



Chapter 4

Presenting the data

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter One, the study reported here examined the understandings of inclusive education of principals in independent South African schools. It asked two pertinent questions that have guided and shaped this study. Underpinning this chapter then are the two research questions posed in chapter one. It first looks at how inclusive education is understood by principals in eight different independent schools in South Africa and what the implications of this understanding has for the practice of inclusive education. What follows is a narrative of the findings – beginning with an introduction to the participants and their personal details, a description of the settings of the interviews, an explanation about the interviews, a table representing how principals define inclusive education, types of disabilities represented in schools, and the themes, subthemes and caveats that have emerged from the analysis.

4.2 THE PARTICIPANTS

A brief description of the participants who were purposively selected follows. The participants have been given pseudonyms and the names of their schools and where the schools are located have been omitted for ethical reasons. Each principal has been given a pseudonym that correlates with the 'name' of the school, so Adam for instance, is head of School A and so on.

Adam started the very successful inclusion process at School E along with *Dee*, and when he left there three years ago, he went to a Jewish school in a sprawling city.

Ben (short for Benjamin) started his career at the same he school attended as a child and he became principal at the school at the young age of 35.

Cass is a retiring reputable head who spent 18 years at her school. She left the country on her retirement (end of 2007) to oversee a school for the king of a Middle Eastern country who spent a long time trying to source the right person for one of his more academic schools.

Dee is head of School D which houses 16 children with severe disabilities. School D is on the same campus as School E of which *Ed* is the head.

Frank was head of a large prestigious school, School F, before he left to work for the king of a local indigenous tribe as Director of Education. He now oversees eighty state schools which are situated on royal land. He started the inclusion process at School F which is reportedly continuing the programme.

Guy is also a retiring principal although he was been asked to stay on for another year until the end of 2008. He practices inclusion on a small scale in School G.

Hal is the principal of a prestigious boys school which has a large number of children with remedial problems.

More will be said about the participants and the roles they fulfil as the thesis unfolds.

4.2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were selected purposively and sequentially (Neuman, 2006) and are listed in the order in which they were interviewed. In Table 1 I have added further demographic details of the participants and have outlined and included the highest qualifications of participants, their ages and the position they hold as professionals in their fields. I have also included the number of years that they have acted as principal, both previously and currently. As mentioned, the participants are scattered over five provinces in South Africa including the Western Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West Province (see table of personal details below).

TABLE 1: PERSONAL DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

Name of Principal	Age	Gender	Position Held	Years as Head	Highest Qualification
Adam	43	Male	Principal of a Co-Educational Preparatory School-School A	6* School E 4**	Honours
Benjamin	48	Male	Principal of a Co-Educational Middle School/Director of Education in SA-School B	17**	Completing a Masters Degree
Cass	63	Female	Retiring Principal of a Girls' Preparatory and High School-School C	18**	Masters
Dee	37	Female	Principal of School D on campus of School E	10**	Honours
Ed	55	Male	Principal of a Co-Educational Preparatory School-School E	10* 4**	Masters
Frank	55	Male	Former principal of School F. Now Director of Education overseeing 80 Primary and High Schools	14* 1**	Bachelor Degree
Guy	63	Male	Principal of a Co-Educational Preparatory School – School G	17* 13**	Teaching Diploma
Hal	50	Male	Principal of a Boys' Preparatory School – School H	14* 13**	Honours MBA

* This number represents a first period as head.

** This number represents the current period as head.

Without fail the interviewees were approachable, hospitable, empathetic and eager to share the stories about inclusive education in their own settings with me. These contextually-bound interviews will then, result in what can be described as a mutually-created story (Fontana and Frey, 2005), which in turn will be the basis and backing of this thesis. Fontana and Frey (ibid) make the point that empathetic interviewing in particular “is a method of morality because it attempts to restore the sacredness of humans before addressing any theoretical or methodological concerns” (p. 697). During the interviewing process I was often aware of this ‘sacredness’ as interviewees shared deeply emotional thoughts and reactions to the process of inclusive education. It was a privilege being part of their lives, even if briefly in the interviews in what Lincoln and Denzin (2000) also describe as a “sacred space” (p. 1052) but also as “rare moments” (p. 1053). In addition, Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe the *sacred moments* that are experienced in human scientific interactions as “the

profound regard for how science can (and does) contribute to human flourishing” (ibid). My experience of those ‘sacred moments’ were both unexpected and a perquisite.

I shall now describe the settings in which the interviews took place. This is in line with crystallisation that encourages a writer to “think with your body “ and to “draw on all your senses” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 164) as one writes in order to create a more intuitive, rather than a purely intellectual, narrative.

4.2.2 THE SETTINGS

The interviews took place on the school campuses and generally in the principal’s office. I felt a certain apprehension as I travelled to the schools but this diminished as I became more confident with the process. The angst however, of getting lost and being late for the interviews, did not subside. On the whole the interviews were a process I enjoyed very much. Although there is always the possibility that interviewees will say what they think they should be saying to an interviewer, I keep in mind that standpoints can never be complete, and that compared with crystallisation, I accept that what they told me was trustworthy and valid (Ellingson, 2009).

Adam was the first head to be interviewed and we sat in his rather noisy but comfortable office next to a large, round table. There were constant interruptions such as buzzes and ringtones from telephones, bells and cell phones, and the raucous chattering of Indian mynahs outside the window, but the busyness of the background did little to distract us from the interview. Adam’s energetic discussion was punctuated with both laughter and at times, poignancy.

When I arrived at Ben’s school, I was shown into his small office which was sunny and warm. Ben was busy talking earnestly on the phone when I arrived but he joined me within a few minutes and we sat around a large round table that took up most of his office. He apologised for keeping me waiting and explained that he had been dealing with several minor crises that had occurred that week. His concern for his learners was palpable and I was keenly aware of his disquiet for a student who had just lost a parent and who had no family left to care for her. After an initial interruption from a cell phone call, we spent the next hour

having a deep conversation. Ben spoke in soft tones and his gentleness as a principal and a person was very apparent.

Cass was the next interviewee and I arrived at her magnificent school in a downpour. It was late afternoon, and since she was preparing to retire from the school, she had a farewell event to attend after our interview. Her office was opulent and had an old-school feel with its sizeable antique desk, fireplace and a deeply-coloured Persian carpet. We sat on comfortable leather couches at right angles to one another and the sumptuousness of the surroundings matched the richness of our discussion. Cass spoke with authority and conviction and her appreciative treatment of the tea lady was testament to her respect for others.

Dee and I met in a large empty staff room and we sat at one end of a long rectangular table. The buildings at her school were still new and the faint but pleasant smell of fresh concrete and paint pervaded the room. The buildings had a feel of being countrified as the school is set on a massive tract of land that resembles a safari park. The African bush surroundings however, faded into the background as I became immersed in Dee's passionate account of the inclusive process at her school. Her passion for what she was doing, albeit as a pioneer in her geographical area, was blatant and uplifting. Although I did not interview Dee's colleague Nicci who too had been instrumental in the inclusive process, she is mentioned quite extensively in the data segments.

I met with Ed in his office on the same campus as Dee. It led off his PA's office and we were assured of privacy with no interruptions. Ed was particularly open about his views on inclusion and he obviously enjoyed sharing his thoughts with me. We later had lunch together at the 'pavilion' along with the children and the gentle, respectful regard he held for them and staff alike was tangible.

I became lost trying to find my way to Frank's office as it was in an unfamiliar part of the country to me. Despite losing my way however, I still arrived on time, albeit somewhat stressed. The building was a huge government building and I had to be shown up some stairs to Frank's office area. There were several offices on the first floor which were occupied by Frank's staff and I was shown in to an enormous boardroom that had several long tables in

it. We sat at a table closest to the wall-length windows which had a breath-taking view across the valleys of the town and the surrounding area. The boardroom however was stark but I was struck with how it contrasted sharply with the depth and intensity of our conversation. I was struck by Frank’s deep fervour regarding education in general and for social justice in particular. As A researcher I found this discussion affecting me deeply as Frank often displayed unashamed emotion. I came away from this interview feeling amazed at the depths we had plumbed during two short hours.

I arrived at Guy’s school on an extremely hot, still, cloudy, lowveld⁷ day, the kind of day that dulls the sounds around one. Guy’s office was divided into two parts which were dominated by a round table at one end and a sprawling desk at the other. It was a comfortable room and it was situated next to a playground – so during the interview we heard the happy sounds of children playing nearby. Guy was a gracious interviewee who eagerly shared his story with me.

Hal is well known to me. He was off on leave when I made the appointment to see him but he graciously agreed to see me anyway. We met in his office where quiet classical music was playing unobtrusively in the background. The interview was short but I garnered some unique and very useful data from him.

In the following table I indicate how long the interviews were according to the number of pages and the number of words in the transcriptions.

TABLE 2: LENGTH OF INTERVIEWS

Interviewee	Number of A4 pages	Number of words
Adam	20	9 284
Ben	27	11 658
Cass	27	12 547
Dee	32	17 044
Ed	14	6 069
Frank	39	21 404
Guy	16	7 514
Hal	13	5 095

The transcripts were either posted or emailed to the eight participants, however only two participants responded and returned the transcripts to me. Hal found few errors while Adam returned his with comments and alternative suggestions to what had been written because of the poor recording. Since many of suggestions were conjecture, I took note of them but retained the original transcript as being more accurate. In the next section I shall be explaining why I have adopted and used a poetic genre in this thesis.

4.3 EMBRACING AN ARTISTIC GENRE

Crystallisation encourages a variety of genres in qualitative research (Ellingson, 2009) so any data segments that are used in this thesis (with the exception of the beliefs surrounding inclusive education which are represented in table form) will, like Kumashiro (2002) does in his study of anti-oppressive education, be represented in the form of narrative poetry. I opt to emulate Kumashiro as I agree with him when he writes,

“[m]y goal then is to move away from a modernist representation on my participants’ experiences, to a poststructuralist re-presentation of their experiences, one that makes explicit ways in which the participants’ voices are contextualized, *[sic]* the researcher’s interpretations are partial, and the reader’s reading is situated” (2002, p. 20)

Presenting speech in poetry form furthermore emulates everyday speech with its idiosyncrasies, metaphors, slang words, broken sentences, incomplete phrases, underlying emotions, stresses, and changes in rhythm and volume (ibid). Representing the participants’ speech in poetry form can therefore be seen as being ‘transgressional’ as it is a postmodern invention for qualitative research, but it nevertheless mirrors an implicit intent of this thesis to be disruptive. In addition, the poetic genre will hopefully capture the unique personalities and the nuances of the spoken words of each participant. Presenting speech in poetry form is a characteristic of crystallisation which allows one to “[u]tilize *[sic]* more than one genre of writing” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 10) in order to advance social justice by offering a platform to a community that is usually outside of academia (ibid).

For this thesis to be authentic I am not shy to make use of controversial statements that may counter what participants say about the same subject and neither will I omit swearing or

strongly-worded statements if I feel it will appropriately capture emotions and emphasise opinions. I also use poetic license to omit speech fillers such as ‘um’ ‘uh’ or ‘ah’ if they significantly distract from what is being said. I have not completed sentences in order to make them more grammatically correct. I have transcribed them as they were said to me. In this regard the sense of a sentence occasionally requires mental closure by the reader. Many of the principals describe children as ‘kids’ and although this term used to be considered non-academic and even undesirable, it should not be misconstrued as being demeaning in any way.

The data segments that are used from the transcriptions are labelled with numbers in brackets such as (4; 12; 19-23) and they have then been rearranged into a poetic format. For example, when a data segment has been extracted from an interview such as,

“...we used to come for assemblies, and I used to look at the children, the mainstream kids singing a hymn for instance, and it used to blow my mind, I would look at all those children, each of them with a voice, each of them standing up when they should stand up, sitting down when they should sit and singing and I would look at the teachers *and the teachers didn't see that...*” [*emphasis mine*] (4; 12; 19-23).

The first number indicates the number of the interview, so the 4 in this instance means this data segment is from the 4th interview (out of 8); the second, and any subsequent numbers in *italics* signifies page numbers, so this data segment is on page 12 of the fourth interview; and the third set of numbers indicate the line numbers. In this case the data segment has been extracted from lines 19 to 23 on page 12 from the fourth interview. Any text in italics in the data segments are my words or my additions. Adam’s interview was of poor quality so any words in square brackets indicate missing words in his or any other interview. I made use of the context of the interview to complete sentences and those words appear in square brackets.

To illustrate how I have rearranged data segments into poetic format I shall reproduce the above data segment below:



“...we used to come for assemblies,
and I used to look at the children,
the mainstream kids singing a hymn for instance,
and it used to blow my mind,
I would look at all those children,
each of them with a voice,
each of them standing up when they should stand up,
sitting down when they should sit
and singing
and I would look at the teachers
and the teachers didn't see that...” [emphasis mine] (4; 12; 19-23)

I chose to break the sentences where a phrase ended or at a comma. I also reduced the font of these data segments to distinguish them from the rest of the text. The next section deals with an introduction to the data presentation.

4.4 HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

The principals I interviewed all had a deep belief in inclusive education as a paradigm for their particular schools and they embraced it fully. Below is a summary of what they told me regarding how they defined beliefs of inclusive education:

TABLE 3: HOW THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IS DEFINED BY THE EIGHT PARTICIPANTS

Principal	How participants define inclusive education
Adam	...including all kids with a variety of needs into a mainstream campus, not necessarily mainstreaming a kid academically, but more to put them in an actual environment which caters for them. (1; 2; 18-21)
Ben	...we've got an inclusion policy. And we try our best to integrate the kids as best we can into mainstream. So that's, maybe it's a bit of our reputation that's spreading around, you know, people have heard about our programme and like what they hear. They come and investigate and if we can help, we help. So our kind of line is if we can progress a child, or if we believe that we can progress a child, then there's a 99 percent chance we'll take the kid. (2; 2; 22-37)
Cass	I never started inclusive education, I never stopped it. That's what happened. (3; 2; 32-34) I never ever did anything other than made it happen. I never said, I never actually ever said "This is inclusive education". I just said to myself "These children need to be educated". My understanding of the word inclusion is that it can't be more important than, no, my understanding of the word inclusion, is that it's not an add-on and that's what I would hate. It's not, "I'm an inclusive school. I am a proud progressive Anglican school which offers inclusion". We just are "A proud, progressive (name of church) school", and that's it. And the



Principal	How participants define inclusive education
	word inclusive is not really a word I use ever really, very often...(3;24; 2-10)
Dee	...my philosophy and it's a personal philosophy, I believe in inclusion, I believe in so many parts of it, um, and in the year and a half we've been here, the, the hugest, or the biggest impact on our children I believe, has been the social impact, and on our parents. The, the children absolutely thrive on the interaction they get from the other kids and vice versa, and I completely, I knew that our children would benefit the school, it would be of benefit to (name of school), I knew that, there was no doubt in my mind but I underestimated the impact it's had on this, on this whole school, on the whole school environment, on the, on the emphasis and the focuses and the, the priorities of the school has changed, and I think that's been huge, and for me inclusion is including children on whatever level, and never making rules, never making kind of getting too stuck in policies because every single child, and I'm talking about children with more severe disability, every single child that we have at the School D, as you know, comes with such unique strengths and weaknesses and needs and that you include them on whatever level they need to be included on. (4; 8; 6-19)
Ed	...there is no doubt in my mind that in every single class in any mainstream school, inclusion has to be implemented. Clearly you have, every learner has his or her particular learning needs. Every class, every pupil has a particular learning style and I think teachers have to be aware of that and they have to adapt their teaching accordingly. However, in a school like this, we've added a new dimension in the sense that not only are we dealing with the need for learner support in the school regarding children with so-called mainstream barriers to learning, we're dealing here with children with severe disabilities, both intellectual as well as physical. I see it as being a continuum and even children who are gifted have specific needs and that's how I see inclusion. (5; 2; 18-28)
Frank	...you can do all sorts of things and so there are all sorts of, each child needs a different programme, that's how the paradigms shift, and what hit me, about five years into my own little experiment, every single child requires their own programme so you think it's about, that's why I don't call it inclusion any longer, because people tend to think inclusion is about those people you're including, it's not, so I now call it, and I like the local North West ones, so I'm going to try and, our model here is going to be called a full service, we're going to be full service schools. (6; 5; 38-44)
Guy	I believe it means giving every child an opportunity in mainstream. (7; 6; 21-22)
Hal	What's, there's an American term about um, what's it called, with minimum needs, least restrictive environment or, something along those lines and I subscribe to that notion really that you should, you should try to, let me go back, sorry I'm not articulating myself very well. The whole White Paper on inclusion which Asmal I think was behind, White Paper 6 if I remember correctly, kind of had the emphasis that a child doesn't have a deficit, so when we're talking about a child being disabled or whatever, that's not right, it's, it's society that has limitations or society that should adapt for everybody's needs. Now, on one level I accept that and I accept the notion of social justice, but I do think there are different levels of coping and there are some people who are intellectually challenged or have other ways that prevent them from functioning optimally, so given that um, I think there is a two-way benefit as I said a lot earlier for children say with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and mild forms of autism, um, learning disabled children, to benefit from being with children who don't have those problems and at the same time I think there're benefits for children who don't have those problems to understand that society is a mixture of people with different talents and gifts. (8; 7; 44-45; 8; 3-17)

One of the threads running through this thesis is that inclusive education is defined and practiced in different ways in different settings and the responses as recorded above

illustrate this point clearly. I shall now describe what kinds children with disabilities were supported in the different schools.

4.5 TYPES OF DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATED IN SCHOOLS

As a result of the interviews, I learnt that quite a number of children with a range of disabilities were accommodated in different schools. Table 4 sums up these disabilities and illustrates how much support each disability required in these particular settings. The amount of support a child needs is based on my own experience of working with both mainstream children and children with a variety of severe disabilities. It should be remembered that a disability is not necessarily crippling to a child, it often depends on a child's cognitive ability as well as how a child copes with her own limitations. Support given could also be measured by how much emotional input is required by staff but this point is not dealt with as such in this thesis. An example of what is meant by the amount of support is needed by a child is as follows: a child who has epilepsy which is controlled may need low support, in other words, all the support this child needs is an awareness by staff that she has epilepsy and that a seizure could occur at any time. A child with uncontrolled epilepsy is likely to need medium to high support from staff which is much more than just awareness. Staff in this case would need to be trained in how to deal with a seizure as well as how to care for the other children in the class who may be traumatised by the event. Similarly some children with a physical disability such as mild hemiplegia, may need minimum care, whereas other children with a more severe form of quadriplegia or who are in wheelchairs, may need help with toileting, dressing and feeding which in this case is very high care or support. A child with Down syndrome for instance may be high functioning and require low support whereas some children with the same condition along with cognitive disability may require high support (the same may be true for children with ADD/ADHD). In this study, the child that had Down syndrome, as you shall see, required very high support. The amount of care a child in the schools I studied need, are unique to this study, and should therefore not be generalised to other populations.



TABLE 4: TYPES OF DISABILITY AND AMOUNT OF SUPPORT NEEDED IN THE SCHOOLS STUDIED

Type of disability*	Amount of support required			
	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Spatial problems as a result of an a motor vehicle accident	*	*		
Mild to moderate learning disabilities eg dyslexia	*	*		
Deafness		*		
Blindness		*		
Dwarfism	*			
Muscular dystrophy		*		
Asperger syndrome		*		
Down syndrome				*
Epilepsy	*		*	
Cerebral palsy				*
ADD/ADHD	*	*	*	
Kanner autism			*	*
Cystic fibrosis	*	*	*	
Defective heart condition	*	*		
Multiple transplants	*	*		
Behaviour problem	*	*	*	*

* Principals reported the presence of the disabilities in the individual schools and not the prevalence.

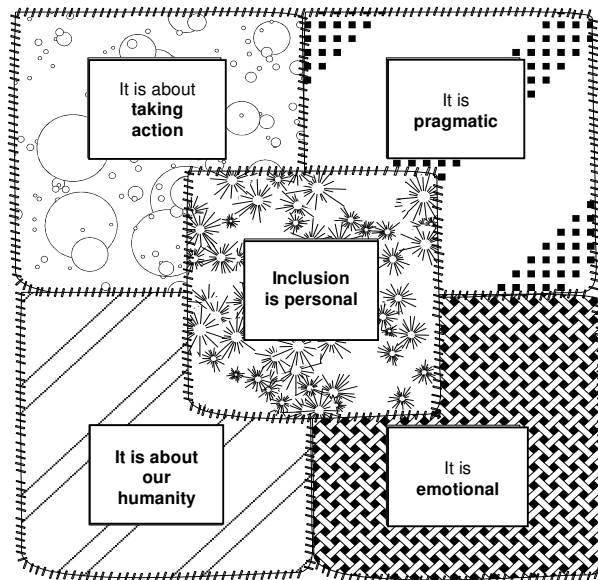
As will be seen from this list of disabilities, what some schools are offering is not mere remediation but intensive support to children who need much more support than children with academic learning disabilities. It can be seen that each principal I interviewed was offering more than the traditional support to children in their schools. For this reason, I postulate that these principals were performing as activists in his or her own way in the sense that each was actively working to change traditions, and were therefore working *against oppression* of children with disabilities within their own communities (Kumashiro, 2002).

As a result of the coding used for this data, several themes have emerged which are described in the next section.

4.6 MAJOR FINDINGS AS DERIVED FROM THE THEMES

The themes that arose from the data are the stitching and the patches that further fashion this ‘quilted’ thesis. See diagram 1 for a bird’s eye view:

DIAGRAM 1: BIRD’S EYE VIEW OF FINDINGS



Ellingson (2009) suggests using the feminist metaphor of quilting for scientific processes and two types of quilting may be used to achieve this goal. The fashioning could be done with stitches that hold everything together or with patches that not only create an art form, but which together with the stitching create a completed and useful item. Crystallisation then uses scraps of data to represent a phenomenon in a non linear form. Of themes, and patterns, the same author says, that they “represent a rich way of arranging collective stories. While not exhaustive or perfect, themes help us to understand what happens in a context or within a group” (ibid, p. 59).

Furthermore, Creswell (2003) asserts that data can be categorised according to a variety of themes that include: ordinary or expected themes; unexpected themes; hard-to-classify themes; and major and minor (or subthemes) themes (p. 243). Data can also contain “contrary evidence” (p. 244). The “saturation point” (ibid) refers to when no new information can be added to themes. The same authors urge researchers to “layer the

themes” starting with the data and attempting to take it to ever-increasing levels of abstraction.

The patches or themes that make up this thesis then include moments of significance which translates into inclusion being profoundly personal. Subsequent themes that arose were that inclusive education is about taking action, it is about a pragmatism that result in a good practice, it is about our humanity at deep level, and it is about emotion. Caveats to the study are also discussed and these include government involvement in the process of inclusive education, timing surrounding the process, the amount of hard work that goes into implementing inclusive education and funding issues. Each theme and caveat will be discussed in detail.

4.6.1 INCLUSION IS PERSONAL

I was interested to know why leaders would be open to inclusive education, whether there had been “moments of significance” (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 17) in their lives that had previously shaped them to be aware of forms of exclusion within their own schools. I was wondering why it was that some principals were open to inclusive education while others remained closed or oblivious to forms of exclusion and therefore oppression within their own communities. Like Kumashiro (ibid) I wanted to “examine these moments to see what difference their stories can make *to my theoretical framework*, (emphasis his) to see how they can help educators think differently about antioppressive education” (p. 18). Furthermore, I wanted to see how their moments of significance, along with their stories, confirmed my theories, “how they disconfirmed them, how they troubled them, how they stretched them or pointed to the gaps” (ibid, p. 8). What then began the stories of my participants in the first place?

The moments of significance participants shared with me were particularly sacrosanct and they gave the interviews a depth and a richness that was unexpected. Some of the moments of significance were deeply personal and moving whereas others were more academic. For instance Adam could not say why he invited Dee to join him on his campus, it was just something that felt right to him, for one thing it made sense financially as we shall see later. On the other hand he twice called his decision as a result of “divine intervention” (1; 3; 35; 4;



20). On delving deeper into what primed him to invite 16 children with severe disabilities to join his mainstream school, he recalled his army experiences⁸ that had had a profound effect on him. This is what he shared ('it' in lines 2 – 3 refers to inclusive education),

I promise you I cannot tell you what did it for me.
When I was at school I wasn't exposed to it,
I went overseas, I wasn't exposed to it.
You know when I was for the first time exposed to it
and this complicates kind of the way I've gone
because when I was in the army
I was a paramedic and a foot soldier at the same time
and I had to work at (name of hospital) and (name of another hospital)
I could deliver babies and stitch,
and I was exposed there for two weeks
to where people who had been shot in the head,
who were severely disabled,
and all that kind of thing.
I hid in the toilets for as much time as I possibly could
to not look at these people or be around them.
It was a terrible week for me, ...
...Then I get to (name of school)
and I looked at these little children in wheelchairs
and I don't think I'm the kind of person
that would also like to want to still feed them
and clean [them]
and all that kind of thing
but I don't know, I don't know why I just said,
I've got to get it together.
Study the psychology of that. (1; 15; 37-46; 16; 1-7)

So while Adam acknowledges that he still cannot face aspects of disability, he nevertheless overcame his own misgivings, his sense of inadequacy and fear, and took the step of disrupting the status quo of the mainstream School E despite any possible resistance from the community. It was not a process that happened quickly, as he recalls mentioning the invitation to Dee and to the school board and then promptly forgetting about it until two years later. Putting inclusion into practice coincided with the completion of the buildings on the new campus. There was evidence that the building was being prepared for children in

wheelchairs, doors were wider than usual and plans were going ahead for the building of the School D that would house the children from Dee's previous little exclusive school.

Ben on the other hand saw inclusion at his school as an extension of 'community' as understood in Judaism. It was a natural progression and yet it was one that needed a prod in the right direction. An overview of one Jewish School does not necessarily make evident that all of them are inclusive of children with disabilities. In a conversation I had with a Rabbi who is involved in Jewish education, he said that Ben was the pioneer of a more inclusive process when he outspokenly said that Jewish education had to change. This statement, according to the Rabbi, led them to the point of looking at themselves. As a result, he told me, it was because of Ben that,

...we looked at ourselves,
did a bit of introspection
and said if we are a community school
why is it that 200 children
who should be in our schools,
can't be in our schools
because they are in (names of remedial schools)
where they get the right education,
(but) socially it comes to certain rituals in their lives
or a time like a Barmitzvah, or times like that,
(they say) we're not part of this,
going to Barmitzvahs,
inviting people over...
...school should be the connecting point of the community
[Excerpt from an untranscribed digital recording].

He also told me that "if we want to be a community school, we have to make that change, but it will be a long process". In answering my question as to whether they would take any type of child with any type of difficulty into their schools, the Rabbi replied in the negative and then qualified his answer by saying they are calling what they are planning on doing "a special needs programme" not "an inclusive programme" as their responsibility at this stage lies in offering remedial support along with a vocational programme in their high schools. He was open about acknowledging their own limitations in accepting a child in primary school

while knowing that they are not able to accommodate children at high school level. They envisage however having a vocational programme for older children in place by 2010. Some people, he told me, feel that they are moving too slowly but he is conscious about doing things responsibly and by “getting all teachers on board first”.

The Rabbi gave me a deeper insight into the Jewish understanding of ‘community’. Each letter of a Hebrew word has a meaning so the Hebrew word for ‘community’ is ‘tzibbur’ which carries several connotations. The first part of the word embodies the meaning that “people are righteous and full of capability”, the double ‘bb’ in the middle of the word signifies “anyone in the middle” while the suffix stands for “anyone on the outside or the extreme other side”. The Rabbi indicated that community without all its parts, is simply not community. In other words said the Rabbi, one cannot have a community that “knocks out” parts of itself, so community means “all and everyone”. He further said,

We felt we weren't fulfilling that
It's nice to say we have the top kids
And we have the middle ground
But we had a whole element of community
that we're saying sorry (to)
because we are driven by academics...

[Excerpt from an untranscribed digital recording.]

Another Hebrew word, according to the Rabbi, for community is ‘klal’ which also carries the connotation that community must include everyone as well as a sense that “inreach” comes before “outreach”. We spoke about what is already happening in preparation for a more inclusive programme in the Jewish schools and the Rabbi told me that this includes Jewish study teachers going to remedial schools once a week to teach the Jewish children there “to keep that connection”, and that as part of their school-wide teacher training programme, each teacher will be given Carol Ann Tomlinson’s book⁹ on how to teach a differentiated classroom.

I asked the Rabbi if a more inclusive type of education is happening in overseas Jewish schools and he told me that, on a visit to what he termed ‘top’ schools on the east coast of the United States in 2007, they found that after three years of being in the inclusive process



in South Africa, “we were far ahead of where they were”. Schools were excited and talking about it, but according to the Rabbi, no-one was really doing much about it. Some schools had external programmes where children were being remediated in separate classes but inclusive education was not integrated into the life of the school as such. He admitted that they had been disappointed as they thought they would be able to learn from the overseas schools but they realised that they were in fact ahead of those schools.

The rabbi and I also spoke about classroom practice. The Talmud interestingly tells the story that if a child does not understand something in class, it is the teacher’s responsibility to repeat it up to one hundred times, and even two hundred times. The Rabbi interpreted this as meaning that there are no limits to how many times a teacher should repeat something to ensure a child understands what is being taught.

And yet paradoxically, as far as Ben’s moment of significance is concerned, he did not refer to his Jewishness as being the mechanism that drew him towards inclusive education at all. Instead it was a very personal experience as a child at school that ‘planted the seed’,

...this has also just popped into my head.

When I was at school,
we used to be quite an academic school,
the principal, my principal,
he actually phoned my parents one day and he said
“Come in to see me”
and they came and he said
“Look I think you should take him out the school
because he’s never going to amount to anything.”

And my dad was quite involved in the governing body at the time
and I was mad about sport,
I wasn’t really interested in academics,
so they, he said “Take him out!”.

And I remember going for an interview at another school
and then my dad said “No, this is ridiculous,
you’re going to stay there”
and I had a teacher
that used to hand back the marks in class loudly
from the top to the bottom,



and I just used to cringe
when my paper was always at the bottom
and I knew kids were going to look at me
“Ah, look Ben’s last again”,
things like that kind of got me thinking
that there’s a better way of doing it you know,
it’s, it’s just not right.
So now I say to my staff
“If ever I hear that someone’s done that,
you’re out of here!”
You know, so maybe those little anecdotes from the past
have maybe planted a seed in my head. (2; 21; 26-40)

Ben had the tenacity to turn an experience that could have shattered his young life into a productive course of action that is not only changing his own community, but in fact, all the Jewish schools throughout the country. Ben could just as easily have absorbed his experience as a child and not allow it to affect his headship as radically as it has. As he said,

But I never articulated it,
I never really thought too much about it,
being a young teacher
so maybe that’s part of it, ja.¹⁰
I think because of how I was at school,
and those things that happened to me,
I think that’s made me more aware
of how children feel and think... (2; 21; 44-45; 22; 7-8)

Had he not articulated his experience as a professional, he might well have resorted to non action which Kumashiro (2002) says causes as much harm as active oppression of one group by another.

Cass’s experience was both personal and academic. She had known people in her personal life who had severe challenges but the latter experience occurred in a geography class as she grappled with why a particular boy in her class kept failing. As she discussed the problem with a colleague they realised it was they who was getting things wrong. As she said,



I think for me as a teacher
it was actually a very simple moment
when a young boy in my class, was failing all the time
and I sat down with the teacher psychologist
and we worked together as counselling psychologists and said,
“Well, why, why is this happening?”
and we, we made our own discovery of what we,
what is termed as the misunderstood word, literally,
and it just opened up the floodgates...
...“Hello,
that’s so simple,
so ridiculous,
we’re just not teaching properly!”
and it was something that we took very seriously into (name of school)
and had enormous success
in just forcing teachers to actually teach meanings,
and (we) said to them, you know,
“We can’t do this.”
And I think that that’s something
which is just amazingly simple,
but it’s quite true because kids get very clouded by ideas
and concepts become one-sided concepts
and that you have to break open that barrier...
you’ve got to learn to think in that way. (3; 22; 38-44; 23; 2-8, 11-12)

Like Ben, Cass used her experience to bring change to the whole school where she was deputy head at the time. This experience must have influenced her later role as head at the girls’ school at which she was eventually appointed. As she said,

...what’s really important is that everybody
has the right of a good education,
... wherever you come from
or whoever you are. (3; 11; 45-46)

Dee’s experience had been a life-long exposure to children with disabilities as a result of her parents fostering children when she was small. She told me,



You know my mom, I suppose,
we were always involved with children with disabilities
when we were growing up,
my mom was a social worker and I believe that, you know,
all four of us,
four siblings have been given a gift
from both of my parents,
that we have always been exposed
to children with disabilities
but also, we've fostered a lot of children
through the years growing up
and I think it really came from there um,
and I've always had an intense love for children...
...even, I was at college,
we had elective teaching pracs,
we could choose a place that was kind of out of the ordinary
of normal schools and mainstream schools
so people went to dolphinariums
and went all over the place
and I asked if we could go to a special needs school.
And it was a big decision for the college to make
because they'd never done that
and so two of us came to (name of school) actually,
our government school here,
and did a practical
and I just fell in love with special needs kids.
I knew that I, I needed to do that.
And I remember starting and speaking to Rotary one night and saying
"It has always been my dream to work with children with disabilities"
and some of those people couldn't believe I'd ever said that,
like it actually was an insult they thought that I ever thought
it could be a dream to work with people with disabilities
but I knew that I could make a difference,
I knew,
and I'm passionate about it you know,
and that's how I think. (4; 19; 17-36)

So whereas Dee could not articulate why she was drawn to working with children with disabilities, what motivated her was an intrinsic knowledge that she wanted to make a

difference to the lives of children. She knew that she was drawn to children who for some were an ‘insult’.

Ed, on the other hand felt obligated to support inclusive education because of his Christianity. Of all the interviewees he was the only one who professed to be a practicing Christian. He also surprisingly¹¹ said that he had certain feminine qualities. When I asked him whether there had been a moment of significance in his life he replied,

...I like to think that I’m blessed with certain feminine qualities
and...I believe in two things
and I shared this with the staff
when I first arrived at the school.
I’m passionate about what I do,
and I like to show compassion
and I like to nurture compassion in my staff,
in the children
and in the community at large.
I think there is lots and lots of place for that
in the world we live.
And so it really wasn’t a challenge,
it wasn’t something that I had to think about.

Mm. Do you think your belief system has shaped you...

Yes, yes.

And...

I am a Christian,
I’m a practicing Christian,
I believe that that is what Christ expects of us.
Um, certainly my world view,
my belief system,
compels me to embrace inclusion,
no doubt about that. (5; 4; 35-42; 5; 1-9)

Frank had several moments of significance that cascaded from his rich experiences as a principal. He is a deeply passionate man who has an equally deep interest in the work done by academics such as educational psychologist Michael Shayer, developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky and Swiss philosopher, natural scientist and developmental theorist Jean Piaget, all three of whom he referred to liberally throughout our lengthy interview. Although Frank already possessed an awareness of injustice in schools, a noteworthy moment of significance occurred when he was attending a principal's course at Harvard. He told me,

...my inclusion thing happened for me at Harvard.

I was studying at Harvard on how to be a good principal

and I was sitting next to a South African actually,

and we had these amazing speakers,

they were brilliant speakers.

One of them,

this guy gets wheeled in on a wheelchair,

and he's very, very spastic and um,

long ponytail down the back,

I was quite cynical at the time

but in comes this guy and I think

"God, what are these Americans doing?

Why they bringing in this guy who literally almost couldn't speak,

he almost certainly couldn't move,

he certainly couldn't walk",

and so he gets wheeled in and he starts talking

and I think he spoke for an hour and a half,

but for the first thirty minutes

you actually couldn't understand what he was saying

without great difficulty

because he was struggling with his tongue

and I mean he was very difficult to understand.

And so I was trying desperately to listen to this

and thinking to myself

"What are these bladdy Americans doing to us?

Why are we being subjected to this?"

Anyway his talk was,

it was profound and because I was sitting, (thinking of my school)...

...[t]hey were all so-called talented kids

and it was a very aggressive, unfriendly school



largely because of all the exclusiveness
and I was worried about that
because I just didn't know
how to make this a gentler, better school
because it was a nightmare
even though everybody saw it as an excellent school.
I didn't
I thought it was a crappy, unfriendly place
and I was trying to work out how I could [change that]
and I didn't know how to do it.
And then this guy gives this talk and he talks about,
his talk was entitled "How belonging leads to excellence",
anyway, so the first sitting
I didn't understand what he was saying
and eventually started understanding what he was saying.
And essentially, through telling stories,
if you really feel you belong somewhere,
all your fears, personal and others,
subside.
And then you can really start using your mind,
you can really start developing yourself,
and everyone else develops around you.
So he explained many, many different stories with things like,
say in a maths classroom, which is where I eventually went
I mean I heard and understood the theory
but I didn't know how to put it into practice
but if you're sitting in a maths classroom
where everyone feels they can't do maths,
basically everyone's deepest fear is that they can't do maths,
and it's widespread
so you do get sexism and racism,
but you also get mathism.
There's a huge abuse,
people have been abused by maths teachers,
really, seriously,
but he convinced me in his talk
that if you have a maths class
and in that class you have someone who literally can't do maths,
so they're suffering from brain damage
and they literally can't count,



but if you include that person in, that child, in that class,
everyone else can calm down about maths
because actually we've got someone in this classroom who literally can't count
so let's not worry about the fact that I can't do maths or whatever,
so you, it's a way of relaxing everyone,
so basically, what my understanding at the time was,
the problem with (School F),
it wasn't a normal environment
and if you could just normalise the environment
get some people in there
because it's normal to have people with,
who can't walk
and people who can't see
and people who can't think straight
and people who, you know,
that's normal,
there's nothing wrong with those people,
they're just part of normal society,
so as soon as you slice out only the white ones,
or only the men,
or only the ones that are good at maths,
you end up with a pretty sick society
and you can't achieve real excellence
so if you want to improve learning,
which is what I wanted to do,
it was ridiculous but that,
the penny dropped as he was talking.
You actually have to include,
so at (School F)
what I had to do was systematically put in say 15 boys out of 150 a year
who were so different from the current little superstar model
that I could normalise that society,
I could make it far friendlier,
I could make everyone learn better,
the teachers would have to change their whole understanding
of what they were doing
and everyone would benefit from that
and the results would go up
and then many other things.

And so I understood that towards the end of the talk,
the penny dropped and I thought “Oh, my God, this is the way!
Why haven’t I followed this before?”
And it was a real moment in my life
as I understood that
and there was this guy talking,
but right next to me,
the guy, who happened to be a South African,
and he was head of a Jewish school in (name of city),
and he started crying
so I sort of think “God, you know I’ve understood this amazing thing,
now this man next to me is crying,
what’s going on here?”
And so he was weeping,
literally,
tears coming down his face
and so I sort of said “What’s, are you okay?”
and he said “Ja, I’ve just...”
and he just explained to me why what [he has) done works.
And so essentially
what he explained to me in the Jewish community,
he, a couple of years before that,
had convinced his community to,
that all the Jewish community were just going to go to this one school,
he was not going to have special schools
and so they were including everybody at their school. (6; 4; 1-46; 5; 1-22)

The speaker that made such an impact on Frank was Norman Kunc who is a consultant and speaker with a masters degree in family therapy. Norman was born with cerebral palsy and experienced both segregated and mainstream education during his school career. He along with his partner has worked, amongst other things, as a disability advocate, hence the talk he gave at Harvard at the principal’s course. The paradoxical motto on the home page of Norman’s website makes use of reverse psychology and gets the reader to think as she reads it. It says,

We have many biases...
And we've worked very hard
to get them.¹²

The effect that Norman's talk had on Frank's praxis snowballed as he thought about what he had heard. Frank had thought of making changes at his school, which he describes in no uncertain terms as being a "very aggressive" and "unhealthy" school, before he heard Norman Kunc, but it was Norman's talk that persuaded him to think of including boys who would never be the academic "little superstars" that characterised the school. It would be these boys, according to Frank's thinking, who would normalise that particular school community.

Frank takes his probable discomfort while listening to Norman Kunc out on his hosts when he uses an insalubrious word to describe them. Rather than seeing this reaction as being an ungracious utterance aimed at the whole of the American nation, it needs to be understood as Frank's own dis-ease at being in the presence of someone he did not encounter on a regular basis. Added to this was the difficulty he had in hearing what Norman had to say. Disability disrupts, and people who do not feel at ease in the presence of those of who are different from them usually struggle with their own inner fears and feelings. And yet as we shall see, the boys Frank did eventually take into the school changed not only him and his understanding of inclusion, but the whole school system as well. Incidentally, the principal Frank sat next to all those years ago at the Harvard talk was Ben.

As a principal in his sixties, Guy has walked a long road as a principal and his move towards inclusive education evolved with time. When I asked him if he would have done things differently had he come across the notion of inclusive education earlier in his career, he said,

I don't know if it would've been,
it would have been different initially
but I don't know if it would have been different at this stage
because it's something that's,
that's grown as we've developed
and I, it's something I feel very strongly about. (7; 7; 27-29)

He was the fortunate recipient of winning a trip to Australia at a conference on inclusive education in 2006. He spent two weeks looking at how schools are practicing inclusive education in and around Sydney. After visiting several schools there he said,



I saw two very different types of school
but the work that was being done in all the schools with regard to inclusivity
was amazing,
I saw two Down Syndrome kids
and I mean, they struggled to sit at a desk
but they were accepted by the rest of the class
they were wonderful,
they each had their own mentor sitting with them
and they did, they did the work required of them.
...and it made me realise that you can do it. (7; 7; 44-46; 8; parts of 1-10)

This trip was perhaps Guy's moment of significance but it had a double entendre as it also helped him to look at his teaching career retrospectively. It made him realise that there was much that as professionals he and his colleagues had not previously understood about some children earlier on in his career, and that their praxis in dealing with children who struggled was problematic. He said,

...when I first started teaching at (name of school) in the early seventies
there were a lot of kids with problems
but in those days we didn't realise what their problems were,
we had a lot of kids that caused huge problems,
I was at (name of school) when we went to two streams
and we decided to expand the school
...and a lot of the kids came from other schools
because they were having problems in other schools.
When a new independent school starts,
you often get the dropouts from other schools.
A lot of those kids really struggled
and it made me realise that
particularly afterwards, when I look back at it
and think of how those kids were almost victimised
by the teachers you know,
they were picked on,
and I, I count myself in that group, in that regard you know,
we used to think "Well, gosh they are,
they really are not bright kids, they struggle a lot"
and a number of those kids are now,
two in particular I can think of,

are serving on the (name of school) Council,
boys that really struggled at school have been incredible successes after school
and I've often worried about that. (7; 6; 35-46; 7; 1-4)

So one could surmise that teachers like Guy who could look back at the careers and see where they failed children, could end up having real regrets about their practice. However realising one's own prejudices and as a result, changing one's praxis, is perhaps an opportunity to redeem oneself.

Hal comes across as being a very sensitive head and like others had both personal and academic moments of significance. He said he became aware of other types of education and of children with disabilities when he was invited to serve on school councils of a remedial school, and a school for children with autism, both of which are situated close to his own school. He said,

...well I think through my dealings with (name of school) and (name of school)
and other schools with which I'm involved,
I've become aware of the,
the kind of the whole issue of social justice
and the needs that are out there
and the fact that schools like this
need to be able to have
that exchange of gifts really
between um, those who are so-called normal, mainstream,
and those who are so-called disabled.
So I, I think there's a, there's a need
for each to be exposed to the other. (8; 1; 35-40; 2; 22-29)

Hal has spent time overseas, not only at Harvard but also at the Klingenstein Centre (see Appendix H for information on this centre) where he made a point of studying inclusive education as a result of his association with the schools he mentioned. He referred to the concept of 'social justice' and understood this concept as being a three-way philosophy,

Well research has indicated,
well research that I've read on independent schools,
that where ...the practice of inclusion has been well implemented



with a clear philosophy as a kind of a triangle
which is the kind of a culture,
a philosophy and some other element which escapes me at the moment,
strategy maybe,
um, where it's been well implemented,
the results indicate that the children who come
from both sides of things,
have benefited by their own admission, as it were. (8; 9; 4-9)

Furthermore, he understands social justice as being,

... a sense of, of fairness,
of opportunities
one hesitates to use equal,
it's probably more equitable opportunities. (8; 8; 33-34)

He like Frank had also been exposed to Norman Kunc at Harvard and this experience also
had a significant impact on him. When I asked him what he felt as he was listening to him he
told me,

I forget whether he walked on or came on in a wheelchair,
but he was able to convey
that there was a great mind
behind this dysfunctional body
and that powerfully gave a, a sense of being "other" in a society
I suppose a mixture of feelings,
I imagine some sense of guilt
because I feel,
probably like most people
tend TO TALK LOUDLY to people who're disabled (*laughter*)
because you,
and s-l-o-w-l-y (*laughter*)
because you probably feel that they,
their mental faculties are probably also deficient
so I, I imagine there was guilt,
he was also quite funny if I remember correctly,
so there was obviously a, a joy
and there was a celebration of life



in all its different facets
and, and I suppose
a sense that everybody has their challenges
whatever they may be
so it's just a, a different set of challenges
everyone must come to terms with. (8; 2; 22-29)

It is interesting to me that Hal could not remember whether Norman Kunc came into the room in a wheelchair or not. It reminds one of young children who cannot remember what colour a person is when asked. It says to me that Hal did not see Norman's physical disability, he in fact saw beyond it. Instead Hal saw the humanity of the man, his humour, his joy, his celebration of life, and what's more he focused on and was persuaded by his message of what is like to be considered Other in society. It was by listening to him that an awareness of social justice emerged.

4.6.2 IT'S ABOUT TAKING ACTION

The participants were chosen to be interviewed because they are they known to be practicing inclusive education in their schools. It was their practice and the fact that they had actively implemented inclusion, that they had taken action, that interested me. Five of the eight participants verbalised that what they were doing was 'risk-taking', in other words, implementing inclusive education was and is a 'risky business' but one they took anyway. This is what they said,

Adam:

I think we're making the right decision,
but the negative is, I mean in reality,
a negative could be that [we are taking a risk.]
I think that risk for me is worth taking. (1; 13; 4-6)

Ben:

I think they have heard about what we do,
their parents have heard and it's word of mouth
and (name of school) started to say "Look, maybe you should try (name of Ben's school)".
(Name of another school) are saying you know, "Try (name of Ben's school)".



...because we're not scared of taking risks,
we take chances and we push the limits,
and we've got a supportive governing body
who allows us to do that as well. (2; 8; 7-11)

Cass:

...because the aim has got to be um, not holding, but sending out.
So it's rooting and flying,
it's the same as every other child in the world,
and you have to do that
so therefore you have to make it happen.
I'm not a remedial teacher.
I have very little knowledge in fact.
I've quite a, I mean, I've obviously got quite a reasonable knowledge of basic education,
but I'm a great risk taker. (3; 4; 36-41)

Dee:

I really see us as, as really just starting off
and it's been, it was a huge risk, it was,
it was an emotional move for us to come
it was mind blowing how, how emotional it was for us,
to take this risk and to, to expose our children
and to make sure they were not going to be hurt you know
because we were so protective over them here. (4; 31; 20-23, 31-34)

Frank:

...because to do it in one school is quite a risk
in terms of long term sustainability...(6; 18; 6-11)

Cass, who acknowledged her own risk-taking, thought that it was also important to teach the children about risk-taking,

so it's teaching the independence,
the thinking out of the box,
and the whole divergent thought process which comes from kids,
well, teaching that risk-taking is good
and risk-taking is possible



and risk-taking is risk taking.

Sometimes you win and sometimes you don't!

So if you don't win, you've got to pick yourself up again and start,

"What did I do that was wrong? What didn't allow me to win that?"

that thought process,

that, I think, that's really important,

and I think a lot of that is,

what is,

is really what inclusive education is really about,

it's teaching to everyone's abilities you know,

and not saying,

and it's, it's gorgeous,

it's fun,

it's wonderful

because it's different every day,

and everything's different,

and you're never in a mould

and you can never get stuck or stagnate

because there's going to be some little challenge around the corner

that someone didn't get it

or somebody did get it or,

how're you going to do that you know.

I think that's good, uh, ja,

I think that's good. (3; 26; 20-31)

Dee who is the most experienced of all the participants in special needs and who along with Adam took the risk of implementing inclusion (and who is now seen as an example to follow by others throughout the country), hints of her continued uncertainty, or ambiguity as Freire (1985) calls it, in the project,

...people are saying, "if you want to see inclusion, go to (School E)".

Meanwhile, we're still baboons man,

we have, you know,

we don't know what we're doing,

we're, we're just kind of growing,

we're learning and growing as we go along,

and here we're seen as these inclusion gurus,



we haven't got a clue, you know
and that's quite scary to me,
it really is,
and I know inclusion's going on in different parts of the country in different ways
but, jo¹³, that, that's a bit overwhelming. (4; 29; 5-7)

So the willingness to take the risks is accompanied by a humility which is evident in some of the other interviews as well. For instance Ben says,

There're no experts. (2; 2; 6)
I mean, I can stand there all day and you know,
tell them they have to do this and why,
and it's all theory.
Until it actually happens,
until you're dealing with it in the classroom,
you can't,
how do you know how you're going to deal with a blind kid in your class?
I don't know how I am going to deal with this kid who comes next year, you know.
It's going to be all sorts of new challenges.
So you learn while you're on it
and you suddenly realise,
"Hang on a second, this is how you do it, okay".
And that's the change, and it's slow. (2; 16; 38-44)

And elsewhere Ben said,

You've got to take risks in this life.
We took a big risk,
I took a big risk,
but I, I was confident that we could make it work. (2; 23; 30-31)

How principals took action and how they introduced inclusive education into their schools follows. Adam was instrumental in starting the inclusion process at School E along with Dee who was heading up a separate and small school for children with a variety of very severe disabilities in a church hall in the same town. It was after much thought that Dee packed up her little school and trekked across town to join the bigger bushveld campus of the brand new independent school on the outskirts of the town. Adam is an energetic professional

who wanted to leave teaching after his stint in School E but he was drawn back to education when the offer of his present job came his way. This strong pull towards education despite having other plans, is testimony to Adam's commitment to working with children.

When he was offered his current job in a completely different setting from where he had just come, the management and in particular the school rabbi, informed him that it was an inclusive school. On closer inspection however he found that the rabbi's understanding of inclusive education was not inclusive education according to Adam's definition. The rabbi meant including children with milder learning difficulties rather than children with more severe disabilities. As a result Adam is currently trying to introduce an inclusive process according to his own definition into the new school. He said:

The issue is that,
for me
an excellent school
should accommodate children with whatever
and if they can't
they need to be open about that
upfront.
Whereas I can now sit here
And be open that (name of present school) cannot have a child in a wheelchair,
not because we don't want it
but the facilities *[text missing]*
We're not an inclusive school,
we're excluding children in wheelchairs,
blind children
we're excluding deaf children. (1; 6; 30-35)

Adam is in the process of bringing two children into School A that need a modicum of support and he is satisfied with that for the time being. He has sent teachers to School E in order for them to observe the type of inclusivity practiced there and according to him,

I know that (name of remedial teacher) is very excited about it
I mean she is a very, very experienced teacher
but they came back from (School E),
they were



gob smacked
excited you know
and they gave that input back to the whole staff,
but we'll see.
I think it is a different animal. (1; 5; 40-43)

Whereas Adam was the catalyst behind full inclusion at his previous school, he is trying to start a similar process at his present school. This for him however, means starting on a very small scale and he does so without the amount of support and insight of the colleagues he had previously.

Ben is not only a principal of his school but he is also the Director of Education of a large number of Jewish schools in South Africa. He was one of the first principals in his area to introduce inclusive education in a broader sense to what was already taking place in his school because as he pointed out, the Jewish community spirit was naturally extant in the school at the time, as it is in all Jewish schools. He has an affinity for adolescents and particularly enjoys working with them. He said,

I love the adolescents
and they're in the most difficult time of their life
where they're changing,
and the whole Middle School concept is about change.
Um, so I like to think
I understand they way they're thinking,
what they're thinking,
where they're at...(2; 22; 9-11)

Of the school's philosophy he said,

Look, first of all
we believe we're an inclusive school
from a whole range of areas.
...we run our school according to an orthodox ideology,
But we have kids who, that are religious,
irreligious,
secular,



different forms of Judaism,
and kids who aren't Jewish at all.
You know, we have always been an open school,
going back even to the apartheid era.
Being a private school
we could kind of push the limits a little bit
which we did. (2; 3; 2-10)

What Ben says here gives an insight into the religious inclusion that has always taken place at the school and which in all likelihood paved the way for an even more inclusive type of education, one where he actively started including children with a variety of disabilities as well.

Cass is an experienced principal who brought great depth to the interview. The school, of which she was principal from 1990, caters for girls of all ages. Of her school Cass says,

It's a proudly progressive Anglican girls' school,
it equally owns the fact that it's very African-based,
and it's very proud of that.
It is an inclusive school,
it is a school that strives,
as does everybody,
for excellent standards of education for children.
It's a Round Square school
so it's given a huge amount of other things it can do. (3; 8; 35-40)

The term "Round Square" embodies within it the concept that there will always be a place for a child despite the chances of her being a round peg in a square hole. The Round Square motto according to Cass is that 'There is more in you than you know' (see Appendix G for a fuller description of the ideals of Round Square schools). The philosophy of Round Square suffuses the school and its philosophy and in all probability, it was one of the factors that shaped the inclusive nature and outlook of those entrusted with leading it.

Dee is a professional with deep insight and knowledge of children with more severe disabilities. She is a profoundly passionate advocate for vulnerable children and the

following excerpt gives insight into her compassion for these children and for her commitment to providing them with a loving space,

It's a pretty obvious thing um,
you know, it really is a child,
(Name of professional) always says
a child who has nowhere else to go,
who's been you know, rejected by everywhere else
and who has nowhere to go and sits at home
but it's children who have got disability
and who need that intensive one-on-one intervention,
those are the types of children we cater for.
Children who can be mainstreamed,
borderline kids
are in the mainstream side of the school,
they are not School D pupils. (4; 21; 9-15)

Dee heads up the School D which is a separate building (built with funds raised by an internationally-known golfer) which is situated on the same campus as the new upmarket private school in the area. When the school was being built, Adam, who was the principal at the time, invited Dee to join him on the new campus. Adam said that he did not understand why he did so,

Don't ask me why!
It just made sense
That there were these people struggling in the church hall. (1; 3; 1-2)

According to Dee,

...the Board, the Board and the headmaster okay, approached us
but, I mean I'm going to be honest,
I think initially it was a huge PR move because they needed funding
and how do you get funding,
it's a private school,
um, by bringing 16 kids with disabilities,
you know we're taking on their shortfall
and it was interesting because we were fighting



“Is that right?

Is that wrong?

Are we going to join (School E)?”

because at, at the back of our minds we’re thinking

“They’re using us ...”,

but our philosophy was

“So what? So what if that is what they’re doing?

We’re going to get the kids here

and we’re going to start a fantastic inclusion programme

and they’re not going to know what’s hit them!

They think they know what they’re doing” (laughter). (4; 17; 41-45; 18; 1-4)

It was an emotional decision that affected not only Dee and her colleague Nicci, but also their community of parents who expressed their reservations about the move. Dee describes how unexpectedly apprehensive the parents felt about the move,

I think at first they were very insecure coming here

because we came from such a secure, small environment

where everything was so protected in a way

and you come here and you expose your child

and your whole family to this whole school

and that was a huge thing for a lot of our parents,

I completely underestimated that. (4; 1; 14-17)

... So it was a huge decision

and we had family meetings

and they said to us,

I remember one particular meeting,

(they) turned to Nicci and I said

“We trust you,

you make this decision,

we trust you!”

And that was so scary

because we didn’t know if this was going to work. (4; 18; 10-14)

But as we shall see, the amalgamation of the two schools in the end provides deep and exciting insights into how successful inclusion can be.



Ed took over the principalship of the School E from Adam and he was intrinsically supportive of the inclusion process that was already taking place when he started as principal at the school. He said,

when I was first interviewed
I did not hesitate to say that I would be
more than happy to embrace
and be willing to assist
in implementing inclusive education. (5; 1; 7-9)

As Dee says of Ed,

...fortunately we're at (School E)
and fortunately Ed is so supportive of inclusion
and of just learning together
that we're given quite a lot of freedom
to kind of just develop this inclusive programme. (4; 32; 29-31)

Ed is a born teacher and comes from a family of teachers. He says,

I think my forte lies in the primary school,
I love the spontaneity of primary school children. (5; 3; 43-44)

Ed and Dee obviously make up a good team to lead the school. They are both experienced and innovative, they respect each other and their intention is not only to run an exemplary inclusive school but also to expand on what they have started. They have plans in place to extend the school to high school level which means the School D could be extended to include a vocational centre for older children.

Frank is the Director of Education in a tribal area and he oversees 80 state schools that are situated on royal land. The king of the area was a former student of Frank's and when he ascended to the throne, he contacted Frank and asked him to work for him. Frank was previously the principal of the prestigious school F where he, like Adam, was instrumental in introducing inclusive education into his school when he realised soon after arriving there



that it was an extremely unpleasant place to be. Of his understanding of the school at the time he said,

I was very, very aware of the fact
that there was something very wrong.
I hadn't even worked out what it was.
(School F) was a very unfriendly school,
very nasty,
lots of bullying,
vicious teacher comments,
vicious parents,
I mean it was really quite a sordid place
and I knew that and I was headmaster of it and so I didn't want to,
which you could at that school,
just have good results, good everything
and just pretend that you didn't notice that it was horrible.
And so I knew it was horrible
and I knew it needed to change. (6; 24; 22-28)

In his present job he hopes to transform a schooling system in an area that ultimately schools 48 000 children. He described the schools to me and from our high vantage point that overlooked a sizeable area of land, he said,

...and you'll see them, uh, you can't see one from here (*looking through window overlooking the land*)
there's one over there, red roofs,
but they're beautiful schools, most of them
and they've been built by the (name of royal tribe) at huge cost.
They, they're almost equivalent to what I would see as the model C schools¹⁴
... that's the sort of stuff you're looking at, quality,
but very poorly managed,
the educational systems in them
are not anywhere near where they should be,
so we essentially are here to try to lift
the quality of education in the 80 schools. (6; 1; 24-33)

Frank is an unassuming gentle man who has not been put off by the daunting task of transforming a whole educational system. His commitment to this project is testament to his

obvious compassion for children and for equitable opportunities. At his previous school he set his sights on not only changing the school into a friendlier place but also to bringing in boys who would not inevitably cope with exams or achieve matric. Despite the resistance along the way, he eventually, with the help of others, and a parent in particular, accomplished a type of inclusion that embodied the maxim 'belonging leads to excellence'. More will be said about this school later.

Guy is in his penultimate year as principal of school G. School G was started by Frank's previous school as an outreach project in another province and as Guy explains,

...we started as an outreach branch of (School F)
By the time I got here in '96
it was a traditional independent school
but we do service the community
through our outreach programme. (7; 1; 11-13)

Other than being inclusive racially, the school has not been traditionally inclusive of children with disabilities. It was Guy however, who started bringing children into the school who needed some kind of additional support and who Guy says, benefits the other children as well. He said,

I believe it means giving every child an opportunity in mainstream.
I believe that inclusive education um,
and I honestly believe this,
benefits the other kids
more than the kids that are being included. (7; 6; 21-23)

Hal is the principal of a boys' preparatory school in a sought-after upmarket area. He too is an experienced principal who has a palpable enthusiasm for boy's education. As he says,

I have a passion for boy's education
and boys are needy creatures,
and they operate at different levels
...so it's kind of my philosophy, has been,
to try to create as many openings as possible,
not to be judgmental,



so I want everyone
from the academic
to the maverick
to the eccentric,
all to feel that they're valued and contribute. (8; 11; 4-10)

4.6.3 IT'S PRAGMATIC

One of the outcomes of the interviews in my opinion is that pragmatism is about good practice which underscores the education that takes place in all the schools. It is practice that goes beyond including children who are different, who will never make matric, or who need very high support. As Sapon-Shevin (2007) says, “[i]nclusion is about reconceptualizing [*sic*] classrooms so that they meet the needs of diverse groups of learners. Inclusion is about acceptance. Inclusion is about belonging. Inclusion is about seeing all people (including ourselves) as complex and valuable”. (p. 217). This is what good practice entails; it is not only about education. Freire (1985) has similar views on literacy. According to him, teaching literacy parrot fashion is not enough. Literacy also needs to help people think critically about the world they live in and to develop an awareness of their human rights and responsibilities.

In my estimation good practice in the schools I studied began with having an inclusive philosophy. This philosophy in some cases was imposed on the staff autocratically, while in other schools it was a process that was already happening when the principal was appointed at the school. Adam was instrumental in implementing inclusive education at his school but it was a slow process that evolved along with the building of the new school. The concept was addressed but it was only as the building reached completion two years later that the process of amalgamating the two schools began. Part of the reason for Adam to suggest the merger in the first place was two-fold. Firstly Adam told me that the teachers at the small special school had taught at his school previously so he knew them and secondly, five of the children at the smaller school had siblings at his school,

I didn't know anything about inclusive education
until about seven years ago,
it wasn't even on my radar,



but my experience at (School E)
there was a group of teachers
who had taught at (School E) before
and who were working at a special needs school.
They were housed in a church hall
and in 2001, I reckon,
I said to Dee,
I think by that stage we had plenty of space on the campus,
I just said to her
“Why don’t you come across to (School E)?”
we’ll build a classroom block at our school
seeing that five of the eight children were siblings of (School E) kids.
That’s actually where the whole thing started. (1; 2; 1-9)

Subsequently children visited each other’s campuses during the building process as part of life orientation lessons, picnics were held on the foundations of the new building and the concept of the amalgamation was introduced to the parents at an AGM. The process happened slowly and according to Adam there was very little resistance from staff and parents.

Ben’s implementation was autocratic and unlike the slow process at Adam’s school, inclusive education happened within a month at Ben’s school. This might not seem like good practice and reminds one of the ‘wild integration’ (Mittler, 2000, p. 26) that took place in Italy between 1971 and 1975 (ibid) which has been partially successful but has not been without its problems. Ben however admits that they are learning as they go along and that they have a model that is working for them. The process started when a parent asked him to take her special needs child into the school. He told me,

So I, I was saying,
about 11 years ago um,
a letter came across my desk from a parent
who said she’d heard that we had been talking
about special needs programme,
she’s very happy to hear about it
but what a pity because it is going to be too late for her kid.
So I had the letter on my desk for a while
and then eventually I called her uh,



I said let's talk.

So she came in,

we chatted,

we went to look at a couple of other schools

where we, you know, heard that there was some inclusion going on.

Um, and I met her child at her house and I thought

"Okay let's just do this!"

So I took in five kids in that year, I think it was 1996.

There were a whole range of different kids,

one kid had cerebral palsy,

one kid came from (name of school), she had basic learning problems,

one child had been in a very bad accident,

was in a coma for a long time and had massive short term memory loss,

one kid had massive spatial problems, couldn't find his way from A to B,

and it was right at the end of that year

and I said "Okay let's just do it for January".

And I went to my board and I said "Okay let's employ one person".

So I employed a SENCO who was an ex-pupil of mine

and we decided we were going to just run it for a year,

pilot programme for a year.

I told my staff we were doing it,

I said "This is what we're doing".

I'm a very unautocratic principal,

I do lots of things by consensus,

most things by consensus,

this time I said "We're doing it,

if you're not happy with it

you need to go".

I said "The train's going north, if you want to hop on, great,

if you don't, then this is the time for you to bail out" (2; 3; 45-46; 4; 1-17)

When we started in 1996,

I had zip clue about it, none, no.

That little girl in that first group that had cerebral palsy,

she had little stick legs sticking out

and she sat here and I said

"Well, you know, academically, okay, you'll manage and all that,

how're you going to climb these stairs?"

And she said "Come I'll show you!",

and she took my hand and we walked to the stairs

and she ran up those stairs.



How can you say no to a child like that, you know?

I kind of saw her strength of character

“I want to be here,

who the hell are you to tell me I can’t be here?”

You want me to run up the stairs,

I’ll run up the stairs!” (2; 22; 38-46; 23; 1-2)

Whereas Adam spent time encouraging discussion with all the role players in his school, Ben spoke to only the school board and one staff member. Although he told staff that they could ‘bail out’ of the inclusion process, he reports that none of them did. He said he could not really remember all the details of how it happened,

The board agreed that we could start,

first of all, I called my head of educational support,

...he is a counsellor here,

and I said,

it was, I think, in December, the beginning of December,

and I said “(name of counsellor), in January we’re starting an inclusion programme,

go and sort it out” (*laughter*)

he nearly had a heart attack.

We employed (name of teacher) as a SENCO

and we just sat through that holidays

and just planned it out

and uh, I don’t know

I can’t even remember how it happened. (2; 23; 8-17)

Five of the eight participants were responsible for introducing inclusive education as a new concept into their schools. This included Adam and Ben as already mentioned as well as Dee, Frank and Guy. By the time the other three principals arrived at their schools, there was some kind of inclusion already taking place, which all of them then actively supported, nurtured and broadened. Most of the participants explained that their type of inclusion did not however include all children. Hal for instance said that he probably would not take a child who had severe behavioural issues. When Cass arrived at her school in 1990, the inclusion process was already in motion. The school was small, and as she said, they accommodated all children whether they could write matric or not.



The basic tenet of (School C) is

I never, ever refuse a child.

Never.

You get in chronologically and you're in.

And that's a lie,

I do.

I send children away if I can't do the job of work. (3; 4; 13-16)

She then told me how a child who was blind, and who she realised needed to learn Braille, had applied to come to the school, but because Cass felt that they did not have the expertise to teach the essential skill of Braille, she recommended a specialised school for children who are blind in a nearby town. This pragmatic approach is a mark of good practice because if a child needs to learn a skill that will see her through her adulthood, she is likely to lose out if she attends a school that cannot teach that necessary skill. Other principals concurred with this option. For example, it aggrieved Adam that he was not a wholly inclusive school in his new school but he was open about recommending another type of environment if in his opinion a child would benefit more than from his environment,

Some people would say children,
for example, the hearing impaired
children we perhaps couldn't accommodate here
or in this particular model
and perhaps they need specialised education,
that they do need to be in a facility
and that's fine.

I am not saying we must include children to our best interests knowingly,
for example, that a Down Syndrome child could come into the mainstream
and that we could accommodate them till the age of 10 or 11
then you know, for various other reasons
it wouldn't be best for them to stay here. (1; 6; 37-44)

These examples of good practice are supported in the research by authors such as Hegarty (2004) who argues that like individual piano tuition, some students may benefit from withdrawal from class while others will benefit from separate education "away from peers" (p. 187). For instance, when I asked Ben what he would do if inclusion for a particular child did not work, he replied,



We'll have to say it's not working.

I said to the mom, we're going to have to be honest with each other,
if it's not working,
we're going to tell you straight,
otherwise it's not fair on the kid. (2; 19; 20-22)

Hal said something similar,

If we feel there's something that's going to make them battle when they come,
let's say we assess them in March,
we may say to them
"We suggest he needs OT before he joins us in January"
but we wouldn't turn them down on that basis.
The only time we would really do that
is if we really felt that it was an impossible fit
and I can't think of a time that's happened,
I mean maybe if it's a physical disability
and we're on many levels,
that wouldn't fit.
If there is outrageous behavioural issues you know
maybe we would
but we haven't to my knowledge done that.
Often though a child might just appear too immature
so we might say "Do another year at pre-primary before you join us". (8; 4; 20-27)

So where principals believe that it is to the benefit of the child that they are not accepted if their particular need will not be met adequately, the converse of having children who are not neurotypical had great benefits for schools. There were many success stories told to me by the principals as a consequence of inclusive education and these success stories are practical examples of good practice. Here follows some of those success stories,

Cass:

And the very first one is a girl
she just could do nothing.
...nothing academically ever went well,
it was really a struggle
and I got here and she was in grade 11,

and I said, sat down with her mother and her one day

and I just said “Look whatever happens,

the only thing we can ever do is find one thing that

(name of student) does well!”

She became a national ballroom dancer

and she’s married,

she has a business,

and she’s a great kid,

she’s here all the time for old girls’ things

and she’s very together with her friends

and it really and truly,

it was about dancing.

It wasn’t about anything else.

She just had a place,

a life,

a place where she could be the best she could be.

she set the trend for the fact that then we decided

we could do anything.

So we did! (3; 2; 35-45)

Cass went on to relate further stories which included a girl who could not read but who went on to run her own catering business. Others have graduated with science and sewing as major subjects.

And you can make such good choices for kids now,

it’s fabulously easy,

fabulous stuff.

I remember when I brought sewing into (School C)

and people said “Ah, good Lord, sewing, it’s like typing!”

I said, “Well, in my considered opinion, both are exceptional skills”.

And I think it’s brilliant.

I think if someone can sew she can make a living for herself,

she can clothe her children,

and I think that that’s a great blessing,

and my being able to sew myself is a great blessing, quite frankly,

apart from anything else,

it’s wonderful sort of meditative stuff

and that in itself is a blessing in the world to[day],

in our world.

And we've got so many kids through matric with sewing and science.

So how about that for a combination, you know?

Science because that's how bright they are
and the sewing because that's what they want to do.

They want to do something with their hands.

They're very well balanced young women. (3; 5; 1-19)

These girls according to Cass were offered the opportunity to go through "a system, to be part of a rite of passage really, part of a growing rite" (3; 6; 33-34), a rite of passage that for this school proved to be successful for some children. So providing children with preferred opportunities is a mark of good practice. Frank, Guy and Hal all told success stories of boys that they had had at their schools who went on to make significant successes of their lives. Guy for instance, said,

I had two boys at (School G)
where I was head for while,
and these two boys both wanted to go to (name of prestigious school)
and were turned down,
...The headmaster said "No, they haven't done well enough in their..." (7; 7; 4-6)
and I said
"But they come from super families,
they're lovely boys,
they've got so much potential in other areas".
He refused to.
I went to the other independent school in the area
and the headmaster there said
"Right, we'll give them a chance"
Both of these boys today have made huge successes of their lives,
one runs the Oppenheimer stable in (name of city),
the other one runs a big photographic studio in (name of city).
These were two boys who were very non academic
but they had wonderful other attributes
and I just felt all along
that had those boys not been given the chance to go to a school like they did,
I don't think they would have been
as successful as they've been. (7; 7; 10-18)

In addition all participants reported that extraordinary changes started taking place as they implemented inclusive education and as their understanding of inclusive education increased. Adam reported that teaching all types of children made him firstly examine his own methodology and secondly, it forced him to intentionally look at the individual needs of a child. As a result, his interaction in the class improved as he practiced teaching inclusively. He said,

I think to a degree it has, um,
what's been important in terms of the process
is that it's brought what we so often take for granted
and just run of the mill, you know,
okay, well we're doing lesson prep
and we are doing this
and we just go through the motions.
What inclusive education has done for me
is it's created an issue,
something important,
something cerebral that one can sit down and look at a real sort of issue,
a real thing,
tangible,
something tangible that you can investigate
and that you can discuss afterwards,
where you can look back and say,
"You know what, I really had to apply myself",
I had to think,
I had to get involved to do the best for this particular kid.
That for me was hugely stimulating,
so the process of inclusion,
I've learnt and, and it has shaped a lot
and certainly me as a teacher.
I used to go through,
I used to do my lesson prep,
I'd deliver it in one particular style.
The other thing inclusive education does
is it makes you look at the child,
at that specific child
and I think what I like about outcomes based education
in terms of the assessment



is that it should in theory make you look at a child

and say you know what,

these are his strengths,

these are his weaknesses.

In theory it's really nice,

in practice I don't know if it happens that often. (1; 16; 36-46; 17; 1-5)

Ben explained how he learnt how little he knows about inclusive education but how he believes that he, along with every staff member, can make a difference to a child's life both positively and negatively,

Um, I think it's made me realise how much we've still got to learn.

Um, you know, that learning curve stays steep,

it never ever comes down.

So you just,

every day is a new challenge, ...

It's exciting.

It's kinda why we do it I think,

because there's an excitement about it,

something new.

You know someone said to me

"How come you've done this for so long?",

and people say "Are you still teaching?"

and I say "Yes, are you still a lawyer?"

You know that story?

You say why do I do it?

I do it,

and I genuinely believe this,

I think every day that I walk through those doors,

I make a difference in a child's life.

Every member of my staff,

not just me,

you know I don't mean to be blasé,

every one of my staff,

every day we make a difference, a difference in a child's life

and I think that's what inclusion's all about, you know.

Just help a kid progress a little bit,

one word,

one phrase,



can actually change a kid's life, you know,
a negative word as well. (2; 24; 24-37)

Cass sees inclusive education on a very broad level and being at a Round Square school, she is deeply aware of their practice at her own school, as well as how it is possible to learn from other schools.

It's made me quite um, quite sharply observant
of what people are doing.
It's, it's given me,
and through Round Square
and visiting huge number of overseas schools on a fairly constant basis,
I mean I've been extremely spoilt,
I've been able to (clicking of fingers)
pick up all sorts of ideas (*clicking of fingers*)
and bring them home
as to what other schools are doing in other parts of the world,
and I mean in Britain they do loads of work on this
and Australia's magnificent you know,
so I've been able to bring home quite a lot. (3; 23; 42-46; 24; 1-2)

Dee has been surprised by what she has learnt from the practice of inclusion and how much work it entails in ensuring that nothing is overlooked in the process,

Ja, there've been parts that were so unexpected to me that I thought,
I kind of in my mind,
I never for once arrogantly thought that I knew what inclusion was going to be like
but there are so many parts that have blown my mind
that I never thought would come into it like the ones I mentioned before you know,
the social side of things,
the dynamics that have happened in, within the school,
the amount of benefit our children have given the school environment
and our families have given this school environment um,
so that's definitely not changed my idea of inclusion
but developed the idea of inclusion um,
and just how, how much work goes into inclusion.
I mean it really is, you, you've just got to be on the ball all the time
and to make sure that, like I said just now,



any aspect of the school's calendar,
that your kids are fully included
and that's hectic because say for instance there's a, inter-house athletics,
you make sure that all your children are included
and all the different ways however they interact,
however they participate in those activities,
they must be there and they must be in those events,
if it's the gala,
if it's the drama,
if it's the this or the that,
you make sure that our children are included and not left out.
Um, so I think the work, um, the intensity of the work that goes into inclusion. (4; 31; 1-16)

So educators cannot underestimate the amount of work that goes into good, successful inclusion. In order to deliver the best possible service, Dee went into great length telling me how she used whatever was available to her to obtain advice from the best experts in the world,

...the other strength I believe is uh, is using resources in a community
and thinking out the box,
and getting onto that internet
and using the best possible people in the country.
If you need advice on something,
going onto the internet and emailing twenty five people.
To me that's the path, that's something (name of special school) did,
that's what we were doing
because we were so isolated in a way at the church
that we had to use professionals,
as much as we could
and if we could get the CAAC* in,
and if we could get (name of professor)'s advice
we would always go to the best possible person we knew of.
We would never just go with "Oh well they're easy to get" kind of thing
and I think that we brought across too,
was using resources and, and using our contacts,
and offering our contact base to the school.

* Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

And a lot of the people we had in our contact base,
they're starting to use more in the mainstream side too.
Um, professional development I think that um, that seeing out the box,
that you get outside people in,
to come and present and things like that,
I think that's definitely something more,
this is more on the professional side um,
because we did things so differently to mainstream schooling,
so that's absolutely to me part of the, the strengths we've brought along with us. (4; 25; 19-34)

Ed sees the practice as being a natural process that has developed with time.,

As I said right at the outset this has been a fairly natural process um,
we have done it slowly,
it has not been foisted on anybody
we've had meetings in the staff room
where Dee and Nicci have been given the opportunity
to share with them their fears and their expectations.
Um, staff from mainstream classes in turn have been given the opportunity
to share their fears and their expectations,
and in that way I think we've managed to implement,
and in that way I think we've managed to implement,
we've certainly come to grips
with the practicalities of implementing inclusion. (5; 11; 35-42)

Through the practice of inclusive education, Frank like Cass, started looking at why people
could not learn certain subjects and this set him on a journey that taught him how to
understand the theory behind teaching at a much deeper level,

Look it hasn't really shaped my understanding of inclusion,
it has shaped my understanding of how you learn, you know,
I think learning is living,
I almost think it's the same word,
so I'm not really just talking about how you learn maths,
I'm talking about more or less how you live,
in the, in the way we meant to live
because I think we are meant to live very extraordinary lives,
why should we not.



And I think it's really impacted on my understanding
of how you learn
so I don't think,
because before I met all this stuff
I was fascinated with maths in particular
and how you learnt it
because I was so irritated when I first started teaching
that no one could do it,
I couldn't believe it,
no one could do it
because I'd had this experience of this wonderfully easy subject
and then when you teach
and you suddenly realise all these people can't do it
and that was so irritating for me
so I went on this massive, massive thing
to try to work out how people could do it,
and then the inclusion thing was actually the answer.
It wasn't the Piaget, that's just the practical skills that you need.
It's the, it's the belonging thing.
You know, emotion, emotions drive learning,
absolutely before the cognitive stuff is the emotional stuff,
so for me the inclusion is the secret breakthrough that you've got to get past
if you want to get to the next one.
So it's ...helped me,
I can't believe how it suddenly accelerated
my own understanding of just all the cognitive stuff. (6; 35; 20-36)

Guy's experience of inclusive education is fairly recent and he too says that inclusion is an ongoing and complex process, but it has spurred him on to thinking about including more children with different types of disabilities in his school. He said,

I don't think we ever really fully understand it,
we're learning all the time
and there are new things as the kids get older
you learn new things.
I would love to be more involved in inclusive education
I'd like to see children in wheelchairs,
children on crutches,
physically handicapped children



as well as he mentally handicapped children,
at my school
and I've never refused one
it's just that no-one has ever asked me to accept one. (7; 15; 32-37)

Hal spoke of how some of his staff struggled with inclusive education at his school but that with openness and regular discussions, they have become more accommodating of children with disabilities,

Without being clichéd or without trying to be clichéd,
but the children learn in different ways
in a different pace, so how does it go?
They learn,
they don't all learn in the same way at the same time,
or as (name of teacher) would say
"There're red apples and there're green apples!"...
... and that we can be flexible.
Initially, I know some staff battled when we had to give modified child approach,
they might not really go to maths at all,
they might go to a special maths class right the way through
and then have a modified report
and initially some staff, I think, battled with that or children having extra time for tests
and so on and so forth,
but I think we speak about it often
and I think people do share a common approach.
They won't all necessarily fit into a norm-referenced process. (8; 10; 17-30)

For practice to be good, it requires having support in place for both children and staff. Table 5 illustrates the number of staff that provide support in the various schools. According to Mittler (2000) the 'provision of a support system is the key to progress' (p. 121). In addition, support for children is as important as support for teachers. Table 5 outlines the paid or in-house support that each school utilises but it needs to be noted that each school refers children to a number of outside professionals as well.

TABLE 5: DETAILS REGARDING NUMBER OF PAID SUPPORT STAFF

School	Number of children	Grades	SENCO	Remedial teacher	Psychologist/Guidance Counsellor	Speech Therapist	OT	Facilitator	Intern	Volunteer	Other
School A	500	4-7	1	3	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
School B	365	7-9	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	1
School C	795	000*-12	1	4	-	-	-	11	1	-	-
School D&E	417	00*-8	2	1	-	-	2	5	5	3	-
School F	150	8-12	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
School G	470	00*-7	-	6	1	1	-	-	6	2	-
School H	440	0*-7	-	2	-	1	-	-	4	parents	1

* Grade 000 is for 4 year olds, grade 00 for 5 year olds and grade 0 for 6 year olds.

Cass for instance, does not have a psychologist on her staff but she has a bank of psychologists she depends upon. She extrapolated,

...we did a lot of work working together with um,

chatting to lots of psychologists,

loads of psychologists,

I'm very, very not shy about psychology,

I think psychology has a huge place to play,

huge,

and I, I really do believe that a healthy mind is a healthy child.

I really believe that,

a healthy human in fact, not just a child.

So I'm quite happy to spend hours from that perspective

on psychological reasons and emotional things and stuff like that. (3; 10; 20-26)

Cass also has extra support staff in place that other schools did not have such as TEFL-trained teachers to work with a number of foreign students who attended her school from countries such as Korea, Rwanda and other parts of the world. Altogether she had 170 paid staff in her school for 795 children, with 100 of those being academic staff.

Providing support as well as encouraging collaboration with permanent support staff and outsiders as well, is a mark of good practice and this has been succinctly captured by the participants in this study. For instance, Dee and her colleague Nicci are often called upon to deal with problems experienced by ‘mainstream’ staff. They have on occasion helped with seating a child with muscular dystrophy in a mainstream classroom as well as teaching staff how to cope with epileptic seizures. Before the inclusive programme, Dee admitted that she did not think their expertise would be used as much as it has been. Adam described Dee and Nicci as being “extremely well-informed” and “competent” (1; 7; excerpts 31-35) and between the two of them they have learnt from conferences across the globe. In Ben’s school there is opportunity every third week for staff development and they often focus on inclusion during these sessions. Support is also available for children whether it is for assessments, educational psychometric testing or psychological counselling. Cass also told me how they have many grade meetings and the ‘talk’ is often around inclusivity and support,

In the senior school we tend to talk support education all the time,
because it’s just important
that children become intellectually independent.
That’s a really important thing, you know,
and that’s what we would do, ja. (3; 21; 13-16)

In Dee’s school there is a lot of assistance and supervision for children who require high support, for instance,

You know I remember once someone saying um,
“Inclusion is never for autistic, for children with autism
because they’ll never cope in an assembly”, for instance.
It’s just not, not even been an issue for that child.
We’ve got two children with autism
who are coping with that completely
and I think it’s because we never underestimate them,
they are part of the school,
we’re going to expose them,
we’re going to support them
because in the beginning what we were doing with that child
was to sit right next to him



and I would have his, he's got a little mat and he builds his finished puzzle,
and we started with that and eventually he didn't even want that.
And now he sits there
and it's not even an issue for him. (4; 32; 12-20)

Dee and Ed also provide learner support in the classrooms where it is needed. The teachers have the support of a variety of teachers such as remedial teachers and many of them rely on Dee and Nicci as mentioned earlier for more specialised input. According to Ed the support for the school is a multidisciplinary approach and he employs or refers children to speech therapists, physiotherapists, educational psychologists, neurologists and general practitioners when necessary.

Frank saw his support staff as being more available to the staff than the children,

I saw them there as the staff,
(name of staff member), when she should used to go off the rails
she used to go and think it was about these kids
and I used to say
"No, no if, if you are spending your time every day helping the kids,
you're failing,
because that won't be sustainable"
and so occasionally she used to fall for that herself
and I had to sort of pull her out of that and say
"Look, you should be spending all your time with staff
because it doesn't help if you just help the kids.
We need to help the teachers to help the kids" (6; 30; 32-38)

When I asked Frank whether the staff used the support staff, he told me that it was a difficult relationship but the mainstream staff essentially moved forward to the point where they were supporting all the children and not just the children who required extra support.
Frank told me,

...so we would have about 14 or 15 of these boys who we'd seriously included
and they were essentially for them
so after school they could always go
and sort out various issues with support

and I eventually broadened that to a whole school extra support system

so I opened the whole library and I said

“No, this is not for the inclusion kids, this is for everyone”

so we’re always going to have that trained facilitator for all problems

and eventually I got the staff to understand

they must all be capable of doing that job. (6; 16; 9-15)

Guy told me that the support staff at his school are mainly there to support the children, but he also holds weekly meetings where problems may be discussed. Interestingly, the staff that provide support in Guy’s school are also required to give time to teach the community in the skills that are lacking in that community,

I have occupational therapists, speech therapists, language therapists

who I use at school to help my kids

and we provide a classroom

but in return they have to give up their time on a Saturday,

one Saturday morning a month,

to run workshops for black teachers.

So it’s one way of helping provide some sort of support for schools in the community

that don’t have access to these therapists. (7; 1; 34-39)

Guy also envisages having more support staff in the future as the number of children requiring extra support increases. Hal provides extensive support to the children who need it with a strong focus on the individual child. Like the other principals, there are formal and informal occasions for discussing the problems that children have, and in addition, the learning support team do in-house assessments. In Frank’s school he made extensive use of children supporting children and this too resulted in unexpected outcomes. He took the risk of grouping children up to 60 in a class with six groups of ten children, each group being led by one of the students. He told me,

So you can see how everyone benefits,

it’s a, really it’s a team thing

whereas if you try and, let’s say, the old system

you put all those second language,

the people who are struggling to pass English,

but all in the same class,



now that doesn't help much.

Equally if you put all the people like say like my son,
in the same class and they're all going to get As for English,
...all they do is get a bit more arrogant
because of course they're going to get an A anyway
and they don't really stretch their, their minds
so (name of teacher), I mean we changed that
and so what's extraordinary was also that one,
it was a huge risk,
you can imagine where we opened up this class of 60 kids,
the others were 25,
so there was one class of 60 and there were four classes of 25,
and we really struggled to find the first 60
because obviously who wants your child in a class of 60 for English.
But we got a class of 60,
as the years went by, (name of teacher)'s results were way above the classes of 25.
I did an analysis because she was adamant,
so we made sure all the classes as far as we could, a mixed ability
and then we looked and her classes got more and more As,
like double percentage than the other ones
and she got far fewer Es than the others
and the others were all being taught on the one teacher to a group, 25,
hers was one basically a facilitator and ten groups. (6; 29; 17-32)

Teaching differently and trying something new despite the risks associated with it is what Thomas and Loxley (2001) would describe as acting in a mindful manner. As they say 'if I act in a manner which is mindful of others – and so does everybody else – then in the long run this is bound to have optimal consequences for a society' (p. 93). One can clearly see that the practice of acting mindfully in Frank's school resulted in better marks for everybody. As he said,

...so the quantity of A aggregates more than doubled,
the quantity of D aggregates almost disappeared. (6; 23; 2-4)

Even though good practice is not only about the improvement of marks, it is more about improving on intervention, on differentiation, on individual needs, on creating an inclusive culture and ultimately it is about social justice for all. Compare Frank's attitude with the Croll

and Moses's study (as cited in Thomas & Loxley, 2001) which exposed that the majority of heads cynically wished to get rid of children who were problematic and to include only those who did not upset the status quo.

A further characteristic of good practice in inclusive schools is the number of adaptations the school makes in order to accommodate their children. Table 6 details the adaptations each school made. Adaptations depended on how many children had been included and for how long the inclusion had been operating in each school.

TABLE 6: TYPES OF ADAPTATIONS

School	Type of adaptation/modification*
School A	No adaptations yet
School B	Colour-coded corridors and rooms; roster systems for carrying bags (organised by children); FET; Braille typewriter offers large print for children who are partially sighted; investigating a vocational track and sheltered employment; no entrance exams; laptops; earphones; a quiet room
School C	Ramps; interactive white boards; laptops; computers; read exams; FET; dispensations and different matrices; good timetables for staff; loads of prep time; teaching mindfully; dossiers**; curriculum choices; service component; TEFL teachers
School E	New building was customised for children in wheelchairs; power wheelchairs; laptops; AAC; switches; adapted seating; standing frames; physical adaptations (electrical leads, space etc); customised building; adapted playground
School F	Getting staff to understand the paradigm, teaching mindfully, adapting assessments and improving, removing access to IQ tests, reorganising classrooms, making use of peer teaching, no entrance exam
School G	Timetable changes
School H	Small classes (max 20 pupils per class), diversified curriculum, ethos that encourages no shouting, modified reports, extra time for tests

* Teacher/child support staff is excluded here as it is dealt with separately elsewhere. These lists may not be exhaustive.

**For children who never pass an exam, a dossier is kept that contains a child's achievements.

Most of the principals acknowledged that they were learning about inclusion as it unfolded over time, but it is interesting to see the extent of their individual inventiveness which obviously brought with it a sense of enjoyment, whether it was science and sewing as mentioned earlier, painting colour-coded corridors, finding simple solutions such as a child requiring glasses or a hearing aid, an art teacher wondering how he was going to teach a child with visual impairment to imagine a spider's web, or introducing offbeat sports such as skateboarding and wall-climbing or as Hal says,

...we try a whole range of different approaches

so I don't think we would ever see it as a deficit in the child

it's just that

we haven't found the right openings for him. (8; 12; 45; 13; 1-2)

The next section deals with the degrees of inclusion that were practiced in the schools.

- **Degrees of inclusion in practice**

Mittler's (2000) take on inclusive education is that it is a process in the making. The *first* point he makes is that the implementation of inclusion is unique to each school and whereas some schools will need to change a whole system, 'others will find that the baggage they carry is unsuitable and may need to be adapted or even discarded' (p. 113). The research on the eight schools show that each school made changes that suited them and the level of inclusion differed markedly from school to school as can be seen in Table 7.

TABLE 7: DEGREE OF INCLUSION TAKING PLACE IN EACH SCHOOL

Schools	Principal overseeing the inclusion process	Degree of inclusion*	Amount of support needed***
School A	Adam	Limited inclusion**	Low to medium support
School B	Ben	All 365 children considered special	Low to medium support
School C	Cass	5% – 10%	Low to high support
School D and E	Dee and Ed	5% – 10%	Low to very high support
School F	Frank's previous school	10%	Low to medium support
School G	Guy	Limited inclusion in Foundation Phase only	Low to medium support
School H	Hal	15% – 20%	Low to medium support

*A figure of 5% signifies children who require high to very high support whereas the 10% signifies a further 5% that require low to medium support. The 5% also represents the normal distribution of children with moderate to severe disabilities and 10% the mean for people with all types of disabilities in the normal population. These percentages are derived from the distribution of disabilities in the normal population (<http://www.statssa.gov.za/PublicationsHTML/Report-03-02-44/html/>)

**Limited inclusion means very few children are actively included and may signify 2 – 3 children in the whole school.

***The type of disability a child has is commensurate with how much support s/he needs. A child with severe disabilities such as cerebral palsy or Down syndrome with cognitive disability will require very high support such as wheelchair support, a communication system and behaviour modification, whereas a child who requires less support such as a child who is blind but who has normal cognitive abilities, or a child who has mild learning difficulties such as dyslexia will require lower support (compare with types of disabilities occurring in schools and amount of support each disability requires in Table 3, page 102).

Secondly, Mittler (ibid) believes that an initial obstacle to overcome when implementing inclusion is the resistance of stakeholders. The principals I interviewed told me that there was only some resistance to the process from staff and parents, a point they found surprising as they expected more resistance than that they actually experienced, and children were unexpectedly accommodating of other children.

Adam prepared his community well in advance for the implementation of inclusive education and he told of how teachers became accepting of the process within a relatively short period of time. He said,

We did it over a period of a year
and we also had parent meetings.
Uh, the main one was really at the AGM
to say that (name of special school) was going to join us
and have a separate facility
which I think allayed their fears to some degree.
Um, and there was very, very little resistance,
in fact it was quite interesting,
that initially most of the resistance came from one or two of the staff members
who were going to actually have a child in their class for that first year (1; 4; 44-46; 5; 1-4)
Needless to say after that first year
they were absolutely accepting
and found it had done so much (for them). (1; 5; 7-9)

Ben described how there was very little resistance to the process but that some parents moved on from his school. He pragmatically saw this response as their choice,

Um, you seemed to have had very little resistance to the process? No-one really left?

No.
Problems from parents really.
Some parents who just couldn't understand it
and wanted, you know, wanted something specific for their children
and some of them moved on, ja.
You know some people felt,
feel that our School doesn't give them that excellence in sport, you know.
We don't play Saturday rugby and cricket,



we don't play sport on Saturday,
so they've* moved on, you know,
that's understandable.

If that's what their priority is, then that's what their priority is.

And if they feel that because we've got kids who are at a lower academic ability than their kids
and, and their standard's going to drop,

well, then they'll go somewhere else where the standards are perceived to be higher.

But they can't argue about our results, you know,
that's the irony.

And our, our results with inclusion,
have remained at the top of the pile for years and years.

Well in this last 11, 12 years.

We're still getting those 40 A aggregates
and 100% pass rates and all that. (2; 24; 43-44; 25; 1-12)

As the process was already happening when Cass arrived at her school, her experience of resistance was largely absent. I asked her whether parents had displayed any resistance. She believed that parents would only resist if their children resisted,

I'm sure they have.

I don't know whether they've actually displayed it to me or not,

I'm sure they have,

I'm sure they have amongst themselves somewhere along the line,

generally speaking, no,

because the children don't.

You see, if children did,

then the parents would

and that would be very understandable,

and I would then think "Gosh, that's got to be looked at!"

But no, mm, mm. (3; 17; 14-20)

Dee had a lot to say about resistance and as she says her expectations were turned on its head to the point where a parent who was covertly against the amalgamation, now actually serves as a volunteer in the School D. A second parent was stopped in her tracks on the way to the principal's office to complain that her child had not received an award for sport. This is what she told me,

* Meaning the parents.



You know I met with a lot of parents at (School E),
and it's been so interesting listening to them
because when we initiated moving to (School E),
I was so poepbang¹⁵, you can quote that (*laughter*),
I was so scared of parents coming and attacking us
and saying "No, you can't do this, no, no, no, no",
but it just flowed,
in fact it was the other extreme.
I was,
I could not believe that we had no,
we had nothing negative said,
we had no resistance,
not one parent, mainstream parent at (School E), came forward
and we had ample opportunity.
We had meetings that we opened it up to (School E) parents,
to our parents,
we had the AGM where we brought forward the suggested amendments to the constitution,
not one parent stood up and said anything.
And I thought okay, well obviously they feel it's fine
or they just don't know enough about it
and they don't feel like they can speak up.
Anyway, then since we started
I've had a few mainstream parents come to me and say, for instance
I'll give you an example
there's a particular parent at (School E),
whose children really achieve academically
and on the sports field,
and she for instance for me was,
she's the type of parent that I thought would have a bit of an issue with us joining,
and she came to me about six months into us being here and said
"Do we need volunteers?"
I said "Ja", because we'd advertised in the (School E), newsletter
and I said "Why do you know someone?"
She said no, she just wanted to know,
maybe she'll come and do it.
I was just, it took my breath away
and I, I said to her
"Do you know what it entails, you know, you're going to work with kids with disabilities?"
She said no, that's what she wants to do
and she said you know, she just wants to tell me,



she said she's going to be very honest,
when she heard that (name of special school) was joining (School E),
she thought we were mad, and she was very, very anti it.
But that never came through to us
but she said she was very anti it
and then she saw where they were building
right next to the foundation phase
and she thought that's disgusting,
it must be right down there at the bottom of the school,
away from anyone else
because what happens if there's challenging behaviour,
my kids are going to pick up that behaviour,
and she said it has been the biggest lesson in her life
in that her children are coming home and telling her things.
And she said her kids were coming home
so positive about the interactions they were having,
that it started making her think
and she thought to herself
"You know what, I actually need to go and spend time there"
and she's now been a volunteer.
Every week she comes and volunteers,
so there have been those kinds of changes.
... another parent said to me,
she was on her way to Ed's office
to have this huge confrontational meeting about her child not getting colours for a sports thing
and she said she came around a corner
and as she was coming around the corner
she saw one of our children being lifted in the hoist by her mom
and being put in a chair
and she said as she came around the corner and she saw that,
everything just came into perspective.
And she said she just phoned Ed
and cancelled the meeting.
And she said for her it, you can make, your children must achieve
and your children must have goals
but it's not about that,
it's not about that
and I think in a way the school has
kind of embraced something so new. (4; 11; 23-46; 12; 1-17)



Frank told me how he realised that inclusive education could only be implemented if the whole system changed and how important it was to have staff who could understand the paradigm shift. He put the limited resistance down to not being personally available to speak directly to the people displaying the resistance,

...you have to change everything,
everything in the system has to change,
everything in the system had to change.
I mean I literally had to remodel everything in that school,
eventually we changed everything.
And so I went out to lunch with the psychologist and one of the house directors
and I explained the whole thing to them and I said "This, we've got to do this!",
and I didn't get any resistance
but I don't think it's actually that difficult to understand
but it does take time so for example, you and I have been talking about it for an hour and a half,
you and I understand the philosophy of it
and if you and I were working with a staff somewhere
we wouldn't have any problems,
we'd just have to solve the problems as we went.
So I got very little resistance from individuals
but I did get it,
obviously because I couldn't talk to everybody myself all the time
so I'd get pockets of resistance
and it was merely because I hadn't been able to communicate with them.
So that's why it took me time
and then when I wasn't bringing people in
you see, I couldn't find people who understood this paradigm
because no-one out there understands it.
So I had to find people who were open to change
and so I, in the interviewing process
I would simply look for people who were open to change
and who were excited about change.
I didn't even mind if they didn't understand my philosophy of what I was doing.
... and that made a huge difference,
the staff, they were very co-operative in that way. (6; 23; 45-46; 24; 1-16)

When I asked Frank where the pockets of resistance came from, he said,



The main thing was from the community
when they didn't understand
because they thought we were becoming a remedial school
but in fact that all went away
once the people got to know some of the boys. (6; 34; 1-3)

Frank then went on to tell me about a boy who sustained brain trauma who was in a bottom cricket team because he could not bat but he loved to bowl. This suited the other players who mostly preferred to bat and when this bowler, who had only half a functional body, started taking wickets in matches, the perception of parents changed towards him as his capabilities unfolded. Frank said,

And so the heat that I took from the community very quickly went away,
probably after about three years
because people actually knew they were human beings,
so it wasn't now "We've got this dof oke¹⁶ in our school",
it was "Oh my God, we've got (name of student)". (6; 34; 26-29)

The perception changed from one that was demeaning to one that recognised the boy as a human being capable of performing well when given the opportunity to do so. In Guy's school where there were only two or three children who required extra remedial support, he perceived there to be "quite a lot" of clandestine resistance,

Yes, there was quite a lot initially
but not to me,
no one came to me
but I know there were comments to other parents that you know,
"How can a child like that be in a normal school?"
was the comment
I had a meeting with those parents early on in the year
once I heard these comments coming out,
and I basically said to each one of them
"How would you feel if you had a child like that?
Wouldn't you like him to be at (School G)?"
and that stopped all the, the problems. (7; 10; 42-45; 11; 1-2)

When I asked Guy how the children had responded he said,



No, children were very, you know,
children don't have problems with kids.
Kids are so accepting. (7; 10; 6-7)

Data in this study thus show that often where resistance is expected, in reality very little occurs, and perceptions change within a short period of time. Dee's example of how a parent changed from being disgusted to becoming a volunteer to the children who had severe disabilities is an obvious example of this.

Mittler's (2000) *third* prerequisite for good practice is that all children should be included in the local neighbourhood state school. Although the population of schools I studied are independent schools and serve children from beyond their neighbourhoods, all the principals were open to having children who required differing amounts of support. As we have seen in Table 6, different schools practice different kinds of inclusion but there was parity and much overlap in the way the eight principals thought about and envisaged inclusion as being for all children. For Adam it is also important for schools to be open about whether they are inclusive or not,

...the concept for me grew in terms of including all kids
with a variety of needs into a mainstream campus. (1; 2; 18-19)
The issue is that,
for me an excellent school
should accommodate children with whatever ...
and if they can't,
then they need to be open about that up front (1; 6; 32-34)

Similarly the underlying philosophy of Ben's and Cass's praxis is one that includes all children,

Ben:

A belief that you're trying to educate children, all children. (2; 20; 44)

Cass:

I sincerely believe that there's good in every,
there's ability in every single person



and in every child,
and I sincerely believe that if you really root children,
and centre them
and give them the core values that makes them feel good,
feel as they should feel, they will fly (3; 11; 43-46)
...and I think that that philosophy is infinitely more important
than the practical implementation (3; 11; 30-31)

Frank explained how in his estimation all children are 'perfect' and that he was determined to accept children who came from value-centred families. This action hints at how important it is for a school to work with parents as it is to work with children. Frank said,

...if we're going to have a way of including people,
is they must understand where we are,
and I'm looking for healthy families.
So if you interview the parents,
don't worry about the child,
all children are perfect,
I don't care about the child in terms of their maths results,
their English results,
or whatever,
but I do care,
and I learnt as headmaster,
if you have a really value-centred mom and dad
or mom,
or whatever it was,
I don't really care whether it was a single family
or single parent or whatever,
I don't care what the model of the family was,
but I did realise
that if you got people who really cared about some of the, you know,
honesty, participation etcetera,
then let's try and get those families in. (6; 6; 17-25)

Guy who is nearing retirement as a head and who was being energised by the limited inclusion in his school poignantly told me how he would love to have had more children with disabilities in his school. In Hal's school they have boys who mainly need remedial help, and

yet there is a clear commitment to providing each individual boy with the intervention they need to be the best that they can be,

...we have a clearer philosophy now
which is to take every boy where he is
and try to make him his best self
and if he's not going to be admitted to a top high school
but needs to go on for further remediation or whatever,
then that's also fine
and if we need to modify tests and exams or even the curriculum
then we will do so. (8; 3; 12-15)

Each principal then is implementing inclusion in his or her own unique way and is being successful at it in the process. Mittler (2000) has a model comprising three levels of inclusion explained in the 'Index of Inclusion' (p. 114). Briefly, the index is structured dimensionally each with two subsections. Dimension A is about creating inclusive cultures by building community and establishing inclusive values, Dimension B is about producing inclusive policies by developing schools for all and by providing support for diversity, and Dimension C is about evolving inclusive practice by orchestrating learning and by mobilising resources. When analysing the practices within the eight schools, it is apparent that each school is at different stages of Mittler's three dimensions. Whereas most of the participants created inclusive cultures that have resulted in an adoption and buy-in into an inclusive philosophy, some schools are still producing inclusive policies and are still evolving their inclusive practice. These differentiated stages are evidence of good practice as problems are dealt with as they arise, weaknesses are strengthened and professionals learn about themselves as they deal with individual children. Ben for instance told the story of how his art teacher suddenly realised that his teaching would have to change in order to accommodate a child who is blind,

...my art teacher who,
he wrote me a letter,
that's why it kind of sticks in my head.
Um, he said that for the first time in his life, he had this blind kid in his class,
and he was explaining how to do something,
he said "I would like you all now to draw this diagram uh, it's something like a spider's web,



imagine a spider's web and draw it".

And then he thought to himself and said

"Hang on a minute,

this child has never seen a spider's web,

how the hell does she know what a spider's web looks like?"

And he said that was his aha moment,

where he suddenly realised

"Hang on, I've now got to change my teaching style".

And it's moments like that that turn it around. (2; 16; 30-38)

Dee also told me of a teacher who wrote her and Nicci a note thanking them for what she had learnt about children with disabilities,

And I remember one uh, teacher,

at the end of last year,

at the end of our first year here,

we had been here for six months, at our Christmas function,

gave Nicci and I a gift and on it was just a little note

and on it she scribbled, "Thank you for making me see that children with disabilities are normal".

And I just thought "Ja!",

and that's in six months, that that teacher has seen that. (4; 26; 4-9)

The changes that staff experienced are part of life-long learning and it only takes an instant for those moments to happen. They will never be forgotten.

I asked some of the participants how they maintained good matric passes despite the fact that they have included children who will never achieve a matric pass into their schools. Cass was particularly outspoken on this matter and she was not the only one who told me that it does not affect their pass rate as they simply bypass the system,

We absolutely get a 100%, we get a 100% of whatever we enter a child for,

but we don't enter 100% in the old ways, ...

I always have at least four or five, six or seven kids

with a certificate, senior certificate,

and very often it's with a senior certificate in um,

really so-called old fashioned way of saying it but,

the old, the way people used to call the non-academic subjects you know,

that what they used to call the practical subjects like home ec.

and, and design technology and

uh, fashion technology and

home make and I don't know what,

business economics or whatever, standard grade subjects.

It matters not at all!

Those children are all going on with a very good sense of self,

and off they go to technicons, the polytechs,

and in any case you can go to university eventually on age

so it doesn't matter,

it really doesn't matter you know.

If that is what they want.

I mean there has always been,

and always will be the great parental argument,

"I don't want my daughter to give up maths because she won't be able to do anything"

and then you know, a lot of counselling later, um,

the child might have been allowed to do the standard grade maths,

and still become a lawyer,

but, but I think that preconceived ideas and, um,

almost urban legends

about what you can and you can't do with a basic matric

is what's had to be dispelled really in South Africa.

And I think that the new FET is doing just that

and in five years time this won't be the conversation you know,

it really won't be

because people will be absolutely cool,

fine that people are doing very well in what they're doing.

But I mean, prejudice

and preconceived thought

is always there. (3; 16; 35-45; 17; 1-10)

Good practice also entails changing traditions such as prize-giving. Frank told me how they altered their speech night from only a few children receiving prizes and awards to one where every matric received an award in recognition of their efforts,

...and so we then created and designed this special

which was a silver hand-crafted, beautiful uh, sculpture thing of a face,

and every child got given one as they left,

so the prize giving became, became this recognition of each child.



And as they were given it,
each child had these special sentences read out about them
and all the parents were there
and the, the difference going from the old speech night to the new speech night,
you cannot believe the difference.
All the parents were just so excited about their children,
and the children were so excited and happy
and it was such a nice rite of passage leaving school,
whereas the last one,
if you go along as most of us would've,
you go along to your prize giving
and so-and-so gets the maths prize
and so-and-so gets the best prefect
and so-and-so is the best this and whatever, of course...
...I don't get anything because I'm not special
which is not true.
I mean, that's the horrible thing about it.
It's actually not true. (6; 21; 28-43)

Cass told me of an award that the children asked for and designed themselves. They handed this award out to children who faced real struggles in their lives. The award was called the Arum Lily Award and it was specifically given out for courage. One child received it because she had had a very bad heart condition, another received it because she had had multiple transplants and was struggling with her school work. Cass said,

And that's really important
and that, that award came from the children.
They came one day and said we need an award for people.
So what do we do?
So we got one.
So we've got an award for ever from that sort of perspective. (3; 18; 25-27)

Another important point about good practice is the development of policy. Participants felt that developing an inclusion policy is essential to successful inclusion and that inclusion could not take place without it. They had to start the policies from scratch as there are no national indigenous policies in place. Adam learnt from his previous experience at School E and was thus able to start a new policy at his present school when they took in a child with



Asperger Syndrome. Ben on the other hand, told me that they developed their own policy as they went along,

...we have a model,
and it works for us
and it was grown by us
and evolved as it went along.
It was just, it really, it was just complete hit and miss.
There was no plan,
I don't think there can be. (2; 11; 5-7)

Frank, Cass and Ben told me that they specifically do not have an entrance policy or entrance exams. Ben was particularly outspoken on the matter,

There're still schools that have an entrance exam to get in.
You need 70% for maths and science.
It's bizarre.
How can you do that?
Now you turn a kid away,
might be brilliant in another area but doesn't get 70% for maths
and he can't get into the school.
It's like telling a person, you're blonde, you can't come in
or you're a red-head and you can't come in,
or you've got blue eyes.
It's discrimination. (2; 11; 21-25)

Dee told me how policy is something that is never finished and that it grows as new developments take place,

...we were told by Frank,
"Don't get bound ... or worked up about policy
because your policy will create itself as you go on"
and I must say when Nicci and I were kind of three quarters of the way through the policy
but every single week I add something new,
and in a way it's really been important that we haven't developed our policy
that we're developing our policy within our first few years



because uh, things get thrown at you

that you never thought would be a, an issue...(4; 23; 17-22)

A certain intolerance of staff who were prejudiced about inclusive education emerged from the interviews with the principals. Dee for instance was intolerant of teachers who are not willing to teach in a school with an inclusive policy. She said,

...my attitude is "Get on with it, this is a school that has an inclusive policy, get out if you don't want to teach here!"

because and, and I know, ... Ben is now at that stage.

He says if he interviews a teacher or a parent

and they have a problem, he says "There's the door"

because to me that's the philosophy of the school now

and if you don't want to take it,

then you don't come to (School E). (4; 15; 16-21)

Most of the participants spoke of protecting their policy as far as the demographics of the school is concerned, (5% of the children will have severe disabilities whereas a further 5% will need remediation), in order not to tip their mainstream school ethos over into one that resembles a remedial or special school.

What was evident throughout the interviews was the passion and the deep feelings running beneath what participants were saying. Each of them displayed an innate and profound generosity of spirit, a deep-seated acceptance of all children whether vulnerable or not, and strong emotions that highlighted the zeal they have for their jobs as leaders. For instance, Adam learnt true life lessons as a result of his army experience and he admitted that working with people who had been disabled traumatically taught him about his own vulnerability,

You know what,

maybe I was being confronted with my own frailty.

Ja, maybe ... I also learnt in the army

how just quickly life can end in death. (1; 18; 35-36)

Ben often verbalised very strong feelings and irritation when he felt that others were being insensitive about children. He told the story of one child who had been school-refusing for

months and when she finally returned to school, one of his teachers complained about her.

This is what he told me,

I had a kid that uh, was school refusing,
and, for ages, months, months,
and eventually we got her to school.
It was a massive, massive effort uh, to try and get her back
and she got back and then a teacher in the staff room
complained that she was wearing makeup and had hair over her eyes.
I said “For goodness sakes” you know, the child has been out of school for six months,
she’s here,
so she’s got makeup on,
so we’ll deal with the makeup in time,
let her just get into school, you know.
So there was a teacher who just wasn’t thinking inclusively.
She wanted everybody to have the same rules.
There aren’t same rules for everybody,
it just doesn’t work like that, you know... (2; 9; 45-46; 10; 1-7)
...when people don’t do what they’re supposed to do
or can’t do it,
you want to just kill them you know.
How can you, I mean, how can that woman say such a stupid thing, you know,
“That child’s got makeup on”!
I wanted to smack her!
You know, how can you be so insensitive?
Can’t you understand?
It happens.
But as long as the majority are understanding and embracing,
and as long as they’re learning from those stupid statements, you know.
She came to apologise afterwards,
but I mean, she accosted me in the staff room,
so I accosted her back, and I had to.
So she got embarrassed but she realised. (2; 17; 17-25)

Frank’s passion was evident in the way he described the nastiness he experienced in School F. He also told me his reasons for leaving his previous school. He could not stand watching children being beaten, and this was at one of the very upmarket schools in the country, and it was not that long ago,



...because I tried to convince them at (name of school),
I was now on the housemaster's body,
one night I asked them to stop beating the kids
because they were,
it was 1992 and they were still caning
and ... I said "Look, surely we've got to stop this practice of hitting kids"
and they all laughed at me.
So the next morning there was this advert in the paper
for a deputy in charge of academics at (School F),
I didn't know where that was either,
so I applied for it.
Then it was all over, uh, for me
it doesn't make sense,
how, how can you hit a child,
I don't care what it's for,
I mean it doesn't make sense in a school. (6; 13; 29-30)

Frank's compassion for children was also evident in the fact that he was ignoring an invitation to speak at a school because he believed that the principal at the school wanted him to discuss with the staff whether they should be setting their children in maths science and English. Frank in reality does not believe in the setting of children and has hence chosen to disregard the invitation,

... they asked me to come
and then he just wanted to check what I wanted to do before I talk to his staff,
and I'd explained this to his psychologist,
because she approached me.
So I'm a little bit irritated at the moment
because you know, I don't want sort of to,
I'm going to go and give them my time for nothing,
I'm not basically going to go and change their paradigm
so at the moment I'm just ignoring them
and I don't think they'll eventually come back
but their problem is,
should we be setting our kids in maths and science and English or shouldn't we?
Now my understanding,
the answer to that question is
"No, you shouldn't be

but we need to get your teachers to understand why they shouldn't be".

It's not as simple as just let's not set,

that you, actually your teachers have to change how they're teaching...(6; 20; 2-11)

Frank's opinion is supported by the literature: Lipsky and Gartner (2004) cite Skrtic (1991) who believes that there is no place in a school that practices excellent inclusion for ability grouping or tracking. The importance of good leadership is ubiquitous in the literature (Angelides, 2004; Daane et al., 2001; Hunt et al., 2000; Mittler, 2000; Palley, 2006; and Taylor, 2005, amongst others) and the participants were deeply aware of their roles as leaders in implementing successful inclusion. Many of them said that having a strong head in place is key to system-wide changes. Ben for instance said,

I think anything that happens in life needs a driver,
and if you've got that one person that's prepared
to take on that responsibility of pushing it
then, I think, then that's where it can happen. (2; 24; 1-3)

Dee also said,

...fortunately we're at (School E)
and fortunately Ed is so supportive of inclusion
and of just learning together
that we're given quite a lot of freedom
to kind of just develop this inclusive, inclusive programme
so ja. (4; 32; 42-44)

Frank too said that he could not have implemented inclusion had he not been the head,

I do know that I pulled it off in that school because I happened to be the headmaster,
if I hadn't been the headmaster
I don't think I would have pulled it off,
because you need the clout,
because people try and not do it and so,
because I wasn't the headmaster of the other schools either,
and I couldn't be,
they just don't understand this.
I know a boys prep guy,

he and his staff couldn't get past the business of having to
remediate these kids outside the classroom. And that doesn't work
because that leads to exclusion,
that leads to labelling,
it leads to all sorts of bad things.
... I mean I actually think this obsession
of whether you get a matric certificate or not also is a huge problem.
You know, great if you can get a matric certificate and if you do,
but it's not an issue if you can't.
Really it's not an issue.
I mean what, what does your matric certificate and mine really mean? (6; 22; 8-18)

Guy reported how the refusal by a principal of one of the top schools in the country to take
some students from his school prevented them opportunities of receiving an excellent
education in a high school. Another school in the same area was open to taking the boys and
they proved with time, as mentioned earlier, to make real successes of their lives.

A further element of good practice is class size. Hal had the smallest classes of 20 children to
a class and Frank told me that he had up to 30 children in a class. The majority of schools
have 25 children per class. Ben told me a remarkable story that made me realise that class
size does not prevent teachers from practicing inclusive education. He heard a teacher talk
at a conference on her rural school and she told this story,

...it's amazing how when you go to these conferences
you hear the most unbelievable stories that come out of rural areas,
of a teacher stuck there with 50 kids in a class
and a blind kid,
or this kid or that kid,
and, and they just manage, you know,
and they do it without even thinking, because they have to.
Those are the examples that people need to look at.
They're doing more inclusive education I suppose than most schools,
because they have to. (2; 16; 8-23)
You know, and you'll find a way, you have to find a way.
It reminds me of this lady who I said in the rural school,
and she spoke at a conference,
I'll never forget,



and she said she had a kid in the class who had been in a fire, in a shack fire,
and this little kid had like got terribly, terribly badly burnt,
and half her nose,
and uh, so she had a prosthetic nose,
but during the time it got clogged up and had to be cleaned
otherwise the kid couldn't breathe.
So they took off the nose and they cleaned it
and eventually the kids started doing it, you know.
So they had a roster system,
every day a different child would help her clean her nose.
Inclusion!
What a lesson hey?
You learn so much from people out there who just do things by-the-by,
they don't even think about it.
They don't know it's inclusive education.
It's just dealing with kids on a day-to-day basis. (2; 18; 6-22)

The way in which a school works with challenging behaviour is also a mark of good practice.
Principals had differing views on challenging behaviour. Hal said that including children with
difficult behaviour would not add anything to the school,

...such as including children with extreme behavioural issues
you actually are, are then not going to gain anything
and not going to give anything. (8; 9; 11-12)

Ben's stance on the other hand when faced with challenging behaviour was one of handling
the issues as they arose. Firstly, he did not resort to expulsion despite a staff member
challenging him to do so and secondly, he coached a class as to what to do when a fellow
learner threw an uncontrollable tantrum,

Um, there was a kid who was here a couple of years ago,
he used to get into these rages,
pick up an overhead projector and throw it across the class,
get like into such an intense rage
and he'd come down to the office,
and I had just employed a new teacher and he was saying,



"I...", can I swear? "I'm * sick of this * school!"

And I just said "Just calm down, take it easy, let's go sit inside and talk",
and this woman thought I was mad.

"Aren't you going to like expel the child?"

That's what he did.

And the kids kind of understood that
when he was going to throw that thing across the classroom,
it was just unavoidable
and they all just quietly left the class
and let him have his tantrum.

Um, kids learn from that. (2; 21; 4-12)

Dee tells of how they saw children with behaviour issues adapting to being in larger groups of children such as at galas, where even children with classic autism learnt to cope with excited screams and loud war cries,

We have children who have, who have had severe challenging behaviour
sitting in forty minute assemblies.

We've got a child with autism, classic autism
who sits in assembly in the middle of all the kids, sings,
who sits in inter-house galas with war cries
and he stands up and starts doing the war cry.

So uh, you know that has been the most amazing experience
is, is not limiting our children in the way we think about disability
and think this is what kids with autism, [thinking] we must protect them. (4; 32; 6-12)

In the following section I examine another theme that arose from the data namely that all of the principals focused strongly on the humanity on the children on their care. It was this awareness of humanity that shaped their practice.

4.6.4 IT'S ABOUT OUR HUMANITY

Throughout the interviews I became aware of an intense focus on humanity and on the generosity of spirit within each principal. There was also much evidence of an extreme

* is in place of an expletive.

sensitivity and love for children and for their well-being. This sensitivity and emotional maturity was often noticeable, not so much by what was said, but by how it was said. In addition, tears were sometimes in evidence and as mentioned earlier, one male principal kept choking up as he spoke to me. Norman Kunc had had a profound effect on the principals who heard him and what he said had a permanent impact on them. Hal for instance has one of Norman Kunc's posters on one his walls at home that says something like "don't treat me as different" (8; 2; 10). The participants' experiences of inclusion changed them as educators as they practiced it. When I asked the participants how the practice of inclusion had shaped their understanding of it, Frank, for instance, said,

I can't believe how it suddenly accelerated my own understanding of just all the cognitive stuff. (6; 35; 44-45)

Adam also displayed a sensitivity that developed towards children who may not be coping and as a result built a safety net into the school system,

...there are, the sort of,
the instruction to the facilitator would be
where the child feels that they need time out for stress or whatever,
that they can be withdrawn,
go outside,
go down to the media centre,
[have] a break if they felt that there were too many kids
around on the playground,
that they were feeling a bit crushed,
[that they could go] to a place of quiet and safety. (1; 9; 45-46; 10; 1-3)

So inclusive education shaped Adam and Frank into becoming more introspective and it made them examine their own dealings with children as practitioners. A similar experience was described by Ben who will be accepting a child who is blind into his school in the near future. Dee described how the School D became a place towards which mainstream children were drawn. She helped these children form a club that helped teachers to prepare lessons for the children with greater educational needs than their own. As Dee said elsewhere, having children with severe disabilities at the mainstream school was at first a novelty which soon wore off, to the point where she and Nicci felt that they may need to implement



programmes to ensure interaction. And yet children still come to the School D during break times and in the afternoons when the children are not there. One could speculate whether these visits are because of curiosity or whether these children had a need to be involved in contributing to the lives of others. Whatever the reasons for the visits, everyone benefited from them. Dee said,

... twice a week we join ...the mainstream playgrounds
... once a week they come to our playground
which is also lovely because we, you know,
that was an important element for us was to make sure
that we um, gave our children at (School E)
the opportunity to take on the School D as their own.
And we didn't ever want to be seen as that School D at the top
or that's where the special needs kids are
and so we're enticing them as well and what's fantastic is that it's such a beautiful environment
and it's the best playground a child could dream or wish for (*laughter*)
that they love coming,
they love coming and what's also lovely is
we've started a club recently...in the afternoons with the older children
and they could choose a name
and they all gave these, nominated different names
and the name that won was "Breaking Boundaries"
and in the afternoon these children come and do various tasks,
help prepare for the next day
and ... they were disappointed that they don't actually get to see the kids
because the kids have gone home at that stage
but they help with the children's programmes,
and they help to get their art ready
...so that was lovely as well.
So we try,
and also what's happened naturally is that it's become the venue for all socials
so you're really bringing kids across there for such positive reasons,
not just for therapy,
not just for this you know,
so that's great. (4; 20; 19-36)

A further example of how principals catered for the 'human capital' in their schools was to deal with the feelings of staff as well. The courage that leaders need to introduce a new



concept into their schools does not come without a price as far as the reactions of staff are concerned. And yet, as Mittler (2000) says, attitudes and feelings of staff should be acknowledged and always taken seriously. The participants in this study were honest about the hard work and difficulties associated with inclusion but their respect for children and a reverence for humanity was consistently apparent. Ed described how they took the feelings of the staff into account and provided them with a forum to voice their fears and anxieties. This is evidence of staff caring for staff, for allowing spaces to be vulnerable,

As I said right at the outset um,
this has been a fairly natural process,
we have done it slowly,
it has not been foisted on anybody um, teachers,
we've had meetings in the staff room
where Dee and Nicci have been given the opportunity
to share with them their fears and their expectations.
Um, staff from mainstream classes in turn have been given the opportunity
to share their fears and their expectations,
and in that way I think
we've managed to implement, um,
we've certainly come to grips with the practicalities of implementing inclusion. (5; 11; 35-42)

Guy realised that the process of inclusion is ongoing and that there are always new things to learn. This attitude is evidence of flexibility, of openness and of a type of humility as far as practice is concerned. He said,

I don't think we ever really fully understand it,
we're learning all the time
and there are new things as the kids get older
you learn new things. (7; 15; 35-36)

Hal described how the ethos of his school includes being sensitive towards the boys who are not considered the jocks of the school,

I mean, I don't know if you've ever really spent time,
but if you see the relationship
and I have to say it's particularly the way the men I think engage the boys,



there's a warmth
and there's a humour
and there's very little in the way of either destructive talk or unnecessarily authoritarian talk.
It's very much a relaxed approach
but it goes beyond that.
I mean if a boy is dropped from a team,
the coach takes the boy to the new coach
and the boy's taken aside and explained why he's being dropped and so on
so there's none, very little of this kind of "Ag¹⁷, you're not up to it, go to the thirds".
But beyond that there's also a recognition I think
and I mean we've never really, until you asked me now, kind of a thought it as a concrete act
but we are aware of the gentle boys
and the head of sport actually is particularly good in knowing them,
knowing their needs,
certainly not talking down to them but trying to create new opportunities
and now we're going to have a climbing wall,
and we've got a skateboard area,
so the whole idea is every boy has some talent and something which will speak to him
and it's up to us to find that.
So we, we try a whole range of different approaches
so I don't think we would ever see it as a, as a deficit in the child um,
it's just that we haven't found the right openings for him. (8; 12; 31-45; 13; 1-2)

A thread that ran through the interviews was how important belonging is to a child and how belonging is a prerequisite for learning. Of belonging Ben told me how they used Maslow's hierarchy of needs but that they customised it to create a more inclusive ethos,

If I can look back and say what was the most important thing I've done in my educational life
I would say that that has been, ja, ja.
I think it gives kids a sense of belonging.
You know we started off with Maslow's hierarchy of needs
and we spun it around on its head
and we said the most important thing is a sense of belonging,
a sense of your self esteem.
That's the first thing that will create a learning environment for a child,
a positive learning environment
and we tried to base everything on that. (2; 5; 7-13)

When I asked Ben what he meant by spinning Maslow's hierarchy of needs on its head he said,

Maslow sets out his hierarchy of needs as being
physiological as the foundation with safety next,
then love and belonging
then esteem and then self actualization.

We believe that in order for our learners to get the full benefit of their education
they first and foremost need to have a sense of belonging
which immediately leads to a sense of self worth and positiveness. (2; 27; 4-8)

It was Norman Kunc who planted the seed that 'belonging leads to excellence' and this was
taken to heart by those who heard him. It is also a theme that has resonated throughout the
country because an annual SAALED conference has as its continuing theme from year to
year, 'From inclusion to belonging'. Frank in particular infused this philosophy into his
school,

So that guy at Harvard,
he convinced me,
he said "Look, I'm not talking about soft stuff.
I'm talking about excellence.
You really want excellence,
the way to go there is through belonging" (6; 11; 18-20)
The main one was to get all the teachers to understand
first of all belonging to excellence,
that whole understanding,
also getting all the teachers to understand
what they had to do in their own practice in their classrooms now,
to enable any child to be happy in their classroom
which is quite a thing
because you've now got to understand the Piagetian cognitive development,
you've got to understand that there're such a spread of them
in every single year group,
you've got to understand how you've got to have tasks that accommodate everybody
and how do you learn to facilitate that.
So I basically went on massive teacher development programmes
and I had to get into all sorts of things...(6; 26; 34-42)

I was interested to know what children on both sides of the spectrum were learning about being in an inclusive environment so I asked principals what children were saying about their experiences of being in an inclusive environment. This is what was reported to me,

Ben:

Sometimes kids do say “Ag, it’s not fair, how come he’s allowed to have a bigger text?” or you know, “Why’s he writing in a room there quietly with earphones on or on a laptop?” and we try and explain to them
“Well, everybody’s different, everybody has their own needs.
If you have a certain need, then we’ll deal with your need” (2; 25; 17-20)
Strange as it is.
But that’s the beauty of it,
because it teaches kids to be accepting of all different things.
And that’s a general ethos. (2; 25; 30-31)

Dee:

...you know what is interesting, it’s also blown my mind coming here,
the children like that like for instance there’s a boy with Aspergers
and there’s a dwarf,
will not come near me because they do not want to be seen as different,
and they know that I am connected to the School D.
For instance the dwarf
she just actually avoids me.
I mean I love her to bits and I go and grab her
and hug her and carry on
but she doesn’t want to be identified as different.
It’s so interesting! It is so interesting!
The children who are more drawn to me in the mainstream side
are children who have got emotional um, challenges,
and children who have got mild learning disability and need, need emotional support.
It’s been interesting,
I’ve had a lot of you know, children who are rejected socially um, come to us
gravitate to our kids,
they, from the start when we weren’t even part of (School E)
and we used to come on our visits,
those children would gravitate.
Nicci and I would make a comment to a teacher
and say “You know, this little girl just seems to be really amazing with our kids”

and every single time it was a child who struggled with school work
or a child who has just had a divorce in the family
or a child who's going through some emotional crisis.
Those kids I think for the first time in their life feel needed
and feel that they can give something,
and that they're not at the bottom end of the, and um,
that has been so interesting to, to watch that come out.
And ja, so like on the playground I've um, those kids stick to us.
Those children will just come and they'll always sit with us
or sit with me or um, come and talk to me and, interesting! (4; 22; 28-45; 23; 1-2)
...it's been so natural it's been, it really has,
it's been so incredibly natural that when I've had the opportunity
or when we have done things with the mainstream children
and I've asked them or in that kind of forum,
it seemed so unnatural to do that because for them it is just no big deal.
They, it just, it's happened so beautifully and so naturally
without a lot of intervention from us.
Um, the kids have just embraced our children
and I don't know, it's just been no big deal in a way, um,
we've had a lot of children come
and like for instance, I had one little girl come
walking up with me from break one day and she said
"You know what?", she said "I'm really good with your kids",
she said "I know I'm going to be a special needs teacher one day".
And so there have been those kinds of things that have, that have happened.
Um, I'm trying to think,
we've had such wonderful comments along the way with children um,
the one child said, just before we joined,
we came and did an activity with them,
and the one child said to Nicci, um,
"I can't wait for the School D to come home". That's...
...what he said to her.
There've been things like that
so it really has been very positive.
The interesting thing is that we're definitely on a journey
and in the beginning when we came it was a huge novelty,
our children were a novelty,
and when our children with disabilities or wheelchairs went on to the playground,
the kids were there and they were part of,
and they just couldn't wait to get to our kids



and now a year and a half down the line the novelty has worn off. (4; 23; 43-46; 24; 1-19)

Um, one of our, one of our pupils from the School D um,
was in the supermarket and apparently was screaming
and the parent, a mainstream parent told me the story
and she said she was standing in the aisle and she heard this screaming
and there were a few people standing, just staring at this child
and her son who is in grade four
went up to that group of people and said
“Stop staring that, he, he comes to our School D”
and she said she just, she was so proud of her son um,
and also what’s happened is a lot of a children, uh, parents come and say
“Ja, you know, when they walk through (name of shopping centre)”, which is our shopping centre,
“kids just come running from miles” you know,
and in the past they would push their child into the shopping centre
everyone would stare
and now kids are coming over and giving high fives and, and carrying on
and so they really do feel so much more accepted within the community,
so that’s happened as well. (4; 24; 38-46; 25; 1-3)

Frank told me what one of his students verbalised to him about receiving help from a fellow learner who happened to be Frank’s son,

...my son, he read long before he went to school,
and he read, and read, and read, and read,
so school was a laugh-off,
always had been and always will be sort of thing um,
and he got 100% for his writing portfolio
so he was, got a very high distinction for English.
In his little group of six,
he had a second language learner
and this guy, I think he eventually got an E for higher grade first language English,
but he was in with (name of student) in that group
and the experience of the two of them,
so (name of son) will tell you that he really benefited from this,
because they had that guy in his class for three years uh,
from having him in his group because his first language was Afrikaans this kid,
and so (name of son) had to be his, one of his teachers
because he had these other four guys in his group,
but he constantly had to be aware of this guy’s issues



because he wasn't an English speaker,
and so (name of son) who only spoke English
had to mediate this guy and his language
and so (name of son) who can tell you one of the reasons
why he became even better at English
was because he had to constantly be aware of this guy's struggle,
and then if you talk to that guy,
and he verbalised it to me and many like him,
that because they were in a group,
so in that group was another extraordinary English guy,
there were two,
my son and this other one who were both like 96% English candidates
and then there were I think a B and a C and an E, something like that.
They will tell you how much they benefited from,
so the guy who got the E strangely enough,
he sort of said to me
"You know what? I really understand the literature stuff as much as (name of son) does",
"I just can't write it like he does".
And that's just because he's a second language learner,
but he's probably right,
he's probably cognitively right up there with (name of son)'s understanding of whatever the literature is, he
just can't yet um, do it in the language that's not his first language,
and you, I bet you that's true.
So he's probably benefited hugely from being in the presence of people
who are right up there with their understanding of that particular text in English.
So you can see how everyone benefits, it's, it's a, really it's a team thing...(6; 28; 37-46; 29; 1-17)

The way that bullying and teasing is addressed by schools is telling as it demonstrates the caring ethos of a school. Most principals deal with the issue sensitively by addressing the incidences as they arise. Ben told me how he dealt with a case of teasing in his school, but he is also realistic about how teasing will happen anyway,

... we don't have much physical bullying,
I can't remember when was the last time I actually stopped a fight you know,
it doesn't really happen.
Um, of course the verbal stuff is, you know, can be quite harmful.
This morning a kid took a yarmulke off the one and threw it away,
and that's a form of bullying.



Um, it's not rife,
but kids are kids, you know,
and sometimes they say things.
They don't really mean to hurt.
Like this kid said, "I didn't mean to hurt him. I was just playing with him"
but I said "Well the other kid didn't think you were playing, he was actually hurt",
and he said "No, I realise that now but...".
So we try and talk things through and let them learn from the mistakes that they make.
But you know, with 365 adolescents in the building,
it's, you know, stuff happens, ja. (2; 9; 27-36)

Cass gathers her children in the school chapel if there are incidences of nastiness or teasing
where the matter is discussed and questions are answered. By addressing issues, fears are
allayed and an understanding of others begins,

You can talk to the children, and we do, always.
And we have been known to say "Right, you're um",
once one of the senior classes um, I suppose probably was a grade 9 class or something like that,
laughed at a little girl with a severe challenge in the prep school
who was inappropriate in her behaviour,
so we just put them in chapel,
got the prep school head to talk
and I talked,
and we talked about looking after people.
Well, they're now the greatest of friends, the two groups,
so it's really about facing it,
and we answered all the questions "Why does she do that?".
Well that's what happens when your brain's not kicking into that you know,
if your arms move,
when, when something happens involuntarily
it means your brain's not saying to you
"You're doing the wrong thing, you can't do that one, don't do it",
like the shakes and all sorts of little things like that.
And it became quite a scientific thing
and that seemed to be a very good way of looking at things,
"Oh well, you know, you know it's like you, you limp if you've got a broken leg".
If your brain's not wiring correctly,
things like that happen and it doesn't make you a lesser person. (3; 17; 28-46)

Cass and her staff are also aware of how mainstream children think and she has on occasion used reverse psychology to teach children more about themselves,

I was just saying the other day that it was extraordinary,
we had to actually talk to a group of kids and say “You’re...” ,
we’ll call the child Anna,
“You’re very kind to her but you’re not nearly as kind to yourselves, why is that?”
That’s quite interesting.
I thought that was wonderful that we had to do that.
I said “This is one of the better moments of my life, this is, really, this is gorgeous!”
Let’s go for it.
So what have we got here, (*laughter*)
we’ve got reverse psychology with everything working in the reverse you know. (3; 24; 46; 25; 1-6)

Dee also has alternative views on teasing which she sees as opportunities to teach children coping skills. In fact she said she *wanted* the children with special needs to be teased,

...because to me teasing and things like that are part of life
and part of the reason we came here was that we wanted our kids to be teased
and that may sound cruel but we wanted our children to be teased
so that we could teach them coping mechanisms
and we want (name of child) to go and ask that girl out on a date that will never go out with him,
and we want to help him through that
because that’s going to help,
that’s going to happen when he leaves at eighteen.
And I think, and that has started happening, and it’s hard,
and it’s heart-breaking,
but it’s going to happen
and it’s a big, wide world out there...(4;28;8-15)

Most principals did not see bullying as a problem in their schools because the ethos of the school systems were firstly, not to tolerate bullying or teasing. Secondly, each incident was addressed as it arose thereby quelling any further bullying or teasing and turning the incidents into lessons to be learnt at the same time.

Finally, Ben’s claims that inclusion is the best thing he has done in his life. As testament to the deep concern for the welfare of his learners he told me,



...it's been a wonderful ride, you know.

If I can look back and say
what was the most important thing
I've done in my educational life
I would say that that has been...(2; 5; 7-9)

Some principals believed that the populations in their schools were far too homogenous and that by excluding certain children only perpetuated this phenomenon. Several of the principals referred to inclusion as being about normal society. When I asked Dee what the strongest arguments for inclusion were she said,

Socially, social acceptance.

Um, and, opportunities for learning
that a school can offer more than ever creating your own NGO um, *(pause)*
and then just acceptance, you know,
teaching people acceptance of, of children with disability
and just making it normal.

And I think that's, that's what's happened here,
is that it really has,

I mean I was just blown away the other day.

I went to a function and there, there was (School E)
and there were two other schools involved in this function.

There was a group of pupils from each school
and we took a few of our kids with disabilities along
and it just made me realise how much we need to get our into our community
and into our other schools more

because when we arrived at this function,
those other kids,

and I'm not used to it anymore,
because here nobody stares,
the kids are just part of the school.

And we got there and these kids were actually turning around in their chairs
staring at our kids.

And I thought "There's our (School E) kids,
not one person even blinking an eye at any disability,
and all these other kids are doing it purely because they haven't been exposed,
not because they're judgmental,
only because they're not used to it."



So, you know, for me it's, it's the acceptance
and, and just the social part of it,
just to give the kids the opportunity to just be part of normal society.
You know, um, for (name of child) for instance,
I mean for him, he's just, he's a child with cerebral palsy, severe athetoid,
and um, uses a laptop and a switch to access his work,
goes into geography and maths as his core subjects
and then goes into ITC, life orientation, um, most of the subjects, art, music,
and he's part of that class
and to see him socially just blossom here
and to not need us anymore at all,
and to, you know, not want us around.
And now he's received his power wheelchair a few months ago
and he's just gone, you know,
he's just gone
and he's just loving that independence and not having us around him,
and um, creating friendships and,
and having fights with peers
and being upset because he's a teenager and he's hormonal and he's irritated
because he's had this fight with this girl and, and you know,
seeing him develop that way.
And then one day I was walking,
I don't know if I've told you this,
I was walking to the School D,
it was about four months, three, four months that we had joined (School E),
and him and his friends were standing outside the School D having a chat,
and they were all excited
and he came into the School D and he said "Dee, Dee!"
and I said "What's going on?"
and he said "I'm going to a movie!"
and he had organised, him and his friends had organised to go and see a movie
and he had refused, he told his mom he's not having me go along,
he's not having his mom go along
and he's not having his facilitator,
he's going alone.
He's thirteen,
he's going,
he's finished.
And his mom said she sat at that phone for two hours.
He said no, he'll contact her,



he'll find a tickey box,
she must just get him a phone card
and he'll go with his friends
and he'll phone when the movie is finished,
he doesn't want people hovering around.
And he went.
And he's gone to their houses,
they've gone to his house,
so socially it's been a huge boost for children like that. (4; 26; 42-46; 27; 1-37)

Frank told me how he tried to normalise what he considered to be a very abnormal community,

Look initially obviously I was just trying to,
I didn't fully understand why it was that bad
and so I started changing things that I just thought would work
so I used to um, they had the processes
like if you became a prefect in that school,
and that's also has to be debated of course
but anyway if you have a prefect system,
the system was, the night after you were made a prefect
you were physically thrashed on your backside by a cricket bat
and some of the boys used to lose pieces of skin,
so it was like violent (*laughter*)
but that's the sort of stuff that happens in societies that aren't normal
um, I really think so.
You know you get all sorts of very, very horrible human abuse stuff happening
and the only way to do that is to get to a normal society,
the Norman Kunc society.
You know you're not going to beat people if you've got people in wheelchairs
and people who can't walk,
who can't do whatever.
I mean you get far more normal,
you know you get to your humanity I think if there's a normal society.
So I didn't know, there were terrible things
so I started dismantling some of those things
but you see, if you just dismantle um,
and it was hard work that,
if you just stop the beating of boys before they become prefects



that doesn't change the, the cause of it
and what I saw, I mean, if you go to (School F) now ...if you go there,
the boys, they are,
not all of them of course, are normal in the other sense,
but there are one helluva lot of boys there who are extraordinarily friendly,
and I mean, I went there,
and it was different for me I suppose,
I try to stay away from there,
I've been away for almost a year
and I had to go there it was about three or four months ago,
I mean the boys were coming out of the classroom some of them,
they were actually walking out of their classroom to greet me and waving and so on.
They're a very, very friendly school.
Now I'm not excited about that because I think that's me,
I'm excited about that because I think they're actually a very friendly school
and they weren't.
I mean they really weren't,
it was a very, very unfriendly school
and it's now I think, a pretty friendly place
and everyone is more or less accepted for who they are, specially the boys. (6; 25; 1-31)

Most of the principals said that the number of children requiring support in their school matched the normal distribution of individuals with disabilities in the normal population. Frank explained how they learnt from deviating from the norm by including more children than the normal distribution endorsed.

Well my understanding got it,
I looked at some of the stats and normally, in a normal population
you should have about,
somewhere around 10% or maybe a little less than 10%,
who are visibly, really got an issue
so I tried to find,
we had 150 boys,
I tried to find 15 per year,
sometimes it went up to 20,
we got a bit carried away with ourselves
and we had to move it back a bit because it became,
... if you take certain kids in



who really do need a lot of extra problem solving around their own particular needs

you can overwhelm yourselves if you go too far

so for me that means you're going away from being normal...

...so normal society should be able to function

and so one year we got so excited,

(head of inclusive education) and myself,

because (head of inclusive education) was the woman I appointed to help me,

we were so excited by how easily

we got the first little number in,

I think we went over 20

and then we realised we were overcooking ourselves

and I said to her "Look it just means we're not going for the normal distribution,

we must go back".

And so we went back,

and I sort of tried to keep it 15, or maybe under 15. (6; 15; 27-43)

Frank went on to say that teachers in an inclusive schools have to change the way they teach and that what is needed in an inclusive community are teachers that are aware of the different ways in which a child learns as well as of how different cognitive levels can stimulate thought processes. The classroom cannot therefore mirror normal society if it consists only of 'homogenous' minds. It needs cognitive diversity to accelerate learning and to counteract abusive practices,

...your teachers have to change how they're teaching

and it's no doubt in my head,

it, research shows it and also you, you can try and see it,

but what you've got in your class still is this very big difference

in developmental levels

because that's what happens when we're young,

from 0 to about 18.,

there's a huge amount of developmental,

cognitive development paradigm,

and whether you're in grade R or grade 9

you've got a big spread in your classroom.

So you have to learn how to manage that,

what tasks do you give

and how do you manage what each child continues to learn

and the, the Vygotskian thing,



if I'm a transitional thinker
and you're a formal thinker
and one other person I'm grouped with is a concrete thinker,
we can spark each other so beautifully.
It's a normal thing to have different cognitive levels in the same discussion.
As soon as you have a discussion,
just formal thinkers,
or just concrete,
it's even worse if you just have concrete,
because you actually um, you[re] disabling them
... they will not progress as they should.
So I'm now convinced
without any shadow of doubt in my head,
setting is a very bad thing.
If you want to have a full service school
it's, it's madness but you have to get your teachers to understand why,
how they must change their behaviour
and what, they must have different tasks for the kids.
And so the curriculum for example, maths, is, it's abusive,
you teach that stuff the way that it's currently framed,
it's abusive stuff, (6; 20; 12-29)

In addition to the discussion on diversity being about normal society, Guy told me that
having children who are different in a school,

...teaches children to care,
it teaches children to help others,
it teaches children that not all people are the same. (8; 11; 12-13)

And have they said anything that has made you realise that they have learnt something from
it, have they verbalised it?

No they just accept him you know,
he's not, he's not different as far as they're concerned,
he's got different characteristics
but he's, he's a, a normal child in their class. (7; 10; 12-19)



Like normal society, being an inclusive school is not without its problems and principals reported that implementing inclusion has its very real difficulties. Firstly, White Paper 6 according to Adam is vague and its guidelines are not clear,

...it does make it really, really difficult
because it terms of the White Paper,
we've got to be inclusive schools
and that definition is not clear.
Um, so that poses a problem,
and I think um, if somebody leading the charge as it were, nationally,
should define what inclusive education is
and what is meant by it, you know,
it would make life a little easier for everybody.
But nobody knows how to do it,
I mean when I say nobody knows how to do it, um, I don't mean that arrogantly
or you know, in the wrong sense.
I don't think anybody knows how to do it.
I think it is a touchy-touchy, feely-feely approach
to something that's very new. (1; 10; 39-46)

4.6.5 IT'S ABOUT EMOTION

In this section I refer to previously inserted data without inserting them a second time in order to avoid repetition. Only new data has been inserted to illustrate this section. Emotions ran deeply during the interviews, some were apparent and stated, others were covert and unsaid. Firstly, I was treated with respect by all the participants who welcomed me with warmth and hospitality. Secondly, the passion that they portrayed as educators was obvious and their support of, and fervour for, inclusion in their schools often came across as genuine excitement, especially when they related the success stories that some of their students experienced in their lives during and subsequently after school. Frank told me about a student who changed from being non communicative and very anxious to one who developed confidence within a year of being at his school,

Most of the boys
we took on were boys who had various learning disabilities
so we, a lot of the remedial schools



they then saw us as the place where they must go to,
and obviously we couldn't take all of the boys...
...but we tried as hard as we could
to take the ones that they thought could come into what,
and I, eventually I, there were no criteria.
I mean one guy called (name of child) uh,
just extraordinary,
he was at one of those schools
and (head of inclusive education) and I decided to take him,
I hadn't met him so (head of inclusive education) had,
and then our psychologists,
flipped when they,
because we eventually called them
when he came in, and they said "You, you can't take this boy in, he'll get killed here" (*cough*)
so I said "Oh God, let me see him, shame". Sorry.
So I saw this little boy,
his mother met me outside and she said
"Look I have to come in,
I can't come in with you because if I come in with you
he will, he only looks at me
and he won't ever talk to you,
so I'm going to have to let you,
you must just talk to him on his own".
So there was nothing wrong with this
and he sat over there and I sat over there
and it was a full 15 minutes before he said anything to me.
He came in,
he was like a hermit crab,
he came in all shrivelled up
and he looked at me through the little corner of his eyes,
he wouldn't even show me his face
and he sat there and for 15 minutes
anything I said he wouldn't respond to me,
so I was literally thinking out loud so I said to him
"Look (name of child),
I don't think I can bring you into this school
because you're going to get uh,
so terribly bullied here,
I can't always be around you
and so I'm terrified that if you're down at the tuckshop or something



and I have don't have some assistants there,

I don't know,

horrible things could happen to you"

and then I said to him, remember he hadn't said a word to me, not one word,

and I said to him "Have you ever been bullied?".

"Often."

First word.

But what that showed me was "How often?"

so I then said "Alright, um, what do you do when you're bullied?"

"I ignore them!"

so then I knew,

"Okay I've got a functioning human being in here, he has a fully operational mind."

Um, I thought "Okay, why not? This guy's actually got it."

I can't understand all this bizarre, all the uh, medical evidence said

"Look, the only thing we can really put this down to, this condition,

is severe anxiety and that's all,

the bottom line was there's no brain damage or, but couldn't write, couldn't read (*clears throat*),

would never have been able to be reschooled,

so was in a special school and he had this very strange social, like a hermit crab.

And so I, we took him in

and it's just amazing what a ...

within twelve months, he was standing upright and his hands were down. (6; 16; 35-46, 17; 1-24)

As Frank recollected this story he often apologised for becoming emotional and we had to pause several times for him to regain his composure. He also told me about his excitement at being invited to School D when they were thinking of moving onto the campus of School E. He said,

Uh, it makes perfect sense to me,

and imagine the richness of having 17 severely disabled kids

who are included in a primary school?

It's just,

I mean that's going to be a spectacularly successful primary school,

it can't be anything but. (6, 12; 8-14)

Frank also told me of the reactions of one of the boys he had taken into the school after he was injured in a motor car accident and who now gives motivational talks,



He talks about himself,
he talks about the day he was hit by this car and,
because he was in hospital for months,
he was told he's never going to read again,
because he was very able academically,
he was a very good sportsman,
and then he got hit by this car and went flying through the air,
it was a good 20 metres
and landed on his head
and then he talks about,
so he starts off his talks now, the last I heard,
he gets everybody to untie their shoelaces and he says
"Now I want you to tie it back, but you're not allowed to,
you've got to put one hand behind your back"
so he gives them a practical,
because that's what he has to do everyday,
he has to tie up his shoes with one hand and so he starts off with uh,
and that's brilliant.
Look, I think his father has helped him a lot.
He couldn't have constructed uh, his talks all on his own
because he doesn't have the cognitive ability to do that
but he's brilliant in his delivery,
he's real because he's standing in front of you
and he really is who he's talking about.
And he's got a sort of sense of timing,
and he does it absolutely brilliantly.
And so he, he's, I don't know how many places he's talked to
but he's talked to, but it's many.
He's extraordinary
I mean outside the chapel
when people are taking photographs,
but I mean I brought him in,
and then he went through five years
and just was extraordinary what he did for that school,
so outside the chapel,
so he leaves all the others
and he comes and he hugs me.
I mean he, he held on to me,
it must have been for five minutes. [*Frank chokes up*](6; 35; 8-35)



Dee admitted that she is passionate about special needs education,

but I knew that I could make a difference,

I, I knew, and, and I'm passionate about it you know,

and that's how I think. (4, 19; 41-42)

Ben said that he knew that he could make a difference to the lives of children on a daily basis, every time he walked through the doors of his school.

The participants on the whole then were energised by the process for they spoke with unmistakable conviction and confidence. Adam said that changing the way he thought about his practice as a result of accommodating children who were different from the norm, stimulated him because they 'forced' him to re-examine the way he did things in class. Both Ben and Dee expressed humility in their own limited understanding of inclusive education despite being two of the most experienced professionals in the country.

As mentioned earlier, there some unexpectedly poignant moments during the interviews, especially with the male participants. Frank choked up several times during the interview as he recalled moments during the implementation process. He furthermore described how his colleague Ben had wept as he listened to Norman Kunc talking about how belonging leads to excellence at Harvard and how that had made a lasting impression on him. Frank also told me how he wanted to change School F into a gentler, friendlier place. Guy admitted to getting tears in his eyes when he was swamped by a little boy who came running at him when he heard him opening the gate to his block. He told me,

You know, when (name of child)

first got to, got to grade R,

he used to sit, grade 00,

he used to sit in a corner facing into the corner,

no-one could come near him he,

he, he couldn't um, verbalise at all,

and within two or three weeks

with me going down to the, the um, classroom almost everyday,

it got to the stage that as I walked through the gate,

he would hear the gate

and he would come running and launch himself into my arms
and hug me and you know it was,
I mean I used to get tears in my eyes every time he did it,
but that was the sort of process uh, progress
that we made very quickly
and he has totally accepted now
the, the, the um, all, the, the tactile problems that he had
are all gone and he's, you know, he's just one of the boys in the class. (8; 10; 17-26)

In addition, Adam confessed that he became aware of his own frailty when working with soldiers who had become disabled, and Hal not only described boys as being needy creatures, he also ensured that they were treated gently and sensitively, especially if they were dropped from a team. Hal was also aware of the different types of boys at his school and he actively ensured that the maverick, the eccentric and the academic were equally catered for in his school. Ed moreover said that he had been blessed with feminine qualities.

Some of the participants were quite vocal about their feelings for staff who did not support inclusion. Ben for instance was adamant that inclusion was going to go ahead at his school and if staff did not like it, they should bail out. Dee too was intolerant of teachers who did not want to teach children with disabilities. Her attitude was that they should get on with it or get out. Frank displayed his irritation for a school who wanted him to address a topic (the setting of classes) with which he as a professional did not agree. Ben too had no patience for a teacher who wanted a child expelled for wearing make up to school after school-refusing for months. And finally Frank was distressed that prefects used to beat each other until they drew blood and it was sheer determination that changed such a malodorous practice. In addition, he displayed his contempt by describing his school as being "vicious". He also related how he left his previous school because he spoke up about boys being caned by teachers. He experienced humiliation when they laughed at him for wanting to change such an old and accepted tradition. The overall responses of the participants whether positive or negative could be described as arising out of a moral obligation to get things right and not allowing anything to stand in their way.

4.7 CAVEATS TO INCLUSION

In every study there are caveats which show pertinent but not dominant themes and it is to these that I now turn. The caveats to this study include four issues which include thoughts on government involvement in the inclusive process; timing issues as far as implementation is concerned; the amount of hard work and effort that is required in the inclusion process; and the funding issues involved in inclusion.

4.7.1 GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

Dee, Ed and Guy felt strongly that the government needs to be more involved in the inclusive process and highlight how inert the DoE appears to be in the process on one hand, and how they need to mobilise the expertise that is already available in this country on the other hand.

Dee:

I think that the whole idea of inclusion from the government side,
I mean we've got it on paper,
and I think that's absolutely proactive
and so much forethought has gone into getting White Paper 6 and getting it all done,
but it's all on paper and nothing's happening
and if what they want to do happens,
it's going to be a disaster
because I've seen how much it takes to include 16 children um,
with severe disabilities into a school
and Nicci and I are there,
we're on top of things all the time,
and I, I'm not arrogant in saying that,
I'm just saying that so much is involved in, in successful inclusion,
that if it's not done properly
it, it will be a disaster
and kids will be hurt...(4; 29; 18-26)

Ed:

I think it's absolutely imperative that we educate our ... decision-makers in Parliament um,
decision-makers in education,



the community at large.

And once we expose communities to children with these disabilities, they will uh, in turn come to realise that these people are part and parcel of society in South Africa and deserve to be accommodated. (5; 11; 1-5)

Guy (talking about a trip to an overseas country to visit schools there):

It's hard work
and I think where, where we are light years behind,
is that we do not, our education system doesn't provide those mentors.
The lady that I've got helping (name of child) our autistic boy,
is paid by the parents and uh,
it's, it's only because they can afford it, he's got this.
If you have kids that uh, come from homes that haven't got as much money,
they wouldn't be able to afford it,
and then we have a problem whereas in (name of overseas country)
all those teachers are paid for by the state. (7; 8; 16-21)

According to WP6 the implementation of inclusive education will be in place by 2024. For this reason I focus on timing in the next section in order to obtain a sense of the length of time principals think implementation will actually take.

4.7.2 TIMING

Several of the participants felt that the implementation of inclusive education is a slow process. Frank for instance, felt strongly that the implementation of inclusion cannot be hurried,

The disadvantages of it are if you, and that's why I'm being so cautious here, you can go too fast
and if you go too fast people will not, will not, they will have such bad experiences as teachers that they'll never go there again
so you can't do this in a hurry. (6; 32; 9-11)



in the light of this, the timing as set out in White Paper 6 is not unreasonable. Frank went so far to say that it can take up to a hundred years to implement new methodologies. It starts with changing textbooks, reconstructing teacher training and altering teaching methods,

So it's, it's extraordinary in education

but it normally takes about a hundred years

before stuff that's developed in say universities or by psychologists or whoever, the academia, essentially the research group,

so I mean, you're part of that,

uh, it takes sadly,

there's a huge delay before practice changes...(6; 32; 21-25)

...you can't just go and take textbooks, current textbooks and teach with those.

You have to start getting these,

an understanding around these multilevel tasks

and you have to start learning how to manage a lot of co-operative learning,

whole group, small group, whole group, small group.

Never just group work,

it's got to be whole group, reflection, small group,

real dialoguing and working on it

and that's, that's a lot of practical training for teachers...(6; 32; 29-34)

Participants also shared how the process had been slow to take hold in their schools and that the practice should not be rushed in the first place. Dee and Ed both said that although inclusion was a slow process in their school, it was also a natural process and that very little went wrong as they implemented inclusion. Ed said,

...it's got to be a natural process.

I, I think one has to guard against an artificially implementing something

that is not going to work. (5, 12; 1-2)

It is noticeable from what participants said that inclusive education needs careful planning and timing for it to be implemented. With the exception of Ben who implemented inclusion from one term to the next, inclusion unfolded with time in most of the schools and principals learnt from it as it took root and became more established in their individual schools. The lesson from their experiences is that inclusive education requires time, it is not something that generally happens quickly and nor can it be hurried.



4.7.3 HARD WORK AND EFFORT

Ben was under no illusion as to how much work needs to go into making inclusion work,

It all sounds rosy, doesn't it?

It's flipping hard,

and it's, it's frustrating, (2; 17; 17)

I think it's tough for teachers,

when they've got seven levels of kids in the class, eight levels, three levels, um,

knowing exactly how to teach to all those levels in one lesson.

I think that's really tough

and it takes a special kind of person to be able to do it properly.

Um, so that's, that's one of the hardships.

All the admin involved,

recording, assessment, evaluation,

those things take more time than it used to.

But I can't see any other way of doing it

without all that bureaucratic stuff involved

otherwise there's no record of it you know,

you can't keep tabs on it. (2; 20; 33-39)

Dee's concern surrounding successful inclusion is that it needs to benefit the child,

And it takes a huge amount of work

and it's, you, you've got to be on top of things all the time

and if you're not,

then I think you're wasting the child's time. (4; 28; 1-3)

Guy stated on the other hand that the extra work teachers have to do is not really a disadvantage at all,

...the disadvantage,

but it's not a real disadvantage

is that it does require extra work for the teacher,

but I believe the teachers get so much pleasure

out of seeing the development of a child that has problems,

so it's not really a disadvantage. (7; 14; 44-45; 15; 1-2)



Cass told me that inclusion is not something that is confined to school hours,

...it's a wonderful thing to be doing,
but it doesn't end on Friday,
whereas with, you know, sometimes with mainstream kids
it ends when, and homework takes over.
It's just a different, slightly different thing. (3; 13; 29-31)

So whereas hard work and effort underpins the implementation of inclusive education, participants were in agreement that the practice was not only in the best interest of their schools, but that it was a paradigm worth pursuing despite the extra work it required to be successful.

4.7.4 FUNDING ISSUES

All the principals felt that inclusion had severe financial implications which they saw as a disadvantage, although Cass specially felt that it is possible to find ways of achieving it,

Adam:

Financially, it's very, it's very expensive,
secondly, physically if a school is not accommodating or cannot accommodate (wheelchairs).
... So there's a huge financial um, implication. (1; 12; 25-29)

Ben:

Probably costs us about two and a half million rand a year for that,
as part of our budget, ja.
So a lot of resources go into it. (2; 8; 15-16)

Cass:

I suspect that the greatest challenge of inclusion is finance.
You know, because it is human capital that you need.
You can't, only human beings really teach children properly,
there is nothing else that does,
so, it matters not how many programmes you put in place,
in my considered opinion, um, I don't think it matters at all you know,
I think really it's, it's the quality of the human being



and the human relationship to another human that allows for teaching and learning to take place.

Both teaching and learning to take place.

And that's about human beings,

it's not about programmes.

So that's finance in a big way, you know.

And the prep school, when I asked the prep school

"What are, ... what would you like me to say about this?"

and they said "Ooh, please say it's very expensive and it's quite difficult sometimes!"

so that is the truth actually. (3; 21; 29-42)

...it's, it's an expense.

And that we would have to work out,

but you can,

you can find ways. (3; 22; 4-5)

Dee had to raise money to build the School D on the campus of School E which she did through a golf day. She felt that parents of children with disabilities are already disadvantaged and that it was not fair to lay an extra financial burden on them. In addition parents who send their neurotypical children to preferred schools have many options, whereas parents of children with disabilities have much fewer options. Disability is democratic in the sense that it can affect all families, but when families struggle financially, they carry the extra burden of having to fork out school fees and medical bills. Dee said,

...the advantage of us funding our own building um, in, in a way it kind of,

the negative part of it was that in the beginning it was us and them, uh,

(name of special school) is building this on (School E)'s premises,

that was how it was seen in a way

because we were funding it,

we weren't part of the whole school

but the advantage is

that the mainstream parents have to pay a capital development levy to the school of R12000,

our parents don't do that because we funded our building...

...and we didn't want that to become a parent responsibility

because obviously a lot of our parents can't ever afford to do that

so that's not part of our parents' package.

And then you can debate whether that's inclusion or not I mean, you know,

our parents are then treated a little bit differently

but to me, our, our parents have a load to carry

and if you can relieve that part of it for them then you must do it.



It, it is a different population of children
and we are dealing with um, families, and, and a community at (School E)
that is economically um, you know they come ...from a strong economic background
and so for them, to me I think to, to make this whole community aware of disability
and I don't want to ever use the word charity so don't,
but there must be social responsibility
and you've got to be careful
and I know Nicci is very anti us being seen as children who need charity
and we know, we don't have children who need charity
but there is a certain amount of social responsibility that goes into inclusion,
I, I do believe that. (4; 18; 31-45; 19; 1-10)

Ed felt that a lack of resources could be one of the biggest disadvantages in South Africa but
that as the country develops that this would become less of a problem. Frank told me how a
parent gave him two million rand to implement inclusion in his school and that he could not
have done it without this donation of money. He said,

I'll never have pulled it off if it didn't make sense
so luckily I think it really does make sense
and it's very simple, it's not that difficult.
So I think you've got to have something that you can understand.
I also don't know if I would've pulled it off without (name of parent)
giving me such a cash injection.
It really helped. (6; 30; 16-20)

Like Cass, Frank said that they would have found a way of getting funds if the parent's
donation had not materialised,

No, no it wasn't the cash, the cash, it wasn't the cash.
You know, (name of parent) is the most extraordinary human being
and so he continues
and he's given me such amazing stuff over the years.
Ja, it's not only, not only about the money,
it was the encouragement,
it was actually saying "Yes Frank, let's do this".
In fact we could have found the money, I mean,... we could've. (6; 30; 24-28)

Two of the principals felt that there were no disadvantages to inclusion and that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages,

Dee:

To me there's no other disadvantage,
if it's done properly
then there, there are no disadvantages to inclusion (4; 28; 8-9)

Ed:

No, I, I honestly don't believe there are disadvantages,
there are so many advantages (7; 15; 6)

Whether this belief is debatable or not, for Dee, who is probably the most experienced in inclusion of all the participants, to say there are no disadvantages, gives credence to a process that is complex, requires a lot of hard work and which is still hotly contested. It is noteworthy however, that all participants have a deep passion for an education that is fair, that is truly inclusive and diverse, not only in the racial sense but in the sense that all children have a right to education, and that surely is a mark of true humanity and a normal society. What underlies the philosophy of each participant is "achieving social justice through care" (Barnes, 2006, p. 142). More will be said about this point in the final chapter of this thesis.

Other data segments bear out what participants shared with me such as the excerpts from the websites. For instance, School B offered one-on-one tuition if their students required this service: "Tutorials can be requested by learners on a one-to-one basis" (see Appendix I, School B) and School F specifically states that it caters for children with disabilities:

"Diversity will be clearly defined in terms of race, gender, academic ability, religion, wealth and disability.

- Specific goals/ targets will be set for each area of diversity.
- There will be a growth in diversity year by year.
- There will be a plan in place to define the market for diverse candidates.
- Facilities for the disabled will be in place" (see Appendix I, School F).



The website for School D tells a poignant story of the first assembly at the school when the School D and E amalgamated:

“Words cannot describe the feelings and emotions we all felt while watching our children arrive. They were proudly dressed in their new uniforms. Tears of joy and happiness were shed by many!

The Opening was held on Friday 21st July [REDACTED]. The children were addressed by [name of speaker], an amazing young man who was included into a mainstream class at [School F] in a nearby city.

[Name of speaker]’s speech which told of his journey of acceptance and belonging was very moving. As he ended his talk he played the song "the World's Greatest". [Name of a student with disabilities] immediately joined in by clapping his hands and singing along to the song. The emotions that we had been holding onto poured out of all of us.” (See Appendix I, School D).

This emphasises once again the emotions associated with the amalgamation, a merger that had an impact on every child, staff member and parent in the school. The care that was so obvious in this school was also recorded in my personal diary, one excerpt which states,

“I wanted to take this school and plant it all over the country so that all children with disabilities can be schooled in such an ideal setting. So on one hand it was heart warming seeing how these 16 children were being cared for, but it is also heart-breaking knowing that there are so many other children who just do not have this quality of care available to them” (Personal diary, p. 6).

This chapter dealt with the presentation of the data which began with an introduction to the participant along with their demographics regarding the age, their gender, how many years they have been practicing as head and their highest qualifications. A description of their settings set the scene for their individual contexts. I then explained why I adopted an artistic genre for the presentation of the data. Participants gave an initial overview of how they define inclusive education and the types of disabilities accommodated in the schools was discussed. An synopsis of how inclusive education started in each school was given. A bird’s



eye view of the major findings were presented as metaphor in the form of a quilt. The major findings were then discussed in detail along with the subthemes and caveats to the study.

What follows next in Chapter 5 is a summary of the findings and a comprehensive analysis and discussion of these findings.

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Chapter 5

Overview, findings and recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings that will be presented in Chapter 5 are presented within a scaffolding that has been developed by Roberts (2004) who has suggested several headings for the final chapter of a thesis. This chapter then presents a summary of the study, an overview of the problem which encompasses a re-examination of the purpose statement and research questions, a review of the methodology and the major findings in the study. The findings related to the literature will be examined and surprises and lessons learnt from the research will be discussed. The conclusion will then be addressed and this will incorporate implications for action, recommendations for further research and finally, concluding remarks.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

What follows in this section is a summary of all previous chapters in order to refresh the reader's memory of what has gone before. Chapter one was an introduction to the machinations behind the global move towards a more inclusive educational system and I examined in detail the four international initiatives that became the basis of a shift towards a more equitable educational system. This shift started with EFA goals by 2015 and expanded, specifically with the Salamanca World Conference in 1994, to the inclusion of children with a variety of disabilities in 'schools for all'. It is indeed portentous that this date coincides with South Africa's own break away from apartheid into a new democracy and therefore the very real possibility of a more inclusive educational system. Furthermore, in chapter one, I highlighted that there is much research on inclusive education in *developed* countries but that research in *developing* countries is still only emerging. I then examined the beginnings of inclusive education in South Africa which was declared officially in WP6 by the then Minister of Education, the Honourable Kadar Asmal.

The purpose of the study was to explore how principals understand inclusive education in independent schools in South Africa. The study aimed to clarify how inclusive education is



understood through crystallisation and narrative research. The rationale for the study was spurred on not only by WP6 but also by the large number of children who are still excluded from schooling in South Africa. I was therefore keen to understand why some principals were practicing inclusive education in their schools despite the difficulties associated with its implementation. I was also concerned with the lack of obvious political will when it came to the implementation of inclusive education in South African schools. Furthermore, I briefly described how children who are marginalised are seen as Other despite the indigenous ubuntu philosophy that undergirds our Africanness. Chapter one also outlined the reasons for focusing on principals of independent schools. For change to be effective in a school, I suggested that a driver is needed to direct the change and the best person to do this in a school is the principal. It was stated that the lack of strategic leadership compromised the implementation of new policies and I was therefore interested in finding out what motivated principals to introduce inclusive education in their schools even though the 'hearts and minds' of those doing the implementing may be resistant to the process.

I focused on independent schools in my study because to my knowledge very few state schools are actually doing successful inclusion. Most state schools that have been selected to do inclusion have had it imposed on them and I know of very few schools that are practicing the kind of inclusion I wanted to study. The schools that were studied were therefore purposefully selected as they had reputations for engaging successful inclusion in some form or another. Finally, chapter one outlined how I came to do this study. I gave details of how I have come from a long career in education where I spent some of my time teaching mainstream children and the majority of my time working with children with severe disabilities. I clarified that I am the principal of a school for children with autism and so have insight into the role a principal has to play in a school. Furthermore I stated that I am came to this study from a unique point of view in that I can identify with what it means to be considered as Other because of my own non heterosexual orientation and hence knowledge of what it means to have a 'social disability'. In addition, as a woman in a man's world I have opted to do this research as a feminist researcher.

Chapter two is an interrogation of the literature which launched off with a definition of inclusive education. This definition, although problematic includes the concept that inclusion

in schools embraces *all* children and that a variety of support is provided to those who require it. The definition does not however incorporate what has been described as ‘hard’ inclusion by some authors (Low as cited in Norwich, 2004) which includes all children whether it is to the child’s benefit or not, nor does it include those who consciously, for whatever reason, exclude themselves from mainstream society. A point was made that if schools are inclusive this process will necessarily result in a more inclusive society as well as a sense of belonging to a larger group. The medical model versus the social model was discussed and it was suggested that children with disabilities be described by the amount of support they require to circumvent seeing the disability and instead focus on the humanity of the child. Identity and learning was considered and the point was made that one’s sense of identity is directly related to how much one can learn. If children are educated in separate or inferior schools, the consequences could be that their sense of self will be diminished and that learning will therefore be below par. In addition the literature revealed that the concept of ‘normalisation’ needs to be rethought because society is likely to marginalise anyone who they see as having a ‘lack’ and that those being marginalised experience oppression by others. Voice and Othering was touched upon in the second chapter and there was a suggestion that the voices of those who are marginalised should be given a hearing. The disequilibrium that results because of the practice of Othering was also examined.

Principals as agents of change was dealt with and there is little doubt in the literature that principals are instrumental in bringing about any kind of educational change. Educational literature regarding disability in the form of the written word ultimately influences thought processes and it was found that mainstream literature is generally biased in favour of dominant discourses. A feminist stance was used in this study because individuals with disabilities can, like women, create different destinies for themselves.

Chapter three deals with the methodology that is engaged to analyse the study. The conceptual framework includes three matrices designed by Wedell (2005) which help to throw light onto the difficulties associated with the implementation of inclusive education in schools. Matrix one deals with rigidities, curriculum and assessments, matrix two offers insight into the interrelatedness between student diversity and a customised curriculum, the amount of expertise that is needed and levels of needs, while matrix three examines the realistic changes that need to be made to accommodate a variety of student groups.



The methodology used in this qualitative study is biographical narrative research with purposeful sampling of principals from eight independent schools where inclusive education is already taking place. The data collection methods were unstructured interviews, cursory observation and the study of legal documents and websites. The data analysis began with the coding of the transcripts, the filed notes, the legal documents and the websites.

In Chapter four I introduced the participants and described their roles as leaders in their schools. I gave an in-depth insight into their beliefs in, and philosophy about, inclusive education. They subsequently took us on a journey through their thought processes and practices and together we cobbled a story that described aspects of inclusive education in South Africa. We examined the types of disabilities they cater for, and we gained a multifaceted understanding of their individual ‘moments of significance’. We learnt how these ‘moments of significance’ shaped them into being not only open to an inclusiveness within their schools but also an openness to being mindful human beings and leaders. We learnt about the procedures of, and understandings behind, good practice in the schools and we saw how each participant displayed a deep empathy for all children as human beings. We gained knowledge of how the participants tried to ‘normalise’ their schools to mirror society more closely and we acquired an understanding that inclusive education is not something that happens overnight. Finally, we discussed caveats to the study which in this case is the amount of hard work that inclusion requires as well as the financial implications that accompanies the introduction of inclusion in a school.

5.3 OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

As this thesis draws to a close, we need to remind ourselves of why we set out on this journey in the first place.

5.3.1 PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that were asked at the beginning of this study included the questions:

- How is inclusive education understood by principals in independent South African schools?

- What implications does the understanding of inclusive have for the practice of inclusive education in individual schools?

The purpose of this study was to explore how principals understand inclusive education in independent schools in South Africa. The study aimed to clarify how inclusive education was understood through crystallisation and narrative research. The first aim of this study was to examine several documents and statements that set the scene for inclusive education in South Africa including the local constitutional and legal contexts that initially informed the place of inclusive education in the South African context. The process of inclusive education was studied through a series of interviews with principals of independent schools. The thesis then aimed to uncover the understandings about inclusive education in well-resourced independent schools in South Africa by focusing on two important questions. We will see that these questions have been adequately answered as we compare the findings with the literature and with the themes that have emerged from the data.

5.3.2 REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach has been used to analyse the data garnered from the biographical narrative research which has resulted in rich content and descriptive material. The sample that was selected has satisfied the research questions with sufficient data and in addition has produced some surprising results which will be discussed later. The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted relatively easily. The digital recordings were mostly of a high-quality although the first interview with Adam was poor. The digital recorder was mistakenly set to a short recording setting which meant that the recorder paused during the silences in the conversation and this resulted in indistinct speech and some missing text. I tried to fill in the missing speech as well as I could and Adam also compared the recording with the transcription when asked to do so. He sent me his interpretation which is what I used eventually. The rest of the interviews were of very good quality. All transcriptions along with the digital recording were posted or delivered by hand to the participants with the request that they verify the transcriptions and that any other comments be added. I received two of the eight transcriptions back and came to the conclusion that either participants were satisfied with the transcriptions or that they had not found time to go through them.



5.3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to use a conceptual framework to analyse my data I opted to use Wedell's (2005) model to do so. To recall the model, Wedell believes that students who are vulnerable "depend on the efficacy of education for their progress" (p. 4) unlike the more capable students who are able to rely on their own resources to counteract inadequacies in the system. In order to analyse the data in more depth, I shall use aspects of the three matrices designed by Wedell in order to throw light onto the difficulties that characterise the implementation of inclusive education.

Matrix one provides some of the rigidities that may occur in the educational structures of a school and the first one to be discussed is funding issues. It needs to be noted however that funding issues were included as a caveat to the study as other complex issues that accompany inclusive education were mentioned by participants before funding issues were discussed. The majority of participants however, said that the implementation of inclusive education has very real financial constraints and this even for the affluent independent schools that have more financial resources than many other schools. This financial constraints highlight the amount of fiscal support schools need if they are to be inclusive schools. If the cost of implementing inclusive education runs into the millions, as the participants verified, then state schools would be in no position to raise the amount of money needed for this change, and it follows then that the national DoE would have to be committed to provide this funding. As someone who is involved in education in South Africa, I often read or hear about how 'there is no money' available for educational projects such as inclusive education. On one hand, WP6 spells out the commitment to inclusive education in South Africa, on the other hand, as some of the participants said, inclusive education is an expensive option. On a similar note, Mittler (2000) writes about the global priorities that are needed in realising EFA goals which in financial terms amounts to \$8 billion US dollars. This may seem like an insurmountable amount of money until Mittler (ibid) compares it with what is spent by individuals and governments on a regular and even a daily basis. He quotes an Oxfam study that reports,

"\$8 billion is:

Four days' worth of global military spending;

Half of what is spent on toys in the USA every year;
Less than Europeans spend on computer games or mineral water; and
Less than 0.1 per cent of gross national product” (ibid, p. 16).

Priorities for spending on a global scale are therefore questionable. Oliver (2004) describes the amount of money spent on special needs education in the UK as a “black hole” (p. 110) and says that the amount of money spent on special needs education in the UK is £7.1 billion out of a total budget of £20 billion. According to Fuchs and Fuchs (2004) the amount of money spent on students with disabilities in the US in 1989-90 was \$18.6 billion. These are vast amounts of money and yet they need to be compared on what countries spend on the military. The US for instance spent \$1 339 billion in one year in 2007 on the military (Blair, 2009). This practice is inexplicable in the face of social justice for all. Of money Cass said,

...in this which is very much one-on-one stuff,
it’s, it’s an expense.
And that we would have to work out,
but you can,
you can find ways. (3; 22; 3-5)

If I relate what Cass said here to the literature regarding the cost of inclusive education, a trilemma, a third way or middle ground exists for finding a way of implementing inclusive education. Hougaard (2008) national director of SAALED, in an article on inclusive education in a recent newsletter writes that funds are in fact available from within South Africa and overseas but that they “are not being adequately utilised and, in some cases, [are] being returned to their source” (p. 4).

A second rigidity in matrix one to be discussed is the transition from primary to secondary education. Although this point was not specifically discussed with the participants as it was not a major focus of the study, there was some evidence that this transition did present problems in the schools. As children with cognitive disabilities, in particular, develop and approach adolescence, academic mainstream schooling becomes less of an option for them. But as Cass told me, it matters not at all what subjects children end up doing. What does matter though, is that children leave school with a sense of self.

The argument that children with disabilities cannot be accommodated as they become older is equated with being an 'urban legend' by Cass and is therefore an argument that is now passé in her view. Inclusive education brings with it new ways of doing education, it is in itself the paradigm shift. If Mittler (2000) is right that teachers already have what it takes to do inclusive education, then ways can be found to accommodate children, no matter how old they are or what their cognitive abilities are. This also means that the quest for one hundred percent pass rates need not be jeopardised, because those who cannot achieve high test or exam results can still given opportunities to excel in other areas, and more importantly, in the area of 'a sense of self'. As Cass says, '

I really do believe that um, a healthy mind is a healthy child.

I really believe that. A healthy human in fact, not just a child.' (3; 12; 20-21).

Healthy humans as we know, are essential for a healthy, caring society. At Dee's school they were in the process of extending the number of grades accommodated at the school and with that came the challenge of accommodating older children with severe needs, but plans were already in place to keep their children as they aged and to provide them with more appropriate adult-type skills. Having the theory in place is not enough, the practice has to be in place as well. Neuman (2000) distinguishes between types of theory. He argues that theory can be empiricist and that on its own it is to be equated with "the world of soft indistinct mental images, values, and ideas" (p. 48) and can be "optical illusions" and "visual tricks" (ibid). To ensure that theory does not remain theory it has to be "tested against the hard, empirical facts of "real" material reality" (ibid). Theory can also be relativist which says that "reality is what we think it is" (ibid). And yet as Freire (1985) argues, there can be no practice without theory which he believes results in "blind activism" (p. 156). There is however a middle ground in working with theory and that is that in attempting to understand facts we will always end with only distorted images of reality (ibid) and that we need to make allowances for these distortions. A more exciting possibility however is that with further research we may be able to diminish or even manage the distortions. If I relate the middle ground concerning theory to my data then there is parity between what Neuman (2000) argues and what my participants said about their own practice. The most memorable comment was made by Dee who confessed to being a "baboon" as far as how much knowledge she has regarding inclusive education. Ben too said that no-one has all the

answers. The conclusion then is that whatever type of inclusive education is practiced, in schools is only *one* way of doing it, it is not the *only* way. This knowledge should in turn remove the angst that accompanies the implementation of a new system as it allows personnel to discover what works best for them within the parameters that are needed for inclusive education.

Another rigidity in matrix one are national policies that differ from one another or that differ from practice. Although this point is not a major focus of this study, suffice to say that WP6 differs markedly from practice in that so little rigorous inclusion actually takes place in South African state schools. The reasons for this phenomenon are complex but the move from being 'Darwinian' in our schools, to being more concerned with social justice, has slowly started taking place. Current policy-making is about being more inclusive as well as being more mindful about children at risk, and less about creating schools that are purely 'successful' in the traditional sense. This does not mean that there is not still a gravitational pull towards the creation of schools that are 'successful' in the market place as Fink and Stoll (1998) point out. They say, "[i]t would appear that in the 1990s, in many countries, the social efficiency and humanist views have replaced the developmentalist and social ameliorist purposes at policy-making level" (p. 310). In other words, by applying market principles to education, competition that results in winners and losers is still widely encouraged and espoused. More recently however, policy-makers seem to be committed to bringing about more equitable and inclusive schooling and are concerned more with social justice and less with competition, survival of the fittest and "successful meaninglessness" (Hamilton, 2008, p. 2) as one author put it. In addition, policies should allow for extensive learning opportunities for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Teachers and other educational personnel need to know that they are being supported and empowered to implement new policies and that they are not having to work in a vacuum, especially one in which the overriding emotion in working with children who are so different from the mainstream, is fear.

Another rigidity dealt with in matrix one is one that may impact on inclusionary practices such as inflexibility with timetables or lack of innovation. I found that in the schools I studied, classroom practice was specifically adapted to working with children with a variety of disabilities. The classroom practice thus reflected the inclusive philosophy of the school

and adaptations that were needed were made to reflect this inclusive thinking. Some changes were kept to a minimum. Dee related,

...for individual children like (name of child)
who, who uses a laptop,
adaptations like making sure there's, there's leads
and there's space
and there's desks and chairs that he needs
and that kind of thing have been made
very easily and very quickly...(4; 21; 4-7)

Of timetables, Cass said that in her school timetables were adapted to give the teachers enough time to work out how to teach in their inclusive classes. The extra time allows teachers to be innovative in the way they teach. In summarising their implications for practice, Scruggs and Mastropieri (2004) reflect that teachers require sufficient time (an hour or more per day) to plan for students with disabilities. Accommodating staff and allowing them time to prepare for their inclusive classrooms is therefore an imperative for schools who wish to practice meaningful inclusion.

An exception to changes in timetables was Guy's school where inclusion was only taught in the younger classes where teachers were willing to teach children with a variety of disabilities. When I asked Guy about the adaptations he had made in his school, he told me,

We haven't done other than make sure that the support staff are in place
and that every teacher is aware that children with those problems
need to be assessed early on
and then that we need to make allowances in their normal programme for those kids
to have their therapy in the mornings. (7; 12; 45-46; 13; 1-2)

So whereas most schools had adaptations throughout their schools, Guy who was in the early stages of implementing inclusion, still only offered therapies outside of the normal classroom routine. He also gave the impression that children could be 'fixed' early on in their schooling so that teachers in the older classes would not have to deal with their problems later on. Guy then, was the only principal who adhered to dominant groupings in his school whereas other schools specifically addressed the issue of difference amongst children in their classrooms.

Frank and Cass both reported to me how they had changed the rigidity of their prize giving evenings. They told me how they ensured that every child received an award at prize giving, not just the few who excelled at academics and sports. The difference that occurred when every child was recognised for who they were and not for what they had achieved, made a difference not only to the children but to the parents as well. Inclusive education does not stop with the inclusion of children. It has a much wider effect in that parents are also included. Every child being honoured at prize giving offers the parents the opportunity of feeling excited and fulfilled that their child is seen as being as special as the maths genius or the sports prodigy. In the next section we look at the second matrix in the conceptual framework.

To recap on matrix two, matrix two offers a “different starting point for moving towards flexibility” (Wedell, 2005). It is intended to show the interrelatedness between learner diversity and curricular expectations with a view to facilitating the delivery of a curriculum that specifically meets the needs of a more diverse population of students. It also requires a change in attitudes and an understanding of the nature of diversity and types and levels of needs which include needs that are common to all, needs that are common to some, and needs that are unique to an individual. Levels of needs have implications for increasing levels of expertise as well as for a restructuring of the curriculum.

There was much evidence in most of the schools that all children were catered for at their own levels. In Adam’s school where he was starting inclusion after having left School E, he, for instance, initiated the preparation of two of his teachers for the intake of two children with Asperger Syndrome by sending them to visit School E. As reported elsewhere, these teachers came back from the visit “gob smacked” (1; 5; 41) and excited because they had witnessed what could be done in mainstream schools for children with disabilities. Starting off slowly thereby gives teachers the time to see that it is possible to teach all kinds of children and that the possibility of adapting a curriculum is within reach.

Ben’s deep caring for his students extended beyond the walls of what happens on the school property and this was evident when I arrived for the interview. He apologised for not having had the time to go through the questions I had emailed to him since he had had “quite a hectic few days” (2; 1; 13-14) dealing with a bereavement in his school. One of his students

had lost her mother and since she also did not have a father, “it was a nightmare” (2; 1; 19). So his role as principal did not stop with school matters or the curricula or to what happens on the school property. It extended to caring for his students ‘after hours’ as well.

Inclusive education one could say then pervades and shapes lives beyond the school walls. It changes the very genetic makeup of how people view the world and how they treat others. What was evident in Cass’s school was how deeply committed she was to spending long periods of time caring for the emotional well-being of all her children and staff. Adaptations to the curriculum were therefore only one way of ensuring that every child was catered for. Their emotional well-being was seen as being as important. Cass too told me how time is devoted to addressing psychological issues with the girls in the chapel of her school. The connotation of dealing with troubling issues such as teasing in a traditionally spiritual space is an interesting one and has echoes with the theme of sacredness mentioned earlier. If humans are respected for who they are then one could surmise that that there is evidence for the sanctity of life. Where better to deal with human mistake-making than in a chapel that represents healing and wholeness.

Dee and Ed too demonstrated compassion that went beyond the practical changes that needed to be made for their school to be inclusive. Dee in particular was very concerned for the well-being of the parents of her children with disabilities and who were at first apprehensive about moving to School E from their “secure, small environment” (4; 1; 14) and she told me how she underestimated the fear around the issue. With time however, the fear dissipated although Dee hinted that the parents still find it difficult attending school events.

The level of care and empathy for stakeholders in the inclusive process is in direct opposition to market-driven education that “treats all differences equally” (Blackmore, 1998, p. 469). Each child in School E, also incidentally noticeable in most of the other schools I studied, were treated as individuals. Several of the principals said that every child in their school is ‘special’. Frank for instance told me that “we eventually worked out everyone’s an inclusion kid” (6; 15; 8-9) and as a result every boy was eventually on a special programme with whatever it was that they needed. Hal spoke about how they extended the curriculum to include offbeat sports in order to accommodate children. One could argue therefore, that unless a school adapts to the needs of children even to the extent of not only using, but

exploiting popular means of communication such as SMS, Mxit and Facebook, it will not be altogether meeting the needs of the population it serves.

Matrix two also deals with the increasing levels of expertise that are needed by staff as they teach children with disabilities. One of the questions I asked was whether principals made provision for staff to upgrade their qualifications. All the participants agreed that they made provision for staff to upgrade their knowledge base, some more than others. This section will be dealt with in more detail in matrix three.

The third matrix deals with the problems of implementing inclusive education in conjunction with the concern that the present system fails to prepare students for the future. This matrix provides a realistic evaluation of the changes that need to be made if inclusion is to be successful including the interrelatedness of teaching-learning approaches, the nature and level of expertise and the variety of student groupings and locations where learning occurs. Studying these features could have implications for policy and practice and could also provide clues to how flexible a school has to be to ensure high-quality inclusion. Furthermore, matrix three offers a framework for a realistic evaluation of the changes that are needed for a more inclusive system (Wedell, 2005). Issues that particularly interested me from this matrix included how the principals enhanced inclusivity in their schools. In other words, how did they create opportunities for personalised learning, how did they encourage staff to collaborate with other professionals in their service delivery, and how did they suggest classes should be grouped for effective learning.

Most principals encouraged staff to collaborate with professionals in their service provision. Adam told me how collaboration was made easier at School E because they already had a number of therapists on the campus. Dee also told me, as mentioned earlier, that she and Nicci were unexpectedly consulted on matters which concerned mainstream teachers such how to treat a child who had had an epileptic seizure. Some of the schools also had outreach programmes where expertise was shared with, and training was offered, to teachers in the community. This outreach did not necessarily include training in inclusive education however. Recall how Dee obtained advice from the best experts in the world in order to deliver the best possible service to her children. Dee also explained that she has had to teach teachers how to interact with children who they had not previously taught. She found that

teachers often humoured children by overreacting to their achievements. She told me how she had to explain to a teacher not to applaud whenever a child wrote something. She had to say to her, “He does that, there’s no reason to applaud” (4; 25; 43-44). Kunc (2009) argues that when neurotypical people meet others with disabilities, the neurotypical people usually ‘see’ the disability and not the person. Kunc attributes this phenomenon to mental narratives they have about disability. The disability overshadows the person despite the fact that the person herself might see herself in terms of being a wife, a mother, an aunt, a daughter, a career woman, a nature lover, or an expert in her field. In order to change peoples’ perceptions of those with disabilities, or any other difference, they will need to firstly extend the partial truths they have about others and secondly to ‘unlearn’ their own limited understanding of others.

There was evidence in my findings that children were not excluded or made to feel different by the way they were grouped although in Ben’s school mainstream students did verbalise that it was not fair that some children needed a quiet room in which to work. Hal also told me that children are smart enough to catch on to how they are grouped and that it is not really possible to deceive them,

...there’re different children at different stages with different needs
but the younger ones,
when they go off to their focus groups for example,
initially I’m not sure that they are aware too much,
we just talk about “You’re going to the small group”
but then it would be naïve to think children don’t know what’s going on
even in the same classroom.
You say “Right, I want the red group of readers here and the green group of readers there”,
they’ll soon know that the red group are the accelerated readers
so it will be naïve not to know,
not to think they’re not aware that there’re different levels of achievement
and going on
and certainly if they come to us from (name of remedial schools),
they do know that they need extra help in certain areas. (8; 9; 31-40)

Children in Dee’s school were grouped according to their needs. For instance one adolescent boy in a wheelchair attended classes with the mainstream children because he was able to

cope with the mainstream subjects. Other children with severe needs were accommodated mostly in School D where they received individual attention and were given activities they could cope with. Most schools however accommodated children in the mainstream classrooms but some schools also allowed children other spaces to go to when they needed respite or quiet. In addition most schools had 25 children in a class although as reported earlier, Frank had experimented, and very successfully, with a class of 60 children in a class. School E was the only school with a separate building for the children with severe disabilities but this unit delivered very specialised intervention with highly-trained specialist staff. Being on a mainstream campus however ensured that the social interaction with other children still took place.

There was also evidence that personalised learning was encouraged. In Frank's school he deliberately put children with a variety of intellects into the same group and they subsequently told him how they had benefitted from the interactions. This practice is a prime example of how power relations can be transformed into something more healthy. In addition, Frank expressed his surprise at the overall improvement in the students' results, and specially at how the students who consistently scored Es in their work, virtually disappeared. The improvement in results in all likelihood was as a consequence of improved teaching although Frank also told me that he instructed teachers to adapt the awarding of marks in order to prevent their parsimony in rewarding the work done by their students. Cass's moment of significance centred around the realisation that it was the way in which she was teaching that prevented a child from understanding. As she examined her own practice, she became aware of her own shortcomings as a teacher.

5.4 FINDINGS RELATED TO THE LITERATURE

5.4.1 POLICY

If I relate the content of the interviews to the literature review then I need to note that although no-one referred to the international initiatives such as Salamanca and Dakar that chiselled out the path towards a more inclusive educational system, some of the participants did however refer to the local White Paper 6. This to me means that they were familiar with the document, but I was not aware of WP6 being instrumental in spurring any of the heads

on to introduce inclusive education into their schools. The principals that did refer to WP6 expressed frustration at the lack of political will on the part of the DoE and the apparent lack of government involvement as well as at the vagueness of the text ,but they also expressed a deep desire to see educational officials initiating and contributing to the process, as well as addressing the persistent inequities in the present educational system. The participants then, were pioneers in their schools in implementing inclusive education despite the lack of broader governmental support and despite the risk to their own internal policies. Most of the participants said they were willing to take the risks however because they had come to believe in the process and because they had the confidence and moral courage to make it work. Their actions are not only exemplary but they epitomize the philosophy of ‘harm to one is harm to all’.

5.4.2 TYPES OF INCLUSION PRACTICED

Earlier in the literature review, types of inclusion that a variety schools practice throughout the world were explained. If I apply the types of inclusion harvested from the literature (Brown and Shearer, 2004; Fuchs and Fuchs, 2004; Hegarty, 2004; Kunc, 2009; Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2004; Norwich, 2004; Stockall and Gartin in Kavale and Mostert, 2004; Thomas and Loxley, 2001) then my conclusion is that the schools I studied practiced inclusion in different ways since the kinds of inclusion practiced coincide with the descriptions of inclusion provided by the different authors. In the table that follows [Table 8], schools have been inserted next to types of inclusion practiced in those schools.

TABLE 8: TYPES OF INCLUSION (AS HARVESTED FROM THE LITERATURE) BEING PRACTICED IN SCHOOLS

Type of inclusion in the literature	Type of inclusion practiced in schools studied
Soft inclusion – support is provided in mainstream schools when and where it is required (Norwich, 2004)	All schools
Hard inclusion – the mainstream setting takes full responsibility for all needs (ibid)	No schools
Stupid inclusion – special support is given but it is not labelled as ‘special’ (ibid)	No schools
Full separatist inclusion – all children are treated equally and there are no potentially ‘stigmatising’ support systems in place (ibid)	No schools
Participation in the same place – allows for support systems as along as these support systems assist with participation in the mainstream and do not occur in separate sites (ibid)	All schools



Type of inclusion in the literature	Type of inclusion practiced in schools studied
Focus on individual need – focuses on meeting needs and the location in which they are met is not prioritised (ibid)	School E
Elective inclusion – focuses on the parents’ choice for a separate setting for their children if this is their preference and this could be for any length of time (ibid)	Not applicable
Quality of life – inclusion does not necessarily prepare children for adulthood (Brown and Shearer, 2004)	School A (aware of the problem and have plans for providing for older children) School B (have plans in place for providing for older children) School C (many stories were told by Cass of success stories of students who graduated from the school – evidence of awareness) School E (have plans in place to provide for older children as the school extends its grades to matric) School F (Frank too told of success stories of graduated students so there was evidence of awareness of adulthood)
Benevolent inclusion – a type of ‘hard’ inclusion which does not ensure that children are benefitting from being included (Stockall and Gartin in Kavale and Mostert, 2004)	No schools
One track approach – includes almost all children in the mainstream and a wide range of support services are provided (Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2004)	School E
Multi-track approach – a variety of services that bridge special and mainstream schooling (ibid)	School E
Two-track approach – separate school with two separate educational and legislative systems (ibid)	Not applicable
Pragmatic inclusion – opposes inclusive education on the grounds that special schools have the best menu of help for children with special needs (Thomas and Loxley, 2001)	No school
Bio-psycho-social model – prevents emotional and behavioural issues from being interpreted as being bio-medical (Norwich, 2004)	All schools
Continuum of services – having mainstream and separate settings that serve in the best interest of the child (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2004)	School E
Inclusion does not compromise the core values of education (Hegarty, 2004)	All schools
Humane environment approach – being aware of and manipulating the environment in which children receive their education (Thomas and Loxley, 2001)	School E
Excellence in inclusion – inclusion begins with a sense of belonging (Kunc, 2009)	School B (Overt*) School F (Overt) School H (Covert*)

* Whereas Ben and Frank actively implemented inclusive education based on Kunc’s principle that inclusion begins with a sense of belonging, this principle in Hal’s school was less obvious although he actively provided for the needs of boys “from the academic to the maverick to the eccentric” (8, 11, 9-10). This would also be a mark of excellence.

No school was therefore fully inclusive in the sense that they were practicing hard inclusion. This was for a variety of reasons. For instance, some principals admitted to not being able to cater for all children such as Cass who recommended a specialist school for the little girl who was blind. Adam and Cass said that they were excluding children in wheelchairs from their schools because the physical structure of the schools was difficult terrain for wheelchairs, and Guy expressed regret at not having more types of children with a variety of disabilities because he was at the beginning stages of inclusive education in his school. In addition no school was practicing benevolent inclusion or felt under any obligation to implement inclusion as window dressing. All heads implemented inclusive education because they believed in it.

5.4.3 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS LEADING THE WAY

As reported earlier, independent schools have the capacity to “further individualism which will in fact work against policies that entrench dominant elites” (Henning, 1993, p. 21). The independent schools I studied not only worked for a policy of inclusion they also offer “an opportunity for developing a unique inclusive education system that is not a blueprint for an existing one” (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p. 21). Although I believe that the principals in my study are pioneers in South Africa blazing a trail for others to follow, they would in all likelihood not see themselves in those terms because of their own humility in the process.

There is much parity between the definitions of inclusive education as presented in the literature and the definitions as given by my participants particularly in the amount of variety in the perceptions of the each individual principal. Adam for instance explained that if he were sitting in a room with ten other principals, nine would disagree with him regarding his definition of inclusive education and that the dissonance associated with subjective opinion, makes a common understanding of inclusive education problematic. However, the overall philosophy of the eight principals was either overtly or covertly creating a ‘sense of belonging’ by valuing each child for who s/he is as well as meeting the needs of each child. This practice in turn shapes how the schools function and in addition, extends the understanding of ‘diversity’ in the independent school sector which incidentally still has a narrow view of what diversity means (that is, that diversity refers to racial diversity only). My participants have created “helpful spaces” for children with a variety of disabilities as



opposed to “harmful spaces”, as clarified by Kumashiro (2002) where “normalcy is presumed” (p. 24). In this way the schools I studied have broken away from the status quo and are preparing their children to break down barriers and to defragment society as adults. Swart and Pettipher (2005) are therefore accurate in saying that as a developing country, South Africa has “an opportunity for developing a unique inclusive education system that is not a blueprint for an existing one” (p. 21). The varied and unique perceptions of the principals perhaps unwittingly, present an outline for such a blueprint.

By practicing inclusive education in ways that could be replicated in other schools, these eight principals are reshaping history for children with disabilities in particular, but also for society as a whole. Inclusive schools are reflections of what society could be like in all its diversity and difference but where everyone is accepted and has a part to play in it.

Frank explained his belief that emotions drive learning and evidence has emerged from this study that supports this philosophy. In his school for instance the D aggregate children ‘disappeared’ and marks improved as the teaching changed and less fuss was made about the ‘academic winners’. The ‘academic losers’ were valued in other ways such as the boy with a physical disability who started proving himself on the cricket pitch or the young woman who went on to run her own catering company. There was also evidence that the desire to be seen as being ‘normal’ was very strong amongst children who were different from others such as the little person at Dee’s school who did not want to be seen talking to Dee and who would avoid her if she was in close proximity to her. This is an indication of someone who is self-actualised enough to make her own choices in life and to have the confidence to display that choice. It is highly unlikely that the emotional maturity accompanying such a display of confidence would have happened as quickly as it did had she been in a separate setting where she would have been mixing with other children with disabilities.

There was as much evidence in the data that heads listened to what children on both sides of the spectrum were saying or not saying. Ben for instance, did not resort to drastic action when a child in his school had a tantrum or who swore about the school. In the face of a staff member calling for the child’s expulsion from the school, Ben stood up for the child and actively trained the other children to cope with the child’s tantrums and violent behaviour. Ben displayed an accommodating understanding of the child and was willing to offer him the

time and the space in which to come to terms with his own social difficulties. By allowing the child to have an opinion and by not judging him, he affirmed the child, he treated his opinion as legitimate and empowered him with an opportunity to grow as a person. Ben also distinguished between authentic communication and the complaint by the teacher who did not understand what Ben was trying to achieve regarding the social acceptance of a child despite the child's behaviour. In addition, two of the heads, Ben and Dee in particular, were autocratic in their dismissal of teachers' opinions who were not supportive of the inclusive process.

As far as 'othering' children is concerned, the evidence proves that children were not labelled in terms of their disabilities, and every effort was made to reduce the feeling of being made to feel 'Other'. Cass for instance even spoke of not knowing much about remedial education, but that she was not put off including children into her school,

I'm not a remedial teacher.

I have very little knowledge in fact.

I've quite a, I mean, I've obviously got quite a reasonable knowledge of basic education, but I'm a great risk taker. (3; 4; 36-41)

The fact that she was willing to include children who were different from the norm despite her own lack of knowledge of remediation is concerned, is surely testament to her commitment to being a school for all girls.

5.4.4 RESTRUCTURING A SCHOOL SYSTEM

I found that several of the participants did not make use of 'shared governance' or 'site-based decision making' (Allen & Glickman, 1998). Instead some of them resorted to autocratic decision-making to implement a system they had grown to believe in, whether through a 'moment of significance' or whether through an increasing understanding of inclusion. The desire and the courage that is needed to change a system became an obligation to change the system and my participants were single-minded about achieving inclusion as quickly as possible. Not even resistance would stop them from deviating from a course they felt driven to complete. The problem with being driven however, is that it can have a ripple effect on others, and even though there were pockets of resistance from a

minority of staff and parents, participants reported a minimal overall resistance to the process.

Allen and Glickman (1998) speak of the ‘hearts and minds’ (p. 505) in a school that eventually determine successful school change. According to them change comes about because people believe in the process and not because of the ‘changes in policies and procedures’ (ibid). Any resistance to the implementation of inclusive education therefore needs to be expected and understood as it not only means extra work on the part of the teacher, it also means that the very real emotional issue of personal prejudice is challenged. Adam succinctly and poignantly mentioned that he became aware of his own frailty when faced with working with and looking after people who had become disabled and it was this subconscious acknowledgement of his own vulnerability that made him hide away from them during his army experience. Rather than face his own fear, he chose to block out the source of his fear. Many changes that take place in schools are neutral in that they require paradigm shifts and extra effort; inclusion on the other hand, challenges deep personal emotions and prejudices. Brown and Shearer (2004) refer to inclusion as being a “highly emotive topic” (p. 144) and that as members of civilisation, we automatically exclude others because that practice has been part of our historical development. Inclusion thus requires a philosophical commitment and a conscious awareness and insight (ibid).

Oakes , Welner, Yonezawa and Allen (1998) on discussing school reform debate that reformers and change agents too often try not to offend others in bringing reform,

[c]onsequently researchers and change agents find themselves in wholly unfamiliar territory: Whites usually squirm at the sound of the “r-word”; mid-to-high income researchers feel a hidden guilt when discussing issues of poverty; men hesitate to talk about gender issues; and only the bravest few traverse the taboo grounds of sexual orientation.’ (p. 969)

As a result these authors say “we huddle behind allinclusive and nonspecific words like “equity”, “diversity” and “heterogeneity” – words that, without greater explication, may become little more than window dressing for the same old beliefs and practices” (p. 969). Silvers (1997) addresses a similar issue and suggests that disability “appears to have a prima facie negative impact on interpersonal relating” (p. 26) which she describes as a “dilemma



triggered by difference” (ibid). Elsewhere she says that “individuals with disabilities customarily are conceptualized [*sic*] as irremediably unequal” (p. 27). Silvers also refers to a telephone survey that speculated that able-bodied people would rather die than spend the rest of their lives in a wheelchair. Her conclusion was that “such morbid counterfactual speculation by the able-bodied often is utilized [*sic*] in public policy contexts to justify exclusion of people with disabilities from many parts of life” (p. 28). The point Silvers makes here “to dismiss the disabled as abnormal” (p. 29) and the failure to put oneself in the shoes of the Other, may explain why it is that neurotypical people find it difficult relating to those with disabilities and why many principals do not embrace and practice inclusion in their schools.

In my research I did not find the participants hiding behind terminology or faulty premises and nor was there evidence of window-dressing. Instead there was palpable honesty about what they were doing as well as a humility that shone through what they related to me. For instance, several of the participants said that they were learning new things about inclusion on a regular basis, policies were being developed as unexpected events occurred and Ben for example said that they would be very honest with parents if something did not work out.

Although only two of the participants , the two who had been exposed to Norman Kunc, referred to the concept of belonging, it was a strong thread that ran through the tapestry of all the data. According to Ben and Frank, it was a sense of belonging that created self esteem in a child, that provided a positive learning environment, that lead to excellence and that reduced anxiety. At a recent principals’ conference, the keynote speaker Rob Evans said that it is easy for independent schools to produce eagles. This is because they receive eagle eggs in the first place and all that is needed to hatch out eagles from eagle eggs, said the speaker, is a warm bottom! The ease that accompanies producing eagles is however cause for disease for some principals who long for more than excellent matric results at the end of a year. One principal in writing about his response to his annual, once again good results, said,

[b]ut the predominant vision that our independent sector retains is entrenched in the 20th century – dedicated to excellence and carrying on as we are in splendid isolation. Largely, we perpetuate the separation that has so dogged education and national life in this country for the past sixty years’ (Hamilton, 2008, p. 2).



This dis-ease for Hamilton he describes as ‘successful meaningless’ “It is an awfully comfortable feeling, being successfully meaningless, is it not? The time is right for a truly meaningful 21st century vision” (p. 3). Hamilton acknowledges that the “splendid isolation” of many independent schools is self-imposed but many of his ilk do not. Adopting a meaningful system such as inclusive education is a way of not only addressing their isolation but of bringing about school reform that ultimately will benefit the whole of society.

Heads like Hamilton have an innate awareness of what is going on around them. Like Frank for instance, who made mention of his awareness of the ‘nastiness’ and violence that existed in his school, was to his mind something that could not be allowed to continue. This awareness, besides his ‘moment of significance’ could well have been shaped by the fact that his upbringing was in a deeply discriminatory society and that he had read a seminal South African book on prejudice written by well-known local author Steve Biko (1978). Biko’s influential book on black consciousness is revered by many South Africans and his views have become the basis for major paradigm shifts in the way people think about themselves in this country, but it still does not explain why some people are open to school reform and others are not. Below is Frank’s interpretation of what Biko outlined in his book. The environment he is talking about in the beginning is the tribal area with its 80 schools in which he is now working,

...amazing stuff um, essentially, because I, you know, consciousness,
one of the things we’re doing here,
I’m saying there two things we have to do,
one is the laboratory of schools to raise the standards of all the stuff we’re talking about,
the other is, it’s probably to do with the philosophical stuff,
it’s to do with the, what I’m currently calling identity consciousness,
and Steve Biko basically wrote about black consciousness
so essentially my understanding was
um, black people have essentially come to understand
that they were inferior because of what society and power and all those things were doing.
And the same’s true of gender,
and so essentially most black people
had bought into the understanding that they were inferior
and so his miracle for me was that he said
“No, no, we are fantastic,
black people are beautiful,



and black people are capable of anything”

and so he essentially got into their emotional consciousness

and he called it black consciousness .

It hasn’t happened yet,

it hasn’t been allowed to happen in that work

and it’s largely undone still in this country

so the political stuff,

the ANC essentially outmanoeuvred the whole black consciousness movement.

Because they killed him I don’t think, he couldn’t um, finish the work that he’d started,

so I think a lot of the black consciousness still needs to be done

and so I’m just as concerned about what I call white consciousness

because it’s a bit like if you’re in the A set,

so the black people were essentially in the E set

and the white people essentially in the A set,

we’re just as damaged as they are in a sense

because we have this belief that somehow or other,

the whiteness of our skins is an advantage

and it isn’t

and so we lose our capacity because of that. (6; 37; 24-44)

So this ‘identity consciousness’ as Frank describes it, could work in one of two ways. It could either make one aware of the prejudice around one or it could incapacitate one to the point of non-awareness of injustice. What brings a person to the point of consciousness is one of the puzzles of this thesis. Somehow each of my participants were conscious of the prejudice in their environments and were actively doing something about it, and not only were they aware of how children were being discriminated against, they were, and Frank in particular, were also aware of other issues such as racism and sexism in their communities as well. Giorcelli (2004) in a talk on inclusion at a local school, said that inclusion specifically thwarts injustice by preventing overt and covert discrimination, by stopping the harassment of students, and by preventing the setting of unnecessary barriers.

So the risks that are taken are with the belief that all children deserve equitable opportunities and that inclusion is a way of achieving this. Two of the participants displayed their deep respect for humanity and thus for children when they said that it is impossible for them to ignore them,



Ben:

...don't throw people away,
don't separate them because they,
something a little bit different about them. (2; 22; 29-30)

Ed:

Clearly there will always be children with disabilities.
We cannot, we cannot wish them away,
it is unethical and immoral to wish them away.
We need to give them every opportunity to realise their potential. (5; 10; 29-31)

In his study on antioppressive education, Kumashiro's (2002) describes how a school kept wanting to send the young adopted son of one of his participants home as they found it hard dealing with him at school. The participant coined the term 'disposable kids' and said

"[o]ur society seems to believe in disposable kids: If a kid gives you too many problems, get rid of it, we can't deal with the problem and when they're older they can go see a psychologist about it and deal with it then" (p. 202).

What struck me in this study is that the participants are principals who are dedicated to changing school systems and that they are pioneers in the process. I asked the participants what their colleagues thought of their practice of inclusion and although some of them said that they are supportive of them, their responses to inclusion varied. Ben, for instance, told me that his colleagues often refer children to his school, while Adam felt that some principals might not agree with his views on, or practice of, inclusive education,

I think everybody has their own definition of what inclusive education is
and I think um, I think that has its difficulties.

Uh, everybody has their own philosophical approach to what education is
and should be, and there would be,
if there were ten principals sitting in this room now listening to what I was saying,
there would probably be nine people that disagree with what I feel
and how I think it should be done,
but it's their right to do it
but it does make it really, really difficult... (1; 10; 34-39)

Dee felt that that the onus to create awareness of inclusion lay on them as a school,



Jenni, in, within our community here,
we've got some heads who are interested
but not really coming and saying "Wow, this is, this is something we could do at our school".
Definitely not.
We haven't had anyone as proactive as that.
They all think it's fantastic,
all very positive about it,
but there's been no-one sending their teachers here or anything like that,
but we haven't been probably as proactive as we could be in that regard. (4; 26; 21-26)

Ed on the other hand was more positive about his colleagues and said that whenever he does have other principals visiting the school, he makes a point of taking them to the School D on the campus of School E. Frank's school was situated on a campus with four other schools and although he changed the system in his own school, he did not see other principals following his example. He said,

'[t]he other colleagues on the campus didn't really fully understand' (6; 31; 23)

and that,

I probably had more success with other people I was talking with in other parts of South Africa,
so for example the (School B) model
which was different to ours um,
we continued to work together
and think together
and change our own systems in our own ways
and then there were other schools
there were very many various other people
but I didn't talk to so many people about it,
so I had probably had more success outside
than I did in fact in those other schools strangely enough. (6; 31; 27-33)

Allen and Glickman (1998) outline several stages that need to take place when a system changes, and if a system does start changing, it is because these features are already in place. These features include a collegial ambience in which methodology is freely discussed; a head who is willing to take risks and who not only encourages risk-taking in her staff but

also welcomes staff input; and staff who, very basically, are open to change. Schanin, Michal, Reiter and Shunit (2007) reporting on the systems change in Israel, namely the enactment of the Special Education Law which required that children with special needs be placed in regular classrooms, found that there were four stages to a change process which was initiated by the Ministry of Education. The first stage was labelled “entry into the change process” (p. 7) and is based on Fullan’s (1991) spiral model. Staff generally do not easily embrace a top-down approach, but in the above-mentioned authors’ study, staff attitudes changed after meetings were held to examine problems, resistance and anxiety and “these discussions eventually led to consensus about adapting to the new policy” (p. 7). Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa and Allen (1998) in their research on equity-minded reforms deliberate on the change literature that “generally advocates a strong bottom-up component as a precondition for successful reform” (p. 966). Their conclusion however is that “top-down and bottom-up reforms need not be viewed as dichotomous” (p. 967). They quote a principal who accelerated general reform in his school by showing films, arranging inspirational talks and encouraging discussions. As a result his already open faculty became increasingly willing to accept reform.

In my research I found that inclusion was done in a variety of ways but that there were some common threads running through the way it was instituted in the individual schools. My sense is that it was generally principal-driven with the help of a small team. Ben for instance admitted that inclusion was not something he could have done on his own, but that he in fact felt alone in what he had chosen to do at his school because very few middle schools have adopted inclusion into their schools,

Um, it’s a lonely ride,
and being a middle school on top of it,
because we’re very few middle schools,
so that’s also tough.
But if you stick to inclusion,
there are very few schools that really have embraced inclusion
and uh, it would be nice to be able to share,
debate things,
compare notes, ja. (2; 26; 10-14)

I was aware that most of the principals experienced a type of loneliness that could either have been related to being one of a few independent schools practicing inclusion, or it could have emanated from a perceived lack of system-wide support. Dee for instance told me how children with special needs are rejected by the special needs schools in her province if they have physical disabilities, if they are under six or if they are not toilet trained. She said,

They're saying no to them so these kids are at home!

So you know, the government's talking inclusion, um, in mainstream schools, but our special needs schools are discriminating against kids of disability. (4; 7; 10-13)

Dee and Ed run an exemplary model of inclusion at the school and they on occasion have invited government officials to openings and other functions but their lack of attendance was disheartening. Dee explains,

...we had a meeting with government officials
and we had the lady who was in charge of inclusion in (name of province),
the project manager,
and we got parents on our waiting list
who came and spoke to her about their experiences of being rejected by the state schools.
She was blown away,
and we held the meeting at (name of special school),
we initiated the meeting,
and then nothing happened...(4; 7; 18-23)

This is in strong contrast to Singaporean Minister of Education who attended the entire five day International Confederation of Principals (ICP) conference in Singapore in July 2009. What is commendable then is that some schools practice inclusion despite the lack of governmental support simply because they believe in it as good practice and a way of giving all children the educational opportunities they deserve.

Implementing inclusion is a first stage in reforming a school but it needs to be sustainable. As Hopkins (1998) says "[i]mplementation by itself is not enough" (p. 1043) and that when a reform is institutionalised or "when it has become part of the natural behaviour of teachers" (ibid) it can be deemed successful. In my research I found that the schools were at differing stages as far as practicing inclusion is concerned. Some had a system that was infused

throughout the school and was sustainable by daily practice whereas others were developing an inclusive model a very small scale. What was important was that the philosophy of the schools was to be inclusive and that that was the driving force behind the process.

5.4.5 CHECKING WEBSITES AGAINST THE DATA

None of the websites which represent the public face of the eight schools overtly advertised the schools as being inclusive and not all schools had mission statements (see Appendix I for excerpts from the websites). I have included a variety of excerpts from the websites of the eight schools that reflect the websites as whole. I have only used selections of the websites that either refer directly to inclusive education or which hint at the inclusive nature of the schools. Amongst the excerpts, I have included a variety of sources including mission statements where they were available, the kind and amount of academic support offered to children, information about a school, types of sport offered, a lengthy description of the School D at School E, the number and types of policy statements at School F in particular, goals and indicators for the future, an excerpt from an anti-bullying policy from School G, and finally citations from different phases in the schools.

Only two schools (Schools A and H) had mission statements which were described in very broad terms: School A had a particularly enlightening philosophy in the nurturing of a school leaver which emphasised the individual and which said that by the time a student leaves the school s/he will be , “A person with self respect for all other human beings” (School A website – source withheld due to ethical reasons). School H had a similar emphasis on the individual but the mission statement is otherwise a very general declaration. School B outlined how much academic support and counselling is available to children and they can request tutorials on a one-on-one basis when they feel they need it.

School C was the only school that declared it had an inclusion policy up front. In the hyperlink to the section titled ‘About the school’ the description of the school is one which states that it “has a policy of inclusion, accommodating all learners” (source withheld). Although the school was clear that it had an inclusion policy, I could not find a copy of the policy on the website. From the hyperlink to the Preparatory School it was also clear that the

emphasis is on supporting the individual child and this is achieved by keeping the classes small. Examples of academic subjects and sports available at the school are listed and by their variety, most, if not all of the girls would be catered for in the more non-academic and the sports arenas. Since there are more opportunities than ever for students to excel in non-academic subjects, girls who are not able to cope with academics will obviously have other opportunities for excelling at this particular school.

In the hyperlink to the School D at School E there is a description of the amalgamation of the School D with School E. It is a poignant description and one well worth reading in Appendix I. It was written by Dee and the emotions associated with the amalgamation are evident. The plans for the future as the school expands to include more grades coincides with what Dee told me in the interview with her in that the demographics would be adhered to and that more older children would be accommodated at the school in the near future.

Examples of policies are include from School F but what is notable is the lack of a policy on inclusion at the school. There is however a comprehensive explanation of how the school plans to extend its diversity, not only as far race is concerned but also as far as disability is concerned. It states that “[d]iversity will be clearly defined in terms of race, gender, academic ability, religion, wealth and disability” (source withheld). As far as my research of the websites is concerned, School E and F are the only schools that refer to disability on their websites. School E refers to IEPs for children who need them while School F refers to allowing “all learners to perform successfully and reach their full potential at their own pace” (source withheld). They also include the levels of support needed by children as outlined in the Department of Educations’ Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2005). This is the most comprehensive website and perhaps the most researched as far as governmental strategies are concerned. This does not mean however that the other schools have less of an intention to provide quality education to all their children.

The excerpt from the anti-bullying policy of School G is interesting in its detail of constitutes bullying. Bullying is not only physical but it is emotional as well and it includes the making of “degrading comments about another’s religion, culture, family members, sexual orientation or social background”. Again the descriptor of ability is missing and this may well be a

loophole in the policy. The support services available at School G though are clear in that any child experiencing a learning barrier is entitled to individual attention.

School H was a difficult website to negotiate through as the visitor to the website required a password which is apparently available to parents only. I requested a password but it did not allow me into the website in spite of getting the password from a reliable source. The main home page however, had a hyperlink to the Junior School where it was stated that one-on-one lessons were available to any boy having difficulty in class.

On the whole the reference to inclusion and disability was largely missing from the websites but therein may lie a story. If schools are practicing inclusion and it is 'no big deal' then it follows that it may not be necessary to single out inclusion on the websites. My sense however is that schools need to be clearer about their inclusive policies for visitors to the websites and should therefore follow the example of School F which is fairly clear about how they intend working with the children who struggle to learn academically as well as how they intend actively including them into the day-to-day practice of the school, this despite the obvious intention of all the schools to provide for all the children in their schools, to offer children one-on-one support when they need it and to nurture children until the time they leave the school.

5.5 SURPRISES

There were several surprises in this study and these include resonance, the lack of common ground amongst the principals regarding their demographical details as well as the common ground amongst them regarding their belief in inclusive education as paradigm for their schools. It is the surprises that make the study interesting and that add the final threads to this quilted thesis.

Firstly, because the understandings and definitions of inclusive education were so varied amongst my participants, it may be likely that their understandings resonate with and mirror the perceptions of the broader population than if the understandings and definitions were more homogenous and one-dimensional. The variations and diversity that characterise

human society therefore may be reflected by the wide-ranging perceptions surrounding inclusive education.

Secondly, it was surprising to find that the principals doing inclusion in their schools differed markedly in their qualifications and in their ages and that it made little difference whether they were male or female. In reality, the overriding quality marking their leadership styles was that they were more feminised than male in the way they led as portrayed by Coleman (2002) earlier in the literature review. This phenomenon coincides with the literature and especially Coleman's (2002) research of transformational leadership in which she found that although both men and women principals opted for an "androgynous" style of leadership, this leadership was characterised by being more "feminine" than "masculine" (p. 31). Kidder bears this point out too in his book on caring leadership. Caring is usually more associated with females than with males, but once again, the starting point for the both male and female principals in my study was one of caring deeply about the children in their schools. Nevertheless the difference in qualification and age shows that one does not have to be highly qualified to change a school system and neither does one have to be a seasoned head, but it does seem to indicate that experience may be a prerequisite for changing systems.

Thirdly, I was surprised by the number of disabilities accommodated in the schools although only School E provided education to children with so-called severe mental and physical disabilities. It was also surprising to find out that the inclusive process happened quickly in some cases, and over time with others. Although 'wild inclusion' is not preferable, it worked in the case of Ben's school because of his commitment in making it work. The variety in the types of inclusion practiced was illuminating which I believe proves that there can be no single way of implementing inclusion. Once the philosophy has been adopted, each school approached the process in their own way and in a way that suited their circumstances and the resources available at the time. It was also interesting to see the creativity that staff resorted to with the adaptations such as colour-coded corridors, and adapted timetables and playgrounds.

A fourth surprise was the depth of integrity, courage, professionalism and humility that was common to the eight principals. They did not portray themselves as experts or as having all

the answers to the inclusive process, they only displayed a servanthood (Palestini, 2003) to the process, a servanthood that was a choice, not an imposition.

A fifth surprise was the effect the inclusion process had on the those around the process. For instance a mainstream child at Dee's school was excited at the prospect of children with severe disabilities joining the mainstream school and said that the children with disabilities were 'coming home'. This response could be an indication that children have fewer problems with the inclusion process than adults. Cass also told me that in her opinion and according to her observations, if children do not react negatively to children who are different, then neither will the parents. This opinion is in contrast to the common assumption that children learn their behaviour from their parents. Secondly, the children at Dee's school became so used to being with children who are deemed different that the response of another school to children in wheelchairs especially, was noticeable to the point of being uncomfortable. Thirdly, the anecdotal way in which a little boy defended his friend in a wheelchair in a supermarket was notable and remarkable in that the child told people around him to stop staring, because 'he is my friend'. The child was responding to the humanity of the child while those doing the staring, were responding to the disability and at the same time displaying their own ignorance and inappropriateness. Guy too said that it "benefits the other kids more than the kids that are being included". (7; 6; 21-23).

The second group to be affected by the inclusion process was staff. Again in Dee's school she related how a staff member wrote a note to her and Nicci and thanked them for showing her that children with disabilities are normal children. Ben told of how his art teacher had to examine his own methodology when teaching a child who was blind. And the third group to be transformed were the parents. Again in Dee's school the parents of the children with disabilities were initially fearful of joining the mainstream school because they felt safe at the small school. This response is indicative of the effect that having a child with disabilities has on parents. Dee later told me that these parents still have problems attending functions at the school because they feel exposed. And lastly, both Frank and Dee told me of how the mainstream parents benefitted from having children with disabilities at the school. At Frank's school all the parents of all school leavers were affirmed through their children receiving recognition at the speech night in the form of an award, while in another story he related how parents started respecting a boy for excelling at cricket and how they started

calling the child by his name rather than supposedly describing him in other terms. At Dee's school, a mainstream parent who was on her way to complain to the principal that her child had not received colours for sport was stopped in her tracks on her way to the office by seeing a parent of a child in a wheelchair hoisting the chair into her car. The parent who was going to complain was confronted by a parent struggling with the very real problem of having a child with a disability, and her perspective on life and what is important was consequently challenged. She cancelled the meeting in the face of realising that her own ambitions for her child were minor in comparison to another parent who struggled on a daily basis with a child who used a wheelchair.

Another surprise was how inclusive education was utilised in changing a whole school system. Frank related how the school at which he was appointed was unfriendly and even vicious but that with time, as they got to know the 15 boys who were deliberately included into the school, how the system changed to being more friendly and less cruel when initiation ceremonies were banned, how learning improved and was accelerated through a sense of belonging and how the system of marking was adapted. So whereas inclusive education can be instrumental in changing a system but it can also be used as a catalyst to making a school a more humane place.

The moments of significance were surprising in their lack of obvious common ground however the experiences affected each principal in a similar way in that they were spurred on towards excellence in their roles as heads. Each principal was actively working for anti-oppressive education (in the words of Kumashiro, 2002) and in addition, they were acting as advocates for children who are vulnerable, and as Dee said, for children no-one else wants.

The definition of 'community' as explained by the Rabbi was interesting in that the very language of Hebrew is inherently inclusive. Each letter in a word has meaning and so it follows that the users of the language could be naturally inclusive. This is in contrast to the Biblical understanding that the Jews were a race purportedly set apart by God for his own purposes. They nevertheless reflect an ancient language that in modern times has significance for humanity and for serious scholars of inclusivity.

Frank spoke about how maths teachers create “mathism” and how abusive this can be for students. One could presume that not only maths teachers abuse the children they teach in their attitudes towards children who struggle with their subjects and without the background knowledge of why children are slower at learning than others, teachers could well resort to ‘abuse’ albeit unwittingly. This study brought the notion of ‘covert abuse’ to my attention for the first time.

Another surprise in the study was finding out the amount of influence Norman Kunc had on his audiences. I was fortunate enough to hear him speak at a seminar in Johannesburg in May 2009 and because he himself has cerebral palsy, audiences tend to sit up and take notice of what he says. Norman is a deeply sensitive man and is a formidable advocate for children and adults with disabilities. He answers the frequently-heard and mundane arguments against inclusion and without fail answers questions from sceptics sensitively but with a sense of authenticity and humour in a way that few others could. He therefore plays a pivotal role in conscientising people and in persuading them to consider inclusive education as an option in their schools. The influence he has had on local principals over the years was evident and he should therefore be supported and others like him should be encouraged to do the same.

Yet another surprise was the success stories of children who had left the schools as reported by the principals whether they were running the stables of one of the richest men in Africa, or whether it was running a photographic studio, being a successful dancer or caterer. The reported successful lives that these children ended up living as adults is testament to how important inclusive education can be in the lives of children.

The way in which bullying and teasing was handled by the different schools was unexpected in that bullying and teasing incidents were addressed immediately and sometimes individually, but what was interesting was when Dee said that she wanted her children to be teased and she wanted her adolescents to be jilted or rejected by girlfriends and boyfriends. This was because she believed that children need to learn coping skills because the reality of life does not allow anyone to be overlooked.

And lastly, it was refreshing to find out that Ben in particular found entrance exams ‘bizarre’ in that entrance exams are at the outset discriminatory. Many mainstream principals would without doubt disagree with Ben on this point as entrance exams offer principals a licence to exclude any child who may negatively affect their matric pass rate which is still highly rated by most schools in this country. This despite the example set by Cass’s, Ben’s and Franks’ schools and who would say that it is absolutely possible to maintain good matric results *and* include children who could not possibly write matric.

In the following sections I shall be looking at implications for actions in the light of the data collected as well recommendations for further research. The thesis will then be brought to a close with concluding remarks.

5.6 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is a landscape, a patchwork quilt, that now needs to be concluded with the final stitches which will translate into the closing remarks. Implications for actions will be outlined and recommendations for further research will be made. Finally, the concluding remarks will draw this thesis to its end.

5.6.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

There are several implications for action which have emerged from the data, firstly the role that the government and ISASA plays in the inclusive process will be alluded to; secondly that principals need to be educated in the philosophy of inclusive education; and thirdly, that they are persuaded to recognise the pivotal role they play in school transformation.

The intention of WP6 is for there to be an inclusive educational system in South Africa. While inclusive education is actually taking place in some schools, and this study took place in independent schools only, nothing can really be said about what is happening in state schools. Secondly, principals should be presented with opportunities for being educated in the policy and practice of inclusive education. Thirdly, the principals that are already doing inclusion should share their experiences with other principals who in turn should be reminded of the pivotal role they play in school transformation. Opportunities should be

given for them to recognise their own ‘moments of significance’ that could spur them on to start practicing the inclusion process in their schools.

5.6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following suggestions are made for students who wish to further research inclusive education in South Africa.

- An impact study of the effect WP6 has had on the implementation of inclusive education in the country.
- An ethnographic study on finding out from principals of state schools how much inclusive education is actually being practiced in schools.
- Researching case studies to establish how much support the education districts are offering schools.
- A comparative study to explore whether there is more inclusion in rural areas or in urban areas.
- Doing a follow up study in the eight schools studied in this thesis to find out from children, teachers and parents how they have experienced the inclusive process.
- An exploratory study on what prevents principals from adopting inclusive education in their schools.
- An synthesis of the findings of this thesis as guide to principals wishing to embark on the inclusion process.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Lincoln and Denzin (2000) refer to the future as “the seventh moment” (p. 1047) and although they have framed their discussion around qualitative research, some of their claims are pertinent to the conclusion of my study. Firstly they believe that qualitative research is bounded by evolutionary aspects. They say that “writing the present is always dangerous” (ibid) and that what is fashionable today may not be fashionable in ten years from now. Secondly they argue that all researchers “share the belief that a politics of liberation must always begin with the perspective, desires, and dreams of those individuals and groups who have been oppressed by the larger ideological, economic, and political forces of a society or a historical moment” (p. 1048) and that as “new, previously oppressed or silenced voices

enter the discourse” (ibid) the centre of the discourse shifts which “refocus and redefine previous ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies, including empiricism, postpositivism, and post modernism” (ibid). Thirdly, “the seventh moment is concerned with moral discourse and with the development of sacred textualities” (ibid). This thesis therefore reflects what I consider to be a sacred text which according to Lincoln and Denzin is characterised by placing us in a “noncompetitive, non-hierarchical relationship to the earth, to nature, and to the larger world” (Bateson, 1972, and Reason, 1993 as cited by Lincoln and Denzin, 2000, p. 1052). Lincoln and Denzin (ibid) extend the argument by stating that “[a]ll human beings are worthy of dignity and sacred status without exception” (Christians, 1997 as cited by Lincoln and Denzin, ibid) and that what should be upheld by humanity is truth-telling, human dignity and non-violence.

Inclusive education seeks to do just that, to respect each individual child for who they are by welcoming them, by providing them with the support they need, whether in the mainstream school or in a separate setting for a while, and by teaching them and those around them respect for themselves and for one another. As we have seen the implications of having an inclusive system is vast and immeasurable and by providing children with human dignity in our schools we help them to move from being “other” to “another” (Rule & John, 2008).

Analysis that does not result in social action to my mind is empty and futile. Atkinson and Delamont (2005) claim that “what people say is a form of action” (p. 835) and the words of the participants in this research are thus the beginning of new ways of acting in schools. Ellingson (2009) avers that “research itself becomes an instrument for emancipation or intervention” (p. 37) and by presenting this thesis in a traditional way, along with a different genre (data set out in poetry form), it, in Ellingson’s words “embodies the possibilities of dialogue as a way to build community and promote peace” (ibid). Finally, crystallisation “provides a path toward bolstering efforts for social justice” (p. 38). Education plays a crucial role in the lives of children. The responsibility lies then with educators, and principals in particular, to create inclusive schooling that values every child and which restores dignity to children with disabilities especially. As evidenced by my participants, this *is* possible when inclusive education is the ‘default setting’ (Hutt, 2009) of schools, where there is a sense of belonging for each child. Not only the school, but society in the end, benefits when each child is respected for who they are rather than for what they can achieve in our success-



driven world. This thesis is now complete and it is my hope that it may help children, and especially children with disabilities, who are marginalised, oppressed and excluded to experience inclusion as human beings and furthermore, that it will go some way in changing school systems to being more inclusive of all children in the future.

A quilt is a faceted whole connected together. It is made up of coloured and varied segments, the old becomes new. It is a handmade artefact that is handed from one generation to the next symbolising its inherent histories and understandings. This thesis, as likened to a quilt, has gathered the biographical narratives that make up its unique scraps. A new tale has been created, one that can be handed down to the next generation and which could contribute to a more nonviolent, anti oppressive form of education and a more just and inclusive society.

---ooOoo---