How inclusive education is understood
by principals of independent schools

by

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at the

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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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o   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.

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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

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Jennifer Gous

Signed on the _____ day of _____ 2010
Johannesburg
South Africa

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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.

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

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Chapter 1
Introduction and orientation

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Chapter 2
The literature review

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Chapter 3
Explaining the methodology

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Chapter 4
Presenting the data

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Chapter 5
Overview, Findings and Recommendations

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