Review of

The Ethics of Inclusive Education: Presenting a New Theoretical Framework
by Franziska Felder, London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2022

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In this compelling book, Franziska Felder sets forth a clear framing of inclusive education by reformulating the concept of inclusivity and its purpose in an education system. As she points out early on in the book, her re-examination of inclusive education should not be understood in a "purely conceptual" manner (Felder, 2022, p. 20). Rather, the book aims to navigate the issue of inclusivity in education in a non-ideal theoretical space and from a practical perspective. Emphasizing the issue of disability and setting out a historical analysis of the emergence and continuation of special education for students with disabilities, Felder also offers several concrete solutions to achieve inclusive education. This book, therefore, puts forward a multifaceted view of inclusive education with a clear point of departure, the goal of which is to lay out a non-ideal theory of inclusive education with a special emphasis on disability.

One of the distinctive features of this book is its holistic approach to inclusive education. Chapter 1 begins with a common perception of inclusivity in the public eye, and by the end of chapter 3, the author has gradually moved toward a sociohistorical analysis of the conceptualization of inclusivity, particularly regarding the way students with disabilities have tended to be excluded from educational opportunities since the Enlightenment. Through these opening chapters, she argues that in order to avoid common misconceptions about inclusive education – which, the author claims, has become an "empty" concept due to having been negatively defined in the literature as an absence of discrimination or exclusion – the focus should be on a more substantial understanding of the social dimension of inclusivity, and we also need to shift our viewpoint on schooling from a place to merely welcoming everyone to a social institution (ibid., pp. 3–7). Thus, the author veritably suggests that by changing perspectives on schooling, there will be a turn in approaching inclusive education as well.

Felder's unique approach to inclusion consists of a multilayered view for which she successfully develops a conceptual as well as a normative framework of inclusion and explains how both work together. The author highlights that while there is a split between the normative camp on inclusivity in education (see, for example, Barton 1997) and the conceptual camp (see for example, Stainback & Stainback, 1990), challenging the two camps might open up the possibility of moving toward a holistic approach that incorporates both. Distancing herself from committing to "all-or-nothing" inclusive education, in chapter 4, Felder argues that inclusion, as a thick concept, is "both action-guiding and world-guiding" (Felder, 2022, p. 55). Hence, in this chapter, the author draws the conclusion that not only does inclusion encompass both conceptual and normative aspects, but both are "somehow intertwined" to serve a practical purpose (ibid., p. 56).

From this point of departure, in chapter 6, Felder argues that in order to achieve inclusive education, re-examining the purpose of schooling as a social institution is crucial (ibid., p. 149). It is ultimately in chapter 7 that the author provides a unifying account of both the conceptual analysis and the normative framework of inclusive education by drawing attention to the ways in which societies value inclusivity. She argues that one of the reasons why it is important to pay attention to the normative content of inclusivity is because this prevents us from viewing inclusion as something "in addition" to other core values in society such as dignity or equality. Thus, in light of Felder's multidimensional view of inclusivity in education, by the end of chapter 7, it becomes clear that inclusion is an actualization of the core values of schooling as a social institution, core values that include freedom (ibid., p. 177).

Another astonishing aspect of this book is that the author takes her multilayered view of inclusion a step further to ensure that both the non-ideal method and a case study of students with disabilities perfectly serve her perspective on taking a holistic approach regarding inclusion. In chapter 2, Felder argues that both ideal and empirical methods are not adequate to address the complexity of inclusive education. On the one hand, based on empirical approaches to inclusivity, ideal theories of inclusivity are "ideologically overloaded." On the other hand, opponents of ideal theories of inclusivity might also criticize empirical research methods due to a lack of acknowledgement in their normative undertone of studying inclusivity (ibid., pp. 10–11). In other words, based on approaches in favour of empirical research, the process of theorizing should be merely instrumental (Rizvi & Lingard, 1996), whereas in ideal theorizing processes, it is the theory that determines what would count as an empirical phenomenon in the first place (Plato, 2000).

It is in the space between these two insufficient approaches that the use of a non-ideal method becomes significant in this project. As the author explains, non-ideal theorizing is "the most appropriate way" to achieve a multilayered understanding of inclusion (Felder, 2022, p. 19). Among all philosophers employing non-ideal methods, however, Felder favours Dewey's non-ideal method. She argues that the key difference between Dewey's method and rival approaches such as Walzer's (1983) or Anderson's (2010) is that in these methods, a highly complex level of abstraction and/or idealization of the concept of inclusivity takes priority over empirical studies (Felder, 2022, pp. 24–25). In contrast with these methods, as Felder mentions in chapter 2, Dewey suggests that "philosophical inquiry always begins with lived experience," and that the ideals that are sought after should not be external to solving any practical problems (ibid., pp. 20, 25). It is also worth noting that Dewey's method aligns with the author's interdisciplinary perspective in the book that involves using a variety of data, lived experience, and a wide range of theories, including a conceptual account of disability. Thus, Felder's non-ideal approach stems from Dewey's practical method, which involves starting with a concrete problem and then unifying theoretical, ethical, and empirical approaches to studying inclusivity as a solution.

Additionally, in chapter 5, the author emphasizes the key role disability plays in her multifaceted view of inclusivity. By offering a social-relational model of disability, the author argues that disability – particularly in an education system understood as a social institution – should not be considered either a barrier or a label to be deconstructed. Rather, it is the social dimension of disability that can increase or reduce exclusion, marginalization, and stigmatization. This social aspect of the phenomenon, therefore, is the key to understanding what the goal of diversity for students with disabilities in an inclusive schooling setting should be (ibid., p. 123).

One question that might be raised about Felder's project, however, concerns the relationship between disability and inclusivity. At the very beginning of chapter 1, one of the major promises made by the author is to provide an answer to the question of what inclusive education is that does not frame inclusivity as "solely a disability" issue (ibid., p. 3). Instead, Felder clarifies that despite the "special emphasis" on disability in the book, the broader picture that her project pursues is to articulate the question of what inclusive education is in light of its social dimension, which I call Q1, as well as to provide an answer to how society values to inclusivity (ibid., p. 3). It is, however, in chapter 5 that the book shifts toward becoming a project concerned with the educational inclusivity of disability. Starting in chapter 5, in which Felder discusses the role of schooling and even teachers in taking into consideration

the social dimension of disability as a non-homogeneous phenomenon for inclusive education, the research question of the book also becomes more about what inclusion for students with disabilities is in an education system, which I call Q2, and how to achieve it (ibid., pp. 119–126). Thus, in the end, it becomes less clear whether the book ultimately provides a response to Q1, what inclusive education is, or Q2, what inclusivity of students with disabilities in schooling is.

Regardless of whether Q1 is the intended overarching question of this project or Q2, it is ultimately unclear what role intersectionality plays in this book. One of the promises in the very beginning of the book is to provide an intersectional account of disability (ibid., pp. 2, 3). However, in chapter 5, the chapter that deals with disability, there is neither a developed intersectional approach to disability nor a discussion of how that kind of approach might change the way one views inclusive education. For instance, if a student with disabilities were born into a relatively wealthy family and neighbourhood, where they could attend a well-funded private school, it would be hard to conceive what is problematic about that situation, under the author's account. However, when disability intersects with an additional factor, such as race, new dimensions to the problem of inclusivity and the kind of segregated educational space that students with disabilities experience would come to light. Historically, for example, in the United States, Black students are at higher risk to be over assigned with disabilities and put in a special education program in comparison to all other racial groups (Harry and Klingner, 2014). Hence, a problem with not providing an intersectional analysis in theorizing disability, either as a case study (Q1) or as the central aspect of the book (Q2), is that the book lacks a crucial multilayer explanation for excluding students with disabilities based on other factors, including race.

The lack of clarity on pursuing either Q1 or Q2 in the book also raises a question about the use of Dewey's method in this project. Based on his method, the point of departure in a philosophical inquiry should be a concrete problem. If the purpose of this book is to address Q2, Dewey's method fits the project perfectly, since the author's starting point is also the concrete problem of special education for students with disabilities. However, if the book's promise, as the author makes it clear in the very beginning, is to provide a response to Q1, it is not clear what kind of advantages Dewey's method offers that other non-ideal methods do not also offer. From Dewey's perspective, Q1 is not concrete enough since it starts from an abstract space of considering inclusivity rather than what should be done for this particular group of students and in response to the kinds of discrimination they face. Therefore, if the book wishes to provide a top-to-bottom answer to Q1, then a further justification for the use of Dewey's method in comparison to other non-ideal methods would be necessary.

Overall, this book's engagement with practical questions, theoretical foundations, and normative frameworks puts forward a path toward generating a more concise analysis of inclusive education. Scholars in fields of political philosophy, education, sociology, child/social psychology, and disability studies will find the argument of this book deep, significant, and a step forward for the literature on inclusive education.

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