



Radical inclusive education: disability, teaching and struggles for liberation

Anne-Marie Callus

To cite this article: Anne-Marie Callus (2017) Radical inclusive education: disability, teaching and struggles for liberation, *Disability & Society*, 32:4, 603-604, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2017.1294386](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1294386)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1294386>



Published online: 28 Feb 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 77



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Radical inclusive education: disability, teaching and struggles for liberation, by Anat Greenstein, London, Routledge, 2016, 154 pp., £26.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-415-70925-5

This book brings together the radical pedagogy of Paolo Freire and the principles of inclusive education, exploring ways in which the two can be combined and translated into practice. In this regard, *Radical Inclusive Education* can be seen as continuing on the work of other authors who have combined Freirean pedagogy with inclusive education, such as Gause's (2011) book on addressing diversity and achieving equity in inclusive education, and Gibson's (2006) article using Freire's concept of the 'culture of silence' to discuss ways in which inclusive education can enable disabled children to find and use their own voice.

The combination of Freirean pedagogy and inclusive education is an important one, because the former can inform the latter in ways that makes the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream education not simply a matter of making some adjustments here and there. Freirean pedagogy can inspire educators to have a radical re-think of their practices and to find ways in which to truly include all children, regardless of their capabilities and their needs. It does this by necessitating a fundamental shift from seeing education as a banking process – that is, the teacher 'depositing' knowledge in students' minds – to a liberating one that is the teacher and students working together in a process of learning and discovery that also addresses the political forces embedded in the material being explored (Freire 1986). Greenstein's adoption of a Freirean approach to inclusive education in *Radical Inclusive Education* stems from her own experience as a speech and language therapist and her realisation that, far from having joined 'an emancipatory profession' (18), she had ended up being part of the mechanism that schools disabled children into being part of a pre-determined mainstream by helping them come as close as possible to normalcy.

Part I of the book presents the theoretical arguments for a radical inclusive education. This part first presents a critique of the idea of normalcy and the concomitant classification of different embodiments. Following Shildrick and Price (2006), Greenstein calls for a rhizomatic view of embodiment in which bodily differences are seen as just that – differences – rather than as impairments. Greenstein here seems to be using the term embodiment in a wide sense to include also different 'enmindments'. In fact, the examples she presents are mostly of people on the autistic spectrum and of people with intellectual disability.

Applying this rhizomatic perspective to education itself, Greenstein next explores how the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream schools does nothing to change the status quo in the education system and in society at large. Children, regardless of whether or not they are disabled, are schooled into a system that requires 'productive and obedient citizens for the global market economy' (52). Interestingly, for a radically different perspective, Greenstein turns to the disabled people's movement for inspiration. She analyses this movement through the Freirean notions of conscientisation and praxis. This movement, Greenstein argues, enables us to reach new understandings of the experience of disability by uncovering the connection between one's personal situation and the wider social context of that situation. This process of conscientisation then leads to praxis; that is, action aimed at creating tangible social change. To these, Greenstein adds accessibility – attending to the access needs of disabled people in order to break down barriers that prevent them from engaging in this action. In this book, the author calls for the same process to happen in schools.

The radical inclusive pedagogy being proposed in the book may seem utopian. But Greenstein seeks to apply its principles by presenting practical examples from her own work in schools in Part II. The methods described are advocated by various proponents

of child-centred pedagogy – student-centred learning, the use of mixed methods, differentiation and the contextualisation of the learning taking place, among others. To these methods, the author adds attending to the hidden curriculum, thus bringing in the political element of education. For the radical approach to education being proposed here, the use of child-centred pedagogical methods are not enough. To them must be added the process of conscientisation, making children aware of the social and political forces that impinge on their lives. The author here focuses on disabling forces that affect disabled children, although the same process of conscientisation is beneficial for all children.

Greenstein returns time and again to the issue of autonomy and personal agency. She emphasises the fact that focusing on disability as an oppressive phenomenon created by society is not inimical to seeing disabled people as active agents in their own lives, disability being both a form of social oppression and part of the identity of persons who experience this oppression. This very important point is left unexplored and can form the basis of a very interesting study of what constitutes disability as oppression and what constitutes disability as identity. What Greenstein does is apply the idea to the radical pedagogy that she calls for in her book: one that removes disabling barriers in education, uses child-centred methods and actively addresses power imbalances together with the children themselves.

This slim volume is an important addition to the literature exploring the application of Freirean pedagogy to inclusive education. It is very well written and uses a style that is accessible even to the lay reader. The key points at the start of each chapter enhance this accessibility, although some points tend to simplify certain notions, betraying the complexity with which they are then presented in the chapter.

Creating the radical changes to the education system being called for in *Radical Inclusive Education* is a massive undertaking. As Greenstein argues, because power relations are embedded in society and in social practices, it is not simply a question of an individual teacher deciding to share power with students and succeeding. More powerful social forces will inevitably get in the way. What Greenstein calls for is 'an ongoing attempt to share power with students, not by denying the adult position, but by acting from this position with as much reciprocity as possible' (118). Educators everywhere would do well to heed this call.

References

- Freire, P. 1986. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. London: Continuum.
- Gause, C. P. 2011. *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Education: A Voice from the Margins*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Gibson, S. 2006. "Beyond a 'Culture of Silence': Inclusive Education and the Liberation of 'Voice'." *Disability & Society* 21 (4): 315–329. doi:10.1080/09687590600679956.
- Shildrick, M., and J. Price. 2006. "Deleuzian Connections and Queer Corporealities: Shrinking Global Disability." *Rhizomes*, 11/12. Accessed October 7, 2016. <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/shildrickprice/>

Anne-Marie Callus
 Department of Disability Studies, University of Malta, Msida, Malta
 anne-marie.callus@um.edu.mt

© 2017 Anne-Marie Callus
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1294386>

