

## Meeting Some Challenges of Inclusive Education in an Age of Exclusion

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*(Received 24 March 2013, Final revised version received 14 June 2013)*

Exclusion is ingrained into the global social fabric in general and education in particular. This paper takes up the challenge of international agreements and conventions affirming Education For All. Increasingly education jurisdictions are submitting to lean testing regimes and publishing results to drive local, national and international competition to drive up standards. While there are grave concerns about the poverty of such policy imperatives and the narrow definition of assessment therein, evidence is mounting to demonstrate the perverse and deleterious impacts on disadvantaged communities and vulnerable individuals. The rhetoric of inclusion is strong but conceptions and practices of inclusive education are inconsistent and disconnected from other aspects of social and education policy that drive exclusion in stark and subtle manifestations.

**Key words:** Inclusive education, challenge, exclusion

### Introduction

The movement for inclusive education challenges the notion of *business as usual* for schools globally. Education jurisdictions, whether situated in the so-called developing or developed worlds, are struggling with the complex relationships between schooling, exclusion and inclusion. Following the *new sociology of education*, Raewyn Connell (1994) observed that schools are very active agents in the reproduction of privilege and disadvantage in Australia; the gatekeepers of unequal power relations, they include and they exclude.

A stubborn foe, exclusion is a seasoned traveller. Exclusion manifests in different forms according to geopolitical and cultural context. Accordingly one would expect diverse interventions in order to dismantle its various formations. The stories brought to the table at the *International Conference on Inclusive Education at Dhaka, Bangladesh* in February 2013 are indicative. Delegates living and working in a range of contexts identified a range of forms of educational, social, economic and political exclusion, the circumstances, effects and casualties that are widely different, but share devastating consequences for the victims. We have also been

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privileged to become aware of bold initiatives to support access, participation and success in education for hitherto marginalised children and young people.

Discussion at the Centre for Asian Studies in Inclusive Education has focused upon exclusion experienced by people with disabilities, and it has also reached into seemingly intractable questions about exclusion of the girl child from basic education and the exclusion of children as a result of extreme poverty and their early entry into childhood labour. Rural isolation, armed conflict and war, population displacement, disability, religious division, racism and travelling all erect barriers to education. These contributory factors often intersect and overlap with each other to exacerbate impacts (Slee, 2008). Exclusion from education is recognised to have deleterious impacts on employment opportunities, health and wellbeing, dependency on the state, incarceration and life expectancy (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Cycles of suffering draw sustenance from and contribute to enduring exclusion from education (André, et al, 2013).

These discussions are not new. They reflect the agenda of the UNESCO (1994) *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* and its call for *Education for All*. This was followed and reinforced in *The Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2000) and the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDG) proposed in the September 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration. The *Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2000) urges *collective commitment* pursuant to the goal of *education for all*. In her opening remarks to the 2013 Global MDG Conference in Bogota, Columbia Helen Clark, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand and now United Nations Development Programme Administrator, reminds us of this collective commitment and of urgency as we countdown to the 2015 goals and targets of the MDGs (Clark, 2013):

The aim of this Conference is to share experiences on what works, and motivate all participants to return to their MDG work determined to use every last minute remaining until the end of 2015 focused on achieving the goals and targets. 31 December 2015 is little more than 1,000 days away, so there is no time to lose!

This paper contends that collective commitment runs counter to a neo-liberal ethic of competitive individualism that is embraced by now global education policies (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). Divided into three parts, I will respond to some of the challenges of and to inclusive education by:

- Sharing my recent considerations of exclusion and the formation of what I called the *condition of collective indifference*;
- Responding to some immediate challenges for researchers and education activists working across different geopolitical contexts, with particular reference to new formations or recent renditions of enduring exclusions; and
- Identifying what Raymond Williams (1989) and David Halp (2003) in call *resources of hope*.

## Can we live and work together?

### a) We think we want to

The discourse of inclusion has been lodged in public and education rhetoric. Governments of different political persuasions showcase social inclusion offices, officers, policies and programmes. Globally, education jurisdictions have published versions of inclusive education frameworks and policies to respond to marginalised and disadvantaged students. Their targets may include combinations of the following:

- Students with disabilities,
- Indigenous students and students from cultural and linguistic minorities,
- Geographically isolated students,
- Students living in poverty,
- Young people prematurely engaged in the labour market,
- Girls excluded from schooling due to child marriage or to a view that education is wasted on them,
- Transgender, gay and lesbian young people,
- Refugee or displaced populations' children,
- Children living in situations of armed conflict,
- Children living in travelling families or communities.

Inclusive education for students with disabilities represents a response to a social movement forged through activism and litigation (Oliver, 2009) to enable children segregated in special education schools and enclaves to join their siblings and peers in neighbourhood schools. Local human rights and equal opportunity legislation such as: Public Law 94-142 (1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act) followed by the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its revisions in 1997 and 2004 in the United States of America (see Minow, 1990; Norwich, 2008 ); the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (United Kingdom); and the Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992 which provides for each state and territory education jurisdiction to comply with the Disability Standards in Education (Slee & Cook, 1998). The uptake of inclusive education by those formerly committed to segregation is also a reflection of the momentum of supranational thought movements such as *The Index for Inclusion* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), *Education for All* (UNESCO, 1994, 2000) and to Article 24 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (Rieser, 2008; Slee, 2010). Transnational organisations such as UNICEF, OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, The Aga Khan Foundation, and The Open Society (Soros Foundation) have also inscribed the discourse of inclusion into their publications and funding programmes. All of this represents political progress for disabled people.

Alongside legislative and regulatory evidence of the promotion of inclusive education stand the fiscal indicators of success. We have acknowledged the work of Non Government Organisations (NGOs). It is also clear that governments have injected significant capital into facilitating the inclusion of students with disabilities into their neighbourhood schools. There has been an exponential growth of this base funding to match surges in diagnoses of disabilities within jurisdictions globally (see Bennett & Wynne, 2006 in Ontario, Canada, Parrish, 2002 in the USA, Kelsair, Maurin and McNally, 2011 in the United Kingdom, Whitaker, 2010, and

Victorian Auditor-General 2012 in Victoria and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations et al. 2011 for Australia).

This investment has been allocated in different ratios across jurisdictions to:

- Building and developing school infrastructure to improve access;
- Development of curriculum and the supply of materials and technology to enable differentiation of instruction and broader student access, participation and success;
- Supply of classroom assistants;
- Transportation to and from school;
- Teacher professional development; and
- Additional school support and professional personnel including psychologists a range of therapists and diagnosticians.

Universities and teacher education institutions represent an additional funding pot in the project of inclusive education. Here I refer to the funding of: research into special educational needs, exclusion and inclusion; initial teacher preparation for student diversity; and continuing professional development. I have not yet factored in the transfer of funds from large corporate interests, for example pharmaceutical companies, in donations to university research centres and self-help organisations such as CHADD (Rose, 2006; Slee, 2010; Whitaker, 2010).

There is a will to press schools to become more inclusive for a greater range of students. Notwithstanding the strength of the discourse and the financial outlay, the progress of inclusive education is not linear, nor has there been an eradication of deficit thinking or indeed fundamental changes in the educational and social outcomes for those targeted for inclusion in affluent countries around the world. For instance the most reliable predictors of academic underachievement in Australia remain Aboriginality, poverty and disability (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations et al, 2011). We bear witness to the perennial disproportionate referral of minority group children to special education services in the USA (Oswald, Coutinho & Best, 2005), the United Kingdom (Gillborn, 2008), New Zealand (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Kearney, 2008) and, I suspect, in Australia (Graham & Sweller, 2009) despite warnings from Tomlinson (1981) based on her analysis of the referrals of Caribbean boys in England in the 1970s. You may ask – why is this happening? Let me suggest that it relates to an incomplete understanding of the structures and properties of exclusion and its insinuation into educational, social and cultural life.

### **b) Our talk is confused**

While the volume of inclusive education discourse is loud, it is inaudible when located amid more strident educational discourses. *Standards and Choice* discourses illustrate my point. The measurement of educational achievement tends to be reductive (Stobart, 2008). The grip of international testing programmes such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) and the injudicious usage of published national performance rankings such as in England, the US and Australia have adverse effects. The public ranking of schools was pursued as a means of generating competition and improvement to drive up standards and to provide choice for parents.

Competition, it is argued results in overall improvement in the performance of teachers and students.

Not only do parents exercise choice where they have the material means and cultural accoutrements to exercise such choices (Ball, 2009), schools have also demonstrated their own strategic manipulation of enrolments and student progression to achieve favourable rankings (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000). Some students, when considering their academic prognosis, become less risky for schools (Slee, 1999, 2010). Under these circumstances the vulnerability of minority students including students with disabilities is severely intensified. In Australia, the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] that is administered at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, provides for the exemption of students according to specific conditions. Students who speak a language other than English and who have resided for less than one year are able to be exempted from the testing programme. Similarly students with significant or complex disabilities are eligible for exemption. Within this provision for student exemption lies considerable interpretive latitude. The data in relation to exemptions requires scrutiny to consider whether schools are mobilising exemptions to gain competitive advantage.

Inclusive rhetoric belies practice and other elements of the educational vocabulary. We will return to this later in this paper when considering the trend towards the greater calibration and division of the student population through the expansion of categories of special education. The point is that education policymakers need to test the coherence of elements of education policies as they are viewed in relation to each other.

### **c) How do we talk about exclusion?**

Exclusion, like music, is characterised by its antiquity and its ubiquity (Levitin, 2009). It is everywhere and it has been everywhere for a long time. Therefore, it is not surprising that we either don't recognise everyday exclusions or, as a means of self-preservation, refuse to recognise acts of exclusion and the suffering of its victims. Richard Sennett and Zygmunt Bauman consider the structural and cultural determinants of exclusion. In the 2004 Castle Lectures in Ethics, Politics and Economics at Yale University Richard Sennett (2006) explores the conditions of new capitalism conducive to the light engagement of people with each other. Half a century of wealth creation, he argues, has produced greater economic inequality and social instability. The 'culture of new capitalism' is characterised by fragmentation, instability and transience. Work, relationships, and place are short-term commitments; we move on. We commute to where we work, often living a detached life from those around us. Skills and knowledge are transitory acquisitions continuously reshaped by new technologies and changing relations of production. Loyalty and attachment are not prized. Fluidarity replaces solidarity (McDonald, 2006, p. 86). Communities are gated and social fissures are deeply etched. Working under a 'spectre of uselessness' (2006, p. 86) trust is surrendered to suspicion and vigilance of our competitor-neighbours.

Expounding on this theme Bauman suggests the mobilisation of a discourse of inclusion, the celebration of diversity and epithets of multiculturalism barely deflect from deep-seated mixophobia (1997, p. 81; 2012). Capitalism produces 'surplus populations', those whose labour is redundant. Unable to consume, they are estranged and become a source of fear and targets of derision and exclusion. Each society produces its own set of strangers. Absolution from

responsibility for our production of wasted lives is offered through so-called impersonal forces being played out in the economy:

... the production of human waste has all the markings of an impersonal, purely technical issue. The principal actors in the drama are 'terms of trade', 'market demands', 'competitive pressures', 'productivity' or 'efficiency' requirements, all covering up or explicitly denying any connection with the intentions, will, decisions and actions of real humans with names and addresses.

(Bauman, 2004, p. 40)

### Taking stock

In *The Irregular School* (Slee, 2010) I argued that exclusion is fostered and sustained through a *condition of collective indifference*. Collective indifference is supported by bestowed understandings founded upon incomplete or erroneous knowledge, as is the case with disability and disablement (Oliver, 1995; Shakespeare, 2006; Stiker, 1999; Titchkosky, 2003). Collective indifference is also supported by professional knowledge and interest.

In this paper I do not intend to discuss bestowed understandings. Instead, we shall consider the interplay of professional knowledge and interest in a particular form of collective indifference in schools. It is important to note that the trends we are dealing with are also evidenced in the Asia-Pacific region (Belfer, 2008; Polaczyk, 2007). The processes I will describe mirror Bauman's observation of rendering inequity and exclusion palatable through the mobilisation of technical discourses.

There is an institutional utility for general and professional understandings of defectiveness and disability (Oliver, 2009) as schools are confronted with students they may previously have failed and ejected. Children who are thought to be disabled, or to have special educational needs and in need of special education are identified through medical and or psychological diagnoses. Accordingly we have identified defects in physical, sensory, cognitive and behavioural function. This summons the work of experts who conduct medical examinations or administer psychological tests to identify defectiveness according to checklists set out in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual - IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). They may also recommend options for schooling and specialist interventions. The science and professional authority of special education has grown and proven its resilience in the face of critique (Brantlinger, 1997; Farrell, 2008; Gallagher, 2004; Kagan, 2012; Kauffmann & Sasso, 2005; Kutchins & Kirk, 1997; Tomlinson, 1982).

Over time, *expert knowledge* about childhood disorders and disabilities has driven a corresponding belief amongst teachers in regular schools that children diagnosed with disabilities are best served by expert special educators and therapists. Regular children are the business of regular teachers. Special needs children require special needs children, and, of course, vice versa. There is an elegant inevitability in the logic and language. The discourse of inclusion has insinuated itself into the vocabulary and texts of education jurisdictions, but the language shields long-standing views of normality and abnormality and of the roles of special and regular education. The discourse of special education has not been dislodged by inclusive education.

Rather for many, the languages of special education have become synonymous and are used interchangeably. The frequency of university courses that carry the title special and inclusive education is indicative. The irony escapes the authors and teachers of these programmes. Accordingly, inclusive education is used as code for educating students with special educational needs rather than an educational aspiration and strategy for all students.

Anti-discrimination legislation (Minow, 1990; Minow, Shweder & Markus, 2008) has increased expectations for increased access for and participation of disabled children in their neighbourhood school. For many this has meant that they occupy the classroom in the company of a teaching assistant (teacher aide) who frequently becomes a *de facto* teacher (Rutherford, 2008; Kearney, 2008) for the child they are assigned. Consequently inclusive education is reduced to a battle to secure additional resources, often in the form of a teaching assistant, a special teaching room or an alternative placement (Kearney, 2011).

The diagnosis of children with disabilities has grown over time and forms of what Daniels (2006) refers to as ‘corruption’ have emerged in the assignation of special educational needs labels. In other words there is an expanding population of special children. Research reveals questionable features of diagnoses. As we noted earlier, over-representation of minority groups in special education diagnoses has been a recurrent observation.

What also emerges from observation of diagnostic trends is the steady growth of numbers of children being diagnosed and treated for behavioural and attention disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder [ADHD], Oppositional Defiance Disorders [ODD], Autistic Spectrum Disorders [ASD including Asperger’s syndrome]. This growth is global. This trend may represent the progress of better scientific knowledge and care for troubled and troubling young people. More traditional special educators such as Farrell (2006) and Cooper (2008) have argued that the growth in scientific understanding of childhood disorders has made it possible to build a comprehensive educational repertoire for working with this growing population. Cooper (2008, p. 457) argues that critique of the ‘bio-psychosocial’ perspective of behaviour and attention disorders is damaging these children. I have neither the expertise nor the desire to refute the medical claim for the spectrum of behaviour disorders. Others have taken up this debate (Daniels, 2006; Harwood, 2006; Kutchins & Kirk, 1997; Rose, 2005; Rose, 2007; ). Their concerns include:

- The basis for and quality of diagnoses;
- The reliability of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – DSM IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 2000);and
- Demographic variations of diagnoses.

Mindful of our earlier discussion about competition and the ranking of schools, we observed that students are reduced to the bearers of results. The intensification of competition between schools and the application of external scrutiny through high stakes testing (Johnson & Johnson, 2006; Luke, 2003; Sacks, 1999; Stobart, 2008) and national rankings means that difficult and underachieving students present a risk to school performance. Students who potentially compromise a school’s ranking are a risk and they need to be managed. There are alternatives: they can be dissuaded from enrolment or they can be assigned to special education

status and be exempt from testing and school achievement data. These students represent Bauman's conception of surplus population; they are the collateral damage of the ethics of competition. There has been a rise in the number of alternative settings to relieve schools of this surplus population (Parsons, 2009; TeReile, 2009).

Studies by Graham, Sweller and Van Bergen (2011) and Graham and Sweller (2010) also invite concern about the efficacy of referral for additional support. Early intervention is preferred or advised for children who exhibit problematic behaviour. They highlight data from the United States pointing to the correspondence of early intervention and juvenile incarceration. Put simply, we are in danger of creating a school to prison pipeline through what we offer as inclusive practices. Once students are assigned to special needs tracks we can look away.

### **Cause for concern?**

Three reports were published in 2012 pertaining to inclusive education in Australia and each reports on limitations of educational provision for students with disabilities. In June 2012 the Department for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, 2012) published the findings of the *Review of Disability Standards for Education 2005*. The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* are a requirement of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) and were promulgated in 2005 after protracted debates between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments. The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* aim to ensure that students with disabilities have access to and can participate in education without discrimination and on the same basis as their peers. They also set out obligations according to the legislation for education providers. The legislation is binding except where adherence causes unjustifiable institutional hardship. The recommendations of the review team (DEEWR, 2012) are organised into thematic areas where problems are evident:

- Awareness
- Clarity and definitions
- Access and participation
- Discrimination and inclusion
- Complaints, accountability and compliance
- Contemporary education context
- Resources

The first review of the progress of the implementation of the standards reflects serious problems that compromise educational equity for students with disabilities.

On 29 August 2012 the Victorian Auditor-General's Office tabled its report on the audit *Programs for Students with Special Learning Needs* (Victorian Auditor General's Office, 2012) in the Legislative Assembly in Victoria. The report is detailed and revealing. It states:

Since 2006, DEECD (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) has distributed more than \$2.6 billion to schools through PSD (Programs for Students with Disabilities). However, DEECD does not have the information it needs to determine whether PSD funding is being used efficiently and effectively. Concerns raised about this

by VAGO (Victorian Auditor-General's Office) in 2007 still have not been adequately addressed and instead of having five years' worth of high quality data about the program, the department still knows very little about its impact on the educational outcomes of supported students.

(Victorian Auditor-General's Office, 2012, p. viii my emphasis)

Internationally, policy proposals and reports on the funding of programs for students with disabilities stumble over key issues such as how to:

- address the tension between stated inclusive education aspirations and the performance drivers of systems around high stakes testing and school and systems rankings
- build value into equity and inclusion
- model resource delivery to build schools' capacities to educate across student differences rather than attempt to satiate the exponential demand for individual containment resource models
- develop rich curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, predicated on building teacher professional knowledge, engaging principles of universal design that is evaluated to demonstrate 'yield on investment'
- build an ethical and technically knowledgeable discussion about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and the intersections of diversity.

Following the Auditor-General's report, The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (September, 2012) published its research report on the experiences of students with disabilities in Victorian schools under the title: *Held Back*. The research reported is comprehensive, involving 1,827 educators, students with disabilities and their parents, and speaks to challenges at the system and school levels pursuant to building more inclusive schools. The opening pages of *Held Back* speak to questions of exclusion and inclusion:

When students with disabilities are unable to enjoy a good education, their future is seriously compromised. A poor education is one of the key reasons why the economic and social participation rate of Australians with disabilities is so low.

People with disabilities are less likely to have completed Year 12 and are less likely to hold a post-school qualification. They are also more likely to be unemployed and have significantly less income than others in the community. Indeed, 45% of Australians with disabilities live in, or near, poverty.

(Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, 2012, p. 8).

Inclusive education presents challenges to schools that have long sought to homogenise the student body. In the final part of the paper I will attempt to offset the general gloom of my description of the processes of exclusion at play in education. I am not pursuing this to diminish the extent or impacts of exclusion. My purpose is to build hope for the ameliorative power of local and global resistance and advocacy. In this respect there are as the disabled English musician and activist, Ian Dury says: "Reasons to be cheerful".

### **Building inclusive ethics**

In this concluding section of this essay my comments are restricted to two challenges. First is the challenge of resourcefulness and second is the challenge of consistency. The *International Conference on Inclusive Education* in Dhaka, Bangladesh in February 2013 instanced many examples of resourcefulness, and the host organisation *The Centre for Asian Studies in Inclusive Education* may reveal examples of the struggle to apply consistency in our thinking about inclusive education.

### **Lessons in resourcefulness**

Two years ago I had the opportunity to visit a small school in an impoverished rural area outside of Hyderabad. Outside the two small rectangular buildings a group of women sat by a fire they had set on the ground. On the fire was a large iron pot of boiling water wherein they were preparing rice to feed the children as they arrived at school. I was deeply humbled as I accepted a spoonful of the rice. The teachers, smiling, gathered to meet the delegation from both the local branch and Delhi headquarters of *Save the Children*.

We were taken to a room where a group of children of all ages sat on a large thin rug on the concrete floor. I did not understand what was being said, but I observed only a momentary distraction of the children as they stood to greet us and sat and returned to the discussion with their teacher. The person next to me explained that this was a meeting of the student council and that they were discussing how they would talk to families to get more children to come to school. A girl stood up and we were told that she had been offered for marriage but her friends and the teachers spoke with the family and offered them assistance to enable the girl-child to stay at school.

After a time, the discussion halted and the children were invited to sing to us. We then told them where we were from. An interpreter at my side, I asked the children some questions. The usual list: How old are you? Do you like your school? Do you live far away from school? What is the best thing about your school? What is the most difficult thing? Responding to the last question, a small boy said with no sense of the profundity of his response: "*In winter, it is cold when we sit on the concrete floor*".

Drinking tea with the teachers I noted the meagre resources in the room as there were some books, magazines and papers on a shelf, a blackboard balancing on a trestle, and a computer lying in wait for the arrival of electricity. There were exercise books and a clutch of pencils on a table together with an old world-globe. The walls were attractively adorned with the work of teachers and children. To me, it appeared to be a place of learning, friendship and community. Amidst great adversity, the like of which I have never experienced, people had gathered meagre resources – material and human – to build inclusion as a precondition of learning (Bernstein, 1996).

Returning to Delhi with a visceral lesson, the likes of which I would never have been able to extract from a book or journal paper, I visited more schools in very disadvantaged urban communities. One of the schools was being renovated. None of the buildings could be used.

The nine hundred and fifty girls who made up the school's morning shift were sitting on tarpaulins outside in the heat. The school operated two shifts to split the attendance by gender, as there was only one toilet facility for in excess of the two thousand students. Upon each tarpaulin that was spread on the rough ground was a blackboard, a teacher and at least fifty children. Each of the tarpaulins that were touching each other represented a classroom. The girls sat in rows looking towards their teacher. Some teachers engaged the girls in recitation, others asked questions to which girls would be selected to stand and respond. The relative silence and the sense of concentration in each of the learning cells struck me as astonishing.

When not travelling, I inhabit a world of abundance and waste. Paradoxically, it is a world of enduring insufficiency. A lack of resources is offered as a reason for not being able to admit, include and educate disabled children in their regular school (Fulcher, 1989). I am not suggesting an even distribution of abundance. The gap between the very wealthy and the poor in affluent countries is growing (Dorling, 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). It is not at all difficult to find evidence of extreme deprivation in the so-called developed world (Kozol, 1991; The Economist, 2012). The Auditor-General's report that we cited points to a growing pool of resources committed to one strand the project of inclusive education: programmes for students with disabilities. This fact is echoed across other jurisdictions. Yet two features are apparent. First the call for more resources does not abate and the charge of insufficient resources to achieve inclusion swells. Second there is little evidence of an impact of this investment on cultures and practices of exclusion. Schools seem to be less tolerant of difference unless there is the promise of additional resources to deploy in the management and education of the child.

I hasten to suggest that my observations do not apply uniformly. I am often struck by the difference in the resourcefulness of rural and urban schools. Often rural schools seem to draw on community in the service of inclusion. They have fewer options for referring children elsewhere and less experts to enlist in the service of these children. Urban schools can defer and refer, and they often do. Reflecting the examples from India, there is a disposition of resourcefulness predicated by ownership of all children. The conference in Bangladesh was also an education in resourcefulness as each of the representatives from Non Government Organisations, and local conference presenters spoke of initiatives to extend access, participation and success in education for formerly excluded children.

### **Challenge of thinking, talking and doing**

When using the term discourse I refer to epistemic frameworks reflected in forms of thoughts that proscribe text and talk and express themselves in our actions. These have been described as discursive practices. Between and within each of these three elements of discursive practice in inclusive education lurks confusion and contradiction. The lexicon of inclusion frequently exhibits deep epistemic tension. Phrases like: *Inclusive and Special Education* and *special educational needs students* tap a bifurcated conception of the nature of the student population and the purpose of schools and this bifurcation reflects a preordained hierarchy. Once we move to examine the relationship between thought and action the opportunity for confusion and contradiction broadens. We see this when an association of principals of segregated special schools describe themselves as inclusive education advocates and experts. Research obsession

with measuring attitudes towards disabled students is seen by disabled researchers and advocates as the reconstruction of disabled people as problems to be overcome or tolerated (Oliver, 2009). The language of inclusion is often deployed to shield the practice of exclusion (Slee, 1993).

This stands as a challenge for us. However, contexts must affect the analytic pitch. The work of Mithu Alur (Alur & Bach, 2010; Chibb, 2011) and the women who work with her in Mumbai and across the Indian sub-continent to establish schools and residential support for disabled children is a radical first-step towards their inclusion in Indian society. Perhaps a way of bridging this is to return to the problematic of ethics (Bauman, 2008)? Where language draws us into linguistic and cultural imprecision, ethics may provide a better way of stating and meeting the challenge of inclusion. Inclusive education thereby is not a project to be applied to “...a discrete population of children, but rather something we must do to ourselves” (Allan, 2005). It is a quest to guide our own thinking and action to understand and dismantle exclusion.

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