Inclusion Through Shared Education

by Joanne Deppeler and Danielle Zay

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Inclusion has become the focus of political debate, social reform, activism, and a catalyst for challenging societal norms and paradigms that exclude the full participation of all citizens. Creating an equitable and inclusive society for everyone has radical implications for research, school policy, and educational leadership practices. Deppeler and Zay's (2016) book *Inclusion Through Shared Education* examines the concept of inclusive education in various democratic countries as it relates to society, education policy and practices, and individual experience. Although there is no consensus on the definition of inclusive education, the book attempts to reconcile divided definitions through examining inclusivity and education using a multitude of lenses. Within *Inclusion Through Shared Education*, the term *inclusive education* is used to describe a "systemic approach to education that involves complex interactions of factors, both within the educational system as an integral part of the society where the voting citizens have specific values and ideologies in each country" (Deppeler & Zay, 2016, p. 11). Collaboration is needed in order to build an equitable system and deconstruct exclusionary practices within education. The theme echoed throughout the book is that multiple members of society (educators, parents, students, policy makers, politicians, activists etc.) are required to achieve inclusive education. This theme provides new insight into the cross-pollinating nature of education as well as the demand inclusionary practices make to ensure that there is local level participation and decision-making in schools, research, and policy-making.

Inclusion Through Shared Education begins with an introduction by Deppeler and Zay, followed by six chapters written by a number of authors. The introduction addresses the purpose of the book, provides a clear and concise summary of each of the book's chapters, and draws parallels between the different subjects presented in each chapter. Chapter 1 discusses the relationship between education and creating an inclusive society. Chapter 2 reviews the positive effect that successful educational actions (SEAs) and an inclusive school model have had on a

vulnerable school community in Spain to promote social inclusion. Creating a more fair and just education system influences the community; specifically, building a relationship between schools and communities positively influences society. In Chapter 3, existing inclusive education policies and practices in Australia are reviewed and challenged. The lack of consistency in educational practices throughout Australia's jurisdictions is exposed and as a result, a national collaborative response is suggested. Together, chapters 2 and 3 identify how inclusive education policy can be successful through multilevel collaboration. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 examine case studies in specific areas related to inclusive education, including hard-of-hearing students in foreign language classrooms, cultural minorities and speech therapists in Quebec, and specialized classes in France. Each of these chapters identifies issues that students with exceptionalities face and the barriers to achieving inclusive education. The sharing of student stories and their experiences in chapters 4 and 6 is effective and reinforces the importance of listening to others coupled with the grassroots approaches needed to build inclusive education. Existing evidence and comparative research findings are discussed, offering new perspectives. Additionally, ground-breaking research is presented.

Throughout the book, authors allude to the problem of trying to promote inclusive education in the context of the neo-liberal paradigm that exists in the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) countries. How can pedagogy respect and welcome all learners, but also create competition among students and elite streams where excellence is valued over the full of participation all persons? On one hand, policy is enforcing inclusionary practices in education; on the other hand, however, policy is rewarding success defined only as academic performance rather than participation. *Inclusion Through Shared Education* provides valuable commentary on this tension. In Australia, schools compete with one another for funding and are resistant to take on students with exceptionalities. In France, elite streams of schooling further the socio-economic divide in society by limiting the opportunities of society's most vulnerable citizens.

Inclusion Through Shared Education includes diverse perspectives. Although the text offers a wide variety of ideas and research, the common thread between all of the chapters is not always clear. The introduction offers insight into how the editors perceive the texts to be linked, however, the focus of each chapter does not always center on the discourse of inclusive education. For example, Chapter 4 focuses more on the experiences of hard-of-hearing students in foreign language classrooms and the way their identities are constructed rather than on an analysis of exclusionary practices and solutions to promote inclusion. The main themes of the book are mentioned in the chapter but they are peripheral to the discussion of the lived experiences of students with exceptionalities and the influence of power relationships inside and outside the context of schooling. The strength in this chapter is its ability to evoke empathy from the reader and develop a new understanding of students with exceptionalities. Perhaps this quality merits the chapter's inclusion in the book.

The breadth of the book points the reader to an ideological caveat that results from observing present and absent topics. The book examines inclusive education in relationship to students from diverse socio-economic and racial backgrounds, and students with exceptionalities,

with a majority focus in exceptionalities. The book could have been strengthened by including dialogue on gender and the need for gender-sensitivity in inclusive education, specifically the discrimination against girls and women in schooling and the need for inclusionary educational policies and practices to ensure education is inclusive for all.

As a translated document originally published in French, there are a number of punctuation, grammar, and formatting errors throughout the book. The volume of errors can be a distraction for readers, as occasionally the mistakes confuse the meaning of sentences. Further, the terminology used to describe students with exceptionalities is inconsistent. It refers to students with disabilities or students with special needs. “Students with exceptionalities” is the language that is presently used in Ontario classrooms, though “students with special needs” is still acceptable. Attention should have been considered in how this language is used within the text.

Interesting, thought-provoking and thoroughly researched, *Inclusion Through Shared Education* emphasizes the importance of collaboration in inclusive education and offers a voice to the most vulnerable population in our education systems. This book would be beneficial to policy makers, researchers, and practitioners, and would be very relevant to pre-service and in-service teachers. It would be of interest to any individual who works with people with exceptionalities or at-risk youth and their communities. *Inclusion Through Shared Education* provides insight and understanding into how we can work together to better our educational approaches, practices, and policies as they relate to inclusive education, to build a more welcoming society for all.

References

Deppeler, J., & Zay, D. (2016). *Inclusion through shared education*. Blue Mounds, WI: Deep University Press.