Section III
Education for disabled people

12 *Disability and schooling in South Africa*

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Introduction

The status of disabled people has long been regarded as an area of special concern in education (see Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997) and was recently, with the publication of Education White Paper 6 on special-needs education (EWP6) (DoE, 2001), made the subject of state attention. In this document, the state outlined the situation in the field of learning disability and its policy intentions for dealing with learning with respect to disability.

A number of important achievements were made in the process of bringing EWP6 to publication. Included amongst these was the recognition that disability is a site of severe discrimination. Publishing EWP6 also affirmed the work that key special-needs commentators and scholars in the country have been doing to highlight the complex conceptual and practical issues surrounding understandings of the disability field and the lack of provision of services for disabled people, as well as to suggest the policy direction that the state should take with respect to disability. Important to understand about the emergence of the EWP, also, is the fact that it complemented, and in some sense completed, the broad inclusionary policy agenda of the state with respect to education and welfare provision, which began with a sequence of Education White Papers in the early 1990s, the South African Schools Act of 1996 and a raft of subsequent legislative changes and policy innovations. These included, inter alia, the new Curriculum 2005 (following a major revisionary process in 2000–2001), a differentiated subsidy structure for schools in favour of the poor, school-feeding schemes and so on.

EWP6 also brought to light critical disparities in the provision of facilities and funding for the disabled, and showed how significantly the heritage of apartheid has marked the field. Today, for example, in the city of Cape Town there exists a number of special schools for disabled people. However, to a large degree, all these schools continue to carry the heavy imprint of the apartheid era. Indicative of this, the special school in the African township of Khayelitsha, continues to struggle with the full range of serious socio-economic problems that mark its environment, while the schools in the more prosperous areas have prospered and even improved in this new era.

Table 12.1, taken from EWP6 and based on 1996 census data, outlines the distribution of disabled people in the country. Significant in this table is the wide

distribution of disabled people across the different provinces. While Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng hold 17.39 per cent, 18.89 per cent and 17.1 per cent of the disabled population respectively, others, such as the Northern Cape, account for only 1.77 per cent.

Table 12.1: Distribution of disabled persons per category, per province

Province	Sight	Hearing	Physical	Mental	Multiple	Not specified	Total	% per province	% of population
EC	161 898	68 531	115 717	41 432	35 997	38 604	462 179	17.39	1.14
FS	133 614	33 045	41 960	13 947	16 461	18 127	257 154	9.68	0.63
G	211 769	59 868	69 936	24 033	26 030	63 906	455 542	17.14	1.12
KZN	183 758	76 034	129 894	42 646	24 895	44 863	502 090	18.89	1.24
M	98 322	31 895	41 381	12 211	9 019	19 085	211 913	7.97	0.52
NC	18 529	6 083	9 052	3 791	2 403	7 137	46 995	1.77	0.12
NP	113 088	51 416	60 078	22 578	16 019	33 690	296 869	11.17	0.73
NW	129 442	37 571	54 706	17 768	16 913	23 134	279 534	10.52	0.69
WC	40 603	18 965	35 051	14 146	6 499	30 174	145 438	5.47	0.36
Total	1 091 023	383 408	557 775	192 552	154 236	278 720	2 657 714	100.00	6.55
% per disability	41.05	14.43	20.99	7.25	5.80	10.49	100.00		
% of population	2.69	0.94	1.37	0.47	0.38	0.69	6.55		

Source: (DoE 2001, p. 14)

Note: EC = Eastern Cape, FS = Free State, G = Gauteng, KZN = KwaZulu-Natal, L = Limpopo, M = Mpumalanga, NC = Northern Cape, NW = North West, WC = Western Cape

EWP6 reads these figures about disability distribution in conjunction with figures for the number of learners in special schools. Table 12.2 provides a view of the number of learners and the number of special schools by province in South Africa.

Table 12.2: Distribution of special schools and learners in special schools, per province

Province	Special schools (n)	Learners in special schools (n)	Learners in special schools (%)	Special schools per province (n)	Per learner expenditure (Rands)
EC	41	6 483	0.28	10.79	13 746
FS	19	3 127	0.40	5.00	22 627
G	96	25 451	1.62	25.26	11 049
KZN	58	7 631	0.28	15.26	21 254
M	15	2 692	0.29	3.95	17 839
NC	8	1 392	0.68	2.11	15 749
L	19	4 250	0.23	5.00	16 609
NW	42	4 364	0.46	11.05	13 015
WC	82	9 213	0.96	21.58	28 635
Total	380	64 603	0.52	100.00	17 838

Source: (DoE 2001, p. 13)

Note: EC = Eastern Cape, FS = Free State, G = Gauteng, KZN = KwaZulu-Natal, L = Limpopo, M = Mpumalanga, NC = Northern Cape, NW = North West, WC = Western Cape

Given that special schools are an infrastructural asset and a service geared towards the needs of a particular segment of the entire disabled population, reading these tables together, as EWP6 does, offers a somewhat distorted representation of disparities in service provision for disabled people across all age groups and provinces.

For example, the report finds that while the Eastern Cape accounts for 17.39 per cent of disabled people in South Africa, the province only has 41 special schools, making up 10.79 per cent of the number of special schools in the country. In contrast, Western Cape has 5.47 per cent of the disabled population but 21.58 per cent – over one fifth – of South Africa's special schools (DoE, 2001, p. 14). That said, these figures do give some sense of the disparities that affect the provision of services and infrastructural support for disabled people in South Africa.

Furthermore, taken together, these tables suggest that much more detailed research and analysis is required to get a handle on exactly where the cleavages lie with respect to provision for the diverse needs of disabled people, including education provision, especially given that redressing such disparities is a powerful factor in setting transformation agendas and identifying and achieving equity goals.

EWP6 makes clear that the disparities suggested by these figures are a direct result of previous apartheid policies where facilities were allocated on a racial basis. Provinces such as the Eastern Cape, with majority black populations, were poorly served, while

those with large white populations received generous support. EWP6 also shows how few disabled children were enrolled in special schools. While the total national incidence of disabled people was 6.55 per cent, only 0.52 per cent of learners in the system were regarded as being disabled. Expenditure on disabled children also varies widely across the country. While Gauteng spends only R11 049 per head, Western Cape spends as much as R28 635 per learner, per annum.

Interesting too about EWP6, is the conclusion that it draws about the failure of the system to accommodate all disabled children in the country. Using World Health Organization benchmarks, EWP6 estimates that there are between 293 000 and 346 000 disabled children in the country (between 2.2% and 2.6% of the population of approximately 13 312 000 learners in the system). Given that the system currently only accommodates about 64,200 disabled learners, it is suggested that between 260 000 and 280 000 disabled children are without proper care and provision (DoE, 2001, p. 9).

The policy response to this situation as outlined in EWP6 is to commit the education system to inclusive education and training, based on principles that include the following:
·   Acknowledging that all children can learn and that all need support;
·   Accepting and respecting that all learners are different in some way;
·   Committing the system to meet the needs of all learners;
·   Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, such as age, gender, ethnicity, language, HIV status, disability, language and class;
·   The need to maximise the participation of all learners in the curricula and cultures of institutions and to uncover barriers to learning.

Given these principles, the approach taken by the policy is two-fold, namely that of 'mainstreaming' or 'integrating' and 'inclusion'. The objective of 'mainstreaming' is to integrate learners into the existing system and supporting them so that they can fit, while inclusion is essentially recognising and respecting the differences among learners and building on their similarities.

The thrust of EWP6 is to acknowledge the discriminatory practices that existed within special education during the apartheid period prior to 1994 and to project a new inclusionary policy. It shows how the dominant deficit discourses of race and disability (particularly physical and neurological) of the apartheid era were used to privilege and exclude, and in response, it suggests the discarding of these constructs as organising structures in favour of what is referred to as a more 'inclusive' approach to education and training.

While we need to acknowledge the important steps made in the new policy, anxieties still remain. There are sufficient grounds for arguing that both the policy (in its textual form), and the practice surrounding it, have not engaged sufficiently with recent debates and developments in the discussion on inclusion. However, at this point, it is in the country's favour that the disability arena is not yet one which has

– such as in the US – become a residual and indeed punitive category in which anybody not deemed to possess the range of skills and attributes required by the mainstream is systematically condemned to a 'special class'.

The discussion in the US, certainly amongst sceptics of the placement of learners in special and remedial classes, suggests that increases in the sophistication of categories of disability and the attribution of the label 'disabled' have a great deal to do with the failure of the schooling system and have become part of a complex and questionable justification for why achievements levels in schools are dropping. The Director of the Department of Educational Services in the Fairfield School District in the US comments that, '[t]here has been…a noticeable increase in the identification of disabled students and we're really trying to understand why this is' (Baker, 2002, p. 663). Other commentators have also pointed to the proliferation of programmes, including testing regimes, for disabled people (see Pitoniak & Royer, 2001; Reynolds & Wolfe, 1999; Shaw, 1997). As Lionni and Klass point out, '[s]omewhere along the line our schools had lost the ability to routinely educate children and produce uniformly good results' (quoted in Strydom & Du Plessis, 2002).

South Africa is certainly not in the position in which the US finds itself. While there have been occasions where the integration and inclusion of disabled learners has been advanced as an explanation for low attainment levels achieved in assessment tests,[1] disability and the identification of disability have in general not been used as a displacement device to shift attention away from failures in the education system.

At the same time, however, the basic discourses that permeate the education field with respect to difference and disability in the US continue to function in South Africa, and manifest themselves within the new policy too. As in the US, the disability field in South Africa is a particularly vulnerable one, with lay-people and 'experts' of one kind or another having come to exert influence in the field in different ways. These people bring with them a range of orientations to disability, ranging from a kind of naïve innocence at one end of the spectrum to an insidious condescension at the other. Ever-present is a pervasive stereotyping. Disability commentator Kathleen Shaw suggests that a great deal of what passes for science and rigour in the field has to be seen for the ideology that it actually is. As she puts it:

> Ideology acts as a lens through which specific policies and procedures are developed and enacted. This lens tends to encourage actors to focus on particular strategies of action, while ruling out other types of action. (Shaw, 1997, p. 285).

In light of these criticisms, we argue that South African policy with respect to disability and education needs further investigation. As a point of departure, we take issue with a frequently-expressed view held by both practitioners and commentators in the special-needs field that the realms of the medical and the social constitute, by themselves, discrete and self-sufficient sites of explanation (see also Chapter 4, this volume). The broad approach we take is that in as much as policies and approaches

serve and confer recognition, and to the extent that they identify, name and focus on problems, they can also erode people's rights. Put plainly, while addressing some issues and meeting the demands for rights in some respects, policy interventions often, though sometimes not deliberately, serve to perpetrate and perpetuate new injustices.

An important discussion that is lacking from the policy debate pivots on questions of citizenship. Quite simply, it is crucial to examine how South African citizenship is constituted in terms of speech, deportment, demeanour, responsibility and accountability, and to explore the image of the citizen that the new policies project and idealise. Key questions that require interrogation include the following:

- What exclusionary devices operate in the identification of the South African subject?
- What counts as acceptable in the repertoire of difference, and what as unacceptable?
- How is difference imagined?
- What official mechanisms and processes exist for managing alterity?
- How is othering perceived, understood and managed by society generally and by the education system in particular?

These questions are crucial to ask of a transforming society, especially if we hope to anticipate and pre-empt new ways of marginalising and othering, even as we learn each day, astonishingly so, how complicit we are, wittingly and unwittingly, in processes of exclusion. In the midst of this complexity it is our duty to remain alert to these possibilities and to make them a part of wider and, indeed, our own processes of public education. In light of these considerations, it is essential at this point in the argument to take what may appear to be a detour into broader philosophical and political considerations. These form a necessary basis to our conclusions about policy issues.

The problem of definitions

Those working with disabled people themselves have difficulty in developing definitions that do not in one way or another exclude or categorise and make different an oppositional construct. While definitions are constructed to advantage the disabled, the opposite is often true. From understanding disability as a biomedical condition to considering the sociological or economic impact of disability, each definition is embedded within broader constructs of how society works, who is in and who is out, and under what conditions decisions are made. How definitions work to frame, organise and create policies and the social practices that flow from them, is nowhere clearer than in the field of education. It is crucial, therefore, that these definitions be understood as emergent from particular histories and discursive formations.

Early medical definitions of disability emphasised the physical, psychological and/or neurological nature of the disabled body. Disability was equated with deficiency, in the sense that a physical, psychological and/or neurological attribute was identified as lacking from an 'agreed upon' image of the ideal subject. This deficit was then policed through structural and institutional measures. This ideal also generated particular social practices and orthodoxies. In the field of education, these orthodoxies found expression in the building of special schools, training special teachers and making those labelled as disabled the target of endless testing and measurement, with a view to 'curing' or 'fixing' them. This perspective, elaborated philanthropically, economically and sociologically, we argue, projects those assumed to be disabled as the victims of tragedy, status or difference (especially racial and ethnic); in other words, as victims of circumstances beyond their control. Furthermore, by emphasising a notion of victimhood and base 'injustice' implicit in being disabled, this perspective advocates that disabled people be 'especially' treated and managed so that they can be 'compensated' for their 'handicap'. As such, they then become the 'worthy recipients' of 'handouts' or special programmes. Internationally, programmes focusing on upgrading mathematics skills or improving English are reminders of how such definitions are deeply embedded and constructed within broader understandings of what holds social (and economic and political) currency, what is and is not desirable, and how notions of exclusion and inclusion operate within such constructions. Just as definitions are rooted in such discourses, so do social practices flow from them. Simply put, we argue that definitions are not neutral constructions that are disembedded from their contexts, but instead are deeply situated and embedded in discourses of corporeality that convey powerful normative messages about what is acceptable and desirable, as against that which is neither. Contextualised by these discursive formations, definitions can be seen to highlight certain markers of what is valued and what is not.

Value(s) and the 'marked body'

Disability as a site of difference finds its origins in the generic discussion about the ideal subject. While it is true that many understandings of subjecthood exist in the many social contexts, cultures and settings that make up the world, the discourse that has come to dominate and frame its current understanding begins with the ancient Greeks' reflections on the constituents of ideal societies, moves through the European Enlightenment that saw the elevation of rationality to a virtue with the concomitant rise of the scientific method, and continues in contemporary debates, to which we will return in a moment.

Plato, to begin with, was of the view that there are important natural differences, and indeed inequalities, among people and that if a society is to prosper, social planners ought to recognise and attend to these (Kamtekar, 2002). The criterion for superiority in Plato's world was moral virtue. Kamtekar argues that Plato's view

was hyper-elitist: '[v]irtue is too rare to belong to a whole race or ethnicity…True virtue belongs to the smallest class, namely philosophers' (2000, p. 9). Aristotle too classified human beings around the nature of the body. 'Natural' slaves, he argued, were more like the body than the soul, 'more like the beast than the human, and this reflects their function to be working with their bodies…nature's purpose makes the bodies of free and slave different' (Ward, 2002, p. 25). While there is insufficient space here to pursue this discussion, the point which is raised, ambiguously, is that the body is the site upon which 'virtue', in Plato's terms, or 'the soul', in Aristotle's terms, are 'marked'.

This ambiguity continues through the European Enlightenment, as seen in the work of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, and into the work of more modern thinkers such as Nietzsche (see Squadrito, 2002). Nietzsche, for example, while arguing, contrary to popular belief, that the ideal race is secured not through birth but through cultural practices, at the same time acknowledges that blood is an important determinant of cultural advancement. Nietzsche writes in *The Will to Power*: 'for spirit alone does not make noble; rather there must be something to ennoble the spirit. What then is required? Blood' (quoted in Conway, 2002, p. 173).

Much of the ambiguity in these and similar discussions relates to whether the marked body could be improved or what the marked body could pass on to its progeny. It is important to note that we are dealing with concepts that are not dissimilar to those found in discussions relating to race. Race, like disability, is often derived from physical 'marks' on the body.

In the modern era, this ambiguity produces sufficient moral space for a range of supremacists to argue for the improvement of the quality – the value – of human stock. Amongst supremacists, central are those eugenicists who, after Francis Galton opens the discourse in 1883, become preoccupied with the management of social hierarchies through the manipulation of marked bodies. In practice, as Bernadette Baker succinctly sums up, this means:

> constructing and privileging certain kinds of whiteness over certain kinds of color, certain kinds of masculinity over certain kinds of femininity, certain kinds of ability over certain kinds of 'corporeally anomalous' body-minds, and tolerating only narrow versions of heteronormativity and religious devotion. (Baker, 2002, p. 665)

In this process, different bodies are relativised in a hierarchy that accords certain bodies higher value than others. Historically, the undervalued have presented their bodies as objects of inspection, trade, amusement and service to the valued, as much as the valued have appropriated these same bodies. In the worst cases, as with the example of Sara Baartman, the Hottentot Venus, black bodies had to be explained to account for their difference and degeneration. When explanation was not forthcoming, black bodies had to be subjugated – manacled and caged – to manage that which remained unknown and stubbornly refused to reveal itself. Later, the

disabled had to be physically erased – murdered, as during the Holocaust – as a way of ridding society of 'useless eaters'.

Extreme as these examples are, they show how Western discourses of the body have determined that a person's worth be calculated according to an economy of values attached to markers selected from their body. Of course, Western discourse is not alone in the ways that it reads human value off human bodies; in many other cultures it is not unknown for disfigured new-born babies to be disposed of at birth. However, what makes Western discourses significant in ways that similar examples drawn from other cultures and locations are not, is that, firstly, the way the West marks and values bodies is discursive. That is to say, it powerfully shapes the way 'embodiedness' is imagined and consequently determines social practices in relation to the body, especially marked bodies. Secondly, this economy of values holds currency in diverse locations and contexts where it has gradually displaced and usurped alternative paradigms for imagining and valuing human difference. Without labouring the point, it is enough to recognise that Western discourses of the body have come to dominate how human value is thought and spoken about as well as estimated, particularly in relation to estimating the value of 'disabled people', people whose bodies are seen to fall significantly short of a discursively imagined ideal body. It follows that these same discourses powerfully shape responses to the perception of deficit, whether those responses be in the form of uncritical social practices that exclude and marginalise, or reflective social practices, such as policy interventions, that seek to include and mainstream.

Frameworks, bodies and the body politic

If this discourse on the marked body has deep and unfolding implications for how society is organised, this is particularly true for education because it is especially through the organisation of education that these values play themselves out. Decisions made by government (at all levels, from municipal to national) about how to organise the provision of education reflect how governments believe people should be treated educationally. These beliefs, outlined through policy, are based on their understanding of the kind of person their decisions are referring to.

The place of eugenics in this discussion is important to understand. The impact of eugenics on society is wide, if uneven. It is deeply implicated in the 'purification' project of the Nazis, and even after the Holocaust continues to fire the imagination of various scientists such as Julian Huxley and Francis Quick, who argue for the sterilisation of particular groups of people – African Americans in the US and 'genetically unfavorable' parents in the United Kingdom. While eugenicists certainly do not become hegemonic in modern society, to the extent that their thinking permeates and seizes the high ground in politics, the academy and social life, they undoubtedly shape modern thinking with respect to how difference might be approached. This influence is profoundly present in the already-existing scientific

practice of classification. It becomes key in what Foucault calls 'dividing practices'. Baker explains:

> [t]hese practices of categorization and classification assumed a divisibility to being and became important to social government between the world wars and well after… It was…a central…impetus to the development of a raft of tests, categories and administrative arrangements – IQ tests, psychological tests, personality tests, clinics, visiting medical services, observation wards and the like that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to deal with the crisis of problem populations. (Baker, 2002, p. 672)

Once the point had been reached in Western thinking that an ideal body existed and that such an ideal constituted the site upon which value rests, the inevitable next step was to address how one determined whether particular bodies constituted and formed a part of the ideal community. It is through this next step that imagining who the ideal is, moves to become what one might see as a framework, because frameworks are now needed to translate the imaginary ideal into the world of the real. In the social world and particularly in educational settings, the mechanisms for doing this are located in practices of measuring, testing and classifying. To find value one has to test for value.

And so in Western science, a fixation takes root with classification that inevitably leads to a constant anxiety about who measures up and who does not, who is in and who is out, who is part of us and who is not. Critically important about this, of course, is where the normative power rests; who is doing the classifying and in terms of which norm. It is at this point that the discourse of ideal and deficit bodies finds its translation into a medical scientific framework that measures and classifies. The sum result is the de-emphasis of this question of normative power and a discursive re-emphasis of the abstract calculus of measuring and classifying, a tandem movement that simultaneously allays the anxiety of some (the valued, the powerful, 'us'), by excluding and marginalising those that 'don't measure up'. It also obscures the social consequences and injustices that flow from such dividing practices, by abstracting the violence that is at the base of the discourse's power.

The politics that are set in train by these developments are important to understand. Questions of community, citizenship and belonging perforce lead, in the realms of the political, social and philosophical, to concerns about inclusion and exclusion. Inevitably, as the 'ideal' takes 'shape', so do questions arise about the consequences of these idealisations. The general sentiment in these debates is that inclusion is by definition good and exclusion is bad. Thus, goes the line of thought, the end of inclusion policies is to overcome exclusion.

Important for our argument is that this general position fails to recognise the possibility that integration – as a strategy that promotes inclusion – might produce new forms of exclusion. Little recognition is given to the possibility that the notion

of inclusion operates on normative principles. Norms determine how groups are defined and constituted in their ideal forms, and, in opposition, their 'un-ideal' forms. Yet little understanding develops around how these norms, through their delimitation of un-ideal forms, come to describe and fix the characteristics of 'out' groups and, as a consequence, 'explain' what it is that such groups lack in terms of their 'abilities' to articulate their rights and access certain services.

The politics of inclusion and exclusion that arises in relation to these perceptions seldom becomes explicit and the subject of public discourse. By failing to take into account the power relations (economic, social and especially epistemological) that define the normative order, this politics underplays the existing and complex social relations in society that give rise to and perpetuate inequity. Critically, the politics of inclusion and exclusion, and the discursive formations that underpin it, elides differences between and within groups, communities and individuals. This is because, firstly, it abstracts and reifies people and, therefore, ignores the subjecthood and agency of who is being excluded and included. Secondly, it lacks the means to approach the complex ways in which difference is produced, particularly the ways in which specific differences interlock and constellate, as well as how differences are articulated specifically, collectively and discursively. Because identified and marked groups (un-ideal groups) are always read through what are understood to be the dominant characteristics of that group, differences within these groups are obscured. Discourses of exclusion and inclusion fail to specify the relationships between disability, race, class, gender, and other forms of difference and inequity in society and fail to show how these articulate with each other. This, we argue, is the major problem with current approaches to dealing with disability.

Returning to the policy

Having had this discussion, what might we now say about EWP6 and the current policy with respect to disability and education? How inclusive is EWP6, what notions of inclusion does it work with, and how does it operate as a site for new kinds of exclusions?

The first point is about EWP6's concerns and its understanding of rights. Close scrutiny of EWP6 will show that a distinct conception of rights is used in the document. This conception is derived from the South African Constitution (1996) in terms of which education is conceived as the fundamental right of every learner, 'whether disabled or not' (DoE, 2001, p. 11). The Constitution, built on the 'values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom' compel 'all of us to take up the responsibility and challenge of building a humane and caring society, not for the few, but for all South Africans' (DoE, 2001, p. 11). Alluring as it might be, we suggest that this rights discourse is suggestive of an ideal body against, off and from which others are 'read'. Embedded in this document and the rights discourse from which it takes inspiration, is a normative ideal. This

ideal is nowhere specified, but is indeed taken for granted. Against the 'healthy body' is the deficit body, lacking in certain things and consequently made the subject of inspection, categorisation and remedial action, and only recognised through a process of entitlement in relation to that imagined in the ideal and measured in the norm. Given this, it is difficult to discard the fundamental categorisation of 'us' and 'them', the 'ideal' and 'not ideal'.

Flowing from this, the thrust of the policy is essentially assimilationist. While mainstreaming begins and ends with the idea of inclusion, the inclusion into which the subject of difference – in this case, disabled people – is invited, is essentially the world of the normative, the ideal, even where it is argued here, special provision and thought is given to those who are regarded as disabled. The policy acknowledges difference but is unable to show how it might work with difference other than through the 'ideal' value of that which is dominant. In this respect, the policy is little different to approaches to multiculturalism that subsist in unproblematised understandings of difference. The power valences that sustain and are responsible for the naming and recognition of difference are never themselves the subject of interrogation. Instead the full focus of the policy outlined in EWP6 is on that which is different to the supposed norm and its assimilation of that named difference. Principally, the idea is to provide for the full range of disabilities in a way that might make them 'ideal' or manage them in such a way that they may become part of the ideal. The ideal itself, and the processes leading to the privileging of the ideal, including naming practices and dividing practices, as suggested above, are not problematised.

Inherent in this difficulty is a deep ontological challenge in which 'being human' is essentialised in very limited ways. The effect of policies such as these, as with policies intended to manage multicultural environments, is ultimately to stereotype difference. It is assumed that the difference that supposedly comes with a particular form of disability is homogenised and fixed. Little recognition is given to the reality that every manifestation of difference is also surrounded and influenced by and articulated with other forms of difference; that disabled people also experience difference in terms of their gender, racial classification or social class, for example. EWP6 fails to recognise that disability is experienced within a complex of factors that variously mediate delimitations of inclusion and exclusion, and that all play a role of one kind or another in that person's experience of his or her difference.

The policy reiterates again and again that disability does not lie with the individual, but rather, is systemic, structural and organisational. By implication, structures have to be adjusted and organised to provide access through, inter alia, ensuring physical access (e.g. building wheel chair ramps), revising the curriculum, providing health and welfare needs through intersectoral collaboration with social welfare, health, and so on. Yet the policy fails to engage the deep ideological underpinnings of the

disability discourse and remains silent on the discourse of the marked body, even as we reshape the physical and material order.

Although it is commendable that as a society we are recognising difference through the ways that we are reshaping and rebuilding our physical and material worlds, these efforts are undermined and betrayed by the perpetuation of naming practices, of sorting and classifying, on which EWP6 is silent and, therefore, complicit. It might be argued that material change impacts on discourse change and, therefore, that the way we speak about and imagine disability will be appropriately modified as we rebuild our environments and change our practices. That material change impacts on how we speak about and imagine the world is undoubtedly true. However, if we accept the poststructuralist assertion that language constitutes reality and recognise that social practices regarding the body have been determined by a hegemonic discourse about marked and deficit bodies, and that in fact, such practices are themselves discursive formations, then it seems unlikely that changing social practices and built environments will disrupt the power of discourse, despite the extent of their moderating influence.

This policy acknowledges that 'some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of support to be able to develop to their full potential' (EWP6, p. 16). It also says that it seeks to 'empower' learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning. But this participation is understood as an artefact that has been determined through its distance from the ideal. One's distance from the 'ideal' is set and measured against a range which, in the field of education, includes regulatory devices of assessment, entry to school tests, proficiency language tests, physical tests, etc. Again, who determines the tests, and how the tests are to be set, in other words, where the normative power lies, are not the subject of critical discussion.

Conclusion

The field of disability has been significantly advanced by recent developments, but has not engaged sufficiently with the ideologies that sustain the field. The essential thrust of the policy has been that of assimilating disabled people – through mainstreaming and integration – into a dominant order that itself is not set up for critique. The effect is to maintain disabled people in the kind of position that other subordinate groups have found themselves in, where their status as human beings is only understood in a derived and essentialised way.

As a way forward we argue for an analysis of the position of disabled people in education, but also in other fields, through what is variously called the non-synchronous route, the parallelist analysis or the joined-up approach. What these approaches do is attempt to understand the deep ontological integrity of the subject beyond the idealisations that govern and discipline dominant thinking. The

objective, is to capture the complexity of interests, influences and factors in a school that give it a specific character. Such an approach requires a policy that recognises that many forces and influences coalesce, collide, fuse and interact to produce human beings, which can never be read through the dominant ascribed identities assumed to inhere in them. Policies are needed which are alert and responsive to this complexity and, more critically, can provide institutions such as schools with the guidelines that can deal with and support the complex identities their learners will bring.

Note

1   Personal communication to Crain Soudien from a Western Cape Education Departmental official, 2004.

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