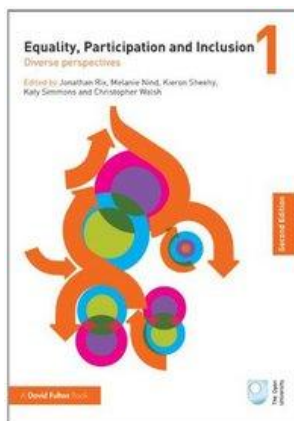


Professional Book Review

Rix, J., Nind, M., Sheehy, K., Simmons, K., Walsh, C. (Eds.) (2010a). *Equality, Participation and Inclusion 1 - Diverse Perspectives* (2nd Ed.). New York: Routledge. 335 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-58422-7 (pb). \$33.41

Rix, J., Nind, M., Sheehy, K., Simmons, K., Parry, J., Kumrai, R. (Eds.) (2010b). *Equality, Participation and Inclusion 2 - Diverse Contexts* (2nd Ed.). New York: Routledge. 339 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-58424-1 (pb)

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When so many textbooks on inclusion are dry, legalistic skeletons on policy and provisions, it is refreshing to come across a textbook more concerned with the human experience of inclusion and equal access in education. Although administrative perspectives and teacher perceptions are illustrated in both textbooks, it is fascinating to leaf through the sizeable section of texts concerned primarily with student voices. The very structure of this manual, in fact, forces upon the reader an important reflection on the nature and content of student perceptions: beginning with section headings such as “Looking Back,” the themes addressed in turn progress organically from memories of student experiences to a personal questioning on needs (“Looking from Within”), to eventually consider student views on best practices (“Looking Around”). There is also food for thoughts on methodological issues surrounding suitable approaches to the recording and analysis of student experiences and voices (Rix et al, 2010a, p. 170, 225, 286).

In practical terms, these books are the second edition of an anthology of texts on inclusion. It has changed in content and is rather longer than its previous incarnation; however, it remains essentially a global overview of literature concerned with equality and inclusion in education. It is originally conceived as a two-volume reader for an Open University undergraduate course component of the same name but stands on its own as a detailed and intelligently structured source manual for any student or professional in the education field.

In this respect, academics may be disconcerted to discover that many of the chapters do not constitute academic articles per se, with the conventional reference section and citeable sources. The first volume, in particular, carries many chapters that are autobiographical (Rix et al, 2010a, pp. 11, 25, 54). It incorporates literally a myriad of suggestive and thought-provoking angles, not

systematically presented in standardized academic research format. It must also importantly be noted that the work only rarely constitutes original publications: extracts and journal articles have been reprinted from a variety of sources. This editorial work does not weaken the impact of the textbook as a whole, but rather bears testimony to solid, even exquisite, capacities for selection on the part of the editors. Much like a good host might delight his guests with a single plate of mouth-watering hors d'oeuvres that will not satisfy hunger but succeed instead in titillating the taste buds and uncovering flavours to be later further explored on one's own, the editorial team succeeds in drawing us out of our comfort zone and in inspiring curiosity in new, diverse angles on inclusion. The content may not fully satisfy specialist academics in search of originality or depth in publications; it will, however, delight the non-specialist educator wishing to widen his or her horizons and understanding of inclusion.

Of particular importance and impact are the mentions of economic discrimination in the classroom, rights of traveller children, perceptions of gay and lesbian students, rights of hospitalised children, educational rights of offenders, the possible impact of occupational therapy, and the often silent exclusion of truant children. Schools would be infinitely better places—and more efficient working environments—if each teacher were to assimilate the content of these two imminently readable volumes and allow them to permeate his or her teaching strategies and classroom awareness. The editors' wonderful crafting also means that the non-specialist educator or student will be initiated, in a mere 600-compact-size pages not much more burdensome than a novel, to such luminaries in their respective fields as John Visser, Ted Cole, and Harry Daniels on social, emotional and behaviour difficulties; Susan Hart on non-conventional students; Gwynedd Lloyd on traveller children; and Jennifer Spratt on mental health in schools. As such, the textbook lays down many fascinating tracks for investigation.

In all fairness, there are some caveats to be expressed to potential readers. First of all, the content is mostly UK-specific and will be of less interest or immediate applicability to a North American reader. Volume 2, part 2 in particular, may be of little relevance to a reader outside the United Kingdom. The other concern would be that this second edition abandons some very important angles: the role of parents and the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). These editorial choices seem difficult to justify considering firstly the fact that parents are often the stakeholders who are in a position to legally challenge the inadequacies of provisions when needed (Priestley & Rabiee, 2002; Bryer, Grimbeek, Beamish, & Stanley, 2004), and, secondly, the observation that peer inclusion, more often than not, now occurs on technological platforms and through social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kleinberg, 2008). The editors present their *mea culpa* about these “tough choices” in the introduction (Rix et al, 2010a, p. 6) and put forward space and compactness as overriding imperatives. Lastly, as almost all the texts included are reprints, it might have been more convenient, for the sake of readers intending to make references to the articles, to display the dates of original publication prominently

at the beginning of each chapter. Some pieces are indeed much older than others: original texts are close to two decades old while second edition additions may be as recent as 2008. Original dates of publication do appear, in block form, in the acknowledgement section, but tracking down these details is more tedious and time consuming than needs to be.

Despite these few caveats, the education undergraduate student should keep this text handy at all times; the research students may succinctly uncover in it investigation angles that had not previously been apparent. The faculty member will find in it concise introductory reading for students to illustrate important theoretical issues and trigger reflection. It should appear on the desk of any school administrator or teacher. In this sense, the editorial work is remarkably subtle in its ability intuitively to focus on readers' potential areas of interest; it is also a breath of fresh air in its full bodied appreciation of the richness, complexity, and diversity of the discourse on inclusion. This is perhaps due to the fact that, unlike textbooks focusing solely on legal provisions and their impact, the editors here firmly embrace, theoretically, the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990). Impacts on classroom practices are indeed numerous, immediate, and fundamental when, as they do, one appreciates that "[b]eing inclusive requires social change rather than an individual having to assimilate into any one dominant group" (Rix et al, 2010b).

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