Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research, 2015
Vol. 17, No. 1, 76–94, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15017419.2013.835278

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Anti-oppressive pedagogy and disability: possibilities and challenges

Angharad E. Beckett*

School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK

(*Received 15 April 2013; accepted 6 August 2013*)

This article connects theories of 'anti-oppressive education' with Disability Studies perspectives. It outlines and critically analyses a typology of three possible pedagogies for teaching about disability as a form of oppression and disrupting the relations in which disability resides. This typology is employed to examine the approach UK schools are currently recommended to take to teaching about disability. It is concluded that UK schools are being advised to take an approach that whilst at best benign is insufficiently radical. The article explores the potential of and for more 'radical' approaches, opening up new avenues for a transformative 'post-Critical Pedagogy' that seeks to unshackle the possibilities for what a life can be/do and where a life might go.

Keywords: disability; education; anti-oppressive; pedagogy

Introduction

This article understands disability as a social phenomenon (Söder 2009; Thomas 2004a), the restrictions imposed on people with impairments by society and 'form of social oppression' (Sheldon 2004, 69). Following Thomas (2004b, 17–18) disability is viewed as residing in a 'nexus of social relationships connecting those socially identified as impaired and those deemed non-impaired', 'relationships that work to exclude and disadvantage the former while promoting the relative inclusion and privileging of the latter'. This clarifies the position taken and provides rationale for the framing of the following questions:

(1) What pedagogy might educators adopt to teach about disability as a form of oppression and thereby disrupt the relations in which disability resides?
(2) What pedagogy are UK schools being advised to adopt in this regard?

The focus is upon educators in 'mainstream' schools, teaching non-disabled and disabled students within compulsory education (students 5–16 years).

One prompt for the article was research exploring non-disabled children's understanding of disability and the role of English primary/elementary schools in promoting disability equality (Beckett and Buckner 2012; Beckett 2013). Non-disabled children were found to enact cultural schemas that sustain their privileged position and subordinate disabled people (Beckett 2013). Many schools admitted that they could do more to address this issue (Beckett and Buckner 2012). These

*Email: a.e.beckett@leeds.ac.uk

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findings imply the need for disability-focused anti-oppressive pedagogy. Although not the only institutions with such responsibilities, schools can contribute to challenging, or 'disrupting' disability (Lingard 2007). Children are increasingly understood to be both products *and* producers of their social worlds (Uprichard 2010) – as such, it makes sense to be concerned about the form of their agency and schools' role in encouraging agency that disrupts oppression. Further justifications for disability-focused anti-oppressive pedagogy are considered anon, but the main aim here is to explore how Disability Studies might inform such pedagogy.

Before commencing discussion, some clarification is provided. First, pedagogy is defined here as *that which informs teaching and from which curriculum emerges* (Ellsworth 2005). This article focuses upon pedagogy practised within schools, but pedagogy is neither age- nor place-specific.

Second, anti-oppressive pedagogy is sometimes associated with particular moments in social and cultural analysis, but the term is used here to describe a *range* of approaches concerned with challenging oppression.

Third, a typology of three possible disability-focused anti-oppressive pedagogies is proposed here – each assessed critically. These are abstractions, constructed/imagined by the author and utilized in the manner of Berlin's (1953) 'classifications' ('ideal-types'), to illuminate an issue. The typology provides a framework within which to locate approach/es that five UK-based organizations recommend that schools take to teaching about disability.

Qualitative content analysis is employed (Bryman 2012) to consider the 'learning objectives' recommended by these organizations within teacher briefings and lesson plans. The focus is upon learning objectives *as stated.* This represents the first stage of analysis. Further research is required to capture the views of the authors of these materials about their pedagogical underpinnings; and how teachers interpret/implement the learning objectives.

Finally, regarding policy context – in 2005 the New Labour Government introduced the 'Disability Equality Duty' (DED). This applied to publically funded bodies including schools. Schools became legally obliged to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. In 2010, the DED was subsumed within the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which covers age, disability, gender, race, religion/belief and sexuality. Whether the PSED watered down the specific duties of the DED is debated. Nevertheless, under the PSED schools remain obliged to eliminate discrimination and harassment and encourage good relations between disabled and non-disabled people. In the light of these duties, the last Government (Labour 1997–2010) encouraged schools to bring discussions about disability into teaching, but provided minimal guidance for achieving this. This article therefore examines *alternative* sources of advice for schools.

It should be noted that this policy context is in flux. The PSED has been included within the current government's 'Red Tape Challenge'[1] (a neo-liberal initiative seeking to reduce the 'burden of regulation' said to be hurting the economy and society). The Government has asked whether the PSED ought to be 'scrapped', perhaps to be replaced by a 'voluntary code'. This provokes questions about the Government's commitment to disability equality. Such a move would undermine the UK's position as signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).[2] Whilst acknowledging these worrying developments, the article has been written in the context of legislation currently extant (July 2013).

Making connections: anti-oppressive pedagogy and inclusive education

Serious and systemic disability discrimination provides powerful justification for disability-focused anti-oppressive pedagogy (Beckett 2009), but such pedagogy is also critical to the development of a more 'innovative and aggressive conception of inclusive education' (Slee 2011, i). If inclusive education is to help build an inclusive society (Armstrong and Barton 2008), then in addition to meaningful inclusion of disabled students within mainstream settings (itself, likely to do *much* to challenge disability), schools' teaching and learning strategies must challenge disability as a form of oppression.

Proposed here is a form of 'inclusive pedagogy', but *not* as currently understood. Inclusive pedagogy is usually defined in terms of rethinking curricula and teaching practices to include everyone (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). This is vital and a prerequisite for the anti-oppressive pedagogy proposed herein: inclusion, in all regards, being 'a prerequisite of a democratic education' (Slee 2011, i).

The connection between 'inclusive' and 'democratic' education, although well established, has been reworked by authors in 'Disability Studies in Education' (Danforth and Gabel 2006). For example, Goodley (2011) calls for dialogue between critical pedagogy and disability politics. To this end, Baglieri and Shapiro (2012), Gabel and Connors (2009) and Ware (2002) suggest incorporating Disability Studies into the curriculum within US schools. Overall, this work implies that strategies encouraging/supporting students to challenge disability as one form of oppression ought to be part of education for all.

If non-disabled students are not encouraged to recognize and challenge disability oppression, then as adults they may reinforce and legitimize disabling ideas and practices (Rieser and Mason 1990). Disabled students need to be supported to recognize and understand the nature of their oppression and acquire skills to resist this (Mason 1990). Arguably, they also need to be included in such initiatives because relationships *between* disabled people can be marked by oppression (Wendell 1996). We need to view *all* students as potentially having a 'foot in both camps' – i.e. 'oppressed' and 'privileged'.

A typology of anti-oppressive pedagogies

What form might disability-focused anti-oppressive pedagogy take? Three options are considered: 'Education About the Other'; 'Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering'; and 'Education that Changes Students and Society'. The concept of the 'Other' is used herein to refer to marginalized groups, socially identified as '*other than* the norm' (Kumashiro 2000, 26). The work of Kumashiro (2000, 2002) informs the typology, which is also constructed in view of three currents of theorizing about disability. It has been impossible to capture/reflect all disability studies perspectives – this being a complex field – instead, three admittedly 'fuzzy' strands of theorizing are identified and connections drawn between these and the three pedagogies. The first strand is termed 'US social constructionist'; the second 'sociostructural'; the third 'post-conventional'. The latter includes work by many authors, connected only by their offering of 'cultural model' and/or 'Critical Disability Studies' perspectives (Goodley 2011).

Some Disability Studies perspectives do not fit these strands, for example the critical realist perspective/s of Bhaskar and Danermark (2006) and Shakespeare

(2006). How these approaches might inform anti-oppressive pedagogy is worthy of further consideration, but beyond the scope of this article.

'Education About the Other' (Pedagogy 1)

'Pedagogy 1' involves studying the Other and celebrating difference. The target audience includes the privileged and the disenfranchised but in practice is often the privileged. For its proponents, oppression is rooted in two types of partial knowledge. First, knowledge concerning only what society defines as normal and normative. Knowledge about the Other is thus by inference only, determined in contrast to the norm. In seeking to address this partial knowledge, this pedagogy emphasizes that people are different and difference should be celebrated. The second partial knowledge is based upon stereotypes, fostering socially biased perceptions of the Other. This pedagogy encourages students to 'treat other ways of being' as 'normal as the normative ways of being' (Kumashiro 2000, 33). The assumption is that this encourages empathy and understanding that the Other is not dissimilar to the self.

In relation to a disability-focused version of this pedagogy, these goals would likely translate as challenging stigmatization that leads to discrimination and internalized oppression. Raising awareness of disabled people's 'ways of being' (their lives), encouraging acceptance of impairment as part of human diversity, celebrating disabled people's achievements, challenging disablist stereotypes and questioning the association of impairment with 'abnormality' would be key to this approach. Students would be encouraged to see the 'person first' before the label and understand that disability is socially constructed and contestable. Raising awareness about disability discrimination (personal and institutionalized) and the role of the disability movement in claiming civil rights would probably be part of this approach – discrimination being understood as resulting from 'social biases'.

This pedagogy might appeal to proponents of the 'US social constructionist' approach to disability. Goffman's (1968) 'Stigma' has been influential here. Disabled people are perceived to face struggles 'to ward off potential interpersonal devaluation' caused by their 'social classification as less than normal, at best, and less than human, at worst' (Gill 2001, 355). The US 'people first' language represents part of this struggle, emphasizing the recognition of humanity before the classification/label (Goodley 2011).

Early work in this vein was criticized for focusing upon the 'efforts of disabled persons to cope with their marginal status' rather than what society and government do to them (Hahn 1985, para. 43). Influenced by 1960s–1970s US civil rights movements, the more sociopolitical minority-group model emerged (Hahn 1985). This considers disability to result from interaction between individuals and a disabling environment. Whilst taking an increasingly 'eclectic' approach to understanding disability (Goodley 2011), the original social-constructionist perspective lived/lives on within this model in its understanding of the 'disabling environment' as moulded by public policy – this being 'a reflection of prevalent social attitudes and values' (Hahn 1985, para. 1).

Critical assessment

Kumashiro concludes that 'Pedagogy 1' (applied to other forms of oppression) can work against harmful 'partial' knowledges about the Other and, presumably, against

their consequences (i.e. devaluation, discrimination). He also identifies dilemmas associated with this approach, which act as 'warnings' for developing a disability-focused version of this pedagogy.

First, in trying to teach students about the Other, this approach may risk fostering 'a dominant narrative of the Other's experience' (Kumashiro 2000, 33) – problematic given the heterogeneous disabled population. Proponents would likely address this by introducing students to the concept of 'multiple oppression'. For critics, this does not capture the complex interplay of oppressions, i.e. of *intersectionality* (Bjornsdottir and Traustadottir 2010; Söder 2009). Unless carefully handled, this pedagogy may risk essentialism.

Dilemma two concerns the positioning of disabled students within this pedagogy. Would/should they be asked to share their experiences with peers, providing insights into the Other's 'way of being'? It is difficult to know when/how/if to 'spotlight' a student from a disadvantaged group when discussing oppression; how to achieve this sensitively, valuing their contributions whilst not making them feel 'exposed' (Ware 2002) or objectifying them as vehicles for the betterment of peers. Lorde (1990) suggests that asking students from oppressed groups to share their experiences may be a waste of their energy – energy better used redefining themselves and imagining alternative futures.

Third, the premise underpinning 'Pedagogy 1' that 'prejudice is due to ignorance' is said to be 'false' – strategies based on this premise are flawed and may even 'create new stereotypes' (Aboud 2008, 68). For example, discussing employment statistics, in the hope of highlighting disability discrimination, might inadvertently reinforce perceptions of disabled people as 'failed workers'. The 'celebrating difference' approach might risk creating new stereotypes if overly simplistic positive images of the Other are promoted. Wendell (1996) and Clare (1999) warn against perpetuating the 'super-cripple' stereotype – the disabled person who has 'triumphed over tragedy' to achieve something extraordinary (e.g. sporting excellence) that compensates for their 'undesirable difference', or something ordinary, demonstrating that with effort disabled people can be 'almost normal'. Wendell (1996) suggests that whilst 'disabled heroes' can be inspiring to disabled people they risk creating an ideal that most disabled people cannot meet, increasing the 'Otherness' of the majority of disabled people. She also suggests that 'disabled heroes' comfort non-disabled people 'by affirming the possibility of overcoming the body' (64).

Fourth, critics suggest that in attempting to engender empathy, 'Pedagogy 1' may present a *sentimentalized* narrative of the Other's experience. In relation to disability this risk is strong, because sentimentalized narratives are well-established parts of Tragedy/Charity Models of Disability. Such narratives deflect attention from social injustice and oppression and position disabled people as a group with 'grievable lives' – individuals 'who can overcome their trauma only when the rest of the world feels moved enough to mourn for/with them' (Zembylas 2009, 94). This type of compassion 'may (...) reinforce the very patterns of economic and political subordination responsible for such suffering' (Spelman 1997 in Zembylas 2009, 94). Zembylas also suggests that such narratives are too readily 'consumable' (disposable) and thus ineffective.

Further, for critics, the idea that empathizing with the Other will help privileged students to see that 'they' are like 'us', 'leaves the self–Other binary intact', allowing 'the self (i.e., the normative identities) to remain privileged' (Kumashiro 2000, 35). For Kumashiro (2000) students must be supported to acknowledge, critique and

transform processes by which the Other is differentiated from and subordinated to the norm, separate the normal from the self and acknowledge and work against their own privileges.

His views mirror criticisms of the US social constructionist perspectives, particularly Goffmanesque approaches, for failing to question social norms or the objectivity or permanence of the values that position disabled people as less than 'normal' (Wendell 1996). Many would concur with Kumashiro's (2000) suggestion that educational strategies need to expose the processes that privilege certain groups and normalize certain identities.

To summarize: a disability-focused version of 'Education About the Other' (Pedagogy 1) would likely encourage recognition of and respect for difference and work against processes harming the Other (Kumashiro 2000, 35). When carefully implemented, it may be helpful. It is, however, riven by dilemmas. Keith's (2010, 540) description of this pedagogy as promoting 'anaemic love' summarizes its main weakness. It is a pedagogy of 'cordial relations', not transformation, favouring the celebration of difference 'without addressing the contentious and difficult' (540). It risks failing to illuminate, critique and transform 'the norm', against which disabled people are judged and found to be 'other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong' (Lorde 1990, 281).

'Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering' (Pedagogy 2)

Contrasting the previous approach, proponents of 'Pedagogy 2' perceive social structures to determine relations between groups – the structure/s of capitalism being of prime importance. Underpinning this pedagogy is an understanding of the *social creation* of inequality (see Oliver 1990 vis-à-vis disability).

This approach encourages students to recognize oppression not only in 'individual acts of meanness', but also in the 'invisible systems conferring dominance' on particular groups (McIntosh 1988, 17–18). The Marxist or neo-Marxist-inflected 'critical pedagogy' of Apple (2003), Freire ([1970] 2000) and McLaren (2005a) is an example of this approach. Following Freire ([1970] 2000), this pedagogy rejects a 'banking' style of education which 'deposits' knowledge in students. Its goal is 'conscientization' – helping students to understand their position in power relations and that oppression dehumanizes oppressed *and* privileged (Freire [1970] 2000).

For the oppressed, conscientization involves comprehending that they exist 'in a dialectical relationship to the oppressor, as his antithesis' (Freire [1970] 2000, 49) and, hopefully, freeing themselves from this relationship. For the privileged, it involves unpacking their 'invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions' (McIntosh 1988, 1–2) and (often unknowing) complicity in maintaining oppressive relations. Hopefully, through critical reflection, students will 'acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality' (Freire [1970] 2000, 189) – i.e. developing critical literacy and a certain type of praxis.

Such pedagogy might appeal to advocates of socio-structural perspectives on disability. The neo-Marxist approach states that through the social organization of work 'each human being – as a unique incarnation of capacities and inabilities – is socially calibrated in terms of its capacity for labour' (Gleeson 1999, 44). Disabled people's lives are thus structured. Cultural ideas about disability are considered ideologies, 'justifying' interests of the dominant group (Oliver 1990). They tend not

to view culture as derived entirely from the economic base. Nevertheless, culture is not viewed as an 'independent variable' – but as *driven by* material and instrumental forces (Alexander and Smith 2001, 136).

These authors reject the idea that 'erasing mistaken attitudes' will permit equality to flourish (Russell and Malhotra 2002). They might want students to 'root out' 'contemporary structures of disability oppression' (Gleeson 1999, 31), critique and transform capitalist hegemonic structures and ideologies. Within the UK, they might favour introducing students to the Social Model of Disability, particularly the 'strong', Marxist-inflected version (Oliver 1990), suggesting that this has an 'educative function' (Bartons 2003, 9), helping students to perceive disability as a *social creation* and thus *contestable*.

A disability-focused version of this pedagogy would likely avoid the 'super-cripple' narrative because this distracts from disabling barriers. The 'dominant story' would concern 'ableism' (Clare 1999, 2). The flip-side of the 'super-cripple' narrative – 'paternalistic objectification' positioning disabled people as 'victims floundering in an identity limited to oppression alone' or as 'projects' for charity (van Gorder 2008, 14) – would also be avoided. In this pedagogy it is not charity that is encouraged, but labour to end the systems of oppression affording the oppressor the position to be 'generous'.

Critical assessment

For Kumashiro (2000) this pedagogy's strength lies in its desire to encourage students to resist hegemonic ideologies and change social structures. That said, criticisms of certain articulations of the approach act as warnings for the development of a disability-focused version of this pedagogy.

For critics, this pedagogy, although critiquing dominant ideologies, is itself ideology. Proponents reject this critique. Freire (with Macedo 1987, 41) stated that he never advocated imposing particular understandings onto students 'in the name of their liberation'. Nevertheless, critics suggest 'Pedagogy 2' *is* attached to and reinforces a particular body of ideas – Marxist – one reason why critics of Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives on disability may question this approach.

For other critics, the socio-structural approach implies that oppression has 'the same general effect' on members of an oppressed group, when it may or may not (Kumashiro 2000, 38). Advocates of 'Pedagogy 2' might suggest addressing this criticism by applying Hill Collins' (2013) 'matrix of domination', or similar, to help students understand that forms of social hierarchy structure one another. Alternatively, Disability Studies authors might consider Erevelles' (2000, 47) proposal for an 'alternative critical pedagogy', re-theorizing disability as *the* 'organizing grounding principle in the construction of categories of gender, race, and class' with 'human suffering' and 'human struggle' understood as produced from the 'economic, social, and political inter-relationality of complex structures maintained . . . by transnational capitalism'.

For Kumashiro (2000) experiences with oppression involve contradictions that cannot be accounted for by structural explanations *however* reimagined. He suggests that 'Pedagogy 2' fails to acknowledge that in every situation a different discourse is recreated or 'cited' – making oppression complex and situated. Such pedagogy supports 'modernist divisions of the world into binary oppositions' e.g. 'oppressor/oppressed', 'where holding a counter-hegemonic position means locating ourselves

on the positive side of whatever divide happens into view' (Keith 2010, 550). We need to help students to recognize that they are at times both oppressors *and* oppressed.

The third line of criticism relates to assumptions that knowledge and critique lead, unproblematically, to action and transformation. Some argue that whilst seeking to empower the 'voice' of oppressed groups complements disability politics, critical pedagogy assumes oppressed groups possess certain *capacities/abilities* – specifically, to exercise 'voice' in particular ways. Gabel (2002) calls for exploration of 'voice' to discover how educators might support disabled students' social struggle. For Erevelles (2000, 32), 'agency' (or praxis) might be expanded/redefined in order to '"hear" the voices of disabled students'.

Other commentators question the same assumption vis-a-vis students from *privileged groups*. This pedagogy involves a paradox – seeking to empower the dominant group to disempower itself. Why should this group want to give up any of the power that its social position affords? Dominant groups partly achieve coherent identities from opposition to the 'Other' (Redman 1996) – thus, non-disabled people achieve coherence in their identities partly from opposition to the disabled 'Other' (Campbell 2008; Price and Shildrick 2002). Challenging the social relations through which non-disabled identities are constructed will be difficult – involving questioning the boundaries of those identities, in the process threatening non-disabled students' 'fundamental sense of themselves' (Redman 1996, 174).

Finally, some suggest that 'Pedagogy 2', like 'Pedagogy 1', rests upon a 'modernist' assumption that providing students with information about oppression will encourage them to conclude that everyone should be free of this. For some, this rationalist and cognitive approach (Boler 1999) neglects psychoanalytical dimensions of oppression (Ellsworth 1989, 2005) – we must engage with emotional reasons for oppressive relations. Promoting rational values is unlikely to shift investments students have in their identities and values (Redman 1996). Others suggest that if students self-reflect, they may feel 'upset' when learning about oppression, especially their culpability here, leading to 'entrenched resistance' rather than desire for change (Kumashiro 2000). Critics question whether 'Pedagogy 2' acknowledges and addresses this.

To summarize: disability-focused 'Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering' (Pedagogy 2) might seek to enhance students' understanding of why some bodies are valued more than others within 'historically specific social relations' (Erevelles 2005, 74) and to encourage praxis challenging disability. This pedagogy is, however, criticized for its 'modernist claims generally, and its neo-Marxist articulations specifically' (Weiner 2007, 57). Authors critical of socio-structural perspectives on disability would likely reject this pedagogy for these reasons, favouring the final pedagogy considered here – an approach that considers 'the production of meaning' to be as important as 'the production of labor in shaping the boundaries of human existence' (Erevelles 2000, 30) and does not perceive (arguably *enforce*) 'rationalism as a self-evident political act against relations of domination' (Ellsworth 1989, 304).

'Education that Changes Students and Society' (Pedagogy 3)

This 'post-critical-pedagogy' developed since the 1990s, informed by post-structuralism, post-Marxism, postmodernism, post-colonialism, phenomenology and critical readings of psychoanalysis. In this approach oppression is understood to be produced discursively (Kumashiro 2000). In the previous pedagogy power is

perceived as negative and coercive; in Pedagogy 3 power can also be positive and productive. Asymmetrical power relations appear 'fixed', but can be challenged and reversed because discourse is:

> an instrument and an effect of power, but also (...) a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. (Foucault 1978, 101)

Foucault is influential here, but proponents also draw upon Butler, Harraway, Laclau and Mouffe, Deleuze and Guattari, Said, *amongst others*. This pedagogy is aligned with a 'postconventional theoretical approach' (Shildrick 2007, 233).

There is no definitive version, but rather *versions*, of this pedagogy. Kumashiro (2000) is influenced by Butler, Queer Theory and feminist/queer readings of psychoanalysis in *his* articulation of the approach. He recommends altering citational practices – encouraging students to labour to stop repetition of/rework discourse, challenge stereotypes' power to harm, and construct 'disruptive, different knowledges' (42–3). Students require support to overcome their resistance to change and to knowledge unsettling their sense of self. They should engage in the 'process of separating the normal from the self' (45), of deconstructing self/Other binaries – the aim being for 'schools...to queer our understanding of ourselves' (45). This might involve examining how a 'sense of normalcy needs, even as it negates, the Other' (45). By changing how we read normalcy and Otherness, we can change how we 'read Others and ourselves' (45).

In Motta's (2013, 86) alternative version of this pedagogy, educators should transgress 'beyond Freire's universalization in "proletarian seeing"...towards a Deleuzian opening to a plurality of ways of critique, thinking and changing the world'. Pedagogy should avoid replacing one privileged viewpoint (of the oppressor) with another (of the oppressed), and promote exercises in *thinking otherwise*. The quest is for transgressive pedagogy that does not reaffirm minority identity, but breaks down 'hierarchies, fixities and dualisms', encouraging 'a becoming minor in which *all become minoritarian*' (87). This challenging pedagogy requires students to bring their 'bodies, minds and imaginations' into the classroom (96), placing some into a 'position of vulnerability that they may not desire' (96), resulting in crisis.

Many proponents of 'Pedagogy 3' embrace this potential for 'crisis', rejecting pedagogies that rest upon rationality and fail to appreciate other ways of knowing/feeling. According to Kumashiro (2000, 44) educators must support students 'to work through crisis' towards a different intellectual, political and emotional space. Similarly, Zembylas (2005) proposes a 'pedagogy of discomfort' (derived from Boler 1999) challenging students' beliefs and habits, encouraging them to 'swim further out into the "foreign" and risky depths...of ethical and moral differences' (Boler 1999, 181). He suggests that students engage in 'analysis of the unquestioned values learned through popular history' and associated emotions (Zembylas 2005, 176) – by recognizing the 'forms being invented for us' (175), students and teachers may devise new ways of thinking and acting about themselves and others.

In short, proponents of this pedagogy encourage teachers and students to unfetter 'the possibility to experiment with what life can do and where a life might go' (Motta 2013, 83). This approach might appeal to Disability Studies authors applying similar 'post-conventional' perspectives (e.g. Davis 2002; Garland-Thompson 2002; Linton 1998; Titchkosky 2003; Shildrick 2007, *amongst others*). These authors re-evaluate the explanatory paradigm used to understand disabled people's

lived experience and 'potential ways forward for social, political and economic change' (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009, 49).

Many understand disability 'as a cultural trope and historical community that raises questions about the materiality of the body and the social formulations that are used to interpret bodily and cognitive differences' (Garland-Thompson 2002, 2). They reject the economic determinism of Marxism/neo-Marxism, considering that 'almost everything is cultural in some way', and, since 'culture impacts on everything, so the causal arrow' in relation to disability 'can point in any and all directions at once' (Bonnell and Hunt 1999, 11). Causal explanation takes (somewhat of) a 'back seat' in these analyses – the primary focus being 'the demystification and deconstruction of power' (11).

It is unlikely that these authors would approach 'Pedagogy 3' uncritically. Nevertheless, many may be sympathetic towards a disability-focused version of this pedagogy if it helped students to: (1) recognize and analyse 'ableist relations' (Campbell 2008); (2) recognize that these relations exist at the intersection of a range of social relations and 'speak' these in often unpredictable ways (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009); (3) interrogate disability discourse and labour to change citational practices; (4) question their readings of normalcy and Otherness, understanding that the categories 'normal' and 'abnormal' are interdependent and unstable (Linton 1998).

Many of these authors agree that disability is a social phenomenon (at least partly), but are less likely to agree about using the Social Model of Disability within educational strategies. Some might support the use of the model in its 'relevant aspects' (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009, 50). Others might not. For critics, the model involves binary thinking – distinguishing 'impairment' as functional limitation from 'disability' as socially produced disadvantage. This thinking is challenged by Hughes and Paterson (1997), Thomas (2004b) and Shakespeare (2004), *amongst others*. Mollow (2006, 288) argues that the model deflects 'attention from the political nature of impairment'. Others have questioned the model (particularly Oliver's 1990) for its economic determinism and failure to acknowledge the fluidity of identity, 'changing micro-macro social relations and cultural meanings' (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009, 56).

The work of authors associating with Critical Disability Studies may provide *new* avenues for the development of anti-oppressive pedagogy. Whilst disability studies has traditionally focused upon exposing disability discrimination, 'studies in ableism' examines 'compulsory ablebodiedness' (McRuer 2006) and unveils the 'non-disabled stance' (Linton 1998). This branch of Disability Studies scrutinizes the psychological, social, economic, cultural and technological conditions that privilege normative ways of being, organize environments around normative citizens and feed into neoliberal and advanced capitalist forms of production.[3] It allows an understanding of how 'all groups, based on physical traits or markings, are selected for disablement by a larger system of regulation and signification' (Davis 2002, 29) and may provide a different basis from which to develop Erevelles' (2000) 'alternative critical pedagogy'.

Pedagogies of discomfort may appeal to those seeking to develop 'a critical social ontology for disability studies', problematizing 'the hegemony of ableist sensibilities' and exposing 'aversive emotions that populate the non-disabled imaginary' (Hughes 2012, 67). Indeed, educationalists have begun to employ something akin to discomforting pedagogy to challenge ableist assumptions (McLean 2008). The work of Hughes (2012, 75), and others, might support the development of pedagogy

that scrutinizes the 'emotional arsenal' of 'fear, pity and disgust' deployed to construct the 'Other', encouraging students to enter a more productive state/phase that embraces, rather than denies the vulnerability of the embodied self (Beckett 2006; Shildrick and Price 2005). Alternatively, such pedagogy might involve students: 'crippin' the human' (putting impairment *back into the human*) (Campbell n.d., 5); rejecting the 'compulsion to emulate the norm' (Campbell 2008, para. 4); labouring to transform negative assessments of bodily 'impairment' to positive account; exploring how the 'anomalous body' might become a crucial site of positive resistance (Campbell 2008, n.d.; Goodley and Lawthom 2013).

Critical assessment

When critical pedagogy encountered 'cultural studies' (broadly defined) its theoretical foundations became less stable (possibly *by design*), resulting in a proliferation of approaches. For proponents of 'Pedagogy 3', its strength lies in its flexibility. Given the complex and situated nature of oppression, attempts to articulate one strategy for all times/places are problematic and should be avoided. There is strength to this argument, but this flexibility makes 'post-critical-pedagogy' difficult to assess.

That said, the approach has not escaped criticism. Some ask whether discomforting pedagogies are ethically justifiable (Rak 2003) – they may distress some students (especially the 'privileged'). Proponents argue that it is *more* unethical to leave harmful discourses unchallenged than risk upsetting some students (Kumashiro 2002). Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) suggest managing this by generating supportive environments and an ethic of care – students' ages and other risk factors should be considered before employing the approach, but discomforting pedagogies are used with children as young as 10/11 and within post-conflict zones, where tensions are high.

Other criticisms of discomforting pedagogy focus on effectiveness. Wang (2005, 57) argues that privileged students sometimes fail to acknowledge 'how their own emotional attachments affect their knowledge and practices'. They may choose to 'reinforce their own identities rather than risk self-transformation' (58). Others, on learning of the 'dark side of history and culture' may feel overwhelmed and depressed (58). The jury remains 'out' regarding the effectiveness of this type of approach and thus whether it offers a way forward for disability-focused anti-oppressive pedagogy.

The theoretical foundation/s of 'Pedagogy 3' prompt the fiercest criticisms. Some suggest that it prioritizes symbolic contests over cultural power, effectively abandoning concrete struggles against material inequality. For some, the approach has become 'academicized', supposedly speaking with the oppressed, but 'in a language they often do not understand' (Weiner 2007, 63). Rikowski and McLaren (2002, 4) argue that postmodern approaches represent 'excessive social-theoretical practice', stating that: (1) people face structural constraints set by capitalist social relations; (2) postmodernism has led to 'relativism; nihilism; solipsism; fragmentation; pathos and hopelessness' (5); and (3) the postmodernist 'infinite play of difference' leaves us with '*little or nothing in common* on which to build a politics of resistance to capital' (6). The latter applies as much to the politics of disability, they claim, as to class (5). For McLaren (2005a, 2005b), revolutionary critical pedagogy must work within a socialist imaginary, encouraging students to understand that

lives *are* centred – by capital – and enabling them to imagine a different world outside capitalism.

These critiques are reminiscent of Barnes' (1999, 580) comment that post-conventional perspectives on *disability* appear to be written by 'academic luvvies' who write 'mainly for themselves and other academics rather than a wider audience'. He might sympathize with McLaren's and other's suggestions that when critical pedagogy encountered such perspectives, it 'lost its teeth' (Weiner 2007, 64).

To summarize, the aim of disability-focused 'Education that Changes Students and Society' (Pedagogy 3) would likely be to: encourage students to critique the 'pathologies of non-disablement' (Hughes 1999, 2007); devise new (positive and non-oppressive) ways of thinking and acting about themselves and others; experiment with what and where a life can be/do/go. This pedagogy may address some of the difficulties with 'Pedagogy 2' (traditional critical pedagogy) including 'essentialism', economic determinism and the failure to engage with 'affect'. For its critics, its theoretical foundations are flawed: oppression is not, primarily, discursively produced – social contradictions are anchored in 'the objective nature of things; they are part of the structural determinations of the social' (McLaren 2001, 1).

Applying the typology

Having introduced this typology of pedagogies, it is tempting to ask 'Which is preferable?' Previously, I have argued that 'Education About the Other' (Pedagogy 1), whilst *at best* benign, is politically 'wishy-washy' (Beckett 2009, 323). I have proposed a 'critical synthesis' of 'Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering' (Pedagogy 2) and 'Education that Changes Students and Society' (Pedagogy 3) (Beckett and Buckner 2012). After closer examination of their theoretical foundations I am less certain that such synthesis is possible, given that Pedagogies 2 and 3 begin from different ontological positions. Further, I find possibilities arising from dialogue between anti-oppressive pedagogy and studies in/of ableism intriguing. My ideas are in flux.

For now, the typology's purpose is to facilitate analysis of the approach schools are encouraged to take to teaching about disability by five UK-based organizations. This analysis follows.

Analysis focused upon advice offered by:

- The *Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)* in lesson plans available at: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/equal-rights-equal-respect/resource-toolkit/lesson-plan-ideas/. These promote 'equal rights, equal respect' for *all*, but refer to disability.
- *Whizz-Kidz* (a charity *for* young disabled people) in lesson plans available at: http://www.whizz-kidz.org.uk/getinvolved/schools/teachingresources/
- *Scope* (a charity *for* disabled people) in teaching resources ('Imagine the Difference' and 'Speaking for Ourselves') available at: http://www.scope.org.uk/help-and-information/education and art-based lesson plans available at: http://www.pollsapart.org.uk/help-and-information/families-and-parenting/disabled-children-books
- *British Red Cross* in association with *Deafblind UK* (an association *of* disabled people) in a teacher briefing and lesson plan available at: http://www.redcross.

org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Teacher-briefings/Disability and http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Lesson-plans/Disability (Available 03/04/13)

The work of Rieser and Mason for the disabled people's organization *Disability Equality in Education* (DEE) has also been considered. DEE closed in 2009 but its school resources remain accessible online (http://www.worldofinclusion.com). In 1990 Rieser and Mason edited (and wrote much of) 'Disability Equality in the Classroom: a human rights issue', setting this organization's agenda. In this review, the 'DEE approach' is derived from this text, other of Rieser's publications (e.g. 2006) and guidance for schools available online at: http://www.worldofinclusion.com

Analysis shows that these organizations promote an 'Education About the Other' (Pedagogy 1) approach. They suggest schools should raise awareness of disabled people's 'ways of being' (e.g. DEE and Scope recommend discussion of disabled people's 'life stories'). Equality for disabled people is presented as a civil rights issue in keeping with the 'minority model'. Most suggest that teachers refer and introduce students to the Social Model of Disability, but do not promote the 'strong' (neo-Marxist-inflected) version of this. They promote a 'social barriers' approach (emphasizing physical and attitudinal barriers). The problem of disability is understood to reside in institutionalized social biases:

> The well-spring of our oppression comprises deeply held social attitudes that reflect generations of prejudice, fear and discrimination. (Rieser 2006, 143)

Highlighting disability discrimination is recommended. DEE advises schools to introduce students to the struggles and achievements of the Disability people's movement. Emphasis is placed, however, upon prejudice reduction.

Schools are advised to encourage students to: *celebrate* difference (e.g. '*difference is a positive thing*' Scope); understand the value of inclusion (e.g. Scope's 'In the Picture' resources); recognize and celebrate the achievements of disabled people (e.g. Red Cross lesson-plan); recognize and challenge disabling/disablist stereotypes (Rieser and Mason 1990). The importance of promoting 'empathy' is emphasized (e.g. for students to *'think about . . . what it is like to be someone else . . . and reflect on other people's situations and feelings'* Red Cross). For some, this should be 'active' empathy. The EHRC advises schools to support children to become 'human rights champions'. Whizz-Kidz and DEE suggest students write to parliamentary representatives to highlight inaccessible school buildings.

All the organizations link discussions about disability with the current National Curriculum,[4] but DEE provides schools with the most detailed advice in this regard (http://www.worldofinclusion.com/qcda.htm). DEE seeks to manage certain difficulties associated with 'Education About the Other'. The Rieser and Mason (1990) text refers to multiple oppression (albeit not *intersectionality*), seeking to avoid essentialism; avoids sentimentalized narratives of disability, problematizing the role of charity in disabled people's lives; celebrates disabled people's achievements, but it warns against the 'super-cripple' stereotype. There is some blending of approaches by DEE, with an acknowledgement that industrial capitalism has played a role in the history of disability (Rieser 2006) and in proposals for changing citational practices and engaging with 'affect'.

Much of these organizations' advice is useful/positive, but there are grounds for critique. Whizz-Kidz's lesson-plans encourage fundraising supporting its provision of 'essential mobility equipment' to disabled young people, but fail to encourage students to ask why society does not provide this equipment or query the necessity for charity. The Red Cross lesson plan risks perpetuating the 'super-cripple' stereotype by focusing upon the experiences of a man with visual and hearing impairments who undertakes 'extreme challenges'. DEE proposes students work with disability statistics (e.g. employment figures) – as previously discussed, this approach needs careful management lest it reinforces stereotypes.

For these organizations, the 'problem' of disability lies in *attitudes*, thus the focus is on *changing* attitudes. For some, this will be a problematic understanding of oppression and therefore a flawed approach – students should be supported to 'root out' 'contemporary structures of disability oppression' (Gleeson 1999, 31), in particular, capitalist hegemonic structures and ideologies. For others, the approach may focus too heavily upon exposing disability discrimination, failing to unveil the 'non-disabled stance' (Linton 1998); and/or assume that prejudice is due to ignorance, ignoring psychoanalytic dimensions of oppression. Many might conclude that the approach is insufficiently radical, is 'safe', anodyne pedagogy that may do some good, but avoids too many difficult questions to be *transformative*.

Getting *beyond* 'Education About the Other' (Pedagogy 1) is difficult in the UK – this having become the 'acceptable' face of anti-oppressive education. During the 1980s a discourse of derision was directed towards certain 'radical' educational strategies. Anti-oppressive ideas were disparaged as products of the 'loony left'; weaker approaches espousing equal opportunities/access were tolerated (McKenzie 2001). The UK preference for 'Pedagogy 1' must also be understood in the context of wider depoliticization of teaching (Hill 2007; Watkins 2008), said to result from heavy central Government prescription and threat of attainment targets. Teachers' freedom (and confidence) to innovate and take risks with pedagogy has been reduced. Recently, fresh obstacles to the development of *any* type of anti-oppressive pedagogy have emerged, including the Government's undermining of its *prerequisite* – inclusive education (Runswick-Cole 2011) – and return to a banking style of education through its revised National Curriculum 2014[5] (changes already proving controversial – see 'Letters' to *Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 2013).

Conclusion

To conclude – further work is required to develop, justify and promote disability-focused anti-oppressive pedagogies, particularly those that advance beyond 'Education About the Other'. My investigation suggests that a programme of relevant research is required within the UK. From the wider literature it is clear that similar programmes are required in other national contexts. Disability is neglected within discussions about anti-oppressive pedagogy. This should concern all who believe that education has a role to play in realizing an inclusive society (Barton 2003). Global initiatives such as the UNCRPD help justify educational approaches that engender 'respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity' and generate *enabling* societies.[6]

This programme of research will necessarily be transdisciplinary. The most obvious approach would be for disabled people and their organizations to play a leading role, collaborating with academics in the fields of Disability Studies and

education and educational practitioners, to conceptualize, operationalize and trial new pedagogies. Hopefully, this article provides an initial framework for such discussion and development of more transformative approaches.

Sadly, here in the UK prospects for this type of initiative are not encouraging. The Government's neo-liberal agenda can be seen in its attempt to undermine equality law and in its education policies. In the face of this, our scope to develop subversive ideas about education's purpose, the role of teachers and how students and society should change is being significantly curtailed. We must hope that this agenda can be resisted and that we can create 'space' for such initiatives.

Acknowledgement

This study was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (RES-062-23-0461).

Notes

1. See http://www.redtapechallenge.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/who-is-protected/ (21/07/13).
2. See http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150 (21/07/13).
3. See http://whiterosestudiesofableism.wordpress.com/about/ (12/04/13).
4. The National Curriculum (NC) specifies the subjects taken and attainment targets for children aged 5–16 attending public schools. Several revisions of the NC have occurred since its introduction in 1988. The Coalition Government will introduce its own revised NC in 2014.
5. See http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum2014/ (21/07/13).
6. See http://.www.un.org/disabilities/ (21/07/13).

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