

**MY LIVING EDUCATIONAL THEORY
OF
INCLUSIONAL PRACTICE**

Margaret Cahill

For the award of PhD from the University of Limerick

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Jean McNiff

Submitted to the University of Limerick, October 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
INTRODUCTION	1
About my thesis	7
My research question	10
The main themes of the thesis	11
The potential significance of my research	14
Form of my thesis	16
CHAPTER ONE BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH	19
Introducing myself	20
My educational values, their realisation and their denial: stories of experience	25
Key conceptual frameworks, as the transformation of my ontological and epistemological values	34
My methodological framework	38
Conclusion	42
CHAPTER TWO CONTEXTS OF MY PRACTICE	43
My work contexts	46
Policy in relation to mainstream education	47
Policy in relation to learning support	57
Policy in relation to special education	68
Policy in relation to the Resource Teaching of Travellers	89
Summary	100
CHAPTER THREE MY EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL VALUES	101
My ontological values	103
My epistemological values	107
My social and political values	110
Creating my living educational theory of inclusional practice	114
CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY	117
Why action research?	118
Practical issues of my research	128
Conclusion	137
CHAPTER FIVE DEVELOPING A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	138
To begin at the beginning	139
Reconceptualising curriculum and pedagogy	144
Pedagogy and curriculum	149
Learning how to learn from my practice	154
Experimenting with my new learning	158

CHAPTER SIX	NEW CRITICAL PRACTICES, NEW CRITICAL THEORIES	162
	Case study 1: A story of mainstream class practice	163
	Case study 2: Working with Pat	179
	Case Study 3: Laney’s story	184
CHAPTER SEVEN	NELL	187
	Summary	212
CHAPTER EIGHT	ESTABLISHING THE VALIDITY OF MY CLAIMS TO KNOWLEDGE	214
	The evidence base of my claim to knowledge	215
	How I have contributed to education	217
	How I have contributed to new forms of theory	234
	Demonstrating the validity and legitimacy of my claims to knowledge	236
CHAPTER NINE	THE POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MY RESEARCH	238
	The potential significance of my research for new practices in inclusional education	239
	The potential significance of my research for new thinking in inclusional education	243
	The potential significance of my research for the Teaching Council of Ireland	245
	Conclusion	247
BIBLIOGRAPHY		249
APPENDICES		277

PLEASE NOTE : ALL ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS AND COPIES OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS ARE IN MY DATA ARCHIVE. THEY ARE AVAILABLE FOR VERIFICATION PURPOSES.

These documents contain information which may lead to the identification of research participants and research settings and therefore have not been made public within the thesis. This is in keeping with my promise to safeguard the anonymity of participants. I explain my ethical procedures in Chapter 4.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is the articulation of my living educational theory of inclusional practice, which evolved through undertaking research in the area of educational provision for marginalised children. It is a narrative account in which I offer descriptions of and explanations for my practice, as I transform my educational contexts into a celebration of democratically-constituted inclusional practices.

The thesis demonstrates how my embodied values of justice, inclusion and equality compelled me to develop social and educational practices that included potentially marginalised children. My living educational theory of inclusional practice therefore contains within itself a living theory of social justice premised on the idea that all are equal participants in democratic public discourses. I explain how I have transformed these values into the living critical standards of judgement by which I wish my work to be evaluated.

My original contributions to knowledge are to do with how I demonstrate the development of inclusional practices that are grounded in the realisation of my values that honour the individual and enable them to become agents in the creation of an inclusive society. From the grounds of my evidence base, I claim to have developed an inclusional practice that has profound implications of the education of the teaching profession and other social formations.