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Developing inclusive communities: understanding the experiences of education of learners of English as an additional language in England and street-connected young people in Kenya

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The Salamanca Statement and subsequent international calls to action around inclusive education aim to meet the goals of Education for All and foster inclusive communities for learners within mainstream education. However, there are diverse interpretations of what inclusion means in practice that vary across local, national and international contexts. In developing inclusive pedagogies with teachers at the forefront of providing support, the use of labels to categorise particular groups of learners according to perceived learning needs can further marginalise them, affecting their sense of belonging in school and potentially their academic and social identities. We present case studies from two contextually and culturally different settings. The experiences of learners of English as an additional language transferring from primary to secondary school in England illustrate marginalised positioning assigned by teachers' perceptions. The ability to 'settle in' to school of street-connected children transitioning (back) into education in Kenya is influenced by their interactions with peers, teachers and the wider community on and after the street. Findings emphasise the need for understanding experiences through shared narratives and dialogue, starting with the experiences of learners to develop pedagogies and foster inclusive communities within and beyond schools.

Keywords: community; English as an additional language; street-connectedness; belonging

Inclusive education practice varies significantly nationally, internationally and across contexts, especially with marginalised learners who are not disabled. For example, children living in resource-poor urban areas, children speaking different home languages to the language of instruction, or children who live in nomadic communities, are not always considered within inclusive policy and practice; and where policy exists, a lack of investment in translating policy to practice or poor resourcing are barriers to

effective inclusion (IDDC 2016; UNESCO 2017). Variety in the structure and delivery of equitable inclusive education also results from the cultural and social beliefs held within contexts.

While the need to develop context-appropriate methods of inclusive practice is generally acknowledged (e.g. Grimes 2009), there is limited focus on the difficulties that arise because inclusion initiatives often place teachers at the centre of interventions while not recognising the culturally charged aspects of practice reflective of their worldview and social beliefs (Lewis et al. 2019). The position of inclusive practice within initial teacher education is often 'additional' to core course content (Forlin 2010) and teachers delivering half thought-out approaches to inclusion can unintentionally reproduce inequality experienced by marginalised learners in mainstream classrooms (Myers and Bhopal 2018).

Effective inclusion is a complex process that takes time (Wilkinson et al. 2017) because it requires change at all levels of the educational system - from teachers to policy makers, as well as involving families and wider communities beyond schools (Lewis et al. 2019). Messiou (2017) emphasises the need for understanding experiences through shared narratives and dialogue, and that fostering inclusive communities within and beyond schools are essential for marginalised groups to develop a sense of belonging. Central to bottom up change in inclusive education is a focus on the experiences of learners - taking time to understand how they experience their interconnected worlds of school, family and community. As researchers working within two contextually and culturally different settings, and prioritising pupil voice (e.g. Robertson 2015) we developed an awareness of the commonalities of learners' experiences within inclusion and marginalisation.

In this article, we make a conceptual contribution to understanding the learner experience – positioning learners as bringing their own knowledge to the communities they inhabit (e.g. Campano 2019; Darling-Hammond et al. 2019) as two case studies. In England, the experiences of learners of English as an additional language (EAL) as they transfer from primary to secondary school illustrate marginalised positioning informed by teachers’ perceptions, exemplifying a need to strengthen the focus on pupil voice in schools (Kaneva 2015). In Kenya the experiences of young people as they transition (back) into education after living and working on the street illustrate how they figure liminal ‘street-connected’ identities that affect their ability to ‘settle in’ to education and are influenced by their interactions with peers, teachers and the wider community on and after the street (Corcoran 2016).

The inclusion policy context in England and Kenya

As a signatory to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and the Salamanca Statement, the UK has a long-standing commitment to the rights of children and persons with disabilities. This translates to education support for those who are disabled but also a broader understanding of inclusion as an ideology beyond specific categories of learners in relation to special educational needs and disability (SEND) (Ainscow et al. 2006). In England, the term inclusion refers to enabling educational experiences for learners who have a recognised SEND and additional needs, and/or experience difficulties through their educational journey. The SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2014) restates the UK’s commitment under Articles 7 and 24 of the UNCRPD on removing barriers to participation through the placement of learners in mainstream schools - promoting a vision of excellence for all, children’s voices in decision-making, and an integrated holistic approach to responding to needs through education, health and care plans.

Moving away from categorisation according to need, four broad areas of support for children's individual needs are identified: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; and sensory and/or physical needs (DfE 2014). The legislative view of inclusion prioritises a culture of high expectations where learners with SEND are included in all opportunities available to other children, enabled by reasonable adjustments or special provision where appropriate. However, practice varies subject to interpretation and available resources.

Furthermore, the English education system is fragmented in terms of school 'types' providing 'specialisation' and 'diversity of provision' (Gunter and McGinity 2014) aimed at improving academic standards and raising achievement. In signing up to the UNCRPD, the UK retained reservations about placing all students with disabilities in mainstream schools, arguing that special schools provide a choice to families and are part of national equality objectives within a highly decentralised system (Alexiadou et al. 2016). However, this 'choice' has been identified as a barrier to achieving the Salamanca commitment to educating learners within their specific locality, and illustrates a mismatch between ideas and practice on the ground. It prioritises the assessment of individual needs, including SEND that are characteristic of the medical model of disability, rather than 'a philosophical belief in the rights of every child to be included in the broadest sense' (Jones and Symeonidou 2017:785).

In addition to disability, other groups of learners are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation: e.g. refugees and those from displaced communities (Gladwell and Chetwynd 2018), ethnic minority students from communities with persistent history of underachievement (Bhopal and Myers 2009; Tomlinson 2016), or those learning EAL (Monaghan 2010). Their diversity of learning needs makes it difficult to generalise around provision, hence practice and support are school and context specific. In

England, inclusion remains an ideological goal rather than a move towards achieving a set of agreed processes (Jones and Symeonidou 2017). Precisely because of this way of thinking and non-recognition of alternative ways of including learners, minority students continue to be marginalised in educational practices (Alexiadou et al. 2016; Tomlinson 2016). The English case study is an example of one school's EAL inclusion practices.

The situation in Kenya is not dissimilar: there is a gap between policy and practice (Corcoran 2015) and inclusion for disabled children is usually through special units attached to mainstream schools or specialist schools focusing on one particular need (e.g. Thika school for the Blind or Kambui School for the Deaf). Some of the latter are only accessible to a select few, despite being fee-free, as many children must travel across the county/country to attend, requiring that they pay to board. This leaves many, mostly rural, children attending a unit attached to a local school that often does not cater to their needs. Similarly to England, education provision for children with SEND in Kenya is determined by assessments conducted by local Educational Assessment and Resource Centres.

However, education policy in Kenya is undergoing a period of change in relation to the general comment to UNCRPD Article 24 concerning inclusive education, the development of policy for education for sustainable development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related Sustainable Development Goals. In line with their Education for Sustainable Development policy, the Ministry of Education rolled out a competency-based curriculum for pre-primary and grades 1-3 in January 2018 and continues to roll it out across year groups in 2019/20. At its centre is a commitment to inclusive education with a new policy on SEND currently being drafted, alongside a move towards the closure of special schools (Nyaundi and Achieng 2018).

In the 2009 *National Special Needs Education Policy Framework* (KMoE 2009) special needs education is defined as providing ‘appropriate modification in curriculum delivery methods, educational resources, medium of communication or the learning environment in order to cater for individual differences in learning’ (KMoE 2009:3). It lists 22 categories of learners within their definition of special needs, including those who are ‘living on the streets’ (KMoE 2009:18) - but the policy emphasises barriers to successfully including learners with special needs in mainstream schools, such as stigma and discrimination (KMoE 2009:15). In practice there is a deficit approach taken by teachers including learners such as street-connected children, no matter how well-meaning their intentions (Corcoran 2015). Despite policies promoting inclusion, teachers claim their training deals only with ‘the average child’ and struggle to include others, reinforcing stigmatisation around ability/background and highlighting their specific expectations of academic performance and behaviour (Corcoran 2015). How these challenges play out in practice and affect the experiences of street-connected children going (back) to school is the focus of the Kenyan case study.

The Salamanca Statement promotes a particular way of thinking about inclusion related to equity in educational opportunities for all children with their needs met in ordinary schools, whilst acknowledging that additional needs may require more support in the context of mainstream curricula (UNESCO 1994). Both case studies highlight disconnects between policy and practice for marginalised groups, suggesting that the focus of inclusion should be on justice-based approaches to the education of all children, regardless of background and school placement and, in particular, access to quality education for those who have been marginalised and historically excluded from schools (Tomlinson 2016).

Schools, marginalisation and transitions

Marginalisation affects children and young people globally but is particularly evident within educational contexts (Mowat 2015) and in relation to inclusive practices in classrooms. Perceiving children as an investment who would make an economic contribution to society (DFID 2018) shifts teachers' focus towards attainment as the main indicator of educational success, and away from the ideology of expanding individual potential through learners' diversity and unique characteristics. In prioritising attainment, teaching concentrates on students fitting into school discourses, leading to structural aspects of marginalisation (Mowat 2015). Teachers categorise students in relation to the contexts they inhabit and how they fit within these, exacerbating groupings based on existing characteristics and in relation to policy documents (Messiou 2017).

However, allocating resources to those who appear to need it most does not reflect diversity within categories and the views of students who use these resources. As such, addressing issues around marginalisation becomes a process of 'othering' whereby teachers see the 'problems' as inherent in the students who need support to fit into schools (Messiou 2017) – as illustrated in the case studies. In their practice, teachers also create new categories based on individual perceptions of children, and their abilities in particular, or rethink categories in an attempt to focus on contextual barriers rather than characteristics within students (Myers and Bhopal 2018). Furthermore, it is unclear whether the so-called marginalised groups see themselves as such and if this carries implications for their experiences (Messiou 2017).

Transitions into or between levels of an education system are periods of change and upheaval for all learners. They can either provide opportunities for establishing new identities or maintain marginalised positioning due to teachers' views of particular groups of children (Walters 2007), thus posing challenges especially for marginalised

learners. A learner's experience of settling into a new school has an impact on their relative levels of wellbeing, particularly if these experiences are negative, and can lead to a lack of self-esteem (West et al. 2010). Negative impacts can be especially significant for learners who are also experiencing social marginalisation. For example, learners with disabilities or young people who are cared for in foster families or institutional care transitioning between schools face challenges that should be included on policy-maker agendas and within guidelines for the implementation of education programmes/systems (Brewin and Statham 2011; Bridge of Hope 2015). Support is often viewed through a deficit lens of 'compensating' (Corcoran 2015), which affects learners' levels of engagement, sense of belonging, and learning.

Methods

The UNCRC and the emergence of the sociology of childhood (e.g. Corsaro 2011; James et al. 1998; Mayall 2002) have inspired rights-based approaches to research – positioning children's voices, agency, and participation as methodologically central to their right to be 'properly researched' (e.g. Ennew et al. 2009; Tisdall 2015). When children are regarded as the experts in their own lives and are included in research and/or decision-making processes, positive transformational change to their lives is possible (Johnson 2017). However, the extent to which young people are able to participate and be heard often depends on the preconceptions of those who control the decision-making process (e.g. Tisdall 2015) and the constraints on children's voices by the parameters of the research project and the social realities inherent to their particular contexts (Hammersley 2017).

Our research aims to prioritise pupil voice, focusing on the lived experience of learners explored through the lenses of adult researchers. Drawing on two doctoral research projects that engaged participatory methodological approaches to understand

the process of inclusion in education, the case studies developed here, aim to highlight the intersections of experience of children learning EAL in England and street-connected children in Kenya (Corcoran 2016; Kaneva 2015). While the participation of the young people is confined to their involvement in the data generation processes, the discussion goes some way to providing an understanding of the process of inclusion in education in two very different contexts.

The EAL case study re-examines learners' experiences as they transition from a primary school in an ethnically diverse area in the North West of England to three different secondary schools. It focuses specifically on the experiences of four children moving to the same secondary school. The children's stories were generated through qualitative methods: observations of engagement and friendships during lessons and play time; learning walks in the primary school exemplifying places of significance to the children's experiences of schooling; semi-structured individual and group discussions of the impending transition and follow up discussions in the secondary school; and learning journals with practical activities aimed at eliciting children's experiences and understanding of different school contexts, transitions and relationships with peers and adults through the child's perspective (Kaneva 2015). The discussions took place in different parts of the schools at times identified as suitable by teachers in each school. The children were encouraged to reflect on their experiences using age appropriate methods and activities (Punch 2002). Interviews were carried out with teachers from the primary and secondary schools.

The study in Kenya engaged multiple qualitative methods to generate stories of transition for 53 young people leaving the street. The case study focuses on those who were under 18, exploring their first days/weeks/months in a new primary school or how they transitioned between schools. Using life story interviews (Goodson 2013) as a

methodological starting point, a semi-structured interview approach was the main method of data generation alongside visual sociology (Thomson 2009). Using visual methods produced by the children enabled a focus on, and developed greater depth to, particular aspects of their journeys away from the street. Their photographs and drawings were central to image-elicitation interviews, or created during focus group activities, in which they related their reasons for creating the images and the wider story being represented. Having some autonomy over the research process, the children related more personalised experiences of transition and explained the social context within which these transitions took place (Corcoran 2014).

Transition is at the centre of both studies: viewed as a significant time in learners' educational journeys, where they experience liminality in terms of belonging and identity. They also exemplify a level of marginalisation resulting from positioning assigned by adults in their contexts. Building on Messiou's (2017) supposition that those who are marginalised may or may not be aware of this positioning, and the implications this has for educational experiences, we explore how the learners within each case study are marginalised and the impact this has on their identity as learners.

Case study 1: Children learning EAL

EAL is an umbrella term for children who bring to school a range of languages, literacies, cultures and experiences (Conteh 2012). Their language proficiency varies from new arrivals with no English to advanced bilingual learners, implying a focus on the barriers to learning due to language. Their inclusion is therefore, defined in terms of language support as means of accessing the curriculum and raising achievement (Alexander 2010). In practice, however, drawing a line between EAL and bilingualism is subject to individual and institutional interpretations. In the primary school, the term EAL only indicated that the children's home languages were not English. Although

children joined the school at different stages, there was no specific language support provided and they were in the same class alongside monolingual peers. In the secondary school, there was a tension around the definition of EAL focusing on language as related to achievement:

This school judge EAL as children who speak another language but not English very well - if they're brought up with another language at home and that's their most dominant language and either very minimal English, or no English at all.

(SEND/behaviour teacher)

I'd say all because they've got different languages at home and they can swap in and out of languages.

(English teacher)

Children were streamed either into mainstream sets based on ability, which followed the National Curriculum with different teachers teaching distinct subjects, or into Transition classes supporting English language and SEND/behavioural needs following a primary school teaching model with one class teacher for all subjects. Children spent most of the day in these Transition classrooms, located in a different part of the school, physically separated from the rest, following termly curricular themes. This support system was established in an attempt to 'try something new' in enabling children to make the 'required progress in the school'. Once considered ready, they would be mainstreamed:

...if they've made not so much a certain amount of progress, but it seems that they would be able to go out and access the rest of the curriculum in school and they should be ready, but unfortunately last couple of years this hasn't really happened... some of these children are really able and if they've got enough English there then they can access things.

(EAL teacher)

The distinction between learners identified as needing additional language support and those deemed ready for mainstream, despite their common primary school context, illustrates different positioning across schools based on teachers' perceptions, which is further complicated by the physical separation of the Transition classes. Staff argued EAL support was crucial in enabling learners to catch up academically before they fully transition into the mainstream in Year 8:

We do the same work that's based on the primary curriculum because the children's levels are so low coming from primary. They are not going to cope well in the rest of the school so we try and do our best here to bring their levels up.

(SEND/behaviour teacher)

In addition to language, teachers worked on building confidence and independence:

It helps them because I think that if you speak to them now then most of them feel a lot more confident about being in secondary school than they did nine weeks ago.

(SEND/behaviour teacher)

A perceived advantage of the Transition classes was that teachers were able to develop effective relationships with the learners, providing support and relevant engagement opportunities, and implying more fluidity between formal learning and wider school adjustment. Consequently, some of the children developed more positive dispositions to learning in comparison to their primary school experiences, with better academic and social outcomes resulting from teachers placing children at the heart of their practice.

The children moved on in their friendships in the primary school, making new friends. Intergroup belonging within the Transition classes was encouraged through traditional strategies for supporting language development: peer pairs, shared learning, etc. They also felt the teacher knew them well:

I would say the teachers who work with us care for us, but the teachers who don't, they like are different.

(Student Transition)

I was at first wanting to come in when I was on a two day visit here... but I miss my old friends... like if I go back to start again in the primary school I may have a lot more days with my friends.

(Student Transition)

Transition classes provided a prolonged transition into secondary school for those positioned as 'not ready' based on their language knowledge and primary school results, with no consideration of their prior educational experiences. Although the Transition classes may be considered a useful approach in identifying learning needs, providing targeted support, and building students' confidence, placement into separate classes is a deficit perspective of addressing language or behaviour needs as inherent to the child, leading to limited opportunities within the school.

The Transition classes raise concerns about belonging because of the physical separation of learners. They form peer groups in Year 7, which are disrupted as they transition into ability sets within already established Year 8 classes, providing additional social hurdles for them to navigate. From a pedagogic perspective, the main concern was around learning, attainment and access to the curriculum and to some extent, the learners recognised these targets:

I want to go in that high class, I want to learn more maths.

(Student Transition)

I still want to be in this class because I still like it, but I feel like going to the other classes as well like different ones every day.

(Student Transition)

A teacher also identified difficulties in how children from the Transition classes were perceived by the rest of the school:

I know for a fact secondary teachers... they think... what have they been doing in primary, what have they been doing here in this Transition class - because they're so low, but actually each year these children probably have been making good progress.

(SEND/behaviour teacher)

In relation to identity and belonging, the Transition classes over-emphasised individual characteristics that positioned them differently from mainstream classes. Children wanted to do better academically as an indicator of schooling success, especially in being compared to mainstream peers. Others felt the supportive environment would not be replicated in the mainstream, raising concerns about belonging later on in their education.

Case study 2: Street-connected children in Kenya

For young people starting school for the first time at an advanced age or returning after an extended period away from the classroom, support is key. Street-connected children, who live and/or work in the interactional, usually urban, space known as *the street* have varying degrees of interaction with education. Some go to the street every evening after school or at weekends/holidays, others miss school one or two days a week, some attend non-formal education provided by non-governmental and community-based organisations, and many will not access education at all. For this latter group, having lived and worked on the street can imply benefits and challenges for their successful transition (back) into education.

Street-connected children experience violence and harassment as municipal authorities, police, and members of the public position them as out-of-place (Thomas de

Benitez 2007). Such stigmatisation affects how they position themselves in relation to others and reinforces feelings of belonging, affecting identity construction. Despite, and in response to stigmatisation, street-connected children find support from peers and street-based communities, constructing complex networks of supportive relationships through which they develop belonging and social capital (Beazley 2003; Davies 2008). Therefore, repositioning themselves after they leave the street, overcoming the social and emotional ties to the street and its communities, and learning to trust adults again, can be an emotional upheaval in which they experience both feelings of hope and self-confidence, as well as 'loneliness, guilt, and disloyalty' (Karabanow 2008:782).

The participants' interactions with friends, family, school-based peers, and teachers all played a significant role in helping them to figure a place for themselves in the communities they transitioned into. Friends and friendships were mentioned by all participants, whether or not they were supported by the same organisation. The participants had attended or were attending a range of schools (e.g. primary, secondary, vocational, boarding/day schools) and were either part of an identifiable group, supported by an organisation to attend the school, or attending as the only student who had (knowingly) lived on the street. For those part of a group, support from peers who understood their journey affected their ability to settle into school:

At [] there is safety and security, and supportive friends...who listen.

(vocational training student looking back on primary school)

However, membership of such groups was also a means of feeling isolated from peers outside the group. Children attending a boarding primary school described how peers could not "understand" them as well as peers in their previous day primary school, located close to the residential centre where they stayed, and there was an element of shame associated with others knowing their background:

Here, if you tell someone your life story they cannot understand you...at [neighbouring school run to residential centre] everyone knows [organisation] so they know your life story.

(student at boarding primary school)

This sense of shame extended to the participants attending school on their own, as they did not want to acknowledge their time on the street and invented backstories or enabled misconceptions to take root rather than disclose why they were new to the school:

If you tell them [your history] they will think that you are too poor.

(student at boarding primary school)

I have friends at my new school but they do not understand. They take me as my good mother's child, and I am not...they do not understand me, and they do not know me.

(secondary school student staying with foster mother)

Social attitudes, especially those coming from a deficit understanding of what it means to be street-connected, impacted upon the children's experiences at school, and teachers' attitudes in particular (see also Corcoran 2015). A number of participants complained that teachers did not treat them any differently to other students on their first day of school (such as not being shown where the toilets were) and they were not made to feel welcome:

It was hard, because when I arrived we started with a test and I have never done a test.

(participant attending a primary school)

On my first day at school, I was given five strokes of the cane. The prefect did not collect the books of mathematics and the teacher got angry.

(participant attending a primary school)

Thinking of their first few weeks, they described being lonely; having problems getting used to concentrating for the long school days; and getting used to studying the number of subjects. This latter issue is also reflective of the transition between the lower and upper stages of primary school or primary to secondary school. Making friends was important to settling in and feeling accepted, and feeling supported had a subsequent impact on academic performance for some:

When I reached [] even reading was difficult because I didn't have any friends, the education left my head [my mind was blank].

(primary school student)

However, it was the teachers' academic and psycho-social support and acceptance of the children, as well as their commitment to learning, that was considered to be the main factor in enabling access to quality education and sense of belonging in school - especially for those whose experience of school prompted their initial migration to the street.

The teachers understand us better at [boarding primary school] ... sometimes the teachers call us together to talk to us ... We are brought together and counselled together ... The teachers support you better.

(participant attending a boarding primary school)

Teachers who viewed street-connectedness in deficit terms reinforced the sense of shame that children felt about living and working on the street, affecting whether they dropped out of formal education and how they performed their street-connectedness in school:

...so I gave them a challenge: I wanted them to look at me and know that I had been on the street so they think differently about other boys and girls on the street.

(vocational training student reflecting on primary school)

Therefore, the transition into education is one in which they position and reposition themselves in relation to the interactions with others, peers and teachers in particular, and the 'street-connected' identities they figured in relation to their own particular experiences on and after the street.

Intersections of experience

Many groups of learners do not fit neatly into school discourses. When categorised into groups according to perceived need (e.g. dis/ability or EAL), with a pedagogic intention to pitch learning and support at 'the right level', such standardising approaches do not necessarily translate into effective inclusion in practice because group members possess diverse characteristics. In the case of learners of EAL, transition into secondary school led to categorisation around language needs. Those perceived to need different educational provision were further marginalised by the location of the Transition classes, effecting a different sense of belonging to the school. The classes offered a supportive environment that aimed to recognise and meet children's academic needs but it operated in isolation both physically and pedagogically. Although the street-connected children in Kenya transitioned into multiple school environments, they positioned themselves in relation to school communities depending on the stigmatisation they faced on and after the street and whether interactions with teachers and peers reinforced or mitigated this positioning. These interactions therefore determined their sense of (not) belonging and affected their journeys through education.

As a result of positioning students as different, it is commonplace to assign responsibility for marginalised groups to specialist teachers and/or centres (e.g. learners of EAL to a different class or street-connected children to non-formal education) (Miles and Singal 2010). Some practitioners still hold the view that inclusive education requires specialist staff to deal with the 'additional need' because of increasing pressure

on mainstream schools to deliver exam results where inclusion is seen as an extra burden (Round et al. 2016). Such practices are labelled as inclusive but often result in exclusion (Slee 2013). Inclusion is everyone's responsibility (Engelbrecht et al. 2016) and teachers should be supported to scaffold individuals' learning from their unique starting points. This approach requires that learners are not labelled according to their characteristics, rather their achievements to date are identified, recognised and built upon.

The drive towards inclusion is not only about participation in learning, but also about developing communities that recognise, value and build upon difference. Inclusive schools have a wider responsibility for their learners' belonging within and beyond the school (Ainscow et al. 2006). The Kenyan case study shows how support from teachers and peers helps street-connected children to settle in and find a place for themselves within this new community. In England, physically separating the learners of EAL affected their sense of belonging to the mainstream and delayed their social integration with peers from their year until Year 8 - creating the extra challenge of fitting in when others had already developed firm friendships. In both instances, teachers took a deficit view of the ability of learners: needing to 'go down to' their level (Corcoran 2015:612) or removing them from the mainstream completely. This reinforces street-connected children's sense of (not) belonging, especially if they struggle academically, as some strive to be the best to prove that they do belong, and may end up dropping out if this is not possible. The learners of EAL wanted the same experience as their peers enjoying multiple subject-specific classes. Understanding, acceptance and adequate support in both situations provided additional benefits.

In drawing intersections between the experiences of learners in both contexts, we acknowledge that we have brought together two distinct groups that may be similarly positioned but are, at the same time, very different. The case studies intentionally emphasise the similarities of experience, but there are differences not considered within this paper. Furthermore, the case studies do not necessarily represent practices across local areas or countries. The English case study is an example of one school's specific EAL practices and the Kenyan study explores transition experiences of street-connected children supported by three particular community organisations. However, they do highlight common experiences across the two groups, and potentially across other groups of learners in marginalised positions – especially when considering individuals who experience multiple dimensions of marginalisation.

Children in Kenya will often speak/learn at least three different languages: there are 67 recognised living languages associated with particular ethnic groups, as well as Kiswahili, the common language of communication, and English used in education and business (Lewis et al. 2013). For young people who have not been in school for a significant period of time and therefore not exposed to English, returning to school involves additional challenges. Intersections of experience may also be present for learners who are refugees learning EAL and starting school in England after periods away from the classroom. There is, therefore, considerable diversity within groups labelled according to particular characteristics that not only fails to consider these multiple identities, but also learners' choices in identifying as belonging to a number or only one of these groups. The complexity of children's educational experiences and transitions, often foregrounded when the practical difficulties with adopting Salamanca thinking into school-wide inclusive practice are highlighted, emphasise the need to take

every learner from their individual starting point and promote their learning, development and belonging from that point forward.

Fostering inclusive communities

Focusing on children learning EAL in England and street-connected children in Kenya highlights the importance of identity and positioning in understanding educational experiences that can inform the development of effective inclusive practice. Deficit approaches to inclusion imply judgements concerning ability that are not value-free and ultimately interlinked with the structural organisation of schools (Davies and Watson 2001). Enabling teachers to reflect upon their own pedagogical approaches concerning particular groups of marginalised learners and facilitating the development of inclusive practice takes time and a shift in ethos at all levels of the education system (Wilkinson et al. 2017). The starting point for this is understanding how to facilitate learning in a diverse mainstream classroom and supporting all learners to feel that they belong within that population. In categorising children according to perceived learning needs, they are ‘othered’, excluded and further marginalised – affecting attainment, retention and social inclusion.

At the macro level the tendency to focus education investment towards attainment, and the perceived economic benefits from a highly educated workforce, leads to short-term benefits rather than the long-term contributions to a country’s economy that come from effective investment in inclusion (IDDC 2016; Lewis et al. 2019). As advocated by Ainscow and Messiou (2018), effective inclusion practices in schools start with listening to learners and, based on this listening, challenging the limiting assumptions that teachers apply to thinking about children. This is further illustrated by the case studies explored in this paper: although from two very different contexts, they highlight the impact of how learners position themselves and are positioned by teachers.

In developing and maintaining inclusive communities, educational settings should adopt wider social responsibilities in recognising their place and role in the local community beyond the school and ‘the potential for communities and educational institutions to mutually sustain each other’ (Ainscow et al. 2006:24). A twin-track approach of providing expertise around specific needs to support classroom teachers whilst valuing the mainstream as a place suitable for all children to learn could be a step towards developing welcoming inclusive school communities. Future research and practice should consider exploring the benefits of such an approach for including a variety of marginalised learners (building on related disability-focused literature), enabling them to develop a sense of belonging in relation to the school, and the academic and social benefits that arise because of this belonging.

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