

---

Citation:

Edwards, T (2025) Beyond the 'dilemma of difference': An analysis of stories from experienced teachers, about their inclusive practice. British Educational Research Journal. pp. 1-24. ISSN 0141-1926 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.4129>

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:

<https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/11737/>

Document Version:

Article (Published Version)

---

Creative Commons: Attribution 4.0

© 2025 The Author(s)

The aim of the Leeds Beckett Repository is to provide open access to our research, as required by funder policies and permitted by publishers and copyright law.

The Leeds Beckett repository holds a wide range of publications, each of which has been checked for copyright and the relevant embargo period has been applied by the Research Services team.

We operate on a standard take-down policy. If you are the author or publisher of an output and you would like it removed from the repository, please [contact us](#) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Each thesis in the repository has been cleared where necessary by the author for third party copyright. If you would like a thesis to be removed from the repository or believe there is an issue with copyright, please contact us on [openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

# Beyond the 'dilemma of difference': An analysis of stories from experienced teachers, about their inclusive practice

Tracy Edwards 

Carnegie School of Education, Leeds  
Beckett University, Leeds, UK

## Correspondence

Tracy Edwards, Carnegie School of  
Education, Leeds Beckett University,  
Leeds, UK.  
Email: [tracy.edwards@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:tracy.edwards@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

## Funding information

Elphinstone PhD scholarship from  
University of Aberdeen

## Abstract

Efforts to strengthen inclusive practice in education have been found to be underpinned by encounters with dilemmas. In particular, much has been written about the 'dilemma of difference', which is the perceived tension between wanting to provide for individual needs in education and wanting to avoid stigmatising individuals by treating them differently to others, in order to do this. This article outlines a research study that worked with 42 'dilemma stories', from 19 experienced teachers. The majority of these stories (35) were crafted as part of a methodological approach which involved story-sharing dialogues with these teachers, transcription, and the (re)drafting of written narratives. Both phenomenography and hermeneutic phenomenology was applied to the analysis of the stories. This required an acceptance of the apparent ontological dissonance between the hermeneutic phenomenological preoccupation with the 'pre-reflective' and phenomenography's emphasis on conceptions. Through the analysis, a typology of 'four dilemmas of inclusive practice' was arrived at. This typology suggests that experienced teachers often look beyond the 'dilemma of difference' and find themselves in more nuanced predicaments, which are arguably less visible to policymakers and advisors.

## KEYWORDS

dilemma of difference, Inclusive Pedagogy, Phenomenography

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2025 The Author(s). *British Educational Research Journal* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of British Educational Research Association.

## Key insights

### What is the main issue that the paper addresses?

This paper contributes to evolving definitions of 'inclusive education' by outlining a variety of professional dilemmas associated with its implementation. In doing this, this paper also addresses considerations around inclusive practice with learners with severe, profound and/or multiple learning difficulties those at risk of exclusion and/or pupils with acute social and mental health needs requiring a multi-agency response.

### What are the main insights that the paper provides?

The term 'dilemma of difference' refers to the tension between wanting to meet individual needs and between not wanting to stigmatise individuals by treating them differently to others. Whereas much has been written about the 'dilemma of difference', this paper outlines a typology of four alternative dilemmas that were articulated by experienced teachers.

## INTRODUCTION

Multiple studies have found that the navigation of professional dilemmas is a characteristic feature of inclusive education (e.g. Florian, 2010, p. 62; Paulsrud, 2023). As the challenge of strengthening inclusive practice in schools is so complex, it has been argued, it is underpinned by complexities, ambiguities and uncertainties. Across the research literature on Inclusive Pedagogy, for example, it is highlighted that the same action within a classroom can be simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, rather than unambiguously either one of the other (e.g. Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012, p. 568). If a boy is working alone at a desk away from his peers, Florian (2012) also argues, it may indicate that he is completing an independent activity within a flexible and inclusive learning environment, or it may instead indicate that he has been forced to take 'time-out' and is being pedagogically neglected by a teacher who is more interested in working with other learners. This example, alongside others (e.g. Linklater, 2010), suggests that inclusive classroom practice does not necessarily involve absolutes. Sitting an individual child away from the class can strengthen inclusive practice on one day of the week and undermine it the next, and on both days neither arrangement may seem ideal. In working to strengthen inclusive practice, therefore, teachers and schools will arguably inevitably find themselves in situations where they are required to confront what Norwich (2010) defines as a 'dilemma' by having to make 'a choice between two alternatives, when neither is favourable' (p. 117).

The study outlined in this paper therefore focusses on 'dilemma stories' from teachers, that relate to their inclusive practice. It analyses these stories to devise a typology of dilemmas, with the broad aim of making some of the realities that underpin having to make 'a choice between two alternatives' more explicit.

## BEYOND THE 'DILEMMA OF DIFFERENCE'

A particular dilemma, emphasised in the academic literature on inclusive education, is the 'dilemma of difference'. This dilemma reflects a perceived tension between wanting to provide for individual needs and wanting to avoid any stigma that may come from treating any

individual differently in order to do this. According to Norwich (2019, p. 2), considerations around the 'dilemma of difference' established the 'basic design of individual identification and assessment system of additional needs' and remains 'the cornerstone of the system' to the present day. In his writings, he traces the dilemma back to the 1978 Warnock Report on 'The Education of Handicapped Children and Young People' (Department of Education and Science, 1978), which initially introduced the term 'Special Educational Needs'(SEN) into the English policy context. The report referred to being 'on the horns of a dilemma' (p. 42), which it responded to by recommending inclusion in mainstream schools as a universal entitlement, unless this was incompatible with access to provision, the education of other children or the efficient in the use of resources. Recommendations from the Warnock Report subsequently became law through the 1981 Education Act (Great Britain, 1981) (Table A1 and A2).

Through the variety of ways in which it has been exemplified however, the 'dilemma of difference' can be viewed as a multidimensional concept that goes beyond discussions of national education policy and infrastructure. In fact, the 'dilemma of difference' can be utilised to explore a number of choices 'between two alternatives' that can be encountered in a variety of situations. It is a dilemma that has been written about extensively by Minow (1990), who applies it to a range of contexts, including paediatric care, gender equality and religion. In relation to inclusive education, Norwich (2010) identifies three 'dilemmas of difference' (p. 116), including those that relate to the identification of SEN, those that relate to decisions around the focus for curriculum for particular SEN learners, and those that relate to school placement. There can be a 'dilemma of difference' around the curriculum for example, when school leaders are confronted with a choice between placing a small group of learners on an alternative learning programme or insisting that this group accesses the same core offer available to all. On one hand such an alternative programme may be detrimental to those in this group of learners, by lowering expectations and self-esteem. On the other hand, such a programme would also arguably be more purposeful, by addressing priorities such as the development of life skills, to enable fuller participation in the community.

In addition, in outlining and elaborating the concept of Inclusive Pedagogy, Florian (2010, e.g. p. 62) links the 'dilemma of difference' to everyday classroom practices, and the decisions which classroom practitioners have to make, in their planning and their interactions with children and young people, on a daily basis. By being based around the suggestion of 'extending what is ordinarily available for all learners' rather than on offering something additional for 'some' (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012, p. 575), the principle of Inclusive Pedagogy, it is argued, responds to the 'dilemma of difference' and offers an approach to offset any negative effects of ability labelling.

## INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY AND 'EXTENDING WHAT IS ORDINARILY AVAILABLE TO ALL'

The principle of Inclusive Pedagogy, it is also argued, is conceptually distinct from alternative ways that teachers and schools might respond to any difficulties which learners bring to their classroom (Florian & Graham, 2014), that may negatively label them, such as the setting of different and less challenging tasks for learners deemed to be low ability, which is central to the approach of differentiated instruction, associated with Tomlinson (2014). Spratt and Florian (2014, p. 130) explain that differentiation tends to be teacher-led and involve separate activities for 'some' and 'most' learners. Inclusive Pedagogy, on the other hand, involves a move away from planning for 'most and some' and a move towards planning for 'everybody' (Spratt & Florian, 2014, p. 129). Teacher planning, using an inclusive pedagogical approach for example, will probably involve considerations around 'getting the micro-culture of the classroom right, to enable all children to thrive' (Spratt & Florian, 2015, p. 90).

This does not mean that all learners experience a lesson in an identical way. It represents a departure from learners having separate, differentiated activities dispensed to them on the basis of their perceived ability.

Examples of 'extending what is ordinarily available to all' cited in studies exploring the implementation of Inclusive Pedagogy include the use of multisensory stimuli to enable all learners within a primary school class to access the same story during story time, avoiding a situation where some children are marked as 'different' and directed to an alternative activity (Spratt & Florian, 2015, p. 94). Another example is that of learners, with different levels of prior attainment working together in a lesson, to sort 'a' and 'an' words (Spratt & Florian, 2015, p. 93). In both examples the teachers move away from planning for 'most' and 'some' and instead move towards planning for 'everybody' (Spratt & Florian, 2015, p. 90), representing an alternative to seeing teaching and learning in relation to what 'works for most learners along with something different or additional for those who experience difficulties' and towards seeing it instead as 'the creation of learning activities and lessons that enable all learners to participate' (Florian, 2010, p. 712).

The principle of Inclusive Pedagogy is also conceptually distinct from other approaches such as the approach of differentiated instruction, because of the emphasis it places on the craft knowledge of teachers (e.g. Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Graham, 2014). Florian and Beaton (2018) refer to 'craft knowledge' as the 'practical wisdom', which teachers apply to their pedagogical decision-making. Within the academic literature on Inclusive Pedagogy, craft knowledge is seen as distinguishable from other forms of knowledge for working in a classroom, including specialist knowledge for working with particular Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or subject knowledge around the actual content of the curriculum being taught. Beyond specialist knowledge for teaching 'special' learners it is argued, inclusive teachers require craft knowledge to guide 'the choices they make and how they utilise specialist knowledge' (Florian & Graham, 2014, p. 466).

This study started with an interest in the principle of Inclusive Pedagogy as a unique response to the 'dilemma of difference'. The study also started with a commitment to identifying further dilemmas encountered by teachers, that subsequent developments in pedagogy and policy could possibly subsequently be formulated around.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

Through the research question 'What dilemmas relating to the teaching of complex and diverse classes are articulated by experienced teachers with an interest in inclusive pedagogical practice', this research study aimed to identify additional, more nuanced, dilemmas around inclusive education, and start to formulate a language around them.

The term 'complex and diverse classes' within the research question was defined as those which included pupils with severe and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties (SPMLD), those at risk of permanent school exclusion, pupils who have already been excluded from a school setting and/or pupils with acute social and mental health needs requiring a multi-agency response. As pointed out by Norwich (2008), it is learners with SPMLD and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties that tend to be perceived as particularly challenging in relation to inclusive education, which is something that has been more recently highlighted in data on school exclusions in England (UK Gov, 2024a) as well as the increasing numbers of children and young people in special schools and/or alternative educational provision (UK Gov, 2024b). In addition, it has also been noted by Colley (2020) that learners with SPMLD tend to be absent from research on inclusive education. By focussing the research question around 'complex and diverse' classes therefore, and by making those with

SPMLD at the centre of a working definition of 'complex and diverse', an identified gap was being addressed, and possibilities for interacting with a fuller range of dilemmas were created.

THE STUDY

A total of 42 'Dilemma Stories' were collected from 19 teachers. A small number of these teachers (seven) submitted their story as a written account, using an online form. However, the majority of participating teachers (12) gave oral accounts of their dilemmas. These oral accounts were transcribed and subsequently adapted into written stories with the researcher, through a process of co-construction, using the methodology outlined in Figure 1. This methodology was adapted from the hermeneutic phenomenological methods used by Crowther et al. (2017) for crafting stories from transcripts of interviews. The subsequent analysis of the stories also had a basis in the alternative approach of phenomenography.

Although they have shared etymological roots, in the term 'phenomenon', fundamental distinctions can be made, between hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenography, as approaches to educational research. Phenomenography is the study of the 'qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them' (Marton, 1986, p. 31) associated with the work of Ference Marton from the University of Gothenburg. Phenomenology, however, is

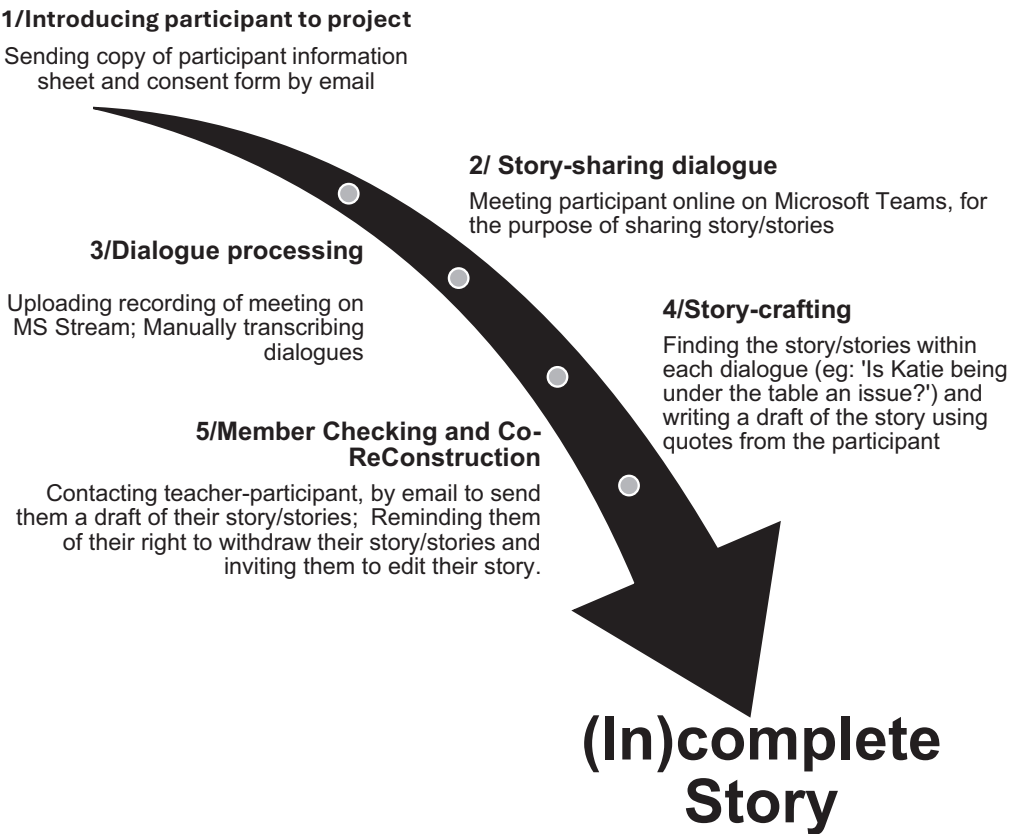


FIGURE 1 The process of crafting stories with teacher participants.



'the study of essences' (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 31) and a rich tradition spanning the early writings of Husserl (1859–1938), Heidegger (1889–1926) and contemporary figures such as van Manen (2016). Whereas the job of the phenomenographer is to elicit what the 'qualitatively different ways' of conceptualising a phenomenon are, phenomenological research questions tend to be shaped, to guide explorations into the lived experience or 'essence' of a phenomenon (or of what the phenomenon under investigation essentially 'is').

The study of the teachers' stories was based on the ontological premise that dilemmas are simultaneously conceptualised and lived through. Although much has been written about phenomenography and phenomenography being contradictory to one another (Limberg, 2008; Marton, 1981, 1986), this study therefore worked with both, thus utilising a novel approach which could be described as 'neo-phenomenography'. This approach departed from typical 'Martonesque' phenomenography by rejecting the notion that the number of possible ways in which a phenomenon could possibly be conceptualised is finite. The study therefore did not strive to establish a final and absolute set of dilemmas associated with inclusive classroom practice, but strove instead enable the 'application of logos' (language and thoughtfulness) to the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016, p. 33) of 'teacher dilemmas', that could be refined and added to in subsequent research.

## **SOURCING TEACHERS' 'DILEMMA STORIES'**

To participate in the research, teachers needed to meet the criteria of being 'experienced' and of 'having an interest in inclusive practice'. For the purposes of the study, 'experience' was defined as having a minimum of 5 years in the classroom. In the context of England, this meant that they were eligible (or within a year of being eligible) for the Upper Pay Range for experienced teachers. The definition of an experienced teacher, as someone who has been teaching for 5 years or longer, is also utilised across much research literature (e.g. Rodríguez & McKay, 2010). However, all but one of the 42 'dilemma stories' were from teachers who either had a minimum of 10 years in the profession and/or had held a senior leadership responsibility. The single story where the teacher did not have either of these things was submitted by a teacher who had been practising for 8 years.

Participating teachers were deemed to have an 'interest in inclusive practice' by being reached through specialist practitioner networks related to teaching pupils with complex barriers to learning. These networks included private Facebook groups and professional learning communities around inclusive practices, facilitated within multi-academy trusts and/or local authorities. An information sheet about the study outlined its aims and the eligibility criteria for participation, as well as key information to enable the 19 teachers to give their informed consent to take part. A 2 min video about the research, which explained the study's focus on 'dilemma stories', was also created and shared with participants.

Although the study reflected an interest in inclusive education, the working definition of 'complex and diverse classes', that was central to its research question, required the recruitment of teachers from specialist school settings, as well as mainstream ones. In the context of England, the majority of the approximately 45,000 school students who have either severe learning difficulties (SLD) or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) as their identified primary need are educated within the specialist sector (UK Gov, 2024b). Interacting with specialist settings, when starting to explore inclusive practice with these learners, is therefore arguably essential. The study was also based on a recognition that classes where all learners might share a diagnosis of SLD or PMLD will inevitably be exceptionally diverse. This recognition challenges any assumptions that, by having learners with the same label, such classes will be necessarily homogenous. At a classroom level therefore, teachers who may happen to find themselves working in specialist settings, and

teaching these classes, will inevitably face dilemmas, and be required to develop 'inclusive' practices within their context.

The 19 teachers who contributed to the study, therefore, included those who taught in special education settings as well as those who taught in mainstream schools. Out of the 19 teachers, seven shared a range of stories, from different stages of their career, associated with different job roles and/or different professional contexts or settings. One participating teacher, for example, 'Helen', shared a total of five stories. Three of these stories related to her current role as a deputy head teacher within a special school. One story related to her former role as an advisory teacher for a local authority, and another related to another former role as an English teacher within a mainstream secondary setting. In addition, different stories shared by one teacher (Polly) related to the different roles of Head of Humanities/Religious Education and that of form tutor, which she held simultaneously. Details of each participating teacher, including the job roles they held within their story/stories, are outlined in Table A1, in the appendices.

## THE STORY-SHARING DIALOGUES

As shown in Table 1, an average of three stories were generated from each dialogue with a participating teacher, with the minimum being one story and the maximum being six. The longest story-sharing dialogue lasted 2 h, 5 min, and the shortest lasted 52 min. Eleven of the 12 story-sharing dialogues lasted longer than an hour, with the average duration being 1 h, 42 min. Whereas some teacher-participants arrived to the meeting with a pre-prepared story to share, others entered into a more conversational dialogue, and stories were subsequently derived from the transcript. A process of member-checking took place, through which drafts of stories were exchanged over email. Throughout the process, the right of participants to withdraw their story was always emphasised. As one participant did in fact withdraw one of her stories, the process of member-checking had an important role to play in maintaining research ethics. Some stories were edited several times and enriched with supporting evidence provided by teacher-participants (for example a copy of a behaviour plan was provided to support Story Seven with actual names redacted).

Throughout the dialogues, most participants tended to refer back-and-forth to different stories they were sharing, rather than neatly telling them sequentially, one-after-the-other. For some teachers, going into the details of a second story triggered another memory or reflection on the first. Other teachers shared stories of situations where several issues were being negotiated simultaneously, requiring a process of further dialogue and interpretation to establish the core dilemma they were grappling with. This made the crafting of stories from transcripts a hermeneutic process, involving further dialogue and interpretation.

## CRAFTING THE STORIES

From each transcript, the crafting of the stories involved:

- Reading and re-reading—going through the transcript at least three times to become familiar with the details of each story and gain a sense of any hidden stories that were emerging.
- Labelling—giving provisional titles to any stories that had not already been given a title by the teacher-participant, during the conversation. The title of each story was a question which captured the dilemma within it (e.g. 'Corridor kids: is there a better way?' or 'Should I be having this conversation about death?')



TABLE 1 Applying van Manen's six stages to the analysis.

Stage in research process (from van Manen 2016, pp. 31–32)	Relationship to this research study
Stage One 'turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world'	The research question 'What dilemmas relating to the teaching of complex and diverse classes are articulated by experienced teachers with an interest in inclusive pedagogical practice' was written to enable enquiry into lived experiences of enacting inclusive pedagogical practice in schools, while reflecting a simultaneous interest in conceptions.
Stage Two 'investigating experience as we live it, rather than as we conceptualise it' ( <i>sic</i> )	Stories were collected from and/or crafted with participating teachers and utilised to gain insight into their lived experiences of dilemmas related to their inclusive practice.
Stage Three 'reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon'	A reflective journal was maintained throughout the processes of collecting and/or crafting stories. Thirty-five of the stories were constructed through story-sharing dialogues with teachers. These dialogues were transcribed, and drafts of stories were initially prepared by the researcher, and subsequently revised through further dialogues with participants. The reflective journal was used to capture initial thoughts and interpretations.
Stage Four 'describing the phenomenon, by the art of writing and re-writing'	The 42 stories used for the analysis were redrafted and finalised with participants.
Stage Five 'maintaining a strong and orientated pedagogical relation to the phenomenon'	The research question was continually revisited throughout the research process, so that they remained at the centre of the enquiry. Emergent research findings were discussed at conferences, to enable interaction with multiple perspectives and interpretations
Stage Six 'balancing the research context by considering parts and whole'	The 'hermeneutic circle' was followed throughout the analysis process. This involved moving between specific sections within each story and the overall story, and moving between a focus on individual stories and the 'types' of dilemma identified.

- Annotating—highlighting details of each story within the transcript and circling sections that may be the basis of a story.
- Documenting—opening a Word document for each story, with the title of the story as its heading. This was followed by copying-and-pasting parts of the transcript that related to each story.
- Editing—removing any utterances from transcribed dialogue inserted into each story. This stage also involved the removal of repeated words or phrases, changing the order of some of the details and/or removing/adding occasional words to ensure the most engaging narrative flow.
- Narrating—adding an introductory paragraph to each story, giving broad (non-identifying) contextual information and framing the dilemma within it. Additional narration was occasionally added, which was interspersed with text that was directly taken from the transcript. Through this, the first draft of the story was created.
- Returning—reading each draft story several days following its initial construction. Each story was edited for spelling, punctuation and grammar. Each story was also edited around any rethinking of interpretations underpinning their initial construction.

- Collaboration—sending each draft story to teacher-participants for them to make edits and/or give suggestions.
- Revisiting—redrafting stories around any feedback from teacher-participants.

The above process was broadly sequential and involved completing each of the outlined stages in order. However, there was often some overlap between the 'labelling' and 'annotating' stages, and between 'editing' and 'narrating'. In following the above process, the research was guided by the following questions, posed by Crowther et al. (2017):

- Does this story 'show' the experience?
- Does it engage?
- Are we still holding the meaning as gifted by the participant?
- Have we seen 'more' in the process of crafting up this story?
- Does it work?
- Does it still need more pruning? (Crowther et al., 2017, p. 831)

It could be argued that, rather than go to the effort of creating stories, the transcripts of the story-sharing dialogues with teachers could have themselves been used as a data source. Analysing these transcripts, it might be claimed, would have provided sufficient insight in relation to the research questions while avoiding the need to create new texts for this purpose. From a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, however, the crafting of the stories embedded 'describing the phenomenon, by the art of writing and re-writing' (van Manen, 2016, p. 30) into the research. It also enabled the navigation of the 'hermeneutic circle' (Gadamer, 1975). In hermeneutics, the term 'hermeneutic circle' can be used to refer to a non-linear process of interpreting a 'text' that alternates its focus between 'part' and 'whole'. Whereas an analysis of only transcripts would have centred on specific phrases and words used by participants within their narratives (the part), crafting stories highlighted the overall dilemma which the teachers simultaneously conceptualised and lived through (the whole).

van Manen (2016, pp. 31–32) proposes that hermeneutic phenomenological work goes through six stages. In Table 1, the ways in which these six stages guided this research study are outlined.

## ANALYSING THE 'DILEMMA STORIES'

From the 44 stories initially compiled, a total of 42 were analysed. One story was withdrawn by a participating teacher. A second story met the study's criteria for omission from the analysis because its distinctiveness raised ethical questions around the possibility that schools and/or individuals could be identified. The titles of each of the 42 stories, which featured in the analysis, are outlined in Table A2, in the appendices.

Following van Manen's six stages of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis involved the engagement of stakeholders in the research, in discussing emergent research findings and having a 'conversation with the situation' (Schon, 1991, pp. 76) within each story. Workshops for teachers, school leaders and education researchers were held at six different conferences relating to inclusive education. At a session at Liepaja University in Latvia for example (7 June 2022), groups of teachers were given the titles of stories on cards. Each title was a question which captured the dilemma within the story, such as 'Is Katie being under the table an issue?' or 'Is it necessary to be creating art in an art lesson?' Using the cards, each group of teachers was asked to look at the story titles and discuss:

- Which dilemmas interest you?
- Which remind you of dilemmas you have experienced yourself?
- Do you have any advice or insight for the teacher(s) experiencing the dilemma?
- How might you sort the dilemmas into categories?

Although the cards in each envelope only gave the title of each story, and did not narrate the entirety of each dilemma, they offered plenty of scope for discussion. Using the cards, participating teachers were able to recount similar dilemmas they had also encountered and/or identify dilemmas that resonated with their own lived experiences in the classroom. Reflections on these dialogues were logged by the researcher, through the use of a reflective journal.

In addition to the six stages outlined in van Manen's writings on hermeneutic phenomenology, the analysis of the 42 stories went through a series of nine steps that were based on frameworks that had been developed to guide phenomenographers through the inductive process of eliciting, classifying and labelling conceptions (e.g. Dahlgren & Fallsberg, 1991; Jobin & Turale, 2019; Skoogh et al., 2020). These nine steps are outlined in Table 2.

This 'neo-phenomenographic' analysis, which was simultaneously influenced by phenomenography and hermeneutic phenomenology, established four ways in which dilemmas relating to practice with complex and diverse groups of learners were conceptualised and articulated by the 19 participating teachers, through their 'dilemma stories'. These are captured in Table 3.

## A TYPOLOGY OF 'FOUR DILEMMAS FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICE'

Only one of the stories analysed clearly articulated the 'dilemma of difference' and involved a tension between a commitment to addressing the needs of individuals with barriers to learning and a commitment to not stigmatising these individuals by singling them out as being different. The story, 'Do I need to give Tyler a separate worksheet?' was shared by Jane on the eve of her retirement, following over 20 years in the teaching profession. In the story, she reflects on how, in the early days of her career, she wanted to address barriers to

**TABLE 2** Process of phenomenographic analysis of the 'dilemma stories'.

Step 1: Shaping	Ensuring that all stories are finalised, have been shared with teacher-authors, and refined through dialogue with them
Step 2: Immersion	Reading and re-reading stories, and highlighting select statements and identifying key themes
Step 3: Mapping	Re-reading each story; Using a spreadsheet to outline the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Title of story</li><li>• Two to four conceptions emerging from each story.</li></ul>
Step 4: Sharing	Sharing vignettes with a critical community, for example by presenting at conferences
Step 5: Revisiting	Returning to mapping exercise completed as part of Step 3 and adapting identified themes around responses
Step 6: Comparison	Looking for similarities and differences between identified themes
Step 7: Grouping/Refining	Identifying any themes that may be collapsed into a single group Making necessary changes and amendments to themes
Step 8: Outcome Space	Formulation of a typology of dilemmas

TABLE 3 Four dilemmas for inclusive practice\*

Dilemma	Associated questions	Number of stories in which this dilemma featured
Dilemma of possibility	Should I take a risk and try something new, which may benefit pupils? Or should I play it safe and continue with habitual practices that are deemed effective, even though they seem far from ideal?	10
Dilemma of 'what's Working?'	Shall we carry on with this strategy or intervention or discontinue it?	12
Dilemma of 'looking'	What are these behaviours suggesting to us? Which interpretation of what we are 'seeing' should we be working with: x or y?	16
Dilemma of 'what matters?'	When we talk about 'entitlement' (or any other professional value) should we take it to mean x or y? Is a or b more important to the lives of our pupils? Which one should we prioritise through our teaching?	32

\*Several of the stories involved the negotiation of multiple 'types' of dilemma.

accessing learning, yet also 'didn't want to patronise somebody and give them a worksheet where the work looked easier'. Through teaching Tyler, however, she found that it was not being able to attempt any task within a lesson that was the most 'embarrassing' and 'humiliating' thing for him. She therefore concluded that everybody 'wants to leave a lesson feeling like they've done a lesson' and that 'nobody wants to sit there feeling like they're not able to do it'. With further experience, Jane also finds value in planning around particular individuals and teaching groups, rather than planning in relation to labels such as 'low ability'. In this story therefore, Jane is actively interacting with the 'dilemma of difference' and responding to it through her developing practice.

The titles of other stories such as 'What is stopping the teachers I work with from using assistive technologies?' and 'Is mainstream for him?' may also initially suggest 'dilemmas of difference'. However, rather than a 'dilemma of difference', the teachers, in both of these stories, as well as all other stories in the collection, were primarily focussed on alternative concerns. In the story 'Is mainstream for him?' for example, 'Kate', a deputy head teacher in a primary school, was preoccupied with establishing the extent to which a child's barriers to participation were due to him having English as an additional language and never having attended a school ever before, or due to him having a significant learning difficulty. Kate's dilemma therefore could be viewed as an example of one of the dilemmas within the typology, which is outlined below, the 'Dilemma of "looking"'.

Whereas only one story in the collection clearly articulated a 'dilemma of difference', multiple stories represented each of the following four dilemmas, which underpin the typology which the research study generated.

Dilemma one: The dilemma of possibility

This dilemma involves a questioning from a teacher, around whether their plans are achievable and realistic. It is a dilemma that can also have an affective dimension and involves teachers asking themselves whether they are being overly naive in attempting practices that they suspect may not be feasible, or appropriate, in reality. When confronted with this

dilemma, teachers find themselves needing to therefore choose between taking a risk (and changing approaches that may be suboptimal) and not disrupting established practices which may be playing an important role in providing routine and security.

One example of this 'dilemma of possibility' was in the story 'Corridor kids: is there a better way?' in which Kelly, an assistant headteacher with responsibility for inclusion within a primary school, works to establish alternatives to having pupils removed from the classroom to work with teaching assistants, away from their peers. In doing this, she grapples with the argument from colleagues that these pupils are 'not learning' during whole class teaching anyway, so can only possibly access a high-quality education if withdrawn from class to work elsewhere.

By drawing upon online professional networks and consulting other local SEN Coordinators, Kelly responds to her 'dilemma of possibility' by implementing 'task boxes' to enable pupils to engage in independent learning within their classrooms, for short periods of time within lessons, when they find it difficult to access whole class teaching. The task boxes were devised in such a way as to ensure access to the curriculum for all. They enabled children to participate fully at various times within a lesson. In doing this, they addressed the issue that being a 'corridor kid' was 'making the child fall further behind' their peers, by excluding them from mainstream teaching. However, the creation of the 'task boxes' was found to be exhaustive and a question remained, at the end of the story, over whether their use was sustainable (or possible) in the long term. Kelly's reflections also carry with them the suggestion that practices that are 'possible' one day may not necessarily be so on another.

## **Dilemma two: The dilemma of 'what's working?'**

Several stories within the collection relate to an exploration of 'what's working?' in the classroom. In these stories, classroom practitioners iteratively plan, implement and evaluate strategies for supporting individuals, which they continually refine and adapt to strengthen their learning and participation. They are immersed in dilemmas around 'what's working?' for their practice, in their context, with their particular pupils. In doing this, they are required to make a decision to continue or discontinue with a particular approach or strategy, while navigating possible ambiguities, to reach valid interpretations through their assessments.

An example of the 'dilemma of what's working?' can be seen in the story 'How do I encourage Lenny to join in the RE lessons?'. In this story, Sarah, a secondary subject leader, grapples with the question 'what's working?' to enable her to reach a pupil who does not participate in lessons. In doing this, she collaborates with the SEN department within her school to establish that Lenny enjoys drawing pictures. When she asks him to present his understanding visually, he successfully engages in higher-order thinking, leading him to write about his views on 'heaven' and 'hell'. In order to reach Lenny, Sarah also draws upon her inner resources and capacity to build human connections. She chats with Lenny while on her break duty, working out ways to build trust with him. This enables her to manage a later incident in which Lenny initially 'sat down in reception refusing to go' on a school trip.

## **Dilemma three: The dilemma of 'looking'**

Many of the stories involve teachers observing the responses of pupils and/or dynamics within teaching groups and striving to make sense out of what can be 'seen' (or elicited through other senses such as hearing). Throughout stories within the collection, this 'dilemma of "looking"' includes efforts to notice what may often be beyond the range of our professional attention. It also involves interpreting what is seen, to enable practitioner

interaction with real learners and situations, rather than imagined ones. Through the 'dilemma of "looking"', practitioners inevitably grapple with their professional perceptions, values and attitudes, as well as their conceptions of where truth is located within a classroom. What are pupil responses to learning demonstrating to us? Am I witnessing a positive response to teaching or non-compliance? With this dilemma, classroom practitioners are often faced with a choice, therefore, between continuing with practices that appear to be effective on the surface (and may be pleasing to various colleagues, senior leaders, parents and/or inspectors) or refusing to ignore the dissonance between superficial appearance and reality and changing things.

The story 'How can I change the perceptions of teaching assistants towards engaging students with PMLD in my class group?' is a clear example of a story which involves this 'dilemma of "looking"'. In this story, Charlie, a teacher in a special school, engages in dialogues with his team around what can be 'seen' in the responses of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Through this, teaching and learning moves away from being something that superficially 'looks' like it is going well, to something which offers opportunities for more authentic, deep learning.

By entering into the 'dilemma of "looking"', Charlie and his teaching team created a classroom culture in which 'adults do not have to intervene but can observe'. This enabled practitioners to reach decisions around the postural management of pupils, for example, and the ways in which multisensory stimuli were presented to them to maximise their engagement.

## Dilemma four: The dilemma of 'what matters?'

Throughout many of the stories, the dilemmas experienced by teachers related to defining core professional values, establishing moral purpose and/or evaluating the rationale behind school policies and practices. These dilemmas were conceptualised, therefore, as being dilemmas around 'what matters' in education, and in the lives of children, young people and families.

In the story 'Is it necessary for children to be creating art in an art lesson?', Stephanie observes an art lesson within the special needs school where she is a deputy headteacher. Although pupils are not completing artwork in this lesson, she sees considerable value in it, so finds herself rethinking the overall purpose of the provision for the school's pupils with SPMLD, asking questions around what ultimately 'matters' in relation to the 'bigger picture' of preparing them for greater independence in adult life.

There was no art ... it was so valuable. Children were practising skills such as opening lids. The teacher got these squeeze tubes of paint with a flip lid. One child had got the wrong end and she was trying to open it and the staff stepped back rather than dived in to help her. This allowed the girl to explore it. When she finally worked it out, she was thrilled with herself ... Another child had to put the lid back on and he only had the use of one arm ... And he's looking at all the other kids and he can't do it. And then you see a lightbulb moment and he SMACKS the tube down on the table to shut the lid. And I thought 'All that problem-solving! All that thinking for themselves!' (Extract from the story 'Is it necessary to be creating art in an art lesson?')

Through the 'dilemma of what matters?' therefore, Stephanie is therefore ultimately challenging received notions of what an art lesson 'is', and of what happens in one.

Across several of the stories, the 'dilemma of "what matters?"' also involves rethinking notions of what constitutes 'good practice' in education. In these stories, teachers question



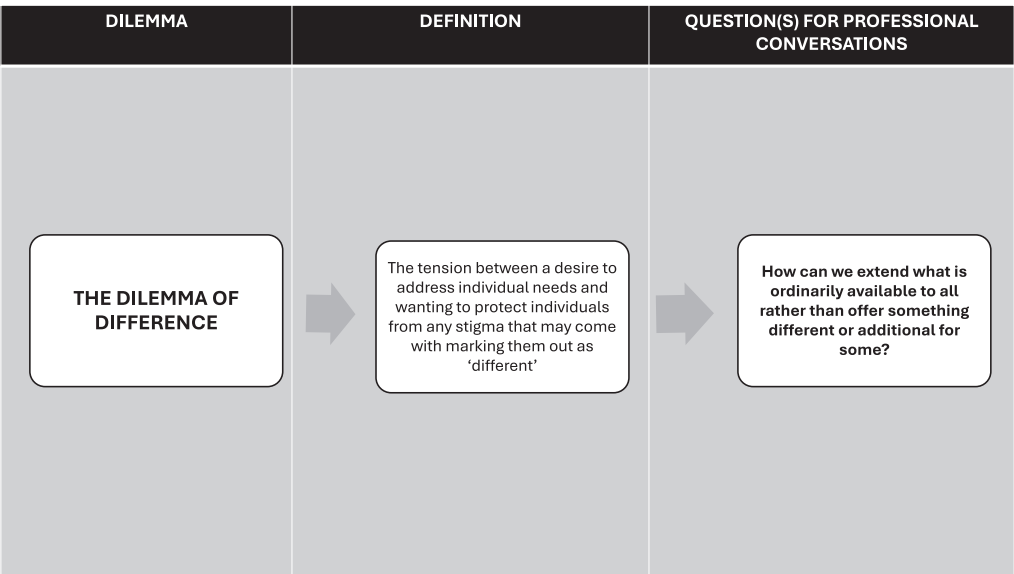
the value of established ways of 'doing things' and seek alternatives which may be more supportive of priorities for pupils' learning. The 'dilemma of "what matters?"' is also articulated within another story from Stephanie, 'Should pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties be taught in needs-based, rather than age-based provision?', which is concerned with establishing of priorities for the allocation of pupils to classes and the deployment of classroom staff. In this story, Stephanie wonders whether it would be more valuable, for example, for pupils working on very early developmental milestones, to remain in the same teaching group, with the same familiar adults, rather than moving up from lower school to middle school and then to upper school. For Stephanie, 'relationships are key' to the lives of individuals with PMLD, meaning that maintaining secure bonds with practitioners arguably 'matters' more than being with age-equivalent peers within the same teaching group.

If those children with PMLD rely so much on their staff team understanding their subtle communications, and knowing those children in depth, then is it right to take them away from that team to move up into the next school? The philosophy behind our curriculum for PMLD learners is that the child is the curriculum! That's the philosophy of our curriculum, so relationships are key. We start with the children, the child's needs, and then their personalised learning grows from that. It takes a long time to get to know all those little subtle signs, things like which side a learner needs to be on to be more comfortable, or how long she needs to be able to see something; how close we need to be...all those things. (Extract from Story 'Should pupils with PMLD be taught in needs-based, rather than age-based, provision?')

As well as going beyond the 'dilemma of difference', the four types of dilemma, identified within the typology, are not always necessarily ethical dilemmas, but are sometimes professional ones. The choices that teachers had within the stories, 'between two alternatives, when neither is favourable' (p. 117) also tended to link to broader philosophical questions around the ultimate goal or purpose of education (the 'dilemma of "what matters?"') for example, or questions around the nature of reality (the 'dilemma of "looking"' and the 'dilemma of "what's working?"'). Stephanie's story is a clear example of this. On the one hand not teaching 'art' in an 'art' lesson, may represent a lowering of expectations and denying learners of their entitlement to an 'art' curriculum. On the other hand, to insist that all learners create a piece of artwork, may be seen as prioritising them having a tangible product from a lesson above their actual learning. Although this could, to some extent, also be itself be viewed as a 'dilemma of difference', the focus of Stephanie's story was on values, the ultimate purpose of education, and the most important priorities to address with children and young people in a finite amount of teaching time. This broader dilemma also applied to other stories in the analysis. As demonstrated through working within the fifth of van Manen's six stages of hermeneutic phenomenological research, and discussing the stories with wider stakeholders at conferences, this broader dilemma is also familiar to many educators in a range of school and national contexts.

## DISCUSSION

It is most likely of no coincidence that the one story out of the 42, where the 'dilemma of difference' featured was a recollection of an incident that took place over 20 years ago, at a much earlier point in the participating teacher's career. It is arguably trainee and early career teachers that are more likely to express anxieties similar to those which Jane initially had, in the story 'Do I need to give Tyler a separate worksheet?' It could be claimed that this is



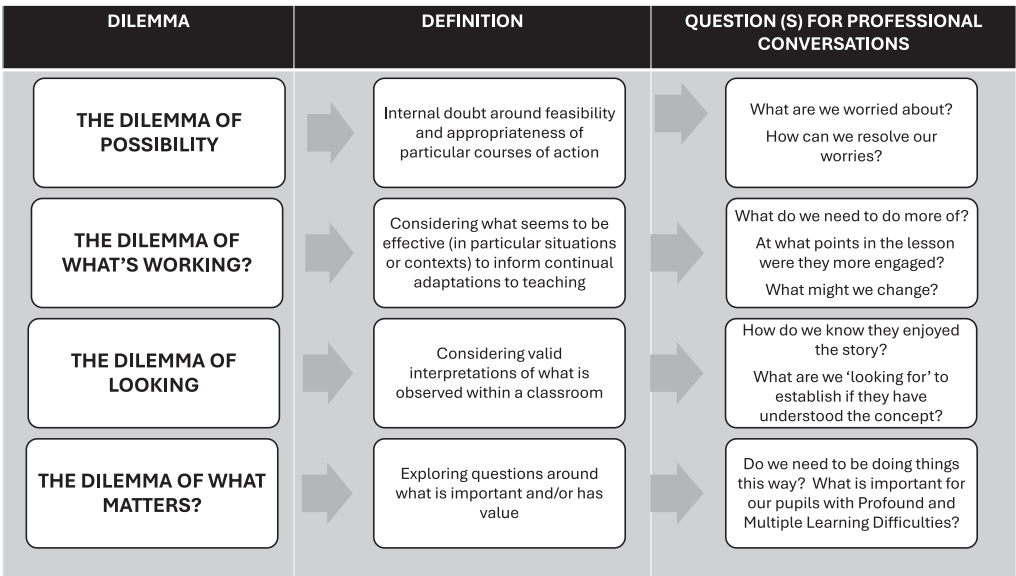
**FIGURE 2** The 'dilemma of difference' leading to dialogues around 'extending what is ordinarily available to all'.

because trainee and early career teachers are generally (although not always!) younger, and so have more recent memories of being a young person themselves, in a classroom. However, it may instead reflect them having abstract notions of what inclusive teaching is, before developing more nuanced and tacit understandings through the ongoing development of practice, over time.

The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that experienced teachers with a commitment to inclusive practice, in the twenty-first century (over 40 years since the publication of the Warnock Report of 1978) can think beyond the 'dilemma of difference'.

Although the principle of Inclusive Pedagogy is a multi-dimensional concept (Florian, 2015) its focus is on 'extending what is ordinarily available for all learners' rather than on offering something additional for 'some' (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012, p. 575) arguably does emphasise it as primarily a response to the 'dilemma of difference'. As a comparison between Figure 2 and Figure 3 suggests, however, a shift in focus away from the 'dilemma of difference' and towards the dilemmas within the typology generated by this study possibly raises a wider range of discussion questions for professional conversations about inclusive pedagogical practice. This typology would not have been reached without the novel 'neo-phenomenographic' research methods that were utilised for this study.

The language of the typology of 'four dilemmas for Inclusive Practice' is also subtly, yet fundamentally, distinct, from more dominant discourses on educational effectiveness. In England for example, the term 'What works?' has underpinned the work of the Education Endowment Foundation, which presents research in the form of a comprehensive 'Teaching and Learning Toolkit' that can be readily consumed by teachers and senior leaders (Education Endowment Foundation, 2023). Rather than the passive implementation what the wider evidence dictates, navigating dilemmas around 'What's working?' involves assessment, reflection, and professional judgement. Whereas the term 'What works' carries it a suggestion of finality and absolutism, the alternative term 'What's working?' is based on an appreciation that the success of any strategy is provisional. Something that may be 'working' in a particular classroom, or at a particular moment, may not necessarily always 'work' everywhere, for the whole of eternity.



**FIGURE 3** The ‘four dilemmas for inclusive practice’ leading to a range of questions, for professional conversations.

As with the ‘dilemma of “what’s working?”’, conceptualisations of the ‘dilemma of “what matters?”’ go beyond considerations around ‘What works?’ in education, that are associated with the dominant sector-wide discourses on evidence-based pedagogy. Through perceiving their practice-based dilemmas as being around the question of ‘What matters?’ teachers in the stories are exploring beneath the surface of claims that something unambiguously ‘works’ and are considerate of different goals, purposes, stakeholders and different impacts over differing timescales.

The four dilemmas within the typology could have possibly been reduced to three or increased to as many as nine. For example, there is much overlap between the ‘dilemma of “looking”’ and the ‘dilemma of “what’s working?”’ and an argument therefore, that both could be collapsed into a single category, particularly given the emphasis in phenomenography on the value of identified conceptions being both ‘parsimonious’ (i.e. as few as possible) and distinct from one another (Marton, 1997, cited in Åkerlind, 2018). What emerged from the analysis of the 42 stories, however, is that the types of dilemmas within the typology do overlap. One reason for this is that different dilemmas were often articulated simultaneously by teachers within the same single story, rather than necessarily conceptualised as being in isolation from one another. Decisions around identifying and labelling each category of dilemma, therefore, were based on a phenomenological recognition of their essential characteristics. Having the ‘dilemma of “what’s working?”’ and the ‘dilemma of “looking”’ as separate categories emphasised the respective role that both situated problem-solving, and attention to the responses of learners, played in the teachers’ stories.

Rather than claim to be an authoritative and finalised typology, the ‘four dilemmas for Inclusive Practice’ are open to adjustments, refinements, and challenge. Rather than limitations of the overall research, any tensions between the dilemmas, or controversies around their identification, can be valued as stimuli to continuing professional dialogue and enquiry.

**FUNDING INFORMATION**

This work was supported by the Elphinstone Institute at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author has no competing interests to declare.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, TE, upon reasonable request.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The research received ethical approval from the Committee for Research Ethics and Governance in Arts, Social Science and Business at the University of Aberdeen on 11/03/19.

## ORCID

Tracy Edwards  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8246-7178>

## REFERENCES

- Akerlind, G. S. (2018). What future for Phenomenographic research? On continuity and development in the phenomenography and variation theory research tradition. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 62(6), 949–958. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1324899>
- Black-Hawkins, K., & Florian, L. (2012). Classroom teachers craft knowledge of their inclusive practice. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 18(5), 567–584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2012.709732>
- Colley, A. (2020). To what extent have learners with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties been excluded from the policy and practice of inclusive education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(7), 721–738. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1483437>
- Crowther, S., Ironside, P., Spence, D., & Smythe, L. (2017). Crafting stories in hermeneutic phenomenology research: A methodological device. In *Qualitative Health Research* (Vol. 27, pp. 826–835). Qualitative Health Research. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316656161>
- Dahlgren, L. O., & Fallsberg, M. (1991). Phenomenography as a qualitative approach in social pharmacy research. *Journal of Social & Administrative Pharmacy*, 8(4), 150–156.
- Department of Education and Science. (1978). *Special Educational Needs: Report Of The Committee Of Enquiry Into The Education Of Handicapped Children And Young People*. (The Warnock Report).
- Education Endowment Foundation. (2023). EEF Launches update teaching and learning toolkit. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/about-us>
- Florian, L. (2010). The concept of inclusive pedagogy. In *Transforming the role of the SENCO: Achieving the National Award for SEN coordination* (Vol. 1, pp. 62–70). Open University Press.
- Florian, L. (2012). Preparing teachers to work in inclusive classrooms: Key lessons for the professional development of teacher educators from Scotland's inclusive practice project. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 63(4), 275–285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487112447112>
- Florian, L. (2015). Conceptualising inclusive pedagogy: The inclusive pedagogical approach in action. In *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* (7), 11–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3636201500007001>, Emerald Group Publishing Limited
- Florian, L., & Beaton, M. (2018). Inclusive pedagogy in action: Getting it right for every child. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(8), 870–884. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1412513>
- Florian, L., & Graham, A. (2014). Can an expanded interpretation of phronesis support teacher professional development for inclusion? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 44(4), 465–478. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2014.960910>
- Florian, L. & Black-Hawkins, K., (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37 (5) pp.813–828, [Available from: DOI <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.501096>].
- Gadamer, H. G. (1975). Hermeneutics and social science. *Philosophy & social. Criticism*, 2(4), 307–316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019145377500200402>
- Great Britain Education Act, 1981. HMSO Available: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/60/enacted>. (2024)
- Jobin, P., & Turale, S. (2019). Choosing the right qualitative approach: Is phenomenography a design for my study? *Pacific Rim International Journal Of Nursing Research*, 23(4), 314–319.
- Limberg, L. (2008). The SAGE Encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods phenomenography. In *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods*. Sage.
- Linklater, H. (2010). *making Children Count?: An Autoethnographic Exploration Of Pedagogy* [Thesis (PhD)]. University of Aberdeen.

- Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography - describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science*, 10(2), 177–200. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00132516>
- Marton, F. (1986). Phenomenography-a research approach to investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought*, 21(3), 28–49.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2013). *Phenomenology of perception*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203720714>
- Minow, M. (1990). *Making All The Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion And American Law*. Cornell University Press.
- Norwich, B. (2008). Dilemmas of difference, inclusion and disability: International perspectives on placement. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 23(4), 287–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250802387166>
- Norwich, B. (2010). Dilemmas of difference, curriculum and disability: International perspectives. *Comparative Education*, 46(2), 113–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050061003775330>
- Norwich, B. (2019). From the Warnock report (1978) to an education framework commission: A novel contemporary approach to educational policy making for pupils with special educational needs/disabilities. *Frontiers in Education*, 4, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2019.00072>
- Paulsrud, D. (2023). Resolving dilemmas: Swedish special educators and subject teachers' perspectives on their enactment of inclusive education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 39(2), 303–320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2023.2210102>
- Rodríguez, A., & McKay, S. (2010). Professional Development for Experienced Teachers Working with Adult English Language Learners. CAELA Network Brief. CAELA Network Brief, May.
- Schon, D. A. (1991). The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action. In *Basic books*. Avebury.
- Skoogh, A., Bååth, C., Sandin Bojö, A. K., & Hall-Lord, M. L. (2020). Healthcare professionals' perceptions of patient safety for the woman in childbirth in Sweden – An interview study. *Nursing Open*, 7(2), 642–649. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.435>
- Spratt, J., & Florian, L. (2014). Developing and using a framework for gauging the use of inclusive pedagogy by new and experienced teachers. *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education*, 3, 145–149. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-363620140000003029>, Emerald Group Publishing Limited
- Spratt, J., & Florian, L. (2015). Inclusive pedagogy: From learning to action. Supporting each individual in the context of “everybody”. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 49, 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.03.006>
- Tomlinson, C. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria.
- UK Gov. (2024a). Special Educational Needs in England. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2023-24#explore-data-and-files>
- UK Gov. (2024b). School suspensions and permanent exclusions. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>
- van Manen, M. (2016). *Phenomenology of Practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315422657>

**How to cite this article:** Edwards, T. (2025). Beyond the ‘dilemma of difference’: An analysis of stories from experienced teachers, about their inclusive practice. *British Educational Research Journal*, 00, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.4129>

# APPENDIX A

**TABLE A1** Profile of teachers sharing 'dilemma stories'.

Teacher	Pseudonym	Number of stories shared	Number of stories in analysis	Professional role and context	How were stories shared
1	Kelly	1	1	Assistant Head/Inclusion Lead (mainstream primary school)	Written
2	Carlos	1	1	Senior Teacher/Lead Practitioner (special school)	Written
3	Charlie	1	1	Assistant Head (special school)	Written
4	Sarah	1	1	Religious Education teacher (mainstream secondary school)	Written
5	Tyrone	1	1	Information Technology Teacher (mainstream secondary school)	Written
6	Paula	1	1	Lead Teacher for Autism Resource Base	Written
7	Sally	1	1	Nursery Teacher (mainstream primary school)	From transcript of dialogue
8	Helen	5	5	English Teacher (mainstream school) Deputy Head Teacher (special school) Advisory teacher for a local authority	From transcript of dialogue
9	Emily	2	2	Teacher (Special School) Middle Leader (Special School)	From transcript of dialogue
10	Annabel	3	2	Head of Education (Independent special school group) Class Teacher (mainstream primary school)	From transcript of dialogue
11	Stephanie	5	4	Deputy Head Teacher (Special School) Class Teacher (mainstream primary school)	From transcript of dialogue
12	Kate	4	4	Deputy Head Teacher/Inclusion Lead (mainstream primary school) Head Teacher (mainstream primary school)	From transcript of dialogue

(Continues)



**TABLE A1** (Continued)

Teacher	Pseudonym	Number of stories shared	Number of stories in analysis	Professional role and context	How were stories shared
13	Wendy	1	1	Head Teacher (mainstream primary school)	From transcript of dialogue
14	Jane	2	2	Senior Teacher with responsibility for a unit for pupils at risk of exclusion (mainstream secondary school)	From transcript of dialogue
15	Ian	3	3	Teacher within a Language Unit attached to a mainstream Primary school	From transcript of dialogue
16	Polly	6	6	Head of Humanities/ Religious Education (mainstream secondary school) Form Tutor (mainstream secondary school)	From transcript of dialogue
17	Natasha	3	3	Science Teacher (mainstream secondary school)	From transcript of dialogue
18	Mike	2	2	Geography Teacher (mainstream secondary school)	From transcript of dialogue
19	Louise	1	1	Form Tutor (mainstream secondary school)	From transcript of dialogue
TOTAL		44	42		

TABLE A 2 Overview of ‘dilemma stories’ analysed.

Story title	Job role of teacher within story	School context	Initial sharing	Story length (number of words)
1 Corridor kids: Is there a better way?	Assistant Head/Inclusion Lead	Large, inner-city primary school	Written	614
2 How do we, as a team, develop effective personalised strategies to support positive behavioural change for a pupil with autism?	Senior Teacher/Lead Practitioner	Special school (autism focus)	Written	330
3 How can I change the perception of teaching assistants towards engaging students with PMLD in my class group?	Assistant Head Teacher/Class Teacher	Special school (focus on profound and multiple learning difficulties)	Written	676
4 How do I encourage Lenny to join in the RE lessons?	Religious Education Teacher	Large, inner-city, secondary school	Written	524
5 Is it possible to engage pupils of all abilities when teaching Technology as a whole class?	Information Technology Teacher	Provincial secondary school	Written	690
6 How do we support Thomas to stay calm in the mainstream classroom?	Lead Teacher for Autism Resource Base	Secondary school	Written	687
7 How do we support Jack to have a good day in nursery?	Nursery Teacher	Primary school	Written	1431
8 How can I get all pupils to have input in my mixed-attainment secondary English Class?	English Teacher	Large, coastal secondary school	Written	419
9 Is Katie being under the table an issue?	Deputy Head Teacher	Special school	Written	444
10 How can I support Jane to be positive about teaching pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties?	Deputy Head Teacher	Special school	Oral	2341
11 How can I support Fiona to be positive about teaching Billy?	Local Authority Advisory Teacher	Local authority/secondary school	Oral	1049
12 What is stopping the teachers I work with from using assistive technologies?	Local Authority Advisory Teacher	Local authority/various	Oral	486
13 What does inclusion look like for a learner with complex medical needs who is self-isolating?	Class Teacher/Middle Leader	Special school (focus on profound and multiple learning difficulties)	Oral	2341

(Continues)

TABLE A 2 (Continued)

	Story title	Job role of teacher within story	School context	Initial sharing	Story length (number of words)
14	How do we manage Samiya's public, sexualised behaviours?	Class Teacher	Special school	Oral	1693
15	If they're making beans and toast with us are they learning?	Head of Education	Consortium of independent special schools	Oral	235
16	Should Dylan go to school assemblies?	Class Teacher	Primary school	Oral	1826
17	Retracted				
18	Is it necessary for children to be creating art in an art lesson?	Deputy Head Teacher	Special school	Oral	435
19	How should we be assessing the progress of learners in our special school?	Deputy Head Teacher	Special school	Oral	834
20	Retracted				
21	Should pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties be taught in needs-based, rather than age-based provision?	Deputy Head Teacher	Special school	Oral	718
22	What have I learnt from having taught that challenging class?	Class Teacher	Autism resource Base	Oral	783
23	Will my teachers ever again say 'That child will not amount to anything'?	Head Teacher	Large primary school; provincial; area of high deprivation	Oral	1295
24	How can I get Ethan to feel positive about coming into school?	Head Teacher	Large primary school; provincial; area of high deprivation	Oral	396
25	How can I get my pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) to see the bigger picture?	Deputy Head Teacher/ Inclusion Lead	Large primary school; provincial; area of high deprivation	Oral	284
26	Is mainstream school for him?	Deputy Head Teacher/ Inclusion Lead	Large primary school; provincial; area of high deprivation	Oral	916

TABLE A 2 (Continued)

Story title	Job role of teacher within story	School context	Initial sharing	Story length (number of words)
27 How can I strengthen inclusion within the current Year 6?	Head Teacher	Large primary school; area of high deprivation	Oral	1693
28 How do we keep these boys in school?	Senior Teacher/Lead for unit for pupils at risk of exclusion	Secondary school	Oral	1996
29 Do I need to give Tyler a separate worksheet?	Geography teacher	Secondary school	Oral	478
30 What should Keely be working on?	Teacher in Language Unit	Language unit attached to urban primary school; area of high deprivation	Oral	483
31 Can I do what I am being asked to do?	Teacher in Language Unit	Language unit attached to urban primary school; area of high deprivation	Oral	650
32 How can we support Claire to communicate?	Teacher in Language Unit	Language unit attached to urban primary school; area of high deprivation	Oral	653
33 Should I really be accepting the argument ‘all teachers are teachers of SEND’ when we have a SEND department I don’t find particularly helpful?	Head of Humanities	Inner-city all-girls secondary school	Oral	877
34 Should I be having this conversation about death?	Head of Humanities/Religious Education teacher	Inner-city all-girls secondary school	Oral	764
35 How do we ensure that the learning of our pupils with severe learning difficulties is being fully supported in Key Stage Four Religious Education lessons?	Head of Humanities/Religious Education teacher	Inner-city all-girls secondary school	Oral	1080
36 Is the provision for Annam in my tutor group good enough?	Subject Teacher/Form Tutor	Inner-city all-girls secondary school	Oral	1377

(Continues)

TABLE A 2 (Continued)

Story title	Job role of teacher within story	School context	Initial sharing	Story length (number of words)
37 How will I manage my form group when Stephanie comes back to school and announces she now wants to be known as Steve?	Subject Teacher/Form Tutor	Inner-city all-girls secondary school	Oral	239
38 Should I be insisting that my pupil with a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome attempts group work, even though she is reluctant to join in with it?	Religious Education teacher	Inner-city all-girls secondary school	Oral	326
39 Should I have asked Chloe to take off the fairy wings?	Science teacher	Coastal secondary school	Oral	320
40 How can I play my role in supporting the success of the Nurture Group?	Science Teacher	Coastal secondary school	Oral	1538
41 How do I ensure that pupils in the Area Resource Base experience the wonder of Science?	Science Teacher	Area resource base for pupils with moderate learning difficulties	Oral	261
42 Am I doing something right if those 'challenging pupils' are actually fine for me in my lesson?	Geography Teacher	Urban, all-girls secondary school	Oral	778
43 How do I find the time to ensure the learning and participation of every student?	Geography Teacher	Urban, all-girls secondary school	Oral	562
44 Are these images of Sierra Leone appropriate for use in my PSHE lesson?	Form Tutor	Secondary school	Written	297