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Disability Studies in Education: Possibilities for Ensuring (Disability) Inclusive Education.

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The purpose of this bachelor's thesis is to assess what possibilities arise when utilizing critical disability studies as a framework and perspective for reflecting upon education. Research showcases that students with disabilities do not all experience (disability) inclusive education in Finland. This led to the research question: What possibilities do critical disability studies within education provide for ensuring (disability) inclusive education?

Critical disability studies capture the voices of persons with disabilities and their perspectives on what education can and should be. Connecting intersectionality reminds us that for education to be inclusive, education must be able to dismantle oppression and marginalization of individuals, groups of people, and societies deemed the 'Other.' This field of study has remained vocal in stating that education must engage with reflection and be willing for radical change when identified necessary to enact and allow space for (disability) inclusion. The core principle of this literature review is to aim for space for persons with disabilities to define and shape education so that education would be constructed and defined by all building the foundations for inclusive education.

In the literature review, reflecting conceptualizations and research from critical disability studies and education within Finland established wider themes of change which can serve as overarching places for reflection to allow for further reflection and praxis. Throughout the literature review, it became apparent how the Finnish educational system remains actively silent in basic education (6-12-year-olds) and does not explicitly confront epistemic injustice, injustice, and exclusion that arises from ableism within various education sectors. A key reflection point is how dis/ability has been conceptualized by 'special' education and situated into 'special' education, although dis/ability should be situated in education. ' This provides a tension point as Finland has committed through the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Salamanca statement to inclusive education. Inclusion is an ongoing process; however, it becomes evident that there is minimal active engagement. Therefore, further research actively including persons with disabilities and their perspectives, including research on praxis, remains crucial.

Keywords: critical disability studies, disability studies in education, primary education, inclusive education, Finnish basic education

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1 Introduction

“We want to redefine, to reimagine, disability - not make it go away. But also, not have it remain with its stigmatic force. So, we want it to go away in a way that we want it to go way” is a statement by Brueggemann et al. (2005, pg.15), which captures the central notion and voice of activism by persons with disabilities that also led to the field of critical disability studies. This notion summarizes a core aspect of personhood within society, immediately connected to praxis and a foundation for conceptualizing disability. It highlights which voices should be central in navigating the role of dis/ability and its meanings. These initial ideas form the intention of this literature review and leads to questions of how dis/ability is presently conceptualized, situated and whom are doing this within education.

Reflecting upon education with Finland it can be established as deeply embedded through one’s connection to formal basic education. This is due to education connecting to it as a societal entity, experiences of people within education and education’s connections to one as a learner are closely linked to embodiments of bodyminds and identities within society both as an individual and as a collective. This significant role brings about the weight of education as an impactful factor, and therefore, the weight of what education is, represents, conveys, and impacts cannot be taken lightly, and this serves as the linking factor for reflecting upon education while simultaneously reflecting upon dis/ability and the bodies and identities connected within society to the conceptualization of dis/ability.

Teittinen & Vesala (2022) establish that persons with disabilities experience discrimination and marginalization throughout their lives and that education and schools have been constructed on ableist foundations and, therefore, on the conditions of persons without disabilities, establishing inequity and marginalization from the foundations. Niemi (2021) summarizes how to combat inclusion, which represents the actions taken within education to address the segregation of persons with disabilities and originates from activism in disability studies. Niemi (2021) stated that over the past 50 years, Finland has led to legislative inclusion of all persons with disabilities within education while simultaneously solidifying special education in the education system and through activism criticized based on segregation within education.

Currently, commitment to inclusion within Finnish education has been established through the Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1995) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), which Finland ratified in 2016, and the most recent education

reform has been the three-tiered support system (Niemi, 2021). Niemi and Mietola (2023) highlight that educational reforms within Finland can be reflected as aligning with measures of progress regarding inclusive education, even with vague national guidelines and frameworks for inclusive education. However, the experiences of exclusion and marginalization within education structures and experiences within education showcase daily occurrences in which students with disabilities and their rights are violated or not enacted through attitudes, participation, and experiences of belonging (Pekkarinen & Schalin, 2020) as well as within educational discourses the discussion surrounding disability is relatively silent regarding equity (Tervasmäki, 2022). Reflecting upon the active public action towards inclusion and its widespread discussion and the current research on the experiences of persons with disabilities, one begins to question whether silence in educational discourses is not due to inclusion but rather active exclusion, marginalization, and oppression of persons with disabilities.

To reflect upon where the silence arises and how active exclusion, marginalization, and oppression have space within education, following the words from Brueggemann et al. (2005), which provides a valuable basis and create the foundation for this literature review to utilize critical disability studies as the lens for understanding education as a means to ensure inclusive education. This positioning arises from the statement of Brueggemann et al. (2005) that to enact change concerning dis/ability and the lives of persons with disabilities, it must be done by persons with disabilities and their perspectives. Therefore, to answer the arising questions, the following research question has been formed:

What possibilities do critical disability studies within education provide for ensuring (disability) inclusive education?

1.1 Methodology

To begin reflecting upon this question, it is essential to establish the frameworks of how the literature review has been conducted, as this reveals the author's positionality and the lens from which literature has been selected and analyzed. Snyder (2019) defines a *literature review* as a meaningful way of synthesizing existing research and identifying relevant gaps and perspectives. Reflecting upon the research question solidifies a clear foundation for inquiry and interest in gaining perspective for what has been missed and what lies within the silent discourses mentioned earlier.

Before expanding on finding literature, the first aspect is establishing how the research question forms selected keywords and themes. The end of the research question: "Ensuring (disability) inclusive education" places inclusion as non-negotiable. Niemi and Mietola (2023) mention the various understandings of inclusion in education. Therefore, the positionality of this literature review follows inclusion as a principle that cannot be questioned but rather a principal foundation for education. This notion can be connected to the legislative commitments Finland has committed to, and therefore, it removes optionality in regard to inclusive education.

Additionally, disability has been intentionally placed within brackets, as my positionality lies in understanding of dis/ability through lived experience in a family with disabilities and critical disability studies. This positionality provides the perspective that although disability-specific inclusion is necessary, it is not enacted without inclusion for all. For inclusion to be enacted, understandings of inclusion construct through an understanding of dis/ability impacts each individual in various capacities through values, norms, and societal/individual actions, including how individuals will respond to exclusive and oppressive structures, discourses, and actions. This places dis/ability into a closely interconnected environment; therefore, dis/ability is the crucial lens. It is essential to reflect upon how this extends to a more expansive understanding of inclusion and connection to social justice.

To deconstruct the first part of the research, questioning the process of finding literature becomes relevant. Having established a topic, the literature search was conducted by establishing the thematic areas as ones that would relate to primary education in various ways and then using search words such as: "disability," "ablism in education," "disability studies," "disability studies in education" "social justice and education" "emancipation in education" "disability studies in teacher education" "experiences of persons with disabilities in education." The literature search for peer-reviewed literature utilizing search platforms such as 'Oulu-Finna,' 'JYKDOK,' 'Open Alex,' 'Google Scholar,' and 'ResearchGate.' The introductory research was found with the following themes of: disablism, ablism, social justice, epistemic injustice, oppression, teacher education, values of education, and special education. Having read the initial literature and recognized themes, it created the foundations of another literature search. It was conducted using specific searches from the themes. The final literature was decided based on whether they followed similar educational and disability discourses as Finland to allow for context-based reflection.

Having conducted the literature review and initial analysis of themes and perspectives from the literature, how this literature review should be structured becomes evident. Vehmas and

Watson (2020) outline disability studies as a field within sociology with a multidisciplinary future. Although foundations lie within sociology, it is intended to have a place within fields such as education to provide space within the foundational frameworks or the deconstruction of ableism, reflect upon dis/ability, as well as persons with disabilities in the field and impacted by the field. Therefore, the manner in which the analysis and literature selection were made aimed to focus on and utilize the research, which created space for the experiences and perspectives of persons with disabilities, and this literature is placed as a valuable source from which to enact change when needed. Referring to the first part of the research question: "What possibilities does critical disability studies within education provide?". This first part places critical disability studies as a field with possible contributions to education due to its intended role as a space for persons with disabilities and conceptualizations of disability. Additionally, the chosen term 'possibilities' frames the perspectives of critical disability studies that arose from the chosen literature for education as ones that might involve change but that change to a field is positive and valuable for actualizing inclusion, addressing marginalization, and dismantling oppression.

Finally, one key perspective to mention is how the concept dis/ability has been written throughout. This literature contains variations of the word 'disability' which have been written as '(disability)', dis/ability, persons with disabilities and disability. Each word has been chosen with various intentions aiming to ensure that linguistically this text would not further exclusive and othering language. The title and research question uses '(disability)' to emphasise and remind that 'disability' belongs within inclusion as well and to highlight the focus of this literature review. 'Disability' is used when discussing established concepts while 'dis/ability' is used when it is crucial to remember the dichotomy. When referring to persons with disabilities, this is the term used as 'disabled' while gaining emancipatory meaning does not yet message the emancipatory meaning in common speech. A key note is that my individual positionality does not use the word 'special' in any other instance than when research or the educational field uses it as the word has othering and oppressive connotations.

2 Theoretical and conceptual foundation of Disability studies in Education (DSE)

2.1 Critical disability studies

Brueggemann et al. (2005) outline disability studies as a "horizontal model of the organization of knowledge" and as one that acts within other fields and models. They emphasize that

disability is present in every aspect of society and knowledge, one that arises and functions in a manner that embeds itself. Like all fields, varying perspectives function and exist.

Therefore, this literature review will explore disability from the framework of critical disability studies as it relies upon the "questions of embodiment, identity, and agency as they affect all living beings" (Shildrick, 2013, p. 32).

Goodley (2014) outlines disability studies as an antidote to medicalization and individualization of disability that gained vocal traction through the Social Model of Disability, which has represented disability as the impact of society and environment on impairment. This has extended to international legislation as a stance that society should extend, thinking past medicalized understandings of disability and that individuals should be acknowledged and not seen through medicalized understandings (Goodley, 2014). Since then, the field of disability studies has expanded, and the understanding of disability has extended. Notions regarding the epistemology of society and disability have formed a marker for understanding oppression and society through disability studies calling for 'radical practices of constant questioning, deconstruction, and reflexivity' (Shildrick, 2013).

Critical disability studies seeks to remain as a space for activism within academia and for ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities while simultaneously actively interacting with intersectional questioning of dis/ability, as well as how the notions of body and mind, which are strongly related to (dis)ability impact any and all individuals (Shildrick, 2013). This has been outlined for critical disability studies to seek activism for persons with disabilities while aiming at the foundational reconstruction of onto-epistemology of beliefs to allow space and emancipation at all levels, from lived experiences and realities to the constraints of knowledge one exists within.

2.2 Dis/ability, disablism and ableism

As established earlier, disability studies surrounds itself and places itself within questions of personhood and valued identities through the reflection of society, identity, and bodies onto epistemological foundations connected to various understandings of disability and its implications. Reflections and questions focus heavily on the very word of disability and its implications. Vehmas & Watson (2020) state that disability remains an enigma, laying the foundations for crucial questioning and reflection, as Goodley (2014, ch.1) reminds us that disability functions "as an entity related to identity."

When expanding the notion of disability, it can be established as multifaceted, containing various perspectives and entities. Commonly, disability may raise the notion of impairment

and function-specific factors. However, disability studies function as active resistance to deficit and medical models of disability, as discussed by Barnes (2020). This expands the notion of disability to a more complex and nuanced understanding containing various perspectives and understandings and the extended and core point of disability-as-oppression (Barnes, 2020). In order to understand the notions and questions relevant to education, it is helpful to open the notion of disability through the understanding of binary thinking, disablism, and ableism.

Goodley (2014) introduces disability as dis/ability to highlight the binary nature of the concept and to reinforce the notion in which one creates the other and one upkeeps the existence. Connecting this to the notion of disability as oppression (Barnes, 2020) highlights the question of which side oppresses the other and, as Shildrick (2013) points out, that binary structures support all modern societies in the Global North, raising the question of how the dichotomy of dis/ability exists when one creates the other and what are the implications.

To expand on this concept question, the question of 'what is disability' is important and can be answered through disablism. Barnes (2020) expands the social model of disability, which essentially constructed the notion that there is a physical reality that can be understood as function-specific and as impairment, while disability is when the body meets barriers within society. The process outlined by Barnes (2020) goes according to the following formation of disablement, in which a body meets socially and culturally built aspects which may create social, economic, and cultural barriers. This has shaped disability studies, human rights, and legislation and impacted the lives of many persons with disabilities (Barnes, 2020) as it connects to the notion by Barnes (2020) in which they state that "impairment may be a human constant but 'disability' need or should not be." Therefore, disablism involves interaction, and disability becomes more than the body; it is a matter of interactions with one's environment.

Brueggemann et al. (2005, pg.15) stated that there is a need for the "redefining and reimagining" of disability in which it is "not made to go away" but it must not "remain with its stigmatic force". This statement mentioned earlier captures the stigmatic force that is attached to disability that needs deconstruction and reconstruction of conceptualizations while calling for ensuring space for the lived realities of diverse bodies through acknowledgment and inclusion within society. Dis/ability is therefore understood through the dichotomy found within the concept itself, and as Goodley (2014) highlights, understandings of ability and

disability are negotiated within the contexts of history and society, such as citizenship requiring the notion of ability and its embodied conceptualizations. This then defines disablism, and as highlighted earlier, can function with a stigmatic force that attaches itself to the lives of persons in society and actively functions when a factor or being is identified through disability. In addition, disablism by Barnes (2020) is outlined as a complex form of oppression, and Goodley (2014) addresses this complexity through the various perspectives that intertwine and exist connected to disablism, including the realities of bodies, barriers, experience, and implication of pain, intersectionality, Othering and impairment as a private lived experience while disablism is the public manifestation. These factors introduced are particularly crucial as they hold lived and physical beings as well as the positioning of one's being and identity within societal conceptualizations and the environment itself.

Goodley (2017) notes the concept of a fluid social body, implying with it Goodley's notions of how one's existence and the body, as well as dis/ability, is conceptualized when the self and society interact in which the questions of embodiment and value exist through the questions of what is a body that matters and how personal methodologies of oneself inevitably are created through the dominant discourses. Highlighting this entirety of thought by Goodley (2014) is crucial in understanding where dis/ability, disablism and ablism present themselves. Disablism acts as the constraint of these methodologies. At the same time, dis/ability implicates societal being, and the enactment of binary being and ableism can be expanded based on the question of value.

Goodley (2014) defines *ableism* as 'possessive' as it exists through 'clinging to its own.' This word choice aligns with how Goodley (2014) defines ableism as privileging able-bodiedness. Ablism is framed by Goodley (2014) to function as a system and creates epistemic invalidation through Othering. Additionally, it frames ableism as a 'process and fantasy' in which all partake in, including internalized ableism for individuals marginalized through the process and by the fantasies. Situating these into society allows for a further understanding of the processes and fantasies that they manifest. Ablism is most relevant and visible when imagining a 'citizen'; what does it entail and who is a 'citizen' including 'psychological, social, economic and cultural character' (Goodley, 2014).

Barnes (2020) discusses how notions of industrial capitalism have set 'targets' and when this leads to "fear and prejudice with larger structural forces," it situates individuals to make sense of themselves and their role in society through ableist foundations. Additionally, the materialist worldview showcases the manifestation of ableism as it prioritizes profit more than equality and social justice (Barnes, 2020), allowing space for decision and moral making

based on normative outlines. Goodley (2014) also discusses the impact of neoliberalism, transhumanism, and the colonial manner of ableist knowledge. This is expanded through how neoliberalism functions on the ideas of "smooth personhood" and "smooth health" and for society is a space for normative citizens (Goodley, 2014), which attempts to showcase the obsession of body and biology that is politized in addition to lived realities.

Returning to the statement by Brueggemann et al. (2005) and the expanded thoughts on dis/ability, disablism, and ableism, it showcases the complexity of what disability is and its presence as an "enigma" (Vehmas & Watson, 2020). Compiling these perspectives, both ableism and disablism function as concrete actions and processes that are imposed and impact personal methodologies of becoming and being. Therefore, an individual must situate themselves according to ableist foundations and society as well as exist within varying conceptualizations of disability. However, as reminded by Brueggemann et al. (2005) in the phrase "not made to go away," a crucial aspect includes acknowledging lived realities and experiences while negotiating the constructed impacting conceptualizations and environments.

2.3 Intersectionality

Goethals et al. (2015) summarize intersectionality as "a central feminist concern about capturing multiple positionalities, placing an explicit focus on differences among social groups." Although established to voice the interlink between feminism and black civil rights in the US (Goodley, 2014), intersectionality relates to disability through understanding "disability as a site of otherness and marginality" (Goodley, 2017). When reflecting upon disability studies, it calls for intersectionality in various ways, the first being for disability to be included within the rhetoric of intersectionality (Wickenden, 2023), the second for disability studies to engage with intersectional understandings of identity and bodies (Goethals et al., 2015) and the final one being a call for disability studies to embody intersectional identities and bodies as a field (Bells, 2006).

As mentioned, Wickenden (2023) discusses the absence of disability in the "rhetoric of disability," attempting to emphasize the importance of identifying "identity as heterogenous and flexible or shifting phenomena for all." This attempts to situate disability as a "rhetoric" that fits within this fluid understanding of identity and, therefore, impacts various individuals, which is supported as well by Goodley (2014), in which it is expanded that "not all experience disablism all are plunged into the mire of ableism." Upon reflection, this showcases the nature of intersectionality as a practice from which to reflect upon the impact

of thought and action on various identities and bodies. Goodley (2014) states that disability includes and is a part of intersectional understanding by stating that the impact of various identities and bodies is connected through “bodies” which “buck the normative” as well as establishing the existence of “mutually constitutive discourses.”

Goethals et al. (2015) bring up the duality of disability studies in having and being an active voice for persons with disabilities while highlighting that disability studies has and tends to “essentialize the category of people with a disability.” Goethals et al. (2015) state that disability itself is a plurality, and when reflecting upon the thought of Wickenden (2023) about intersectionality highlighting ‘similarities, contrasts, and power gradients,’ it could be gathered that the plurality of disability stems as well from these intersectional aspects impacting understandings of disability and being. Additionally, it is highlighted how simultaneous privilege and oppression can be (Goethals et al., 2015), shifting the lens through which to reflect as identities are understood with more nuance and complexity. Wickenden (2023) highlights the vital remark regarding the fact that disability, like other markers and embodied identities, can be overfocused on or underrecognized. This highlights the complexity of enacting intersectional thinking and being, as it challenges reliance on knowledge of plurality and ignorance, simultaneously with the possibility of action engaging with both perspectives.

Additionally, the disability studies itself as a field acts as a place of reflection regarding the enactment of intersectional thinking and action as Bell (2006) challenged the field by naming it ‘White disability studies’ to call attention to the lack of intersectional understandings and experiences of disability in both conducting research and the focus of research itself. Bell (2006) highlights that disability studies has followed along with other academic disciplines. However, it states that the understanding of “more on the inside than the outside” should be reflected within research. Current positionality lacks in providing space for this notion, not by diminishing the experiences but by highlighting that the lack of positionality impacts wider and intersectional understandings of disability and bodies.

The specific expansion of intersectionality felt crucial in order to ensure more space for intersectional thinking in reflection and showcasing the various aspects in which intersectionality presents itself as a fundamental and necessary foundation for understanding and imagining conceptualizations of disability. For this literature review, understanding intersectionality within disability studies calls for similar reflections in education as well as

transparency of positionality for disability studies as an active field functioning in an interdisciplinary manner.

2.4 The existing sub-field: Disability Studies in Education

Having covered various concepts of critical disability studies in the sections above, which function as the fundamental core of the field and from which reflection is done, one can begin to question how this relates to education. This section is titled the “*existing sub-field*,” as when searching literature about critical disability studies and its connection to education, disability studies in education as a formal field emerges. Baglieri et al. (2011) introduce disability studies in education (DSE) as a field in the United States that captures perspectives by many educators but has formalized through special educators aiming to reflect upon education itself and, therefore, its sub-field of special education. Valle and Connor (2019), in their book ‘Rethinking Disability: A disability studies approach to inclusive practices,’ concentrate on praxis for implementing DSE and include a synthesis of disability studies in education as a field. This synthesis outlines formulations informed through disability studies on the tenets of the field, which Valle and Connor (2019, pg.274) list in the following way: “To engage in research, policy, and action that:

- Contextualize disability within political and social spheres.
- Privilege the interest, agendas, and voices of people labeled with disability/disabled people
- Promote social justice, equitable and inclusive educational opportunities, and full and meaningful access to all aspects of society for people labeled with disability/disabled people.
- Assume competence and reject deficit models of disability.”

When reflecting upon the Valle & Connor (2019) tenets of the field concerning research, theory, and practice, it becomes evident that the field of DSE focuses heavily on the foundations from which to construct education as well as where to situate dis/ability and experiences of persons with disabilities. Additionally, the reason researchers and special educators such as Connor (2020) elaborate their process for engaging with DSE stems from working within education and reflecting upon epistemological foundations of the special education field due to noticing the impact of students who were considered a part of special education. The tenets of disability studies in education, when reflecting upon other literature within DSE, showcase interesting factors, such as a heavy focus on reflecting upon special

education and its impact on the notions of general education. Additionally, the various praxis grounded in DSE and critical disability studies concern education in general, yet research seems to situate within the sub-field of special education. Overall, this formalized field, which focuses on including concrete praxis, provides an interesting reference point to reflect upon the possibilities of critical disability studies in education for Finland.

3 Context of Finnish education and inclusion

Having expanded on the theoretical foundations of disability studies and how it has begun to formalize within educational research and practices provides a starting point for imagining disability studies as an active interdisciplinary field and foundation for praxis. To further the utilization and active interaction of disability studies, it is valuable to reflect upon the research and theoretical foundations of the Finnish educational system. Without contextualizing, research may not reveal enough of the change disability studies enact or praxis and research already being done that embodies the intentions of critical disability studies within education. To allow for reflection, this section will introduce the surrounding structures of primary education in Finland and the impacting values shaping the role of education.

The fundamental aspect of the Finnish educational system is the core connection to the welfare state through the principle of access to education for all that is to be financed by the public sector, as established by (Pynnönen et al., 2022). Additionally, the minimal standardized testing throughout school inclusion is a significant defining factor in the education structure (Pynnönen et al., 2022). The author links the concept of equality as a core value that has impacted education's role within Finnish society, which has, with time, shifted more into the conceptualization of equity, seen in educational reforms. Although the conceptualizations have evolved, both have been connected to the notion of universalized education that provides an understanding of knowledge, one's society, and the world (Pynnönen et al., 2022).

The value of equality and now equity is a byproduct of what has been deemed as an overarching idea of supporting an individual's growth into an active citizen (Pynnönen et al., 2022). This requires understanding what constitutes an active citizen, which is influenced by society's values. One of the most significant influencing factors is increasing neoliberal politics within Finland, in which one significant stand of thought involves minimizing the

public sector influence (Pynnönen et al., 2022). Flem et al. (2021) summarize the neoliberal ideology as one in which people are central to outcomes within society and their lives, including their societal position. When reflecting upon the neoliberal discourse within Finland, the question of what constitutes an active citizen arises. With principles of the welfare state still in place and the value of equality and equity, one could base conceptualizations of an active citizen on these. However, as discussed by Gonçalves and Ikävalko (2022), the current constructs of an active citizen is one who will carry responsibility for oneself and their well-being. Additionally, the principle of becoming an active citizen through education includes the notion of education constituting skills and knowledge for one to actively contribute through the workforce into society (Gonçalves & Ikävalko, 2022).

An important aspect of reflecting upon the neoliberal values emerging with force within the Finnish political environment is due to research by Pihl et al. (2018), which aimed to analyze discourses of marginalization and that there was a significant ableist discourse present within education systems that enacted marginalization within and due to education. This raises concern as Flem et al. (2021) highlight how oppression cannot be dismantled through neoliberal atmospheres. Marginalization is outlined as a concept with a range of conceptualizations that focus on whether an individual is devalued and dismissed within society or in correlation to the conceptualizations of active citizens (Mowat, 2015). At the center of conceptualizations of marginalization are the focuses on individual and joined conceptualization as marginalization actualizes in relation to the individual's experience (Mowat, 2015). Messiou (2012) highlights that marginalization may consist of jointly defined forms of marginalization, actions leading to marginalization for individuals, and subjective interpretations for varying individuals in which certain circumstances and experiences are elaborated as marginalizing. In addition to marginalization as a concept relating to various aspects within and regarding society, it relates to education, usually linked to concepts such as power, justice, equality, equity, participation, agency, exclusion, and inclusion (Mowat, 2015). Messiou (2012) also introduces how marginalization within and due to education could focus on inclusive education as a crucial aspect for addressing marginalization as well as ensuring and providing space for inclusion.

To reflect upon these changes, Qvortrup and Qvortrup (2018) outline inclusion in praxis as including levels of inclusion, arenas of inclusion, and degrees of inclusion. This situates inclusion into a cross-cutting and complex concept that can be enacted in various forms. The degrees of inclusion situate inclusion as one that exists in various capacities and can ebb and

flow. In contrast, the arenas of inclusion introduce the idea that in various relationships, systems, and communities, inclusion can be enacted differently, even in simultaneous situations (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). For this literature review, reflecting through the levels of inclusion and utilizing the other dimensions are valuable as the levels account for the following: numeric, social, and psychological, which all include aspects of whether social participation occurred and if students experience a sense of belonging (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). Additionally, throughout reflections, inclusion will also be reflected from a societal aspect and how education impacts societal inclusion due to Mietola (2018) highlighting how the school has been deemed fundamental to childhood and youth and, therefore, connects the school and education to a wider understanding of personhood, development, and society. This connects education to matters of inclusion outside of school practice and experience.

As mentioned earlier, within the introduction, one of the most explicit ways Finland has claimed to address inclusion has been through special education and now the three-tiered system of support. The intention was to remove the dual system of special education and general education, resulting in a spectrum of support varying from general, intensified, and special support, from which special support requires a formal decision and an individual educational plan (Chong, 2016). This system of support has been significantly connected to inclusion, as mentioned, and therefore, the discussion of inclusion is also connected to the systems of support in place. Niemi and Mietola (2023) highlight that the transition to the three-tiered support system does indeed rather reproduce the dichotomy of special education and general education in a hidden manner, causing inclusion to ‘fail’ in public discussion. Additionally, Niemi and Mietola (2023) highlight that the inclusion discussion following this three-tiered system of support has led to a debate on whether inclusion works or not and raising the concern that this does not correlate with signed legislation and human rights as well as the history of inclusion which is directly related to the actualization of rights for persons with disabilities.

Overarching educational policies are summarized and conceptualized in the National Core Curriculum, which serves as guidelines for educational and pedagogical decision-making as well as leading values within education (Tervasmäki, 2022). The author conducted a discourse analysis on the national core curriculum regarding inclusion with a focus on ablism and the rights of persons with disabilities. This research showcased that inclusion was mentioned explicitly once and connected to developing basic education as well as accessibility and eliminating barriers, as described by Tervasmäki (2022). The author outlines how the national

core curriculum further constructs ability expectations, allows space for integration and segregation, provides more specific knowledge and skills criteria requirements for students, and lacks explicit mention of dis/ability-awareness in content. Additionally, Tervasmäki (2022) discusses how inclusion has been linked to success and actualizing of a skillset rather than the activism-based foundation of inclusions, which provides an interesting reflection point on whether the earlier popular perspective of inclusion works or does not. This raises the question of whether inclusion can work if it is situated incorrectly.

To conclude, expanding the Finnish context to which critical disability studies will be further connected, it is necessary to include the experiences of students with disabilities as the main foundation for reflection and change. Niemi (2021) outlines how the narratives of support within school and society have led to negative experiences even after actions taken by Finland, and the number of students in segregated and integrated learning groups/schools has not changed over time either. A concerning aspect highlights a significant gap between the actualization of rights for children with disabilities and daily occurrences in which education does not include opportunities for belonging and participation (Pekkarinen & Schalin, 2020). Other aspects that came up in reports are the designs of classrooms, such as poorly executed large, shared classroom spaces; lack of skills and exclusive attitudes from working staff, especially in 'general education' staff; bureaucratic battles for necessary support; lack of resource allocation as well as general education not constituting as a safe learning environment for students with disabilities mostly due to attitudinal barriers (Pekkarinen & Schalin, 2020).

Overall, these expansions of the Finnish context provide a starting point for reflections and themes which arise such as neoliberal tensions and values, pedagogical decisions (including three-tiered support), attitudes and consistent gaps between expressed intentions and realities provide focus points for possible emerging viewpoints through critical disability studies.

4 Possibilities of disability studies in education

4.1 DSE As a means to address epistemic injustice

To begin, I will utilize the notion discussed in the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' by Freire (2000), which emphasizes that human nature entails subjectivity, and due to this, when outlining and building foundations for reflecting the world and its history, Freire emphasizes that subjectivity carries weight in change and knowledge. This notion is closely linked to

epistemic injustice, which, as summarized by Omodan (2023), can be viewed as a form of exclusion and injustice related to power and reinforced by power impacting the formation and value of knowledge. Additionally, the author in detail expresses the various forms of how epistemic injustice manifests itself within education which all link to the “devaluation or dismissal of their knowledge and perspectives” (Omodan, 2023, p. 1)

4.1.1 Impact of epistemic injustice

Expanding it into concrete manifestations is crucial to further reflect on epistemic injustice.

Omodan et al. (2023) discuss the following aspects within their research:

- Biased curriculum design
- Discriminatory pedagogical practices
- Unequal distribution of resources and opportunities.
- Limited representation and recognition of diverse knowledge, systems, and perspectives
- Differential treatment

With initial reflection, the tenets of disability studies in education listed by Valle & Connor (2019) seem to represent oppositional approaches to the following aspects of how epistemic injustice manifests. The question then lies in how epistemic injustice manifests itself within Finnish education. The first and core instance of epistemic injustice is a statement made by Teittinen & Vesala (2022) in which they elaborate on how education is constructed on the conditions of persons without disabilities, and this implies epistemic justice as Omodan (2023) discusses how there is a prioritization of dominant cultural narratives within education. This leads to a question: if education is built without the conditions of persons with disabilities, is education just to any capacity concerning persons with disabilities? A concerning reality of this is the discussion synthesized by Niemi and Mietola (2023) on how inclusion is debated as something in public discussion that is either successful or not. It would seem valuable not to dismiss the advocacy of persons with disabilities by questioning their ask. This would frame inclusion as a requirement and one that cannot be questioned on whether it exists, which has also solidified itself as a stance since Finland’s ratification in 2016 of the UNCRPD (Niemi, 2021) discussed in the introduction.

Continuing from this perspective, understanding of dis/ability seems to play a key role how society responds to enacting and ensuring justice for persons with disabilities, as it shapes the perspectives from which individual and society act upon in all interactions. Referring to section 2 in this literature review which outlines general conceptualisations as well as

highlights the plurality of how dis/ability is conceptualized and understood highlights that society negotiates between.

The main site in which dis/ability has been conceptualized within education is in special education praxis and special pedagogy, which create understandings of dis/ability within education that stem from the sub-field. Vehmas (2005) summarizes the extensive history and foundations of special education and the role of its conceptualization of dis/ability within education. Although the selected book 'Vammaisuus: Johdanto historian, teoriaan ja etiikkaan,' which covers the historical, theoretical, and ethical aspects of dis/ability written in 2005, research such as Niemi and Mietola (2023) and Honkasilta and Vaahtera (2022) discuss similar conceptualization and perspectives present within education currently in a more implicit manner.

The conceptualization of disability and embodied lives persons with disabilities have been allowed to live have been significantly defined by the field of special pedagogy and education since the 1800s, as established by Vehmas (2005). This knowledge is particularly insightful when reflecting upon how special pedagogy as a field does not formally classify itself as a field of study for dis/ability or the learning of persons with disabilities, but this is where studies and research have been situated (Vehmas, 2005). However, as Vehmas (2005) outlines, special pedagogy and its foundation are based on supporting students with individual difficulties in regard to defined traits that impact their education and learning. This raises concerning evidence that this defined field itself situates disability within research rather than education itself, which can be reflected in how this literature review would differ in positionality if it was written under the sub-field of special pedagogy. More importantly, this situation and positionality question arises that even with formal shifts to inclusive structures away from the strict duality model of education, the signal of where the research originates impacts who utilize research and where to situate dis/ability and, therefore, persons with disabilities. A viewpoint on a possible reality would be constituting and situating disability in fields such as multicultural education (Naraian, 2021), allowing for dis/ability to exist when and where it relates and naturally situates.

Through critical disability studies, it becomes established through the resistance and activism to the deficit and medical models of disability that not all conceptualizations of disability dismantle and prevent the reproduction of epistemic injustice. Hämeenaho and Komulainen (2019) outline that these paradigms are crucial and present in education. One crucial aspect, as pointed out by Schalk (2017), is the synthesis of Bell Hooks' notion of how margins play the defining role of privileged space. This places each model and paradigm of disability into a

reflection of what is margins and what constitutes the center. The very act of reflection showcases the ways epistemic injustice occurs. One could then question how the utilization of models such as the medical model is justified if reflection showcases to be contributing directly to epistemic injustice. Therefore, the above-mentioned question regarding special pedagogy and its epistemological foundation has become a critical concern through critical disability studies-based reflections. This is due to how the field utilizes the fields of medicine and psychology conceptualizations as a rationale and justification for the morality of the field (Vehmas, 2005).

Additionally, extending dis/ability away from particular traits or aspects often connected in education to each other. A wider reflection is valuable to look further than what has been constructed regarding dis/ability in education. Goodley (2017) discusses the fluidity of disability and uses the concepts of ‘noticed’ and ‘hidden’ according to the various environments in which one exists. The author expands the discussion to highlight that the nature of dis/ability is more complicated and plural due to its connected notions, which are the impact of dis/ability conceptualizations in relation to material bodies. Therefore, this relates to a more cautionary reflection for education to avoid essentializing disability within constructing disability in education. It raises the perspective to imagine situating dis/ability-related studies only into special pedagogy or a specific field of study when it presents itself in such a variety of ways that extend beyond the individuals’ embodied body mind and, therefore, would be confined and restricted when not allowed a horizontal model of reflection (Brueggemann et al., 2005).

4.1.2 Addressing epistemic injustice

With these initial reflections on epistemic injustice and its manifestation, it becomes crucial to theorize the current and the possibilities for action and change in addressing the injustice. At the very core, there is a requirement for reframing knowledge regarding the manifestations of epistemic injustices. To begin reframing knowledge, Freire (2000, pg. 43) beautifully provides a concrete line of action:

“Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as a historical reality.”

This quote captures a call to form a concern, the act of beginning to question and reflect on how dis/ability is situated and spaces for emancipatory being for persons with disabilities

within education. This concern and questioning begin the recognition of injustice as one that exists and is present throughout the past, which has also served the current realities. This impact creates a different environment in which one or a society consciously chooses not to act upon the perspectives and experiences of dehumanization.

For recognition to take place, critical disability studies emphasize the focus should move from ‘the abled’ to ‘the disabled’ as highlighted by Goodley (2017), in order for all individuals of society to be able to reflect inherently first the ableist ideal, which forms and reinforces the notion of disability. The value of this arises from a perspective brought to light by Friedman (2019), which highlights how narratives of disability currently ‘are reflection points for non-disabled.’ This insight remains problematic and unjust as then disability narratives are for the privileged instead of embodied voices and insights that would be allowed to exist and form into knowledge and praxis rather than a constant oppositional entity.

When it comes to praxis, questions of conceptualizations of dis/ability and, therefore, persons with disabilities become relevant for how people enact inclusion within education (Takala et al., 2023) and therefore, inclusion being enacted gains legitimacy through knowledge and how it has been formed as it is seen in actions of individuals and society. Omodan (2023) reveals that addressing epistemic injustice, therefore, requires transformative action throughout education, and central to this seems to become factors such as avoiding ‘epistemological modesty’ in order to allow for knowledge to be and most importantly, environments and structures such as teacher education (Narain, 2021) classrooms including pedagogy (Omodan, 2023) seeks to change with this knowledge shift for justice and inclusion to occur.

4.2 DSE As social justice and inclusion.

4.2.1 Sites of marginalization, exclusion and injustice

Connecting back to section 3, which discusses the Finnish context and the experiences of learners with disabilities, it remains crucial to open the discussion to other questions regarding social justice and inclusion that extend further from epistemic matters. Therefore, this section extends to the manifestations of epistemic injustice and how they reproduce marginalization, exclusion, and injustice. Goodley (2014) establishes how the tensions between the two are ‘judged according to the concept of an ideal individual and do not match the ideal.’ When judgment becomes a site of oppression, the implicit and explicit principles of Finnish education also are sites of oppression based on how a student is defined and assessed and how their learning is reflected in these intended outcomes of education. Understanding how sites

of marginalization, exclusion, and injustice take form is vital in the beginning of dismantling structures and ableist action.

Rutherford (2023) synthesizes various research on the experiences of students with disabilities, forming various themes that become sites of marginalization, exclusion, and justice. Similar experiences were established by Pekkarinen and Schalin (2020), Teittinen and Vesala (2022) and Niemi (2021) contains similar experiences of education and schooling. The following themes were established by Rutherford (2023) through the section titles:

- Disability: a bad thing?
- Inclusive education?
- School cultures
- Teachers' values, beliefs, and assumptions
- Pedagogical practices
- "Special" education practices
- Support: helping, hovering, or hindering?
- Friends matter
- The essence of students' experiences

Within these themes arose various experiences of how school and education have marginalized or excluded students and shaped the negotiation of their identities as individuals and learners. These various titles included perspectives on (Rutherford, 2023):

- how dis/ability was discussed and viewed
- how inclusive education forms through the other mentioned themes
- the impact of school culture and how dis/ability has space within it
- the role of teachers through their pedagogy as well as their ideologies
- the separation of 'special' and 'normal'
- culture of support
- social aspects of education and how dis/ability impacts friendships.
- How the experience of schooling was connected to and shaped through the injustice and equity present within education

These perspectives all link to elements of social justice, understanding of inclusion, and various barriers and tensions within education. To expand on these the following sections will expand the themes in connection to Finnish education.

4.2.2 Social justice and inclusion

Discussions surrounding the concepts of inclusion and social justice have been done throughout this literature review; therefore, this section will instead reflect upon the experiences and messages of education that students receive or internalize. Hämeenaho and Komulainen (2019) discuss inclusive education as how an education system allows students to learn within their social learning environment in schools and supports students in encountering and understanding diversity. The author emphasizes that inclusion forms through the idea that each student is a diverse student with diverse needs. The experiences of students with disabilities (Niemi, 2021; Rutherford, 2023; Pekkarinen & Schalin, 2020) show that for students to learn and be active as members of society, it would require space within mentalities, values, and their environment. With space, the possibility to be learners and individuals of society as students with diverse needs amongst all students rather than students with ‘additional’/‘special’ needs.

Niemi and Mietola (2023) discuss how students feel safer and more accepted within special education classrooms regarding peers and staff. This does highlight that a student experiences inclusion; however, rather than accepting segregation as a means of actualizing an inclusive and safer learning environment, education should engage with addressing how classrooms for everyone are unable to create an inclusive environment, as Vehmas (2005) discusses that special education in its segregated form is still individuals and teachers but ones labeled “special” either in their professional skillsets or as learners.

Expanding their thought, Vehmas (2005) brings about how the use of ‘special’ implies that a ‘normal’ teacher or ‘normal’ students are unable to due to reaching their limitations of creating learning environments for ‘special’ learners. Rather than a justification, reflecting through critical disability studies, it paints education as attempting to avoid confronting ableism through disablism notions of creating an inability. Additionally, the use of ‘disability’ and ‘education’ appears synonymously with ‘special’ discourses within recent literature and in regular conversations (Connor, 2013). One might question how ‘disability’ is special, which would then also frame ‘special’ through disablism as it relates to inability. Rutherford (2023) titles a sub-theme as a question: ‘Disability A bad thing?’. As Vehmas (2005) outlines, the notion of ‘special’ arises from a negative deficit connotation and contributes to an oppressive power structure. Since disability within education seems to co-exist with ‘special,’ it establishes disability as a ‘bad thing’ in Finnish education. This situates the Finnish three-tiered support model in a concerning position as one of the spectrum of support still outlines

special support, showcasing that it has not been moved away from even with the change from the dual division and terminology changes along the way (Niemi & Mietola, 2023).

Reflecting upon how the Finnish educational system has moved away from a dual system, it seems concerning that this dual division persists and could be seen in Takala et al. (2022), which showcases how teachers within education resist the notion of inclusion based on their competency, concerns for the learning of ‘general’ students and ‘special’ students as well as lack of working time and resources. This highlights how inclusive education and experiences of inclusion within education connect heavily to viewpoints of exclusion. Necessary resource allocation and working time are necessary for policy to ensure a space for inclusion in education. However, within the Finnish discourses, this seems to overshadow that regardless, the right to inclusion remains, one of which is harmed by the ableist discourses.

These perspectives of ‘special,’ diversity, and inclusion relate to friends and school culture heavily as they showcase the discourses present in school, allowing for experiences such as ableist behavior in students and staff and without an anti-ableist school culture (Rutherford, 2023) one could theorize that accountability will lack allowing for marginalization and exclusion to take place and reinforcing oppressive structures formed and upheld due a culture which does not actively resist.

As Finnish education bases its’ values on equity, as seen in section 3, it calls for reflection on matters of justice. Justice can be seen as connected to emancipation because it represents ‘social transformation’ (Ibsen, 2023). The author continues by stating that the object of emancipation is related to shifting positionality of status and relationships relevant to individuals and groups. Ibsen (2023) reminds us that abolition and recreation are necessary for emancipation and, therefore, inclusion could occur. Brueggemann et al. (2005) continue the discussion by emphasizing how dis/ability requires not a formulation of ‘mea culpa’ and confessions of future willingness for change but rather concrete actions based on social justice and active response to calls of persons with disabilities for justice and inclusion.

4.2.3 Barriers and tensions

Rutherford (2023) outlines how teachers and pedagogical practices, including special education, act as barriers for students with disabilities and their learning and embodiments of a student. The similar perspectives of special pedagogy/education, individualization, and resistance of teachers are the core of this section as well and rather continue from the section

on social justice and inclusion to highlight their role as either a barrier or a tension within the field between the rights of persons with disabilities and current education.

One aspect is how support could act as 'helping, hovering or hindering' according to Rutherford (2023), which, when mirroring accounts of students within systems of support, showcases how the manner of support did act as a barrier to their learning as well (Niemi, 2021; Rutherford, 2023; Pekkarinen & Schalin, 2020).

As support within education in Finland is a part of mainstream education due to legislative positioning, the call for addressing the 'yucky stuff' within 'normal' environments would allow for not a formality of change but one that allows it to take place (Brueggemann et al., 2005). This positively would align with the challenge of inclusion being faced in Finland as it has not been able to actualize due to systematic changes without further commitments (Niemi & Mietola, 2023).

The 'yucky stuff' notion by Brueggemann et al. (2005) returns the conversation to the general/special education dichotomy that arises consistently. In addition to epistemic injustice and terminology of the field, it is crucial to describe the tension this dichotomy creates in the Finnish education environment. Even with changes in support systems (Niemi, 2021), tensions arise due to the extensive historical connection to societal control and selection mechanisms utilized in education structures (Vehmas, 2005). Takala and Hausstätter (2012) highlight how Finland's focus in the past has been on the 'right to learn but not participate.' Therefore, it could be considered that even in the present, there are similar tensions between control and one participating in learning, as reflections on the current national core curriculum still emphasize support for learning necessary skills and knowledge (Tervasmäki, 2022).

4.2.4 Enacting social justice and inclusion

To briefly summarize how disability studies in education can address social justice and inclusion, the sub-sections above have established both sites of marginalization, exclusion, and oppression and situated them into the current Finnish educational system. However, to achieve active contribution to justice and inclusion establish an intentional praxis (Freire, 2000).

An intentional praxis can begin with little. One aspect of this praxis is the very act of including persons with disabilities, which would actualize justice and inclusion with time. (Brueggemann et al., 2005) The other is allowing dis/ability to be a possibility for learning and reconstruction rather than something to include (Goodley, 2017). These highlight the

possibility that a praxis of social justice and inclusion requires a willingness and possibility to transform and further enact itself from this starting point.

4.3 DSE As a critical viewpoint and foundation for teacher education

Having reflected on literature showcasing education in society and a field of study through epistemic injustice, social justice, and inclusion, it becomes apparent that critical disability studies literature does not expand only to horizontal knowledge-related matters. However, specific themes are deemed central, such as teacher education. Rutherford (2023) and other authors (Ashby, 2012; Gilham, 2016; Kofke & Morrison, 2021; Morton et al., 2023; Naraian, 2021) concretely establish reimagining teacher education as a key means for responding to the experiences of students with disabilities in education concerning epistemic injustice, social justice, and inclusion.

4.3.1 Situating dis/ability in teacher education

When conducting the literature review, the only literature found through the searches conducted included one journal article that explicitly highlighted disability studies in education and teacher education focused on inclusion within Finland (Hakala et al., 2018). However, disability studies has discussed teacher education as mentioned earlier when introducing section 4.3 it becomes apparent that it may be a reflection point for Finland. To examine, journal articles and books which contain discuss teacher education with similar educational contexts provide insight into earlier Finland-specific matters relating to dis/ability.

As described by Jakhelln et al. (2021), teacher education in Finland is provided to prepare teachers for 6–12-year-olds in primary education through the principles of research-based education with connections to questioning the field of study and the profession and classroom practice. Additionally, as outlined by Rutherford (2023), teacher education links strongly to epistemological matters, values and principles, and understandings of teaching in practice and, therefore, directs and reflects education itself as a field and its impact on society.

Therefore, this section of ‘Situating dis/ability in education’ is placed within teacher education as reflections will cover the various aspects where dis/ability actively situates.

Naraian (2021) discusses how literature in disability studies regarding teacher education has focused mainly on the following aspects:

- curricula built to support inclusion
- assumptions behind the field of special pedagogy
- absence of disability in mainstream teacher education discourses

- Curricula frameworks do not include a formal position for disability studies.
- Disability studies within teacher education and the field of education are unknown and inaccurately situated in the field of special pedagogy.

These aspects listed showcase that taking into account theoretical foundations and conceptualizations established in section 2 and experiences of students with disabilities in sections 3, 4.1, and 4.2, it becomes evident that the focus points of teacher education follow similar perspectives of how dis/ability lacks a position or is inaccurately positioned within the field of education and therefore, its research and practical takeaways for future teachers.

4.3.2 Teacher education and its impact

Siuty & Beneke (2020) state that for critical inclusion to be possible within education, teacher education must focus on ‘critical pedagogy, ablism, and oppression.’ Additionally, Connor (2013) emphasizes how every teacher is connected to dis/ability due to its link to normalcy and how these correlate to concepts of: ‘failure, instruction, the role of a teacher, the nature of learning, the purpose of schooling, concepts of dis/ability.’ As a teacher is connected to each of these aspects, the principle of intention being based on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control, which in turn will shape action situates teacher education as the preface to how pre-service teacher acts inclusively in-service known as Theory of Planned Behaviour or ‘TPB’ (Urton et al., 2023).

Flem et al. (2021) discuss how individuals working in a field are connected and formed through their environments and related values, which impacts their relation to dominant social systems. Additionally, the author highlights an example of social work, which, like education, involves a space and role that requires consciousness of oneself as an individual relates and expands to represent and shape larger conceptualizations of the world that one’s own identity and being. This showcases how one within teacher education enters not with a blank slate but rather with life experiences and epistemological foundations shaping action. As teaching is political (Lingard & Keddie, 2013), the previous intentions established, depending on where these intentions are situated, may reproduce or resist ableist notions and social change (Morton et al., 2023). However, Lingard & Keddie (2013, pg.444) highlight that for social change to occur, the school must be seen as a “site of contestation, resistance, and possibility for equity and justice,” implying that social change requires certain consciousness before entering the classroom, which teacher education can act as the space for.

Considering the Finnish educational system, Takala et al. (2022) showcase that within Finland, many pre-service teachers have negative conceptualizations and dispositions regarding inclusive education, which, when connected to critical disability studies and the rights of persons with disabilities, is concerning. Additionally, several of these dispositions highlight the division of students into 'special' and 'normal'; concerns about resources and teacher well-being first, lack of hope in enacting inclusion, questioning lack of competence for teaching when including students with 'special' needs (Takala et al., 2022).

Not all dispositions explicitly connect to disablism and ablism; however, actively separating into 'special' and 'normal' are explicit, as is the viewpoint on the lack of competence and confidence in gaining competence for 'special' students, which showcases unwillingness and detachment to the commitment a teacher has to teacher their students. Concerns of resources and teacher well-being are valid and crucial to inclusion itself. However, this being a leading concern when discussing inclusion raises questions on whether the priority should be ensuring inclusion for students while criticizing structures that create a lack of resources and lower teacher well-being. Overall, this showcases that within teacher education, there would be significant opportunities and necessity for addressing inclusion, conceptualizations of dis/ability, and how it impacts students with disabilities.

4.3.3 Inclusive teacher education

To support pre-service teachers in becoming inclusive, following the same principle of TPB concerning inclusion showcases that teacher educators and teacher education must be inclusive. One key aspect highlighted by Siuty and Beneke (2020) is that teacher education only includes persons with dis/abilities. Significant barriers exist in accessing reasonable accommodation and stigma held by faculty members. Katsui (2022) situates this as a reality within Finnish universities while reminding us that it is an individual human right. To begin creating inclusive pre-service teachers, disability studies highlight a call for teacher education itself to become inclusive and consider the possibilities of disability studies in higher education.

Pugach et al. (2020) state that a starting point for teacher education is a close reflection on the dis/ability-related discourses to be able to identify and ensure that dis/ability studies can be found in an embedded and horizontal manner through the field. Additionally, Pugach et al. (2020) should engage in dialogue with one another: "social justice and multicultural education, academic curricular areas and special education," and there should be intention

behind discourse related to dis/ability and social justice. In addition, Siuty and Beneke (2020) discuss the concern for lack of engagement with dis/ability within critical education.

Reflecting upon the impact, opportunities arise to ensure clear value-based decisions that will reflect the entire faculty as a joined formal approach. This is important for dis/ability for it to be reflected accurately and in its multifaceted manner and connection to identity, culture, and materialized realities.

As an additional perspective, Naraiian (2021) discusses how teacher education could allow for a 'third space' to exist. By this, the author discusses allowing education to have space for reimagining and reconstruction by not operating in this third space with the duality of special education and inclusive education. This prospect seems to align significantly with critical disability studies' focus on having a willingness for radical change and reflection when necessary to be able to identify aspects of necessary deconstruction and change.

4.3.4 Addressing discourses and narratives of education

Within all the literature on teacher education, addressing discourses and narratives of education within teacher education shows to be crucial for students to begin reflecting from the lens that dis/ability studies provide and become aware of disablism and ablism within the systems they will operate in. Freire (2000) highlights that awareness of oppression is relevant for each person to understand the internalized oppression and how they perpetuate it. The interesting perspective this has is that it includes Freire's division of both the 'oppressed' and 'oppressor' to engage with critical reflection.

To begin reflection, some discourses and narratives can carry tensions within education or support reflection within teacher education. One key tension highlighted is how diversity and inclusion 'exist separately' too often, which leads inclusion to present itself as more connected to the term 'special' rather than diversity, even though inclusion itself connects to diversity (Gilham & Tompkins, 2016). Addressing this tension explicitly could provide opportunities for learning situational concepts and their impact. When this occurs, inclusion does not have the space for intersectionality as explained by Gilham and Tompkins (2016) but rather essentializes 'inclusion' and connects to the traditional understanding of 'special,' which do not ground themselves in perspectives from critical disability studies. If this tension can be accounted for, it allows for further reflection, and Ashby (2012) outlines key topics to include in education that would allow for dis/ability to play a role in shaping education:

- Dis/ability as a social construct

- Disability studies and the language of education
- Critical lens for considering the experience of oppression
- Challenging normalcy
- Decentering knowledge

Additionally, Schalk (2017) highlights that if education were to use (dis)ability within teacher education, it would pre-frame dis/ability as conceptually a topic that needs to be expanded and reflected upon pre-service teachers. This would apply the concern to all, and this stance would be that dis/ability could not function silently.

Ashby (2012) also elaborates how their teacher education has attempted to create space for these topics as well as dis/ability through creating teacher education as the ‘third space’ discussed by Naraiian (2021). This has been done by creating a singular program from which pre-service teachers gain double accreditations to work both as classroom teachers or special education teachers. Similar imaging of teacher education is not found within Finland in the literature searches. However, this reimagining seems valuable to include as a reflection point for Finnish teacher education for the possibility of reconstruction. This disruption of norms is supported by Pugach et al. (2020).

Supporting what this reimagining creates space for includes space for pre-service teachers to grow in recognizing dis/ability in a society that has been silent regarding it (Schalk, 2017) as well as to carry a willingness to rethink demands and ideals created and reinforced by them (Goodley, 2017). This connects to teaching through it being necessary then for teaching students to build an understanding that teaching basic education comes with the commitment to teaching every student and imagining a classroom for praxis should include all (Ashby, 2012). This praxis should include learning to avoid the concept of best practices and restrain from essentializing disability, as noted by Ashby (2012, pg.93) and further reinforced through their statement that “one student with autism knows one child with autism.” Additionally, Morton et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of teaching and that one must critique aspects of education that reinforce ableism and negative conceptualizations of dis/ability. This seems valuable for pre-service Finnish teachers to become active in ensuring the rights of students established in the UNCRPD, Salamanca statement, and the national core curriculum, as discussed in section 1.

The significant barrier to this within teacher education, as established by Ashby (2012), is the dissonance between reality and inclusive education, which can be seen within Finland through the narratives of teachers regarding their views on inclusion showcased by Saloviita (2018), as well as Takala et al. (2022) which situate to after the core curriculum change. This

dissonance raises a challenge, however, whether it should rather be viewed as an active resistance to ableism that enacts change with time. Overall, the perspectives related to the environment of teacher education are highlighted through the impact of fields of study within Finland. These various means of reimagining teacher education, including dis/ability visible, provide future reference points to imagining and specify possible shifts within Finnish teacher education.

4.4 DSE As praxis implemented in the classroom.

Valle and Connor (2019) throughout their book highlight and showcase that critical disability studies focuses on matter such as epistemic injustice, social justice and inclusion as well as teacher education, however, it also does provide a praxis which reaches into the classroom. Theorizing is valuable and reconstructing foundations as well when it reaches into the sites of marginalisation, exclusion and oppression. These sites occur through the praxis.

4.4.1 Reflection, deconstruction and reconstruction

Reflection itself is a praxis that teachers need (Morton et al., 2023). To enact praxis, one must be willing. Referring back to Takala et al. (2022), pre-service teachers hold significant negative attitudes towards inclusion, as well as fear for their workload, competency, and students' well-being, showcases to which Takala et al. (2022) that there seems to be 'little hope' in being able to implement theoretical foundations in praxis. Therefore, reflecting on the aspects of hope and other mentioned factors would be useful for teachers to situate themselves in indeed implementing praxis. Bruggemann et al. (2005) raise the viewpoint of human nature that one is limited to understanding others' lives and experiences, and therefore, humans function through wonder. Therefore, the process of wonder regarding dis/ability does exist (Bruggemann et al., 2005), but could framing and supporting this aspect of human nature allow for praxis? Teachers as individuals need to wonder and situate dis/ability into praxis according to the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities in addition to teachers themselves building a classroom in which wonder is processed and not given space to exist in a manner that excludes, marginalizes, or oppresses. This is supported by Gilham and Tompkins (2016) regarding how inclusive education is ongoing work and how power relations are addressed. Therefore, if inclusion through the degrees of inclusion introduced by Qvortrup and Qvortrup (2018) is implemented, it could allow for inclusion to be ongoing work in which it is enacted by actively becoming more inclusive.

Additionally, the experiences of students within the tiers of support outline that reflection would play a key role when teachers decide on support measures as some experienced factors such as bullying being a reason for segregated spaces (Niemi, 2021) and other individuals experienced how administrative formalities such as 'special support' connected their identity within education rather than connecting it to the learning support methods (Niemi, 2021; Siuty & Beneke, 2020). Reflection, deconstruction, and reconstruction arise as important within and during decision-making to ensure whether these decisions align with the rights of these students and their agency. Otherwise, these instances seem to leave significant room for teachers to make decisions also based on eliminating 'the situation', which, when it concerns the life of an individual should be weighed with a larger frame of reference in mind, especially with how critical disability studies highlights several experiences where justifications did not align with students.

4.4.2 Curricula and educating on diversity

Curricula shape education and inform classroom praxis within Finnish education and when, as highlighted by Tervasmäki (2022), establish how the national core curricula does not include dis/ability awareness and defining inclusion specifically to guideline-specific decision-making. This leaves significant autonomy for a teacher to include or exclude dis/ability focus within teaching, and considering the negative perspectives towards inclusion as well as disability (Saloviita, 2018), it raises the concern that teachers will not actualize what has been asked if they do not value it. This brings about a key possibility for readjusting curricula.

This extends the question of whether dis/ability is included within curricula and how dis/ability is discussed. In the current core curriculum, dis/ability is explicitly discussed only in health education; therefore, it is not even found in basic education for 6-12 years (Tervamäki, 2022). This is discussed through a medical paradigm due to its connection to health only. Therefore, this requires the implementation of dis/ability throughout the curricula following principles from earlier sections. This requires the creation of tangible aspects in what is taught about dis/ability as well as how a teacher accounts for dis/ability awareness through acknowledging and creating a safe space for students to have diverse accounts of dis/ability regarding personhood and humanity, oneself, their identities and material realities of the body, families, friendships and to as a teacher showcase and expect an inclusive and just discourse of dis/ability within the classroom (Flem et al., 2021; Rutherford, 2023).

One concrete approach that showcases the possibilities of critical disabilities in Finland is to address the effect of the way teachers discuss their capabilities to be dismissive and not encourage them to further their studies or work. At the same time, it still exists as the outcome set by education (Niemi, 2021). This resulted in students needing more inclusion in how they were perceived within the concept of capable (Niemi, 2021; Rutherford, 2023; Pekkarinen & Schalin, 2020). This is only one example, but literature such as Valle & Connor (2019) showcases praxis in a tangible manner that can hopefully be formed and created through research and dialogue within Finland regarding the areas of change needed.

4.4.3 Praxis of support, space for identity & learning

Finland has a praxis of support through the three-tiered system (recipe). However, the experiences of this praxis provide points for change within the system in addition to critical reflection on the system of support, which was discussed regarding social justice and inclusion in section 4.2. The experiences of support are seen in how many parents report that the attitudes and experiences of unskilled and unknowledgeable support within the mainstream classroom and the special support in less capacity negatively impact the learning of students with disabilities (Pekkarinen & Schalin, 2020). These experiences are important to deconstruct. The first is that the experiences of negative attitudes are established as a direct barrier to participating inclusively in education; this has to change within classroom teachers and staff as it is exclusive and marginalizing.

Additionally, the basis of being in segregated settings is understandable for preventing continuing exclusion, but one might question whether this creates genuine inclusion rather than distance from the problems. This also leaves the individual affected by marginalization and exclusion to deal with the consequences, as explained by (Niemi, 2021), where segregated spaces became the environment for learning and being in school regardless of 'normative' and 'mainstream' environments. This also showcases dis/ability and persons with disabilities being connected through experienced barriers and marginalization by the 'normal' or 'able,' which is discussed in section 2.

The second aspect of these experiences is the skillset of teachers in supporting students with disabilities. Segregated settings, as described by Niemi (2021), function with a different approach to pedagogy and learning, which allows students to be included as learners and in learning. Tervasmäki (2022) questions why the praxis of "special pedagogy" is seen as separate and cannot be defined as pedagogy, which forms the possibility of implementing

pedagogy in all circumstances and not according to formalized categories. This shift in narratives of pedagogy utilized is also supported by including them to actualize learning within curricula to solidify that there should not be a separate space where pedagogy allows inclusion to occur (Tervasmäki, 2022). This also contradicts Finnish education's commitment to inclusion in all learning settings.

Additionally, Brueggemann (2005) highlights that dis/ability itself build a 'model of interdependence'. This notion places support when framed and enacted in a manner that considers dis/ability that naturally allows for interdependence regarding learning as well. However, the experiences above and divisions of support do not seem to capture this interdependence which is framed through dis/ability as systems of support still disable.

This interdependence connects to identity as it relates to how an individual can embody a learner, an active citizen, and a human. As highlighted by Lingard & Keddie (2013), 'classrooms are confined to society' showcasing that education can reject disablism and become anti-ableist if society is too, as society determines education and society is students, teachers, and other stakeholders. The tension lies in the fact that education must reject disablism and become anti-ableist for society to become the same (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). However, this tension must be simultaneously addressed to allow learners to be diverse and to be viewed according to the ideals of education in a manner that does not exclude, marginalize, or oppress. Most important to praxis is that all action is routed in 'diversity creating a chance of emancipation' while ensuring that pedagogy is emancipatory itself, as discussed by Flem et al. (2021).

5 Discussion

Throughout this literature review, I have reflected upon education through the theoretical foundations of critical disability studies and DSE. A key focus point was the possibilities this reflection showcases for ensuring (disability) inclusive education. The attempt through the literature review was to capture the significant conceptualizations of critical disability studies such as dis/ability disablism, ablism, and intersectionality (Goodley, 2014) as well as the main notions and experiences of persons with disabilities in education and perspectives for education to include. Expanding these concepts was valuable as they framed the requirements for actualizing inclusive education and society. As Finland has committed to inclusion legislatively and the rights of persons with disabilities (Niemi, 2021) through various manners

covered in sections 1 and 3, it becomes apparent that dis/ability is a necessary point of reflection for Finnish education.

This literature review showcases a general reflection theme from which Finnish Education connects to or could further explicitly reflect on confronting ableism in education. With Finland actively engaging with themes of diversity and inclusion (Niemi & Mietola, 2023; Pynnönen et al., 2022), reflection upon dis/ability is necessary and justifies this literature review. Therefore, collecting literature involved literature from critical disability studies and Finnish education and its similar contexts. This literature outlined themes that can be seen in the named sections, which place disability studies in education as a means of addressing epistemic injustice, as social justice and inclusion, as a critical viewpoint and foundation for teacher education, and as a praxis implemented in the classroom (Valle & Connor, 2019). Through the literature review, it became apparent that these themes highlight several specific aspects within each from which future research and analysis could be conducted to establish which education areas require change and how.

However, although this research provides insight, it has limitations and aspects to consider. Much of the literature utilized synthesized perspectives of several other studies, allowing for deep analysis within points. However, the finding literature regarding Finnish education specifically could have been simpler. There was little research on either language with explicit use of ‘vammaiset henkilöt’/persons with disabilities, ableism, dis/ability showcasing that when dis/ability has been discussed, it has been done regarding specific matters or under the term ‘special.’ This showcases a limitation of what was found with the research methodology used and limited explicit research concerning dis/ability, especially regarding literature discussing ‘mainstream’ education.

As for how utilizing critical disability studies limited and narrowed this study through the core message of the field found in section 2. Critical disability studies can be summarized thoroughly as a field that calls for embedding in other fields to create space for dis/ability and persons with disabilities (Schildrick, 2013). Returning to the statement by Brueggemann et al. (2005, pg.15): “We want to redefine, to reimagine, disability - not make it go away. But also, not have it remain with its stigmatic force. So, we want it to go away in a way that we want it to go way” encapsulates that when using critical disability studies it should limit conceptualizations of dis/ability and required impacts to ones established by persons with disabilities to allow for emancipation and ensure inclusion.

Critical disability studies are a cross-cutting field in which certain perspectives often arise on different themes, as seen in this literature review. Additionally, as Goodley (2017) elaborated,

joint themes arise within dis/ability and in sites of 'othering,' diversity, and marginalization. This complexity, however, is not seen as a limitation by critical disabilities studies as it reveals how questions of dis/ability impact all in various ways due to its fluidity (Goodley, 2017) and narrows this study to focus on active engagement to change.

Overall, the literature available and the influence of critical disability studies intended to be situated led to utilizing literature that included narratives by persons with disabilities, which was strengthened through other research. To contribute these perspectives reliably within research, literature was peer-reviewed and utilized when the literature was published in a manner that directly impacted the point. This can be seen in those matters relating to current practice and to literature published relating to the current core curriculum. This allows for in-depth reflections of overarching perspectives through the years, which impact the current and up-to-date reflections on Finnish Education.

The process of this literature review showcases how the discourses of ablism in Finnish education (Pihl et al., 2018) do indeed manifest themselves in several sectors of education, and this literature review is, therefore, not a synthesis of something addressed but rather a synthesis of a continuation for creating (disability) inclusive education. Reflections upon epistemic injustice, social justice and inclusion, teacher education, policies, and the classroom can be further researched. The particularly valuable aspect of future research possibilities is the promise of concrete praxis and processes for various stakeholders to implement for actualizing this praxis (Valle & Connor, 2019). Most importantly, is that throughout this research is that it would not only reflect disability studies in education but enact it simultaneously.

To conclude, I will refer back to a key point of critical disability studies which emphasizes that reflexivity and even radical change should be welcomed as this allows possibilities for emancipation and inclusion. Rather than taking these reflections that arise from critical disabilities as critique, it would be valuable for education to take these as a possibility for education to meaningfully engage in becoming inclusive and dismantling the oppression connected.

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