

Pedagogies for inclusion of students with disabilities in a national curriculum: a central human capabilities approach

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Abstract

A national curriculum *for all* students suggests curriculum design that can make a difference in academic opportunity for the 15-20% of the Australian school population verified with a disability (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2013). The Australian Curriculum from its inception has been challenged for how it caters for the needs of students with disabilities. The *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority* (ACARA) claim responsibility for designing the intended curriculum however responsibility for the enacted curriculum has been delegated to states and territories. It has been argued that how one teaches cannot be separated from what is being taught and learnt (Lusted 1989) with curriculum defined as what teachers enact in their classroom (Boomer 1991, 1999). It is timely to explore the Australian curricula in light of pedagogical justice, particularly for students with disabilities.

In thinking about these issues, this paper argues that the capabilities approach of Amartya Sen (1985) and Martha Nussbaum (2003) provides a powerful theoretical framework for advancing curricula and pedagogical justice for students with disabilities. Nussbaum's ten Central Human Capabilities are used as a lens to assess how the learning needs of students with disabilities are being met in relation to the literacy capability of the Australian Curriculum. These case studies analyse two teacher perspectives of their interpretation and understanding of the literacy capability across both special education and mainstream school settings located in Adelaide, South Australia. The paper concludes by proposing ways in which the Australian Curriculum can better ensure that education contributes to developing some or all of Nussbaum's 10 central human capabilities: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reasoning; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's emotions. These need to be developed at least up to a threshold level for students with disabilities and ultimately advance pedagogies for their inclusion in a national curriculum.

Key words: Students with disabilities; national curriculum; central human capabilities; inclusive pedagogies; special education; teacher perspectives; literacy capability

Introduction

Australian education enters a critical new chapter as the Australian Curriculum (AC) rolls out from Foundation entry level to Year 10. Over the past 30 years international debate on curriculum provision to promote national consistency in student learning has permeated education (Wilson 2003). The rationale of Australia's first national curriculum in 2008 was to promote a quality, world class education for all Australian students, based on high achievement standards, accountability and national data collection. This presents immense challenges as international efforts at national curriculum design have found educators

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questioning the relationship between an official curriculum and the learning needs of students verified with a disability (SWD). Curriculum provision has recently come under scrutiny in policy and curriculum developments in many nations (de Boer, Pijl & Minnaert 2009) with the view that SWDs need to be a vital component in national curriculum efforts (Norwich 2009; O'Mara et. al. 2012).

Given that one in five students (15-20%) attending Australian schools are identified with a disability (DEEWR 2013), one would assume that Australia's first national curriculum would address their needs. This is endorsed by justifications of the AC to produce a 'high quality curriculum for all young Australians.' The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA 2009) advocates that the learning needs of SWDs be incorporated in an inclusive curriculum. The social, emotional, economical, and educational benefits of inclusive education for marginalized groups, in particular SWDs, have been well documented (Peetsma, et al. 2001; Ruijs, Van Der Veen, & Peetsma 2010; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 1994). Furthermore, all learners were assigned equal rights in accordance with their diversity of needs (Bentley-Williams & Morgan 2013). Inclusivity has evidenced benefits to society as a whole by promoting identity, health, productivity and respect. However, SWDs continue to be consigned to the margins of the education system even with many countries advocating inclusive education and every student's entitlement to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning experiences (ACARA 2013). Inclusion continues to be challenged for not necessarily equalizing educational outcomes rather contributing to the persistence and widening of educational inequality (Slee 2010). Miles and Singal (2010) argue the need to bridge the gap between the *education for all* and *inclusive education* international agendas. These issues challenge whether socially just curricula and pedagogy will ever exist for SWDs. Focusing on SWDs capabilities rather than deficits is posited as a means to advance inclusion initiatives.

This paper begins by distinguishing between Sen (1985) and Nussbaum's (2003) central human capabilities and the AC seven general capabilities. This will be followed by a description of the design of the two cases studies. The perceptions of two teachers will then be analysed in relation to the challenges and issues of implementing the literacy capability of the AC for SWDs, before applying a proactive lens on their pedagogies for inclusion. To conclude, an analysis of how the central human capabilities potentially are promoted through pedagogies for inclusion when implementing the AC literacy capability, will be described.

Applying a central human capabilities approach to the Australian curriculum

One fifth of Australia's school population identify as SWDs, incorporating a range of mild to severe physical, intellectual, social/emotional, developmental disabilities, and many presenting with complex comorbidity. These students are linked by disadvantage and challenged by idealisations of what students *should be*. SWDs are continually required to *fit* into mainstream learning and if it is deemed too difficult they can be segregated or excluded from participation. Australia's formative national curriculum presents a rare opportunity to create a cohesive and effective strategy for SWD learning and pedagogy. So to advance curricula and pedagogical justice for SWDs, applying the theoretical framework of Amartya Sen (1985) and Martha Nussbaum (2003) advocates a *capabilities* philosophy of what students *can do* and *be*. Further to this, Nussbaum (2003) proposes ten central human capabilities which all individuals are entitled. These include: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reasoning; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's emotions.

Applying a capabilities approach interrupts inequality to identify pockets of hope (Zembylas 2012), rather than reinforcing deficit approaches. It also has potential to promote turnaround pedagogy to engineer curriculum redesigns that make a difference by viewing students as children of promise and ultimately disrupting the cycle of failure (Comber & Kamler 2004). This aims to 'ensure full access to dignified education and meaningful educational opportunities' (Jones & Vagle 2013, p. 130). Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum describe fundamental entitlements of students with disabilities to achieve benchmarks in reaching their potential, thus experience quality of life and choice. Sen (2009) argues how a person's life is a combination of various functioning's (doing and being). However to understand their quality of life requires assessing the substantive freedoms to choose the life they have reason to value (i.e. capabilities). These human capabilities are distinct from the context specific educational capability definitions (Terzi 2007) used in policy and curriculum documentation. This includes the literacy capability of the Australian Curriculum.

Distinguishing between AC general capability and central human capability approaches

Educational capabilities have been commonly characterised as predetermined skills, competencies, outcomes, and processes primarily focused on an individual's functioning. These have been argued to possibly limit choice, opportunity and freedom (Terzi 2007), particularly for those educationally marginalized. In the design of the AC, seven general capabilities: literacy; numeracy; information and communication technology (ICT); critical and creative thinking; personal and social capability; ethical understanding; and intercultural understanding, were identified to complement key learning areas. As an example, literacy was deemed as an integral social justice component fundamental to success in all learning areas and to participate effectively and fully in today's highly literate society (ACARA 2013b; Winch et al. 2006). Overarching AC literacy processes include comprehending texts through listening, reading and viewing, and composing texts through speaking, writing and creating. These were developed for foundation to year ten students (ACARA 2013b). The literacy capability aimed to promote skills, competence, behaviours and dispositions addressing benchmarks of what is expected of students across a literacy learning continuum from level 1 (foundation) to level 6 (year 10) (ACARA 2013). In response to draft literacy capability curriculum documents, level 1 was subsequently revised and divided into five sub-levels; from 1a-1e to include early literacy skills emphasising communication. This targeted increased access to the literacy capability for SWDs (ACARA 2013a).

This paper not only advocates for the general capabilities approach advanced by the AC, but proposes applying a central human capabilities to curriculum and pedagogy further opens opportunities and freedoms (Nussbaum 2011; Sen 2009) for SWDs. This approach not only provides access to curriculum and pedagogy, but could broaden the scope of what and how to teach whilst identifying desirable and valued outcomes for SWDs. Young (2008) supports this notion by questioning what is actually prescribed as educationally worthwhile knowledge, and for SWDs this is a pertinent issue. Providing a central human capabilities approach which is sensitive to cultural difference (Nussbaum 2003) advances current curriculum and pedagogical emphasis on SWDs functioning, by exploring who they are, what they choose to do, while providing real opportunities and alternatives (Anand, Hunter & Smith 2005). This relies on educators placing SWDs in a position of capability to function (Nussbaum, 2003).

Given the commitment to educate SWDs through mainstream education and advance their rights to educational participation (Disability Standards for Education 2005) on the same basis as students without disabilities, exploring pedagogies for inclusion of SWDs in the

literacy capability of the AC is important. This is particularly important as SWDs have been traditionally marginalised from mainstream curriculum developments. Further to this, applying a central human capabilities lens may advance SWDs opportunity to access and attain relevant literacy capabilities. In essence, this paper is exploring how the AC can positively enhance these central human capabilities to improve educational outcomes and quality of life for SWDs. But this raises the question of what human capabilities are deemed as central?

Ten central human capabilities

Nussbaum explicitly identified ten central capabilities for all humans to live and act with dignity (2003, 2007), as an extension of Sen (1985) and her own work. She advocated a definitive list of the most central capabilities and fundamental entitlements which in her view were superior to human rights. Nussbaum (2003) argued how rights were only secured when the relevant capabilities to function were present. These proposed capabilities include: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reasoning; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's emotions. Nussbaum (2003) described how these are not fixed but open to contesting, however she challenges that these capabilities may open opportunity. This approach endorses SWDs capabilities rather than focusing purely on their functioning, so they can get on with the lives they prefer by enhancing the choice set available to them (Anand, Hunter & Smith 2005).

Elaborating on the ten central human capabilities, Nussbaum (2003) advocates how all individuals should be able to live, have good health including nourishment and shelter, and be able to move freely with integrity. She also claims that opportunity to use one's senses, to imagine, be free to express thoughts and practical reasoning are central human capabilities. The opportunity to experience emotion, feel attachment and affiliation with humans and other species, promotes capabilities of living with and engaging in one's environment, whilst being empowered to take control and responsibility. Finally, being able to play, laugh and enjoy activities were fundamental entitlements. So if these ten central human capabilities are deemed essential for all individuals, then how do teachers perceive they are promoted through the AC literacy capability? The key measure of the AC success will be whether the curriculum genuinely caters for all students. This is particularly important for the immediate needs of SWDs who experience lower educational achievements, less economic participation and poorer health outcomes. Such outcomes are due to barriers in accessing services, participation in communities and quality education. This is subsequently compounded by the increasing prevalence of individuals experiencing disability (World Health Organisation [WHO] 2011). Unless the AC enables SWDs to develop their capabilities, their marginalization will persist within education.

Case Studies: Pedagogies for inclusion

This paper explores teacher perceptions of how the ten central human capabilities are promoted by the AC literacy capability and the pedagogical tools employed. As part of a University of South Australia Divisional Research Performance Fund project, titled 'Interpretation and enactment of the Australian Curriculum literacy capability by educators of students with disability', this paper will report on findings from two case studies. Two teacher participants were purposefully selected from a mainstream (Years Reception -10) and also a special education (Years 6-12) school setting in metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia. Perspectives from both mainstream and special education settings were to provide

insight across both contexts. The mainstream teacher taught a class of 34 students, nine and ten years of age. Eight students were characterised with learning disabilities and two whom the teacher perceived to be undiagnosed with language and communication disabilities. The special education teacher taught a class of seven students aged 14-18 years. Six students presented as non-verbal and one student was semi-verbal, diagnosed with Down Syndrome. Employing a case study approach provided richness of initiatives across diverse contexts (Gerrard, et al. 2013). In particular this paper explores teachers' pedagogies for inclusion when implementing the AC literacy capability and their perceptions of promoting Nussbaum's (2003) ten central human capabilities. Teacher voice is important in understanding how curriculum design accommodates and supports SWDs in meeting aspirations of equity, access and capability (Kirk & Macdonald 2001). Whilst findings cannot be generalised, these case studies shed light on how teachers perceive the AC literacy capability to be inclusive in meeting the needs of SWDs. Genuine understanding can only come from genuine participation (Gilmore & McDermott 2006) which in this case refers to teacher engagement with the AC literacy capability.

The research process involved three semi-structured interviews (approx. 1 hour), two literacy lesson classroom observations (approx. 1 hour) and work sample and program document analysis over one school term (ten weeks) with each teacher. A naturalistic research design captured pedagogical knowledge whilst Nussbaum's (2003) ten central human capabilities was applied as a theoretical analysis framework. Capturing teacher perceptions as they enacted the literacy capability highlighted the content that SWDs had the opportunity to learn. This provides additional insight to the intended curriculum of what content ought to be covered (Kurz, et al. 2010). For the purpose of this paper, teacher perceptions of the issues surrounding pedagogies of inclusion in teaching the AC literacy capability to meet the needs of SWDs will be described. This will be followed by teachers' perceptions of how implementing the AC literacy capability promoted the ten central human capabilities.

What did the teachers say?

Curriculum and pedagogical challenges in meeting the needs of SWDs permeated teacher perceptions of their understanding and implementation of the AC literacy learning continuum level 1 (foundation) to level 6 (year 10) (ACARA 2013). Such challenges reinforce entrenched issues within the field of disability education. These include: continual curriculum and pedagogical adaptation required by teachers; lack of links to disability; pre-determined notions of worthwhile knowledge; and restricted access and opportunity for SWDs to learn. However, given the teachers commitment to meeting the diverse needs of SWDs, the AC literacy capability was viewed as an opportunity to re-evaluate existing practises and design new pedagogies of inclusion in raising expectations of SWDs learning outcomes. These included employing pedagogies of: teacher self-efficacy and positive attitude; progression and achievement; equity, flexibility, access and choice. In addition they were perceived to promote SWDs central human capabilities of integrity, affiliation and emotions, life, senses, imagination and thought. To fully understand teachers' implementation of pedagogical tools for inclusion, understanding the curriculum and pedagogical challenges is necessary. The following section begins by exploring these challenges, then turns to identify the proactive pedagogies for inclusion described by teachers which includes analysing which of the ten central human capabilities are perceived to be promoted and how.

Curriculum and pedagogical challenges for teachers

The continuum oriented AC literacy capability presents graduated benchmarks for all students moving from Foundation to Year 10. Interconnectedness between curriculum and pedagogy as described by Boomer (1991, 1992) signalling how pedagogies cannot be separated from what is being taught and learnt (Lusted, 1989), became highly evident as participants described working with SWDs. Both teachers identified that the regular curriculum has traditionally not fully provided for SWDs. In their pedagogical and curriculum implementation they have *‘to adapt, do everything on your own, lots of research and modification’*. *‘It’s a specialised way of teaching, it’s not, and it should be given value’*. Lee, et al, (2010) identify how curriculum adaptations do not necessarily alter the content, rather modify the ways the content is represented. For teachers of SWDs, this can be an *‘everyday necessity’*.

Deciding what is worthwhile knowledge?

Both teacher participants recognised their mandated responsibility in implementing the AC, but identified limitations in its design. *‘I need to use it and so for me it’s about finding what areas fit in with what I am doing and how can I, not manipulate it, but how I can pick and choose what is actually suitable to what I’m teaching’*. This accentuates Young’s (2008) notion of identifying educationally worthwhile knowledge with teachers grappling with tensions between the official curriculum and the needs of SWDs. Aligned with this issue, the graduated literacy benchmarks on the continuum proved challenging with both teachers describing that the content lacked *‘linkages to disability’*. One teacher participant described when using the continuum to program and assess student achievement, *‘you can’t really box in individuals with learning difficulties and with disabilities’*. This was further elaborated with the comment, *‘I guess the difficult thing is sometimes they don’t fit any of them really, or they might fit for comprehending but they won’t for navigating and reading or vice versa’*. Given the existing level of debate regarding the inclusion of SWDs in curriculum and assessment, there still exists a gap in research in relation to the enacted curriculum for SWDs who participate in the same assessments as their peers (Kurz, et al. 2010). Further to this, it is assumed *“that all students have a comparable opportunity to learn the assessed content”* (Kurz, et al. 2010, p. 43), which was a major challenge identified by both teacher participants in relation to the AC literacy capability and SWDs.

Developmental and age appropriate programming and assessment

Real complexity was raised by questioning what content of the literacy capability was deemed as *‘really important for these students?’* In particular, the issue of age versus developmental appropriateness of the literacy capability continuum for SWDs. Given the nature of complex comorbidity and diversity of student needs, each teacher grappled with *‘how one student may present at level 1b on the continuum in one area, whilst level 6 in another’*, which subsequently may change according to *‘different contexts and timing’*. This not only presents challenges for the teacher in programming and selection of appropriate pedagogical tools that are both age and developmentally appropriate, but also has implications for *‘how to assess and report respecting human dignity, especially when an*

adolescent is performing at a literacy capability such as level 1b'. Both teachers described the tension between *'reporting on individual learning goals within the literacy capability but also the mandated A-E grades'*. This was further exacerbated by the teachers both describing how their efforts at including SWDs in the literacy capability were often met by clauses of exemptions from regular assessment processes. One teacher produced a student report with *'Not Applicable'* across all categories. For these teachers, students' sense of identity and self-esteem was a priority, however this was a constant battle in relation to meeting system requirements. Somewhat emotionally one teacher described how seemingly small graduated learning goals for some SWDs were actually *'amazing achievements which the literacy capability continuum failed to recognise'*. She described how *'something quite limiting is the fact that you need to have something on paper when you can't really measure that amount of learning'*. These issues reinforce the incongruity between students' ability levels and the grade level standards within standardized curriculum and assessment (Lintner & Schweder 2008).

Differentiating professional judgement

Initial implementation of the AC literacy capability was described by both teachers as *'limiting'* evidenced by the comment, *'well I've been saying it's quite limited, so it hasn't really, it's not providing me a lot at the moment. I'm transferring what I know and how I understand my students to make it work'*. This reinforces how the extensive prior knowledge and skills of teachers in working with SWDs is drawn upon in adapting and differentiating regular curriculum in efforts to be inclusive. Teachers rely on their professional judgement and guess work when the original curriculum design may not specifically include SWDs (Haycock & Smith 2010). This raises the issue of whether the curriculum content was designed for a range of learner needs or rather providing a curriculum which requires as an afterthought decisions on how students with different learning needs may access the curriculum (Frattura & Capper 2006). Given the depth of challenges described by the two teachers in their understanding and enactment of the AC literacy capability for SWDs, their positive shift towards using this as an opportunity to provide pedagogies of inclusion demonstrated a deep commitment to advancing educational outcomes for SWDs.

Pedagogies for inclusion: promoting central human capabilities

The responsibility and challenges for these teachers to enact the curriculum, choose the appropriate pedagogy and assessment aligned with the literacy capability benchmarks, were also perceived in a positive light. Both teachers acknowledged the AC literacy capability as an opportunity to ensure SWDs were provided with the most appropriate curriculum and pedagogy to raise expectations and student achievement. As these teachers applied proactive measures through pedagogies of inclusion, promotion of the central human capabilities became evident. The identified pedagogies for inclusion included: pedagogies of teacher self-efficacy and positive attitude; pedagogies of progression and achievement; and pedagogies of equity, flexibility, access and choice. Each will be described in the following section.

Pedagogies of teacher self-efficacy and positive attitude

Self-efficacy when implementing the AC literacy capability was evidenced through one teacher's comment. *'I have the tools to do it, but no one knows what to do with it, I think what I am doing is as good as, as any other, we're just trying to do the best we can with the stuff we've got'*. Confidence in one's own ability to implement the AC literacy capability for SWDs was also reinforced through the comment *'...you're doing it without even realising it half the time'*. However, this self-efficacy was repositioned through using the AC to re-evaluate what they teach. Both teachers were looking for new pedagogies that they normally wouldn't have (Lintner & Schweder 2008) when challenged with new content and meeting the needs of SWDs.

Self-efficacy was expressed by both teachers in their pedagogical knowledge to engage, scaffold and implement a repertoire of strategies to individualise curriculum (Pearce, Gray & Campbell-Evans 2009). This was reinforced by positive teacher attitude as evidenced by the comment, *'I think we've got, currently we're in a really good position to have some really, really big impacts with these students'*. Additionally progressive philosophy was expressed;

'I don't think it should be a stagnant thing either. It's something that should keep evolving, so it's obviously going to be a dynamic continuum...I think that the newer curriculums will just, will evolve with student's learning hopefully'.

Through these pedagogies, the central human capabilities of integrity, thought and life were embedded. Positive teacher attitudes and self-efficacy towards individualising the curriculum to meet SWDs needs was described as paramount in providing relevant learning to challenge thinking at the appropriate level. As such it was perceived that SWDs would maintain their integrity as valued class members, which builds their self-worth and quality of life experiences.

Pedagogies of self-efficacy and positive attitude were posited as essential to inclusion of SWDs in the literacy capability of the AC, however emphasis on advocating higher expectations for student progression and achievement were also expressed.

Pedagogies of progression and achievement

'Moving with the students, it's not really about us is it, it's about them'.

Student achievement is undeniably the core business of education and arguably this can be more effective when teachers apply pedagogies to move with students aligned with their knowledge, skills and capacities. The teachers in this study viewed the AC literacy continuum as a tool for progression;

'so movement forward, so having a starting point, I guess you have to know where your students are, so a lot of pre-assessment stuff is really important and then working out yeah, working out where they fit in initially on that continuum and how they can progress along it'.

The structure of the literacy continuum was described by one teacher as ‘*clearly laid out how one thing leads to the next*’, whilst acknowledging the individuality and achievement needs of each student. ‘*I can use different levels within my year level and if that’s not possible I can go back to other year levels as well*’. This notion of individual progression was further supported by the comment;

‘...the way that I understand continuum is that ideas presented in one level are then built on in the next and we’re trying to prepare them for whatever the next level might be. I mean sometimes the kids can’t work at the level that is designated for year four so they’ll work at a different level but I’m trying to prepare them for whatever levels coming next’.

Teacher responsibility for providing the pedagogies for SWDs literacy progression permeated teacher interviews as was reflected in the following;

‘Looking through where some of my students sit at the moment, to actually increase, to go up that ladder, looking at for example texts and construction of and that’s quite challenging and that’s something I need to really, really look at, just how I can get my student up to that level. Again, takes a long time and I haven’t been working with these guys for very long but yeah...the learning continuum, how do I keep going up, because that’s what it’s about isn’t it?’

This responsibility was further emphasised and aligned with raising teacher expectations for student achievement and progression along the literacy continuum. ‘*Maybe there are ways I can be changing it, so I can be getting my students a bit more rapidly towards those kinds of things*’. Such pedagogies promote the central human capabilities of affiliation and emotions to ‘make them feel like they’re successful in their learning’ (Nussbaum 2003).

‘When students have success, they’re quite pleased with their results and happy... you get an instant reaction and you can see it, whether it’s a gesture or a laugh or you know movement, it’s evident through that. Which is cool, it’s instant...it’s huge evidence I think’.

Providing opportunity for emotional development such as feeling happy about achievements rather than fear and anxiety (Nussbaum 2011) is essential in promoting central human capabilities. Teacher relationships through creating attachments and emotional connection with SWDs which advocate success and achievement are crucial in their development. Engaging in the AC, alongside peers and with teacher support, opens opportunities for SWDs to develop affiliations on the ‘social basis of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others’ (Nussbaum 2011 p.34). Awareness by teachers in this study to increase their expectation to progress SWDs learning and achievement along the AC literacy continuum, advances the capabilities approach of advancing ‘what people are actually able to do and be’ (Sen 1985). Rather than limiting curriculum design and pedagogies on SWDs functioning, that is, what they are doing, pedagogies for inclusion advance a capabilities approach focusing on the set of alternatives

and real opportunities they are provided (Anand, Hunter & Smith 2005). Ultimately, this promotes equity, flexibility, access and choice in relation to the AC literacy capability for SWDs.

Pedagogies of equity, flexibility, access and choice

'My expectations are quite high. I think they are more than capable of achieving good results. I think it's just about presenting it in a format that's accessible I guess. It's all about access really. Access is a huge thing and equity'.

For SWDs concerns of access and equity under the realm of inclusive education presents a long history with some students excluded, not engaging in meaningful learning, or underachieving (Florian & Rouse 2009). This challenges SWDs ability to develop central human capabilities of life, senses, imagination and thought. For these teachers, presenting and adapting the curriculum in an accessible form, cultivates SWDs ability 'to use imagination and producing works and events of one's own choice' (Nussbaum 2011, p.33). As one teacher described, *'having that sense of choice, and being able to be part of your learning'* promotes 'freedom of expression' (Nussbaum 2011, p.33).

When further identifying how the AC literacy capability promotes central human capabilities, the special education site teacher described her perspective in relation to students presenting as non-verbal. She saw the importance of promoting the capability of life exclaiming, *'I see them using literacy on a daily basis, to live! To support them to have quality of life and to have choice, to have a voice, even if they don't, even if its non-verbal'*. This teacher further elaborated on promoting the capabilities of senses imagination and thought of students presenting as non-verbal. *'The comprehension that's going on inside even though she can't communication is really quite high, it's about being able to tap into that, to actually see what students know and how they display it'*. This demonstrated the teacher's personal commitment in applying pedagogies of equity, flexibility, access and choice, which were further expanded with the comment, *'our ways of capturing and understanding it should be kind of expanded'*. Philosophical approaches such as these reflect the teacher's commitment to promoting the separate capabilities of each student rather than normative curriculum and pedagogical approaches (Nussbaum 2011).

Pedagogies of inclusion addressing equity and flexibility were also identified through applying multimodal and digital methodology. The teachers' broadened notion of literacy texts, included written, visual and multimodal approaches. *'When it says the word text, a piece of writing. Any piece of writing or it can be a visual text or it can be multimodal, anything that's giving them information, anything that's telling them something, anything that's trying to persuade them or demonstrate or explain'*. For these teachers, texts were no longer seen as just pen and paper. Instead;

'...text can be anything whether you're looking at an interactive story like a talking book or whether you're looking at you know, digital literacies, can be YouTube clip, it can be a song, and you know I'm talking about lyrical, especially with the students who are non-verbal and you're using sign language. I look at it pretty broadly, the definition of text, yeah it's not just you know a

book that you open and close, texts are all around us all the time, and especially when you're talking about also instructional stuff and responses'.

Within a setting with students presenting as non-verbal, technology and the visual literacies were the '*biggest strengths*' of the AC literacy capability. Previously, some of these SWDs have been constrained by literacy curriculum content, design and pedagogy, whereas technological advances have opened opportunities for increased access and engagement to promote capabilities focused on what SWDs 'are free to do' (Anand, Hunter & Smith 2005, p.9).

'I just think it's engaging and I think for a lot of students that have learning difficulties, I think it's a really good, I think it's a really powerful tool for learning. We all learn in different ways and I think it's really, it's actually equitable learning in that everyone has access to it. It's inclusive.'

Further evidence of how multimodal and digital literacies promoted central human capabilities through expanding learning opportunities for SWDs were described;

'they're quite excited by it because they're such visual learners and they really switch on, you can just see, they're excited to be here, they're excited and so, it's kind of that unconscious learning isn't it, it's just happening, just flowing. It's interacting and it's instant, like its cause and effect, its instant'.

This was immediately followed by the comment;

'I just can't imagine what it would have been like for these students without digital literacies. It must have been absolute hell, I mean there's still a lot of sensory stuff you can do, don't get me wrong, there's lots of physical things and still lots of visual experiences you can give those students but it's just so empowering'.

Broadening access and flexibility in teacher pedagogy when implementing the AC literacy capability through digital and multimodal approaches, not only promotes equity and choice for SWDs, but enhances central human capabilities of integrity and emotion. Being able to engage more fully in the curriculum through broadened opportunities and experience progression and academic achievement, which may have previously been inaccessible, contributes to a good life. This enables SWDs to move more freely and with integrity in the educational setting, whilst experiencing positive emotions associated with learning. '*Capturing those students success during that moment is pretty special and that's stuff I'd like to share with parents or carers*'. Therefore, whilst teachers are challenged with implementing the literacy capability of AC, inclusive of SWDs, applying pedagogies of inclusion provides opportunity to promote central human capabilities of life, senses, imagination, thought, emotions and affiliation which are deemed as essential for every person.

Conclusion

As Australia embarks on implementing its first national curriculum for all students, exploring pedagogies for inclusion of SWDs in the AC is imperative. For too long teachers of SWDs have grappled with tensions between normative and segregated curriculum design, with neither approach prioritizing the development of SWDs central human capabilities, that is what they can do and be (Sen 1985). Whilst the two teacher perspectives in this paper cannot be generalised for the entire SWDs teaching profession, identification of pedagogies for inclusion in the AC literacy capability of: teacher self-efficacy and positive attitude; progression and achievement; and equity, flexibility, access and choice, provide a proactive approach to ensure SWDs needs are included within the Australian Curriculum. Whilst the teachers in this study identified challenges in curriculum design, including the step by step literacy continuum with limited links to disability, their confidence and professional responsibility was demonstrated in pedagogical approaches of being flexible and responsive to individual needs, engaging in new approaches to broaden curriculum accessibility, and increase expectations and rate of learning progression.

Teachers of SWDs have always committed to pedagogies of inclusion, however of educational significance, the importance of promoting central human capabilities for SWDS has been identified in this paper in the context of the AC literacy capability. Through advancing opportunities, alternatives and choices, through pedagogies of SWDs can develop Nussbaum's ten central human capabilities. These are deemed essential for any person to live a dignified life through securing fundamental entitlements to life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination, thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over one's environment. This paper has presented the perspectives of two teachers and how applying a central human capabilities approach to the teaching of the AC literacy capability can open opportunities for SWDS to show what they can do and are able to be (Sen, 1985, Nussbaum, 2003). SWDs have an entitlement to accessing the AC literacy capability and demonstrate their achievement which is aptly summarised by the following teacher comment;

'I think they can do anything: I think it's, the term literacy is quite broad, I think it can encompass a lot, a lot of learning, a lot of things. Like every learning is literacy really. It's embedded in everything: I think they can be quite successful'.

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