Title: Discourses of inclusion: a critique

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Abstract
Inclusion is now an accepted part of schooling in the UK. This paper presents aspects of a doctoral research study that critically considered prevailing discourses of inclusion in education. The study was concerned with how inclusion presents itself to the social world and with how meanings and discourses of inclusion (as a body of knowledge) are acquired, legitimized and re-produced.

One of the aims of the study was to take the seemingly self-evident object of inclusion and to deconstruct and question it, both as a potentially normalizing, hegemonic discourse and as a universalizing concept. A multi-method research approach was adopted to address the questions: how is the contemporary discourse of inclusion configured and what are its characteristics? What might be the potential effects of this discourse?

A range of educationalists, including teachers, teaching assistants, and lecturers engaged in professional development programmes were invited to give their views and interpretation of ‘inclusion’ in written form, via an online discussion board facility, or orally, and also as a visual representation in the form of a drawing that was then discussed. The multi-textual responses were analysed thematically and interpreted.

Within the data, the phrases ‘special educational needs child’ and ‘the included child’ were frequently used interchangeably. The interpretations of inclusion that were given were, more often than not, restricted to a neo-traditional special needs discursive framework. This study suggests that the discourse of inclusion continues to rely on neo-traditional special educational knowledge. Although there may be different language and terminology, traditionalist systems and practices that potentially limit ways of thinking and talking about difference, appear to prevail.

In some instances, the discourses accorded with inclusive policy. For example, a prevailing discourse of ‘meeting needs’ and ‘keeping children safe’ was concordant with the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) policy agenda; affirming Ball’s (1997) notion of policy as practice.

Drawing upon Foucault’s notion of discourse as practice, this paper makes tentative suggestions about the effects that certain prevalent and newly emergent discourses might have upon pupils; especially upon pupils who are caught within a deficit discourse; assigned particular labels; marked out as ‘at risk’ or ‘vulnerable’, or who are subject to particularly subtle discursive process of ‘othering’.
Introduction

This paper presents aspects of a doctorate study that drew on poststructuralist ideas surrounding discourse to interrogate and critique contemporary discourses of inclusion in education. The study considered how the contemporary discourse(s) of inclusion is constructed and constituted in educational communities. It was framed by a recognition that the ways that children are spoken about, positioned and ‘managed’ in schools are not transparent, harmless or benign; they have (disciplinary) effects. A fundamental question that drove this enquiry was: whose interests are served by the way inclusion is talked about and represented in education in the present context?

Inclusion

Inclusion officially emerged as a concept and social practice in the 1990s. Following the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), that pressed for international moves towards inclusion based on rights and entitlement for all children, the UK Labour government appeared to commit itself to inclusive schooling through a stream of policies and periodic official reform (e.g. DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001; 2003; 2005; 2007). Despite its predominance and the propagated notion of inclusion as a fundamental good, the ideas and messages within inclusive policy appear to remain quite nebulous and vague. For example:

Touchstones for effective inclusion include key ideas about the presence, participation and achievement of children with diverse needs, within mainstream schools and settings (DfES, 2005, p.9).

Perhaps as a consequence of vagueness in policy, inclusion remains a generalised, disputable concept that is wide open to interpretation. Educators and researchers continue to engage in conversations about it ‘irrespective of the fact they may be talking across deep epistemological ravines’ (Slee, 2001, p.169) and the term appears to mean different things to different people who have various investments, or vested interests, in how it is constructed and interpreted. There are various ‘competing discourses’ through which meaning and understandings differ (Graham and Slee, 2008, p.277).

Nevertheless, despite the slipperiness of the term, inclusion is something that is ‘recognisable’. It has become a kind of truth that is part of the commonsense practices of schooling (Slee, 2003). Common sense, taken for granted, self-evident values and practices can become readily absorbed and remain unquestioned. One of the aims and purposes of my study was to take the seemingly self-evident, commonsensical object of inclusion and to tentatively interrogate it critique it; to find out what the assumptions were behind it and, moreover, to question it as both a potentially normalizing, hegemonic discourse and as a universalizing concept. In order to do this, the most appropriate research approach appeared to be a discourse-based one.
Discourse

Discourse research has a commitment to challenging common sense knowledge and disrupting easy assumptions about the organisation of social life and social meanings (Tonkiss, 1998, p.245). According to MacLure (2003, p.9), a discourse-based educational research project sets itself the work of taking that which offers itself as commonsensical, obvious, natural, given or unquestionable (such as the notion of inclusion), and tries to ‘unravel it a bit – to open it up’.

At a fundamental level, discourse may be understood as recognisable statements that cohere together (Wetherell, 2001) or as bodies of ideas that produce and regulate the world in their own terms rendering some things common sense and other things nonsensical (Youdell, 2006, p.36). Discourses carry particular rationalities. They map out what can be said and inform our thinking about how we should be and how we should act in the world. We are open to a range of discourses and draw upon ‘recognisable’ discursive repertoires to make sense of the world. Once a discourse becomes normal or natural it is difficult to thing and act outside of it (St. Pierre 2000, p.485).

Foucault (1972, p.49) referred to discourses as ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’. They can be viewed as practices that embody meaning and social relationships and that also constitute individuality, or subjectivity, and power relations. Power and knowledge are actively (re)produced in discourse. Established discourses are employed by various regimes of power and are subjected to investment and control. For Foucault, discourse is inextricably linked to power and knowledge (knowledge becomes a matter of how particular things come to be seen as true). Discourse is a vehicle for power-knowledge:

in a society…there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. (Foucault, 1980, p.93).

From within this framework, the world we know is one that is constructed by human discourses, giving us not so much truths as ‘truth-effects’.

Context

Before describing the research methods that were adopted in this study, it is worth briefly considering the present socio-economic context as it is not necessarily conducive to communitarian notions of inclusion. The context in which inclusion operates may be characterised as a neo-liberal, market-driven one. Neo-liberal forms of government place greater responsibility on the individual, individual enterprise and personal freedom rather than on the state or the collective (Rose 1999). People are encouraged to participate and to utilise their skills in the knowledge economy. Individualism, self-reliance, enterprise and entrepreneurialism are defining features of neo-liberalism (Bridges and Jonathan, 2003, p.134). As the government seeks to optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of the economic and social system, the ‘performance’ of individuals and schools becomes highly significant. As explained
towards the end of this paper, inclusion, and particularly newly emergent discourses associated with it, aligns itself with, and is characteristic of, neo-liberal forms of government.

**Explicating the discourse**

Graham and Slee (2005) urge educators to ‘explicate the discourses’ of inclusion in an attempt to address forms of exclusion in the current context, and that is what I set out to do. I aimed to locate the discourses that circulate around inclusion and to deconstruct the constitutive and regulatory effects of them. I wanted to locate fragments of texts, reiterated words and statements that I believed characterised and signified its discourse, so methods were consequently adopted that helped to trace and ‘mark out’ its discursive domain.

Discourse does not consist of one text, one action or one source. Discursive statements appear inter-textually and comprise of familiar patterns of disciplinary and paradigmatic knowledge and practice (Luke, 1995, p.16). A multi-method research approach was adopted, with a focus on visual, textual and discursive representations. A range of educationalists, including teachers, teaching assistants, and lecturers engaged in professional development programmes in the area of inclusive education were invited to give their views and interpretation of ‘inclusion’. They did this either via a drawing, through discussion, or via an online (virtual) discussion forum.

The people who took part in my study may be seen as belonging to particular communities of practice and all worked directly with children in schools. Communities of practice are linked to discursive networks that frame the possibilities for what people can (and cannot) speak about (Barr and Smith, 2007). There were two separate groups of educators, or two communities of practice, who took part in the study. The first group comprised of teaching assistants who worked in primary, secondary or special schools and who were studying for a Foundation degree. They took part in the online discussion data gathering part of the study.

**Online discussion**

Herring (2001, p.642) suggests that we owe to Foucault the insight that social institutions are themselves constructed and maintained through discourse and that ‘nowhere is this more true than on the Internet, where ‘communities’ of users come together, sharing neither geographical space nor time and create social structures exclusively out of words’. The internet seemed a fitting social arena from which to gather the data.

A discussion posting area was created that invited teaching assistants to respond to the dual question ‘What do you understand by the term inclusion and how do you interpret it?’ The asynchronous discussion forum area was set up within the context of their studies (for a Foundation degree) as a non-assessed component.

**Drawings and group talk**

The second group comprised of practitioners that included teachers, lecturers and support workers, who were studying on a Masters degree in Inclusive Education and they took part in the drawing and discussion activities. Visual methodologies, and
drawing in particular, traditionally tend to be confined to the arts rather than education. Visual imagery, in the form of photographs, and the use of artefacts is contributing to emergent arts-based approaches to research in the field of inclusion (Allan, 2008). Such creative approaches can dislocate constructions of epistemology in the situated discourses of inclusive schooling (Moss et al, 2007) and challenge traditional forms of knowledge production. Haney et al (2004, p.242) used drawings in educational research and claim that this approach has an unusual power to document and change the ecology of classrooms and schools, and are ‘valuable as a research tool for delving beneath easy assumptions’.

The group of practitioners talked about their drawings, individually at first and then collectively. The drawing and discussion session was audio-recorded and transcribed. The three different types of data collected may be viewed as a kind of montage, a pieced together assemblage, or a collage, that, when woven together and analysed, formed representations and repetitions of inclusion.

**Analysis**

In analysing the multi-textual data the focus was on statements made about inclusion. I regarded the statement not as a linguistic unit but as a function (Foucault 1972, p.98) that is recognisable and secures power relations (Graham, 2005). The statement is a function of dividing practices and may be understood as a thing that is said that privileges a particular way of seeing and that codifies certain practices.

The aim was to interrogate ‘discursive formations’, that I understand as a frame for the different and potentially conflicting discourses that operate in the same terrain, as they relate to the social construction of inclusion. Patterns of emphasis, regularity, consistencies, repetitions and recurring words and phrases that were noted created what I saw as discursive regularities within a discursive field. Although statements were not exactly repeated in the same way, the enunciations had a similar character. Analysis was approached with an understanding that statements and families of statements within discourses do not so much describe as produce understandings, knowledge(s) and subject positions. During analysis and subsequent critical readings, I asked various questions, for example: how are these statements framed or constructed? What do they do? What do they evoke? What do they enable or forbid? What might be their potential effects? How might they create or sustain a regime of truth?

**Ethics**

It is worth signifying that it was the discourse(s) of inclusion that were under scrutiny and not the agents of the discourse or the character or ‘voices’ of the persons who engaged in it. Discourse precedes individuals and we are caught up in it. The concern was with the invisible forces of power or domination that are inherent in institutions and with the discourses and practice that shape our lives, and not with individual opinion. The focus was on the discourse of inclusion itself and in the social and discursive construction of it.

Davies (2004, p.4) suggests that when poststructuralists talk about ‘the way that sense is made’ they are not attempting to reveal something about the sense -maker (the subject), about his or her motives or intentions, but about the possibilities of sense-making available within the discourses within a particular sense-making community.
Methodology was approached from this perspective and from an understanding that the speaking subject is located within a deeply anonymous murmur (Deleuze, 1988, p.7).

A Reading

In constructing an interpretation or reading, I aimed to provide both a plausible movement from the data to analysis to reading, as well as a persuasive account. What is presented is a singular and inevitably partial reading, and the possibilities for different versions or readings are infinite. Texts are always open to alternative readings and someone else would see something different and read the data in a different way. As Humes and Bryce (2003, p.180) put it, the search for clarity and simplicity of meaning is illusory because there will always be other perspectives from which to interpret the material under review.

Both ‘recognisable’ and what I regarded as newly emergent discourses of inclusion appeared to emerge from the data. They were associated with, and coalesced around three themes: policy, othering and self and I now consider each of these discourses.

Policy

Circles of inclusion

Visually, in the drawings, and symbolically, inclusion was invariably represented as a circle. Figure 1 provides some examples:

Figure 1: Circles of inclusion

The circle is an interesting shape that conjures various connotations and associations with security, protection and belonging. Jeremy Bentham’s panoptican, that Foucault (1977) refers to in relation to surveillance, was a circular structure; reflecting a confined interiority. Circles appear to be the preferred
figuration used by policy-makers to symbolise inclusion. As shown in Figure 2, educators are encouraged by the government to think about inclusion in terms of circles - with an inside and an outside.

Through policy discourse, certain ways of thinking and acting become available to us, while other ways remain ‘un-thought and unperformed’ (St Pierre, 1997, p.283). Policy may be regarded as an influential form of social practice and an expression of power that can normalise views of how the world is (Armstrong, 2005).

Figure 2: The DfES circles of inclusion

(http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/local/ePDs/leading_on_intervention/site/u1/s2/2.htm)

The practitioners drawings of circles were explained as representative of a ‘joining together’, ‘protection’, security and safety; implying ‘outside’ dangers, risks and vulnerability. A prevailing discourse of ‘keeping children safe’ and, in particular ‘meeting needs’, was concordant with the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) policy agenda, affirming Ball’s (1997) notion of policy as practice. The discourses showed that it was very much taken for granted that ‘being safe’ and ‘meeting needs’ is an essential part, or requirement, of inclusion:

Inclusion is about being really safe in a safe environment.

I always took inclusion to mean that every child was entitled to a mainstream education by whatever means necessary to meet their individual needs.

Inclusion is about differentiating an activity to meet everyone’s needs.

Yes…but

Within UK governmental policy, inclusion is presented as a fundamental good. From their study on meanings of inclusion, Lawson et al (2006) suggest that teaching assistants’ definitions of inclusion accorded with aspects of government, local authority or institutional rhetoric and discourse. They also found that inclusion was
generally seen as a fundamental good, but the affirmation of it, the ‘yes’, was more often than not modified by a doubt, or by a ‘but’. In my study the ‘yes’ was more often than not modified by a doubt:

Don’t get me wrong; I’m not against inclusion, but not for everyone.

All children should be included but I have worked with children who just would not cope in a mainstream setting.

*Inclusion is a good thing but not such a good thing for special needs children with severe learning needs*

Inclusion was seen as a fundamental good but not for everyone. This is one of the paradoxes of ‘inclusion’. Where it was signified that inclusion is not for everyone, the ‘not everyone’ were frequently marked out by the language, labelled in some way according to a category, and were ‘othered’.

**Othering**

*The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.*

(Conrad: Heart of Darkness).

Inclusion was heavily characterised by processes of othering. Its discourse appears to be constructed within a powerful othering framework. There was a resounding sense of otherness and a tendency for the data descriptions, statements and the discursive field to homogenize the majority of students or pupils and set up a division between the majority (the ‘us’ or the un-named) and a minority that was presented as other, or as special (the ‘them’). The recurrent phrases ‘these people’ or ‘these children’ exemplified this division and language:

The ideas and sentiments behind inclusion are all well and good; but how can I have these pupils in my class when I am using dangerous machinery?

The crux of the matter is that these children do need help.

*Inclusion is when every child’s needs are met and difficulties overcome. These children may not necessarily be the ones who have a statement.*

Othering discourse was characterised by a neo-traditional special educational needs language and practice. There appears to be a continued, often competing and uneasy alliance between inclusion and traditional, embedded discourses and practices of ‘special educational needs’, and this has been powerfully critiqued as being detrimental to inclusion (Slee, 2001; Thomas and Loxley, 2001). The ‘included child’ was used synonymously with the ‘SEN child’:
Our literacy area is an area that is set aside for the teaching assistants to work separately with included children in year 6

Within my setting, our agenda at the moment is to remove the class away from any aggressive acts of behaviour, leaving the included child observed but not challenged.

The taken for granted, common sense discourse of special educational needs, as well as overtly labelling children, appeared to permit and legitimise an accepted objectification of pupils who are subject to its practices:

Maths classes are setted. My Senco has ensured that where there is a statemented child there will also be some school action and school action plus children as well so that others get support off the back of the statemented child

The teaching assistant in my class works directly with the pivatted\(^1\) children

Educators were sometimes positioned as police; in surveilling, searching out and identifying ‘needs’ which were invariably seen as difficulties:

We sometimes have to act as detectives to see the full picture of a child’s needs and problems.

In Baker’s (2002) terms, it becomes a matter of searching for visible signs of pathology and of ‘hunting down’ perceived deficit. There appeared to be an assurance that ‘full coverage’ would be obtained in meeting all aspects of needs in a totalising way and that nothing would be left out. Once difficulties, or needs, had been identified and marked out, pupils were subject to a regime that involves observation, surveillance, and examination in the form of monitoring of learning, intervention, ‘programmes’ and assessments:

In our school, SEN children are put on programmes for inclusion

We use catch–up units with our SEN and included children

Certain ‘types’ of pupils were ‘marked out’, targeted, surveilled and were seen as ‘the included’, and others were not. The categories in which children were talked about may be seen, in Foucauldian terms, as ‘grids of specification’. These classify and regulate pupil and student identities, bodies, spaces, and social practices in different relations of knowledge and power. Autistic Spectrum Disorder was a strongly ‘marked out’ difference and was a determinant of inclusion. There was a sense that certain prevailing medicalised and pathologised ‘conditions’ and ‘syndromes’ have a disease-like characteristic, and that ‘marked out difference’ creates a form of spectacle, fear or revulsion:

It’s not fair to have a child with, say, autism in a mainstream class because they have an illness that may have an effect on the education of other children.

\(^1\)Refers to Performance Indicator Value Added Targets (PIVATS) used in UK schools
It makes me cringe...the idea of ASD in mainstream. Having pupils with severe ASD in a mainstream would amount to a floor show, for the benefit of the other pupils.

I’ve got an autistic child in my class - not severely autistic but quite far on - who’s not going to achieve anything.

The last extract resonates with what Youdell (2004) refers to as ‘educational triage’, or the ‘hopeless cases’.

The most hidden of the unspoken categories that emerged and at the same time perhaps the most evident category, was the category of ‘normal’. This is the starting point for most of the categorizations, the normality against which the other categories are constructed and against which the ‘others’ become visible.

**Use of space**

Elements of the drawings, text and talk revealed an emphasis on practicalities, physicality and cosmetic adjustments to an ‘environment’ in terms of access to buildings and ‘included’ children being ‘housed’ together. There is no ‘a-spatial’ space and school space is not a neutral container but one that can be read and has influence (Prosser and Loxley, 2007). Armstrong suggests that:

> the spatial repartition of children…produces and reproduces values and meanings which hegemonically sustain difference and exclusions. These values and meanings are seen as natural because of the familiarity of the practices and discourses which surround them. (Armstrong, 1999, p.76).

In my study, the discourses around the use of space and the value and hierarchical classifications attributed to it conjured territorial maps; with ‘good and bad’ or desirable / undesirable designated spaces:

> The SEN department in our school is separate and other kids speak of it as the base where the thick kids work.

> How inclusion works in a school environment can mean something different. There is an inclusion room were pupils are sent if they disrupt or generally step out of line.

> At the school where I work...I think my school is inclusive...the SEN pupils were actively encouraged to be out and about at break times but this did not go down well with some parents and midday supervisors.

Inside and outside spaces are designated for ‘them’ and ‘the others’. The field of power is invariably invisible but special partitioning makes it visible. The spatial or panoptic ordering of pupils in schools in this way may seem natural but it can also be viewed as a form of discipline. Discipline proceeds from an organisation of individuals in space and it requires a specific enclosure of space. Disciplinary space ‘tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed’ (Foucault, 1977, p.143). The use of space and how it is delineated and
used in schools may be seen as a dividing practice, a technique of domination and as another mode of objectification.

**Self**

Happiness, emotional well-being and engagement, have now become central policy concerns within Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003). The discourse of inclusion also appears to be constructed around notions of happiness and (raising) self-esteem. Self-esteem was privileged in my study and appeared to be the newly emergent ‘buzzword’ associated with inclusion. Self-esteem was closely associated with the notion of happiness:

*I’ve tried to do a circle here... er...and the idea is that the child is boosted by enabling support, to raise self-esteem. And they’re all happy...we might all be off doing little different things together but we still all come together at the end to be happy and have fun.*

There were smiling faces in most of the drawings and a recurrence of the phrase ‘happy children’ in the descriptions and explanations of them. Self-esteem was linked to a fixed, linear tree-like linear ‘growth’, in an ‘environment’, and to enlightenment:

*And for me it (inclusion) is about the light going on and understanding something that they couldn’t previously understand and that’s all linked to self esteem...*

Emphasis was placed on building (in a relatively straightforward and linear-like fashion) self-esteem for certain groups or individuals who are targeted for programmes of intervention, and who are subsequently invariably characterised, or labelled, as emotionally ‘vulnerable’ or at risk.

Smith (2002, p.99) suggests that self-esteem is now seen as an essential building block, if not the building block, in a good education and that to criticise wanting to raise self-esteem is ‘to violate some sacred precept’. As with other prevalent notions within education, such as ‘inclusion’, there is a vagueness surrounding the construct of self-esteem; yet there is an apparent uncritical acceptance of it. It appears, on the surface, to be both benign and empowering. Like ‘inclusion’, it is presented within a progressive narrative as some ‘thing’ that is intrinsically good, desirable and attainable.

Although seemingly altruistic, discourses of self and self-esteem may be viewed as a variation of a form of disciplinary discourse in a therapeutic culture. A therapeutic discourse offers a set of explanations, and possibly a script, about appropriate feelings that individuals ought to have and how they ought to respond to events (Ecclestone, 2004; 2007). Foucault treats therapeutic discourse as a variation on disciplinary discourse (Carlson 2005). Therapeutic discourse concerns itself with individuals defined as ‘abnormal’ in one way or another and its aim is a normalising form of rehabilitation (Foucault, 1980, p.176). It privileges a particular way of being at the expense of others.
Focusing on self-esteem is introspective. As with discourses and practices of special educational needs, discourses of self-esteem shift the focus or the gaze from the outside to the inside and individuals are regulated - towards a norm - 'from the inside'. An ‘inside’ focus can sideline or shift attention away from outside structural and systemic explanations of a problem, to a focus on people's feelings about it and/or their ‘inadequacies’. Focusing on the self individualises; it encourages individuals to make their own subjectivity the focal point.

When self-esteem, or addressing emotional vulnerabilities, is presented as a kind of remedy for exclusion, self-esteem is recast not as a psychological construct but ‘as a psychological condition' that people suffer from’ (Ecclestone (2004: p.129). In my study, having a perceived low self-esteem was almost presented as a medical condition that is treatable. As Ecclestone (2007) puts it, emotional vulnerability may be seen as the new deficiency.

Cruikshank (1996, p.234) regards self-esteem as a ‘technology of self’ that is linked to the technology of norms. When the psychology-derived construct of self-esteem is viewed as a technology of the self, it evokes a particular form of individualism, characterised by entrepreneurialism and an enterprising self. It evokes a form of identity that is self-oriented and is exactly the kind of identity required under neoliberal forms of governance.

Reflections

This study affirms, to some extent, Ball’s notion of policy as practice as the discourse of inclusion is characterised by policy rhetoric, such as ‘meeting needs’ and ‘keeping children safe’. Aspects of the relatively new language of Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003a) appear to have emerged as a normative educational discourse in relation to inclusion.

Inclusion as a concept suggests that nobody is excluded. In my study, inclusion was paradoxically (re)presented as a fundamental good but not for everyone. The discourse of inclusion appeared to be constituted within a powerful special educational needs and othering framework. Although there may be a different language and terminology associated with inclusion, traditionalist systems and practices that potentially limit ways of thinking and talking about difference, appear to prevail. My reading of discourses of inclusion to some extent confirms the fear that ‘rather than resolving the special education problems of the late twentieth century, the inclusion debate will reproduce them in the twenty-first century’ (Skrtic, 1995, p.234).

The grids of specification (Foucault, 1972) within the discourse of inclusion, were related to re-iterations of special educational needs and a focus on self-esteem. Inclusion surfaced as a technicised process that identifies, fixes, cures or makes normal that which is ‘other’. The explicit naming and identification of particular groups or individuals to demonstrate inclusion, functions both to locate or point out perceived difference and to naturalise perceived ‘normalised’ ways of being (Graham and Slee, 2008). The discipline, in both senses of the word, and the knowledge base (or truth) that is privileged through this discourse is Psychology, a particularly
authoritative discipline that has the power to ‘name’ and ‘by naming to normalise’ (Usher et al, 1997, p.81).

To return to the question that drove this enquiry: whose interests are served by the way inclusion is talked about and represented in education in the present context? I suggest that it is not necessarily ‘the included child’ who benefits from inclusion in the current neo-liberal context. Self-esteem discourses, and other individualised ‘needs’ based on self-oriented discourses that circulate in schools and potentially create entrepreneurial identities, may be seen as part of wider social practices that are conducive to neo-liberal forms of governance and ultimately serve the interests of the state.

References


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