An analytic framework for developing inclusive educators

Amy Claughton, School of Education, 2018

Transforming teacher education

Utilised within Initial Teacher Education, the author proposes that the Learning Portal Framework (LPF) can be used as a reflective tool for pre-service teachers (PSTs) to identify the skills and abilities that their learners already have. The LPF applies the concept of both the ‘being’ and ‘doing’ elements of disability (Thomas, 1999) to the facets of disability studies in an educational context. This provides a base for PSTs to reflect on and support the development of both academic and emotional learning opportunities. PSTs are prepared to transform education beyond the deficit model and analyse teaching strategies that disable or enable personalised teaching opportunities that also give consideration to the student perspective.

Learning portals framework

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Context

The LPF has been developed as a response to an ideological conflict with the data analysis of a study conducted as for the author’s PhD. Drawing on the theoretical perspective of Disability Studies in Education, there is a tension between identifying barriers that frame “disability as a social construct” (Connor et al., 2008, p.447) and assuming the competence of children with impairments (Connor et al., 2008, p. 448). The research explores how play-based curriculum can enrich the learning of children with impairments. The LPF has been developed to counter the typically deficit based approach to analysing data for children with impairments and their play scenarios.

Methodology

Applying commonly identified facets of attitudes, structures and environments within the construction of disability, the LPF allows for teacher reflection on strategies that enable or disable. A deeper level of analysis is added through the application of Thomas’s (1999) barriers to ‘being’ and ‘doing’. Employing a functional approach, it has been developed to allow educators to recognise the actions support accessible learning opportunities. The barriers are retained to acknowledge actions that impede or restrict access.

Learning Portals

A learning portal represents practice that transcends barriers and creates accessible learning opportunities. Teaching practice is defined as actions that teachers take to give meaning to inclusion (Florian, 2009). Portals are developed when the focus of teaching practice is built from a basis that recognises individual capacity. Teaching strategies and practices value individual contributions, and are pivotal moments in learning where adult actions grow all aspects of learning and development.


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