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An exploration into educators' perceptions and attitudes towards immigrant learners

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2007-02-13T13:25:49Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/1972

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study described in this report was to explore educators' perceptions and their attitudes towards immigrant learners in their school and how those impact on them, at work and in their social lives. This study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Questionnaires were used as research instruments in this study and semi-structured interviews were also carried out with individual educators. The sample of the study constituted thirteen educators from a school in Gauteng. The school was chosen because of its situation and because it is a co-educational school in an area with many immigrants. Educators' comments suggest that they are not adequately trained or prepared to deal with immigrants in their classroom. They perceived that they were not sufficiently equipped or informed with the policy of inclusion to accommodate immigrant learners. Further areas of concern expressed by educators include an inability to overcome the language barrier when dealing with the learners from outside South Africa, and a generalised lack of support by employers and superiors. From the results of this study, one can deduce that in general educators perceive immigrant learners as an additional burden to deal with in a classroom situation, which impacts negatively on their work performance.

KEY WORDS

Attitudes, Barriers to learning, Educators, Exclusion, Immigrant learners, Inclusion, Perceptions, Xenophobia.