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Inclusive education: a case of beliefs competing for implementation

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The study explored the understanding and implementation of inclusive education in an independent Jewish community school; a school with a community ethos of care and belonging, whose context is, by definition, exclusionary on the grounds of a particular social category – religion. However, this exclusionary agenda positioned the school as inclusive on the grounds of strong communal values. Nevertheless, the school struggled with difference and diversity despite its purportedly strong communal spirit and religious culture. Further, it is arguable that the challenges encountered by the school may be indicative of the emergent economic context of South Africa where aspiration is often thwarted by economic realities. This study relied on qualitative methods of data generation such as insider interviews, personal accounts and document analysis. The participants were drawn from four stakeholder groups, namely, teachers, parents, middle managers and top managers. Guided by Lewin's theory of planned change, the study identified four belief systems which influenced the way inclusive education was both understood and practised in this school. The study argued for the recognition of the importance of different belief systems in the implementation of inclusion in South Africa.

Keywords: conditional inclusion, emergent economic contexts, inclusive education, Jewish community school, Kurt Lewin's theory of planned change

Introduction

We report the findings of an exploration and analysis of the way in which policy on inclusive education was understood and implemented at a Jewish community school in South Africa.

The study was conducted within an educational context, namely, a community school that is, by definition, exclusionary on the grounds of a particular social category – religion. However, it was as a result of this exclusionary agenda that the school was viewed as inclusive on the grounds of its strong communal values. In light of this, the expectation would be that all children of a particular religion would be welcomed with open arms at the school. The crux of the study is that this was not the case. Despite the apparent strong communal spirit upheld by a strong religious culture, the school community struggled with the concepts of difference and diversity of ability. The investigation highlighted the difficulties of individual change as well as planned change within a community school. Accordingly, it represented a specific effort to explore the many challenges constraining the implementation of inclusive education policy. Regardless of the social justice model adopted by the new democratic government in South Africa, the constraints of an emerging economy are visible in the microcosm of the school. The options available to the school were constrained by severe financial limitations coupled with increasing demands from the community. These demands were underpinned by parental awareness of the value of education in a precarious global economic climate and an emergent economy such as South Africa.

Background

Prior to democracy in 1994, the dominant discourse in South African education was the medical deficit model, or 'individual model'. It is termed individual because of its understanding of disability as an individual condition (Terzi, 2004) and regarded a medical deficit model as it borrows terminology and practices from the medical domain in order to assess children's limitations against developmental and functional norms (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009).

This discourse had its core within special needs and disabilities and was evident among supporters of special schools and segregated education. Being a deficit model it regarded the individual as needing to be cured outside the regular education system. Deficiencies in the system were ignored and those operating it were absolved of all responsibility, thus attaching the cause of deficiency to the individual and not the system. This discourse influenced exclusive practices in education for decades and resulted in a prevention of access to mainstream education, for many (Naicker, 2006).

Subscribers to this model view normality or "ablesim" as being the perfect body and any deviation from ableness results in disability and a diminished human state. They have a collective belief that impairment is inherently negative and, if not ameliorated, cured or eliminated, it should be silenced (Campbell, 2008). This model creates social categories which assume a causal relation between individual impairment as deviating from human normality and disability which is viewed as a restriction in abilities to accomplish tasks (Terzi, 2004). These social reactions to impairment, which result from the methodical exclusion of disability from schools and other social environments, produce a cycle of normality, difference and procedures to cure which are strengthened by the dual system of special education and regular education (Hamre & Oylar, 2004). Education strengthens such practices by the building of special schools and the training of special teachers and by making the disabled the objects of endless testing and measurement. Education includes in as much as it excludes and the belief in a "common referent" or norm against which disability is measured (Graham & Slee, 2008:281) pervades education, while simultaneously limiting the range of possibilities for inclusive education (Slee, 2001).

The birth of democracy in South Africa and the emergence of political activism of disabled people's movements globally brought a shift in ideological thinking from the medical deficit or individual model to the social model based on principles of social justice. The social model defines disability as the creation of particular exclusionary social and economic practices and structures rooted in cultural attitudes and seeks to dispel the understanding that there is a causal relationship between impairment and disability (Terzi, 2004).

Oliver (1996 in Terzi, 2004) argues that the social model does not deny the problem of disability but pinpoints it within society. Put in another way disability is seen as being enforced on disabled people in addition to their impairment by a repressive and discriminating social structure. The social model rejects the basic concepts underpinning the medical or individual model and according to Oliver (1990 in Terzi, 2004) tackles marginalisation and discrimination by removing the disabling barriers produced by dominant social and cultural institutions. It deconstructs and disputes these barriers by aiding in understanding (Terzi, 2004).

The social model is based on principles of social justice which according to Schugurensky (2010) would characterize a society as one which aspires to the principles of equity and solidarity, which values and understands differences and which places high value on human dignity. Artiles, Harris-Murri & Rostenberg (2006) imply that social justice views pervade the discourses on inclusion and are the means to achieve equity for students with disabilities. They argue that the social justice model is not merely a traditional model with individualistic views of allowing access, or communitarian views of being socially responsible, but a transformative model where underlying ideological and historical assumptions of difference are examined, where practice is deliberately negotiated, where marginalization is critiqued and discredited, where merit based school cultures are questioned and where resources are distributed in a nurturing and meaningful commitment.

Based on social justice being transformative, one of the guiding principles of the social model therefore, and in direct contrast to the medical model of diagnosis, is the principle that attitudes, values and beliefs in society cause disability, and therefore society needs to be treated and cured (Johnstone, 2001 and Oliver, 1996 in Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009).

By incorporating the principles of social justice, the social model sees education as the catalyst for overcoming the prejudicial attitudes of society towards people with impairments (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009). According to Winzer and Mazurek (2010), this model is the chief principle upon which inclusion is founded and, says Johannessen (2010), is about action taken to ensure that equity in education and freedom from discrimination are achieved.

In education, the social model is operationalised by means of inclusive schooling (Winzer & Mazurek, 2010). This model views education more broadly as a vehicle for overcoming prejudicial attitudes towards disabled people in society (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009). According to this model, education would comprise very different practices from those provided in terms of the medical deficit model and would need to undergo a significant change in principles and practices when providing for disabled children. Accordingly, curriculum approaches, classroom management and the ethos of all stakeholders would have to change in order to rupture current stereotypical and discriminating attitudes. Furthermore, this model envisages an environment in which segregated schooling would be replaced

with schools that are accessible and provide space and structure for participation by all (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009).

The above models provided the substance for the argument that the discourse one adopts carries powerful messages for practice. For example, a medical deficit stance views understandings of inclusion entrenched in normative discourses as promoting tolerance rather than inclusion. On the other hand, the social model argues that disabilities and difficulties should not lessen equal access and participation in education and society, and contends that, through inclusive education, equity in education and society could be achieved. Similarly, the study on which this article is based suggested that one's mindset influences action; in this case, the practice of inclusive education. Returning to South Africa, inclusive education became a possibility after the first democratic elections in 1994, when the Bill of Rights raised expectations in this regard. The elections in South Africa coincided with the Salamanca Statement and the guiding principles of this document, produced under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1994, spoke to the prevailing philosophy in South Africa that schools should accommodate all children (Greyling, 2009). South Africa was thus faced with the challenge to change from the past unsatisfactory and separatist educational experiences (Nel, Müller, Hugo, Helldin, Bäckmann, Dwyer & Skarling, 2011) to an inclusive education system (Department of Education (DoE), 2001).

To address this challenge, in October 1996 the Ministry appointed a National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and a National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS). Their joint findings resulted in a recommendation that the South African education system foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning. And so, in 2001, *Education White Paper 6: Special Education: Building an inclusive education and training system* (WP6) (DoE, 2001) was published.

The White Paper emphasises that all learners can learn and are entitled to support. It suggests that education structures could meet the needs of all learners, acknowledging and respecting their differences by changing attitudes and environments (Hay & Beyers, 2011).

Yet, despite WP6, inclusive education practice is not happening consistently or at all in South Africa. Pather (2011) argues in this regard that the tensions between the beliefs of those with the individual-deficit mindset and those with the social mindset are evident in the challenge of translating policy into practice.

Currently, both the above discourses are still playing out in South African education with some children included in, while others are excluded from, mainstream education. Inclusion appears to be practised in pockets within South Africa and as Basson (2011) found that different degrees of inclusion were being practised even within the same school. He concluded that teachers' inclusive practices are likely to be sustained over a short to medium period as teachers employ practices they have learnt. They then tend to revert back and draw on the personal practices entrenched in their own teaching repertoire.

One may argue that the belief of exclusion became entrenched in the national psyche and many South African teachers, who are currently teaching, were trained in and began their teaching careers within a paradigm that held fast to the idea of the correctness of exclusion. In support of this, Pather (2007) found that mainstream teachers, especially those who were born and brought up in a context which centred on two

separate systems of education, assumed that disabled learners were better provided for in special schools.

It therefore appears that the eradication of apartheid did not mean the end of conservatism in education. A consequence of this was inhibited growth in a shared inclusive school philosophy (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006).

Walton (2011:243) emphasises the role of the community in supporting inclusion. She refers specifically to schools in poor areas which are characterised by “ubuntu” in spite of the fact that they have very limited resources. Ubuntu is the African philosophy of being that says, “I am because we are, or I am fully human in relationship with others”, and emphasises co-operation and the sharing of resources.

It would seem that in some cases a community has the power to influence the practice of inclusion. This study entered the debate by exploring the implementation of inclusive education in a community school. The question that was asked was why implementation was difficult in a school in which one would assume inclusion would be a natural occurrence.

The context

The school in the case study was established in 1960 to serve the local and growing Jewish community in a suburb of Johannesburg (Herman, 2004). It is community funded and governed and therefore engages in inclusive education separately from state policy. The governing body, the South African Board of Jewish Education (the Board), was established in 1928 and its functions are to control, coordinate and inspect schools, while representing the Jewish community in educational matters. The Board’s main and fundamental objective is to ensure that as many Jewish children as possible receive a Jewish education regardless of financial or academic ability. The fact that the school is a Jewish community school means the majority of children and parents are bound together by their Jewish faith and its way of life, whereas the staff are racially and religiously mixed.

As an independent school and a member of the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA), the school is cognisant of and bound by the Constitution of South Africa and WP6, meaning that it should include children who experience barriers to learning wherever possible and wherever it is educationally realistic (ISASA, 2002 in Kruger & Yorke, 2010).

Financially, the school is not entitled to a government subsidy and is reliant on fees and on the community’s contributions. Furthermore, the school, as an independent school, is competing in a marketplace where academic norms and standards are the benchmark.

The school is homogenous by its nature as a faith-based school but it is typified by academic diversity. Sitting next to one another in classrooms are learners who experience barriers, highly advanced learners, learners who underachieve, learners from diverse economic backgrounds and learners with preferred modes of learning.

We acknowledge that within the context of the study and when talking about inclusion, we referred only to the learners who needed intensive academic support. At the time of the study about 14% of the learners in the school were experiencing barriers to learning. These learners were catered for by the Academic Support Department (ASD) which offers support to small groups of learners using the pullout system, as well as facilitation in the classrooms. In addition to support, the department offers enrichment during the school day to a few high achieving learners.

Over the years the school has built up a reputation of being a small nurturing school which puts a lot of effort into the learners. Structures, such as regular meetings and case conferences on the needs of all the learners, have added to its reputation. As a result the school had been described as inclusive in organisation.

The parents in the community have facilitated the process of inclusion by withdrawing their children from remedial schools and applying at the school. The increased enrolment applications and the subsequent influx of learners who experience barriers subsequently precipitated the emergence of some resistance to the change. Furthermore, an imposing standards agenda, pressure to achieve the correct learner balance and labelling or marginalisation of learners added even more tension to the school population. The change ultimately resulted in some teachers embracing the arrival of the children from remedial schools, while others complained that it was difficult to teach children on different levels in the same class.

Consequently, this community school was faced with a dilemma: its shared values of membership, loyalty and care (Strike, 2000) on the one hand, and the reality of some children within the community being denied access to mainstream education based on learning differences, on the other. This challenge was addressed in the study and it was found that change in practice needs to follow a change in attitude towards children who experience barriers to learning. In this regard we turn to Lewin’s theory.

Theoretical framework

The findings were theoretically framed and linked to Lewin’s planned approach to change, including field theoretical and group dynamic theories. His theoretical position provides an understanding of behaviour and change (Burnes, 2009).

Lewin’s analysis assumes that beliefs represent an individual’s principles and drive the possibility and consequences of action in an individual’s phenomenal world. Principles and the cognitive views of an individual’s world are represented by beliefs. Thus, beliefs are powerful forces which include an individual’s attraction and aversion to their own and other groups and standards, their feelings regarding status differences and authority, and their reactions to approval and disapproval (Benne, 1976).

Lewin contends that the individual is always seen in terms of the group and underlying his model is the concept of a force field, which consists of opposing forces holding group processes in a state of equilibrium (Kippenberger, 1998). Lewin termed this force field a quasi-stationary equilibrium which was in a constant state of change (Burnes, 2004).

In this study, the various forces created four different discourses in the community, vying for dominance over the individual’s thinking and understanding of the meaning of inclusive education. The study found that each belief system provided its own understanding of inclusion.

Methodology

The inquiry was conducted as a qualitative case study embedded in an interpretative paradigm. Merriam (2009) maintains that researchers conducting qualitative research would be largely interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.

This paradigm assumes a relativist ontology that suggests there are multiple realities and that the researcher and partici-

pant co-create, co-construct and co-inform these realities and understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Semi-structured interviews were held with four stakeholder groups consisting of teachers, parents, middle managers and top managers. Twenty-seven participants were interviewed individually for about one hour. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Document analysis was also undertaken and consisted of perusing past principals' logbooks, the Board's documents, minutes of meetings and correspondence. These documents were used to triangulate data so as to enable a rich and deep understanding of the issues examined.

Atlas.ti – computer assisted qualitative data analysis software – was used to code the data. Once coded, the narrative method was used to tell the “storied lives” (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach & Richardson, 2005:197) as, through collaboration and developing relationships, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) believe people feel free to construct their stories. In this way the voices of the stakeholders were allowed to emerge.

Findings

Based on the analysis the argument was that apart from the medical deficit model and the social model (diversity), two additional discourses, the pragmatic discourse and the community discourse, impacted on the implementation of inclusion education. These discourses vied for dominance and resulted in fragmented and conditional inclusion. The following section will be divided into a description of the four discourses and will be followed by a discussion which highlights the discourses vying for dominance and the link to Lewin's theory. The following discourses will be addressed: special education, pragmatism, diversity (social justice) and community.

Special education

Supporters of a special education model believe that children with innate conditions achieve above or below the grade-level norm, and that this poses a problem in both school and society. In order to improve significantly or to catch up to their peers, they will need to receive specialised, intensive and individualised instruction provided for in separated settings (Brantlinger, 1997).

The Board's initial vision for the school entailed a separate school or self-contained classrooms and was not to promote inclusive education. As Charles, one of the Board members reported, it was their intention to have “*a fully running special needs school*” on the campus. Although a strong marketing drive, which addressed the dwindling learner numbers at the time, invited Jewish children from remedial schools to attend the school, an inclusive approach was never intended.

It would seem that there was an ironic turn of events for the school when it began developing in an inclusive direction. Charles believed that the school was “*going too far on this*” [and questioned] “*...are we moving too quickly on it?*” He challenged the current model at the school and the structure of the ASD, which was an inclusive model, “*the model here is not the right model...and if we went and staffed this department in a different way, we [would] have different results in the school.*”

Charles' main goal remained to include Jewish children who experienced barriers to learning socially and he explained, “*I'm all for them being in our environment, participating, so they are part of sports, part of assemblies and part of plays*”. He was initially concerned about the social marginalisation of children who went to remedial schools but this became tem-

pered and his view became progressively more aligned with separate education. Accordingly, not all learners who experienced barriers were to be part of the mainstream classrooms at the school.

In the special education discourse the classroom symbolises a “fictional” centre (Graham & Slee, 2008:279), a space into which certain groups are brought and where powerful normative domains are constructed which protect it and define its exterior. At the centre, a socially constructed desirable normal subject resides and defines deficit conceptualisations of the other than normal object who resides on the margins waiting to be normalised. In this superficial inclusive environment, shaped by education and society, domains of interiority and exteriority are derived (Graham & Slee, 2008).

In school classrooms, conceptions of this ‘centre’ are manifested and epitomised and differences highlighted and reinforced. Children with learning impairments have to fit into the space constructed for them by normative, imperious and dominant discourses (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). As Katherine a middle manager stated:

“I think that if you know that your structures can cope with it, yes take them in, but if we know that our structures can't, we know that it's going to be putting that much extra pressure and that's not fair.”

Katherine believed that inclusion was about children fitting into the current structure and did not mention access or accommodating children's needs. She felt that if the current space denied certain children's needs, these children would require a remedial school. Sarah, a teacher, was also unable to see the benefit of “*this setup*”. She reflected a special education approach and thought that the school “*should almost have a remedial school within the school*”. From what she had noticed at a remedial school, “*it's a very intimate environment the teacher gets to every single child*”.

Sarah acknowledged that if learners were too heterogeneous or had “*psychological problems [and] learning problems*”, they would need separate tuition. Brantlinger (1997) echoes this and argues that some mainstream school structures, which are homogenous and view learning as developmentally linear, do not cater to diversity.

This special education approach saw a system for these learners as being one with a separate identity, boundaries, staff, budget and authority, which the school was not able to provide. This discourse, which is bound by the norm, limits the possibilities for inclusive education.

Pragmatism

The second approach, the pragmatic approach, is one which endeavours to interpret a belief or perception by tracing its practical consequences. Proponents of this approach are attracted to concreteness, to facts and action, and to power (Menand, 1997).

Pragmatism appeals to particulars, to positivism and to emphasising practical aspects. It shows disdain for verbal solutions and useless questions (Menand, 1997) and, rather, respects structure.

Andrew, a parent, was concerned with structures at the school. He believed that inclusion could only happen in “*a structure where there is both the teachers and the class structure that allows for inclusive children or for inclusive education. My understanding is that the school doesn't really have enough resources to do that effectively*”.

Despite showing regret at having to turn children away,

Andrew said, *“it’s sad if they couldn’t come, but if there weren’t resources to deal with their issues, there’s nothing we can do about it”*.

Andrew lamented that it was more about resources as an end result and less about the rights of the child: *“it’s not a human rights issue it’s an issue of what the school is geared to dealing with...it’s about the resources that are available and the structures available”*.

Andrew also struggled with the disproportionate ratio of learners to good teachers which had seemingly resulted in benchmark scores being *“lower than [they] should be”*. He thought this indicated *“an [unbalanced] correlation”* and believed the reason to be too many *“special needs children”* being accommodated within the framework of the school’s available resources.

Jordaan and Jordaan (1989) posit that a person’s truth is determined by the practical consequences of the plan in which they choose to believe. Accordingly, Barbara, another parent, also seemed influenced by balance and realistic, sensible and practical attitudes. She too measured the value of an idea by its consequences and was driven by what she believed were practical consequences and their bearing on the school.

Her concern was with the ratio of learners who experienced barriers to neurotypical learners and wondered if *“the school [would] be better if we had 10% or 15% of special needs kids”*. She thought that perhaps *“we could have a school that attracts all of them, but I genuinely think you need some kind of boundaries in terms of numbers”*.

A pragmatic approach to inclusion was dependent on issues such as school reputation, balance between resources and numbers of children and pedagogical considerations. Despite the intention by stakeholders to cater educationally for as many Jewish children as possible, there were choices as to which child was in and which child was out. Inclusion was understood as a balance between a pragmatic world of resources, infrastructure and balance, against an ideal world of belonging and equality. These values and meanings were embedded in the thinking of some stakeholders. However, setting cut-off points and exceptions to inclusive education weakened it and served to instil both old and new forms of segregation.

Social Model

The third approach, a social justice approach to inclusion, embraces all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, socio-economic status and any other aspect of an individual’s identity that might seem different. Supporters of this view have a vision of an inclusive and equitable society, which takes into account a broad range of diversity beyond disability (Polat, 2011), and sees inclusion as the educational ideal which is promoted through schools. Samantha, both a teacher and a parent at the school, felt it’s vitally important that social justice and diversity be promoted by creating a human rights culture where all are respected especially in this particular privileged environment. This she felt could be achieved by exposing children to a larger diverse population.

the only way we can become tolerant is by including all kinds of people and being exposed to all kinds of people...I have always felt that my kids have been privileged enough to go to a private school and being at a Jewish school only exposes them to such a small population of privileged people...if they could be exposed to some kind of difficulty, to people with some difficulties, it would be so good for

them to develop them as whole proper human beings (Samantha).

Taysum and Gunter (2008) argue that social justice is more than taking diversity into account and simply means equality of opportunity, which, for Dave, a middle manager, was vital. He believed that inclusivity meant

we have to create a vehicle for a child to become great in his own capacity...It’s growing people and if there is no opportunity or a place for a child to go to that has a disability, how on earth does he or she grow?

Like Dave, inclusive education was understood by some stakeholders to mean that the actions of society can disable people (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009). In South Africa in particular inclusive education is explicitly viewed as a means to address issues of social justice, inequality and human rights. Samantha said:

[There is] such a need for fairness and everyone should be given an equal opportunity no matter who and what you are...I mean who are we to judge, who are we to play G-d and say who can come into our school, who can’t come into our school, who’s worthy enough and who is not worthy enough?

Lana, a parent, challenged the pragmatic approach to conditions and concerns of compromised standards. She suggested that inclusion is rather about quality education which is dependent on the quality of the teachers. *“I think that those kids themselves shouldn’t compromise the education. If a teacher is well trained and equipped and knows how to handle it, there should be no issue at all”* (Lana).

She saw inclusion as a form of schooling which *“attempts methodologically and pedagogically, all ways to try and facilitate learning and bridge differences”*.

This diversity discourse (social justice), the basis for inclusion, is in direct contrast to the special education and pragmatic approaches. Stakeholders who believed in this approach started to believe in this discourse through their personal experiences with disability, for example Dave, who had grown up with a disabled father. They viewed inclusion as benefitting all learners and advocated inclusion as a means to remove the injustices of the past and the present by encouraging learning and self-growth within the community. Inclusion involves major changes in the educational system and it is hard to see how such changes could be accomplished without the diversity ethos of the people involved.

Community

According to McMillan (1996), community means a sense of belonging together, a feeling of trust that comes from shared experiences. Membership provides an audience where one sees oneself mirrored in the responses of others. Simply being Jewish opened the door to membership of this community.

According to Dave, a middle manager, all Jewish children would benefit from being a part of the Jewish community, by having an identified and accepted *“place”* within the community. He believed community is about *“really working together to make sure that everybody in the community has a place, a sense of belonging and can function”*.

The community members have rights and the school has the responsibility to afford them their rights. Maree, a parent, also recognised that it was the right of any Jewish child to attend the school, *“regardless of where that child is on the academic scale, that child...should have a chance of having a Jewish education too”*.

Other parents like Cheryl agreed that as a Jewish school it should not be “*losing Jewish children to remedial schools*”. Cheryl described how her son, who experienced barriers to learning, had been included in the school “*and it has been fantastic. It has enabled him to be at a school with his brothers, his cousins, have an identity, being part of...[Jewish life] socially. It’s changed him completely*”.

Strike (2000) contends that all people want to belong. Furthermore, Omoto and Snyder (2002) state that, by belonging and by having a heightened and broadened sense of community, personal efficacy may be effected. Social support and a caring environment increase feelings of confidence, optimism and self-esteem. It is as if community provides collective self-esteem.

Cheryl confirmed this when talking about her son being included. She described how being part of a community can empower and described how “[inclusion] *completely, absolutely works...if there’s that real support...it has been amazing it has been empowering*”.

Shields (2000) argues that currently the notion of schools as homogeneous communities with shared beliefs, norms and values is inadequate. She maintains that schools are highly complex and heterogeneous and suggests that where there is difference in a community there is not a set of established norms; consequently members of a community need to develop norms together with openness and respect and to create a “community of difference” (Shields, 2004:38). This applies to the school which despite serving a culturally and religiously homogenous community school, the school was also of a particular kind of ‘community of difference’ with regard to academic ability.

Religion and culture, a homogenous Jewish centre, the “glue” (Strike, 2000:618), was taken as a given; however, differences of another kind, differences of ability posed un-negotiated and unconstructed challenges for the community. The question thus emerges as to who and/or what drove the implementation of inclusive education.

Discussion

It would seem that the Board’s intention was to follow the special education route, yet this discourse was strongly mixed with the community discourse, because they needed to bring Jewish children to the school, and the pragmatic discourse, because they needed the fees. Inclusion therefore happened by default and caused discomfort for some. The Board provided a good example of where the four discourses were conflicted and could not be separated, thus indicating the complexity of the issue. As there was no formal inclusive education policy from the Board the pragmatic discourse appeared to set the standard by providing conditions and parameters under which inclusion could be provided and how much inclusivity would be accepted. It seemed to cohere with the community discourse of care although not for all. The social justice discourse suggested that all children were welcome yet these beliefs caused disequilibrium as it expected the community discourse to live up to the idea of abandoning the created norms and conditions. Also in conflict were the special education beliefs and the community discourse of togetherness although special education beliefs protected the community discourse from children who could not fit into the “norm”. On the ground however, teachers, parents and middle management needed to deal with the change.

Subsequently, change towards inclusion occurred at the school not because of the group but because of individuals. It was evident that the continual admission of learners who ex-

perienced barriers resulted in either change or resistance to change, depending on the perceptions of various individuals.

While special education beliefs (medical discourse) sanctioned the status quo of separateness and discredited inclusion, these beliefs conflicted to a large extent with the community discourse of togetherness. Yet this discourse provided the privileged educational status quo demanded by the community. Consequently, the special education belief protected the community discourse by excluding children who were not able to fit into the “norm”. This belief, according to Soudien and Baxen (2006), views disability as being associated with deficiency. The study revealed that some teachers like Sarah constructed learners who experience barriers as being better off in separate settings. She could not understand “*if you’ve got a school like [Remedial School] why we would want to change*”. This resulted in children being lumped together in a classroom without a change being made to either the curriculum or attitudes. This is termed “locational inclusion” (Hodkinson, 2010:62) and essentially means that the child is included physically, while being subliminally excluded from participation unless the child is able to fit into the current structure.

Diversity (social justice) beliefs promote unified educational systems and inclusion. Such beliefs in this instance, however, tested both the strength of the community discourse and the trustworthiness of its elements of caring and acceptance. The diversity discourse caused disequilibrium in the school as it expected the community discourse to live up to the idea of abandoning the created norms and conditions. The community discourse of care and unqualified acceptance was not able to fit into this paradigm and instead managed it by silence.

And so, instead of “locational inclusion” (Hodkinson, 2010:62), according to Dave, a middle manager, this discourse implemented inclusion, “under the radar”. Inclusion did not become an item for intense discussion at the school, but rather as Dave describes, “*it sounds absolutely weird that what we can be successful in [is]...not open...it’s not an avoidance, but it’s a protection...[rather] than openly discussing it, [as we] potentially have folk that [might] sabotage it*”. It would seem that it was only a small passionate group of people who decided on and practised inclusion. Although volition alone was not able to effect systemic change, Fullan (1996) argues that change by individuals has the opportunity to affect the system despite the system.

The pragmatic discourse, on the other hand, dealt with inclusion with conditions and the impact of this conditional inclusion set by the pragmatic discourse accelerated its power and constituted a threat to inclusion. Andrew, a parent, believed that the problem of balance had culminated in a decision to cap the intake of children from remedial schools to the school. For him this quota was the only way to balance the numbers and prevent a completely “*open door policy*” which would tip the balance.

Because there were no shared values, goals and beliefs regarding difference (Shields, 2004), the pragmatic discourse appeared to set the standard. From the start the discourse of pragmatism provided the conditions and the parameters under which inclusion could be provided. The community did not allow inclusive education to thrive, so individual discourses stepped in, in order to manage it. Eventually the individual beliefs became more powerful than those of the group.

Ultimately the community was faced with a dilemma. The community discourse was bound by constitutive values that did not allow for expulsion. Advocacy and conflict between indi-

vidual beliefs challenged the value placed on education and, without a clear strategy in place for the inclusion of all Jewish children, change took place irregularly and erratically at the school.

According to Fullan (1996), change needs shared vision and leadership. In terms of the school, there was no shared vision, only contradictory individual discourses pulling away from and pushing towards norms. Neither “top down nor bottom up” strategies are able to work by themselves: the top and bottom must work in combination (Fullan, 1996:421). The fundamental challenge experienced by the school was that entering into open discussion and establishing a shared vision would threaten the community discourse with diversity.

Hence, the concept and practice of inclusive education at the school came from within the individual beliefs and there consequently appeared to be no community resistance, even though some of the beliefs contradicted the principal community belief. This was probably because there was no need to resist while there was a perception that the pragmatic belief was the gatekeeper of inclusive education, and while the muted diversity approach to inclusion appeased the community conscience. This resulted in a fragmented change where all those involved represented and implemented whatever they felt according to their own beliefs, personal experiences, abilities or skills.

The result was that the various discourses were pulling groups in different directions with their own conditions, but there was no dominant group thinking that could initiate and sustain the change. This explains the tolerance under silence that Dave describes, which was a way of allowing inclusion to continue. He said that inclusion had to continue “under the radar” in order for it to succeed.

Accordingly, silence was the undercurrent of the debate around inclusive education, a silence which gave the community discourse a safety net against cynicism and being undermined. However, there was little consensus among the belief systems regarding the inclusive education principles; the polarised views of diversity and pragmatism were not able to rely on the community discourse to unite them and were, in fact, divided even further. Despite all this, inclusion filtered into the school by individual teachers and, although it was only practised in pockets, it made a profound impact on the whole.

Scholars in the field such as Pather (2011) have raised important questions for the implementation of inclusion in the broader South African educational system and include: What beliefs inform our personal understandings of inclusive education? This study yielded four beliefs or discourses which informed the understanding of inclusive education and its concomitant practice. This accords with Lewin’s theory which argues that beliefs drive actions and control their significances within an individual’s world. The four discourses exemplified and drove actions towards or against inclusive education and proved to be powerful forces which limited or freed behaviour change.

It would seem that difficulties such as lack of commitment, lack of funds and poor management are seen to be responsible for the delay in the implementation of inclusive education. In an emerging economy with severe financial limitations, these constraints were visible in the microcosm of the school. Moreover, the educational demands made by the community in an uncertain global economic climate were indicative of the fact that aspirations and beliefs (discourses) are often let down by economic realities.

Conclusion

This paper examined the understanding and practise of inclusive education at a Jewish community school. The study discussed here found that, at the school, the process of inclusion came about through the interplay of a multiplicity of forces (Kippenberger, 1998), which divided opinion on inclusive practice and resulted in dominant and minor practices of inclusion, or no inclusion at all. Beliefs displayed authority as such that they determined action (Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005) and, in turn, the implementation or non-implementation of inclusion. Perhaps, as Lewin’s theory suggests, there has to be group change in order for the individual to change. Perhaps, as Fullan and Miles (1992) suggest, new personal meaning must be a learning process which takes place on a guided and shared journey. Or, as Shields (2000) would have it, perhaps community does not require similarity; communities must think about differences, they must enter into negotiation and conversation and form an understanding of difference.

Yet, without shared goals and a belief in social justice, total inclusion did not take place in this community school, whose discourse seemingly resembled the discourse of inclusion and social justice. Indeed, inclusion occurred in pockets based on teachers’ individual beliefs, life experience and skills. Moreover, silence was the result of not discussing and bringing the different discourses into the open.

It is therefore concluded that the four belief systems identified here influenced the way in which inclusive education was both understood and practised in this school. Accordingly, the study argues for recognising the importance of different belief systems as well as the importance of open discussion, in the understanding and implementation of inclusion in South Africa.

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