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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 children in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The Salamanca Statement and subsequent international calls to action around inclusive education aim to meet Education for All goals 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 their academic and social identities. We present case studies drawn from two doctoral studies conducted in contextually and culturally different settings to understand learners' experiences of marginalisation in education. 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 learners' experiences to develop pedagogies and foster inclusive communities within and beyond schools.

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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

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(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; Le Fanu 2013), 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. 2017). The position of inclusive practice within initial teacher education is often 'additional' to core course content (Forlin 2010) and teachers delivering inadvertently 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. 2017). In essence, inclusive education centres on learners' rights to be included and valued as members of a school community, providing opportunities for all learners to actively participate. Fostering such inclusive communities – within and beyond schools – through shared narratives and dialogue is essential if marginalised groups are to develop a sense of belonging (Messiou 2017). Therefore, 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 colleagues sharing our experiences of conducting research and prioritising the voices of learners (e.g. Robertson 2015), we developed an awareness of commonalities of experience in relation to inclusion and marginalisation within two contextually and culturally different settings. 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 2016). 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). In this article, we draw on the findings from these two independent doctoral research studies to make a conceptual contribution to understanding the learner experience – positioning learners as bringing their own knowledge to the communities they inhabit (Campano 2019; Darling-Hammond et al. 2019). Before we explore the case studies in more detail, it is useful to understand the policy context within which the two research projects were conducted.

The inclusion policy context in England and Kenya

In England, the term inclusion refers to enabling educational experiences for learners who have a recognised disability, additional learning needs, and/or experience difficulties through their educational journey. The special educational needs and disability (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE 2014) aims to remove 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. The legislative view of inclusion therefore, 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. This commitment translates to educational support for disabled learners as well as a broader understanding of inclusion as an ideology beyond specific categories of learners (Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson 2006).

However, practice varies subject to interpretation and available resources, and oftentimes decisions about support do not consider children's experiences. 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. For example, special school provisions, available alongside mainstream schools to offer 'choice' to families, 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: refugees and those from displaced communities (Gladwell and Chetwynd 2018), ethnic minority students from communities with a persistent history of underachievement (Myers and Bhopal 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 in this paper is an example of one secondary school's EAL inclusion practices and their impact on learners' experiences of transitioning into secondary education.

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 is often not resourced to cater to their needs. Similar 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 country's Education for Sustainable Development policy (KMoE 2017). In 2018, the Ministry of Education rolled out a competency-based curriculum. At its centre is a commitment to inclusive education with the drafting of a new inclusive education

policy, alongside a move towards the closure of special schools (Nyaundi and Achieng 2018). In the 2009 *National Special Needs Education Policy Framework* (KMoE 2009), which was the policy in place when the case study research was conducted, 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 'living on the streets' (KMoE 2009, 18) – but the policy emphasises barriers to successfully including learners identified as having special needs in mainstream schools, such as stigma and discrimination, without including strategies to address them (KMoE 2009, 15). In practice, there is a deficit approach taken by teachers including learners such as street-connected children (SCC), no matter how well-meaning their intentions (Corcoran 2015). Despite policies promoting inclusion, teachers claim their training deals only with 'the average child' and describe their struggles 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 SCC 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 equitable educational opportunities for all children with their needs met in local 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 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 making an economic contribution to society (DFID 2018), directs teachers' focus on 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 catching-up with learning and 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 them most does not reflect diversity within categories or the experiences 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 school (Messiou 2017). 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).

A focus on experiences of being included in education not only has the potential to provide insights into prior knowledge, it is acknowledged widely as a prerequisite for inclusive practice (Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson 2006) that better reflects learners' individual strengths and needs. Such an approach shifts practice away from deficit views of learners' needs and compensation, particularly evident for children learning EAL (Kaneva 2016) or those who are street-connected (Corcoran 2015), towards building more inclusive practices and communities. Focusing on learners' feelings and perceptions of school, rather than solely on their attainment and performance in relation to the curriculum, highlights the unequal distribution of power in the classroom (Packer and Goicoechea 2000) and the extent to which they identify with school values, participate in appropriate activities (Chiu et al. 2012), and figure a sense of (not) belonging.

Figuring a sense of belonging is pertinent when learners experience changes to their educational contexts. Such transitions, into or between levels of education, are periods of change and upheaval for all learners and their experience of settling into a new school, for example, impacts upon their relative levels of wellbeing (Bagnall 2020). Transitions can provide opportunities for establishing new identities but they can also reinforce marginalised positioning resulting from teachers' views of particular groups of children (Walters 2007). Negative experiences of transition can impact self-esteem and be especially significant for learners who are also experiencing social marginalisation (West, Sweeting, and Young 2010). For example, disabled learners or children who are cared for in foster families or institutional care can face additional challenges when transitioning into or between schools (Brewin and Statham 2011; Bridge of Hope 2015). Viewing their support through a deficit lens of 'compensating' (Corcoran 2015) affects learners' levels of engagement, sense of belonging, and learning, emphasising the need to recognise specific groups of marginalised learners in policy-makers' agendas and within guidelines for the implementation of education programmes/systems (Bridge of Hope 2015).

Transition was at the centre of both doctoral studies, which focused on learners starting new schools or returning to old ones. Such transitions were a significant time in the learners' educational journeys, where they experienced liminality in terms of belonging and identity that was amplified or mitigated in relation to how they were positioned within the school community and the extent to which they are made aware of their positioning. In the following section, we explore findings from each of these projects as case studies, focusing on the knowledge that participants have of and bring to their school communities.

Case studies: considering commonalities in transition experiences across different contexts

Combining the two case studies in this paper, we explore how learners are marginalised and the impact this has on their experiences of schooling. Each of the projects took a different methodological approach to data generation, but both aimed to prioritise learners' voice, through participatory methodological approaches that focused on the lived experience of children explored through the lenses of adult researchers. Children's voices, agency, and participation are methodologically central to their right to be

'properly researched' (Beazley et al. 2009) and when regarded as the experts in their own lives positive transformational change is possible (Johnson 2017). However, the extent to which children are able to participate and be heard often depends on the preconceptions of those who control the decision-making process (Tisdall 2015) and the constraints on their voices by the parameters of the research project and the social realities inherent to the particular contexts (Hammersley 2017). Children's participation in both studies is confined to their involvement in the data generation processes. However, 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 primary to secondary school in an ethnically diverse area with higher-than-average levels of economic and social deprivation in the North West of England. It focuses specifically on the experiences of four ten- and eleven-year-old children, whose stories were generated through: observations of engagement and friendships throughout the school day; semi-structured individual and group discussions in primary school of the impending transition and follow-up discussions in secondary school; and learning journals with practical activities aimed at eliciting the children's experiences and understanding of different school contexts, transitions and relationships with peers and adults (Kaneva 2016). The discussions took place in different parts of the schools at times identified by teachers in each setting, and encouraged children to reflect on their experiences of moving from primary to secondary school using age-appropriate methods and activities (Punch 2002). The questions directed the discussion towards topics such as the different parts of the school day, previous experiences of transitions (e.g. relocating to England), and/or making friends. Teachers from the primary and secondary schools were also interviewed. Data analysis involved deductive processes (Bryman 2012) of applying and problematising key concepts from the theoretical framework concerning agency, engagement and positioning within the classroom.

The study in Kenya was an exploratory study, asking how young people (aged 12–28) experience the transition from the street (back) into communities and schools. Multiple qualitative methods were engaged to generate stories of transition for 53 young people leaving the street. These stories were later analysed following an inductive bottom-up approach (Braun and Clarke 2006), using the research question to provide a broad structure, giving an insight into how young people (re-)positioned themselves within families, school-based and training centre communities, and wider society after leaving the street. The case study in this article focuses on first days/weeks/months at a new school primary or secondary school when they were aged under 18. They all attended state-funded day schools except for eight children sponsored to attend a private boarding primary school. Using life story interviews (Goodson 2013) as a methodological starting point, a semi-structured interview approach was the main method of data generation alongside the use of images produced by the children that enabled a focus on, and developed greater depth to, particular aspects of their journeys away from the street (Corcoran 2014). 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.

Central to both projects was an acknowledgement of the ethical issues of conducting research with young people and partnering with community-based organisations and schools. They were addressed throughout the research design, data generation, and analysis processes for both studies in addition to complying with the University of Manchester's ethical approval system (Kaneva 2016; Corcoran 2016). For example, negotiation with the organisations or schools was required to ensure there was no coercion of learners to participate and that any interpreters employed could support the participants if sensitive issues came up during and after interviews. It was also necessary for us to consider our 'perceived' positions within the research, the associated power dynamic inherent to the researcher-researched relationship, and how the participants were represented within and because of the data (Kaneva 2016; Corcoran 2016). The most important methodological implication related to participants' expectations of the research and their ability to give 'informed' consent, ensuring that time was taken to help them understand the nature of the research, what their involvement entailed, and that they could withdraw their participation at any time (BERA 2018; Ferguson 2020).

The case studies below present the data from the two doctoral studies that highlight the intersections of experience of children learning EAL in England and SCC in Kenya relevant to the process of inclusion in education.

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 mainstream in Year 8:

> We do the same work that's based on the primary curriculum because the children's levels are so low. 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, 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 from 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 are different. (student A)

> 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 B)

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 confidence, placement into separate classes is a deficit-driven perspective of addressing needs as inherent to the child limiting their 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 B)

> 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 C)

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

> I know for a fact, secondary teachers … they think … what have they been doing in primary, what have they been doing here in Transition classes – because they're so low, but actually each year these children probably have been making good progress. (SEND/behaviour teacher)

In relation to 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 children starting school for the first time at an advanced age or returning after an extended period away from the classroom, support is key. SCC, 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.

SCC 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, SCC 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 [school next door to residential centre run by organisation] 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 (see also Corcoran et al. 2020):

> 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

Presented separately, the case studies provide an overview of two independent doctoral studies. Here, we aim to emphasise how learners' experiences in both studies intersect, particularly in relation to how they are positioned as learners who bring their own knowledge to the communities they inhabit and the ways in which schools translate inclusive education into practice.

Although inclusion centres on providing opportunities for all learners to actively participate, it is often narrowly defined as providing 'special' attention to those who at first glance do not fit into mainstream education and thus require extra support. Such deficit-driven approaches can mirror wider societal attitudes, unintentionally transforming the classroom into a space that reinforces the 'out-of-place' positioning of learners and their related sense of not belonging. However, many groups of learners do not fit neatly into school discourses and positioning them as different, can lead to the segregation of marginalised groups within alternative provision (Miles and Singal 2010): e.g. learners of EAL in a different class or SCC in non-formal education.

Placing EAL learners in Transition classes located in a different part of the school led to separation from the rest of the student body and further marginalisation. The classes offered a supportive environment that aimed to recognise and meet children's academic needs but operated in isolation both physically and pedagogically. The learners wanted the same experience as their peers and separation affected their sense of belonging to the mainstream, delaying social integration with the rest of their year group until Year

8 (their second year in secondary school) and creating the extra challenge of fitting in when others had already developed firm friendships. This approach could be described as meeting the Salamanca requirement for learners to physically access their local schools (UNESCO 1994), but fails to include them within the wider school community. Therefore, standardised approaches categorising learners according to their perceived need (e.g. dis/ability or EAL), with a pedagogic intention to pitch learning and support at 'the right level' to improve achievement, do not necessarily translate into effective inclusion in practice.

The drive towards inclusion goes beyond results and participation in learning. Rather it involves the development of communities that recognise, value, and build upon difference. Inclusive schools have a wider responsibility for their learners' belonging within and beyond the school, where a recognition of their 'right to belong' is essential to an educator's inclusive mindset (Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson 2006, 73) and the development of inclusive school communities (Mowat 2015). The SCC interviewed in Kenya transitioned into multiple school environments, and positioned themselves within school communities in relation to the stigmatisation they faced on and after the street and whether their interactions with teachers and peers reinforced or mitigated this positioning. These interactions determined their sense of (not) belonging and affected their journeys through education. Those who felt supported by teachers and peers were able to settle in and find a place for themselves within the (new) school community. When teachers took a deficit view of the ability of SCC – needing to 'go down to' their level for example (Corcoran 2015, 612) – their sense of not belonging could be reinforced, especially if they struggled academically or are bullied by peers (e.g. Taylor et al. 2019). Some learners strive to be the best to prove that they do belong, and may end up dropping out if this is not possible or too difficult a challenge.

Understanding, acceptance, and appropriate support provided by welcoming and supportive teachers, who also exemplify a commitment to learning, translates into a greater sense of belonging for learners and additional benefits in relation to their self-confidence and attainment. This was illustrated in both case studies, emphasising the need to find a balance between a focus on academics and the provision of supportive and inclusive communities. Inclusion is everyone's responsibility (Engelbrecht et al. 2016; UNESCO 1994) and teachers should be supported to scaffold individuals' learning from their unique social and academic 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. In drawing intersections between learners' experiences 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 SCC supported by three particular community organisations. However, common experiences of marginalisation are highlighted across the two contexts, and potentially across other groups of learners in marginalised positions – especially when considering individuals who experience multiple dimensions of marginalisation.

For example, children in Kenya who have not been in school for a significant period of time, and not exposed to English because they speak other languages at home and/or on the street, could face additional challenges when they return to school (Corcoran et al. 2020). Intersections of experience may also be present for learners with disrupted educational journeys learning EAL and starting school in England after periods away from the classroom (e.g. refugees, travellers). There is 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: e.g. a street-connected girl who is also a disabled refugee in a country where the national language is different to her mother tongue. 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 SCC in Kenya highlights the importance of belonging 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). Despite a focus on inclusive practice within teacher education (Forlin 2010), some practitioners and/or school management still hold the view that inclusive education requires specialist staff to deal with 'additional' needs because of increasing pressure on mainstream schools to deliver results where inclusion is seen as an extra burden (Round, Subban, and Sharma 2016). Such practices are labelled as inclusive but often result in exclusion (Slee 2019). 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, as a result of efforts to support them to fit into existing school systems rather than adapting the systems to meet the needs of all learners, they are 'othered', excluded and further marginalised – affecting attainment, retention and social inclusion (Messiou 2017).

At the macro level, the tendency to focus on 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. 2017). 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 and the need for bottom-up approaches

to the development of inclusive pedagogies and related policies informed by learners' experiences of schooling.

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, Booth, and Dyson 2006, 24). The development of inclusive communities that are responsive to learner needs requires a rethinking of policy and practice around attainment and learners' experiences. The current focus in both Kenya and England on academic performance leads to greater marginalisation and exclusion based on the assessment of learners' needs and knowledge. Instead, a balance should be sought between achievement and inclusive values: developing inclusive communities within education where each learner is acknowledged as having unique characteristics and prior knowledge is built upon to enable a sense of belonging that will in turn support attainment.

In the case of language learning, it can take up to six years for learners of EAL to catch up with their monolingual peers (Cummins 2000); and in Kenya, older children (who start school at an advanced age, repeat years, or spend time out-of-school) attain much lower scores in their Kenya Certificate of Primary Education than their younger counterparts (Lewin et al. 2011). In both instances, the ability for learners to catch up with their peers and the extent to which their experiences of both the transition and education in general are positive, could be greatly enhanced by feeling that they belong – and in some cases increase the likelihood of learners' continued retention in education (e.g. Corcoran et al. 2020). Teachers who are provided with the time to understand their students where they are now, and are encouraged to reflect upon and address how their perceptions of learners reinforce or create new contextual barriers are able to use this prior knowledge as a catalyst to attainment. It is only through teachers knowing their students that generalisations about need can be addressed.

Approaches to teacher education for inclusion therefore, need to be adapted to enable changes in practice to be implemented (e.g. Lewis et al. 2017). 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 also be a step towards developing welcoming inclusive school communities (The World Bank Group 2020). Future research and practice should consider exploring the benefits of such an approach for including a variety of learners considered to be marginalised (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. Not all SCC or learners of EAL underperform, and a significant number both survive and thrive in their time at school, but a focus on what is needed to instil a sense of belonging in all learners as individuals necessarily benefits all learners. Finally, transition is the lens that we have used to capture issues related to inclusion and an associated lack of belonging. In doing so, we also identify the limited focus on transitions in education, especially for marginalised learners, in both policy and academic literature (Bagnall 2020; Bridge of Hope 2015). We therefore highlight the need for a sustained focus on supportive, inclusive pedagogies of teaching and learning for all learners making transitions into or between levels of education systems, and in the months that follow.

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