

ABSTRACT

In order to explore the ways in which visibly rewarding learners (via badges, accolades, awards, honour board listings) for academic achievement is consistent with the aims and ideals of inclusive education, this critical realist study provides the perspectives of learners, parents, teachers and senior management at two Gauteng high schools. The study is primarily focused on exploring the possibility that the current competitive structure found in Gauteng high schools as manifested by visible rewards can be a barrier to inclusive education, particularly the participation and achievement of all learners. As such, it is both descriptive and explanatory. The study is set within a theoretical framework that includes Johnson and Johnson's Social Interdependence Theory together with the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011) and Participation Framework (Florian, Black-Hawkins & Rouse, 2017).

Drawing on constructs from psychology and sociology in the way the concept of inclusive education is explored, I have employed a mixed method approach. Quantitative learner and parent surveys allow for greater reach of maximum participants in the school. Qualitative focus group interviews with learners and semi-structured interviews with teachers and senior management provide richness and depth from information-rich participants that are directly involved in the decision-making processes and procedures of visibly rewarding learners. In exploring the participation and achievement of all learners, the valuable perspectives of the learners and their parents provide a greater understanding of visible rewards.

Keywords: critical realism, sequential mixed methods, visible rewards, inclusive education; participation and achievement, Gauteng province.