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Espoused and enacted practices in relation to the policy of inclusive education in South Africa :a case study in four primary schools in Johannesburg

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education was introduced in the South African education system to promote equality and human rights in post-apartheid South Africa. The implementation of inclusive education as stated in the Education White Paper 6 is to fight against segregation and ensure equal learning opportunities for all children, even those with disabilities. This qualitative research study investigates teachers' espoused and enacted practices in relation to South African inclusive education policy. Classroom teachers are seen as the primary resource for achieving the goal of an inclusive education and training system as a result they provide valuable data regarding how the implementation of inclusive education has been thus far.

This study took place in four different primary schools, each representing a stratified demographic category under which that particular school falls. These types of primary schools were Private, Suburban, Township government and the Remedial school. Semi-structured interviews provide personal narratives of beliefs about the value and implementation of inclusive education. Classroom observations provide an opportunity to examine if the espoused practices influence or match observed classroom actions. Most importantly the study determines if teachers' espoused and enacted practices align with what is emphasized in South African inclusive education policy. Findings indicate that there are varying degrees of commitment to inclusive practices and those are influenced by individuals' context, support models available and teacher's self-efficacy and skills. The conclusion suggests there is a gap between teachers' espoused beliefs and their practices which ultimately reveals non-alignment between teachers' practices and South African Inclusive Education (IE) policy. It further suggests that there are factors that need to be addressed urgently to see inclusive education realised in South Africa.