

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' TALK ABOUT MAINSTREAMING  
- A STUDY IN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master in Educational  
Administration at Massey University

Janice Evelyn Thorburn

1994

371.90993  
Tho

R20

## Abstract

The interview accounts of nine urban, regular school principals are examined to identify the different positions held by these principals on the issue of the mainstreaming or inclusion of students with disabilities and special needs in regular schools. Applying the methodology discourse analysis, the different positions are investigated, and their implications explored, in terms of the ways they are justified in the context of wider beliefs and conceptions about the nature of education and the nature of disability.

The literature review describes the development of special education in New Zealand, the growing practice of mainstreaming, and the significance of the emergence of the Regular Education Initiative to the mainstreaming debate. The conflict in the debate is seen to lie in the differing conceptions people hold about the nature of education and the nature of disability. These conceptions are fully explored and applied as discourses within the debate.

Discourse analysis as a methodology is described in detail and the results of the analysis are reported in reference to the seven main discourses identified. Four of the discourses - the pro status quo, the medical, the lay and the charity discourses - are described as divisive discourses in that they in effect deny the equal rights of students with special needs to attend regular schools. Two other discourses - the rights and the proactive discourses - are described as inclusive, in that they argue for the rights of students with disabilities or special needs to be included in their neighbourhood schools and classes. A seventh discourse, the critical discourse, can be employed as a divisive or as an inclusive discourse.

It is claimed that this study has increased the potential for critical analysis of the mainstreaming debate in two main ways: firstly, by applying Fulcher's four identified discourses of disability to accounts by school leaders in the New Zealand setting (Fulcher, 1989); and, secondly, by identifying from the literature and the data three further discourses and applying these to the debate.

These three discourses provide further tools that enable educators and others to critically analyze their positions in the debate. It is hoped that critical analysis of discourses will lead to the challenging of current segregating practices in the education of students with special needs, and to more support and acceptance of their inclusion in regular classes and schools.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My warm thanks and acknowledgements go to the following people:

The principals who generously and thoughtfully gave their time to participate in this study

Wayne Edwards, the primary supervisor of this thesis, for his responsive, practical and supportive guidance as I journeyed through the thesis process

John Codd, my second thesis supervisor, for further constructive suggestions and interest

Maureen Corby, colleague and friend, who completed her thesis the year before, and who very genuinely empathised with me over many therapeutic cappuccinos

Other colleagues and course members at the Auckland College of Education, and at Homai College, who have been encouraging and interested throughout

Helen McKenzie and Audrey Torrie, who bore with me in the stresses and dramas of typing up and formatting this study

The 1990 intake of the Massey M Ed. Admin. course, especially Ron, Marion, Colleen, Phil, Grace, Sylvia and Lyn - our Auckland support group

and,

Ray Murray, Director of the School of Special Education, Auckland College of Education, mentor, leader and friend for over ten years, whose proactive discourse on the inclusion of people with disabilities has powerfully influenced me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables and Figures	viii
Introduction	1
PART ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Chapter One: Special Education and the Mainstreaming Debate in New Zealand	4
Introduction	
The development of special education in New Zealand	
The Regular Education Initiative (R.E.I.)	
The mainstreaming debate	
Summary	
Chapter Two: Conceptions about the Nature of Education	14
Introduction	
The dual education system	
Separate special education	
Students with special needs - whose responsibility?	
Towards a unitary system of mutual responsibility	
Summary	
Chapter Three: Conceptions about Disability	24
Introduction	
Disability as deficit	
The historical construction of disability	
Three deficit conceptions of disability	
The medical view ('medical model')	
The charity view	
The lay view	
Disability as difference	
The rights view	
Summary	
Chapter Four: The Concept of Discourse and its Application to the Mainstreaming Debate	37
Introduction	
The concept of discourse	

Discourse within mainstreaming	
The ideological nature of discourse	
The wider context of discourse in the mainstreaming debate	
Summary	

## PART TWO: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Five: Discourse Analysis of School Principals' Talk about Mainstreaming: An Introduction to the Methodology	46
Introduction	
Discourse analysis	
The ten stages of discourse analysis	
Stage 1. Clarifying the research focus	
Stage 2. Selection of the sample	
Stage 3. Collection of data/interviews	
Summary	
Chapter Six: The Methodology in Action	65
Introduction	
Carrying out the research	
Stage 4. The interviews	
Stage 5. Transcription of interviews	
Stage 6. Coding	
Stage 7. The analysis of the transcripts	
Stage 8. Validation	
Stage 9. Writing the report	
Stage 10. The application	
Ethical aspects of discourse analysis	
Summary	

## PART THREE: RESULTS

Introduction to Part Three: Results	86
Chapter Seven: Discourse about Education: Pro Status Quo	87
Introduction	
The pro status quo discourse: The regular school for regular students	
The status quo as 'common sense'	
Justifications for maintaining the status quo	
Summary	

Chapter Eight: Discourse about Disability: Disability as Deficit	104
Introduction	
1. The medical discourse of disability	
2. The lay discourse of disability	
3. The charity discourse of disability	
Summary	
Chapter Nine: Discourse about Disability: The Rights Discourse	120
Introduction	
Disability as societal oppression	
Difference rather than deficit	
Rights as unconditional	
Summary	
Chapter Ten: Two Further Mainstreaming Discourses: The Critical Discourse and the Proactive Discourse	135
Introduction	
1. The Critical Discourse	
2. The Proactive Discourse	
Summary	
PART FOUR: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	
Chapter Eleven: Discussion and Conclusion	156
Introduction	
Discussion	
The discourses	
Patterns within and between the discourses	
The importance of identifying discourses in the mainstreaming debate	
Conclusion	
Recommendations for action emerging from this study	
Suggestions for further research	
Reflections - an epilogue	166
BIBLIOGRAPHY	169
Appendix	

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

## Tables

Table 1. Beliefs about mainstreaming drawn from the literature	59
Table 2. The discourses	157
Table 3. Discourse distribution. Number of times participants cited as drawing on a particular discourse	159

## Figures

Figure 1. The pilot interview schedule	61
Figure 2. The adapted interview schedule	66
Figure 3. The stages of analysis	75

Where a lot of people come from, where a lot of teachers come from, is that because [students with disabilities] are special or because they are *deemed* special, we have the notion that they have to be *treated* special and ... until we can get over that notion, we will continue to treat them as special and expect them to have the extra resources, to have the extra assistance because of their special nature. But... on the other hand, where they are *not* regarded as special, then perhaps it works better... - for the *student* anyway.

(School principal - research participant)