

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.

**Inclusion and behavioural difficulties in secondary
schools: Representations and practices**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

at Massey University, Manawatū,
New Zealand.

Marie-Pierre Fortier

2014

Abstract

Despite a political commitment towards inclusive education, research evidence suggests that barriers to inclusion in New Zealand remain. Notably, disciplinary practices exclude students from secondary schools. There is also little evidence as to how teachers define and practice inclusion, in spite of the fact that the translation of inclusion into practice necessitates the development of an articulated and shared vision of what inclusion entails for practice. Thus, this study aims to explore social representations of inclusion among secondary school teachers. It also aims to explore how these representations function in the classroom by examining their relationships with the practices used by teachers to prevent and manage difficult behaviour.

The study was designed as an iterative two-phase research process. Phase One involved an online questionnaire intended for teachers, teacher aides, Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour and Ministry of Education: Special education staff to explore their representations of inclusion and behavioural difficulties. Building on this preliminary investigation, Phase Two involved case studies conducted with teachers in three schools where multiple sources of information and data collection methods allowed investigation of teachers' representations and practices in context.

Findings indicate that inclusion is multi-dimensional in teachers' representations with elements pertaining to practices, values, social justice, and resourcing. This reveals that teachers are knowledgeable about inclusion as a professional group. Each school context and teachers' representations of their school community influenced their representations of inclusion. However, results also show that teachers' representations are anchored in the model of integration as participants name conditions to inclusion, among which is the condition that students' behavioural needs are not too severe for their presence in regular classrooms. Barriers to inclusion are also identified within teachers' representations. Teachers' practices in preventing and dealing with difficult behaviour show a progression with preventative strategies used first and targeted practices used as behaviour seriousness increased. The variety of explanations used by participants to justify their practices point to the importance of understanding the complex relationships between representations and practices to evaluate the inclusiveness of teachers' actions. Recommendations are made to help individual teachers and school communities building on their existing knowledge for greater inclusion.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my sincere appreciation to the teachers, members of school staff, specialists, and students who participated in this study. Thank you for your time and involvement. Your storied experiences captivated me and certainly contributed to increase our comprehension of inclusion as it is understood and lived in New Zealand secondary schools.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my research supervisors, Dr. Jane Prochnow and Associate Professor Alison Kearney. You both brought thoughtful insights into this study and helped me find my own voice in this very challenging but highly stimulating field of research that is inclusive education. Thank you for opening up opportunities for me. Most of all, thank you for believing in me and in my project. Your continual support kept me going and I am truly grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge the warm welcome I received by many people at the College/Institute of Education. Special thanks to Philippa Butler, Maggie Hartnett, Roseanne MacGillivray, Sharon Simmons and Alison St. George. You were very 'inclusive' of me and made a difference. Special thanks also to my fellow doctoral students. Sharing this adventure with you with its ups and downs was precious in hard times and revealed a brilliant experience all the way.

To my dear friends (old and new, in New Zealand, Québec or elsewhere) and wonderful colleagues in Montréal, thank you for your support. For their unconditional support and precious help, thank you to my parents Pauline Mercier and Mario Fortier and to my sister Amélie.

Finally, I wish to thank Massey University for the award of a Massey University Doctoral Scholarship.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables.....	ix
List of Figures	xi
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research Aims of the Study	2
1.2 Rationale for the Study.....	2
1.3 Context of the Study.....	3
1.4 The Place of the Researcher	6
1.5 Thesis Overview.....	7
Chapter Two: Literature Review	9
2.1 Origins of Inclusion and Evolution of Inclusive Education.....	9
2.2 Conceptual Diversity of Inclusion.....	17
2.3 Inclusion and Behavioural Difficulties at School	25
2.4 Barriers to Inclusion and Behavioural Difficulties	34
2.5 Prevention and Management of Difficult Behaviour for Increased Inclusion	41
2.6 Chapter Summary and Research Questions	48
Chapter Three: The Theory of Social Representations	51
3.1 Introduction to the Theory of Social Representations.....	51
3.2 Defining Features of Social Representations	56
3.3 Social Representations and Practices	64
3.4 Social Representations in the Professional Field of Education.....	67
3.5 Social Representations and Inclusion: Theoretical Criteria	69
3.6 Chapter Summary.....	70
Chapter Four: Methodology	71
4.1 Methodological Approaches to Social Representations.....	71
4.2 Qualitative Research	73

4.3 Overview of the Study	78
4.4 Phase One: Exploratory Online Questionnaire	81
4.5 Phase Two: Case Studies	93
4.6 Research Ethics	105
4.7 Chapter Summary	111
Chapter Five: Phase One	113
5.1 Participant Information	113
5.2 The Nature of Inclusion	118
5.3 Knowledge About Inclusion and Behavioural Difficulties	125
5.4 Experience of Inclusion and Behavioural Difficulties	138
5.5 Participants' Position Towards Inclusion and Behavioural Difficulties	146
5.6 Chapter Summary	157
Chapter Six: Introduction to the Case Studies	159
6.1 Case Study A: Kānuka School Teachers	159
6.2 Case Study B: Nikau College Teachers	167
6.3 Case Study C: Ponga High School Teachers	177
6.4 Chapter Summary	185
Chapter Seven: Representations and Practices	187
7.1 The Nature of Inclusion	187
7.2 Positioning Towards Inclusion and Behavioural Difficulties	227
7.3 Educational Practices Used to Manage Difficult Behaviour	233
7.4 Chapter Summary	246
Chapter Eight: Discussion	247
8.1 The Nature of Inclusion: Representations Among Teacher Participants	248
8.2 Relationships Between Social Representations of Inclusion and Practices	269
8.3 Supporting School Communities	274
8.4 Chapter Summary	276
Chapter Nine: Conclusions	279
9.1 Conclusions From the Study	280

9.2 Contribution to Knowledge.....	283
9.3 Recommendations	284
9.4 Limitations	285
9.5 Future Research.....	285
9.6 Final Words.....	286
References	289
Appendices.....	313
Appendix A: Online questionnaire (Phase One).....	315
Appendix B: Request letter to school principals (Phase One).....	337
Appendix C: Information sheet (Phase One).....	339
Appendix D: Follow-up letters for participants in Phase Two.....	343
Appendix E: Request letter to school principals and boards of trustees (Phase Two)....	346
Appendix F: Confidentiality agreement for the liason person (Phase Two).....	351
Appendix G: Initial invitation to participate for school staff (Phase Two).....	352
Appendix H: Information sheet and consent form for adult participants (Phase Two).....	353
Appendix I: Procedure to identify and approach potential student participants (Phase Two).....	358
Appendix J: Request letter to the school principal, chair of the board of trustees and director of the external unit (Phase Two).....	361
Appendix K: Information sheet and consent form for student participants (Phase Two).....	367
Appendix L: Interview schedules for adult participants (Phase Two).....	371
Appendix M: Interview schedule for student participants (Phase Two).....	377
Appendix N: Transcriber confidentiality agreement (Phase Two).....	380
Appendix O: Authority for the release of the transcripts (Phase Two).....	381
Appendix P: Observation sheet (Phase Two).....	382
Appendix Q: Self-report form of behaviour incidents (Phase Two).....	383
Appendix R: Field notes data gathering sheet (Phase Two).....	384
Appendix S: Table A-1.....	385

List of Tables

Table 2.1	Theoretical models and approaches to behavioural difficulties.....	26
Table 2.2	Macfarlane and Prochnow’s continuum of problem behaviour.....	29
Table 4.1	Research overview.....	80
Table 4.2	Sampling procedure for the selection of the initial sample of schools....	84
Table 4.3	Schools characteristics: comparison between population, initial sample and final sample.....	86
Table 4.4	Type one thematic analysis procedure.....	91
Table 4.5	Type two thematic analysis procedure.....	92
Table 4.6	Demographic characteristics of the case study schools.....	96
Table 4.7	Strengths and limitations of classroom observation and self-report forms.....	101
Table 4.8	Phase Two: overview of the types of data.....	102
Table 5.1	Frequencies of responses to participant demographic information per professional group.....	114
Table 5.2	Frequencies of the highest reported qualification in education per professional group.....	116
Table 5.3	Frequencies of responses about having received formal training in inclusive and/or special education per professional group.....	117
Table 5.4	Ranked themes from the free word association task.....	119
Table 5.5	Number of coding references from participants’ definition of inclusion for each category per professional group.....	120
Table 5.6	Percentage (%) of responses reflecting the inclusiveness of the characteristics of inclusion per group.....	123
Table 5.7	Number (n) and percentage (%) of participants’ perceived level of knowledge about inclusion per professional group.....	126
Table 5.8	Percentage (%) of the level of confidence in including students perceived or identified as experiencing behavioural difficulties reported by participants per professional group.....	127
Table 5.9	Number (n) of selections for each training provider per professional group.....	128
Table 5.10	Number (n) and percentage (%) of selections and rank for each source of information about inclusive education per professional group.....	132
Table 5.11	Mean and standard deviation (SD) for situations where discussions about inclusion occurred or were witnessed per professional group.....	135
Table 5.12	Number (n) and percentage (%) of participants selecting each type of behaviour.....	139
Table 5.13	Frequencies of participants’ selection of the categories of people consulted first for help to meet the needs of a SEN student, per professional group.....	143

Table 5.14	Percentage (%) of the levels of agreement of participants for each attitudinal statement per professional group.....	149
Table 5.15	Number of coding references for each category of causes of difficult behaviour per professional group.....	154
Table 5.16	Frequencies of the categories of issues reported as important by participants per professional group.....	156
Table 6.1	Demographic information about Case Study A participants.....	160
Table 6.2	Primary sources of information for Case Study A.....	161
Table 6.3	Secondary sources of information for Case Study A.....	161
Table 6.4	Demographic information about Case Study B participants.....	168
Table 6.5	Primary sources of information for Case Study B.....	169
Table 6.6	Secondary sources of information involving other staff for Case Study B.....	169
Table 6.7	Secondary sources of information for Case Study B.....	170
Table 6.8	Demographic information about Case Study C participants.....	178
Table 6.9	Primary sources of information for Case Study C.....	178
Table 6.10	Secondary sources of information for Case Study C.....	179
Table 7.1	Associative network task: number of coding references for each theme and teachers referring to each theme per case study school.....	189
Table 7.2	Interviews analysis: number of coding references for each theme and teachers referring to each theme in the category inclusive practices per case study school.....	193
Table 7.3	Interviews analysis: number of coding references for each theme and teachers referring to each theme in the category resourcing per case study school.....	202
Table 7.4	Interviews analysis: number of coding references for each theme and teachers referring to each theme in the category inclusive values per case study school.....	212
Table 7.5	Interviews analysis: number of coding references for each theme and teachers referring to each theme in the category social justice per case study school.....	221
Table 7.6	Nature of participants' attitudes towards inclusion.....	227
Table 7.7	Number of coding references for observed practices and teachers referring to each practice per case study school.....	234
Table 8.1	Number of coding references for the categories of representations of inclusion among teacher participants per data collection method.....	255

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	The New Zealand model for support.....	4
Figure 4.1	Case study design.....	94
Figure 5.1	Distribution of the ratings attributed by participants of the inclusiveness of the school(s) they worked in at the time of data collection per group.....	124
Figure 5.2	Selections of other groups or one's own group as a training provider in inclusive education and/or special education.....	129
Figure 5.3	Distribution of the number of sources of information about inclusion selected by individual participants per group.....	130
Figure 5.4	Relationships between groups in selecting other groups or one's own group as a source of information about inclusive education.....	133
Figure 5.5	Percentage of the level of safety as perceived by participants in three situations.....	141
Figure 5.6	Percentage of the selections for the support providers as identified by teachers for dealing with behavioural difficulties.....	144
Figure 5.7	Number of selections for school-wide practices, procedures or programmes in place in the school(s) where participants worked at the time of data collection.....	145
Figure 5.8	Distribution of the attitudinal scores per group.....	147
Figure 5.9	Preferences in term of support for extra help to meet the needs of a SEN student per professional group.....	152