

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Addressing Tensions and Dilemmas in Inclusive Education: Living with Uncertainty

By Brahm Norwich

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This book explores the current issues and tensions in the area of inclusion and inclusive education. However this is not just another generic book about inclusive education. Rather it aims to influence the practical reality of dealing with the education of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. To do this the author undertook a critical analysis and synthesis of the theoretical underpinnings, influences and perspectives which have impacted policies and the practical reality of inclusive education both in the UK and internationally. The author is to be commended for addressing the tensions and dilemmas arising from these various stances and for offering resolutions for the practical realisation of inclusive education. He acknowledges that such resolutions sometimes require compromise, thus reflecting '*Living with uncertainty*' in the title of this book.

In the opening chapter the author adopts a broader analysis of the issues and dilemmas explored in his earlier work while also engaging with critical responses from other inclusion theorists to this earlier work. Ultimately, Norwich responds to others' rejection of his dilemmatic approach by suggesting that their 'purist' stance arguably will not result in the practical realisation of inclusion. The author draws upon Berlin's useful analogy of the fox and the hedgehog to demonstrate the purist and realist views. The author aligns himself with the fox, who recognises tensions and dilemmas which result in resolutions and making hard choices, in order to effect practical changes. Meanwhile the hedgehog represents the pure ethical position of inclusion which the author argues will be lost unless compromise is reached. This analogy, when used in subsequent chapters helps make the identified tensions and dilemmas of plural democracy, difference, ontology and epistemology more accessible for the reader.

Having set the agenda in Chapter 1, the author then draws on the international literature to critically analyse concepts and issues around special educational needs, disability and barriers (Chapter 2), identification and classification (Chapter 3), inclusive curriculum, pedagogy and schooling (Chapters 4, 5 and 6), parental and student voices (Chapter 7) and philosophical and research issues (Chapter 8). Throughout each of these chapters the underlying notes of the above mentioned tensions and dilemmas are played and cleverly presented in an accessible melody for the reader to enjoy in the concluding chapter (Chapter 9).

Within each chapter the author engages with the theoretical stances followed by the practical realities and possible resolutions and / or compromises. The notion of education as an individual, social and or political endeavour is explored throughout and the author argues that these positions are not necessarily in opposition to each other. Indeed many of the resolutions seem to be multifaceted, multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional, for example, he argues for an interactive model of disability based on realist assumptions about disability arising from individual and system factors or bio-social interactions. These are compatible with the WHO's *International Classification of Functioning for Children and Young People* which the author argues looks promising for redefining and researching disability.

Interestingly, despite the endorsement by some theorists of full inclusion, inclusive pedagogies and inclusive curricula, Norwich argues that research in these areas is limited. This may be due to the varied and diverse conceptualisations of inclusion. As a means of moving the debate on towards a practical realisation of inclusion, Norwich asks us to consider the ontological and epistemological positions related to knowledge of inclusion and inclusive education. He questions whether these stances are predicated on investigative reasons or emancipatory reasons, for example, the identification or labelling dilemma is arguably dependent upon its usage, context and individual perspectives.

In summary, this book is a valuable asset for all researchers and students of inclusive education. There are many provocations and theoretical frameworks throughout the book which may be of interest to researchers and students alike for exploring various aspects of inclusion whether that is from a full inclusion or maximal inclusion perspective. I also think that primary and post-primary teachers may find some of the practical resolutions in Chapters 4-7 useful.

**ADDRESSING TENSIONS AND DILEMMAS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY** by Brahm Norwich, is published by Routledge, London, 2013, and costs STG£24.99.

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