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Do we have to rethink inclusive pedagogies for secondary schools? A critical systematic review of the international literature

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Abstract

This article builds on the findings of a critical systematic review that aimed to explore understandings and applications of inclusive pedagogies in the secondary school. Inclusive pedagogies are often conceptualised as both a set of strategies that aim to ensure access to learning for all students, and as value principles that reflect particular views on inclusion; this is why they tend to be approached in diverse ways. We were particularly interested in secondary school as the focus on particular curricular areas and subjects, additional pressures for teachers and students derived from assessment and exams, and fewer opportunities for collaboration between teachers as a result of the compartmentalisation of the curriculum can make the implementation of inclusive pedagogies more challenging than at primary level. Six databases were searched for literature published exploring inclusive pedagogies in the context of secondary school. We found that inclusive pedagogies were often filtered through the lenses of particular subjects and were associated with other approaches with similar philosophies, such as differentiation and student-centred learning; that student perceptions of inclusive pedagogies are still little explored; and that tensions associated with inclusion were only acknowledged to some extent. Based on the findings, we argue for a refined way of understanding inclusive pedagogies in the secondary school context, one that acknowledges the unique characteristics, challenges and tensions at this school level. The review

findings also affirm the 'messiness' of the inclusion literature and raise questions as to the relevance and usefulness of systematic reviews in exploring this fragmented topic.

KEYWORDS
differentiation, inclusion, inclusive pedagogies, secondary school

Key insights

What is the main issue that the paper addresses?

We explore understandings and applications of inclusive pedagogies in the secondary school based on a critical systematic review of the international literature. Secondary schooling involves a 'step up' in intellectual and social demands, a wide-ranging curriculum and increased pressures for staff and students that are likely to come into tension with inclusion.

What are the main insights that the paper provides?

Our findings affirm that there is no clear direction for inclusive pedagogies in terms of either theory or practice; a paucity of ideas with 'established' ways of thinking being recycled; and little desire to engage with tensions. They also question the usefulness of systematic reviews in exploring this fragmented topic.

INTRODUCTION

Within policy rhetoric and practitioner debate, inclusion has been constructed as a problem that needs to be 'fixed' within schools. This has often led to an emphasis on technicist 'best-practice' approaches involving an array of handbooks, resources and pedagogical toolboxes which instruct teachers on how to 'teach' for inclusion. Alongside more technical views of inclusion, other approaches emphasise the ethical principles underpinning a drive for inclusion, especially the idea that all learners should be respected and valued and that teachers ought to be responsible for all of their students (Florian & Spratt, 2013), irrespective of the challenges this might involve.

What both perspectives tend to acknowledge less though is that inclusion requires engaging with often very uncomfortable tensions between difficult, even contradictory, positions. As Allan (2007) states, 'inclusion *is and should be a struggle*' (italics in original) and neglecting to engage with such tensions risks allowing 'institutions and teachers to evade responsibility for making more significant cultural and political changes in practice and thinking' (p. 19). Such tensions can be more prominent in the context of secondary schooling.

Secondary schooling—which in England refers to the educational phase of compulsory schooling for students aged between 11 and 16 years (Department for Education, 2023)—has some unique characteristics. These include a 'step up' in intellectual and social demands,

a wide-ranging curriculum and increased pressures for staff and students deriving from an exams culture, competition and increased accountability (Ball, 2003; Brady & Wilson, 2022; Pearce et al., 2010). These demands are likely to come into tension with the ethical principles underpinning and practices associated with inclusion and, more specifically, inclusive pedagogies. It is the latter which is the focus of this article.

This article builds on the findings of a critical systematic review of international literature that aimed to explore understandings and applications of inclusive pedagogies in the secondary school. Based on the findings of the review, we argue for a refined way of understanding inclusive pedagogies in the secondary school context, one that acknowledges the tensions and dilemmas that implementing inclusive pedagogies can involve. The review findings also affirm the 'messiness' of the inclusion literature and raise questions as to the relevance and usefulness of systematic reviews in exploring this fragmented topic.

In the following section, we explore ideas about inclusive pedagogies more broadly, before presenting and discussing the findings of the review and their significance.

PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES

Inclusive pedagogies reflect ideas about inclusion. Inclusion in education is gradually seen as being about *all* students—a shift from earlier conceptualisations which focused on students with disabilities (Ainscow, 2020). Inclusion is also related to the idea of *accommodation* of learners, the assumption that schools will change in response to their students rather than assimilate them into their pre-existing structures and cultures (Cline & Frederickson, 2009). However, inclusion is a fragmented notion. Although it can be linked to values such as equity, justice and respect (Arnesen et al., 2010; Cigman, 2007), such values are understood and implemented differently by different people, thus leading to ambiguities and tensions. As Felder (2018) notes, 'although there seems to be broad consensus [on the significance of inclusion] on a superficial level, there is much more ambiguity if one looks deeper' (p. 55).

The fragmentation of inclusion is also evident in the different ways it is translated into pedagogic applications and decisions—into *inclusive pedagogies*. Inclusive pedagogies are often conceptualised as both a set of strategies that aim to ensure access to learning for all students and as value principles that reflect particular views on inclusion; this is why they tend to be approached in diverse ways (Florian & Spratt, 2013; Lewis & Norwich, 2004). We use 'pedagogies' rather than 'pedagogy' in this article to acknowledge this complexity.

At the heart of inclusive pedagogies appears to be the notion of treating all students with respect. As Cigman (2007) argues, showing respect has been understood in different ways, with some interpreting it as being about treating all students as far as possible in similar ways to avoid the stigma that difference can bring. Florian and Spratt (2013), e.g. note that:

> Inclusive pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that supports teachers to respond to individual differences between learners but avoids the marginalisation that can occur when some students are treated differently.
>
> (p. 119)

This approach to inclusive pedagogies is based on a number of principles, including: difference is part of the human condition; all children can make progress in their learning, so all learners ought to be supported and the presence of some will not hold back others; and teachers are capable of teaching all learners, with this involving replacing a 'fixed view' of 'ability' with an open-ended learning potential perspective (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

These assumptions can inform classroom practices that Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) have organised into a framework called the *inclusive pedagogical approach in action*.

This framework involves: extending what is ordinarily available for all, rather than learning activities for most alongside additional or different activities for those experiencing difficulties; differentiation by student choice for everyone and rejection of ability grouping; a flexible approach driven by needs of the learner rather than the requirements of a fixed curriculum; and seeing difficulties in learning as professional challenges rather than learner deficits.

However, Norwich & Koutsouris (2020, p. 227) raise questions with regards to the assumptions underpinning some of these principles. The first question is about the issue of 'differentiation by pupil choice'—is there a place for teacher-directed learning? Student voice offers unique opportunities for education, but it is also a contested matter and can be reduced to tokenism, the side-effect of a neoliberal drive for increased emphasis on consumer choice (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). Such arguments are also present in debates around educational 'buzzwords' such as *student-centred learning* (SCL). For example, the notion of 'power-sharing' has been shown to be the least supported and/or practical aspect of SCL (Bremner, 2021a, 2021b), with many constraints to implementation (Sakata et al., 2022), especially in more conservative educational cultures (Wang, 2007).

Another question is about 'rejecting ability grouping'—are there no benefits to temporary subject ability grouping? Research has found that additional support is not necessarily perceived as stigmatising and in some cases it might be experienced as a privilege (Koutsouris et al., 2021). This is consistent with Florian and Beaton's (2018) point that experiences of inclusion and exclusion might be less about the kind of teacher strategies used than the way they are enacted.

A final question is about the idea of 'seeing difficulties … as professional challenges'—can persistent difficulties related to individual difficulties still be considered as professional challenges? To consider this issue, one could revisit long-standing debates on the interaction between individual and societal factors and the experience of disability (Shakespeare, 2018). So, some children's difficulties may still be persistent even in the presence of high-quality teaching and support. This view is often challenged, as it draws less attention to factors that can be changed and improved, for example, teacher attitudes, the classroom environment and support (Vehmas & Watson, 2014), but this does not mean that all student difficulties can be addressed by good teaching. As Shakespeare (2006) notes: 'disabling barriers make impairment more difficult, but even in the absence of barriers impairment can be problematic' (p. 43).

The inherent contradiction of the *inclusive pedagogical approaches in action* lies in the desire to respond to individual learner differences while avoiding treating students differently; it is difficult to imagine how both can be achieved at the same time. The basis of this assumption is an association between the recognition of difference and stigmatisation or isolation. Florian and Beaton (2018), for example, note that 'the work [some students] are given is differentiated to such an extent that they end up isolated from the classroom community even though they may be physically present' (p. 870). They suggest, in turn, extending what is ordinarily available for all and in this way promoting a sense of commonality that is often associated with inclusion. Pozo-Armentia et al. (2020), however, have been critical of approaches to inclusion that emphasise commonality at the expense of recognising difference and diversity. Their argument is that inclusion is often perceived as opposing difference—which was meant to be protected in the first place:

> There is a certain novelty that inclusive pedagogy does introduce and which, when it grows uncontrollably and without the necessary balances […] can do away with differences, levelling them out in such a way that their effects end up disappearing, thus destroying the principle it seemed to want to respect.
>
> (p. 1066)

Other approaches to inclusive pedagogies are more open to acknowledging the importance of recognising difference in order to ensure access to appropriate provision. Lewis and Norwich (2004) argue that the identification of learners' needs or requirements may involve three interlinked dimensions: (i) needs common to all; (ii) needs specific to sub-groups; and (iii) needs unique to individuals (Lewis & Norwich, 2004). Two contrasting positions to difference can then be identified: the 'general differences' position and the 'individual (or unique) differences' position. From a 'general differences' position, decisions on provision are informed by needs that are common to all learners and needs that are unique to individuals, as well as needs that are specific to a group that shares common characteristics or difficulties (students with dyslexia, for example). This represents a moderate approach to inclusion (Cigman, 2007). Conversely, from an 'individual differences' perspective, provision is informed by unique differences and common needs; however, group-specific needs are not recognised because they are perceived as stigmatising. This is a stronger position which Cigman (2007) describes as 'full inclusion', with *inclusive pedagogical approach in action* an example of this approach.

The 'general differences' position can also be related to 'differentiated learning' or 'differentiation'. According to Tomlinson (2000), differentiation is about responding to student diversity by tailoring content (curriculum), processes (teaching) and products (assessment) to students' requirements. Similar to inclusion, differentiation has been related to social justice aims (e.g. Mills et al., 2014), but interestingly is less often discussed together with inclusion, as their respective aims are, in some cases, perceived to be different. For example, Pozo-Armentia et al. (2020) discuss a tension between differentiation and inclusive education and argue that 'the limits of inclusive education are in recognising and promoting excellence in difference, while the limits of differentiated education lie in recognising and promoting inclusion [understood as commonality]' (p. 1064). This echoes the so-called dilemma of difference perspective on inclusive teaching in that recognising student difference might lead to stigmatisation; however, failing to recognise difference could lead to loss of opportunities and restrictions to participation. This dilemma involves the clashing of values that differentiation and inclusion are seemingly based on—especially if inclusion is seen to be about emphasising commonality and downplaying difference:

> Teaching involves trying to achieve several values, such as responding to individual differences (or needs) and being positive and respectful of learners (not marginalising or devaluing). When these values clash there are dilemmas that require a balancing of risks; so, though the aim is to have it 'all ways' there may be limits which are to do with the tension between values (responding to differences/needs and avoiding marginalisation).
>
> (Norwich & Koutsouris, 2020, p. 226)

These tensions and challenges, however, are not always acknowledged in the literature. Finkelstein et al. (2021), for example, discuss inclusive pedagogies as a set of practices organised across five themes: collaboration and teamwork, determining progress, instructional support, organisational practices, and social, emotional and behavioural support. The assumption is that 'an inclusive teacher should essentially be competent in [these] five areas' (p. 755). These five themes were also used by Lindner and Schwab (2020) in their systematic literature review that explored differentiation and individualisation in inclusive teaching (note that the Finkelstein et al., 2021 study was available online from 2019).

As evident from this analysis, inclusive pedagogies are complex and multifaceted and are also often conflated with other pedagogic approaches and discourses (e.g. 'differentiated learning' and 'student voice'), without a clear indication of what makes a particular pedagogy 'inclusive'. We briefly examine some overlapping approaches in the next section.

OVERLAPPING APPROACHES TO INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES

In addition to differentiation (e.g. Lindner & Schwab, 2020), inclusive pedagogies can also be associated with other approaches or discourses, for example *adaptive teaching* (e.g. Gallagher et al., 2022). Adaptive teaching is less used than differentiation in the literature, but some present it as a more positive way of thinking about and responding to student difference in that it emphasises high expectations of all students (Eton, 2022).

An approach to inclusive pedagogies that emphasises commonality is the *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL). The basic principle of UDL is that educators ought to ensure that all students' needs are met in general classes with no need for additional support—or that general teaching, curriculum and assessment are planned in such way to cover the needs of all students (Capp, 2017). Universal Design for Learning is described as involving multiple means of representation, expression and engagement (Meyer et al., 2014); however, it has also been critiqued for practical limitations that lie in the extent to which provision can be extended to accommodate the needs of all at the same time (Norwich, 2013).

Another approach to pedagogy that is often discussed in the context of inclusive pedagogies is *inclusive inquiry* (Ainscow, 2020; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). This approach was developed to enable dialogue between teachers and their students about how to make lessons more inclusive in the sense that existing thinking and practices are challenged, and experimentation of new approaches is encouraged. Inclusion from this perspective is associated with student voice, and particularly with the engagement of hard-to-reach students in the classroom who are seen as empowered by this process:

> The dialogues that [inclusive inquiry] encourages are focused on learning and teaching. More specifically, differences amongst students and teachers are used to challenge existing thinking and practices in ways that are intended to encourage experimentation, [foster] more inclusive ways of working [and] break down barriers limiting the engagement of some learners.
>
> (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020, p. 675)

Inclusive inquiry has been linked to values associated with democracy in education and described as 'an antidote to pressures in schools' (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020, p. 682). However, it seems to assume that empowering student voice can offer a viable solution to the issues raised by inclusion, without acknowledging the many tensions and challenges (e.g. Douglas et al., 2016; Norwich, 2013; Slee, 2011; Thomas & Loxley, 2022).

Inclusive inquiry is also associated with broader student- or learner-centred approaches in education. The notion of SCL has been interpreted in a wide range of ways, to such an extent that some have pointed out it may be so wide-ranging that it has lost practical meaning (Neumann, 2013; Schweisfurth, 2015). Bremner (2021a) conducted a review of definitions of SCL found in the academic literature, and proposed at least six different, albeit potentially overlapping characteristics of SCL. The two that most clearly resonate with inclusive pedagogies are 'adapting to needs' (adapting learning around learners' needs, interests and prior learning experiences) and 'power sharing' (a focus on increased learner choice and decision-making around the learning process). An important distinction, here, is that 'adapting to needs' can, in theory, be completely teacher-directed, whereas 'power sharing', by definition, requires there to be at least some degree of decision-making on the part of the learners themselves. It is when SCL is interpreted in terms of the latter 'power sharing' that it begins to be associated with broader aims and outcomes, such as the reduction of power distances, increased democracy in and out of the classroom, and even 'emancipatory'

outcomes (Schweisfurth, 2013). The extent to which such emancipatory outcomes may be achieved through SCL is subject to debate.

METHODOLOGY

Building on these ideas, we were particularly interested in exploring inclusive pedagogies in the context of secondary schools, as the focus on particular curricular areas and subjects, additional pressures for teachers and students derived from assessment and exams, and fewer opportunities for collaboration between teachers as a result of the compartmentalisation of the curriculum (Hargreaves, 2005) can make the implementation of inclusive pedagogies more challenging than at primary level (Schwab et al., 2022).

This systematic literature review 'speaks to' and builds on two previous literature reviews: one on inclusive practices (Finkelstein et al., 2021) and one on individualisation and differentiation (Lindner & Schwab, 2020). These reviews focus largely on mapping instructional and organisational practices that are conducted 'in the name' of inclusion, such as the provision and adaptation of materials and resources—as Lindner and Schwab assert, the 'didactic method' (p. 17) of teaching. This review instead takes a theoretical and discursive approach and explores the different ways in which inclusive pedagogies are understood by scholars, conceptualised, linked (or not) to theory and practice, and related to other discourses. This facilitates a deeper consideration of inclusion as an academic and practical field, including potentially shared and competing ideals and understandings. We also consider critically whether a systematic literature review can be an appropriate methodological approach to examine such a fragmented concept, in a context where systematic literature reviews are often seen as a 'gold standard' and have a growing presence in educational research (Haddaway et al., 2017).

This study, therefore, explores the following research questions:

- How are inclusive pedagogies in the context of the secondary school conceptualised in the research literature?
- With what other approaches do they overlap and what is the significance of this?

Approach

In this systematic review, we adopted a critical approach (Grant & Booth, 2009). The aim in critical systematic reviews is to rigorously map the research literature, but the analysis stage seeks to go beyond description and contribute conceptual insight and innovation through a critical lens.

Search strategy

We developed a comprehensive search strategy following an initial scoping of the topic area. The following search terms were used in this review:

- *Inclusion terms*—"inclusive pedagog*", "inclusive teaching", "inclusive learning", "inclusive instruction".
- *Setting terms*—"secondary school*", "secondary education*", "compulsory education", k-12, "middle school*", "high school*", "junior school*", "junior high".

Database searching

We conducted the search in November 2022. We used the following databases, with search terms cross-searched in the title and abstract fields: British Education Index, Education Research Complete, ERIC, International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, Australian Education Index, and Web of Science.

Inclusion criteria

To be included in this review, texts had to meet the following inclusion criteria:

- be written in the English language;
- be published from 2000 to 2022;
- focus on the age range 11–16 years (i.e. equivalent to secondary school in England);
- have an explicit and substantial focus on inclusive pedagogies (i.e. it is not mentioned as a subsidiary recommendation);
- focus on mainstream rather than special schools—this was because we wanted to explore inclusion in the context of performativity pressures that are more evident in mainstream education;
- be of any study design/ research method but involve primary data collection to be able to capture the use of inclusive pedagogies in ways that involve practice;
- be a peer reviewed journal article—conference papers, book chapters and roundtable papers were excluded;
- focus on in-service teachers (i.e. texts referring to initial teacher training/preservice teachers' training in inclusive pedagogies were excluded).

Selection process

Following the database search, results were combined into an Endnote X9 Library and duplicates were removed. The three authors (NB, GK, LS) conducted a pilot stage of title and abstract screening using the inclusion criteria with 25 texts to agree on screening decisions and then GK and LS conducted initial screening independently. Titles and abstracts of texts included at the initial stage were then divided equally amongst the three authors. Full texts were located, and each author assessed the full texts against the inclusion criteria, following another pilot stage amongst all of the authors. We conducted group meetings throughout the screening process and debated individual texts at some length, where we were uncertain. Our final included papers ($n = 13$) were agreed upon by all three authors. See Figure 1 for a PRISMA flow diagram showing the numbers of texts included and excluded at each stage of the review.

Data extraction

We developed a data charting form specifically for this review. The data charted included first author, date, country, journal, study design, methods, sample, school discipline/subject under focus, how inclusive pedagogies are conceptualised, theoretical underpinnings and overlapping pedagogical discourses. This process was completed by GK and NB, following a pilot stage on several texts conducted by all three authors.

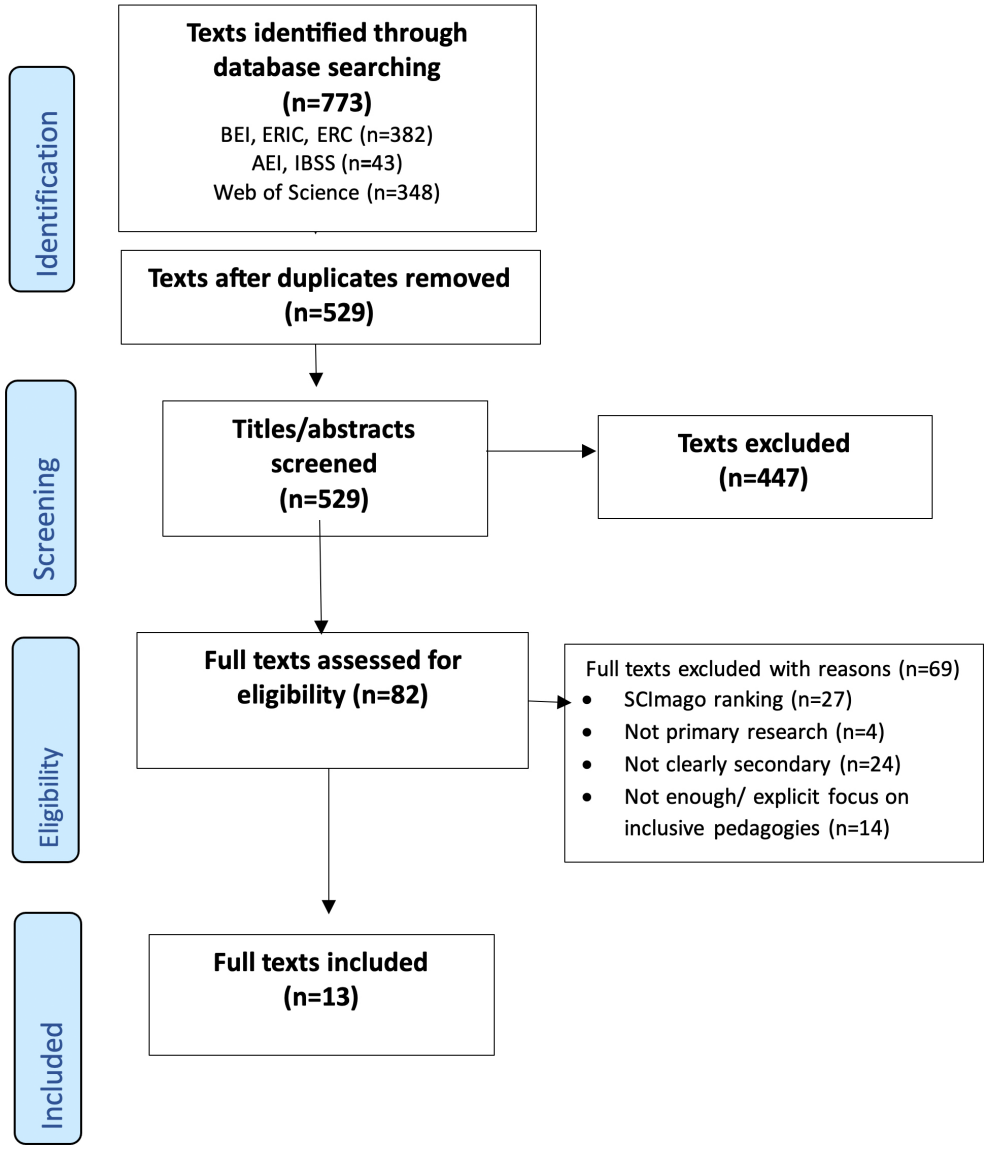

FIGURE 1 PRISMA flow diagram with search process.

Quality assessment

We refined our search results according to SCImago Journal Rankings, retaining those texts falling in Quartile 1 in at least one discipline, as an indication of the quality and rigour of the studies and of the findings and interpretations. Given that the aim of this review was to critically examine conceptualisations of inclusive pedagogies, we wanted to ensure that the included texts had been rigorously peer reviewed.

Analysis

Literature reviews can reproduce ideological hegemonies if assumptions underpinning the approaches and conceptualisations in a field of research are taken-for-granted and accepted uncritically (Wall et al., 2015). We, thus, took a critical approach in the way we examined principles underpinning inclusive pedagogies, as well as reflected on our own ways of thinking and assumptions. Analysis was informed by reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). We aimed to explore patterns in and beyond the language used in the texts, paying particular attention to socio-cultural locale, context and patterns of centralising concepts. GK led on the analysis phase. Texts were coded for both semantic and latent content relating to 'inclusion' and 'inclusive pedagogies', with similarities and differences across the texts noted. Attention was paid to authors' theoretical approach to inclusion and the way inclusive pedagogies were conceptualised, as well as to other approaches associated with inclusive pedagogies. Overarching discursive themes were subsequently discussed and decided upon by all authors.

FINDINGS

There were 13 texts located in this review, which was a lower number than initially expected. We discuss the methodological significance of this finding in the discussion. Table 1 provides a descriptive table of findings from the articles. The findings are now presented, organised under the following sections: date; country; journals; focus; methods and participants; how are inclusive pedagogies conceptualised; and overlapping approaches.

Date

Of the 13 papers included in the review, the oldest dated to 2008 (Burnard et al., 2008). There were four papers from 2022, two from 2021 and 2015, and one paper each from 2020, 2018, 2017 and 2016.

Country of data collection

Here we report country of data collection and not where the author(s) was/were based. The papers located collected data in countries across the globe—although a limitation is that only studies published in the English language were included. The most represented country of data collection was the USA with three articles, followed by Canada and Germany (two articles each), Australia ($n = 1$), Belgium ($n = 1$), Bhutan ($n = 1$), Saudi Arabia ($n = 1$) and Sweden ($n = 1$). There was also a comparative study between Spain, Australia, Sweden and the UK.

Journals

The 13 papers were published in 10 different journals. Most journals had an educational focus (e.g. *International Journal of Educational Research*), with one having a psychology focus (*Frontiers in Psychology*) and two with a teacher training focus (*Journal of Science Teacher Education*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*). Nine journals were represented by a single paper—the only exception was the *International Journal of Inclusive Education* with

TABLE 1 Descriptive table of review findings.

Authors	Date	Journal	Country of data collection	Focus (e.g. subject)	Setting	Methods	Participants	Scale	Special educational needs (SEN)-focused or other	How are inclusive pedagogies conceptualised	Overlapping approaches
Adu-Boateng & Goodnough	2022	*Journal of Science Teacher Education*	Canada	Science	Secondary (or equivalent)	Qualitative case study	Teacher	1 teacher (with an SEN background/ training)	Students with disabilities	Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Co-teaching
Alnahdi et al	2022	*Frontiers in Psychology*	Saudi Arabia	Other—Social participation	Primary and secondary (or equivalent)	Questionnaire	Students	824 students	Students with and without disabilities	Based on students' perspectives	Differentiation (regarding groups of students) and personalisation (regarding individual students)
Ashton	2016	*Classroom Discourse*	USA	Maths	Secondary (or equivalent)	Qualitative case study	Teachers	Two teachers	Students with disabilities	Co-teaching	Co-teaching
Burnard et al	2008	*International Journal of Music Education*	Spain, Australia, Sweden and the UK	Music	Secondary (or equivalent)	Qualitative case studies	Teachers	Four teachers	All students	Fraser's (1997) notion of 'recognition'	Student-centred learning
Dukpa et al	2021	*International Journal of Inclusive Education*	Bhutan	Maths, Science, English	Primary and secondary (or equivalent)	Mixed methods	Teachers	106 teachers (only 16 interviewed, seven observed)	Students on the autism spectrum	Florian's inclusive pedagogy framework	Differentiation; UDL
Fredman et al	2015	*Education and Urban Society*	USA	Other—learning environment	Secondary (or equivalent)	Interviews	Current and ex teachers	16 current and ex teachers	LGBTQ students	Challenging the heteronormative structures of schools (LGBTQ representation and safety)	n/a
Garrett & Wrench	2015	*International Journal of Inclusive Education*	Australia	PE	Secondary (or equivalent)	Interviews	Teacher	One teacher	Students from disadvantaged backgrounds	Embodied pedagogies	Learning 'in', 'through' and not just 'about' movement

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors	Date	Journal	Country of data collection	Focus (e.g. subject)	Setting	Methods	Participants	Scale	Special educational needs (SEN)-focused or other	How are inclusive pedagogies conceptualised	Overlapping approaches
Gheyssens et al	2021	*Teaching and Teacher Education*	Belgium	Other—learning environment	Primary and secondary (or equivalent)	Questionnaire	Teachers	1522 teachers	Diverse students	Differentiated instruction; noticing	UDL; differentiation
Pantić et al	2022	*Journal of Educational Change*	Sweden	Other—teacher agency	Primary and secondary (or equivalent)	Qualitative—other	Teachers	54 teachers	All students	Teachers' sense of agency for change; Florian's inclusive pedagogy framework	n/a
Sagner-Tapia	2018	*International Journal of Inclusive Education*	Germany	Other—alterity/identity	Secondary (or equivalent)	Qualitative—other	Teachers	23 teachers	Students with disabilities	Todorov's theory of alterity; Florian's inclusive pedagogy framework	n/a
Schwab et al	2022	*International Journal of Inclusive Education*	Germany	German, Maths, English	Secondary (or equivalent)	Questionnaire	Teachers, students	74 teachers; 665 students	All students	Based on students' perspectives; Sharma's Inclusive Teaching Practices Scale (S-Inclusive Teaching Practices Scale)	Differentiation; personalisation; UDL
Shaw et al	2020	*Computer Science Education*	USA	Computer science	Secondary (or equivalent)	Qualitative—other	Teachers	17 teachers	Diverse students	Not clearly theorised; access; racial and gender disparities	Differentiation; peer pedagogy; creativity; adaptation
Woodcock & Hardy	2017	*International Journal of Educational Research*	Canada	Other—Teacher professional development	Primary and secondary (or equivalent)	Questionnaire	Teachers	120 teachers	All students	Slee's notion of 'exclusive schooling'; Florian's inclusive pedagogy framework	n/a

four articles. The range of journals also reflects the different approaches to inclusive pedagogies discussed later on. We revisit the significance of this in the discussion.

Focus

About half of the articles ($n=7$) explored inclusive pedagogies with an explicit focus on one or more subjects, namely mathematics ($n=3$), science ($n=3$) of which one article had a focus on computer science, languages ($n=3$), specifically English ($n=2$) and German ($n=1$), physical education (PE; $n=1$) and music ($n=1$). The approach to inclusive pedagogies taken in each article was particularly influenced by the subject, as for example in Garrett and Wrench (2016), where inclusion in PE was explored through ideas about embodiment, and Burnard et al. (2008), who explored promoting engagement and creativity in the context of music education. The influence of the subject matter in secondary school education is further explored later on.

A group of six articles was not written with a strong emphasis on a particular subject. Two of these articles were written with a focus on the learning environment—one of which highlighted representation and school safety for LGBTQ+ students (Fredman et al., 2015). Another article focused on students' perceptions of inclusive practices (Alnahdi et al., 2022), and the remaining articles focused on teachers' agency for change ($n=1$), the ways teachers can construct the identities of their students through the lens of alterity ($n=1$) and teacher professional development with links to tensions between special/ inclusive education ($n=1$).

Methods and participants

All included papers ($n=13$) were empirical, covering a range of methodological approaches. There were four questionnaire-based studies some using well-known instruments, for example, the *Inclusive Teaching Practices Scale* (Alnahdi et al., 2022; Schwab et al., 2022). Three studies involved qualitative case studies and three used a range of other forms of qualitative data collection/analysis, e.g. Pantić et al. (2021), who analysed teacher-completed online logs. Two studies were interview-based, and a single study used mixed methods—interviews, observations and questionnaire (Dukpa et al., 2021).

Interestingly, participants were largely teachers (also ex-teachers, Fredman et al., 2015). Only two studies (both involving the same researcher) involved students (and one of them alongside teachers, Schwab et al., 2022); students were not just participants, but students' perceptions were placed at the heart of how the authors conceptualised inclusive practices.

When it comes to scale (judged by the number of participants), there was a wide range of projects, ranging from involving a single participant (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022) to large-scale survey participants, with a maximum of 1522 teachers in Gheyssens et al. (2021).

How are inclusive pedagogies conceptualised?

More than half of the articles ($n=8$) related inclusive pedagogies to all students, and most ($n=7$) specifically to students from historically disadvantaged, marginalised or minority backgrounds. Burnard et al. (2008), for example, linked inclusive pedagogies to:

> all children achieving and participating despite challenges stemming from poverty, class, race, religion, linguistic and cultural heritage or gender.
>
> (p. 110)

Shaw et al. (2020) discussed particularly racial and gender barriers students have to overcome when it comes to accessing science courses, namely, computer science in the USA. A single study had a focus on LGBTQ+ students (Fredman et al., 2015) and four on students with disabilities, of which one specifically focused on students identified with autism (Dukpa et al., 2021).

In almost all articles included ($n = 12$ out of 13), inclusive pedagogies were explicitly related to a wide range of theoretical ideas and frameworks. Even when there was no clear theoretical background (Shaw et al., 2020), inclusion was still seen as grounded in social justice and was linked to broader structural barriers in society that limit participation for certain groups.

Below are the main theoretical ideas discussed and linked to inclusive pedagogies.

Florian and colleagues' framework

The most widely reported approach to inclusive pedagogies was Florian and colleagues' framework ($n = 4$), i.e. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) and Florian and Spratt (2013).

Adu-Boateng and Goodnough (2022) used this framework to support the principle that no student should be left behind and thus this calls for adjustments in curriculum and teaching. Dukpa et al. (2021), given their focus on students with autism, linked this approach to ideas about neurodiversity and emphasised that teachers should see themselves as responsible for teaching all students. Pantić et al. (2021) focused on the ability of teachers to attend to individual differences between learners while avoiding the marginalisation that can occur when some learners are treated differently from others—but without addressing the internal contradiction of the statement (how you can address different needs, if you do not use different approaches). They also drew a link between inclusive pedagogies and attainment:

> Inclusive pedagogy […] emerged from research into the craft knowledge of teachers who were committed to the principles of educational inclusion in their practice while maintaining high levels of academic attainment.
>
> (p. 147)

This seems to be an interpretation of Florian and colleagues' idea that teachers ought to have high expectations of their students (not see then as ineducable and perceive student difficulties as professional challenges), but this does not mean that all students are expected to have high levels of academic attainment. This idea, however, is revealing of the priorities of secondary school education.

Florian's approach was also related to other theoretical perspectives, to ideas about differentiation and UDL (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022; Dukpa et al., 2021), co-teaching (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022), teachers as agents for change (Pantić et al., 2021), Todorov's theory of alterity (Sagner-Tapia, 2018) and Slee's notion of 'irregular school' (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). With regards to the latter, Woodcock and Hardy (2017) explore how the focus of professional development can affect the way teachers think about inclusion to encourage more 'irregular' schooling practices—practices that challenge the status quo:

> The more formal special education PD teachers were exposed to, the more likely they were to construe inclusion as largely or wholly relating to special

> education (e.g. focusing largely upon students with special educational needs and/or disabilities) and the more negative they were likely to be in relation to inclusion more generally; that is, the more likely they were to ensure the maintenance of 'regular' exclusionary schooling practices, and less likely to support the 'irregular', inclusive school.
>
> (p. 52)

Inclusion based on students' perspectives

Only two studies in the review explored inclusive pedagogies from the perspective of students (Alnahdi et al., 2022; Schwab et al., 2022). Alnahdi et al. (2022) note that: 'studies on the relationship between inclusive teaching practices and students' perceptions of inclusion on school- and classroom-levels regarding formal (explicit learning and teaching processes) and informal (social interactions in general, play) educational processes are rare' (p. 2); thus, it is important students are given a voice. Interestingly, Schwab et al. (2022) found that students from the same classroom perceived teaching practices (differentiation) of the same teacher very differently, and although it was acknowledged that this is not an easy to interpret finding that might point to measurement difficulties, it further highlights why it is important to capture students' perceptions of inclusive practices.

Alnahdi et al. (2022) also cited Ainscow and Messiou (2018), a paper about inclusion inquiry—an approach to inclusive pedagogies that emphasises empowerment of student voice to promote engagement for all students (see above, literature review). Schwab et al. (2022) acknowledged some of the complexities of implementing inclusion in secondary school (e.g. curriculum and exam pressures) that might impact the extent to which student voice can be taken into consideration.

In addition, both studies offered insights into the debate as to whether attitudes to inclusion can also affect teaching practice: 'teachers who have positive attitudes towards inclusion tended to differentiate curriculum more during teaching as perceived by their students' (Schwab et al., 2022, p. 73). This is a debated matter and other studies identified tensions between teacher attitudes and inclusive practice (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022).

The influence of subject topic on the way inclusion was understood

It was also clear that the subject topic or field had influenced the theoretical approach to inclusion taken in some of the studies, e.g. Fraser's notion of 'recognition' to underpin ideas about SCL in music education (Burnard et al., 2008), an emphasis on embodied pedagogies in PE (Garrett & Wrench, 2016) and the 'noticing' of important teaching events as part of teacher reflection on practice and professional development (Gheyssens et al., 2021).

More particularly, Garrett and Wrench (2016) explored learning 'in', 'through' and not just 'about' movement in PE and argued for a pedagogical shift towards appreciating bodies as agents of knowledge production. From this perspective, inclusive schooling practices can be understood as an 'attempt to provide access to valued forms of knowledge for those from less socially powerful positions' (p. 487). From a different perspective, Burnard et al. (2008) drew on Fraser's (1997) notion of recognition to challenge cultural domination and lack of representation in multicultural schools using music as an avenue. In both examples, inclusion and inclusive pedagogies were, in a sense, re-imagined and tailored to the needs and particular purposes of different subjects.

Other approaches

Inclusive pedagogies were also related to representation and safety for LGBTQ+ students; Fredman et al. (2015) used Poole and McPhee's (2005) structuration theory to 'examine how educators navigate social and academic environments in order to incorporate inclusive pedagogical practices and cultivate safe schools for [LGBTQ+] students' and 'unveil the heteronormative structures of schools and the production and reproduction of values that support or challenge these systems' (p. 57).

Three studies also linked inclusive pedagogies to particular teaching approaches, namely, UDL (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022), co-teaching (Ashton, 2016) and differentiation (Gheyssens et al., 2021). These teaching approaches are presented in the next section as overlapping approaches to inclusive pedagogies; however, in the three studies they were placed at the heart of how inclusive pedagogies were conceptualised—although it was recognised that they were not the only possible approaches (Gheyssens et al., 2021).

Overlapping approaches

Inclusive pedagogies were not the only approach to pedagogy discussed in the articles—other approaches are listed below.

Differentiation

Differentiation was discussed in a number of the studies ($n = 5$) and was mainly linked to Tomlinson's work (e.g. Tomlinson, 2014) and defined by Gheyssens et al. (2021) as:

> a teaching practice and a teaching philosophy to meet the needs of diverse learners [and] an approach where teachers are proactive and focus on common goals for each student in the classroom by providing them with multiple options in anticipation of and in response to student differences in readiness, interest and learning needs.
>
> (p. 2)

Differentiation was also linked to *personalisation*, with Alnahdi et al. (2022) associating differentiation with accommodations offered to groups of students and personalisation to accommodations for individual students. Shaw et al. (2020) also used the term *adaptation* when it comes to the curriculum.

Interestingly, differentiation was also discussed in the context of Florian and colleagues' framework, although their basic principles are seemingly in tension (as discussed earlier on). For example, Dukpa et al. (2021) noted that in their Bhutan-based study:

> teachers' understanding of differentiation is focussed on separating students on the autism spectrum from others by providing activities or lessons which is different from what other students receive rather than adapting and changing the process of teaching and offering choices to everyone.
>
> (p. 17)

Their perspective is influenced by Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) idea of extending what is ordinarily available to all, but as the basis of this idea is a sense of commonality, it is less

clear how it can be used to justify classroom differentiation. This is examined in more detail in the discussion.

UDL

Universal Design for Learning was mentioned in 3 studies as an approach to inclusive pedagogies with the potential to bring about 'promising outcomes for diverse students' engagement and academic success' (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022, p. 306). However, it was recognised that UDL emphasises sameness and that this might come into tension with ideas about differentiation—although both can be about inclusion (Schwab et al., 2022). Universal Design for Learning was mainly linked to guidelines published by CAST (Meyer et al., 2014). The use of UDL by teachers was also discussed as being associated with tensions, including lack of specialised support (with regards to supporting students with disabilities), an inflexible curriculum and an over-dependence on standardised testing that 'can influence teachers' instructional choice by abandoning strategies that provide options for reinforcement of skills and in-depth understandings of the content to teaching-to-the-test instruction' (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022, p. 317).

Co-teaching

Co-teaching was discussed in relation to inclusive pedagogies in two studies, one from the USA (Ashton, 2016) and the other from Canada (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022). Both studies focused on students with disabilities—and co-teaching was defined as 'the pairing of a general education and a special education teacher to work together in the same classroom' (Ashton, 2016, p. 1). In Ashton's (2016) study, co-teaching was explored with reference to disability studies, with the author approaching it from a critical perspective, as an approach that can potentially reinforce a mainstream/special distinction:

> We must continue efforts to break down the discursive barriers between general and special education, encourage conversations that challenge traditional views of education and nurture new conceptions of normalcy that create a space for all students to learn.
>
> (p. 15)

Student-centred learning

Ideas about SCL underpinned many of the approaches to inclusion and inclusive pedagogies already discussed. For example, approaches influenced by Florian and colleagues (e.g. Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Spratt, 2013)—as well as by Ainscow and Messiou (2018)—place SCL and voice at the heart of their pedagogies. Two studies also emphasised the role of students' perceptions for inclusion, where students were also involved as participants (Alnahdi et al., 2022; Schwab et al., 2022). However, only Burnard et al. (2008), in the context of music education, referred explicitly to SCL as a teacher response to their students, highlighting:

> the teachers' ability to design learning experiences that recognize intrinsic motivation and learner agency. These qualities of pedagogical practice […] facilitate an extremely productive, meaningful and focused music experience […] The

> teachers […] demonstrate the ability to forge a consonant interpretation of students' verbal, physical and emotional expression, and simultaneously incorporate this into their teaching practice and experience design.
>
> (p. 120)

Overall, in the articles, these approaches (differentiation, UDL, co-teaching and SCL) were discussed together with inclusive pedagogies, either as overlapping approaches (i.e. having similar philosophies and purposes) or in some cases as synonyms or examples of how inclusive pedagogies can be implemented.

DISCUSSION

In summary, almost all the included articles linked inclusive pedagogies to theoretical ideas, and, despite some commonalities (e.g. empowering student voice), there was fragmentation when it comes to how inclusive pedagogies were conceptualised and linked to practice. Inclusive pedagogies were also largely seen to be about all students (student diversity) and less about students with disabilities—and, even in the latter case, distinctions between 'mainstream' and 'special' were often challenged. Given this focus on students, it is then surprising that student perceptions of inclusive pedagogies are still very little explored. Tensions associated with inclusion (e.g. between a focus on commonality/ difference or between attitudes/ practice) were to some extent acknowledged, but not in all cases. In addition, approaches to inclusive pedagogies were filtered through the lenses of particular subjects (e.g. music and PE), and were interpreted and re-imagined serving subject-related priorities and purposes. Inclusive pedagogies were also associated with other approaches seen as sharing similar philosophies and purposes—differentiation, UDL, co-teaching and SCL. Overall, the general feeling was that there was no clear direction for inclusive pedagogies either in terms of theory or practice, a paucity of new ideas with 'established' ways of thinking being recycled and little desire to engage with the tensions and struggles of inclusion.

We now discuss these findings in two sections: tensions between commonality and difference and the role of inclusive pedagogies in secondary school.

Tensions between commonality and difference

As discussed, several studies drew on the approach to inclusive pedagogies put forward by Florian and Beaton (2018), Florian and Spratt (2013) and Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011). Having already discussed (and questioned) some of the ideas underpinning this approach, it is important to highlight that this is an approach that emphasises *commonality* and perceives difference as stigmatising. In this way, this approach is similar to UDL in that it downplays difference and aspires to extend provision to cover the full range of student diversity.

Inclusion is often linked to ideas about commonality, as opposed to individuality and difference, seen as having broader social significance (Norwich, 2013). Ideas about inclusion as 'a common good' (Felder, 2019) and 'an ethical project' (Allan, 2005) underpin this view. Felder (2018, 2019), for example, distinguishes between a societal and communal sphere; she argues that although communal (i.e. about interpersonal relationships) inclusion might leave space for the expression of individual interests (e.g. choice), at a broader societal level inclusion ought to be promoted and safeguarded. Allan (2005) also notes 'that inclusion starts with the premise that an individual has a right to belong to society and its institutions, which therefore implies that others have obligations to ensure that this happens' (p. 282).

Ideas about commonality have filtered through to approaches to inclusive pedagogies; however, even approaches embedded in commonality principles paradoxically rely on some level of recognition of individuality and difference. Florian and Beaton (2018), for example, write that:

> The inclusive pedagogical approach was developed in response to questions about how individual pupils can receive the additional support or extra help they need without treating them differently from others.
>
> (p. 870)

The authors explain that the aim of this approach is to support learners who are physically present in the classroom but 'excluded from opportunities to participate in collaborative or group activities because the work they are given is differentiated to such an extent that they end up isolated from the classroom community' (p. 870). From this perspective, different treatment is understood more as stigmatising than supporting. What is difficult to imagine is how this approach could be implemented, without some level of recognition of difference—and also, how all learners can be effectively supported, if they are treated similarly. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) suggest extending what is ordinarily available for all, but this might be less feasible in a diverse classroom. In addition, Florian and Beaton (2018) seem to question their own assumptions when they admit that 'marginalisation for some pupils within classroom activity does not necessarily occur because of the teachers' choice of strategy but the way in which it is enacted' (p. 871). So, what might bring isolation or stigma is not differentiation of curriculum, teaching or assessment, but the way this is introduced and used by teachers.

It is interesting that some of these arguments target exclusionary practices—that are conceptualised as the opposite of inclusion. It could be argued though that inclusion and exclusion are not about different states that can be 'securely' achieved, but rather complex and interacting processes. Qvortrup and Qvortrup (2018), for example, in the context of social relationships, discuss how inclusion cannot be separated from exclusion, as experience of the one possibly involves the experience of the other. They argue that, although total inclusion (assimilation) or exclusion (total isolation) is conceivable, it is more likely that people will experience some sort of combination of inclusion and exclusion. For example, students might feel included in some of their lessons but not included in others, or included by some of their peers but not by others—and every day can bring different experiences. So, inclusion and exclusion cannot be understood as polar opposites, and experience of the one cannot lead to the elimination of the other.

Another side-effect of emphasising commonality in the ways we understand inclusion is the change of focus from students with disabilities (or other minority groups) to all students. This can lead to the idea that 'everyone is different', and that difference is part of 'normal' human diversity—that is a full inclusion perspective (Cigman, 2007). At face value, this is not a negative view given the stigma that difference might bring about; it can mean though that challenges associated with difference will also be normalised and so potentially overlooked.

This idea is reflected in the *dilemma of difference* associated with inclusion: recognising difference will always involve the danger of stigmatising, but failing to recognise difference might lead to loss of opportunities (Norwich, 2013; Norwich & Koutsouris, 2020). In the example discussed before, Florian and Beaton (2018) highlight that 'the work [some students] are given is differentiated *to such an extent* [emphasis added]' (p. 870) that the students might become isolated. A possible resolution to the dilemma of difference would be to seek a balance between recognising difference and avoiding stigmatisation—and in this particular example, exploring different levels of differentiation until we can secure an acceptable

level of support alongside opportunities for participation. This would be an imperfect resolution, in constant need of revision.

In addition, Schwab et al. (2022) discuss a tension between teacher attitudes to inclusion and implementation as a debated, but ultimately empirical matter. Although there is evidence that attitudes can influence implementation (e.g. Sharma & Sokal, 2016) but also that positive attitudes alone might not be enough (Adu-Boateng & Goodnough, 2022), thinking about this matter mainly as an empirical one can draw attention away from tensions and dilemmas, and emphasise inclusion as a matter of individual willingness. There is no question that positive teacher attitudes play some role, but alongside other factors (e.g. inflexible curriculum, exam-driven culture) and in the context of hard to resolve tensions.

Although these and other tensions and dilemmas are inherent in inclusive pedagogies, they are rarely acknowledged. This is a recognised matter:

> Inclusive education, especially in its radical versions […] commits to one big value and idea that provides security and purpose. For others, inclusion, or at least the long-standing values underpinning it, are several values that can at times come into conflict and present dilemmas.
>
> (Norwich & Koutsouris, 2017, p. 5)

The latter perspective tends to be represented by the minority of the literature and one of the consequences is that many approaches to inclusive pedagogies feel idealistically driven and, especially for this reason, detached from reality—and particularly the reality of secondary education that we discuss next.

The role of inclusive pedagogies in secondary school

The findings of the review also raise questions about the ways inclusive pedagogies are understood in the secondary school context. It is worth noting that several of the studies that were cited in the review as underpinning inclusive pedagogies originate in or point to research conducted in the context of primary school.

The most striking example is Florian and colleagues' work. Florian and Beaton's (2018) study involved reception (ages 4–5) and primary classrooms (ages 7–8); Florian and Spratt (2013) refer to a larger project involving both primary and secondary teachers, but they only report an illustrative case study of a primary teacher (next, we also briefly discuss the full study, Spratt & Florian, 2015), and Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) study involved primary schools (students 3–12 years old). Another example is inclusive inquiry that was cited in the review and was also developed in primary schools (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020)—although its origins are an action research project carried out in secondary schools (Messiou & Ainscow, 2015).

So, given the strong links to primary school, one might ask to what extent and in what ways current understandings of inclusive pedagogies are relevant to secondary school. Secondary education has certain distinct characteristics. For example, Schwab et al. (2022) note that the 'secondary school curriculum tends to be more subject focused rather than pedagogy driven and thus majority of schools tend to maintain their traditional factory model structure. The majority of secondary school teachers tend to work on their own or in small teams around their subject matter' (p. 64). They also note that 'secondary school teachers are under tremendous pressure to complete the designated curriculum' (Schwab et al., 2022). This raises questions, especially with regards to approaches that emphasise student choice and SCL that probably require flexibility when it comes to curriculum, teaching and assessment. For example, Geurts et al. (2023) found the involvement of students

in decision-making about teaching and learning activities to be challenging with students often having limited opportunities to actively participate. As discussed, learner-centred pedagogies are often associated with implementation challenges and practical constraints (e.g. Sakata et al., 2022).

Similar challenges are acknowledged in this review, with Adu-Boateng and Goodnough (2022) discussing teacher reported tensions with regards to using inclusive pedagogies, while also having to navigate an inflexible school curriculum and dealing with exam pressures often translated into teaching-to-the-test approaches. Such performativity pressures are widely reported in the literature (e.g. Ball, 2003; Brady & Wilson, 2022; Pearce et al., 2010).

On the other hand, inclusive pedagogies are not necessarily about specific practical strategies but broader principles—indicatively, teachers must believe they are qualified and capable of teaching all children (Florian & Spratt, 2013)—so they should arguably be relevant to both primary and secondary school. Spratt and Florian (2015), for example, report that although in their study primary and secondary teachers' practices were different, they were underpinned by the same key principle: *respect of each individual within the learning community*. Teachers also used approaches that were meant to 'contribute to class solidarity and minimise categorisation and determinism' (p. 95). Spratt and Florian (2015) also highlighted that teachers did not necessarily use new approaches, but already recognised useful classroom practices (collaborative group work, space for pupil choice, formative assessment etc.), organised under a common framework for thinking (i.e. their inclusive pedagogies framework). One might still argue though that—even for widely used practices—secondary schools can lack the flexibility that primary schools often have.

An additional matter is the influence of curriculum subjects that is much less obvious in primary schools. Stentiford and Koutsouris (2022) note in a higher education context that 'disciplinary context is currently under-recognised as an axis of significance when considering inclusion' (p. 1266), and draw attention to differences between, for example, hard (e.g. maths and physics) and soft (humanities and social sciences) disciplines and how the epistemological and organisational differences between disciplines might impact on understandings of inclusion. Although this argument was made for inclusion in higher education, it does have relevance to secondary school as evident in the review findings—e.g. relatively different understandings of inclusion in PE and music lessons. Disciplinary differences might suggest that a single approach to inclusive pedagogies (if at all possible) might be less useful or relevant in secondary school where different subjects have different priorities.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

In this section, we reflect on the significance of our findings building on the points discussed above and with particular reference to the impact of our chosen methodological approach.

As per the title of the paper, we might like to ask: do we have to rethink inclusive pedagogies when it comes to secondary school? This, though, might be a superficial question as the current constraints of secondary school are not independent of societal expectations and directly relate to broader debates about the role of education. Education can be understood as a complex system (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022) and this complexity is also reflected in the way its purposes are understood. Biesta (2015) recognises three key functions of education: qualification (being prepared for future employment); socialisation (becoming part of a society and culture); and subjectification (developing a sense of self and agency). Qualification is particularly emphasised in the current educational culture, and often at the expense of other purposes. This is evident in the focus on academic attainment, especially for particular high-stakes subjects and measurable outcomes (Biesta, 2009), and can be

seen as part of a broader neoliberal agenda (e.g. Ball, 2003; Holloway & Brass, 2018). An increased focus on qualification also might threaten the importance we attribute to inclusion, as it is about values rather than tangible and measurable outcomes.

When it comes to inclusive pedagogies then, it might be less about rethinking inclusion and how it can be translated into pedagogic principles and more about re-evaluating our broader educational priorities. We could still though consider refining the ways we think about inclusive pedagogies in secondary school from at least two perspectives. First, the review found that student voice was emphasised but was less evident in the included studies. It is difficult to imagine why most studies focus on teachers' views and exclude other important stakeholders, and most importantly students and their parents. Second, any approach to inclusive pedagogies should acknowledge tensions and dilemmas. This was evident to some extent, but many very influential approaches focus on broader principles, without examining the tensions that they involve. Such an acknowledgement would not threaten inclusion or deconstruct these approaches—it would instead make them more considered and rounded.

An additional matter is the extent to which the methodological approach taken in this paper—a systematic literature review, albeit critical in orientation—might have affected our findings, and their range and significance. Our intention was to understand how the term 'inclusive pedagogies' has been used in the literature, but arguably the systematic approach we took limited, not just guided, our field of view. Systematic reviews, however well designed or transparent they might be, are restricted by the particular parameters of their search strategy. We are confident in the way we conducted our searches and implemented our strategy within our team, but we eventually ended up with a small number of included articles that met our inclusion criteria. The adoption of the SCImago Journal Rankings for quality assurance purposes, in particular, seemed to have an effect on the number of included articles. The transparency of SCImago Rankings is by itself a debated matter (e.g. Mañana-Rodríguez, 2015), but these are widely reported rankings on websites of education journals despite the emergence of voices that advocate for more responsible use of journal rankings (such as The Declaration on Research Assessment, DORA). Using SCImago Rankings, though, was not the only reason for excluding a significant number of articles. Other reasons why texts were excluded were that the focus was not on secondary or equivalent school (we touched on this earlier on), and that there was not enough focus on inclusive pedagogies as a concept—only passing references with no explanation of what they might involve. The latter seems to characterise large parts of the relevant literature.

The nature of systematic reviews also means that work which does not meet the inclusion criteria will not be captured in searches or included; however, some of this work might be relevant, but perhaps framed in different ways. Thomas and Macnab (2022) and Bešić (2020), for example, suggest adopting an intersectional framework for inclusion that was not captured by our search strategy; the ideas discussed in these articles were not framed in terms of inclusive pedagogies, so our searches and inclusion criteria excluded them both. However, the articles argue for a different way of identifying students' needs and requirements—and therefore have significant implications for inclusive pedagogies:

> uniform views of students, embedded in educational policies, narrow the lens through which educators can support learning within the institutional contexts in which they work. Therefore, once a student is identified as needing specialized support in a specific area, other aspects of that student's needs may be pushed aside or overlooked.
>
> (Bešić, 2020, p. 117)

> genuinely intersectional understandings of difficulty need to focus on structural and social dimensions of schooling—not only on the ways that we see difficulty, but on the ways that we encourage and enable children and young people to live and work together harmoniously and productively.
>
> (Thomas & Macnab, 2022, p. 240)

Notably, the intersectional approach advocated by the articles above is meant to disrupt more traditional and 'established' views of inclusion and inclusive pedagogies, the way difficulties are understood and by extension supported. It is then even more problematic that a systematic review (depending on its design) might not be able to capture divergent perspectives and alternative views.

Using a systematic framework can, thus, lead to a narrowing of ideas and perspectives that can give a (likely false) sense of direction—but also lead to an 'introverted bubble' where similar, 'established' ideas are recycled, and divergent thinking might be discouraged. Narrowing the scope of ideas and perspectives can then reinforce 'ideological hegemonies' in that 'researchers may innocently and unknowingly reproduce ideological assumptions as they read and build on existing research' (Wall et al., 2015, p. 258); such hegemonies were probably evident in the relatively similar, self-reinforcing ways that inclusive pedagogies were approached in many of the included articles. This acknowledgement is particularly important for a body of literature that often veers towards unitary views (i.e. inclusion as an ideal that should not be questioned), and is less open to diverse perspectives (Norwich, 2013). It has also been noted that 'influential figures in a discipline may act as barriers to publishing new ideas in high-quality mainstream journals' (Wall et al., 2015, p. 258)—and one might wonder why in this small group of included articles certain authors and journals were captured more than once (e.g. the *International Journal of Inclusive Education*), whereas other also influential authors, journals and approaches were not present at all.

So, in addition to acknowledging benefits of mapping the way inclusive pedagogies are used, we also recognise the many limitations of such a methodological approach, that in a way reflect misplaced assumptions about and expectations of quality and rigour that originate in conventions of the natural and/or health sciences. This point is similar to the long-standing debate about the role of experimental designs in education and their 'gold standard' status (indicatively, Koutsouris & Norwich, 2018; Thomas, 2021). Systematic literature reviews are also often seen as representing a 'gold standard' in terms of 'evidence' synthesis and have gained traction in education (e.g. Haddaway et al., 2017). However, they can be 'messy and limiting' (Drake et al., 2021, p. 28) particularly in exploring fragmented or interdisciplinary topics (like most educational topics)—challenging ideas about 'gold standard' approaches.

Overall, the review highlighted the fragmentation of the inclusion literature and the lack of direction either in terms of theory or practice. The findings reinforce the view that inclusion might have lost its critical edge and its transformative potential and has, in many cases, been reduced to cliché or 'chatter' (Oliver, 2013). It may be that to explore such fragmented concepts more flexible narrative review designs, such the one adopted by Thomas and Macnab (2022), might be able to capture more nuanced ideas, expansive terminology used, and a wider range of points of view. This though also requires a deeper engagement with inclusion and its tensions and struggles that is often less evident in much of the current literature base.

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