How inclusive education is understood by principals of independent schools

by

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at the

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Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

Supervisor:
Professor Dr Irma Eloff

PRETORIA
2009
For my mother and father
Catherine and Monty Gous
and my aunt
Des Oldfield
By focusing on the ruins of history and the fragmentation of agreed upon meaning, we move against a victory narrative couched in the very conquering optimism that has lost its credibility, and toward some sense of what it means to use the now-time of a crisis of otherness to struggle toward a more just society.

Patti Lather
A thesis might be one’s own work with many hours spent at a desk but without the support and encouragement of those around one, the task would be that much more difficult. For this reason I wish to say a heartfelt and warm thank you to the following people for supporting me through this process. To the following:

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To the One who has been beside me throughout the process, who took me to depths where I found the unsearchable and where I learnt a little more about who I am, I thank you.

---oOo---
I declare that the thesis which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Education Policy and Management Studies at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

______________________________
Jennifer Gous

Signed on the _____________ day of ____________________ 2010
Johannesburg
South Africa

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Abstract

In recognition that every child matters, inclusive education has become a practice that has been adopted by many schools across the globe and most usually in first world countries. As a whole-school system it occurs less frequently in developing countries including South Africa which, unlike many developing countries, has a sound infrastructure and many excellent schools in both the state and the independent sectors. ‘Education White Paper 6: Special education: Building an inclusive education and training system’ was published in 2001 with the express intention of developing an inclusive education system in South Africa. Some independent schools have successfully implemented exemplary forms of inclusion in their schools and this is the phenomenon that has been studied by focusing on the understandings and experiences of the principals. As the researcher I interviewed eight principals who are practicing inclusive education as the norm in their schools. This study reveals various aspects of the inclusive process including the pivotal role that principals play in the transformation process of which inclusive education is the harbinger. It also analyses why principals choose to embrace a paradigm that on the surface is uncomfortable and not an easy option. I used biographical narrative research as methodology for this qualitative research and crystallisation as quality strategy in order to study the phenomenon that is the understandings of principals of independent schools of inclusive education. The basic tenet was that inclusion leads to belonging and excellence in education. The major findings and implications for action are of interest not only to principals, but to anyone who is seriously interested in innovative and more humane forms of anti-oppressive education.
Key Terms

biographical narrative research
children with disabilities
cognitive disability
crystallisation
disability
exclusion
inclusion
inclusive education
inclusivity
integration
mainstream
segregation
social justice
special needs

Words used singly or in combination in electronic searches

attitudes          marginalisation
disability         othering
exclusion          perceptions
feminism           principals
gender             queer theory
hidden             science
inclusion          silence
inclusive education special needs
independent schools special schools
leadership         voice

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## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASD</td>
<td>Autistic Spectrum Disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAAC</td>
<td>Centre for Alternative and Augmentative Communication, University of Pretoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWP6</td>
<td>Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FET</td>
<td>Further Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GETC</td>
<td>General Education Training Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Inclusive Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plan/Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISASA</td>
<td>Independent Schools Association of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVA</td>
<td>Motor Vehicle Accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAALED</td>
<td>South African Association for Learning and Educational Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEFL</td>
<td>Teaching English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP6</td>
<td>Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System</td>
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## Abstract

Key terms

Words used singly or in combination in electronic searches

Acronyms

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