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To cite this article: Trevor McCandless, Tim Corcoran & Ben Whitburn (31 Oct 2023): Normative power in higher education: the ghost of inherent requirements, International Journal of Inclusive Education, DOI: [10.1080/13603116.2023.2274115](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2274115)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2274115>



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Published online: 31 Oct 2023.



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Normative power in higher education: the ghost of inherent requirements

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of two surveys that were conducted in an Australian university's School of Education, investigating how students and staff understood the inherent requirements of their courses. The survey results highlight that despite there being no explicit written inherent requirement statements for these courses both staff and students believed they had a deep understanding of the nature and potential effects of inherent requirements. The longer the students and staff were connected with the School, the more likely they were to feel aware of the culturally structured inherent requirements of these courses. Overwhelmingly, staff and students drew upon a hegemonic doxa that normalised exclusion on the basis of the assumed limitations of individual students or potential course applicants. The authors propose a shift in policy and practice from inherency focused on the assumed student deficits towards coherency premised on the teacher workforce, better resembling the intent of inclusion of education and of society more generally.

ARTICLE HISTORY



Received 11 May 2023
Accepted 17 October 2023

KEYWORDS

Inclusive education; inherent requirements; teacher education; doxa; normative power

Introduction

Many university providers of initial teacher education in Australia provide explicit statements of the inherent requirements that must be met to enrol in their courses leading to a university degree (Brett et al. 2016). While these inherent requirements are often explicitly stated in handbooks available to students prior to enrolling, how they are understood by staff and students can remain implicit prior to enrolment, while continuing to impact how they understand their course before, during and post-graduation. In 2021, the School of Education in an Australian university conducted two surveys to gauge how inherent requirements, as understood by staff and students, impacted access to their courses and how they are taught. In particular, these surveys tested how inherent requirements were understood to impact students with disabilities or related conditions (SwD) at enrolment, in their ability to complete their courses, and if SwDs

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were likely to gain employment as teachers following graduation. (SwD is defined in the relevant legislation as referring to those with physical, intellectual, mental and medical impairments, including conditions that result in a person learning differently.) At the time, the university surveyed did not provide such written statements detailing the inherent requirements of their teacher education courses. The surveys were conducted to inform the development of such a set of relevant statements to be inclusive of all students, with the intent of diversifying the teacher workforce.

Inherent requirements are not merely written texts. Instead, inherent requirements manifest socially conditioned attitudes and behaviours that can only be fully understood from within the society that creates them (Corcoran 2023). The surveys demonstrate that the majority of participants (both staff and students) not only assumed that the School of Education had explicitly documented inherent requirements, but also that respondents understood the content of these ‘documents’, including the limitations these imposed upon the staff, students and potential students of these courses. Some students went so far as to explain the measures they had taken to avoid the exclusions they believed were detailed in these inherent requirement statements, particularly in choosing to not disclose their own disabilities or related conditions. That is, they not only believed written texts existed, but that they understood and had acted upon the content and intent of these texts.

Too often inherent requirements are reduced to definitions of physical, affective or mental deficits of the individual students applying or enrolling for courses, which leads to further complicated and exclusionary implications for SwD (Corcoran, Whitburn, and McCandless 2022b). This paper positions the medicalisation of the capabilities of SwD as unwarranted, recognising that medicalisation is an inevitable consequence of understanding teaching as an individual pursuit of ‘the able’ (Whitburn & Corcoran 2021). Unfortunately, ‘the able’ is an extremely exclusionary concept in Australian teacher education as it only includes those in the top 20–30% of the community in terms of academic ability (QITER 2021; TEMAG 2015), even before the application of the further exclusions proposed in inherent requirement statements.

The paper uses the term *hegemonic doxa* to refer to the taken-for-granted, unacknowledged and unscrutinised beliefs that inform decisions on who does or does not meet the inherent requirements of higher education courses. *Hegemony* (Gramsci 1971) highlights the power relationships implicit behind certain ideas, while *doxa* stresses the taken-for-granted, naturalisation of these ideas. Bauman (2007) defines doxa as ‘assumptions people think with though seldom if ever about’ (64). The paper highlights how staff and student responses to two surveys show the power of hegemonic doxa and the paradoxes this produces that undermine the sustainability of the teaching profession itself. It proposes coherency as a reappraisal of this hegemonic doxa. Coherency understands teaching to be situated within a community of practice, that is, a team of professionals seeking solutions to the pedagogical challenges they face and where each professional teacher empowers the teaching and learning environment for everyone involved. The concept of hegemonic doxa will be further defined in the next section. This will be followed by a section discussing the nature of inherent requirement statements and then a section on the paradoxes such statements impose. The paper then presents an analysis of the surveys of staff and students illuminating the implicit exclusionary nature of incoherency held by both, before proposing coherency as an alternative.

Hegemonic doxa

Social theories seek to explain how systems of domination naturalise and normalise power imbalances. Such explanatory theories include those of Gramsci's (1971) conception of hegemony, Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) symbolic violence, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) theories of lines of flight, and Foucault's (1980) Power/knowledge. Bourdieu (2014) expressed a concern central to this paper by his use of term 'Doxa', which he defined as:

Doxa is answering 'yes' to a question I have not asked ... The dominant are generally silent, they do not have a philosophy, a discourse. They only begin to have one when they are rankled, when people say to them: 'Why are you like you are?' They are obliged then to establish as orthodoxy, as an explicitly conservative discourse, what had previously been maintained below the level of discourse in the mode of 'taken-for-granted'. (184)

If there is a requirement to define what is normal and what is not, this fact alone takes away from the hegemonic power of the doxa, since it implies the need for justification. What is understood as 'normal' can even be, paradoxically, an exceptional outlier. As Goffman points out in *Stigma* (1986):

... in an important sense there is only one complete unblemished male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports. (128)

This unblemished male is understood by the hegemonic doxa to be 'normal' but is exceptional – males with this series of characteristics have never constituted more than a tiny proportion of the population.

Inherent requirements block access and therefore act to protect already existing power relationships against the possibility of change. Stenner (2017) defines liminality as 'experiences that happen during occasions of significant transition, passage or disruption' (14), or as a moment of possibilities. The inherent requirements of a course of study are the opposite of a liminal space. Inherent requirements act as a boundary, rigorously defended to avoid those considered undeserving from gaining entry (Corcoran, Whitburn, and Knight 2022a). Evidently, they operate on the level of the taken-for-granted to reinforce existing power, that is, as a hegemonic doxa.

Rather than inherent requirements being based on an objective and rational assessment of the minimum needs a person must hold to meet the demands of a career (such as teaching), they reify cultural stereotypes and ableist notions of what it is to be normal. What is taken to be normal is not the average person, but rather has been culturally defined to exclude the vast majority of the population. The notion of inherency is so tainted by this hegemonic doxa that the concept itself must be called to account and replaced by one of contingency – that is, a movement away from a conceptualisation of what it means to be a teacher defined as an isolated, self-realising individual, towards one where all members of the profession prove to be contingent while operating within a mutually enabling community of practice. We return to this point later in the discussion.

Inherent requirements

Inherent requirements are an increasing feature of university course guidebooks, despite universities' capacity to provide students with reasonable adjustments to meet the

demands of their courses remaining ambiguous at best (Brett et al. 2016). While the denotative meaning of inherent requirements focuses upon the needs of the course or of the profession that the course is understood to prepare the potential student for, invariably, inherency shifts the focus away from the profession to define deficits as embodied in individuals, particularly deficits understood as excluding students from these courses. Inherency set limits to course entry that are often medically defined and understood as being capable of being objectively measured. As such, these measures are presented as immutable and incontestable (see Brett et al. 2016). In general terms, these requirements are constructed to imply that the needs of both the course and the profession are the excluding agents acting to protect academic integrity. Those excluded are constructed as being without agency (Allan 2003), since it is their embodied deficits that necessitate exclusion. That is, to fail to meet one or more of the inherent requirements associated with a course, defined within the statements themselves as objectively measurable, medicalised attributes (Pitman, Brett, and Ellis 2021), is to have no ability to gain entry to the course and no recourse to appeal. Being excluded due to not meeting the inherent requirements of the course is then presented as having been saved from pursuing a path that was never objectively open to the applicant (Johnston et al. 2016).

This means that inherent requirements actively stand in a contradictory relationship with other policies, including reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act (Parliament of Australia 1992), which are intended to facilitate the inclusion of SwD. Where inclusive policies place the onus upon tertiary institutions to find means to broaden student participation, inherent requirements present minimum standards students must meet regardless of their own circumstance or situation (see UWA, n.d.). As such, students who feel they do not meet any of these requirements are unlikely to apply, since these inherent requirements appear to already define their incapacity. This shift in onus from the university (as required to provide reasonable adjustments to facilitate inclusion) to the student undermines the intent of legally mandated anti-discrimination requirements (Parliament of Australia 1992). As such, potential students are provided two options: self-exclusion, or to risk applying for the course while not disclosing a disability or related condition. This second option would require them to complete their course without the support of reasonable adjustments otherwise available to them.

The paradoxes of inherency

Inherent requirements snare initial teacher education courses in a series of paradoxes (Corcoran, Claiborne, and Whitburn 2019). A recent issues paper on *Teacher Workforce Shortages* (Australian Government 2022) states that, 'A common concern about the teacher workforce is whether it reflects the diversity of the school student population' (9). And yet, inherent requirement statements frequently provide extensive lists of fixed abilities (i.e. sensory acuity, fine and gross motor skills, self-regulation and so on) that are defined as immutable, irredeemable and non-negotiable factors designed to automatically exclude people from applying to enter an initial teacher education degree. This definitional exclusion based on a single attribute without regard to the other skills and abilities of the person holding this attribute, or the technological assistance available to them, or what they can achieve with the support of their fellow teachers,

or indeed the benefits someone with such attributes could bring to the teaching profession, is then used to define the limits of inclusion. This form of definitional exclusion is constructed using ‘expert opinion’ deemed objective (e.g. psychological assessments), and this objectivity then allows these limits to be applied without reference to those who experience these attributes within their daily life. As such, while stated policy is to broaden participation, inherent requirements work to exclude without a right of appeal.

Perhaps ironically or contrary to intent, inherent requirements can lead SwD to avoid disclosing their disabilities and related conditions. Disclosure is impacted by cultural factors (Clark, Wilkinson, and Kusevskis-Hayes 2018), not least, as will be discussed later, the ever-present threat of being defined by one’s disability. However, if the only pathway into a course is to hide one’s disability, this also excludes the possibility of gaining access to legally mandated reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act (Parliament of Australian 1992). In this sense, inherent requirements, which in themselves have no legal status (Brett et al. 2016), effectively nullify the legal obligations of tertiary institutions under the Disability Discrimination Act, reversing the onus of responsibility from the institution to the student – from the collective to the individual.

The underlying hegemonic doxa of inherency is that individual teachers must be resilient, self-actualising and ‘classroom ready’, and these requirements are the declared foundation of educational policy documents in Australia with their focus upon improving initial teacher education (QITER 2021; TEMAG 2015). This form of inherency focuses exclusively upon the presumed deficits of individual teachers, assuming that more resilient individuals would be able to meet the demands of what is otherwise acknowledged as a profession in crisis (Gallant and Riley 2017; Holloway 2022). Further, while inherent requirement policies set a series of minimum standards individuals are required to meet if they are to gain admittance to initial teacher education courses, actual government policy constantly reiterates that ‘average’ is simply not good enough (see for example AITSL 2023).

There has been an historical obsession with the presumed low academic ability of Australia’s teaching workforce. The notion that it is teachers with low academic ability who are the cause of poor student outcomes has been a frequent refrain across Australian politics. For instance, in 2022, the acting Federal Education Minister declared at an independent schools’ conference:

“So for your school you just don’t have them – you don’t have the bottom 10% of teachers dragging the chain,” he said. “But for every teacher you don’t have in your organisation, guess where they go?”. (Karp 2022)

No teacher in Australia is able to graduate without passing the *Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education Students* (LANTITES), a test imposed on initial teacher education courses by a previous Labor government. This test is an inherent requirement to enter the profession, and one that sets the literacy and numeracy benchmark for admittance to within the top 30% of all the adult population of Australia (AITSL 2023). Despite this test being mandated by the government and created by them to ensure that only the most literate and numerate Australians can ever become teachers, the immediate past acting Federal Education Minister was quoted in another newspaper as saying that:

... his 12-year-old son had been able to answer some of the maths questions that 10 per cent of university graduates got wrong. “I was reading out example questions to our sons at the weekend and my boys were answering them.” (Bita 2022)

Rather than constructing potential teachers as those with abilities above a predetermined minimum as set by inherent requirement measures, often these requirements are based upon candidates being ‘more than normal’ in much the same way Goffman defined his ‘unblemished male’.

Teachers have not only been defined as barely literate and numerate, they are also seen as the main reason for falling standards. This narrative dominates how teachers are represented in the press (Mockler 2022) and has led to a shortfall of teachers in classrooms, with 59% of currently employed teachers indicating they ‘intend to leave the profession’ (Holloway 2022). This situation exists within the context of there being no definitive means to measure the actual rates of teacher attrition, particularly of early career teachers (Weldon 2018), with even the best-informed estimates, such as those by the Queensland College of Teachers, providing estimates of between 8 to 50% – a range so broad as to be useless (AITSL 2017). While there is some evidence that the factors pushing teachers out of the profession are linked to the undermining of professional teacher identity caused by neoliberal public management techniques (Gallant and Riley 2017), the response to teacher shortages and ‘declining standards’ has frequently been to fund small, teacher recruitment organisations who promote themselves on their ability to attract ‘high-achieving’ students, often with STEM qualifications, into the profession – even if for only a short time (dondolo partners 2017; QITER 2021).

These deficit constructions of teachers are anything but conducive to encouraging SwD into the profession. Rather, the current discourse is one that is outspoken in its preferencing and privileging of the ‘more-than-able’ into the profession, while seeking to exclude anyone who does not match this increasingly narrowing definition of what a good teacher should be. The current federal Labor government, while still in opposition, proposed that high school students in the top 20% by ability (as measured by the Australian Tertiary Admission Score – ATAR) would be paid up to \$48,000 to study teaching (Maiden 2022). This has since become a policy to provide ‘5,000 bursaries worth up to \$40,000 to help attract high quality candidates into the teaching profession’ (Education Ministers Meeting 2022, 9). As Harvey et al. (2016) point out, ‘there is a substantial body of evidence showing that the ATAR is closely correlated with socio-economic status’ (31). Effectively, this makes the Labor policy one that privileges the already privileged, since, while almost 17% of students from the top SES quartile achieve an ATAR of 80 or above, only 3% of those in the bottom quartile do. The proportion of students from the highest quartile who achieve an ATAR of 80 or above is almost equal to all students from the lowest quartile who achieve an ATAR at all (Manny 2020). That is, the current Labor Party policy is one of middle-class welfare at the expense of low SES students and SwD who have been similarly shown to struggle to achieve the highest ATAR scores (Pitman 2022, 31).

Ambiguity exists about how inherent requirements are developed since becoming registered to teach is done by a registering body at arm’s length from Schools of Education (Brett et al. 2016), something noted in a further paper on this topic which shows most staff believed this to be the case (Corcoran et al., [under review](#)). While

there is limited contact between the registering bodies and initial teacher education providers, it falls upon the ITE courses themselves to ensure that their graduates qualify to teach. This situation involves another silence, where the assumed purely vocational nature of an education degree leading directly into a classroom implies graduates will want to register as teachers upon completion of their degree. However, for a large proportion of ITE course graduates this is simply not the case (Weldon 2018). This situation also implies that what are understood to be the registering body's preferences – whether they hold these preferences or not – influence the inherent requirements to enter an ITE course. However, since the bodies responsible for registering teachers and those providing ITE courses do not jointly set these requirements, ITE courses are forced to second guess the registering bodies actual requirements. As we will discuss later, too often this process of second guessing reflects the hegemonic doxa that defines some as normal and others as deficit.

The surveys

In 2021, two surveys were undertaken, one of staff and another of students, to understand what these groups believed were the inherent requirements of the Education degrees offered in an Australian School of Education. As mentioned, this was within a context of the School not having written inherent requirement statements. At the time, the School was considering how to construct inherent requirement statements for its courses, and these surveys sought to provide insight into what affects they might have, particularly upon SwD, and if these could be mitigated. The survey research was approved by the Deakin university ethics committee (2020-363).

Staff survey

There were 33 responses from staff at the School of Education. Of these 31 were from academic staff (approximately 25% of teaching staff) and two from professional administrative staff. A quarter (24%) of those responding had been in their current role for up to five years, 39% had been in their role from five-to-ten years, and 36% for over ten years. Of these, only 3 respondents declared they had a disability or related condition.

Despite the School of Education not providing written inherent requirement statements, 91% of all staff said they were either aware (36%) or somewhat aware (55%) of the inherent requirements of the degree courses provided across the School. In fact, the longer staff had been employed in the School, the more likely they were to feel aware of these requirements. Of those with under five years in their role, only 13% said they were aware and 75% were somewhat aware of these requirements. For those with 5–10 years' service, those aware increased to 31%. Those with over ten years in their current position were most likely to feel aware of these requirements (58%).

Staff overwhelmingly believed that the university was required to provide equitable access to its degree level courses (91% agreed and 9% somewhat agreed), that the teaching profession ought to be accessible to as broad a range of people as possible (58% agreed or 33% somewhat agreed), while also acknowledging that inherent requirements set the minimum expected standard students must meet if they are to begin or to complete degree courses in education (30% strongly agreed and 45% somewhat agreed, with

18% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 6% strongly disagreeing). When asked if inherent requirements present hurdles that students must overcome to complete their degree, staff overwhelmingly agreed with 27% strongly and 42% somewhat agreeing. However, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, and the rest either somewhat disagreed (9%) or strongly disagreed (3%).

When asked if they believed the inherent requirements of their courses were set by the profession more generally, with the university merely responding to these externally set requirements, over half of staff felt this was the case (with 21% strongly and 33% somewhat agreeing). A further third neither agreed nor disagreed. This remained true when asked if inherent requirements would impact students when applying for post-graduation registration (45% saying either strongly or somewhat impact, but 42% being unsure).

As mentioned above, staff knowledge of, and confidence in, providing advice about inherent requirements increased with years of service. Staff were asked how much inherent requirements impacted students in the subjects taught by them, with nearly three-quarters (74%) of staff responding students were strongly or somewhat impacted.

Staff mostly believed that the impact of inherent requirements on students could be reduced by the School and its staff applying reasonable adjustments within their courses (with three-quarters of staff at least somewhat agreeing). However, while 70% of staff felt they had the skills to assist SwD meet the demands of the course they provided, only 24% of staff strongly agreed they had these skills. This matched those who neither agreed nor disagreed they held these skills. Again, length of service impacted staff certainty on whether they possessed these skills, with none of those with under five years' service strongly agreeing they did and almost two-thirds of these staff neither agreeing nor disagreeing they held these skills.

This survey shows how many staff understand inherency from within the hegemonic doxa which places the ability of a person to become a teacher being solely measured by the abilities of the individual, ignoring the potential for systems and communities of practice to facilitate expanded participation. These mandated exclusionary deficits are defined as a series of medicalised and fixed lower limits to participation. The medicalisation of such exclusions provide inherent requirements with an aura of ontological truth grounded in scientific objectivity. Even if the mechanisms available to appeal these inherent requirement exclusions are also mentioned, the clear implication is that medical expertise is more highly valued than the lived experience and understanding of those with these attributes, whether these be staff, students or potential students. This understanding is also implied by the student responses to their survey questions, which will be shown later in this paper.

Just as staff feel inherent requirements are imposed from outside the university's sphere of influence, staff also often feel that knowing how to accommodate SwD is something outside their own level of expertise. While only a quarter of staff strongly agree they had the skills to ensure SwD met the inherent requirements of the units they teach, 45% believed learning access plans, developed elsewhere, facilitated their ability to make reasonable adjustments to support SwD. The sense that inherent requirements are imposed on staff, the university and SwD pervades the survey results. While virtually all staff agreed the university is required to provide equitable access to its degree courses, they did not necessarily feel they had the skills to establish

these with their own students without external expert assistance. As such, the hegemonic doxa that inherency stands as an objective fact established and mitigated by the specialist knowledge of experts outside the teaching situation remains strong (Slee 2011).

Students survey

The survey was promoted to all students in the School of Education and students were repeatedly encouraged to participate. Dedicated effort was made, through the university's Disability Resource Centre, to particularly promote participation of SwD to better understand the effects of supposed inherency on their experiences of inclusion in ITE courses. Of the 117 survey respondents, 42 (36%) identified as having a disability or related condition.

One student commented upon the underlying assumptions behind the survey:

I have tried to find the inherent requirement statement for my course (Master of Teaching) since seeing this notification but have not been successful. The only time I knew there was an inherent requirement was from this survey.

Fewer SwD said they had been aware of IRs prior to beginning their degree than the overall student cohort responding to the survey, but more became aware – and by a large margin – once they had begun their courses. Of all student respondents, 46% were aware of inherent requirements before starting their degree, for SwD this was 38%. However, after commencing their course 52% of all students became aware of IRs, while 74% of SwD did. That is, over half of all students who only became aware of inherent requirements after commencing their course were SwD, despite them only composing 36% of the sample.

Who students would notify if they felt their disability might impact the inherent requirements of their course was very different according to whether or not they stated they had a disability or related condition (Table 1).

The most frequent response from those without a disability to the question of who they would notify about their condition was to say they did not have such a condition, implying they did not feel the question was relevant. While two-in-three students with a disability said they would speak to the Disability Resource Centre about their issue, this was only true of one-in-nine students without a disability. Students without disabilities were also more likely to say they would speak to someone directly related to their course than were students with disabilities. Only one student without a disability said they would not disclose their disability, but this is contrasted with six students with a disability who said they would not disclose.

Table 1. If you believed you had a disability or related condition likely to be impacted by the Inherent Requirements of your course or unit, who would you notify?

	Students With Disabilities	Students Without Disabilities
I do not have a disability	0%	62%
The Unit Chair	18%	15%
The Course Director	0%	11%
The Disability Resource Centre	67%	11%
I Would Not Disclose	15%	2%

Students with disabilities and related conditions made it clear in their comments why they had chosen not to disclose:

My condition is neurological, I learnt to live with it, and I don't tell anyone I have it, I don't really like to make it public, and I actually don't think of it myself.

Because I might be seen as inadequate or "unfit/inept" for study due to my disability. Also, I might be viewed as a "hassle/inconvenient" student. Also, that I would be disqualified from studies and expelled from the university for being below average and not being able to fulfil visa requirements because I'm too slow.

I have already experienced too much stigma with my medical condition to risk disclosing.

Of those who felt they were impacted or somewhat impacted by the inherent requirements of the professional learning units of their course, almost two-thirds were students with a disability. Only 3 of the 27 students with a disability who answered this question said they were not impacted by the inherent requirements associated with the professional practice component of their course.

Students with a disability or related condition were much more likely to consider IRs as unreasonable, with a quarter of those responding to this question saying they were unreasonable – and this was nearly 70% of all of those who felt IRs were unreasonable.

Disaggregating these data shows that students with and without disabilities and related conditions experience the inherent requirements of these courses in significantly different ways. As with staff, the longer SwD were exposed to the culture of the School, the more likely they were to become aware of the nature of the inherent requirements of the degrees they have begun. This hegemonic doxa becomes increasingly apparent to SwD over time but remains mostly invisible to those who state they are without disabilities. The complications of where to find support and who (or whether) to disclose separate the two cohorts.

Towards coherency

The hegemonic doxa associated with inherency constructs individuals as either meeting or failing to meet the requirements necessary to be students or to become successful teachers. As such, the focus of discussion is too often defined by experts deciding the limits of ability, and which condition or complex of conditions should automatically determine ineligibility. It is not clear what the expertise of these experts is, either in education more broadly or in living with disabilities. The setting of these limits to participation as lists of quantifiable and medicalised conditions disenfranchises SwD from having a say in what they can and cannot achieve. Their own expertise in living with and managing their disabilities and related conditions is denied to them. They are faced with the stated facts from remote 'experts' they have never met, and a reversal of the onus of proof that demands they now must show they can complete these courses.

We are not highlighting that inherent requirement statements need to be made more precise (we stress again, the School of Education in which this survey was conducted did not have written inherent requirement statements) but rather that the entire problem of inherency needs to be reframed since it mischaracterises the ontological possibilities involved in teaching and learning.

Inherency ignores the social nature of teaching and learning – and not merely in regards to the support that individuals can receive from their community of practice. Teaching is social in all senses, and broadening the participation of those within the teaching profession is fundamental to the teaching and learning process itself.

We are suggesting a shift away from the hegemonic doxa. Rather than providing a laser-like focus upon the asserted deficits individuals bring with them to the profession, we argue ways should be found to nurture coherence. This shift in practice away from what an individual can do by themselves towards what we all can do together (Sennett 2012) begins with the assumption central to education generally: that everyone can learn. And so, the focus needs to shift from how to more accurately develop measures to exclude participation, towards finding what supports broader participation. As Slee (2011, 155) says:

Inclusive education needs to be forthright about its values, principles for action and intentions. It values community, the recognition and representation of difference, and fosters interdependence across constituencies to enlist schooling as an agent for an education in democracy and social change.

This vision of inclusive education, inclusive at levels beyond a focus upon the attributes of the minds and bodies of individual students and staff, is contrary to that stated in other policy documents within the university where the research was undertaken. For example, policies mandating the provision of reasonable adjustments for a member of the university with a disability or health condition. The primary step in policies like these is the disclosure of an individual's disability or health condition. Supporting evidence must also be provided from a medical professional. The adjustment must not involve unreasonable impacts upon the university or staff or fellow students. As such, reasonableness is too often defined with reference to a single individual, with their individual attributes being defined as deficit and where reasonableness understood on a case-by-case basis focused upon the presumed inconvenience an SwD will present to others. The ability of others to tolerate such inconvenience becomes the ultimate measure of the reasonableness of a reasonable adjustment. Such policies do not take into consideration how the students and teachers themselves are disadvantaged by the absence of those classified as 'unreasonable students'.

Unlike Occupational Health and Safety policies, which provide for workplace representatives to continually improve workplaces, the onus for any change related to improving access and inclusion is *always* individualised. This includes mandatory review processes of any reasonable adjustment implemented so that the assumed inconvenience of them can be removed as soon as practicable. There is never any recognition of the notion that a reasonable adjustment that makes accessing education easier for one student may facilitate the learning of someone else who does not meet the strict requirements of reasonableness. There is no recognition of the benefits that come to all students in seeing how others can be facilitated in their learning. This would otherwise appear to be an essential lesson for students who are about to become teachers in schools with their own students with a broad range of skills and abilities.

As Gross et al. (2023) make clear in another context involving inclusion in vocationally oriented degree courses,

exposing non-disabled HHS students to peers with disabilities challenges false perceptions of 'disability as a problem' and can enhance HHS professionals' empathy towards this population. (2)

Our call for inherency to be replaced by coherency includes a call for a focus upon inclusion beyond that of the individual. This is a call for a democratisation of these processes that will facilitate teaching and learning beyond meeting the individual needs of staff and students who are able to prove they require these adjustments and that such adjustments will not place too onerous costs upon the university or upon the patience of staff and fellow students. Education is rarely an individual pursuit. Finding ways to encourage all staff and students to participate in fuller democratic education by making work and learning spaces more accessible to everyone ought to be central to what a School of Education does.

The analysis of these surveys shows that even without documented inherent requirement statements, the longer those impacted by inherency are exposed to a culture structured around the hegemonic doxa, the more likely they are to feel they understand the implications of that doxa. This means that a shift to more inclusive practices will need a shift away from inherency towards coherency. Otherwise, the ghost of inherent requirements will continue to normalise exclusion.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

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