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DIS Art and Culture Disability Festival
Academic conference

Dealing with ableism through the Antiracist Policy of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth





Racism conceptualization in the Ministry's Antiracist Policy

- The policy provides teachers with the theoretical background, the responsibilities and commitments of all school community members, and a detailed plan for schools on how to deal with and prevent racist incidents.
- It views **diversity as a multidimensional phenomenon**, involving various aspects of people's identities (religion, ethnicity, language, appearance, **disability**, gender, sexual orientation, etc.).
- Racism(s) are defined as discourse (of whatever content) which has the effect of:
 - establishing, sustaining and reinforcing oppressive power relations
 - categorizing, allocating and discriminating between certain groups (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 70)



Disablism definition in the policy

Disablism can be defined as discriminatory, oppressive, abusive behaviour arising from the belief that disabled people are inferior to others. Disablism refers to prejudice, stereotyping, or "institutional discrimination" against disabled people. The main problem about disablism (also known as abilism or ableism¹⁹) is that it is not easy to identify. In many cases, people do not realise that it exists. Disablism is first and foremost about people's attitudes: it does not only refer to consciously discriminatory behaviour, but also to the way that people unconsciously relate to people with disabilities. The unconscious part of discriminatory attitudes is much harder to tackle than conscious acts of discrimination, but both need to be equally targeted in the struggle for human rights.



Aim of the Antiracist Policy

The policy's aim is **NOT** to label individuals as 'racists' or 'not racists' but:

- the recognition of any direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional behaviours and procedures that lead to negative discrimination of specific individuals based on their diversity
- to take action to prevent and address racist incidents
- to develop an antiracist culture.





racist incident definition

Any incident that may be perceived as racist by the victim or another individual (Macpherson, W. (1999), The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, London and ECRI (2007) General Policy Recommendation No 11 on combating racism and racial discrimination in policing)

Racist incidents can be verbal, non-verbal, physical, symbolic or social, and result in the exclusion, marginalization or discrimination against other people or groups of people because of their specific characteristics.

e.g.: ridicule or imitation of accent or gestures, use of derogatory language, racist jokes / comments, spreading rumors, exclusion from social groups, offensive, threatening or racist graffiti or symbols, physical violence



Benefits of Antiracist Implementation

Empowerment of victims to report racist incidents they experience



Clarification of the boundaries between racist, bullying and delinquency incidents.



Identifying and managing racist behaviors previously ignored by teachers



Establishing a policy of non-tolerance to racist incidents at experiential and cognitive level



Protection of victims and potential victims



Creating and extending a sense of security for parents and families.



Indicative yearly reports for racist incidents based on the Antiracist Policy



2024-2025: Out of 159 schools that sent yearly reports, 78 recorded no racist incidents at all, while the remaining 80 recorded a total of **699 racist incidents** (the largest number so far) **with only 9 of these recorded on the basis of disability**



School Network for the support of the implementation of the Antiracist Policy

PARTICIPANTS: Since 2018, the CPI organizes and facilitates a School Network with teachers from around 50 schools of all levels each year.

AIMS: To empower and train teachers in relation to the:

- multiplicities of racism manifestations,
- definitions of basic concepts which form the theoretical background,
- responsibilities and commitments of school community members,
- steps for dealing with racist incidents,
- challenges of under-reporting,
- need for accountability on behalf of schools and individuals,
- development of contextually appropriate pedagogical interventions based on the racisms operating in each context and, and
- awareness of the continually evolving racisms across the globe.

METHODOLOGIES: The online and face to face meetings include experiential workshops, in collaboration with experts in the field, promoting self-reflection, privilege awareness and multiperspectivity.

CPI School Network Rationale

The role of education

Is not to ensure a society that is completely free of hatred and aggression – a rather impossible and unrealistic goal

BUT to admit its share of responsibility in creating a school where racism and discrimination incidents do NOT go by unnoticed

AND to challenge teachers to critically evaluate all arguments in and out of the classroom that draw on ideological values that discriminate against people based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or other aspect of their identity.





Training framework

The network trainings draw on:

- a) intersectionality***, to empower teachers to identify, acknowledge and resist the multiple racisms and discrimination incidents that occur on an individual and systemic level within and outside schools, involving various aspects of people's identities and
- b) pedagogy of discomfort***, to encourage teachers to reflect on their own prejudices and privileged positions.



The urgency of intersectionality



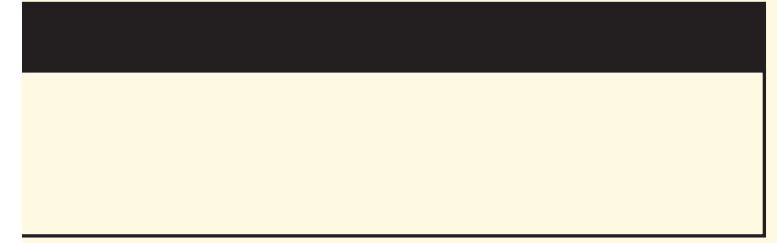
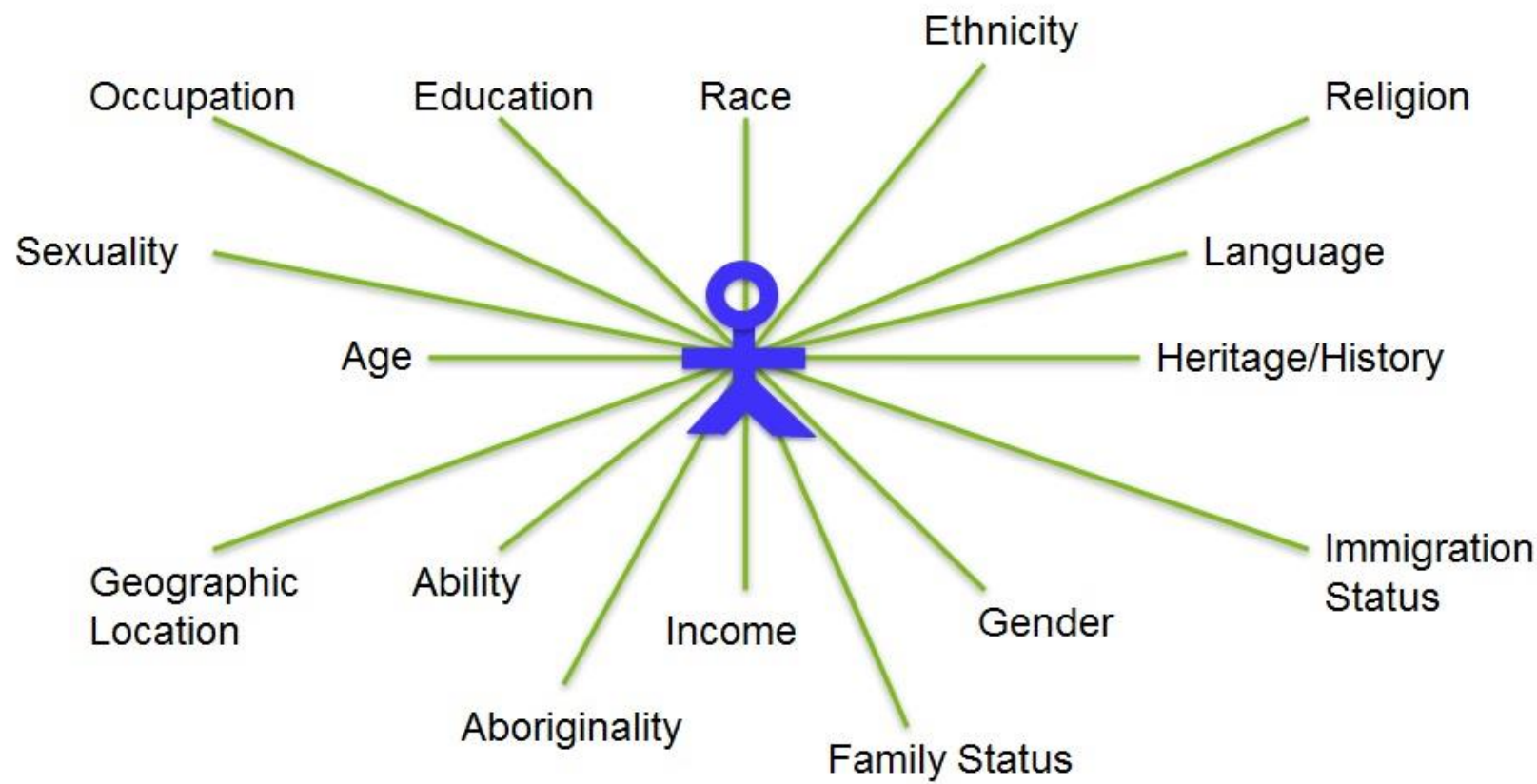
Kimberlé Crenshaw

American Civil Rights Advocate
Professor, UCLA School of Law and
Columbia Law School

https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_s

“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.”

Kimberle Crenshaw



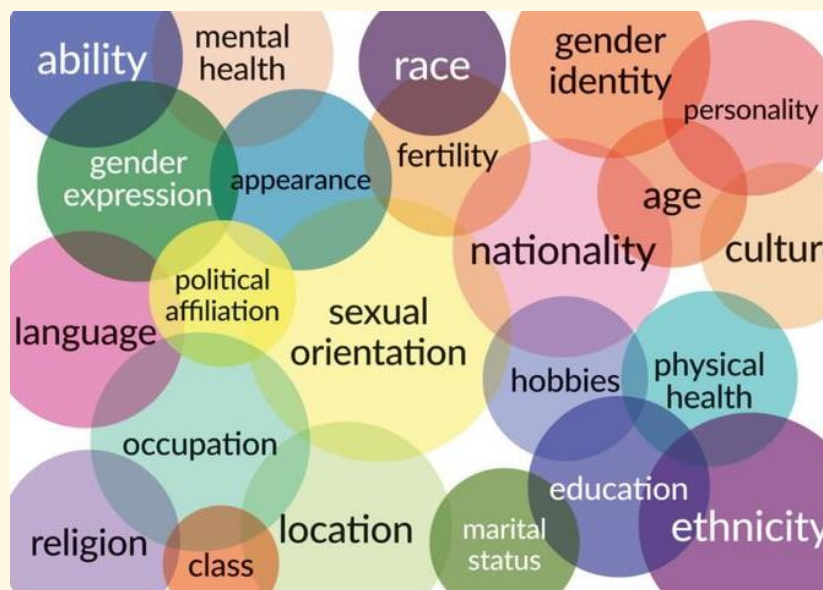
Intersectionality signifies ‘the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts’ (Brah and Phoenix, 2004)

INTERSECTIONALITY

noun. *"The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups."* – Merriam Webster

Intersectionality examines the ways in which experiences and discrimination are compounded by people's experience in multiple marginalized groups at once.

multiplicity of identities and racisms



Given the multiplicity of identities, equally multiple and alternating are the possible combinations of discrimination and racism that may wrong or favour some children at school and people in the wider society



PRIVILEGE AWARENESS

Socially granted, unearned advantages accorded to some people/groups and not others. These systemic or structural advantages impact people based on identity factors such as race, gender, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexuality, class and body type.



Pedagogy of discomfort (Zembylas, 2023)

“a teaching practice that encourages students to move outside their comfort zones and challenge the beliefs, habits, and practices that sustain their biases.”

Inconvenience can be used to reframe discomfort as a foundational experience of coexistence – one that generates a pressure that is hard to manage; discomfort-as-inconvenience, then, requires educators to reconsider ways of creating environments in the classroom that “receive” and “respond” productively to differential manifestations of discomfort.

Affective infrastructure might be able to help educators become more attentive of the elements determining discomfort, inconvenience, and other affects, thus creating new possibilities for remaking them differently.

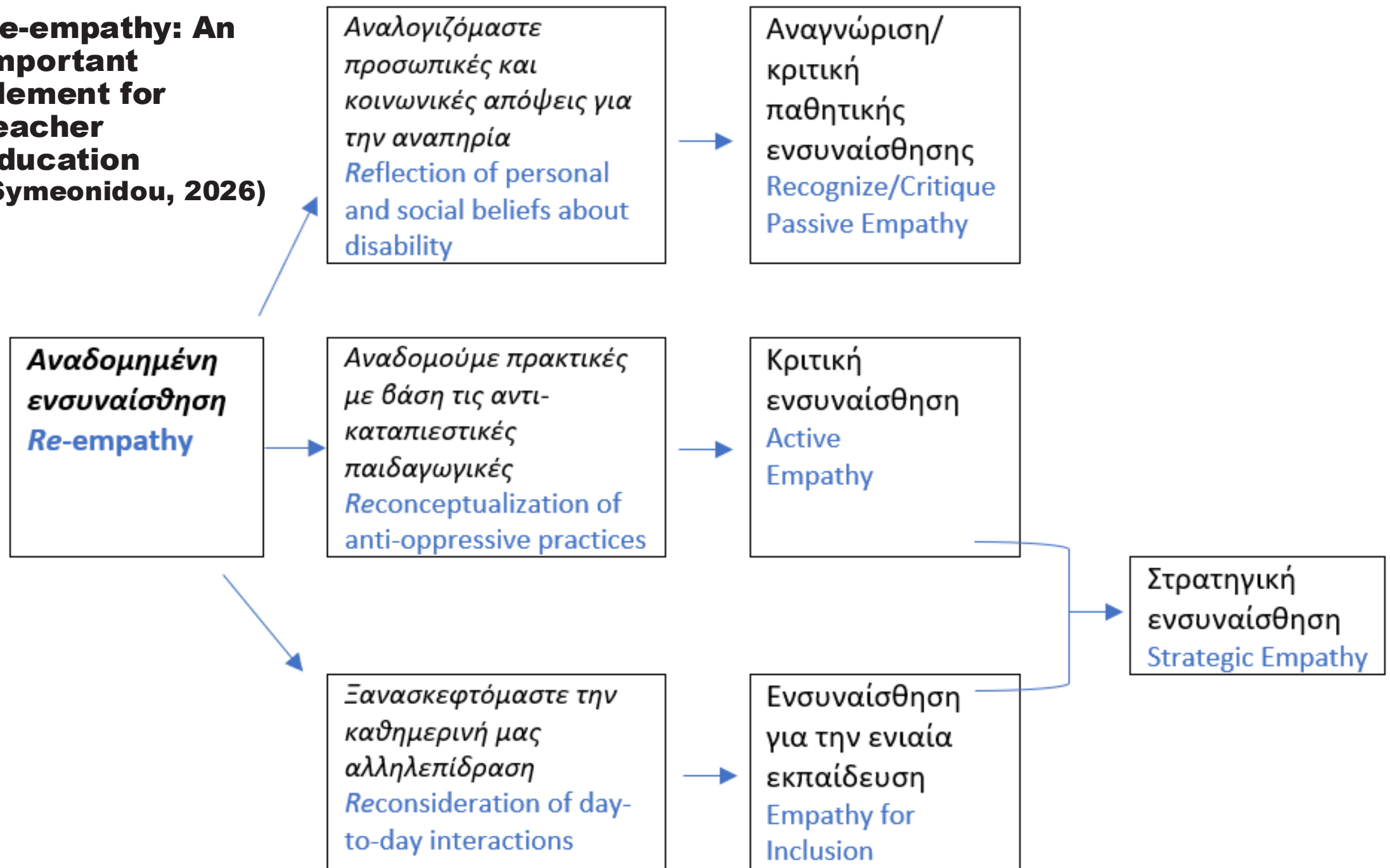




Training framework

- It is important for pedagogies of discomfort and empathy to work in conjunction and strategically in order to create more **possibilities for ‘safe spaces’** (ZEMBYLAS & PAPAMICHAEL, 2017).
- If educators can critically equip teachers “to identify the entanglements between the personal and structural”, then it is more likely they “will begin to **realize not only how racial inequalities are formed over time but also how [they] themselves are engaged in (unproductive) affective practices of race and racism throughout their lives...**” (ZEMBYLAS, 2022).

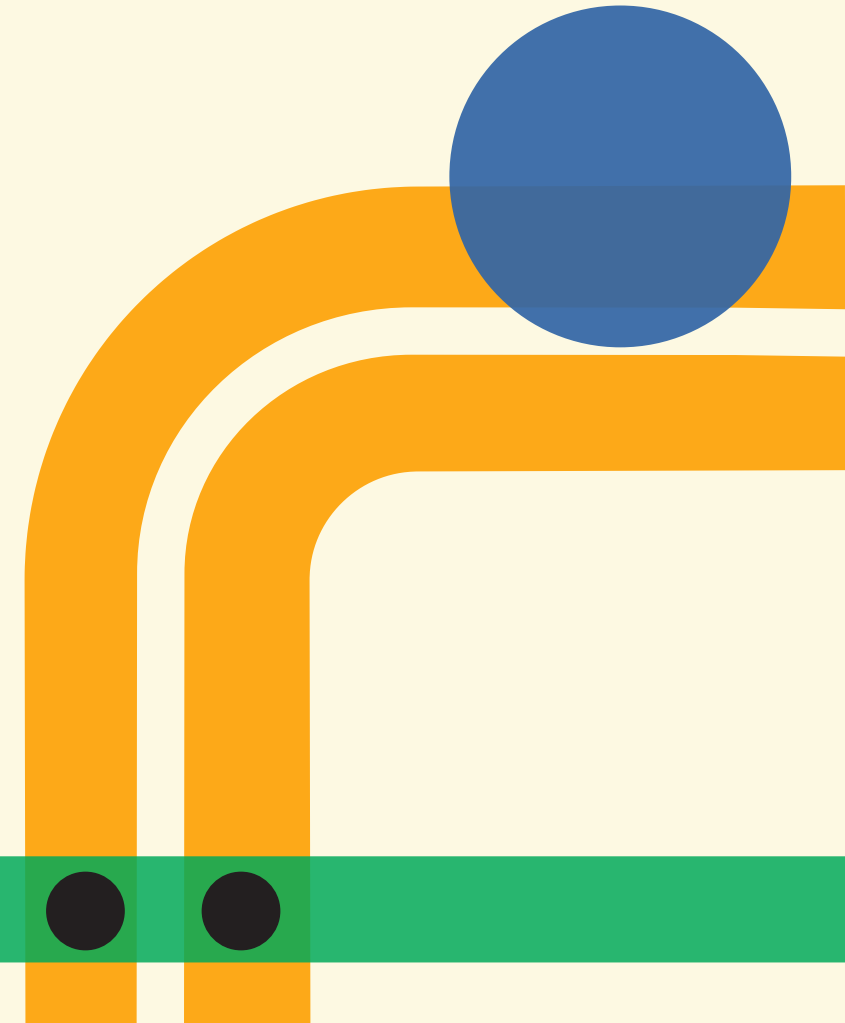
Re-empathy: An important element for teacher education (Symeonidou, 2026)





Concluding thoughts

- How can we move away from deficit/philanthropic/pity approaches towards disability and essentialist understandings of the disability experience?
 - How can accountability for the antiracist policy implementation be improved?
 - How can parents and other stakeholders contribute to this aim?
- When educators are empowered through the pedagogy of discomfort, antiracist and critical literacy methodologies and are equipped the tools of antiracist policy and intersectionality, they can promote **sustained social action**, despite the challenges faced.





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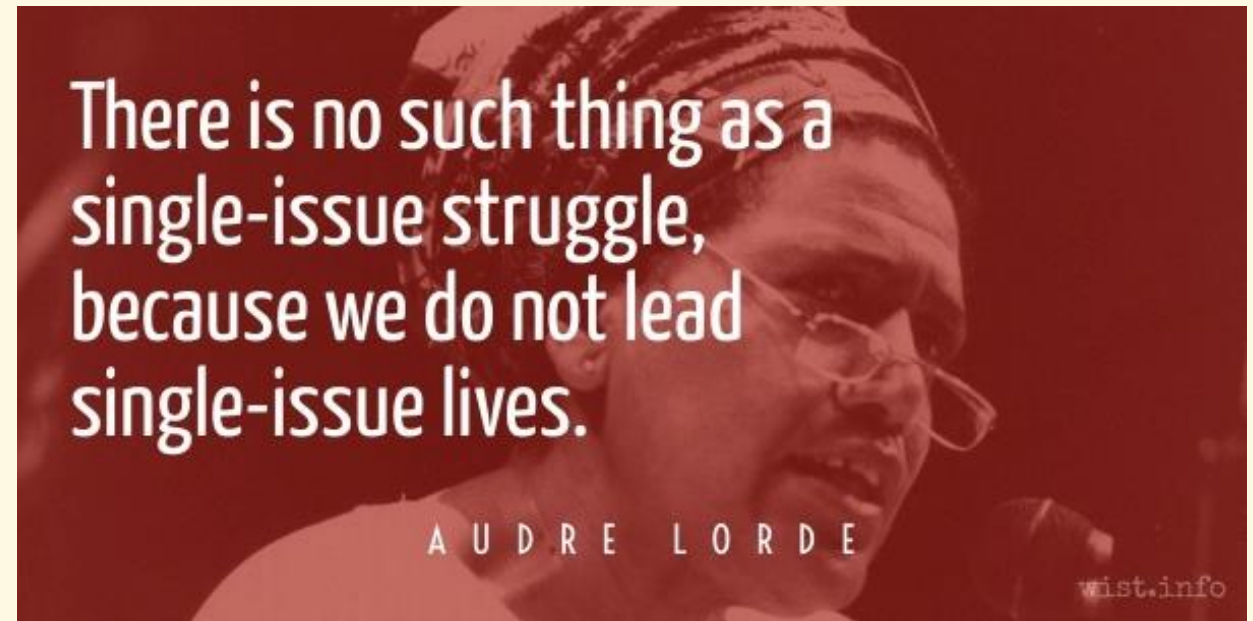
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