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BOOK REVIEWS

Confronting Obstacles to Inclusion: International Responses to Developing Inclusive Education

Edited by Richard Rose

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Rose as editor of this book draws on the experiences and findings of prominent educational practitioners and researchers to present international perspectives on the inclusion of children with special needs in education. His introductory chapter contextualises these arguments for inclusion as part of an international movement while highlighting the value of exploring unique responses across differing systems.

The first four areas of concern addressed in the book examine possible causes for exclusion, how families might be supported, pupils as partners in inclusive education and professional development for teachers. The final two sections relate directly to classroom practice and support. A number of authors contribute to each section and primary research is included. While reference is made to specific disabilities across the book (e.g. autistic spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy) disability is not considered to be the only criteria for separation within education. The treatment of minority ethnic groups (e.g. Irish Travellers) is considered as is the predicament of the 'girl child' for example in India.

Section One refers to shared societal perceptions and the role of media for example in supporting inaccuracies around autism. The overly medicalised view of special educational provision in India is outlined in this section's final chapter contrasting with the findings from some Mumbai-based research presented in Section Two which presents parents as 'sensitisers' in communities where advances are being made around inclusive educational provision. The focus of this second section is the manner in which schools can develop parental involvement.





While the link between effective inclusion and parental involvement is not explicitly drawn Hornby provides a checklist for schools on how policy and practice might be reviewed while Ashdown explores ways of supporting home-school partnership.

One of the strengths of this publication is its attempt to examine inclusion from a number of perspectives including that of students with special educational needs (SEN) where student 'agency' is equated with developing inclusive learning environments. Exploring inclusion through the lens of professional development (Sections Four and Five) results in some guidance being provided to institutions attempting to promote the concept of an 'inclusive culture' and engage in reflective practice. Of particular interest is the emphasis placed on developing teachers' attitudes towards inclusion above delivering information relating solely to special needs; an example being the importance of knowing how children learn and the contexts in which this happens (McPhillips, Bell and Doveston).

The book's final section reflects on many of the issues raised elsewhere in the text and where possible examines their application which may be of particular interest to classroom practitioners. The roles of key players are explored including class teachers, peers (Giangreco, Carter, Doyle and Suter), special needs assistants (SNAs) (O'Neill) and the students with SEN themselves (Roffey). The fact that the perspectives offered in this section are considered and less context-specific makes the information more widely applicable for the reader who may be attempting to advance the argument for inclusion.

The diversity of contexts described by this book's many contributors (i.e. twenty-nine in total) is indicative of the varying ways in which the concept of inclusion has evolved. While readers are unlikely to attach equal relevance to all its chapters the wide ranging perspectives serve to describe special education as it develops internationally. The value of the book may therefore rely on the reader's willingness to reflect on possibilities rather than it providing suggestions as to how obstacles might be overcome.

CONFRONTING OBSTACLES TO INCLUSION: INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION edited by **Richard Rose**, is published by **Routledge, London, 2010** and costs **STG£22.99**.



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