Performing disability: An activist politics of relationality
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Abstract:
Despite recent theoretical shifts in disability studies towards productive hybridity, inclusive education scholarship continues to be swept up in logics of representation. For example, a universalised rights-based agenda underpins much work in inclusive education, which seeksto legislate equal educational opportunities for people with dis/ability in particular (UNESCO, 1994). In this paper I argue that the pursuit of inclusive education forever remains paradoxical as long as ableist ways of knowing/being, such as those represented in normative rights discourses, dominate our lives. Instead I turn to the conceptual elaborations of non-representational theories (NRT) to examine mediations of dis/ability in relational assemblages by concentrating on what occurs in between. Across three scenarios: in the street, the workplace, and as well in the design of inclusion in initial teacher education, this work contends with how in/accessibility, for instance, can have indescribable consequences on temporal and spatial participation. Thus, I turn to ideas of reconfigured performativity (Thrift, 2008) to consider the role that NRT and affectivity portend to disability studies. This work intentionally draws on paradox to repurpose institutional practices in higher education.

Biography:
Ben entered the profession of education in the early 2000s as a teacher of braille, and went on to teach English in Spain. Ben now holds the role of Senior Lecturer of Inclusive Education at Deakin University, in Melbourne Australia. Ben's research explores the affordances of embodied dis/ability to inform inclusive reforms, accessibility, transition and participation. Recent co-authored publications include a theoretical review of how time mediates inclusive practice in education, (Thomas, M. K. E., & Whitburn, B. (2019). Time for Inclusion? British Journal of Sociology of Education 40(2), 159-173; and Disability at the University: A Disabled Student's Manifesto, co-edited with Dr Chris McMaster and in press with Peter Lang. Ben has a predilection for travel and craft ales. He tweets @BenWhitburn.

References:

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