



Review

Questioning special needs-ism: Supporting student teachers in troubling and transforming understandings of human worth



Gill Rutherford

Education and Disability Studies, University of Otago College of Education, P O Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand

H I G H L I G H T S

- Urgent action is needed to end systemic discrimination of 'special needs' students.
- Teacher educators have a responsibility to contest 'special needs' ideology.
- Dysconsciousness may explain student teachers' tacit acceptance of 'special needs.'
- Multidisciplinary pedagogical tools may be useful to support new ways of thinking.
- The critical role of emotions in learning - teaching needs to be widely recognized.

A R T I C L E I N F O

Article history:

Received 27 November 2015

Received in revised form

25 January 2016

Accepted 23 February 2016

Available online 9 March 2016

Keywords:

Teacher education

Disabled students

Ideology

Special needs

Emotion

Humanity

A B S T R A C T

This paper is offered to spark discussion about teacher educators' contestation of 'special needs' ideology, to disrupt discriminatory thinking that diminishes educational opportunities for labeled students. Following discussion of the overarching purpose of education and evidence of the tenacity of special needs-ism, I explore multidisciplinary pedagogical tools that may facilitate engagement with student teachers, to trouble and transform hegemonic beliefs. These include notions of dysconsciousness, critical consciousness, threshold concepts, and pedagogies of discomfort, all of which highlight the role of emotion in realizing new understandings. Recognizing the inherent human worth of *all* students is considered fundamental in addressing educational inequities.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. Preface	128
2. Education: an apprenticeship in humanity?	129
3. Special: an ideology that has reached its use by date?	130
4. School: the site of (re)production and reification of 'special' ideology?	131
5. Dysconsciousness: a way of understanding the tenacity of ideologies?	132
6. Beyond special needs-ism: how can we think respectfully about each other as human beings?	133
6.1. Threshold concepts	133
6.2. Critical consciousness	133
6.3. Pedagogy of discomfort	134
6.4. Pedagogies of strategic empathy	134

E-mail address: gill.rutherford@otago.ac.nz.<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.02.009>

0742-051X/© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

7. Educating the emotions: recognizing the power of feelings	135
8. Closing thoughts	135
Acknowledgments	135
References	136

My request is: help your children become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human

(excerpt of a letter to educators written by a Holocaust survivor, cited in [Ginott, 1993](#)).

1. Preface

Listening to Radio New Zealand National news on 3 November 2015, my attention was caught by an announcement that the government was asking, “What is education for?” ([Radio New Zealand, 2015](#)). As the news item continued, the flicker of hope sparked by this news dimmed. In response to the press release that the government was about to begin consultation about an Update of the Education Act 1989 ([Ministry of Education, 2015](#)), comment was invited from both the President of the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) and the Chief Executive of the Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA). The latter declared, “Certainly, as far as employers are concerned, what we first and foremost want to see is good citizens.” That was hopeful. He explained that good citizenship required having the ability to calculate, read, reason, pass tests, “and finally, learn to get along with other people – and you want an education system that fairly enables, pretty much everyone, apart from people who are disabled in some way, to do that.” I actually texted Radio New Zealand to ask if I had heard this correctly. I had. The Chief Executive concluded with remarks about the competitive nature of the world, and asserted that New Zealand students “need to be as good, if not better, as everyone else – as employers we would task the education system to fill that goal.”

I heard this interview when I was in the process of writing this paper. It prompted (yet another) rewrite. I have chosen to position the EMA Chief Executive's opinion at the start of the paper, as it reflects its substantive focus: *understanding the power of hegemonic ideologies in determining what kinds of education are available, to whom, and what this means for teacher educators in guiding the development of ‘new’ teachers*. As a teacher educator in a New Zealand university, I am inevitably drawn to the issue of student teachers' thinking, about disability in particular. While heartened over the years by the latter's increasing interest in disability related matters, I remain troubled by the tenacity of deficit special needs ideology that underpins many aspiring teachers' well intentioned language and actions. Some twenty seven years after crossing the threshold of my first class as a beginning high school teacher, I continue to witness the compromising of disabled students' educational rights and opportunities, at both systemic and individual levels, based on inherently flawed assumptions about what it is to be human. I share [Lalvani and Broderick's \(2015\)](#) concerns about the “implicit ideology of Separate but Equal” and try to work with student teachers in ways that enable them to realize and respond respectfully to the full humanity of all their future students, unencumbered by any shadow of special needs-ism/ableism.

This paper has evolved out of a need to better understand

student teachers' interpretations of disability, to improve my attempts to ‘interrupt’ ([Ainscow, 2005](#)) deficit ideologies, and to offer alternative, hopeful understandings of students who carry the essentially meaningless yet assumption-ridden label of special needs. These concerns need to be positioned within the larger context of education and its overarching purpose(s), and so this is discussed at the start of the paper. The focus then turns to the enduring ideology of ‘special’ in education, and argues that schools play a critical role in its production and reification. Examples of the perspectives of first year student teachers are provided to illustrate the impact of immersion in school contexts in which markers of difference, signaling special needs, are typically accepted as the natural order. As one way of interpreting the entrenched nature of ideologies, I draw on the concept of dysconsciousness, developed by [King \(1991\)](#) in relation to racism amongst US student teachers. The multidisciplinary notions of threshold concepts ([Meyer & Land, 2003](#)), critical consciousness ([Gonsalves, 2007](#)) and pedagogies of discomfort ([Boler, 2004](#)) and strategic empathy ([Zembylas, 2012](#)) are then outlined as possible ways of supporting student teachers to engage with ideologies and other ‘troublesome knowledge’ ([Perkins, 1999](#), as cited in [Meyer & Land, 2006](#), p. xv). These approaches highlight the ubiquitous yet infrequently acknowledged ([Clouder, 2005](#); [Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007](#); [Martin & Lueckenhausen, 2005](#)) power of emotion – how both students and teachers *feel* about the content and process of teaching and learning, especially when negotiating material that may be challenging.

Please note:

- I realize that this paper's focus on disabled students may be questioned and interpreted as reinforcing (a) the destructive dichotomizing of students, and (b) the false notion that ‘inclusive education’ is primarily about disabled students. This is not my intention. I have chosen to highlight the issue of discrimination of disabled students in particular as it appears, certainly in a New Zealand context, that too many such students continue to be failed by the very system that is charged with the responsibility of serving them ([Human Rights Commission, 2009](#); [IHC, 2015](#)). I hope this paper may draw further attention to this injustice.
- While acknowledging the dynamic nature of language in any given time, context, and ideology, the term ‘disabled students’ is used when referring to students in this paper. This descriptor is consistent with the language claimed by and used within various disability rights' groups, to denote the ways in which socially constructed barriers oppress and exclude certain members of a society (e.g., [Cameron, 2015](#); [Disabled Persons Assembly NZ, 2015](#); [Human Rights Commission, 2013](#)). I also respect that some individuals/groups prefer the term ‘person with a disability.’ In specific contexts, if it is necessary and appropriate to use any descriptors, I am guided by whichever term individuals prefer.
- I use the term ‘special needs-ism’ to signal its invented, socially constructed nature as a ‘condition’ or ‘category’ that is imposed on students, usually without their consent.

2. Education: an apprenticeship in humanity?

Philosophers, researchers, educators, politicians, captains of industry, parents, citizens from all walks of life – including students – have wondered for centuries what education is for (as well as why, who says, and so on). Underlying this question is another – *What kind of society do we want to live in?* (Griffiths, 2012; Slee, 2011). Returning to the EMA Chief Executive's opinion cited earlier, it seems reasonable that the purpose of education is the production of good citizens, who have various kinds of skills and are able to get along with others. The emphasis on individual and global competitiveness is to be expected in an era of neoliberal ideology in which 'the market' is revered as an appropriate arbiter of educational performance and outcomes (Ballard, 2013; Fielding, 2007). "An education that fairly enables, pretty much everyone, apart from people who are disabled in some way ..." is not only unreasonable, but discriminatory and devoid of any sense of justice and recognition of our common humanity. I realize that these are simply the comments of one person (representing a powerful body of employers, who yield influence over the compulsory and tertiary education systems), and that my visceral reaction is not indicative of others' perspectives. Nevertheless, the fundamental question, 'what is the purpose of education?' is sorely in need of thoughtful consideration, particularly in light of ongoing inequities experienced by "people who are disabled in some way" as they move through an education system in which they are often required to 'prove' their worth, prior to being offered opportunities to reveal and further develop their competence (Ellis & Ellis, 2011; Gibson, 2013).

Education serves both instrumental (a means of accessing employment opportunities, status, material success) and inherent purposes (the development of values and dispositions required to live as a citizen in a democracy or other form of government, and/or as good in and of itself) (Griffiths, 2012). The ways in which these extrinsic and intrinsic outcomes and processes are enacted depends a great deal on the ideologies and values of whichever government holds power. The prevailing neoliberal political and economic priorities in most Western nations frame education as a business, driven by beliefs about the value of competition, individualism, user-pays, accountability, material success, and other tools of performativity (Fielding, 2012; Pring, 2012). In these contexts, teaching is reduced to a technical "science of deliverology" (Pring, 2012, p. 747) and learning is narrowed to the competitive acquisition of specific knowledge and skills that are considered necessary for economic success in a global knowledge economy. In Griffiths' (2012) opinion however, "It is a thin conception of a good life which is based entirely on market choice and consumerism leading to those material pleasures that money or time can buy" (p. 667). I agree. As an alternative, I am drawn to the work of Scottish philosopher John Macmurray (1891–1976). My reasons for doing so are conveyed in Fielding's (2012, p. 676) cogent summary of Macmurray's scholarship:

Here is a philosopher who at the beginning of the 1930s argued that we should educate the emotions, place relationships and care at the heart of teaching and learning, educate 'the capacity for change itself', eradicate fear and the pressures of high-stakes testing, replace aristocratic traditions of schooling with the development of a truly democratic culture, and locate all we do as educators within the wider, deeper context of how we learn to live good lives together.

The centrality of education as a means of learning to be human, to lead good lives together in a context of rapid and inevitable change, is at the heart of Macmurray's philosophy. In Edinburgh, at

a Moray House College of Education Annual Public Lecture on 5 May 1958, he claimed:

The first principle of human nature is mutuality ... This principle, that we live by entering into relation with one another, provides the basic structure within which all human experience falls, whether individual or social. For this reason the first priority in education—if by education we mean learning to be human—is learning to live in personal relation to other people. Let us call it learning to live in community. I call this the first priority because failure in this is fundamental failure, which cannot be compensated for by success in other fields; because our ability to enter into fully personal relations with others is the measure of our humanity. For inhumanity is precisely the perversion of human relations. (1958/2012, pp. 669–670)

Macmurray's insistence upon the personally relational, interdependent nature of human beings – "an interdependence of equals" (1964, p. 21) – provides a hopeful counter to neoliberal insistence on the merit of independence and *functional* relations, in which interactions with and information about others are primarily for instrumental, objective purposes, a means of achieving a goal. In contrast, *personal* relations and knowledge are characterized by open, caring and reciprocal understanding with others (Facer, 2012; Fielding, 2007). While Macmurray acknowledges that both kinds of relations are legitimate, he emphasizes that all interactions must "fall within and be governed by the recognition that the other is inherently and essentially human" (1964, p. 18).

Macmurray also asserts that judgments of education should be made on the basis of its "persisting effects" (1958/2012, p. 670) – "by the kinds of lives people lead" (Fielding, 2012, p. 678) – rather than its short term, immediate effects. Aware that, in his lifetime (as in the present), the future for which students were being prepared was not knowable, he questions the privileging of 'technical' knowledge. Instead, he believes that knowledge of values, "those human qualities and aptitudes which remain unaffected by social transformations" (Macmurray, 1958/2012, p. 667), would better serve future generations. He claims that knowledge of what is worthwhile in living good lives together is intrinsically related to educating students about emotions, to enable them to feel (and think) for themselves. As Fielding (2012) explains, "The origin of values lies in our liking or disliking and gradually, through the processes of education ... we come to learn what is worthy of our support and admiration, our abhorrence and rejection" (p. 679). Macmurray argues that students need to come to their own decisions about what is worthwhile to know, believe and value; in Fielding's words, to cut "through the jungle of inertly received presumptions about the world" (2012, p. 683). Being open to questioning one's beliefs and opinions in response to real life experiences is advocated, to enable students to contribute to the transformation of their society (Fielding, 2012).

Macmurray's commitment to education as a means of developing "more other-regarding understandings of human flourishing" (Fielding, 2012, p. 687) serves as an antidote to current ideological forces that promote the 'othering' of students who fall beyond the borderlines of a narrow construction of 'normal.' I believe that consideration of his contribution to education is both timely and valuable. It has led me to wonder whether conceptualizing the purpose of education as an apprenticeship in democracy (Slee, 2011), is sufficient. The reality of democracies is such that some citizens continue to be disenfranchised and dehumanized, whether deliberately or implicitly, a process that begins for some in their attempts to cross the threshold of (compulsory) schools, and reaches far into their adulthood (Slee, 2011). Instead, (akin to Macmurray's idea that "curriculum and pedagogy should ... be

dominated by apprenticeship in humanity through community” [Stern, 2012, p. 740]), perhaps it would be useful to rethink the purpose of education as an apprenticeship in humanity.

3. Special: an ideology that has reached its use by date?

It could be argued that the measure of humanity in present day society is diminished, in part, by the continuing separation of certain ‘kinds’ of students, thus compromising “our ability to enter into fully personal relations with others” (Macmurray, 1958/2012, p. 670). The need to question why this happens is raised by Bartolomé (2007):

Despite good intentions, I maintain that the invisible foundation – hegemonic ideologies that inform our perceptions and treatment of subordinated students – needs to be made explicit and studied critically in order to comprehend the challenges presented in minority education – and possible solutions – more accurately. (p. x)

Writing in regard to “minority education,” Bartolomé’s claim may be applied to any/all students who experience discrimination in schooling because a facet of their humanity falls outside the parameters of what is deemed ‘normal’ and/or of value within a given society. According to Bartolomé (p. xiii):

Ideology refers to the framework of thought constructed and held by members of a society to justify or rationalize an existing social order. Dominant ideologies are typically reflected in both the symbols and cultural practices of the dominant culture that shape people’s thinking such that they unconsciously accept the current way of doing things as “natural” and “normal.”

In this paper, hegemonic ideologies are regarded as those that are privileged and given prominence through the workings of those in power, “the dominant culture,” who seek to create “a commonsense view of the world” (Bartolomé, 2007, p. xiii), with beliefs and values that serve their interests.

The following synopsis of special education is offered as an example of a hegemonic ideology, and as a means of contextualizing what is being contested in this paper. The ideology of special needs/special education had its genesis alongside the creation of compulsory schooling in Western societies in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries (Valle & Connor, 2011). Compulsory schooling served as a means of transmitting and reproducing the dominant culture’s values, beliefs and structures, thereby functioning as an effective means of social control (Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008; Valle & Connor, 2011). Contemporaneously, developments in science and industry had significant impacts on societal structures and processes, promoting and privileging, for example, the “scientific study of human beings” (Valle & Connor, 2011, p. 5; see also Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008). This included the development of statistical measurement of human development, and the belief that human traits could be measured, mapped on a “normal curve of distribution” (Valle & Connor, 2011, p. 44) and ranked in terms of inferior (left side of the bell curve), average, or superior (right side of the bell curve).

The belief that ‘intelligence’ was an inheritable trait that was allegedly more abundant in members of the dominant culture (who were white and possessed greater economic and social capital) legitimized the growth of the eugenics movement (Valle & Connor, 2011). Controlling the reproduction possibilities of those judged to have inferior human traits provided a societal means of sorting human beings in terms of their ‘worth.’ Schools similarly

performed a sorting function (Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008) through the identification and labeling of students who exhibited ‘difficulties’ in learning and their subsequent relocation to separate schools or classes (Slee, 2011). While it can be argued that the primary reason for the removal of ‘troublesome’ students was to minimize disruption to the learning and achievement of ‘normal’ students, it was also rationalized as a means of providing ‘less able’ students the extra, special attention they needed (Slee, 2011).

The use of psychometric Intelligence Quotient (IQ) testing, as a means of measuring students’ inherited intelligence and their “predicted vocational potential” (Valle & Connor, 2011, p. 45; italics in original), enhanced the efficiency of schooling by funneling students into the ‘right’ kind of schooling commensurate with their innate (fixed) ‘abilities.’ This in turn ‘pre-determined’ students’ likely futures in terms of employment and life trajectories (see Kliewer, Biklen, & Petersen, 2015 for further critique of intelligence testing and its impact on individuals). The privileging of “scientific rationality and technology” (Rousmaniere, 1997, as cited in Valle & Connor, 2011, p. 5) enabled the dominant culture, via schools, to optimize their return on investment and reproduce the social order in which their power was embedded.

Within this brief summary, I hope that some of the critical characteristics of ‘special’ ideology are evident. The subjective assigning of value to the kind of human traits that count, by those with vested interests in designing the world for their ways of being, in turn determines the value of the kinds of human beings who count. In particular, the false belief that intelligence (a valued trait) is inherited and can be measured by IQ testing, has spawned a multitude of hurts and lost life opportunities, due to the denial or compromising of education for those ranked, by number and label, at the far left of a bell curve conceptualization of intelligence and its manifestation in ‘educability’ (Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008; Kliewer et al., 2015). The pernicious legacy of such thinking continues; Bracey (1995, as cited in Fendler & Muzaffar, 2008, p. 63) wryly observes, “Educators might say that all children can learn, but the man in the street carries a bell curve in his head.” The homogenization of groups of students is another facet of special education ideology that perpetuates myths, evident in teacher comments such as “I wasn’t trained to teach special needs,” and accompanying assumptions that all “special needs kids” are inherently problematic, need more teacher time, extra resources, special expertise, will disrupt other students’ learning and so on (Lalvani, 2013). Deficit discourse reflects and compounds the pathologizing of certain kinds of students. As Barton (2003, p. 15) stated, over a decade ago, “the language of ‘special educational needs’ supports deficit assumptions and is a euphemism for failure.” The attribution of deficiency as inherent, ‘within child,’ is another characteristic of ‘special’ ideology, drawing from medical model interpretations of disability (Lalvani, 2013; Valle & Connor, 2011), as is the associated belief that such students need fixing or ‘remediation’ to bring them closer to the norm, in both their achievement and being. Perpetuation of the ‘normal-abnormal’ binary parallels the less obvious binary of ‘rights-needs.’ As Gilham (2011, p. 114) claims:

Essentially we value the normal over the abnormal thus our resources are aimed at normalizing. The normalizing approach of Special Education therefore, is one that conceals the rights of students in and of themselves as human beings not regardless of difference but because of difference.

Runswick-Cole and Hodge (2009) call for a move away from a discourse of ‘needs’ to one of rights, as part of what is required as a counter to special needs-ism within schools, and to reframe the consideration of students’ education in terms of their rights and capacities.

4. School: the site of (re)production and reification of 'special' ideology?

Ware (2011) asserts, "schools typically orchestrate our earliest experiences with disability, and thus, by default, these sites manage the meaning that is made of disability through the everyday mechanisms of schooling" (p. 255). In this section, discussion of the ways in which schools both reflect and perpetuate 'special' ideology is illustrated by first year primary student teachers' observations regarding their experiences of school prior to enrolling in a New Zealand university teacher education degree program. These student participants took part in an ethically approved, yet to be published pilot study that sought to understand (1) what student teachers know about disability, and (2) how they come to know disability. A sequential mixed methods design (Mertens, 2009) was used, in which an anonymous web-based survey (including both Likert scale and narrative responses) generated descriptive data from 22 participants (19 female; 3 male; the majority aged between 18 and 20 years old); this was followed by qualitative in-depth interviews with four female first year student teachers. Questions in both the survey and interviews focused on student teachers' experiences, knowledge and beliefs about disability, special and inclusive education. Data analysis involved calculation and interpretation of the Likert scale survey responses, and thematic coding of the survey narrative questions and transcribed interview responses.

It is worth noting that participants had little, if any opportunity to formally learn about disability as a human rights matter throughout their schooling (interestingly, however, all of them believed that disabled students were more likely than other students to experience some kind of discrimination at school). The minimal attention to disability matters in the national curriculum exacerbates the invisibility of disability as an inherent part of being human (even though almost 1 in 4 New Zealanders experience some kind of impairment [New Zealand Statistics, 2014]). As noted by Boler and Zembylas (2003), silences and absences are significant, and can "define the present knowledges as normal while the absent knowledges are deemed deviant" (pp. 120–121). This may perhaps be likened to the experiences of Māori (the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand) students, in that the assimilation of Māori students into state schools was insufficient to develop respectful understanding of indigenous culture and bi-cultural rights. To facilitate more equitable ways of knowing, the inclusion of the Treaty of Waitangi, *te reo Māori* and cultural knowledge in the national curriculum, accompanied by vigilant self-advocacy, was and still is necessary. It appears that macro level changes, such as laws (e.g., Education Act, 1989; Human Rights Act 1993); policies (Ministry of Education, 2010) and those brought about by disability self/advocacy initiatives to position disability within a human rights framework (e.g., New Zealand Disability Strategy [Minister for Disability Issues, 2001]; United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability [United Nations, 2006]) have yet to be recognized in widespread and meaningful ways in schools.

The notion of schools as sorting mechanisms is evident in participants' experiences of being in the same classes as disabled students: in primary school, only 9 out of 22 reported having disabled children as fulltime members of their classes; in high school, only 2 out of 22 experienced this. One participant's memory of her high school experiences was particularly insightful and empathic:

[disabled students] just stayed in a classroom, like there was like their own little classroom. ... [The classroom's] not really together which it should be really. ... I talked to them and stuff

but it's just, it seemed like they were pushed to one side a bit – maybe it's just the way the school is. ... They deserve to be able to go in a class like everyone else instead of going in a little classroom up the top of the school. ... They will feel left out, won't they, like they won't be able to socialize as much with everyone else in the school so they probably might not want to, because they wouldn't have had that experience. ... I think it depends on the school doesn't it?

In general, participants conveyed a sense of disabled students being a *part of*, physically present in schools, yet *apart from* and marked as different to peers, justifying their distancing from the heart of school life, and from each other. Knowing individuals personally provides opportunities to realize our shared humanity, individuality, competence, and complexity, and can diminish the power of labels and stereotypical ways of knowing that often cloud and taint interpretations of difference. The majority of participants' routine use of labels (e.g., 'the Down syndrome girl'; 'retard/cabbage class'; 'they' – an effective, albeit inadvertent means of othering and distancing), and their interpretations of 'special needs' attributed the source of any difficulties as inherent in individuals. Similarly, interpretations of disability were largely articulated in deficit terms (e.g., unable to, less able than, less capable, needs extra help, the inability to perform and/or interact socially with people). In contrast, two to three participants conveyed understandings of disability that focused on human difference in ways that did not diminish individuals' humanity. As one participant observed, labeling

is getting in the way – it stops people from being who they are. Like [other people] are just like, "oh they have got that wrong with them so they can't do that." I mean they don't know the person – they have no idea what they can do and what they can't do.

As Macmurray (1964, p. 19) notes, "you will never know anything about human beings unless you enter into relationship with them."

While certain students' physical markers of difference (such as bodily characteristics; means of movement and/or communication; using an oxygen tank), made them visible to others, what seemed to primarily shape participants' interpretations of these differences were the ways in which schools responded to those beyond the norm, by way of structural, attitudinal and other markers of difference (Fig. 1). Consider for example, in addition to labels as already noted, the untroubled use in schools of: (untrained) teacher aides and special(ist) teachers; separate physical space for certain students, both within classes (e.g., ability grouping) and removal to special classes/units or placement in 'bottom' ('lowest') streams; different timetabling from the rest of the class or school; special resources and equipment; special buddies; different expectations. Interestingly, special education was described by one participant as "education that is separate from normal studies" and "not for everyone" – a twist on Slee's assertion that "schools were never really meant for everyone" (2004, pp. 47–48).

These markers of difference appeared to be accepted by most participants, whose responses to the questions about the education of disabled students indicate a belief in the efficacy of current special educational provisions. For example, one participant believed "we have got pretty good special needs units and teacher aides in New Zealand so it's hard to kind of imagine it without that." This resonates with Bartolome's (2007) discussion of Eagleton's (1991) work, in which she notes, "because hegemonic ideologies are perceived by members of a society as natural and self-evident,

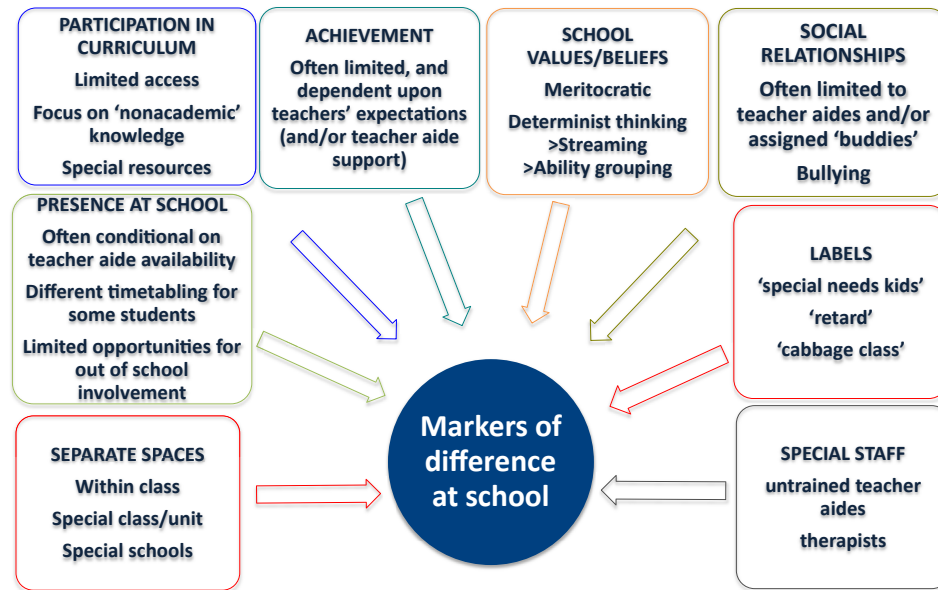


Fig. 1. Markers of difference.

alternative ideas are not considered because they are perceived to be *beyond the bounds of the thinkable*” [italics added] (p. xiv). It is not surprising therefore that student teachers may internalize special and deficit constructions of disability as their default way of knowing, having been immersed in environments that not only reflect and perpetuate such thinking, but also present it as the natural order.

5. Dysconsciousness: a way of understanding the tenacity of ideologies?

The concept of dysconsciousness may be helpful in understanding the tenacity of ideologies in general. Defined by Joyce King in 1991 in her attempts to understand US student teachers’ responses to racism, dysconsciousness is “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (p. 135). King explains, “it is not the *absence* of consciousness (that is, not unconsciousness) but an *impaired* consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race, as compared to, for example, critical consciousness” (p. 135, emphases in original). Such impaired thinking is attributed by King to “miseducation ... About society and the possibilities for social change” (Brandon, 2006, p. 197). The comment made above, “it’s hard to kind of imagine it without ... special needs units and teacher aides” denotes, perhaps, a narrow sense of possibility for educational change.

More recently, Lalvani and Broderick (2015, p. 174) have applied the concept of dysconsciousness to (dis)ableism, describing ‘dysconsciousness ableism’ as “the limited understandings that our students may hold about the nature of inequity related to disability/ability, distortions that also ‘make it difficult for them to act in favor of truly equitable education’ (King, 1991, p. 134).” Substitution of ableism in the following sentence may be useful in clarifying this concept: “dysconscious ~~racism~~ ableism is a form of ~~racism~~ ableism that tacitly accepts dominant ~~White~~ ableist norms and privilege” (King, 1991, p. 135).

One way of interpreting the student teachers’ uncritical acceptance of special education - their dysconsciousness - is that it may be derived from their ‘miseducation’ about disability, as evident in

the markers of difference involved in the production of special needs in schools. While provocative, such a notion is not intended to condemn teachers, the majority of whom, I believe, are committed to doing their best by students, and work extremely hard to withstand competing pressures within a neoliberal political climate (Ball, 2003). Teachers are not the only actors involved in the playing out of education. As Lalvani and Broderick (2015) point out, teacher educators may also contribute to the persistent omission of disability from discussions of education regarding social justice, multiculturalism and/or diversity, and the enduring, condoned systemic segregation of disabled students in schools. Their invitation to engage in dialogue about “educational segregation” (p. 173) is timely, as is their proposal that, as teacher educators, we need to recognize and engage with the possibility of dysconsciousness among ourselves - regarding not only ableism, but all marginalized ‘isms.’ In addition, it would be apposite to extend this invitation for dialogue to government officials and policymakers, whose educational policy and practice decisions are instrumental in creating “the existing order of things” (King, 1991, p. 135). And, as the heart of our collective endeavors, central to any dialogue has to be meaningful participation by students themselves, as mandated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989).

Working from the premise that education within a democracy is fundamentally about learning to be human and to live good lives together, I hope it is clear that the perpetuation of harmful ‘special’ ideology, grounded in inherently flawed assumptions about human functioning, has long outlived its perceived usefulness (Kliwer et al., 2015). It may be easier to grasp how mistaken such thinking is by asking whether it would be acceptable for education systems to continue to officially sanction racism in policies and practices. If we know that the response to certain students (whose bodies, minds, senses work differently to the socially ascribed ‘norm’) is wounding and unfair, we cannot ‘unknow’ this. We have a responsibility to acknowledge and address what is essentially institutionalized discrimination. In the following section, some means of challenging dysconsciousness are outlined for consideration.

6. Beyond special needs-ism: how can we think respectfully about each other as human beings?

Teacher education is charged with the responsibility of developing 'new' teachers and attesting to their competence in meeting the standards required for formal admission to the teaching profession. Aspiring teachers enter teacher education with their own beliefs about teaching and learning that have developed through immersion in an "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975; see also Gonsalves, 2007) throughout their time in school; as outlined above, these beliefs may include an untroubled internalization of deficit ideologies. How teacher educators work with student teachers to make the latter visible, to "make the familiar unfamiliar" (Ainscow, 2005, p. 116), and support student teachers to "think otherwise about the deep structures of disablement" (Slee, 2004, p. 47) is therefore of critical importance. It is at this juncture that teacher educators have an opportunity to break the cycle of discriminatory thinking and teaching practice that result in certain students' diminished educational opportunities and achievement. It is worth noting Griffiths' (2012) emphasis on injustice both during (processes) and from (outcomes) education. In a later publication (2014) she observes, "learning is a facet of a rich worthwhile good life while also always being a useful tool to obtain other facets of that good life" (p. 245). Compromising the enactment of a student's right to education has far reaching consequences, in hindering her/his access to other rights of citizenship in adulthood (Quennerstedt, 2009). If student teachers graduate into the teaching profession without having had to think deeply about the values and beliefs that determine their practice, the process of 'miseducation' and dysconsciousness will continue, impacting on yet another generation of students.

The following discussion outlines approaches that have been useful in facilitating shifts in thinking in other disciplines. The key characteristics of threshold concepts, critical consciousness, pedagogies of discomfort and of strategic empathy, all of which emphasize the integral yet oft neglected role of emotions within teaching and learning, are explored for their utility within the context of disability matters in teacher education.

6.1. Threshold concepts

Since 2003, threshold concepts have been utilized in over 100 disciplines and professional contexts (Land, Rattray, & Vivian, 2014) to identify specific disciplinary concepts that students find challenging. This then enables teachers to alter their pedagogy and/or curriculum to facilitate students' transition across thresholds to gain conceptual clarity (Land, Meyer, & Smith, 2008). In Meyer and Land's (2003) words:

A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. This transformation may be sudden or it may be protracted over a considerable period of time, with the transition to understanding proving troublesome. (p. 412)

Four key characteristics of threshold concepts were originally articulated, namely, that such a concept is: (a) transformative (eliciting a significant change in perception or understanding); (b) integrative (revealing the unrecognized interrelatedness of something); (c) irreversible (one cannot 'unknow' or revert to previous

ways of knowing); and (d) troublesome (counter-intuitive or unfathomable, involving discomfort) (Land et al., 2008). As well, the notion of liminality is incorporated to explain the transition of moving through the space of transformation, from prior to new understandings; a messy, nonlinear process that is often accompanied by feelings of disquiet and uncertainty. Students may take considerable time to cross the threshold to new knowledge, and/or may be 'stuck' or suspended in a state of liminality, 'in between' that which is familiar and comfortable and that which is yet to be known. If 'stuck', some students may achieve an understanding that lacks authenticity, described as "a kind of mimicry" (Land et al., 2008, p. x), or functional understanding (as in basic memorization of key material simply to pass exams).

The potential of threshold concepts as a means of augmenting understandings of disability matters within teacher education has yet to be investigated. There are however useful parallels in research conducted by Clouder (2005), in Occupational Therapy; Cousin (2006), regarding Otherness in Cultural Studies; and Morgan (2012), in Social Work. These studies offer salient theoretical and practical considerations of threshold concepts, and demonstrate their utility in making sense of students' learning of such concepts. Although I position myself in a kind of liminal space as I learn more about the theory and application of threshold concepts (and as I write this paper!), I tentatively suggest that disability may be such a concept.

While appreciating that, like Otherness (Cousin, 2006), disability is defined in multiple ways, depending upon the identity and experiences of the definer, socio-cultural, political, educational and temporal contexts, the impact of power dynamics and so on, this in itself can be troublesome for students. The complexity of disability per se, and current interpretations of disability as an inherent part of being human, within a context of human rights/social justice, requires a transformative shift away from deficit special needs assumptions. This also brings realization of the integrative nature of disability – that it must be considered in terms of its relatedness to, for example, the marginalization and oppression experienced by other 'minority groups,' as well as its relevance to all aspects of human being and functioning. This in turn elucidates the nature of human beings' interdependence, as emphasized by Macmurray (1958/2012) and the falsehood of the binary of 'them' and 'us' thinking. Genuine comprehension and internalization of this multi-dimensional conceptualization of disability is of an irreversible nature, in that once someone has fully developed this new way of knowing, s/he cannot 'unknow.' Learning to 'think otherwise' about hegemonic ideologies necessitates a shift in subjectivity as a person deals with the loss of certainty involved in moving out of one's comfort zone, and crossing a threshold to an uncertain territory of new knowing (Clouder, 2005; Meyer & Land, 2006). Students experience the process of liminality in different ways and timeframes, as they work to make sense of, what may be for some, quite confronting ideas that clash with their own. In some situations, students may resist, claiming that the discussion of certain issues is simply a case of having to be 'politically correct' (Cousin, 2006). Whether or not others (e.g., Morgan, 2012) further explore the notion of disability as a threshold concept, it does seem helpful in understanding what students (and teachers) may experience when struggling to make sense of critical ideas, which in turn may reveal opportunities for working more responsively with each other.

6.2. Critical consciousness

The theoretical framework of threshold concepts can be considered in relation to Gonsalves' (2007) work, in which he draws on Freire's concept of critical consciousness and further

develops King's notions of dysconsciousness and miseducation. Concerned with student teachers' resistance to the critique of hegemonic ideologies inherent in multicultural education, he outlines four stages of consciousness that he believes must be worked through in the transformation of hegemonic beliefs and values. Student teacher comments are incorporated in the following discussion as examples of particular stages.

The *unconscious* stage is characterized by a student's immersion and socialization in the dominant culture and ideologies, which are largely invisible and unquestioned as 'the truth' (e.g., *I've never thought about this stuff*). In the *dysconscious* stage, a student has an 'impaired' consciousness, aware but accepting of inequities as simply the way things are (e.g., *Of course special needs kids are better off in a special unit – they need extra help. Just tell us what to do with them ...*). The *preconscious* stage involves an emerging sense of uncertainty as a result of conflict between the knowledge being presented in teacher education courses and students' existing beliefs and values. Gonsalves (2007) likens this to cognitive dissonance, which may elicit resistance or defensiveness as students try to make sense of new ideas (e.g., *So what do I call them?!?* in response to discussions of deficit language). It is here that the learning process becomes troublesome, and students experience, in different ways, a state of liminality, which is also evident in the fourth stage.

In the conscious stage, students are well aware of social inequities, and, according to Gonsalves (2007), may respond in one of three ways. They may regress to a previous stance of resistance and defensiveness, in which case their learning about the harmful nature of deficit ideologies has no impact on their practice, and may even strengthen their initial resistance (e.g., *OK, I know life's not fair, but what I am meant to do about it? What about the other 28 kids?*). A second option is described as a moratorium, in which a student needs time to adjust to the perplexity of the learning process and her/his feelings about changing her/his mind (e.g., *When I started this course, I thought I knew all about disability – now I'm not so sure – I don't really know what to think ...*). Alternatively, students may develop a state of critical consciousness, defined as "a psychological state in which the individual has political clarity in understanding the social and political relations that drive oppression and the structure of their own life" (Gonsalves, 2007, p. 16). Students' thinking changes, having integrated and transformed their understandings and demonstrated willingness to work in equitable, critically conscious ways, to counter the impact of deficit ideologies (e.g., *In my next practicum, I'm going to include [the student] in my class. I don't think it's right that she's always left at the back of the class with an untrained teacher aide*). Whether or not this transformation is permanent is not known, given that students and qualified teachers often "remain immersed in, or are just barely emerging from, the belief structure of the dominant culture" (Gonsalves, 2007, p. 24), and may work in school contexts in which the ideology of special education and the myth of the norm are reified.

I am cautious about the 'stage' nature of Gonsalves' (2007) framework, in that it does not appear to consider the contextual and relational dimensions that are fundamental to learning and teaching, and belies the complexity, fluidity and unpredictability of these processes. Similarly, there could be a tendency to conceptualise threshold concepts and liminality in a linear fashion. Nevertheless, I believe that both approaches have merit in understanding what a student teacher, or indeed teacher or teacher educator, may experience when faced with learning that demands more from her/him than curriculum that does not directly pose a challenge to one's core beliefs and values. Both approaches are also useful in identifying specific areas of content and/or pedagogy that need to be rethought, in order to "tailor activities to utilize resistance as a point of dialogue and discovery" (Gonsalves, 2007, p. 22). Both

make explicit the affective dimensions of learning and teaching, as do the following pedagogies.

6.3. Pedagogy of discomfort

Boler (2004) explains that a pedagogy of discomfort "recognizes and problematizes the deeply embedded emotional dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines, and unconscious complicity with hegemony" (p. 121). She describes "inscribed habits of emotional inattention" (p. 122) as "embedded, cultural habits of seeing and not seeing" (p. 122), which is akin to King's notion of dysconsciousness and an uncritical habit of mind that tacitly accepts the status quo as 'normal.' According to Boler, moving out of one's comfort zone, "inscribed cultural and emotional terrains that we occupy less by choice and more by virtue of dominant cultural values, which we internalize as unconsciously as the air we breathe" (p. 121), can be a "shattering emotional experience" (p. 120), in forcing one to deeply question and unlearn the beliefs and values that have been integral to one's identity and positioning in the world (this reminds me of a student's comment, that class discussions about disability matters were "like tiptoeing through a minefield – wearing snowshoes"). With disarming honesty, Boler recounts her own experiences of working with students in a compulsory 'social foundations of education' course, and shares her realization of the need to meet discomfort with compassion – for both students and teachers. I am both comforted and reminded of my own frailty by her wise counsel: "Compassion means developing a patience for my own shortcomings. It means developing patience and respect in the face of the other's suffering, no matter how painful it may feel to be the object of another's anger" (p. 131).

Compassion is one way of responding to the emotions involved in the process of "dominant cultural withdrawal" (Boler, 2004, p. 119), and can be instrumental in facilitating change. In addition, as in any attempt to change habits, alternative ways of thinking, being and doing must be offered to replace the loss of what was thought to be 'true.' Boler turns to critical hope, to explicitly acknowledge the reality of social injustice and to engage in the difficult, emotional and uncertain work involved in the process of exposing and countering the harmfulness of hurtful ideologies. She advocates the use of content resources that can support the shift from prior to new 'worldviews,' including the use of first person accounts, narratives and the review of historical developments (e.g., of privilege, marginalization and self-advocacy/rights' movements). Boler emphasizes the collective and relational nature of such inquiry, and draws from Freire's focus on humility in dialogue in her statement, "Humility is in part the ability to listen to others as we forge connections and the courage to recognize that our perspectives and visions are partial and striving and must remain open to change" (pp. 130–131).

6.4. Pedagogies of strategic empathy

Working within a context of anti-racism in higher education, Zembylas (2012) expands on his earlier work with Boler (e.g., Boler & Zembylas, 2003) to outline pedagogies of strategic empathy, which involve:

The willingness of the teacher to make himself/herself strategically skeptic (working sometimes against his/her own emotions) in order to empathize with the troubled knowledge students carry with them, even when this troubled knowledge is disturbing to other students or to the teacher. (Zembylas, 2012, p. 114)

Parallels with threshold concepts and liminality, as well as a pedagogy of discomfort, are evident in Zembylas' assertion that the use of strategic empathy is "a valuable pedagogical tool that opens up affective spaces which might eventually disrupt the emotional roots of troubled knowledge – an admittedly long and difficult task" (p. 114). Like Boler (2004) and some proponents of threshold concepts (Martin & Lueckenhausen, 2005; Tanner, 2011), Zembylas focuses on the importance of both students and teachers moving beyond their comfort zones, which is consistent with Lalvani and Broderick's (2015) invitation to teacher educators to consider doing so.

According to Zembylas (2012), abandoning "the repetition of the same old rational argumentation about the moral value of anti-racism [ableism or any other 'ism']" (p. 123) in favor of explicitly foregrounding the emotional work inherent in troublesome knowledge is imperative in transforming understandings. Zembylas offers several guidelines to help "open up affective spaces" in ethical and respectful ways. These serve to counter the closing down of students' engagement as manifested through awkward (eyes averted, don't ask me) or hostile (uncomfortable, perspiration generating) silence, or through the domination of defensive discussion by those with deeply held convictions that disavow alternative perspectives. He draws from the notion of reconciliatory empathy, which necessitates seeing the 'other' in human terms, finding commonality with them and showing willingness to connect while also recognizing that each party has their own 'troubled knowledge' that affects them and others (i.e., in this case, both student and teacher acknowledge rather than deny their discomfort and how it may impact on others). As well, such empathy involves realization that every person has rights, which includes the right to hold one's own views – being empathic does not mean having to accept or adopt the other's view or belief.

Conducting class discussion in these ways is easier read than done, and carries the tensions inherent in working through opposing views in a safe and ethical manner. Some ways to scaffold learning and create safe "holding environments" (Meyer & Land, 2006, p. xvi) in which to support students as they move through liminal spaces to new understandings include: developing the kinds of relationships with each other that imbue a sense of trust and common good; providing an overview of the process of (un)learning/(re)learning, and the time and uncertainty involved; being explicit about the affective dimension of learning and teaching, especially in regard to particular subjects; inviting students to voice their preferences about how the class can engage in discussion of troublesome/threshold concepts; developing respectful 'rules of engagement' that reflect the characteristics of reconciliatory empathy; modeling, as best one can, compassion, humility and honesty, and an openness to hearing others' perspectives without judgment (Boler, 2004; Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Noddings, 2012; Zembylas, 2012).

7. Educating the emotions: recognizing the power of feelings

The importance of recognizing and responding to the ubiquity of feelings in teaching and learning has been illuminated throughout the literature examined in this paper. As Gaita (2012) declares, "We often learn most deeply when we are moved by what people say or do, in life and in art" (p. 766). Although the affective nature of teaching and learning in higher education has been largely overlooked and under-researched, we do not operate in an "emotion free zone" (Martin & Lueckenhausen, 2005, p. 410; see also Clouder, 2005; Cutri & Whiting, 2015; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). The impact of how we feel in these contexts matters. For example, Clouder (2005) observes, "failure to teach and evaluate in the affective domain can possibly be attributed to the perceived

difficulties of challenging values and attitudes" (p. 514). She further notes that students' affective development should be "fundamental to professional education rather than incidental" (p. 514). Support for educating the emotions (Macmurray, 1958/2012) is provided by Immordino-Yang and Damasio's (2007) neuroscientific evidence of the critical link between cognition and emotion, particularly in facilitating the transfer of 'school based' learning to 'real life' contexts. Indeed, they claim, "When we educators fail to appreciate the importance of students' emotions, we fail to appreciate a critical force in students' learning. One could argue, in fact, that we fail to appreciate the very reason that students learn at all" (p. 9).

8. Closing thoughts

In 1968, Dunn wrote a provocative article entitled *Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable?* Nineteen years later, in 1987 (the year I completed my initial teacher education qualification), Lipsky and Gartner wrote a provocative article entitled *Capable of achievement and worthy of respect: Education of handicapped students as if they were full-fledged human beings*. Twenty eight years later, in 2015, Lalvani and Broderick wrote a provocative article entitled *Teacher education, #Exclusion, and the implicit ideology of Separate but Equal: An invitation to a dialogue*. These, and many other publications, are essentially reiterating the same concerns. And in the meantime, generations of students have moved through education systems that are burdened by outdated false assumptions about human diversity and capacity. How many more generations have to live in the shadow of special needs-ism?

Lipsky and Gartner (1987, p. 69) cite Edmonds (1979): "We can whenever and wherever we choose successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far" (p. 29). They point out that "how we feel" is pivotal, because:

It is not whether we profess concern for them but rather, the extent to which we think that they matter; that they are able to succeed; and that they have entitlements — basically, that they are one with us. The problem arises because "by definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human" (Goffman, 1963). (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987, p. 70)

We have known for some time what is possible and what is the right thing to do by disabled students. We do not need any more words. Instead, we need to decide who and what matters in education, and how this can be achieved for the good of future generations. We can choose the comfort of dysconsciousness, to be complicit in implicit discrimination, willing to compromise the rights of some members of our society in the interest of others, who are judged to be a better return on investment in the global economy. Or we can choose to engage with and facilitate other ways of thinking, that 'others' are "one with us," which helps us all become more human and lead good lives together. I realize that these choices represent the extremes, and that in a democracy, education will always be required to serve multiple and conflicting demands. Nevertheless, I hope that we can learn from Macmurray's insistence, that in all interactions, we recognize that the other is inherently and essentially human (1964, p. 18). (Re)thinking education as an apprenticeship in humanity may serve all of us well.

Acknowledgments

The pilot study referred to in this paper was funded by a University of Otago Humanities Research Grant.

Thanks to Suzy Wells, Johanna Naus and Ros Allan for their

generous reading of an initial draft of this paper.

The thoughtful feedback offered by reviewers is hugely appreciated – thank you so much.

References

- Ainscow, M. (2005). Developing inclusive education systems: what are the levers for change? *Journal of Educational Change*, 6(2), 109–124. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10833-005-1298-4>.
- Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), 215–228. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065>.
- Ballard, K. (2013). Thinking in another way: ideas for sustainable inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 17(8), 762–775. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2011.602527>.
- Bartolomé, L. I. (2007). Introduction: beyond the fog of ideology. In L. I. Bartolomé (Ed.), *Ideologies in education: Unmasking the trap of teacher neutrality* (pp. ix–xxix). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Barton, L. (2003). *Professorial lecture: Inclusive education and teacher education: A basis of hope or a discourse of delusion*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Boler, M. (2004). Teaching for hope. In D. Liston, & J. Garrison (Eds.), *Teaching, learning, and loving: Reclaiming passion in educational practice* (pp. 117–131). NY: Routledge Falmer.
- Boler, M., & Zembylas, M. (2003). Discomforting truths: the emotional terrain of understanding difference. In P. P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social change* (pp. 110–136). NY: Routledge.
- Brandon, L. (2006). On dysconsciousness: an interview with Joyce E. King. *Educational Studies*, 40(2), 196–208. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15326993es4002>.
- Cameron, C. (2015). *Why we are disabled people, not people with disabilities*. Retrieved 25/1/16 from <http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/why-we-are-disabled-people-not-people-with-disabilities>.
- Clouder, L. (2005). Caring as a “threshold concept”: transforming students in higher education into health(care) professionals. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 10(4), 505–517. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562510500239141>.
- Cousin, G. (2006). Threshold concepts, troublesome knowledge and emotional capital: an exploration into learning about others. In J. H. F. Meyer, & R. Land (Eds.), *Overcoming barriers to student understanding: Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge* (pp. 134–147). NY: Routledge.
- Cutri, R. M., & Whiting, E. F. (2015). The emotional work of discomfort and vulnerability in multicultural teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(8), 1010–1025. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1005869>.
- Disabled Persons Assembly NZ. (2015). *Home page*. Retrieved 25/1/16 from <http://www.dpa.org.nz/>.
- Dunn, L. M. (1968). Special education for the mildly retarded: is much of it justifiable? *Exceptional Children*, 35, 5–22.
- Ellis, R., & Ellis, S. (2011). *Certain proof: A question of worth [documentary]*. USA: Footpath Pictures.
- Facer, K. (2012). Personal, relational and beautiful: education, technologies and John Macmurray's philosophy. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 709–725. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.744194>.
- Fendler, L., & Muzaffar, I. (2008). The history of the bell curve: sorting and the idea of normal. *Educational Theory*, 58(1), 63–82.
- Fielding, M. (2007). The human cost and intellectual poverty of high performance schooling: radical philosophy, John Macmurray and the remaking of person-centred education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 22(4), 383–409. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680930701390511>.
- Fielding, M. (2012). Education as if people matter: John Macmurray, community and the struggle for democracy. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 675–692. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745044>.
- Gaita, R. (2012). Love and teaching: renewing a common world. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 761–769. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745046>.
- Gibson, J. (2013). *Shaun Markham - a reluctant standout*. New Zealand Education Gazette. Retrieved 16/11/15 from <http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8730&Title=ShaunMarkham%E2%80%93a%20reluctantstand-out>.
- Gilham, C. (2011). Beyond the Monster's wanting and doing: Special Education as a barrier and diacritical hermeneutics as possibility. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue Canadienne de L'éducation*, 34(3), 103–118.
- Ginott, H. (1993). *Teacher and child*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from <http://www.holocaustandhumanity.org/about-us/educational-philosophy/>.
- Gonsalves, R. E. (2007). Hysterical blindness and the ideology of denial: preservice teachers' resistance to multicultural education. In L. I. Bartolomé (Ed.), *Ideologies in education: Unmasking the trap of teacher neutrality* (pp. 3–28). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Griffiths, M. (2012). Why joy in education is an issue for socially just policies. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(5), 655–670. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2012.710019>.
- Griffiths, M. (2014). Social justice in education: Joy in education and education for joy. In I. Bogotch, & C. M. Shields (Eds.), *International handbook of educational leadership and social (in)justice* (pp. 233–251). NY: Springer.
- Human Rights Commission. (2009). *Disabled children's right to education*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from <https://www.hrc.co.nz/your-rights/people-disabilities/our-work/disabled-childrens-right-education/>.
- Human Rights Commission. (2013). *Guide to using disability rights language*. Retrieved 25/1/16 from <https://www.hrc.co.nz/your-rights/people-disabilities/our-work/guide-using-disability-rights-language/>.
- IHC. (2015). *IHC education complaint*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from <http://www.ihc.org.nz/campaigns/education-complaint/>.
- Immordino-Yang, M. H., & Damasio, A. (2007). We feel, therefore we learn: the relevance of affective and social neuroscience to education. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 1(1), 3–10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-228X.2007.00004.x>.
- King, J. E. (1991). Dysconscious racism: ideology, identity, and the miseducation of teachers. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60(2), 133–146. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2295605>.
- Kliwer, C., Biklen, D., & Petersen, A. J. (2015). At the end of intellectual disability. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(1), 1–28.
- Lalvani, P. (2013). Privilege, compromise, or social justice: teachers' conceptualizations of inclusive education. *Disability & Society*, 28(1), 14–27.
- Lalvani, P., & Broderick, A. A. (2015). Teacher education, Exclusion, and the implicit ideology of Separate but Equal: an invitation to a dialogue. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 10(2), 168–183. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1746197915583935>.
- Land, R., Meyer, J. H. F., & Smith, J. (2008). *Threshold concepts within the disciplines*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.
- Land, R., Rattray, J., & Vivian, P. (2014). Learning in the liminal space: a semiotic approach to threshold concepts. *Higher Education*, 67(2), 199–217. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1063/1.2756072>.
- Lipsky, D. K., & Gartner, A. (1987). Capable of achievement and worthy of respect: education for handicapped students as if they were full-fledged human beings. *Exceptional Children*, 54(1), 69–74.
- Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Macmurray, J. (1958/2012). Learning to be human. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 661–674. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745958>.
- Macmurray, J. (1964). Teachers and pupils. *The Educational Forum*, 29(1), 17–24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131726409339304>.
- Martin, E., & Lueckenhausen, G. (2005). How university teaching changes teachers: affective as well as cognitive challenges. *Higher Education*, 49(3), 389–412. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-004-6782-x>.
- Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative research and evaluation*. New York: Guilford.
- Meyer, J. H. F., & Land, R. (2003). Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: linkages to ways of thinking and practising. In C. Rust (Ed.), *Improving student learning - Theory and practice ten years on* (pp. 412–424). Oxford, UK: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD).
- Meyer, J. H. F., & Land, R. (2006). *Overcoming barriers to student understanding: Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge*. NY: Sense Publishers.
- Minister for Disability Issues. (2001). *New Zealand Disability Strategy*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from <http://www.odi.govt.nz/nzds/>.
- Ministry of Education. (2010). *Success for all*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from http://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-nz/49SCES_EVI_00DBSCH_INQ_9975_1_A147433/8a9fb77778f8192ba495fa74edd5b1bebfad57b0.
- Ministry of Education. (2015). *Education Act update*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/consultations-and-reviews/education-act-update/>.
- Morgan, H. (2012). The social model of disability as a threshold concept: troublesome knowledge and liminal spaces in Social Work education. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, 31(2), 215–226. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2012.644964>.
- New Zealand Statistics. (2014). *Disability survey 2013*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/health/disabilities/DisabilitySurvey_HOTP2013.aspx.
- Noddings, N. (2012). The caring relation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 771–781. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.745047>.
- Pring, R. (2012). Putting persons back into education. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 747–760. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.744193>.
- Quennerstedt, A. (2009). Children's rights in education: transforming universal claims into New Zealand policy. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 44(2), 63–78.
- Radio New Zealand. (2015, November 3). *Govt asking question - "what is education for?" [Radio interview]*. Retrieved 4/11/15 from <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport/audio/201777137/govt-asking-question-what-is-education-for>.
- Runswick-Cole, K., & Hodge, N. (2009). Needs or rights? A challenge to the discourse of special education. *British Journal of Special Education*, 36(4), 198–203.
- Slee, R. (2004). Meaning in the service of power. In L. Ware (Ed.), *Ideology and the politics of (in)exclusion* (pp. 46–60). New York: Peter Lang.
- Slee, R. (2011). *The irregular school: Exclusion, schooling and inclusive education*. London: Routledge.
- Stern, J. (2012). The personal world of schooling: John Macmurray and schools as households. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 727–745. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.740586>.
- Tanner, B. (2011). Threshold concepts in practice education: perceptions of practice educators. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(9), 427–434. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4276/030802211X13153015305592>.
- United Nations. (1989). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from https://treaties.un.org/pages/viewdetails.aspx?src=treaty&mtdsg_no=iv-11&chapter=4&lang=en&title=UNTC-publisher=

- United Nations. (2006). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability*. Retrieved 16/11/15 from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>.
- Valle, J. W., & Connor, D. J. (2011). *Rethinking disability: A disability studies approach to inclusive practices*. NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Ware, L. (2011). Disability studies in education. In S. Tozer, B. P. Gallegos, A. Henry, M. B. Greiner, & P. G. Price (Eds.), *Handbook of research in the social foundations of education* (pp. 244–260). NY: Routledge.
- Zembylas, M. (2012). Pedagogies of strategic empathy: navigating through the emotional complexities of anti-racism in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 17(2), 113–125. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.611869>.