



WELSmain 2021 - Abstracts

September 30, 2021, 16.30 – 17.30 CEST

E9 Who Decides? Power, Disability, and Educational Leadership

Dr. Joshua Bornstein and Dr. Holly Manaseri

Title: Ability and Belonging: Contested Ontology and Epistemology that Shape School Practice

Theories of practice tie directly to leadership actions. The researchers argue that educational leaders have a strong and direct influence over educational inclusivity, especially at their home institutions. While assuming that educational leaders strive for inclusive schools, they deem it necessary to ask leaders to examine which students are in need of additional inclusive practices and how they center student forms of knowing within that analysis. They argue that deeply entrenched norms, specifically racism and ableism, inform those analyses and have a deleterious effect on professional practice. Seeking to help leaders avoid oppressive complicity, the editors and authors hope to provide additional clarity for educational leaders focused on inclusion.

Bornstein and Manaseri aim to inform a debate on the ontology of disability in educational settings, destabilizing the assumption that belonging is predicated on racialized normalcy. Secondly, the authors seek to challenge the educational system's epistemological assumptions about disability, in which school structures and policies prove that racialized normalcy is a true way to know students. Thirdly, they consider educational responses to disability through administrative decision-making in practice and policy. This effort is designed to deepen a discussion on DisCrit in educational leadership that has recently been gaining momentum in the leadership for social justice literature.



Dr. Michelle L. Damiani, Rowan University, USA

Title: Who Decides? Teachers with Disabilities and the Role of School Administrators

Asking, “Who decides who can teach, how teachers can teach, and what constitutes ‘good’ teaching?” The author argues that schools are organized around ability constructs that shape the experiences of disabled students, staff, teachers, and administrators. Achieving equity in education, she finds, requires that all stakeholders interrogate the implications of their policies and practices. Equity-oriented leadership implores school leaders and administrators to examine the effects of ableism, and to use their power to disrupt inequities for diverse teachers.

The researcher draw on data from interviews and letter writing to highlight the experiences of teachers with disabilities that inform recommendations for school administrators who share responsibility for creating supportive school cultures, ensuring equitable access, and building capacity in education. Situated in a joint framework of transformative leadership and disability studies in education, this presentation concludes with ways to move forward in a shared leadership model with teachers with disabilities as teacher-leaders. Damiani draws on a social justice model to frame two first person narratives from the authors who, between them, have more than 60 years of work and formal learning in numerous Canadian and Australian education settings: one from the perspective of a physically disabled student with particular focus on her experiences as a master’s and PhD student in a Canadian university, and the other from the standpoint of a university professor and administrator. Both narratives point to possibilities, challenges, and tensions experienced when learning environments are predicated on a range of ableist assumptions rather than pursued with more inclusive aspirations for students.



Tya Collins, Université de Montréal, Canada and Corina Borri-Anadon and Marie-Odile Magnan, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Canada

Title: Shedding Light on Disability and Race in a North American Linguistic Minority Context: A DisCrit Analysis of Special Education in Quebec

The realities of the Deaf community and other students with disabilities is not, of course, limited to the United States of American. The researchers argue for increased utilization of Disability Critical Race Studies as a tool for the analysis of educational policy in Quebec. The authors demonstrate how Quebec's unique cultural and linguistic history, in both modern-day Canada and former imperial British North America, have affected local concepts of marginalization. In particular, the researchers explain how the priority of language in Quebec has precluded a parallel concern for the significance of race or ethnicity to understanding the students' school experiences. The lack of data concerning race and ethnicity is especially important for understanding the experiences of students of color receiving services related to disabilities. As a result, the intersection of race and disability is largely ignored in schools by education policy makers.

Education policy in Quebec officially emphasizes a "raceless" society in favor of one based on language and cultural distinctions. As an alternative, the authors use DisCrit to argue that concepts related to culture, ableism, and race are needed to understand special education in Quebec. The researchers argues that ignoring race in the study of special education and the application of disability labels, ignores important on-the-ground realities of how children are identified and labeled for special education services and how students of color experience schooling. Overall, the research adds important understanding of the unique history and language policies in Quebec, and the importance of DisCrit to understand the intersection of race and disability.



Dr. Cynthia Paes de Carvalho Pontifícia, Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil and Flávia Pedrosa de Camargo, IFMS – Campus Corumbá, Brasil and Mônica de Carvalho Magalhães Kassar, UFMS – Campus do Pantanal, Brazil

Title: Leadership for Inclusive Education in Brazil: Potential Contributions of Studies to the Disability Training of School Leaders

Students with disabilities have a variety of needs that unfortunately go under-addressed. This reality extends across borders, and researcher from Brazil provide a study of their efforts to understand and report on both policy and leadership practice regarding students with disabilities in Brazil. Their work features a historical policy analysis and interviews of leaders in a Brazilian region away from its largest cities. Their interview data helps add to our readers' understanding of the experiences students with disabilities have in Brazil. This research points to the need to discuss the training of education professionals, particularly those who work as principals, pedagogic coordinators, administrators or leaders. Thus, we assume the relevance of Disability Studies as an important knowledge field to sustain the implementation of consistent inclusive education policies in schools. Disability Studies brings an important intersectional identity lens as well. DeMatthews et al. (2020) argue that racism, ableism and other identity markers articulate and reinforce each other and work in an interdependent and invisible way to support the idea of normality. This in turn contributes to segregation and intra-school inequality. Annamma and colleagues (2014) also argue that a multifaceted approach contributes to a greater understanding of the marginalizing conditions that affect black students with disabilities, for example.

Regarding the behavior of principals, the analytical perspective advocated by DeMatthews and colleagues (2020) indicates that they often reinforce the status quo of segregation and marginalization. Thus, we propose the simultaneous, integrated and historical critical consideration of the multiple social aspects of schooling and the identities of students and their families for a critical review of the principals' approach to school inclusive improvement and their initial and in-service training. The Brazilian scholars mentioned above experienced a variety of struggles, both locally and systemically, in their effort to advocate for students with disabilities. Theory and practice, while interrelated and mutually influential, often have significant discrepancies.

References

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