it always remains an open-ended, context-bound, and contingent state or process’ (155). What is clear from the literature is that inclusive education is co-created in specific situations by children, parents, teachers, and other staff.

This study embraced robust democratic principles derived from Dewey’s educational vision, whereby children’s experience of inclusive education is one of ‘learning to live with one another’ (Barton 1997, 234; Young 2000). By incorporating the various perspectives of children, parents, classroom staff, therapists, and school leaders, the study revealed tangible possibilities for co-creating inclusive practice in diverse social and

educational contexts. Those possibilities are encompassed within the key concepts generated from analysis of the literature; fostering inclusion by capitalising on the changeability of the shared occupational situations that teachers, parents, children, and others co-create inclusive experiences in regular schools.

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