

Book Review

International Perspectives on Inclusive Education In the Light of Educational Justice

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Introduction

„International Perspectives on Inclusive Education in the Light of Educational Justice,” is a book that discusses the perspectives, around the world, on inclusive education within the framework of educational justice and equality. The collaborative effort from Simone Seitz, Petra Auer, and Rosa Bellacicco, published by Verlag Barbara Budrich, assembles and contrasts several points of view of inclusive education globally and elucidates their ties to one another through the analysis of recent research findings. It is asserted that the objective of inclusive education is to provide cognitive benefits through the integration of students with special needs, especially in learning, and enabling them to optimally develop their potential.

Simone Seitz, a General Didactics and Inclusive Education Professor, has previously published several enlightening research papers that explore the depths of conscious and unconscious cognitive processes, with a focus on Cognitive Psychology. Petra Auer is a postdoctoral university researcher at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano in Bolzano, Italy. Her research interests include acculturation of ethnic minority children and youth, inclusion in educational settings, values in children of primary school age, and socialisation in the school context. Rosa Bellacicco is affiliate of the Competence Centre for School Inclusion at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy, and a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Philosophy and Education Sciences at the University of Turin. Her areas of interest are the transitions of disabled students from education to the workforce in both secondary and postsecondary settings.

The book’s contents can be divided into three distinct sections. The first section, under the title, „Conceptualisations Underpinning Research on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion”, emphasises the concepts that support diversity and equity research and the role that these ideas play in advancing social justice and well-informed decision-making. The second section is focused on evidence of education justice in varied forms of education systems, under the title, „Educational Justice in Different Education Systems – Some Empirical Evidence”. This section highlights the key components that contribute to the implementation of educational justice by reviewing a variety of empirical findings on the subject in diverse education systems. The final section, „Doing Inclusion – Making Difference,” concludes with a discussion on the concept of inclusion, its significance in fostering innovation and growth, and some practical ways to remove obstacles of inclusion.

The book contributes to a number of specialised research fields, including the critical and empirical assessment of creative theory. This all-encompassing strategy encourages a thorough comprehension of the research field and the capacity to apply knowledge from diverse disciplines in novel and significant ways. Nevertheless, despite its advantages, a reliance on this book alone may prevent advanced research students from accessing the most recent results and trends. Although this book is organised and classified to assist with research, there may be unintentional restrictions as a result. Inconsistencies in indexing, classification, or insufficient cross-referencing could make it difficult for researchers to find specific articles.

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Review: Structure and Content

The first part of this book includes four articles. Important ideas including power dynamics, social justice, and intersectionality are examined critically by the authors, who provide insightful analysis for scholars and professionals working in the field.

Mai-Anh Boger is the author of the first article titled, “Political Ontologies of Difference and Their Trilemmatic Structure”. Her research seeks to clarify the underlying assumptions that mold our perceptions of various identities and their connections. Boger has expounded upon the trilemmatic notion, which is grounded in the cartographic method. The political ontologies of difference have inherent tensions that provide rise to the trilemmatic structure. Moreover, three fundamental statements, also known as lemmata, and the dilemmatic relationships that exist between them make up a trilemma. In this instance, the three fundamental ways that people want to avoid discrimination are through empowerment, normalisation, and deconstruction.

The second article was written by Anja Tervooren, titled “The Social Category of ‘Disability’ as a Desideratum of Intersectional Childhood Studies”. In her article, Tervooren addresses the social construct of disability and emphasizes the importance of intersectional childhood studies. According to the author, the new social childhood studies are based on a critique of the developmental paradigm, which is linked to a critical discussion about the normalisation of childhood in German-speaking nations. Tervooren has described four areas in which the developmental paradigm is criticised and discussed. These are: (1) the (re)production of assumed normality, (2) the limitations of German-language childhood studies with relation to the social category of „disability,” (3) the importance of „disability” as a social category in international childhood studies, and (4) the difficulties facing intersectional childhood studies with regard to the social category’s complexity.

Alessandra Imperio and Simone Seitz are the authors for the third article in Part I entitled „Positioning of Children in Research on Assessment Practices in Primary School”. This article focuses on the way children are positioned in research on elementary school assessment methods. The authors look into the ways in which children interact and participate in the evaluation process in an attempt to bring insight into children’s perspectives and experiences. A literature review of 47 articles on primary-school children’s conceptions of performance and assessment was examined by the authors. A table covering five categories of countries including Africa, Asia, Americas, Europe, and Oceania has been created based on the findings. The author has also provided an overview of the methodology that other researchers have employed to examine assessment practices.

The final article in Part I was written by Michaela Kaiser and Simone Seitz with the title “Giftedness and Achievement within Discourses”. The researchers provide an extensive look of the complex relationship between achievement and giftedness by applying a mechanism of structuring knowledge orders in the school-based promotion of giftedness and achievement with a specific focus on diversity. A total of twenty-three articles from 2008 to 2019 have been examined. Four objectives have been outlined by the results of these three authors’ analysis of the discourse surrounding giftedness, achievement, and inclusion points. These objectives are: (1) locate and clarify the concept of giftedness from a disciplinary perspective; (2) make reference to educational policy agendas; (3) require specific pedagogical approaches; and (4) justify with the underlying disposition of giftedness and achievement.

The second part of the book enlightens readers on a variety of issues pertaining to educational justice, including the conditions of students during the school day, the viewpoints of students and instructors, the assessment and analysis of statistical data, and models of financing for inclusion.

Simone Seitz, Francesca Berti, and Catalina Hamacher wrote the first piece in the second section, titled „Throughout the Day on the Way to More Educational Justice? Children’s Voices on All Day-primary Schooling”. The article explores the perspectives of the authors on full-day education in Germany and Italy, emphasising the similarities and differences between the two frameworks. While the second article written by Petra Auer titled „On the Inclusiveness of the Education System in a Multination State from the Perspective of Primary School Children and Teachers’ Values” has highlighted an emphasis on the values of primary school students and teachers, this study looks into how inclusive the state’s educational system is. The study pointed out that all-day schools present a great opportunity for this kind of planning as they provide more opportunities for socialising during the slower morning and afternoon hours. Reducing inequality through more successfully promoting children’s competencies, especially those of children who are perceived to be situated in disadvantaged living conditions is the main goal of maintaining and improving everyday education. The authors have described the basic human values theory by Shalom H. Schwartz, which claims that the basic motivations that shape human behaviour across cultural boundaries are encapsulated in four values dimensions, namely self

enhancement, openness to change, self-transcendence and conservation.. Additionally, the study looks into how educators can help students from diverse cultural backgrounds feel included and like they belong.

The third article written by Rosa Bellacicco and Silver Cappello, entitled „Evidence on Analysis and Reflections of Available Statistical Data in Italy” describes the manner in which inclusive education variables are recorded and varies amongst the three Italian statistical reports. These are: MIUR (2018–2019), which is the main data bases on students with disabilities, ISTAT (2018–2019), which includes the data of school inclusion of students with disabilities and ASTAT (2018–2019), which includes the data of school inclusion. The national reports make distinctions between various impairment types such as physical, sensorial and intellectual. They go into great detail about the kinds of schools that are available and the national settings where they are located, and also how many students at different school levels are receiving inclusive education.

The last article in Part 2 was authored by Joanne Banks, Silver Cappello, Heidrun Demo, Rune Hausstätter and Simone Seitz, entitled „Funding Models of Inclusion in an International Perspective”. This article has explored various ways to finance education that support and maintain inclusive practices, providing an international perspective on inclusion funding models. In order to create efficient models that meet the needs of a wide range of students and advance social justice, the article aimed to analyse the complexity and difficulties associated with funding for education by comparing three different countries: Ireland, Italy and Norway.

The third part of the book has prepared four articles focusing more on viewpoints, beliefs, issues, and difficulties in inclusive education. The authors provide academic professionals with insightful information by dealing with important problems and difficulties that come up when implementing inclusive practices in schools.

The first article titled „Inclusive Education from the DisCrit Perspective” was written by Valentina Migliarini. This article discussed the DisCrit (Disability Critical) concepts of inclusive education, examining the influencing factors of oppressions that exist in Italian classrooms, such as gender, race, socioeconomic status and disability. Additionally, the head teacher and five teachers participated in two focus groups as part of a qualitative pilot study carried out by the authors at a comprehensive school in Rome, Italy. According to the findings, teachers frequently use a student’s degree of disability and similarity to the white Italian norm to gauge how well-suited they are for a given learning environment. This perspective indicates the vital prerequisite of a holistic and inclusive method of teaching. The solidity of Krip-Hop and Hip-Hop Pedagogy in promoting the intersectional inclusion of DisCrit immigrants with disabilities was also discussed by the authors.

The second article, „Adolescent Attitudes Towards and Representations of Otherness,” discusses the cultural background, social dynamics, and family environment influencing children’s attitudes. Anna Frizzarin, the author of this article has discussed the significance of the Adolescent Attitudes Towards Otherness Survey (AATOS) as an approach for researching and understanding adolescents’ attitudes towards people who belong to various racial, ethnic, or cultural minorities. This article has been successfully completed by Frizzarin by conducting a computer-based survey with 543 students from two lower secondary schools and three upper secondary schools. The purpose of the survey, which has been conducted in a number of Italian schools, is also aimed at finding out what the students think about inclusive education and the disabilities of their peers. The study’s conclusions demonstrate that students’ attitudes towards various concepts are primarily influenced by three factors: behavior/habits, personality traits, and physical appearance.

The third article, „Individual Education Plans as Instruments and Practices for Inclusion: Problems and Dilemmas,” was written by Petra Auer, Rosa Bellacicco, and Dario Ianes. This article is a literature review that has focused on Individual Education Plans (IEP) as instruments and practices for inclusion. By using several important keywords such as individual education plan, individual education program, IEP, individual planning, and personalized learning plan, the three authors have successfully outlined two types of issues regarding the IEP, namely problems and dilemmas. Among the important elements that can be linked to problems are accessibility of IEP, gender differences and students’ and parents’ participation. As for the dilemma, there are three important elements such as the recognition of difference through identification in the IEP, the recognition of difference through curriculum goals in the IEP and the role of specialized professionals assigned on the basis of the diagnosis.

Heidrun Demo authored the last article in the third part, „Conclusion – The Challenge of Integrating Antinomies Around Inclusive Education”. The difficulties in integrating antinomies related to inclusive education are covered in great detail in this article. Handling conflicting demands and ensuring equitable educational outcomes requires strategic problem-solving, teamwork, and sophisticated understanding. The article also highlights how important it is to accommodate the different needs of students with disabilities while ensuring their complete inclusion in general classroom environments. It emphasises how crucial it is to create a

friendly and supportive environment that supports equitable opportunities for all students, irrespective of their backgrounds or ability levels. It claims that inclusive education may take on the task of reuniting knowledge that has been split into multiple intellectual traditions that are commonly perceived as being in opposition to one another, despite ideological barriers.

Conclusion

This book provides insightful information that can be used to further comprehend and put inclusivity into practice. Moving forward, we must never stop advocating for inclusive education, raising awareness, and changing educational systems as needed. In inclusive education, new trends are beginning to take shape. These include funding teacher professional development, appreciating early intervention, encouraging research to inform evidence-based practices, and utilising technology to promote inclusivity. Special education perspectives view inclusive education as an extension of the least restrictive environment principle. This book is therefore especially recommended for students who intend to major in or focus on special education. This book is also a valuable resource for students who want to teach in general education, as it offers advice on how to create welcoming environments that value diversity. In addition, future educators, school administrators, and education policymakers have an opportunity to establish an inclusive culture in their institutions by implementing the ideas covered in the book.

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