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Democracy : a reality check for early childhood development practitioners.

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DEMOCRACY:
A REALITY CHECK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfillment of the degree of Masters of Education by coursework and research report.

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Date: February 2008

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. The report is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other university.

_____

Eleanor Anne Huggett

_____ day of February 2008.

ABSTRACT

The majority of educators/practitioners practicing in South Africa today were either educated under the apartheid regime or experienced a post apartheid education that was given by people socialized under the apartheid regime. Therefore, there is a strong possibility that democratic practice in schools is compromised due to the socialization of the practitioners. ECD practitioners' perceptions on democracy and how they implement democratic practices in their workplace are explored in order to begin to identify the elements of a learning and working environment that could promote the values of a liberal democracy. A dialogic, participatory approach using questionnaires, focussed group discussions, personal interviews and critical incidents, investigated relevant issues such as perceptions of democracy, socialization, leadership, adult education and the impact of crime and HIV/Aids within the ECD context. The findings show that democracy is recognized as a positive and welcomed development in South Africa. There is a genuine 'spirit of ubuntu' present and the participants relish the diversity in their midst. A common feature between all groups is the concern over crime and corruption. However, it also revealed that although the surface levels of understanding of the principles of democracy are similar between various groups, the in-depth perceptions regularly differ. Improved avenues for legitimate communication between participants at all levels is advised, not only to discuss differences but also common ground. Understanding the factors that promote democratic principles such as cultural interaction, diversity, etc. could help both the participants of this study and other ECD practitioners in creating and promoting legitimate democratic practice in the workplace.

KEY TERMS:
Adult Education
Communication
Democracy
Leadership
Socialization
Ubuntu
Human Rights
Early Childhood Development

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research report to my father Bernard William Huggett – and my mother Pamela Mary Huggett (1934 – 1992) who longed for, and would have delighted in, democracy in South Africa.

And to

Bluebird Pre-Primary
Greenpark Nursery School
Parkmore Nursery School
Stepping Stones Pre-Primary
Parkview Pre-Primary

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ACRONYMS

AVP	Alternatives to Violence Projects
CNE	Christian National Education
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
ISASA	Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa
ISS	Interpretive Social Science
NECC	The National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigations
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PBO	Public Benefit Organisation
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SASA	South African Schools Act
SETA	Sector Education Training Authority
SGB	Schools Governing Body
VET	Vocational Education and Training