Beginning teachers and Inclusive Education: Frustrations, Dilemmas and Growth

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Scholars report desirable outcomes for all participants in classrooms where diverse learners are welcomed members. Data suggests teachers leave the profession early because of the demands of their work made increasingly difficult by the diverse range of students, lack of assistance to support the diverse range of student needs, and the resulting burnout. This paper presents qualitative data from six beginning teachers, juxtaposed with the author’s personal narrative, to illustrate the ongoing problems beginning teachers face, contending with political, historical and cultural barriers when teaching students with diverse learning needs. Despite policy advances and mandated courses in inclusive education in initial teacher education, beginning teachers are overwhelmed by the magnitude of teaching diverse learners in contemporary classrooms. Of note in the data are the preservice teachers’ fluid conceptions of inclusive education. The polarity of success and failure of inclusive education is re-envisioned through Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizome. The data illustrate the challenges and messiness of learning to become an inclusive educator. It is important to listen to the experiences of beginning teachers given the value of supportive classroom environments for students with diverse needs and the impact creating these environments has on beginning teachers’ longevity in the profession.

Keywords: inclusive education; beginning teachers; Deleuze; emotion
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Introduction

Teaching is a highly emotional reality, a marvellously and frustratingly complex mix of deliberate intent and serendipity, purpose, and surprise (Brookfield 2006, xii)

One of the most poignant incidents in my time as a beginning teacher, almost 30 years ago, was when I was teaching 66 Year 4 students in a double teaching space with another graduate teacher. Megan, one of my students, used an FM system to enhance the effectiveness of her hearing aids in the classroom.

Megan was doing exceptionally well at school, matching students at the top end of her grade. However, similar to many graduate and long standing teachers faced with teaching students who appear to sit outside the norm (Spratt and Florian 2014), I was anxious about my ability to teach a student with a disability. I raised my angst with the guidance officer about how my lack of experience might prevent Megan from sustaining her high academic achievement. The response of the guidance officer was chilling. I was told that I needed to grow up and accept that because Megan was deaf she would never reach her full potential.

But my experience was 30 years ago! Surely there has been considerable change in the experiences of beginning teachers since that time.

Using the lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizome, this paper shares the journey of six beginning teachers. Specifically, it examines what Julie Allan (2008) refers to as the four territories of failure in inclusive education which she contends become ‘likely to entrench teachers’ sense of failure in the long term’ (Allan 2008, 19) with the potential to contribute to teachers’ exhaustion and burnout.

Informing literature

The following literature reports on the impact of teacher training, teacher beliefs, and emotions on how inclusive education is perceived and enacted in classrooms. It concludes with a call to recognise the contribution beginning teachers can make as advocates for inclusive education and the risk this poses for their longevity in teaching if not supported in the process.
Despite a growing focus on diversity and inclusive education in initial teacher education (ITE) programs, an emerging corpus of research literature suggests preservice teachers are still uncomfortable with the prospect of teaching students with additional support needs (Spratt and Florian 2014). Inclusive education policies and practices demand ‘a focus on all learners who are vulnerable to exclusion and to exclusionary pressures within society’ (Lambe 2011, 976). To counter the risk of exclusion careful deliberation is needed to maximise the benefits of education for all students. However, also important is the preparation of and ongoing support for new teachers working in classrooms with diverse student populations so they remain in the profession to work as agents of change. In Australia, contemporary teacher training programs are now required to offer programs that develop requisite knowledge and skills to plan for and manage learning programs for students across a full range of abilities (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL] 2011). These programs are underpinned by the policies such as United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child (1989) and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006) which ratified a child’s right to quality education that meets their needs regardless of ability or the financial standing of their family. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994) also called for the development of inclusive schools to combat discriminatory attitudes and support students to obtain a full education.

Retention of beginning teachers is a concern in Australia and internationally (Ewing and Manuel, 2005). In Australia the attrition rate of teachers is increasing (Queensland College of Teachers [QCT] 2013). Goddard and Goddard’s (2006) study conducted in Queensland, Australia found a meaningful association between a serious intention to leave the teaching profession and burnout levels reported by teachers beginning their teaching careers. A Canadian study reports a 30% attrition rate during the first five years for all new teachers in Ontario (Ontario College of Teachers 2004), citing a lack of support to adjust to the demands of the classroom as the most common reason for leaving the profession. Similarly in America, Ingersoll (2012) reports 30–50% of new teachers leave the field within their first five years while a study by Hong (2010) reports pre-service teachers tended to have naïve and idealistic perceptions of teaching, and dropout teachers showed most emotional burnout. Training teachers who are; reflective, adaptive practitioners, aware of the complexities and demands of
teaching, and willing to question schooling practices that do not work, is paramount to preparing and retaining teachers who promote the ideals of inclusive education (McKay, Carrington, and Iyer 2014).

Allan notes the limitations in inclusive education are a result of four territories of failure: ‘confusion, frustration, guilt and exhaustion’ (2008, 9). Confusion exists over ‘how to create inclusive environments within schools and about how to teach inclusively’ (Allan 2008, 10). The accountability culture, challenging student behaviours, large class sizes, lack of in-class support and a public perception about teachers’ poor performance have contributed to frustration towards the inclusive movement. Teachers who are time poor and perceive they are letting students down often experience a sense of guilt. Guilt is a conditioned response we experience when we feel we have compromised our values and belief system. Inclusion is often constructed as a technical matter through textbooks and curriculum guides when the reality is a far more complex process that is value laden and driven by teachers’ beliefs.

Emotions are ‘a significant part of being a teacher’ (Flores and Day 2006, 220). The emotional climate of the classroom is determined by the interplay of students, teachers, administration and other staff, and parents. Structural, political, social and economic factors added to this social junction strengthen or diminish the emotional capacity of teachers (Flores and Day 2006). Attending to attitudes and beliefs, as well as skill development, in ITE programs is vital in developing an inclusive educator with a coherent identity. This process includes helping them to negotiate the dissonance between theory and practice, to create a ‘language of possibility’ (Giroux, 1988) around inclusive education that challenges the audit culture burgeoning in schools.

The current audit culture serves to exclude some students by limiting teaching practices, narrowing curriculum, and contributing to the deficit language that surrounds students with disabilities or learning difficulties (Dulfer, Polesel, and Rice 2012). Audit practices, such as high stakes testing ‘[organise] and stratif[y] individuals … to normalize dispositions, aptitude and conduct’ (Thompson and Cook 2012, 572).

An Australian study by Carroll, Forlin, and Jobling (2003) noted ITE programs had limitations in equipping teachers for inclusion because related emotional factors, vulnerability, and coping mechanisms were not explored. Bartolomé suggests teacher-training programs need more focus on ‘hegemonic ideologies that inform ... perceptions
and treatment of subordinated students’ (2008, x) while Sosu, Mtika and Colucci-Gray (2010) highlight the need to provide preservice teachers opportunities to build skills and confidence to implement the practicalities of inclusion.

Florian, Young, and Rouse (2010) identified three key elements of inclusive practice: seeing difference as an ordinary part of human development, a sense of efficacy in teaching diverse learners, and new ways to work collaboratively. When difference is seen as part of human development teachers respond is ways to ensure students belong in the classroom by providing a wide net of academic and social learning experiences. Variations in levels of challenge, interests, delivery modes and methods of assessment are at the forefront of planning and delivery.

Innovative pedagogical approaches rely heavily on teachers’ views in relation to students experiencing difficulties with learning. Teachers are more likely to seek new approaches to meet students’ needs when they see the diverse needs of students as a dilemma; a social construct resulting from a range of variables (Fransson and Gannäs 2013) for teaching rather than an innate problem within the student (Hart, Drummond, and McIntyre 2007). Beginning teachers’ thinking about learning and teaching does not shift along a predetermined set of undertakings (McKay 2013). It is a messy, ongoing process, not unidirectional, or consistent across all aspects of practice. While the shifts are related to personal factors, institutional supports are also significant in transformation of their views (McKay 2013). Their perceptions about teaching and learning are rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987): growing and changing, sometimes returning to original forms and then growing and changing in a new direction or remaining dormant ready to grow at another time (Gregoriou 2004). Adequate ongoing support to develop the pedagogical skills required to respond to the dilemmas beginning teachers encounter developing inclusive classrooms is one factor that can support growth and change.

Using the lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizome, this paper shares the journey of six beginning teachers. Specifically, it examines what Julie Allan (2008) refers to as the four territories of failure in inclusive education which threaten teachers’ sense of efficacy and contribute to teachers’ exhaustion and burnout.

**Project overview and research approach**

**Data collection and participants**
The study reported in this paper was conducted over two years, and comprised two parts. Part A involved data collection by the use of semi-structure interviews and reflective diaries during the final year of university of the 4-year Bachelor of Education course. Seven of the initial 14 participants gained full-time employment teaching in primary schools post-graduation and continued onto Part B of the study. During Part B data were collected through reflective diary entries, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. A classroom observation protocol was used to focus observations and allowed the researcher to gain information the participant may not have offered during the interview and to triangulate other data. Interviews were used to clarify information or elicit further details obtained from the diary entries and provided opportunities for data follow up during analysis. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and checked by the participant for accuracy. All participants used the optional template provided to complete their reflective diaries. The diary template included questions such as:

- Describe a situation drawn from any school day this week involving a student who you consider is experiencing learning difficulties
- What influenced how you acted in this situation?
- How would you deal with this situation next time?

**Using the rhizome to understand the data**

A wide body of literature is developing in the field of teacher education drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari. Cole (2011) notes a Deleuzian approach to change in education allows insider knowledge to prevail. Transformation from within can spread and gather impetus rather than relying on hierarchical forces to drive change. Carrington and Iyer (2011) use Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome to illustrate the ongoing shift in subject positions evident in the reflection logs of preservice teachers as they apply theory to practice in service learning contexts.

‘The rhizomatic model for data analysis allows new possibilities for thinking about how preservice teachers learn about inclusive education’ (Carrington and Iyer 2011, 11). Rhizomatic wanderings have the potential to present an alternative view of preservice and beginning teachers’ current understandings of difference. In contrast to the four territories of failure (Allan 2008), participants also experienced a certain level of confidence, passion, satisfaction, and enthusiasm. Re-interpreted as ruptures that
occur in participants’ values, attitudes and beliefs, new lines of flight contribute to transformation and challenge the perceived dichotomy of success and failure often associated with inclusive education.

This paper reports on one theme, *emotional responses to inclusion*. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) analogy of the rhizome is used to unpack the frustrations of six of the participants as they negotiated the challenges and dilemmas of creating inclusive classrooms.

Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of the rhizome is offered as a way to consider the fluid notion of identity (Boylan and Woolsey 2015), and to disrupt the linear and layered thinking (Honan 2007) about teacher development and conventional knowledge about difference (Allan 2004). A rhizome is a tubular plant that grows beneath the ground. When conditions are right the plant sends off shoots in many, irregular directions. Deleuze and Guattari identify four elements of the rhizome: connection and heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture and cartography and decalcomania.

Applied to preservice and beginning teachers’ identity development, connection and heterogeneity refers to how practitioners connect theories of learning differences and inclusive education to the actual learning experiences in the classroom. Multiplicity refers to the new knowledge that is created when teachers connect theory from university to the experiences at the school site. Asignifying rupture occurs as teachers apply the multiplicity to consider new practices through critical reflections. Cartography and decalcomania explain how beginning teachers select their classroom practices. Tracings occur when beginning teachers mimic or copy the practices of the mentor teachers without considering why they engage in those particular practices or who is marginalised because of the choices. Mapping occurs when preservice teachers reflect on contextual and personal factors to select appropriate strategies. The rhizome is offered as a useful metaphor to understand the messy and complex process of developing as an inclusive educator.

**Exploring the data**

**The complexity of teaching**

Establishing a positive classroom climate conducive to inclusive education, while dealing with the additional responsibilities, was confronting for participants as they
came to terms with the reality of teaching and what it entailed. Confusion about inclusive teaching existed on two levels for the participants: (1) their role in responding to students with additional support needs, and (2) how inclusive spaces were created. As preservice teachers Pepper, Edweena, and Theresa positioned themselves in a nurturer role, expressing an overwhelming sense of responsibility and helplessness. The high levels of sympathy expressed are significant because they may lower teachers’ expectations of students experiencing learning difficulties (Woolfson and Brady 2009). The responsibility of teaching was magnified as the preservice teachers aimed for total control as they addressed the academic standards of students in teacher-centred classrooms.

Comments such as the following were indicative of the confusion preservice teachers expressed about how education was serving some students and what this meant for their role as teachers. While Pepper and Theresa’s emotional distress was evident through tearful breakdowns during the interviews, Edweena and Sandra’s comments appeared to be driven by fear of their limited capacity to fulfil their new role.

How can they be in grade 7 and still not be able to read? (Pepper)
What am I supposed to do? … I haven’t had … experience in teaching children with learning difficulties. (Theresa)
I feel that when I am teaching my own class … I will feel less confident to support these students. (Edweena)
I am beginning to realise I am totally and utterly out of my depth when dealing with students … (from the special education program) … I am very, very concerned about my future classroom. (Sandra)

Edweena explained she was ‘frustrated [by] … the way students talk[ed] to [her] and other people’, however, she remained calm and aimed for respectful interactions. Her approach may have appeared ineffective at face value. Lessons were disrupted as her focus shifted to management of student behaviour but Edweena preserved respectful relationships necessary in inclusive classrooms.

As a preservice teacher Theresa described how she was also frustrated by student behaviour. She explains her experience with one student.

I was pretty much being my mentor teacher, doing what she would have normally done. … I will do the same thing in the same way and they’ll just be like No. They just refuse…. I guess I was trying to set a bit of an example to show the kids that I do mean business, that I am not going to be walked all over. … He had a good rapport with my mentor teacher… I don’t have that…. I
would try to give him allowances… try to get him on side and he old just abuse
it and it would disappoint me and that use to really annoy me. (Theresa as
preservice teacher)

Her frustration, fuelled by insecurity and disappointment influenced her
pedagogical choices as she became ‘more inclined to help the others, as they weren’t
being rude or disrupting the class’ (Theresa). Over time Theresa identified her
contribution to the negative student-teacher exchanges and developed her own
behaviour management strategies.

I think I’m getting there. There are still days where obviously you don’t feel
you are making progress but I think looking back over the space of the year I
have come a long way … some of them haven’t … I guess it still falls back on
my teaching. … Everyday there is a new experience to tackle. I am getting
better … and am more confident with that … I let a little bit slide … trying to
keep them on a really tight leash doesn’t really help … giving them a bit of
leeway is good for them. (Theresa as beginning teacher)

In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) terms, by assigning ruptures she created a map rather
than a tracing of her supervising teachers’ practices that better suited her style, situation,
and relationship with the student. As a beginning teacher Theresa improved
relationships with her students based on trust and respect. Relationships were enhanced
as Theresa relinquished some control and power back to the students.

As a preservice teacher Jack taught a student who used a wheelchair and access
was restricted to some areas of the classroom. The student’s modified desk was
separated from the other students. Being taken from the classroom three times a day for
toileting also disrupted the learning and socialisation opportunities. Jack explained,

I think the whole class should be set up differently. I think inclusion is great but I
think there are points where there is a mix up like physically he is in the class but a
lot of the time, you know what is the point? It’s not benefiting him. I think it is
great for him to have time with kids and stuff but as far as learning and that goes-
you know half the time he doesn’t know what is going on because he has been
gone for half an hour (toileting). He’ll come into the classroom and … I’ll give him
a sheet but it is too difficult … to me it is not working.

Jack’s attempt to reconfigure the classroom to provide the student with full access
was disregarded by the supervising teacher. Jack identified alternative ways of
combating physical barriers to inclusion, but despite an awareness of the barriers,
preservice teachers may not have the skills or authority to enact change. Jack also
struggled to transfer the concepts taught at university in relation to differentiating the
curriculum to the school site. Organisation of space and time was problematic for Jack,
but his comments regarding the student’s challenges to complete the worksheet inadvertently redirected the problem and the barriers to learning back onto the child. Data indicated other participants also shared this challenge, particularly in relation to providing additional support for learners.

Participants continued to identify one-on-one support as a key strategy for responding to student difference. This strategy compounded the additional strain on their time and energy when they were trying to manage the increasing responsibilities of whole class teaching.

Participants described ‘feeling tired and overwhelmed’ (Edweena) not only dealing with lesson planning and implementation, but ‘keeping track of all the paper work and referrals and the reporting, and behaviour’ (Edweena). What became more noticeable as the participants were required to manage whole class responsibilities were the shifting targets of their feelings. Frustration shifted between their own inadequacy, lack of support from the school, the role the parents played and then to the students, targeting their behaviour and lack of engagement and motivation. However, over time there was evidence of a growing sense of efficacy. Extracts drawn from Pepper’s preservice to beginning year of teaching data provide an example.

I had a really bad week … I was just fed up with the kids attitude and I just was really upset … I am trying so hard and not getting anywhere. (Preservice teacher)

It makes me sad that she is still unable to read… I don’t like that she doesn’t get any additional help from the school. (Preservice teacher)

Sometimes I can see it is not working, I’ll just switch topics … I feel confident enough to do that… I tried to incorporate ICT … I became more confident in my teaching and my ability to be able to just think of something off the top of my head. … I’m a bit scared of the parents at the moment … and scared because I am going to be in control next year. (Preservice teacher)

I feel like I am teaching to the middle … I need to do more with these kids but when they are so demanding and it is so hard to get that 10 minutes to sit with them.(Beginning teacher)

The kids who are not paying attention to me with their seats rocking… they are not going to get it done and I have to spend time with them later … they don’t learn anything because they want to get on the carpet and play…. and the rest get lazy and don’t do their work.(Beginning teacher)

I get so sad … I am disheartened because the parents just don’t care … they can’t even be bothered to learn my name. (Beginning teacher)
I think at the beginning of the year I was like can I really do this? I had no idea what I was doing. I have definitely gotten more confident … because I feel like I have learnt so much and … I now know I can do it. (Beginning teacher)

**Developing pedagogical knowledge and skills**

Participants reported they rarely witnessed models of inclusive practice during the professional experience. As a preservice teacher Logan described how her practice became more influenced by her understanding of the students as she became less conscious of herself and ‘more aware of what the kids were doing, which … was much better for them and it became really easy’ (Logan). However, as a beginning teacher she expressed frustration at not having ‘enough time to support all of the students in the best possible way.’ Trying to maintain control of all aspects of the teacher-directed classroom, including providing one-on-one support for students became overwhelming.

Partner work and peer tutoring was a strategy used by many participants to reduce the need for one-on-one teacher support. Edweena recalled a surprising partnership between two students.

Some students I did not expect to work well actually really encouraged each other. Two low students had this real competitiveness between them and they pushed each other and they worked better than anyone in the class. I’m not sure how I managed it, it just found its way.

Peer tutoring and partner work freed the teacher to work with a range of students. Although finding it initially unsuccessful, Theresa and Sandra re-attempted peer tutoring as they became more confident. They provided leadership opportunities for students that, as observed by the researcher, resulted in more cohesive learning spaces. Sandra and Theresa remained open to contingency; their practices, like the rhizome were continually open to review and renegotiation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Transformation of their perceptions of teaching as a shared responsibility with the students rather than a transaction they had to control evolved.

Participants expressed frustration ‘working with one student when so many others … needed one-on-one help as well’ (Logan) and students ‘refusing to use the help because they [did not] want to be different’ (Edweena) and did not ‘like being singled out’ (Theresa). These participants may not have considered the unintended implications of their practice, and perhaps did not consider including the students’ voice in the decision-making. Edweena expressed frustration in relation to wasted time and resentment towards students who resisted the support she provided.
I am trying to make it more interesting … when things get cancelled or they have to go somewhere, that is frustrating … I had gone to a lot of effort to make a booklet for a child … But he didn’t like it. He didn’t touch it and I had spent all this time preparing it.

Their attempts to respond to student difference reflected the control participants perceived as part of teaching and how they centred themselves in the learning process. The participants were still developing a professional identity and this along with limited skills could have contributed to conflict between their assumptions and beliefs, and their actual practice (Carrington 1999).

Participants described their confusion linking theory and practice noting that including all students was not an easy or straightforward process. Their growth as inclusive educators took on the form of the rhizome: it stalled, changed direction, erupted, and changed form (Gregoriou 2004) as they attempted to overcome the barriers. Edweena described it as time consuming with students reluctant to ‘even attempt the work.’ She realised her early attempts were unrealistic because she was still trying to establish behaviour expectations and relationships with the students. However, as the year progressed Edweena changed her focus and was able to provide the ‘whole class, not just those students that are lower … more hands on activities.’ Despite constantly struggling with students who ‘refus[ed] to use the help’, Edweena continued to reflect on new possibilities introducing less obtrusive supports available to all students.

I have this shelf and it has got different resources for Maths and English both to support and extend. I call it the resource shelf. I didn’t want the connotation of it being for the ‘dumb’ kids … I might suggest in a lesson … if you want to go to the shelf you can. (Edweena)

Formative assessment focussed teaching for some participants. Sandra explained how as a beginning teacher she used her observations to inform her teaching once she started to ‘gain confidence.’ In line with the value she placed on social justice and equity issues, Sandra explained she was conscious of not stigmatising students and ensured the ‘groups were flexible so students did not feel like they [were] being excluded.’ Sandra also described the team approach she established in her class.

I ask them how we can make this better because it is our class and we need to do this together… somebody else can learn from you … giving them ownership and giving up power. I was so wanting to control everything at the beginning making sure that everything was ticked….We do a lot of voting in this class… enforcing a team effort.
Sandra’s transformation into an inclusive educator, which acknowledged the value of each student, relied on several interrelated factors. Multiplicity occurred through new knowledge being formed that allowed her espoused beliefs to align more closely with her practice. Her ability to create a cohesive learning environment and increasing confidence in her knowledge and skills was significant in allowing her to develop trust in her students.

Participants claimed the theory learnt at university and the realities of teaching were quite different. Sandra explained how ‘university teaches you the content but not where it applies ... or the sequence that kids are supposed to learn things.’ However, she did contend that it was not until she ‘was actually teaching that she began to grasp these elements.’ Ruptures in participants’ thinking about teaching and learning often did not occur until they actually had to take responsibility for their own class. Most participants noted the lack of opportunity during their preservice training to observe various techniques modelled by experienced teachers. This claim is not to say it did not occur, but it may indicate limited opportunity to reflect on what they observed. The importance of observation and critical reflection, and the significance of quality mentor teachers during the practicum and intern period are highlighted (Walkington 2005).

Multiplicity is formed through an interface between critical reflection and knowledge and skills. Multiplicity occurred in situations where participants experienced coaching and on-going professional development that enabled the reflective process. As an example of growth, during the initial weeks of the beginning teacher year Pepper described how her teacher aide took guided reading because Pepper ‘didn’t have time.’ However, later in the year classroom observations revealed Pepper using formative assessment during reading lessons to immediately inform her teaching. At the same time the remainder of her class was engaged in meaningful literacy activities, some supported by the teacher aide while others worked independently. Through the support of the literacy coach and given time to observe other teachers in action, Pepper was able to develop the skills she required to address the expectations of administration and to support students experiencing difficulty. Pepper’s deeper understanding of literacy practices illustrates the importance and benefits of ongoing mentoring to cement the links between theory and practice (Walkington 2005), resulting in strategies characteristic of inclusive practice.
Learning to be a teacher is nonlinear. At times, participants described success; other times they described aborting lessons and reshaping them to suit the students’ needs. New growth in their practice was closely linked with ongoing support and the participants’ propensity for critical reflection that enabled them to assign rupture and consider alternatives to the barriers of inclusive practice, including personal beliefs.

**Shifting attitudes, values and beliefs**

Values are subjective and therefore arouse an emotional response (Larrivee 2000). Teaching is a value-laden enterprise. Therefore, emotions are a significant part of the construction of teacher identity (Zembylas 2003) and learning to teach (Flores and Day 2006). Teachers’ beliefs are influential on their practice (Beswick 2008). In particular, beliefs about student competency and teacher efficacy frame the way teachers respond to students.

Participants’ beliefs about inclusion transformed during their transition into teaching. Jack contended ‘at the start of the year [he] may have been a little more optimistic’ about inclusive education but came to question its attainability, while Sandra developed a more positive view. She explained,

> When I was in uni, it all sounded impossible to incorporate all learning abilities in the class. I now realise that the classroom is a richer place for it. Yes it is challenging …EVERYDAY. Yes there are days that I still feel it is impossible … I have come to realise that inclusive education is not doing everything for everyone all of the time, but rather doing something for everyone as much as I can.

Sandra’s transformation required changes in her beliefs and critical self-reflection. As she learned to share decision making and control, a sense of trust developed and the students became partners in the learning process (Hart, Drummond and McIntyre 2007).

The participant’s beliefs about their efficacy, in relation to inclusive teaching, were fluid during their transition into teaching. The levels of efficacy demonstrated by the participants varied within each individual. Efficacy impacted on how they responded to students experiencing learning difficulties, and their capacity to become agentic and advocate for their students. As Theresa described

> I sometimes feel that I am on a bit of a rollercoaster with these kids in relation to my ability to teach them. Some days I feel really confident and feel like I’m making a difference and getting somewhere with their learning and personal
dev development. Then other days I feel the complete opposite and question my ability and career choice. (Theresa)

Analysis of these stories is important at a time when teachers carry the burden of accountability constraints that hinder the agenda of inclusion.

**Discussion**

The use of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizome to illustrate participants’ perceptions of learning and teaching illuminated the fragility, messiness, and nonlinear development of teachers’ growth and understanding of what constitutes inclusive teaching. Participants did not work within teacher-centred practices and then move to student-centred approaches. Rather, for those who moved towards student-centred practices significant components of their teaching reflected this move in some, but not all, aspects of their work. The decisions teachers made as they responded to student difference were often influenced by how well they were supported in the context of the learning situation. Teachers’ professional identities are shaped and reshaped over time by the affiliation of contextual, cultural, and personal factors, which in turn influence their teaching practices (Flores and Day 2006).

This study found that a teacher-centred approach predominantly influenced the pedagogical choices of the new teachers. Features of a teacher-centred approach included tight control on all aspects of the classroom where the teacher assumed major responsibility for student learning. There was a focus on student compliance and participation, and curriculum driven lessons. Teachers engaged in these practices as part of a survival strategy (Flores and Day 2006) to counter inexperience and the complexity of diverse classrooms.

Fatigue levels were high for participants due to the demands on their time. In teacher-directed classrooms, lessons had a whole class focus and responses to student difference included mostly one-on-one support provided by the teacher. Positive student–teacher relationships were valued in this setting but were threatened by the position of power occupied by the teacher. Fatigue and anxiety were closely linked with attempts to respond to students who required additional attention to meet educational goals (Fantilli and McDougall 2009).

However, as participants moved towards creating more student-centred classrooms their focus shifted from themselves to their students. Elements of inclusive
teaching such as engagement and motivation, goal setting, feedback, trust, and shared responsibility were featured more predominantly in their classroom decision-making and changed the dynamics of the classroom relationships.

In student-centred classrooms the teachers took on the role of facilitator. Their success in this role was influenced by the pedagogical knowledge and skills they developed through ongoing support and professional development they received during the beginning year of teaching. Ongoing support from more experienced teachers has been found to be a major influence on teacher development (Fantilli and McDougall 2009). Participants in the current study, who received ongoing support, were able to implement responses to student difference more aligned with recognised needs through the use of student data, and these participants also demonstrated increased attention to reflective practice. They made attempts to link lessons to students’ interests, experimented with differentiated instruction, and efforts were made to individualise goal setting.

Despite the structure of professional standards upon which teachers are judged, learning to be a teacher does not shift along a predetermined set of accomplishments (Allan 2004). Shifts in the beginning teachers’ perceptions of teaching and learning is not unidirectional, or consistent across all aspects of practice, rather it is rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), growing and changing, sometimes returning to original forms and then growing and changing in a new direction or remaining dormant ready to grow at another time (Gregoriou 2004).

The participants who were well supported through mentoring and coaching were able to respond to students with learning difficulties in a variety of ways. Multiplicities emerged as connections between theory and practice were made and strengthened. Asignifying ruptures, through reflection, allowed teachers to consider and negotiate a range of dilemmas encountered in responding to the needs of diverse learners, enhancing teacher efficacy, and the level of job satisfaction.

In order to support beginning teachers to develop and enact an inclusive philosophy it is important to understand their emotional struggle as they contend with a range of contradictions and struggles in day-to-day teaching. It is not enough to provide a formula for teaching or to provide quick tip solution guides to teaching students with diverse need. We need to listen to beginning teachers’ stories to understand how to
support them through the emotional demands that threaten to push them out of teaching. Constant changes in educational policy, teaching approaches, and expectations of teachers means ongoing research is required to fully understand the dilemmas, emotional impact, and challenges beginning teachers face as they attempt to create inclusive classroom.

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