ANTI-COLONIAL EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

# Inclusive Education in African Contexts

## A Critical Reader

Nareadi Phasha, Dikeledi Mahlo and George J. Sefa Dei (Eds.)

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# Inclusive Education in African Contexts

ANTI-COLONIAL EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE
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**Scope**

Informed by an anti-colonial spirit of resistance to injustices, this book series examines the ways and the degree to which the legacy of colonialism continues to influence the content of school curriculum, shape teachers' teaching practices, and impact the outcome of the academic success of students, including students of color. Further, books published in this series illuminate the manner in which the legacy of colonialism remains one of the root causes of educational and socio-economic inequalities. This series also analyzes the ways and the extent to which such legacy has been responsible for many forms of classism that are race- and language-based. By so doing, this series illuminates the manner in which race intersects with class and language affecting the psychological, educational, cultural, and socio-economic conditions of historically and racially disenfranchised communities. All in all, this series highlights the ways and the degree to which the legacy of colonialism along with race-, language-, class- and gender-based discrimination continue to affect the existence of people, particularly people of color.

# Inclusive Education in African Contexts

*A Critical Reader*

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*Dikeledi Mahlo and Nareadi Phasha*

NAREADI PHASHA, DIKELEDI MAHLO AND GEORGE J. SEFA DEI

# INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION IN AFRICAN CONTEXTS

## INTRODUCTION

Why do we need a book on inclusive schooling and education in Africa? Why would you want to read it? On the face of it these may seem trivial, simplistic questions, but it is important for us to ask them because, contrary to received wisdom, inclusion is not a given in our communities. We all have to work hard to achieve social inclusion and we as educators do not as yet see our schools enthusiastically grasping the concept. In order to give attention to the issue we must ask the most basic, simple questions. We all have our different conceptions of inclusion but not every school, family, community or institutional setting can claim to have understood it. In many respects our respective locations and situatedness in different spaces allow us to bring differing and perhaps converging views on what we would all like to see as an inclusive school and inclusive education.

One does not have to yearn for inclusion simply because one has been excluded. It is just the right thing to do. We are all better for inclusion. We cannot have communities in which 'others' do not belong. Schools cannot educate as if our students are homogenous in every aspect of human life. We are about differences. Differences are the source of our strength as much as our commonalities. We can no longer afford to make difference a site or source that disunites or divides us. We must bring a reading to inclusion that values us all as part of a single humanity. To do so, however, we must challenge our refusal to engage in critical questions of power and privilege. We must be prepared to think laterally and widen our perspectives. We may be utopian but we have to work hard to make our ideals a reality.

In this book we write about inclusive schooling and educational difference. Notwithstanding good intentions of educators, Africa's schooling and education is still at a crossroads. To some this may be a harsh assessment, however, if one looks critically at key issues of curriculum content, educational relevance and schooling outcomes for youth one cannot help but come to this realisation. A neo-liberal agenda has presented Africa's education with great challenges that call for creative imagination in revision for effective schooling and education for young learners today (see Brock-Utne, 2003; Berthe'lemy, 2006; Mundy, 2008; Osei, 2006). We take up an emerging subject in African education, namely the question of educational inclusivity, and examine the strengths, accomplishments and challenges, as well as the way forward. Apparently, no longer present is the foresight of pre-colonial

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 1–17.*

educators who brought to education a much broader understanding than present in the formal classrooms of today (see Fafunwa, 1974, 1982; Fafunwa & Aisiku, 1982; Sifuna, 1990, 1992). Today's educators can only fight hard to restore this vision. We have no other choice because the limits and limitations we impose upon ourselves by not having an inclusive schooling environment are too numerous.

For these educators there is nothing more deserving than to see education as a totality encompassing the varied ways, options, and strategies through which learners come to know their world, and to effect social and personal change. While colonial and post-colonial education have had their limited strengths the challenges of meeting inclusivity in global education remain (see Allan, 2007; Pivik, McComas, & Laflamme, 2002). Part of the problem, as far as Africa is concerned, remains a conceptual understanding of inclusion which until quite recently was largely viewed as special education or the education of learners with physical disabilities (see many of the essays in this book). The idea of inclusion as addressing fundamental questions of power and equity, promoting a link between students' myriad identities has not always been taken seriously. The reading of education as promoting "national citizens" with shared aspirations and dreams, while noble, has tended to sweep differences under the carpet, as if they were a problem, but Africa cannot be left behind in rethinking educational inclusion in ways that evoke critical questions of power, equity and social difference. We cannot afford to think of learners as universal subjects without identities of class, gender, sexuality, [dis]ability, language, race and ethnicity that necessitate a linking of knowledge production and schooling (see also Campbell, 2002; Carrington & Robinson, 2004; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Barton, 2000; Barton & Amstrong, 2007; Brock-Utne & Skattum, 2009, writing in other contexts). We must tap into our rich cultural resource base for their contributions to inclusive schooling and education.

The conceptualisation of inclusive schooling in an African context would have to begin with an acknowledgement of social difference, power, identity and culture. Difference must be acknowledged as a site of strength. In our contemporary classrooms we have learners who come from different or diverse social backgrounds, which are not simply sites of knowledge but are also shaped by the exigencies of history, politics, and self-location. An affirmation of who our students are, their relative identities and histories, the cultures and experiences that they bring to the school system, and the interplay of culture, history and location in shaping educational outcomes is paramount. These sites of learning should be tapped into as part of the learning process for the benefit of all.

If identities are relational then difference can only enrich the cause of education. History, culture, experience and location offer different standpoints to learners, linked by knowledge production through the production of the multiple identities that shape learners in the school system. Education cannot be provided uniformly and the urgency for inclusion necessitates that educators deal with the challenges, possibilities and opportunities entailed in having different bodies in their schools and classrooms. Disability is a significant dimension of our identity, shaping who we are,

as are questions of class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language and religion. A number of works in transnational contexts have affirmed this understanding (see Danforth & Naraian, 2015, Slee, 2001a; Dei, James, James-Wilson, Karumanchery, & Zine, 2000; Dei, James-Wilson, & Zine, 2002). Inclusive schooling and education is about all learners and cannot be simply for those deemed to be outside the norm. We must question our supposed normalcies and look at who is outside. In effect, inclusive education must trouble our conceptions of normality and what is deemed 'abled' and 'disabled'.

As Dei (2016a) notes, there exist extensive writings on 'inclusive education', including the social justice perspective that highlights significant theoretical, philosophical, conceptual and practical questions about the ways we approach educational inclusion (see Ainscow & Dyson, 2006; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010; Amstrong, Amstrong, & Spandagou, 2010; Peters, 2005; Peters & Oliver, 2009; Slee, 2001b, 2011; Slee & Allan, 2005). There is much that can be learned for the African context from these international sources and vice versa and the continent's educators also need to theorise the uniqueness of our take on inclusive schooling and education. Appreciating, sharing and validating values, histories, experiences, knowledges and experiences of all groups are relevant, but by themselves these may still be inadequate to transform African schooling and education. We need a fundamental structural change for a school system which cultivates sameness and for the most part takes a lukewarm approach to difference. African education must grapple with the question of how much of inclusive education should be about teaching indigeneity, decolonisation and resistance on the part of learners and educators. Inclusive schooling and education must also confront some questions: What have been the consequences of the on-going 'marketization of education' (Kenway & Epstein, 1996) in/for Africa? How does the economics of schooling today implicate strategies on inclusive education and the search for educational equity in the face of globalisation and encroachment of global capital in schools? What are the limits of promoting inclusive education through an uncritical social justice framework which works with an approach towards integration and equality? How do educators begin to think of radical notions of inclusion as beginning anew to realise the limits of integrating into what already exists when 'that which already exists' – the current education system is the source of the problem in the first place? (Dei, 2016a). How is 'integration' into such a hegemonic system transformational, subversive or even radical? When educators begin to think of 'equity' as radically different from 'equality' how do we promote alternative models of social justice which require treating people differently [and not the liberal conception of simply "treating everybody the same"]? Cherishing difference and plurality still promotes an image of multiple, thriving, mutually respectful and appreciative of ethno-cultural communities.

The discussion on reframing inclusive education in Africa must also engage with literature and theorists operating from anti-colonial, de-colonial and integrative perspectives. These works pose additional key questions, for example,

- How do we decolonise education and the school curriculum in Africa? How do we subvert the structures and processes of educational delivery (structures for teaching/learning/administration of education) that end by creating sites of marginality and colonising education for African learners?
- How should African educators, school administrators and policy workers take up ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, class, religion, language and disability as important identities that trouble and complicate the notion of the 'universal' and 'disembodied' learners as significant social categories and relations of power and domination in schools?
- What powerful markers of identity and difference connect to schooling for knowledge production, curriculum, pedagogy, classroom and anti-colonial transformations of schools and educational systems?
- How does inclusive education acknowledge colonial hierarchies and relations of schooling as revolving around certain ontological, epistemological and axiological hegemonic foundations?
- How does a critical inclusive education approach challenge power and the rationality for dominance?
- How do we bring a more holistic and multidimensional understanding of inclusion and social justice to include spiritual, emotional and socio-environmental dimensions of learners?

The question of re-visioning schooling and education from a critical inclusionary perspective must seek a structural transformation of school/education systems in ways that pay particular attention to the macro-social processes, economic, political and psycho-cultural realms of domination and colonisation. Specifically, we must find ways to change the macro-structural and political conditions in society which create socio-economic inequities that impinge on school systems and the schooling experiences of all learners. While measures for the redistribution of resources in schools, representation of diverse stakeholders, effective collaborations and consultations with parents and local communities, as well as ensuing wide involvement in school decision-making processes (to include all groups in society) is critical we must continually keep a gaze on how inclusive education approaches can be framed within the deficit, compensation and ameliorative lenses. Inclusive schooling and education in Africa must be about co-creation of schooling curriculum, Indigenous classroom pedagogies and holistic instructional strategies which bring to the fore other questions about responsibilities of educators: what type of education do we provide for contemporary learners, how and why, and what are learners going to do with such education? We also ask what it means to create an inclusive anti-colonial global future and the nature of work that is required collectively to get us there.

The creation of communities of learners requires that we do not ignore differences while thinking they constitute a problem. Schools as working communities require that our conception of inclusion goes beyond questions of physical ability to how

fundamental characteristics intersect and come to shape schooling and knowledge production. Given that difference has conventionally been seen as a liability, it has become a site of power and asymmetrical power relations. We need a critical understanding of difference as power to subvert what is viewed as normal and our expectations of the universal learner.

It is important for us to advance a rationale for inclusive schooling that extends beyond the qualitative value of educational justice (see also Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996; Loreman, 2007; Mittler, 2012; Abgenyega & Supple, 2011; Dei, James, James-Wilson, Karumanchery, & Zine, 2000; Dei, James-Wilson, & Zine, 2002, in other contexts). Such environments can only enhance learning outcomes but we need inclusive education because it is about creating communities of learners and seeing schooling as community. Schooling and education must welcome and embrace difference in order to be truly inclusive. Our schools must embrace and address what social difference entails, particularly its connection with the educational and learning processes. We must identify sites of marginality and exclusion in order to develop strategies that would include everyone. We must understand inclusion and exclusion as being about power and how it is enacted to meet different needs and expectations for diverse people. Sites of social exclusion and bodies excluded are more than people with physical disabilities. Schools usually work with a dominant view of the learner and this interpretation is transposed to every learner, making it difficult for the one who fails to conform to what is viewed as 'normal'.

We see radical inclusion rooted in local cultural knowledge as the new norm of what education should be about. A rethinking of African schooling and education has to take us back to our roots and an examination of our histories and cultural traditions of knowledge production, dissemination and use. We need to look at education from this source in terms of its connections with family life, community and social relevance, and see how the question of difference was evoked and responded to. This means drawing on the lessons of how knowledge is impacted through early socialisation practices, childrearing practices, teaching and learning responsibilities of community membership, and the application of knowledge to solve practical everyday problems within one's backyard and beyond.

Traditional African communities are about inclusion. If one analyses aspects of African Indigenous education, for example, one can infer that we need to create spaces in African schools for parents, elders, families and cultural custodians to come in as teachers to work on a daily basis to complement the work of professionally trained educators. Community teachings emphasise togetherness, sharing and reciprocity. Inclusion is taken as meaning we all belong and a responsibility of every citizen is to ensure that mutual interdependence is respected as an ideal and a virtue. To make our schools inclusive, students must be firmly grounded in their local communities and a practical component of classroom teaching must be to see students locate in their communities to implement their classroom ideas and engage community knowledge. We have to return to the days when the separation of school and community was non-existent.

Consequently, it is important for us to understand difference in the local community setting. Gender, class, ethnicity, language, religion, sexuality and (dis) ability have long been seen as inclusive categories in traditional African education within community settings, but this is not the case now. For example, understanding gender and schooling in African an context calls for a deeper reflection on the way gender education is pursued in the postcolonial setting. Lip service is paid to gender, schooling and education as an equity issue and Eurocentric constructions provide the basis of a critique for Africa. An examination of gender in African ways of knowing would permit us to simultaneously examine boys and girls in relational terms, that is, in terms of reconceptualised inclusion.

There are complexities and contradictions in the function of schools as gender socialising agents. African schools today have become 'masculinising agencies' through official policies and practices (curriculum, pedagogy and instruction), yet there is a failure to examine how these reinforce particular notions of what it means to be male or female. Also, colonial and postcolonial forces, including globalisation, have impacted on everyday social constructions and practices of masculinity in a schooling setting. Much research on gender and schooling in Africa has excluded boys' experiences and how they are implicated in unequal and unjust gender relations. Often, within African schooling and education, questions and concerns about African/Black masculinity are reduced to questions of identity, identifications, and socio-cultural differences, thereby eroding in a sense the question of community. Inclusion is about communities, groups and collectiveness. Individual learners are in social relational ties with each other, so teaching about these addresses a basic tenet of inclusion as much as community building.

Inclusion is also about wholeness. The learner is a complete person who engages body, mind, soul and spirit. Inclusion respects such holism of the learner. Elsewhere, Dei (2015b) has argued that African countries would need a cultural and paradigmatic shift to avoid the privileging of Cartesian reasoning and intellect over body, such that vocational training is seen as less desirable and more suited for lesser intellects, often meaning poor and working class bodies. We know that technical and vocational training often forces this separation of intellect from body, and skill from reason, which if we approach the critique with an Indigenous framework in mind is a false demarcation. Knowledge is more integrated and organic than this. Because of this demarcation, vocational schools often receive less funding and struggle to attract top teachers. The social stigmatisation of the students erodes their self-worth, so a re-visioned education will have to change this attitude and give value to it vis-à-vis the colonised and colonial education which privileged mere academic fields. This approach is inclusive education.

Why are so many of our youth disengaged from societal settings, including educational institutions? Many of us are quick to conclude that youth of today are the future and that we (as adults) need to stir them to appropriate ways of social conduct and responsible citizenship. Education is about the search for that future and through it we contest and design futures for ourselves and for others. All generations

have faced their own challenges and the youth of today are no exception. The task is to know and understand the challenges so that they do not become "rebels without a cause". It is also important for today's learners to know that whatever challenges and obstacles they face they are not insurmountable, but only if they accept the responsibility to be creators, initiators and doers to transform our communities. Arguably, what educators put into teaching is what we collectively and eventually reap. In an uncertain world the stakes have not been higher. There are no shortcuts to achieving educational success.

Inclusive education must be well thought out, planned and executed. We can learn from international contexts while not necessarily seeking a wholesale transplant of ideas and practice. Questions of local contexts and histories are significant (see for example, Ali, Mustapha, & Jelas, 2006; Mittler, 2012; Loreman, 2007; Slee, 2006; Vitello & Mithaug, 2013; Zine, 2002; Villa & Thousand, 2005; Pijl, Meijer, & Hegarty, 1997; Singal, 2006; Ainscow, 2005) yet, inclusive educational approaches must incorporate multiple learning methods and experiences. Contemporary educators must find a way to make that critical link of culture, identity, history, pedagogy, instruction, and education.

Notwithstanding the many noted strengths, creativity and resourcefulness of today's youth, one often hears the popular refrain "today's youth are a lost generation", an assertion that not everyone agrees with but one that does reflect a growing concern for a youth that is sceptical of authority and eldership, and not interested in culture, tradition or the past. As educators, we must ask ourselves how we are imparting knowledge to youth so that they can identify with and engage as part of their everyday living, how youth have found themselves to be inclusive within our educational institutions, how we have grounded them in their cultures and histories as part of their educational journeys and how education has equipped them with the skills and capabilities to actualise their ambitions, hopes and desires.

No one can duck these questions. While not casting aside the disempowering aspects of culture and tradition it is foolhardy to be overly dismissive of culture and tradition. We need to educate young learners to be critical of all knowledge. We argue that education is partly to blame for the inability to translate what is taught into more concrete and purposeful action that shows true meanings, values and purposes. Critics often point to acts of juvenile delinquency, social violence, disaffection, disengagement and disenchantment as among the most urgent problems of contemporary society, but how do we teach affection, engagement, respect, discipline, and strong character as part of an inclusive strategy for education? Adults cannot escape responsibility for helping youth navigate the challenges of everyday living. With educators, parents and community workers they have particular responsibilities to ensure that the youth are not disengaged or disenchanted with their lives, but rather they have a responsibility to ensure they are socially engaged and responsible members of communities. We can all insist that youth be provided with education to help them not only understand society but also meet their responsibilities and obligations. We need education that gives back hopes to today's youth. When we fail we cannot blame them.

In the context of the foregoing discussion the question arises as to what type of education youth must receive and what they are to do with it. The least education can do is to restore their lost aspirations. Unfortunately, what we hope for and actually accomplish are not always the same. We need education (like knowledge) to compel action. It should aim to bring personal, collective and social transformation and equip the learner with the skills, knowledge and tools to build and sustain communities and social and physical environments. Education is about teaching and learning responsibly. There are particular knowledges that educators can teach young learners as means to realising their full potential as members of society, to do with the teachings of community, social belonging, citizenship participation, civic responsibility and collective survival.

Local cultural resource knowledge has implications for critical and oppositional work in schools. Learners can be taught to embrace their cultural knowing, particularly enshrined ideas and principles that espouse the attributes of healthy and sustainable community living where everyone has a sense of belonging (see Zollers, Ramanatha, & Yu, 1999, in other contexts). Educators' classroom pedagogies and instructional strategies can be effective when inclusive and the pursuit of local cultural knowledge systems by learners can be part of the intellectual project of affirming multi-centric knowledge systems in schools. Learners thus make sense of their worlds and communities differently and are able to interpret their schooling and everyday experiences as they seek healthy sustainable living. In North America this is particularly poignant, given the difficulties schools face with educating an increasingly diverse student population, one marked by complex and competing histories, experiences and social expressions demarcated by race, gender, class, sexual, language, and religious difference. Local knowledge is significant in expressing and supporting the intellectual agency of different communities and subjects. Marginalised youth continually interrogate and utilise relevant knowledge from their home and street cultures, histories, and myriad identities to fashion solutions to daily problems. Such knowledge should be neither discarded nor deemed irrelevant in classroom teachings.

The current discourses of reclaiming knowledge, culture, history and identities of learners have emerged from the need to reflect on past experiences and histories and to utilise locally contextualised cultural knowledge to respond to contemporary problems (see Abdi & Cleghorn, 2005). This does not make a claim to a mythic or romanticised past, but rather realises that the past is part of the present, and that a people's history and local cultural resource base have roles to play in the search for answers to daily concerns and problems. Furthermore, the assertion of local community voice and knowledge is a necessary exercise in resisting domination and colonial imposition of certain ideas of the privileged. In the context of such readings, local cultural resource knowledge as Indigenous knowledge can be oppositional and counter knowledge to conventional and official school knowledge.

We restrict our work simply to the African school curriculum. As argued elsewhere in a global context (Dei, 2016b), Indigenous philosophies express knowledge

systems, ideas and social values connecting local communities and cultures with the land and surrounding environments. For example, proverbs, cultural stories and mythologies have long been part of Indigenous knowledge systems. Proverbs, in particular, constitute a body of epistemology in African communities connecting questions of culture, society, land, environment, history, and tradition as valid sources of local knowledge. One may question the focus on African Indigenous philosophies or knowledge systems in a discussion of inclusive education, but we believe these have important lessons for all youth, irrespective of their location and context. Our interest or task is not the wholesale transplanting of such knowledges in a global context. We respect questions of the source and contexts, as well as the contentious but critical issues of ownership and appropriation of knowledge remain. While mindful of these issues we are most interested in highlighting particular teachings (as lessons) embedded in such knowledge systems for youth education in a global context (see also Dei, 2014a, b, 2015a).

When the experiences and histories of marginalised groups are denied or devalued in schools there is the need to centre their agency so that learners themselves become subjects of their own histories, stories and experiences. A culture-centred paradigm provides a space for marginalised students to interpret their experiences within their worldviews, rather than being forced to do so through a dominant lens. Within this is also a lesson for the dominant, who must begin to reflect on and appreciate what marginalised cultural perspectives can offer to the education of the learner. While we need to [re]construct an Indigenous identity outside of that which is constructed and imposed within the context of Euro-American hegemony, dominant learners must also critically interrogate their values and cultural frames of references for their omission, negations and blind spots.

As part of our learning objective we are offering suggestions for schools to be inclusive not only of the bodies (students, staff and faculty) who populate them, but also of the ideas, teachings and knowledge systems that are legitimised as worthy of pursuit. We are bringing an understanding to inclusivity that is holistic and incorporating of diversity and difference as sites of power and identity. We are offering a counter-visioning of schooling that makes a radical departure grounded on an Indigenous worldview that articulates the nexus of society, culture and nature to offer critical teachings of the land, environments, cultures and peoples. Before proceeding we share the theoretical structure with which we are operating.

Conceptualised as a prism, inclusive education affirms the role and power of local cultural knowledge to subvert such internalised colonial hierarchies of schooling by centring values such as social justice, equity, fairness, resistance and collective responsibility in the education of the learner. While not negating the importance of such values and their place in the school system it is maintained that currently, as can be witnessed in our schools, these values are about the individual learner and individualism. They may not be inclusive enough and do not necessarily create communities of learners/learning communities with social responsibilities. These values do not place emphasis on multiple ways of knowing, yet it is these latter

expressions, such as community building and community of learners, which are the hallmark of an inclusive schooling environment in which all learners, educators, administrators, parents and community workers develop a sense of shared belonging, pride and ownership, and see themselves as having valuable contributions to make to benefit all. This is what schooling should be about, i.e., creating communities of learners with shared responsibilities for the success of all.

## THE CHAPTERS

Bringing interesting and diverse perspectives to inclusion in an African context, the chapters presented in this book mark a departure from conventional thinking about what inclusive education means in African contexts. In her theoretical discussion focusing on *Epistemologies of Inclusive Education and Critical Reflexivity for Pedagogic Practices in Primary Years (4–11), Tchombe* makes a case for understanding inclusive epistemologies. Epistemology as a body of knowledge shapes educational practice. It is noted that epistemologies of inclusion traditionally emerged from differently held views about special education that focused more on disabilities. Accordingly, inclusion became a philosophy that ensured that pupils with disabilities were included in regular classrooms, whether or not they could meet traditional curriculum standards. However, this approach has only presented educators with a limited scope for inclusion by focusing on those with disabilities and difficulties and neglecting other disadvantaged groups. To rethink inclusion we need a reconceptualisation of educational practice. Tchombe argues for a clear epistemology of inclusive education, as well as associated pedagogic practices derived from the understanding that disability discourse is on a different developmental path and should not be based on a deficit hypothesis. Using lessons from the impressionable years of 4–11 as a focus of her attention, the author believes we need educators who can develop and utilise their transformative pedagogic skills and competences to reform current teacher education programmes. The paper is relevant to the discussion in bringing a broader view to inclusion, highlighting attitudes, values, skills, techniques, as well as the ways the structure of school organisation, curriculum, assessment and teaching strategies are employed to ensure full participation. All of these have major implications for an inclusive education policy.

We must extend the discussion of epistemology to policy, for example, asking: what thinking shaped educational polices about inclusive education policies in Africa? Education policies inform and determine to a large extent the educational approaches pursued in African schools. Specific educational policies and programmes offer some interesting perspectives. In Creating Rights-Based and Inclusive Schools in South Africa*, Themane* looks carefully at the *Charter on Children's Rights and the Child Friendly Schools* framework, which seeks to advance the question of access and quality education as a lens for the interrogation of inclusive education in South Africa. The chapter calls for a shift from a focus on special education of students

with learning disabilities to address a broader view of inclusion that highlights questions of power and social difference and equity. The three aspects of Child Friendly Schools: (a) a right-based and inclusive school; (b) safety, protective and caring environments; and (c) a gender sensitive school that promotes equity; help ground insights on the need and rationale for a broader view of inclusive education.

In further exploring the dialectics of theory and practice, *Mpofu and Molosiwa's* chapter on *Disability and Inclusive Education in Zimbabwe* is an interesting case study. The authors' examination of the historical and contemporary events influencing disability spaces for learning, teaching and administration of education in Zimbabwe is an important addition to the collection. They propose community participation in education driven from a democratic citizenship perspective rather than one of inclusive education, as an accommodation approach to best represent the development of inclusive learning spaces for learners with disabilities. The question is being increasingly asked as to the possibilities of democratic education, especially for Africa. How can such education empower the continent's learners to take up their civic responsibilities to nation and community building? Clearly, inclusive schooling environments can help us find answers. The authors argued that inclusive education strategies evolving from a democratic citizenship education perspective can help us better understand the history or evolution of inclusive education spaces in the Zimbabwean education system. A rights-oriented approach to inclusive education following the UN Conventions on disability rights (as human rights) makes for more inclusive learning spaces in the Zimbabwean education system. We need more evidence in support of this thesis and these points to some directions worthy of pursuit. The authors raise important issues relating to conceptualisation of rights education and how conventional approaches arrive at questions of power and equity for groups. While the idea of democratic citizenship education is important, the post-colonial challenges of African education, in which difference has been subsumed under the guise of nation building projects, have been problematic.

The paradox and contradictions in pursuits of inclusive education not guided by an epistemology of knowledge is laid bare by *Molosiwa and Mpofu's* case study, *Practices and Opportunities of Inclusive Education in Botswana*, which interrogates contradictory approaches. While it can be argued that inclusive education historically pursued under the different education policies have enhanced schooling outcomes for some, there are pertinent challenges that need addressing if inclusive education is to realise its full potential. For example, it is noted that child-friendly schools and pastoral care contributed immensely to shaping inclusive education practice in most African countries. As signatory to UN conventions, Botswana is mandated by Education For All and the Millennium Development Goals to provide accessible and equitable education opportunities in pursuit of inclusive education, yet in practice the country remains somewhat exclusionary due to its special education approach to teaching and learning, as evident in the existing special schools and classrooms. The authors point out that a special education approach is justifiable, though it can also be contended that it is an antithesis of inclusive education.

A rethinking of inclusive education could therefore be approached from three theoretical perspectives: social constructivism; the socio-cultural; and the community of learning theories; all of which draw upon learner-diversity and how learners support each other as they learn together in inclusive classroom settings. It would be interesting to see how an approach grounded in transformative education can strengthen such perspectives.

Learning together in inclusive classrooms is only productive and consequential if learners are empowered to achieve their full potential. *Walton's* chapter, titled *Inclusive Education: A Tame Solution to a Wicked Problem?* interrogates the ease with which a vision of an educational system accessible to all, fostering participation, enabling belonging, and gaining powerful learning can be achieved. The difficulty is caused by the pervasiveness of exclusionary pressures in entrenched educational systems that have the potential to confound and constrain efforts towards greater inclusivity. While South Africa has policy and legislation to promote access to education for learners, and to secure support for their diverse learning needs, there is still evidence of exclusion from and within schools. This chapter proceeds from the premise that an understanding of the problem of educational exclusion is necessary to ensure that inclusive education is imagined as a reform initiative to promote social justice. Given the complexity and intractability of educational exclusion, the author uses the concept of a 'wicked problem' to explore some practices of exclusion in education, with particular, though not exclusive reference to South Africa. 'Wicked problems' are conceptualised as complex, dynamic, multi-faceted and intractable. The author argues that, given the complexity of the problem of educational exclusion, we cannot afford a 'tame' or watered down idea of inclusive education, that is, an approach to inclusion merely concerned with ways of 'accommodating' learners with additional support needs in ordinary classrooms. Instead, inclusive education needs to be a social and political project bold enough to identify and challenge the impediments to meaningful inclusion and requiring the radical changes necessary to ensure quality education for all.

Drawing from Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, *Mahlo's Rethinking Inclusive Education in an African Context* similarly notes how inclusive education continues to be a contentious issue in African schooling. In asserting that it is a relatively new concept, with its focus on special education, she draws attention to a failure to acknowledge difference as a significant site for schooling and education. Schools need to provide education for learners who have been traditionally excluded because of profound learning disabilities in order to enhance learning outcomes for all youth. This it itself is not in doubt but it is a question of whether educators and schools will be inclusive and go beyond the traditional markers. The question of what to do and how is equally critical for understanding the dictates of critical inclusion. This contribution is on some educational environmental factors that maintain and perpetuate social and educational injustice. Clearly, we must address these challenges because they have consequences and implications for envisioned African schooling.

In discussions of inclusive education, language as a key aspect of identity is often the least engaged. *Hugo's Language as an Excluding Factor in the South African School System* is makes a much-needed contribution to this collection. The author brings into discussion the question of language as one of the myriad aspects of the learner's identity that shape schooling and knowledge production. It is noted that language is the vehicle that carries educational content and knowledge. Well-developed language abilities and language skills are essential for learning to take place. Unfortunately, when the issue of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the school system is discussed in South Africa the authors observe that "the colonial yoke prevails". In a South African educational context, the LoLT has become an extrinsic barrier to development and progress at school, even causing a breakdown in learning for some. The author raises several issues surrounding the accessibility to language and the use of the various official languages in the school situation. Hugo also helps shed some light on reasons the LoLT itself can be a barrier excluding some learners from attaining their full potential at school. The intervention of corporate capital in African higher education through privatisation measures has come with a high price, notwithstanding any benefits.

*Darko's* paper, *Concealed Market and the Commercialization of Education and its Implication for Inclusivity,* critiques the specific development of market-oriented curricula and research schemes at institutions of higher education, arguing this trend of commercialising educational research and teaching has potential pitfalls in the fight for equity and access to higher education in Africa. Using a Ghanaian case study, the paper highlights a disturbing private hold on the nation's higher education, with glaring social inequalities along lines of class, gender, religious differences having emerged that impact on the ability of local populations to have equal access to education. Are there implications for rethinking schooling and education for inclusion? What are the lessons for rethinking higher education to ensure that it becomes accessible to everyone? The paper suggests ways of understanding the phenomenon of privatisation to articulate alternatives through an effective strategy of inclusive education. This can only ensure that higher education does not privilege the few in Ghana, with wider significance for the debate on inclusive education in Africa.

As editors we have taken the liberty of including in this collection a few chapters that extend the debate on inclusive schooling beyond the African context. *Nyaga's* paper, *New Possibilities for School Curriculum: Praxis of Indigenous Peoples in Kenya,* draws on his academic and experiential knowledge in both Canadian and Kenyan school systems to shows why we need a reframed school curriculum for Africa as way to decolonise education. The paper interrogates the power of Western hegemonic systems of knowledge production to define colonial bodies, histories and experiences and to impact educational journeys of young African learners. Nyaga's experiences with the Kenyan school system leads him to acknowledge the power of Indigenous knowledge and the issues raised have similar implications for pluralistic contexts as borne out of his Canadian educational experience. His paper

demonstrates an ability to tease out possibilities and limitations of the two school systems in a way that leads him to the urgency of promoting inclusive education at levels of classroom practice, teacher's pedagogy and the critical engagement of texts and other curricular resources.

Using equity as a conceptual lens for educational access, *Akanmori's* paper, *A Ghanaian Teacher Evaluates Access and Equity to Education in Canada and Ghana – John Dewey's Philosophy of Education and the Education for All Initiative,* examines the convergences and divergences in inclusive pursuits in the two contexts. Drawing on her insights and intellectual sojourn in Canada and her exposure to some of the conventional discourses for social inclusion, she highlights the educational and material resource gaps between and among countries as a hindrance to the promotion of global peace and social harmony. The work of John Dewey features prominently in her analysis of the challenges of inclusive education, in particular in understanding the role and implications of education for social development. The discussion has some insights on the way forward for African schooling and education in terms of contemporary broader and structural issues that implicate African education around equity and access, especially the current push for Education for All.

*Torres's* chapter, *Transforming Indigenous Curriculum in the Philippines through Indigenous Women's Knowledge and Practices: A Case Study on Aeta Women Healers,* pinpoints some of the similar challenges one encounters in Africa. She notes how Aeta woman healers' epistemologies drawn from medical, political, cultural and spiritual resource base have lessons for an approach to inclusion that recognises the saliency of indigeneity. It is opined that the question of whose knowledge counts and how, even in most communities certain knowledges, can be privileged while others are devalued needs to be addressed as part of any approach to inclusive education. The paper is relevant in broadening debates on inclusion to touch on indigeneity and knowledge production. We must understand and respond to the colonial gaze as a strategy to make room for inclusive education through the transformation of the curriculum. Indigenous cultures and their epistemologies offer us important lessons.

## SUMMARY

As readers engage this text we remind them that inclusive education is not new to African schooling and education. We offer a holistic perspective on inclusion that takes up how questions of local culture, knowledge and Indigenous prisms have been incorporated in schooling and education in various African countries to offer a much broader view of what education is about. The African conception of the family is broad and inclusive, with education having been taken to be more than what goes on in the classroom as traditional African communities have maintained integration of the social, political, cultural, physical and metaphysical.

We have had a knowledge base of holism that sees the individual as a sum of the integrated parts, just as a community becomes a network of individuals working together rather than in isolation. The school has always been part of the community

and education takes place in the homes, families, churches and workplaces. There has been much dictation between the teacher and the parent, and the success and/or failure of one is the success and/or failure of all. The responsibility for taking care of each other has been ingrained within families and communities, as in effect education has been about a community of learners and schooling has been about a community. Bringing such ideas and epistemologies of understanding to schooling and educational practices can position Africa at the forefront of critical discussions on inclusive education, but we need to restore traditional values and ideas. The individual learner is important but so is the community of which they are part.

While conventional approaches to inclusive education may have focused on assisting those deemed 'disadvantaged' or having some physical challenges, we need to develop a much broader view of inclusion, which is about *all*, and making sure that we address issues of power, privilege and dominance which tend to establish advantage and disadvantage among groups and individuals. All learners go to school with their varied and diverse identities. The challenge is for re-visioned schooling and education in an African context to work with a critical view of such diversity that sees difference both as a site of power and domination and source of strength. When acknowledged in schooling and education we hold possibilities of creating better learners and coming up with equitable and enhanced learning outcomes for everyone.

We began this chapter by asking educators to think laterally about educational inclusion. Clearly, we know there are different perspectives we each bring to the topic of inclusive education, and having such multi-perspectives on inclusion is part of the search for answers. As readers engage with this collection of views we are not merely interested in coming to some agreements but in seeing how the theoretical stance we as editors have taken on pedagogical and communicative issues registers with each of us, whether as educators, learners or community workers. There are different stories to be told about inclusion in Africa and ours are just a few of many. It is a beginning for us but it is not the end. As the Kiembu of Kenya say, "One step marks the end of a long journey".

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THERESE MUNGAH SHALO TCHOMBE

# 1. EPISTEMOLOGIES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY FOR PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES IN PRIMARY YEARS (4–11)

ABSTRACT

Epistemologies of inclusion emerged from views about special education that, although different, all focused on disabilities. Accordingly, inclusion emerged as a philosophy that ensured pupils with disabilities would be included in regular classrooms, whether or not they could meet traditional curriculum standards. The limited scope ascribed to inclusion, by focusing only on those with disabilities and difficulties, neglected other disadvantaged groups. Inclusion is about managing diversity, thus the whole school philosophy. With a clear epistemology of inclusive education, pedagogic practices should be derived from an understanding that disability emerges from a different developmental path and should not be based on a deficit hypothesis. Focusing on the impressionable years of 4–11 is important, as this is a significant phase in child development that is crucial for identifying such difference. To achieve the goal of inclusive education therefore requires teachers with transformative pedagogic skills and competences that can only be achieved through reforms in current teacher education programmes. Teachers with an inclusive profile should be critically reflexive in their pedagogic practices. To develop the required competences, the education disciplines must be taught in ways that will address attitudes, values, skills, techniques, beliefs and knowledge, ensuring that these are linked to specific and generic pedagogic competences. Schools are expected to adapt and change in order to embrace inclusive practices as they reflect on their values, address the structure of school organisation, curriculum, assessment and teaching strategies in order to ensure full participation. All of these have major implications for an inclusive education policy.

**Keywords:** diversity, epistemologies of inclusion, pedagogy, critical reflexivity, belonging, transformative teacher.

## INTRODUCTION

The nature of knowledge and how it is constructed and validated (Brophy, 2006; Kirschner, 2009), epistemology can also be defined as how we come about knowing (Scanlan, 2005), providing a context in which to consider the rules and standards

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 19–36.*

that organise perceptions, ways of responding to the world, and the concept of self (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). For this reason it can be seen as the knowledge one holds about a situation or issue and how it impacts and orients thinking about practice. This chapter examines how different types of knowledge about inclusion were constructed and how they highlighted more issues related to special needs education. It traces how the evolution of the concept of inclusion has evolved as a response to the growing demands to address critical social issues related to access, quality, equity, social justice, and acceptance in education and schools. This is critical, as inclusion has from the beginning been concerned with ensuring that pupils with disabilities are included in regular schools. To ensure full participation, they are expected to rethink their values, address their structures, and restructure the curriculum and assessment procedures. The essence is to ensure that all challenges to learning be removed through reviewing the teaching strategies. Understanding the expectations of inclusion from the different epistemologies of inclusion should orient thinking and action necessary to address the whole school philosophy for full inclusive practices. Held knowledge and beliefs about any situation determine how it is managed. Inclusive education is also seen as a consequence of globalisation because it raises great concern about quality and equity, including relevance in education. The aforementioned does not encourage only access and participation with the end product in view, being attainment, but rather the major concern is the extent to which education focuses on learning and outcomes. Inclusive practices can greatly contribute to quality education and ensure equity in classroom participation, addressing cognitive and other self-reliant skills for enhanced self-realisation and greater productivity. On this account, inclusive education can be seen as an important aspect of social inclusion.

Inclusive education, for most policymakers and educationists, accommodates the disabled, those with difficulties, the talented and gifted in regular schools. In some cases, inclusion is about having all children with different disabilities in a class in a special school. The basic premise for inclusion can be identified in the tri-partite categorisation system of ISCED-97, with category A comprising learners whose disabilities have clear biological causes; category B those who are experiencing learning difficulties for no particular reason; and category C those who have difficulties arising from disadvantages caused by socio-cultural factors. The whole school philosophy therefore means all A, B and C as categories found in most classrooms. Even so, in some if not most cases inclusion is still seen only within the context of admitting children with special education needs in regular schools. Thus, disability is seen from a deficit model perspective with special difficulties perceived as a ‘disease’ within the child. Insistence on inclusion as acceptance of pupils with disabilities is still the major concern of inclusion. Of importance here is the engagement of pedagogical practices that ought to address all learners, irrespective of their developmental status, especially those with qualitatively different frames of mind.

Inclusion therefore is about people and society, valuing diversity and overcoming barriers (Topping, 2012) as a dynamic and continuous process. Diversity, a central

element, is not limited to children with different forms of disabilities that are visible (visual, auditory, learning, autism, handicap). The most neglected category is C, children in disadvantaged situations, created by socio-cultural context, such as those with language barriers, orphans, different ethnic groups, immigrants, albinos, pygmies, displaced, religious groups, and street children. In the case of gender and sexuality. For example, in the case of gender, in classroom processes, teachers may marginalise female students, often addressing only low order cognitive questions to female students rather than reinforcing their efforts as they commonly do for the male students (Tchombe, 2014a).

The way society is constructed can lead to different forms of restriction for certain groups, denying them equal opportunity to participate in all life events in their communities. Disability can be seen as a social construct that varies across cultures in the same way as gender, ethnicity and religion, for example. The point remains that inclusive education means accommodating children from remote and nomadic populations, from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and from other disadvantaged or marginalised circumstances in regular education. There are some common challenges that affect the inclusion of all learners in regular schools, related partly to the environment, practices, resources, values and attitudes of the community. If the purpose of education is to engage children in worthwhile learning activities and processes for the development of their competences the facilitating role of the teacher is an important element. Addressing teachers' critical reflexivity requires those who are well trained to be innovative, creative, imaginative, analytic and action-oriented, and to work with all those concerned using an inclusive pedagogy that focuses on process. Through the process learners become more creative and analytical.

Teachers whose teaching is process-oriented base their reflections and actions on sound empirical evidence. Evidence-based knowledge and skills enable them to focus their techniques on ensuring that all learners are fully engaged in academic learning. If such learning occurs within the community of learners, positive human values will prevail. By making learners active in their learning, teachers would shift from the "banking" concept of education, which controls the thinking and action, inhibiting their creative power. Each learner, irrespective of his/her status, should be endowed with creative power that must be nurtured, given an enabling learning environment, with triangulated interactions flowing among teacher/pupils, pupils/teacher, and pupils/pupils action (Freire, 1970, p. 77).

It is a truism that there is a relationship between teachers' underlying beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning, and about ability and disability. The philosophy and theoretical framework guiding general pedagogic practices of inclusion stem from constructivism and social constructivism, with each partner in the teaching and learning process counting. Each learner is a co-constructor of the knowledge that is being generated and there is mediation through scaffolding directed to all learners (Gandis, 1999; Tudge, 1992).

Following from this introduction, the rest of the chapter addresses derivatives of the epistemologies of inclusivity, discusses evidence from a transnational study, and examines some international milestones that have contributed to the epistemology of inclusion. It discusses inclusive education, examines development in childhood years, and looks at traditional African epistemology and inclusion, as well as teacher education.

## DERIVATIVES OF THE EPISTEMOLOGIES OF INCLUSIVITY

In educational institutions, children are defined and categorised from their visible physical characteristics, which impacts on how they are perceived and consequently educated. Such epistemology of personhood determines the nature of institutional acceptance, inclusion and exclusion, dictating how knowledge is taught, learned and assessed. Usually, this attitude is directed by teachers' self-fulfilling prophesies regarding pupils' competences based on teacher's knowledge about whether ability is fixed through a biological given that cannot change or be incremental and thus can be improved upon, through quality socio-cultural inputs (Gandis, 1999). Learning challenges should be the same for all children, except that the environment must be enabling in responding to the specific needs of each child. There is a need to understand that disability, as a developmental process is just as dynamic as other human conditions.

Broadly speaking, the shift in terminology from integration (which is considered as partial inclusion) to inclusion can be said to reflect a change in emphasis from a needs-based agenda to a rights-based agenda (Ainscow, 1997; Thomas, 1997). Evans and Lunt (2002) also argued that, while integration is largely a disability issue, inclusion is usually promoted from a wider principled and idealistic perspective. Social inclusion is about reducing inequalities between the least advantaged groups and communities and the rest of society by closing the opportunity gap and ensuring that support reaches those who need it most. With social inclusion, schools rather than of the pupils should undergo adaptation, without which children's identity may be lost as they struggle to find their own way of integrating into the school culture.

On the other hand, the epistemology of real inclusion is based on the principles that children are different, thus schools need to adjust to embrace their needs. UNESCO (2005) calls for changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies in education, arguing that it is the responsibility of the regular school system to educate all children. Writing on inclusion, Vygotsky (1978) affirmed that each child is unique and has the potential for achieving quality education. Therefore, education policy should respond to diversity of needs, abilities and identities and the curriculum and pedagogical practices must be flexible. Pedagogic practices should minimise barriers that restrict the quality of learning.

Inclusive education is based on different epistemological underpinnings that have political implications, examples of which are related to social cohesion, social identity, self and self-expression. Children should be given the opportunity early

in their development to learn to respect, develop and experience these values in their educational settings, without which they will not help develop a harmonious society. Inclusive education is seen "as an on-going process, in an ever-evolving education system, focusing on those in school but who are not learning" (UNESCO, 2008). Inclusion is also about offering learners the possibility for full self-realization and the fulfilment that successful achievement brings. Evidently, the different epistemological views about inclusion are moving away from mechanical strategies used to overcome disabilities through rote memorisation. Focusing teaching and learning on cognitive processes plays a key role in achieving inclusive education as it tends to make children aware of their own cognitive functioning. It helps children understand and learn better as they manipulate, cooperate, interact and contribute to classroom activities. Teachers' comprehension of how children learn, think and reflect critically and creatively can enhance the construction of meaningful curriculums related to learning in an inclusive classroom.

Inclusion from a broader perspective calls for a fundamental reorganization of regular schools and classrooms in order to cater for a greater diversity of children's needs in the community (Timmons & Walsh, 2010). Such a view involves restructuring the culture, policy and practices in schools because the greatest concern is for learning and participation of all pupils vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as having special educational needs (Booth, Ainscow, & Black-Hawkins, 2000). Inclusion does not place pupils living with disabilities or those in disadvantaged situations in a disfavouring educational position. Providing different schooling systems such as regular and special schools for children of the same socio-cultural context is creating two social worlds (Cole, 1998), which means that there exist two types of pupils in an educational system, the regular and special needs. Given that education determines national character, having a separate education system for different groups of children leads to the development of inappropriate attitudes and diverse belief systems in a given society. Maintaining some pupils in special schools and support classes still seems discriminatory and cannot be justified on the basis of equity. This is marginalisation, even segregation within the education system, and could impact on access to job opportunities and create categories of the weak and strong, leading eventually to a power struggle. The argument that there are special needs children is questionable, as Stubbs (2002) postulates that any child can experience difficulty in learning and that those children with intellectual impairment often learn well in certain areas. This should draw educators' attention to address special intelligence in curriculum issues to give each child the opportunity to develop their specific competence. From these views, inclusion is premised on the right of all children to be full members of regular classes of their neighbourhood schools (Dixon & Verenikina, 2007).

The perspective developed by Dixon and Verenikina (2007) regards disability as a socio-cultural developmental phenomenon that consists of two types: *primary* and *secondary*. The former is organic impairment, the secondary disability as distortions of higher psychological functions due to social factors, thus, developmental delays

or even differences that characterise and limit the course of child development is a function of the social environment through poor access to socio-cultural knowledge, lack of social interaction and opportunities to acquire psychological tools (Dixon & Verenikina, 2007). These exacerbate primary disability to the extent that expectations and attitudes change access to social experiences, leading to the development of secondary disability. Inclusion comes from an epistemological shift in attention from service provision to the psychology tool of a sense of belonging.

## EVIDENCE FROM TRANSNATIONAL STUDIES

Evidence from transnational studies in five countries (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria and Togo) in Africa on institutional preparedness for inclusion illustrated in varying degrees that policy is still limited to children with disabilities and difficulties and does not address the disadvantaged. In some cases inclusion as evident in the policies means mere physical presence of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools but it is not addressing children with other social problems (Tchombe, 2014b, 2014c). Inclusion is somehow limited to academic inclusion with little effort to address social inclusion so what really obtains is seen in statements that describe educational provisions and some psychosocial support for children and young people with special education needs in mainstream schools. Little is said about what constitutes inclusive practices, teachers' inclusive profile and/or how they should be trained. In most schools, marginalisation and inclusion co-exist, however the emerging different views about inclusion have also shifted attention to new political perspectives, with much discussion on globalising quality and equity. Quality development for all in childhood years has been well articulated, not only in child psychology as a discipline and other literature but also in international declarations such as the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child to Education, so they can achieve self-reliance and social integration. The issues of equity and social justice generating new thinking about enabling children's healthy development are covered by the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All in 1990 and its focus on child-centred pedagogy; the Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for persons with Disabilities, whereby education has the responsibility to integrate persons with disabilities in the system; and the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action adopted on Special Needs Education, with its broadened definition embracing all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic and other conditions. The challenge for the school system and the classroom teachers in regular schools is great, with some countries, such as Kenya and Nigeria, well advanced in implementing these prescriptions (Tchombe, 2014c).

In the UK, for example, there is a legal obligation on schools to provide curricular and physical access for all learners (Topping, 2012). Acceptance and a sense of belonging in the school community are strongly encouraged, and Farrell and Ainscow (2002) have provided a holistic framework on how inclusion should be described as a cycle, of Presence – Acceptance – Participation – Achievement.

This provides an important framework that implicitly addresses the education system as a whole, including teachers and all partners. The focus is on learning outcomes reflecting each learner's full engagement with inclusion seen from this framework supporting the achievement and participation of all those facing learning and behavioural challenges, including barriers to learning. With this new vision, Farrell and Ainscow also argue for an expansion of the scope of inclusion whereby schools should engage all families and the community, as well as all children, seeking effective intergenerational learning across the lifespan in informal, formal and non-formal education.

From this perspective, four levels of the expanding notions of inclusion have evolved (Topping, 2012). Firstly, children with special education needs are found in mainstream schools; secondly, those with special education needs access the mainstream curriculum with social and emotional integration; thirdly, all achieve and participate, despite challenges stemming from poverty, class, race, religion, language, gender and, ethnicity; and fourthly, all children, parents and community equally achieve and participate in lifelong learning in many forms in and out of schools, colleges and universities. This paper postulates that each level could be based on different epistemologies of inclusion, shifting from integration and progressively moving towards partial inclusion then full inclusion, which in many ways determines epistemologies of inclusive education practices. It further draws from on the evaluation report on mainstreaming children with special education needs, with Pirrie, Head, and Bran (2005), devising a topology of segregation, integration and inclusion (adapted from *Integration and Inclusion*, produced by Disability Equality in Education, and available at http://www.diseed.org.uk/integration_inclusion.htm).

From the above, certain epistemological inferences can be made. The first two levels of Topping's notions of epistemology are based on needs which reflect the deficit hypothesis, perpetuating the medical model, by which the orientation is individual adaptation, emphasising benefits to the disabled person, managing difference, stressing process, focusing on curriculum delivery and improving educational opportunity for the disabled learners. The third and fourth levels engage all children as part of knowledge construction, ensuring that they participate and achieve support from parents and the community as partners in the education process. The emerging views address rights, positing a social model of disability. As observed, the social model postulates institutional adaptation and support for all, emphasising benefits to all and celebrating diversity in unifying the system. The critical value of the model is that it stresses outcomes and focuses on curriculum content, professional skills and partnership with parents and community for school effectiveness and improvement (Pirrie, Head, & Brna, 2005).

## TRADITIONAL AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY AND INCLUSION

Inclusion has been the practice in Africa's holistic developmental education (Nsamenang, 2011; Tchombe, 2011). Traditional African epistemology of human

relationships has been based on humanness, communality and interdependence (Phasha & Moichela, 2011). The Ubuntu concept meaning 'beingness' as used in Southern Africa illustrates an African philosophy of living with one another of which the values of being honest, accommodative, sharing, saving life at all costs, and respecting young and old are paramount (Mpofu, Kasayira, Mhaka, Chireshe, & Maunganidze, 2007). As pointed out by the authors, the concept is synonymous with valuing human dignity which appeared in a Eurocentric agenda only in the 20th century, which reiterates the importance of the African social philosophy exemplified in a social support system that involves everyone. The concept is based on qualities such as an individual's participation in valued family and community activities. Participation by all is crucial for this guiding African philosophy, stating that no disabled person is seen as disabled by his/her kinsmen (Mpofu et al., 2007).

Generally, in African settings, exclusion, segregation and even stigmatisation were unacceptable, though they may have occurred in some situations. Education is not only developmental but is also seen as a dialectical process whereby the self, autonomy and respect for others emerge through everyday actions.

## UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDHOOD YEARS FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

The impressionability of childhood years for all aspects of human psychological development begs for sensitivity in each child's uniqueness, enabling access to quality relevant education in childhood years by laying a firm foundation for later development that is critical for education. However, this can only be possible based on parental and teachers' held epistemologies about childhood to determine practice. Parents, teachers and even children themselves each hold personal epistemology, determined by their beliefs, aspirations and expectations (Hofer, 2001). Knowledge of what influences children and their development of cognitive, social and emotional competences, among many other aspects, are important. Even how they form friendship groups and deal with emotions and develop identity are critical developmental concerns. All of these impact on how they perceive self in the learning context and in relation to others.

In any teaching and learning situation, therefore, children will participate and be motivated, if they are have a teacher who makes them see the worth of learning for themselves for a better future, one who arouses their enthusiasm and morale, makes them feel valued, and reveals to them the worth of spiritual and cultural values. Teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions about child development and learning, including unconditional love, among other factors, will enrich their technical capital in managing an inclusive classroom.

The theoretical and conceptual perspectives of this chapter come more from Vygotsky's work on defectology, the premise on which he built his developmental theory. He focused on three central concepts, with mediation being central to all aspects of knowledge co-construction (Blanck, 1992; Moll, 1992). Mediation

strategy is seen as the carrier of socio-cultural patterns and knowledge and the zone of proximal development (Moll, 1992) the focus of mediation. Vygotsky posits that the model can be applied to all children, including those with disabilities, particularly with the use of scaffolding strategies to ensure the participation of every child. Vygotsky`s social constructionist epistemology constitutes the basis for developing a unique vision for future models of special education, of an inclusion based on positive differentiation (Gindis, 2003) that focuses on strengthening individual skills. Vygotsky saw human development as a socio-genetic process with learning coming about through social interactions between children and adults. But Vygotsky postulates that the principles of development are the same for all children, including those with disabilities or in disadvantaged situations. Children with disabilities are not just less developed than their normal peers but rather they develop in qualitatively different ways (Gindis, 1999).

From the above, disadvantaged children are more likely to be responsible, creative, and independent and can express themselves if well nurtured. In later childhood, Piaget (1969) tells us that the child's intelligence is more systematic and logical, though concrete. All of this is vital information for understanding the child if there is a difference in the normal patterns of development. All children in the childhood years do express hope, will, purpose and competence (Erikson, 1974). Children go through the transitions from the world at home to that of school and peers, learning to make things, using tools, and acquiring skills. Those with any status can accomplish in an environment that is rich with interactions that also encourage positive attachment. If they can discover pleasure in intellectual stimulation, being productive, seeking success, they will develop a sense of competence. All aspects of development are interconnected in one way or another, thus no aspect of development can be studied in isolation. A major proponent of the ecological theory, Bronfenbrenner's main argument is that the developing child is embedded in a series of complex and interactive systems. The implications of the ecological perspective and its environmental determinants to child development are not genetically transmitted, but are better explained by the developmental niche theory (Super & Harkness, 1986) to be part of the impinging physical, social and cultural milieu of development. Bonding and attachment (Bowlby, 1977) still play a major role in the developmental process, and are important mechanisms for inclusion.

Childhood is also a period when peer support or non-support, particularly for those with differences in their development. The child may experience rejection, discrimination, stigmatisation and even exclusion. Inclusion at an early stage is important, anticipated by Vygotsky when he suggested that handicapped children needed to be educated together with other children in a challenging social environment.

Managing diversity requires a teacher who understands what constitutes regular developmental process and such knowledge provides the building blocks, comprising beliefs, attitudes, values and principles directing education practices. This is because knowledge of differences is value added to perceptions about

diversity (Eriksen, 2006). As Lipsky and Gartner, (1999) argued, there is no clear line between the cognitive characteristics of pupils with or without disabilities, and there is no support for the contention that specific categories of pupil learn differently, so separate provision for them cannot be justified. Understanding disability as a developmental process is crucial because it provides a new vision on the epistemologies of inclusion. Vygotsky postulated that disability may change during development and is sensitive to the influence of remediation programs and social influences and attitudes. Vygotsky strongly argued that the principles of child development are the same for all children, irrespective of their status.

Today, children's needs are given high priority on the social and educational agenda, but they are often considered as if they exist independently of the socio-cultural context, by which materials of knowledge in social upbringing are usually generated. An individual's epistemology (Hofer, 2001) of types of developmental disability and disadvantages are derived from cultural context, prescribed beliefs, skills and attitudes, actions which are based on the idea of theory of mind that permits individuals to recognise others as having the capacity to exercise their originality and critical judgment (Hayes, 1994). For example, having the knowledge and understanding that independence and confidence are valuable psychological tools during childhood and for all groups of children will guide the direction that will enable them to develop these competences. Classroom practices will be geared towards helping children have good feelings about and believing in self themselves, knowing they matter and belong, and are valued, wanted and respected.

Inclusion is based on a philosophy that is enabling and that all children can achieve, but the question arises, does physical disability mean psychological deficiencies in terms of cognitive capacity, language deficiency, low learning capacity or even a lack of motivation? Some of the misconceptions about the capacity of children living with disability or found in socio-cultural, economic and political disadvantaged situations are attributed to the high premium placed on IQ, the basis for evaluating what constitutes intelligent behaviour by Eurocentric standards. There are other types of intelligence highly valued today, as pointed out by Cloete (2010), notably, creative, factual, analytical, practical, emotional, interpersonal, linguistic, physical/spatial, musical and financial and added motivation. Schools can create room to give each child the opportunity to develop more than one of these. Though practical intelligence is looked low down upon, it is an important capacity favoured in some cultures. For instance, socialisation of children in an African cultural context focuses more on observation, modelling, action and doing. When a child uses the hands to carry out activities the functioning of the hands is under the control of the mind, demonstrating that they are the tools of the mind. Practical intelligence would partner well with creative and analytical intelligences, particularly when teachers engage children in hands-on activities. The issue here is not factual intelligence, which is the basis for judging competence through IQ test results, thus inclusive education would need to offer an education through its curricular activities that went beyond factual intelligence to address practical and interpersonal intelligences relevant for

collaborative works and harmonious living. Inclusive education could also focus on musical intelligence, valuable for developing emotions and therapeutic activities. We may need to revisit the writings of great educators such as Plato, Froebel, Pestalozzi, Comenius and even Rousseau or Montessori on development in childhood years for new orientations on inclusive pedagogy.

The main purpose of education is to serve as a mechanism for maintaining and promoting social cohesion and building social mobility, achievable if the school curricula were to create opportunities through their pedagogical practices that tap into children's potential ability or abilities. In such cases, the dialectic relationship between educational inclusion and social inclusion would have dual value for the individual child, thus, inclusive education is important for its social, ethical, economic, academic and psychological values (Raelin, 2007). Even though the diversification of educational provisions and the personalisation of learning experiences may be difficult, they are important components of inclusive practices (Daniels, 2001), helping enormously in increasing the degree of pupils' participation and commitment. However, education as a field of study borrows its epistemological tenets and research methods from psychology, philosophy, anthropology and sociology, including Indigenous knowledge systems, and studying these social science disciplines in education does not provide in-depth orientations of how to address the epistemology and pedagogy of inclusion.

## TEACHER EDUCATION

All practices are driven by principles derived from theories. If learning is a dialectical mediated process (Raelin, 2007) then teachers' actions in classrooms would need to be based on sound continuous critical reflections, where mastery of the subject matter, managing and responding to the dynamics of the learning environment are guided by sound principles. During teaching, teachers make a myriad of pedagogic decisions that enable pupils' participation through different approaches, such as cooperative/collaborative learning in group work and the use of peer tutoring. Such participatory approaches enhance individual and collective reflections, whilst enabling learners to recognise patterns and make improvements. Such sense of community, made up of diversity of learners, their peers and teachers, will enhance and enrich the process of situating knowledge within pupils' experiences, permitting the children to engage in meaningful learning.

Self-efficacy has been established as a critical construct in social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), which is the strength of belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach set goals. In inclusive classrooms, teachers would need to ensure that the child's sense of self does not suffer, so it is important for teachers to know that self-efficacy affects every aspect of human endeavour and determines one's power to change negative life situations and experiences. Expectations of it are looked upon as primary cognitive determinants of a child's will to want to engage in class activities, therefore having a great effect on his or her self-regulation to want

to achieve. The child's confidence needs to be fuelled through targeting specific learning each time to provide more opportunities to accompany the child him or her in the learning process. An important engineering factor in an inclusive classroom, is the extent to which teacher-pupil and pupil-pupils' interactions help the individual child to want to participate. Teachers would need this theoretical knowledge to reinforce classroom practices.

From an inclusive perspective, teacher education and training would need to shift from a rather mechanistic to an organic approach that is more constructive and qualitative. An organic approach addresses training that makes teachers capable of matching their teaching to learner diversities, making them accountable for not only the success of their pupils' learning but also the extent to which they fully engage all pupils in class participation. Teacher education and training must shift from merely providing student teachers with survival skills to handle and cope with classroom routines and rituals to more transformative practices. These would be based on the teacher's reflections and should make pedagogic actions more dynamic and interesting for children, and intrinsically something they want to learn. However, teachers' employment of survival skills in their classroom activities is driven by the prescriptions of an examination- dominated syllabus, not the realities of the classroom context. On this account, teachers' mechanical approach to teaching is to rush to complete the prescribed schemes of work for the term or the syllabus for the year, with no attention given to how children are learning.

Teachers need to be able to grasp the broader issues of knowledge and professional skills for inclusion, create and re-create knowledge, understand their learners and effectively deal and interact with them. In addition, the shift from teacher-centred and task-centred to learner-centred education drives home a new philosophy of how to teach, maintain positive teacher-pupils relationships, and ensure partnership through better classroom structure (Tchombe, 2006). An inclusive classroom needs teachers whose profiles are built on values, beliefs, knowledge, competences and attitudes related to inclusive education. Through education courses, specific objectives should be identified to develop competences, a topology of which should be identified, standardised and incorporated in teacher education programmes for the development of an inclusive profile in both initial and in-service training. Teacher education needs to go beyond producing people who can merely teach and who are intellectually equipped to develop their professional competences further (McNamara & Desforges, 1979), to training for a clear knowledge of situational understanding of the context of the educative process (Tchombe, 2006). Teachers, therefore, should be trained well in the use of small group work, role-play, and drama, encouraging classroom interaction from a triangulated paradigm in which there is a flow of interaction between teacher-pupil, pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil. Critical reflexivity for pedagogic practices in the primary years today needs teachers who can assume leadership in ensuring quality learning, teaching and assessment in a whole school setting. Critical reflexivity should be evident in a teacher's ability to ensure he/she allocates active learning time for all children through monitoring,

maintaining smooth flow in class activities and children's attention. The teachers' metacognitive skills to handle these issues should be addressed during their education and training.

Inclusive practices demand teachers to be competent in developing knowledge acquisition and retrieval skills through teaching that is based on the process of the disciplines, not the content. By this reflection, the triangulation of the structure of the discipline, the diversity of learners and tools should orient teachers' pedagogical practices. Teaching from this perspective adopts a constructivist approach, within which theoretical framework pupils are not defined as having a deficient approach to knowledge acquisition and retrieval but different and unique modalities, which can be developed through a teacher's constructive pedagogical approach (Kirschner, 2009). Teachers have the responsibility to address pupils' creative process through using pedagogic skills and techniques of probing, questioning, prompting, guiding and modelling to ensure the acquisition of new knowledge. These techniques are highly focused on constructivist/socio-constructivist pedagogy. Teachers must learn how to start teaching by using induction devices and pupils' previous knowledge. Most teachers are good at setting primary goals, ensuring pupils' full participation in the learning process and encouraging deep rather than surface approaches to learning (Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999). To prepare teachers for inclusion would require new curriculums addressing specific competences, teachers' attitudes, beliefs and knowledge. Student teachers must have access to an inclusive resource centre and learn how to use technological devices to enhance participation. Practicing teachers must have the opportunity for continuous professional growth through seminars, workshops and school-based training.

Theorising of 'epistemologies of inclusion' illustrating knowledge and establishing a connecting link of the epistemologies of inclusion and the practice of inclusion

This chapter has presented a comprehensive and coherent argument with appropriate explanatory theoretical framework to guide understanding of inclusion, its culture and practices. As pointed out by Beattie JHM (n.d.) cited in Tchombe and Nsamenang, "It is difficult to understand what people are doing without trying to understand what they think, they are doing" (2013, p. 5). Ryle (1978) made the distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that", the former representing the tacit dimension which often eludes our capacity to abstractly frame our action (pp. 26–32). The concept Ubuntu clearly illustrates Indigenous knowledge, directing epistemologies of inclusion and the major theoretical premise that is humanistic.

To continue with establishing links or connectedness, three interrelated concepts having implications for the epistemologies of inclusion are identified, namely, knowledge, theories and practice. Knowledge of inclusion emerging from medical and social models seems to have generated the deficit and difference hypotheses leading to different epistemological positions. These models have differentially provided insights into knowledge of special education, leading to variations in meaning making, orienting of curriculum development and its processes. Evidently, the scenario leads to the creation of different dimensions of understanding the forces

orienting the different epistemologies of inclusion as it impacts the education process. Traditional modes of thinking about the curriculum would need to be revisited to enable teachers to develop deeper and better strategies in the teaching process.

The deficit hypothesis, based on a reductionist theoretical framework, by implication, reveals that, in the practical context of teaching and learning, selfhood is not challenged. The teaching learning processes are not driven by epistemologies that better equip all learners to think differently about self and learning to develop mastery and competences. The disease and deficit epistemology of disabilities obstructed the perspectives for explaining developmental differences, so to be clear about knowledge of the teaching that will lead to critical reflexivity teachers should search for the scientific basis of their professional work (Tchombe, 2006).

Constructivist and socio-constructivist approaches of Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky and Dewey proposed conceptual and practical approaches in teaching and learning that are deeply entrenched in processes. The theoretical framework sees each learner play an active role in knowledge acquisition. From this perspective, the concept of knowledge is employed to incorporate practice that pays special attention not so much to the content of knowledge but more to the processes that encourage more knowing-in-action and their outcomes. In any classroom in which such pedagogical strategies are employed, learners, irrespective of their status, learn better because learning is a shared joint process in a responsive context (Gandis, 1999). Such practices contribute much to knowledge, especially when accompanied by mediated action that is mutually reciprocated. The social model thus allows a central position to the learner in the teaching/learning process, with focus on cognitive perspectives. This model in practice enables the learner to make sense of self and even of the world around.

The main argument is that epistemologies of inclusion should engage learners in meaningful and relevant activities that permit them to apply the concepts they are attempting to learn. Dewey (1938) reminds us that education is an active and constructive process. Learning in an inclusive classroom must be grounded in experiences and active inquiry in relevant practical contexts as well as providing learners with opportunities to reflect upon their experiences and to express their thoughts. Kolb (1984) believes that learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience. Any learner can engage in making sense or meaning through the process of active engagement between the inner and outer world of the environment. Teachers and educators should be aware that learners, based on their learning styles, are sensitive to learning preferences. Epistemologies of inclusion require that educators understand the main conceptual, structures and the nature of knowledge (inclusion) for effective and efficient inclusive practices, providing each learner with opportunities for transformative learning. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theoretical premise provides valuable orientation for inclusive practices because of their postulation that learning is not the acquisition of knowledge by individuals but a process of social participation in a well-organised situation.

Their views of participation in communities of practice should enrich learning in an inclusive classroom

Changing worldviews with increased knowledge, crystalising better understanding of disabilities, disadvantaged and differences have led to clearer understanding. Establishing links and discovering patterns have enabled the identification of explanatory propositions to support inclusive teaching so as to develop professional knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

Scholarly research into the relationship between the teacher's qualifications (characteristics generally) and the child's outcomes now supports the notion that, first and foremost, teachers must have knowledge, skills, and dispositions about child development and learning (Weichel, 2003). The World Report on Disability (2011) suggests that appropriate training of mainstream teachers is crucial if they are to be confident and competent in teaching children with diverse needs. The report clearly emphasises the need for this training to focus upon attitudes and values, not just knowledge and skills. If a child with visual or auditory impairment achieves the same level (or even higher) of development as an unimpaired child, then the former achieves this in another way, by another course, by other means. Vygotsky (1993) argued that blindness was not a disease but a normal condition, sensed as his different only indirectly and as a result of social experiences.

To enable all children to reach their potential levels requires that teachers adapt their pedagogical practices, especially their questioning and explanation skills (interactive behaviours'), to addressing the needs and characteristics of every child. Addressing diversity requires greater professional competence. Teacher training most often focuses on academic subjects rather than on generic and specific pedagogical skills, capacity for critical thinking and creative transformative teaching. Teacher education programmes must be reformed to define areas of competences for an inclusive teacher. Education has major social consequences and through inclusion this is even more so powerful for development (Vygotsky, 1993). The type of knowledge held about inclusion will greatly impact on patterns of classroom pedagogic behaviours and practices.

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MAHLAPAHLAPANA J. THEMANE

# 2. CREATING RIGHTS-BASED AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an understanding of inclusive education that addresses questions of power and social difference. Rather than taking a traditional and narrow focus on physical disabilities this takes a broad view, informed by the Charter on Children's Rights and the Child Friendly Schools framework that promote access and quality education. More specifically, it emerges from a sequel of small-scale case studies on making schools enabling and safe environments in which children and youth feel safe and supported. It is within the context of these small scale studies that it argues for a form of inclusive education that is committed to making schools important settings for development. It shifts from a focus on special education of students with learning disabilities to addressing a broader view of inclusion that highlights questions of power and social difference and equity. To achieve this objective, it addresses schooling and education in impoverished societies such as those found in Africa. Firstly, I introduce the problem, sketching the conditions under which schooling and education take place in Africa. Secondly, I look at South Africa, with a brief historical picture and description of the evolution of the Child Friendly Schools framework. Thirdly, I discuss the Child Friendly School's three characteristics (a rights-based and inclusive school; safety, protective and caring environments; and gender-sensitive school that promotes equity) to illustrate the need for a broader view of inclusive education.

**Keywords:** inclusive education; child-friendly schools; inclusivity democratic participation; learner-centeredness.

The question of what Inclusive Education entails has been the subject of much debate in recent years (Mittler, 2012; Zhang, 2013; Göransson, Nilholm, & Karlsson, 2011), prominent in which has been its reconceptualisation. The many perspectives that have emerged may be classified into two main categories, namely, special education, focusing on the physical disabilities of learners, and a broad view that focusses on questions of power and social difference. In Africa, inclusive education has been largely located in the former, but this view is limited because it neglects the socio-political environment in which schooling and education take place.

Studies (Cornell & Mayer, 2010; Masitsa, 2011) suggest that teaching and learning is most effective in secure environments in which learners feel safe to

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learn. School safety can be conceptualised as having three domains: *physical*, which involves all parts of the body, including access to nutrients (food, water, and sleep) and lack of exposure to physical danger; *emotional*, which includes a feeling of belonging and connection as well as freedom from embarrassment, sarcasm, teasing, harassment, relational bullying, stigmatisation, and other forms of humiliation; and *intellectual*, relating to feeling comfortable, taking academic risks, expressing oneself and resilience (Themane & Osher, 2014; Vogel, Seaberry, Barnes, & Kelley, 2003; Prinsloo, 2005; Masitsa, 2011).

Safe and inclusive schools are characterised by healthy conditions in which teachers and learners are not faced with gender-based violence, unsafe or at-risk health practices leading to illness, teenage pregnancy and early drop-out (Vermeer & Tempelman, 2006). They are connected to their communities, and parents' participation in the education of their children is high (Fourie, 2003; Kalenga, Fourie, & Maphosa, 2014; Palmer, 2005; van Jaarsveld, Minnaar, & Morrison, 2012). Of these different facets of safety, this chapter focuses on rights-based and inclusive education, with particular focus on South Africa.

## THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prior to 1994, South Africa was characterised by a violation of human rights, with the apartheid education system designed to be discriminatory and non-inclusive. Its victims, Africans in particular, were subjected to segregation and discrimination, excluded and deprived of access to quality education, and thus the main victims of this harsh and cruel system of governance. They were subjected to an inferior education system designed to prepare them for inferior jobs in society and exclude them from important positions in society. Segregation, discrimination and disenfranchisement denied them access to many opportunities, and led to their general marginalisation.

It is against this backdrop that this chapter locates inclusive education within a broad view, as opposed to a narrow one that emphasises the accommodation of children with physiological difficulties. It accommodates diversity in its various forms, such as race, gender, language and power, against which background initiatives need to be conceptualised and understood. It is a shift from the focus of inclusive education on learners with special needs that dominates other discourses, and it creates space in which to address issues related to violation of human rights which undergird the provision of quality education.

The violation of human rights, in particular that of women and children, is not unique to South Africa as most developed countries continue to struggle with it, despite being long-standing democracies. However, attempts have been made, such as initiatives to expand basic education under the auspices of the World Conference on Education for All (EFA, 1990) (Haggis, 1991); the World Summit for Children (WSC, 1990) (World Health Organization & UNICEF, 1996); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1990), and the Millennium Development Goals, concerned with the provision of quality rather than quantity of education. These

attempts, despite their lack of palpable changes, have expanded the boundaries of understanding inclusive education from a needs-based to a right-based approach (Hall, 2013).

A shift of focus from a narrow view (needs-based) to a broad view (rights-based and inclusive) of inclusive education seeks to address unrealised rights of millions of disadvantaged children, notably their lack of quality education in countries such as South Africa. The broad view helps the idea of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities to be understood as a systemic, structural and instructional problem of conventional schooling rather than just a physiological problem. Such an analysis shifts the focus away from the individual learner to the broad structures of the schooling system, that is, structures for teaching, learning and administration of education that underlie it (Bernstein, 1971). One such framework is that of Child Friendly Schools, which provides a lens through which to focus on the quality or lack thereof of education provision within the broad view of inclusive education.

## THE CONTEXT OF THE CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

Of the three main initiatives that have pushed the idea of the broad view of inclusive education, the first is the school effectiveness and improvement movement, which emphasised the importance of making schools work by affording all children access to quality education (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). It has consistently pointed to the intellectual poverty of the Bronfenbrenner (1979) eco-systemic theory, which posits that students with learning difficulties should adapt to the environment in which they study rather than looking at a broader picture that questions why the conditions exist as they do. However, this movement has not fully addressed such issues. Secondly, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2009) endeavours to create conducive learning environments that address social determinants of health that are barriers to learning for disadvantaged learners, in particular, school factors that hinder mental and emotional health, and focus on the importance of safe, caring and friendly learning. This initiative is informed by the social model of understanding inclusive education, regarded by McCray, Turner, Hall, Price and Constable (2014) as disability in dynamic interaction between humans and their surroundings. Emphasis is shifted from the individual to the broader social, cultural, economic and political environment. Thirdly, UNICEF's advocacy of inter-connectedness between the child, family and community in the delivery of quality education has paved the way for the broad view of UE (Abrahams, Matthews, & Ramela, 2011). These three initiatives are a basis for understanding inclusive education as working with difference, strength and power inequalities.

The Child Friendly Schools framework extends the scope of inclusive education from a merely classroom-based approach to one that deal with power, accountability and transparency on issues of schooling. These issues have dominated the agenda of three international movements: the Convention of the Child; International Human Rights, and the Declaration of Education for All (UNICEF, 2006). Without going

into finer details, it was within these initiatives and movements that the broad view of inclusive education evolved around the world. In South Africa, they informed the White Paper Number 6 (Department of Education, 2006) that seeks to widen the scope of inclusive education from focusing on learners with special needs or special schools to embracing other forms of power relations in education and training. It encouraged enrolment and attendance of learners with some form of disability in mainstream schools, respect for all children's rights, and recognition of diversity of their cultural heritage. While this development is a step in the right direction, much still needs to be done, as studies have argued that its implementation in Africa remains a mirage (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2012). Implementation falls short of confronting real structural and power issues, and other social ills, such as substance abuse, violence and sexuality, HIV and AIDS related issues.

Generally, the epoch has been characterised by efforts to promote human rights, redress past imbalances, and make education inclusive and accessible to the majority of the disenfranchised. This was initiated by the dismantling of a separate education system with the principles of unity, inclusivity, democratic participation and child-centred teaching as its cornerstones. Although inclusive education is difficult to define, with its variations and understandings across contexts and nuances that reflect ideological and disciplinary backgrounds, South Africa needs to be applauded for this bold step of contextualising inclusive education in its proper historical context and by initiating pedagogic discourse around pertinent issues. However, this bold step, notwithstanding the pedagogical aspects of inclusion knowledge, has received scant attention in international literature on teacher education for inclusion, with much of the content of teacher education initiatives being driven by ideas of what teachers need, or what policy dictates. There is thus a need for critical engagement with the pedagogic discourse of inclusive education in the country, with a view to understanding more about the processes. Among a myriad of issues underpinning these issues is the question of safety and security of schools.

Many countries that also struggle with making inclusive education work in their schools have adopted the Child Friendly Schools framework, with some pockets of success. For instance, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia and Ethiopia, with historical educational contexts similar to South Africa, also struggle to make schools democratic, leaner-centred and inclusive. Among other strategies they have used to turn their schools around in order to address their challenges is the Child Friendly Schools framework.

## THE SOUTH AFRICAN VERSION OF THE CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

The Child Friendly Schools framework is an offshoot of the three major global initiatives: the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) (Lochan, 2014), the World Summit for Children (1990), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). These three initiatives focus mainly on expanded Early Child Development,

universal access to basic education with reduced gender disparities, rates of adult illiteracy and enhanced life skills through multiple education channels. Later, in the mid-1990s, focus shifted to the provision of quality education more than just access, thus, among other priorities for UNICEF were quality-related matters, which led to a shift from needs-based to rights-based focus.

The focus on rights raises questions on understanding the broader view of inclusive education, such as: who are the out-of-school children? Where do they live? What are their backgrounds? Why do current facilities, curriculum and strategies not attract and retain these children? How relevant is formal schooling to their local life skills? These questions, in turn, raise further questions about children's safety and security, health, quality education, and their classroom, school and community environments. Furthermore, initiatives to attract, enrol and retain the 'hardest-to-reach' children are necessarily more expensive, and more difficult, requiring more creative and perhaps different incentives, rewards, learning environments, teaching and learning strategies, materials, and support services, to those employed in traditional schooling for black children. It was these questions, and others that prompted the UNICEF Education Cluster to coin the concept Child Friendly Schools (Allan, 2010).

The framework has taken different shapes in various countries as global, regional and national workshops have disseminated and refined their principles, encouraging diversity in adaptation of model schools and their communities to evolve practices to their unique contexts. UNICEF has supported pilot schools to evolve, refine and document progress, based on experience, analysis and reflection of their contexts. To this end it has responded with zeal to adopt and adapt models as an overarching approach, consistent with Education For All and Millennium Development Goal commitments, rights-based programming imperatives, and aims of other organisations such as the WHO. South Africa has adapted the Child Friendly Schools framework as Safe and Caring Child Friendly Schools, a label considered suitable for embracing the broader conception of inclusive education.

In South Africa, as in other parts of the world, current educational thinking underpinning inclusive education reflects a move away from a pathological approach to understanding the sources that cause learning barriers, fitting well within a Child Friendly Schools framework that locates barriers to learning and training in the entire system rather than focusing on an individual (Department of Education, 2008). This implies that barriers may be located within the broader social, economic and political context, not just in a single school or individual. This thinking has its understanding that there are layers in the education systems that interact with each other to produce certain conditions that might impede effective schooling. Therefore, the pathological view of inclusive education is inadequate because it disregards the importance of multiplicity of issues that are at play in the delivery of quality education.

This view suggests that an effective implementation of inclusive education requires interaction with implicit factors that underlie the education system, but Bronfenbrenner's eco-systematic theory of falls shorts of this level of analysis because it does not go beyond interaction with the environment or seek to engage

with epistemological paradigms that shape an education system. In contrast, the Child Friendly Schools framework attempts to embrace inclusive education from a broad perspective rather than a narrow one that only takes matters at face value. The consideration of implicit factors is espoused by UNICEF in its endeavour to make schools right-based and inclusive.

The South African Department of Education has, since the dawn of the new dispensation, worked with several organisations to develop strategies aimed at making schools rights-based and inclusive. In particular, UNICEF assisted in the development of the Safe and Caring Child Friendly Schools programme, to address challenges of social exclusion, such as out-of-school children in disadvantaged areas (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012). However, although great strides have been taken in making schools right-based and inclusive, especially in the previously disadvantaged communities, much work remains undone. Most of these schools still face numerous challenges that make them unsafe and unfriendly for children, notably to turn Safe and Caring Child Friendly Schools into a system-wide programme rather than just an add-on project.

The Child Friendly Schools framework espouses six characteristics, namely, that schools should be (i) rights-based and inclusive; (ii) gender sensitive and promote equity; (iii) safe, protective and caring; (iv) effective in terms of teaching; (v) promote health; (vi) forge community links. In keeping with the scope of this chapter I discuss the three most pertinent.

## A RIGHTS-BASED AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

As I have argued, the broad view espouses inclusive education that goes beyond the purview of special education, focusing on learning disabilities to highlight questions of power and social difference. Among other things, such a view advocates the restoration of values of dignity, respect and responsibility to expose learners to human rights issues, such as the struggle for democracy that underpins the provision of education. To achieve them, schools should create classroom environments and teaching content that are learner-centred. A school curriculum should inform how learners learn, be treated by their teachers, treat each other and take their rightful place in communities, with a sense of mission to promote social justice. Thus, inclusive education should be understood to deal with issues of diversity in its broader terms to ensure equal opportunities for all students.

A rights-based school respects and responds to diversity and ensures equal opportunity for all, treating diversity as an opportunity for quality education rather than a stumbling block. Its curriculum does not discriminate on the admission of any learner based on colour, creed, physical or mental ability, economic status or culture. More specifically, it promotes inclusivity by purposely seeking out non-attending and non-enrolled girls and boys to ensure that they attend school regularly and perform optimally. Nor should the curriculum discriminate against a teacher in any way or ensure that it facilitates enrolment, recruitment and deployment of

teachers in an inclusive manner. In this way the rights of students to education will be maximised, regardless of their socio-economic status.

School leadership should promote inclusivity by developing a curriculum that enables the participation of all the learners, irrespective of their social, familial or cultural backgrounds. For example, learners in a rights-based school curriculum are expected to have a basic understanding of all rights, roles and responsibilities, in line with the South African Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of learners. This will give them an understanding of broader societal matters and issues of power relations and promote inclusive schooling and education that goes beyond the parameters of a school timetable and subjects to be taught.

In addition, the rights-based approach to schooling and education should recognise the rights of every learner and see them in a broader context. The school leadership should be concerned about what happens to learners even before they enter the classroom, including their social challenges at school and home. It should promote learners' rights and responsibilities within the school environment as well as activism within their community at large by ensuring inclusion, respect and equality of opportunity for all learners, and not tolerating stereotyping, exclusion or discrimination. Human rights in the school are thus not merely about education in the classrooms but a way of life in the school and community. To achieve this objective, an inclusive school should strive to be child-seeking and treat learners with dignity.

It will promote and monitor the rights and wellbeing of all learners in the community, for example, by establishing parent monitoring committees that will be responsible for: (a) mapping to identify every household in the school's catchment area by age, gender and other characteristics (disability, minority, displaced, immigrant); (b) a close follow up on learners who may be at risk of faltering, dropping out, or lacking constant attendance; and (c) by preparing needs assessment reports. This approach stems from a broad view of inclusive education that promotes a learner-centred ethos.

A learner-centred school is premised on the rights of learners, acting in their best interests, leading to the realisation of their full potential, and being concerned both about them as "whole" learners (including health, nutritional status, and wellbeing) and about what happens in the family and community before they enter school and after having completed. The right to education has major implications for their rights to health, protection and participation. This view of inclusive education shifts from a focus on special education to addressing broader societal questions of power and social difference that impact on the school.

## SAFE, PROTECTIVE AND CARING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

In an African context, such as the one in South Africa, inclusive schooling and education have different meanings from those of developed countries in which issues of safety and security are taken into consideration. African countries have unique safety and security challenges, ranging from physical threats, such as infrastructure,

to invisible threats such as abuse of women and children. Inclusive education needs to be understood differently as these threats impact negatively on schooling and quality education provision, and no effective teaching and learning can take place in unsafe and insecure environments. When learners do not feel safe and secure they are likely to drop out or may not perform to their maximum potential in their schoolwork. Issues of safety and security in schools have an impact on who succeeds and who does not, so creating and maintaining schools that are safe and secure should be the priority. This understanding underscores the importance of broadening the conception of inclusive education, advocates of which have suggested a comprehensive approach to dealing with academic achievements and broader understanding of safety and security, beyond merely defending school property.

Over recent years the need for school security has changed from focus on school property (vandalism, fire or theft) to the safety of learners and teachers and other personnel (van Jaarsveld, Minnaar, & Morrison, 2012). Issues of crime and other forms of conflict are now common features of school life, especially in township and informal settlement schools (Vogel, Seaberry, Barnes, & Kelley, 2003). This is a new challenge to achieving an ideal inclusive education in Africa, therefore inclusive education should focus on preparing learners on issues of safety, protection and caring environments. Implementing safe and secure measures at schools requires that proper and well developed risk assessment and threat analyses go beyond the school property. The CFS framework provides such as an understanding.

Several initiatives can be undertaken to make schools safe, protective and caring by strong leadership with well-trained and ready staff members who prevent undesirable people from having access to the premises and putting learners at risk. This may involve controlling the entrances and exits and protecting property and stakeholders on the school premises. Learners could be prepared to deal with bullying, through awareness campaigns on the roles and responsibilities of school managers, teachers, children, parents and communities at large. Involving communities has its challenges as most are illiterate and so unable to become involved in the education of their children. This way of looking at schools as community sites broadens a view of inclusive education. Safe, protective and caring environments can make schools accommodative to learners and teachers who are more vulnerable, for example, those who are HIV and AIDS infected and affected.

Learners from Majadibodu combined primary school have a low socio-economic status, as measured by their parents' level of income and educational qualifications, so learners lack basic schooling requirements such as textbooks and other learner-support-materials. They have to travel long distances as their school is situated far from their homes, often arriving late and in most cases missing a number of first periods at school. The principal of the school is strict person and does not sympathise with their plight, sending them back home or giving them a few lashes, despite corporal punishment having been outlawed. The School Governing Body is aware of the plight of these learners but they have done nothing to intervene, not least because their parents are also uneducated. As a result, some of these learners have dropped

out of school and/or been sexually molested, a situation that persists in the face of new policies that encourage inclusivity.

## GENDER SENSITIVITY AND EQUITY PROMOTION

Girls in Africa have traditionally been marginalised from mainstream education, in particular in areas such as mathematics and physical sciences. A broader conceptualisation of inclusive schooling and education needs to confront issues of equity and equality in a more direct manner, therefore, the promotion of a gender-sensitive and girl-friendly school environment is critical in the creation of Child Friendly Schools that seek to be inclusive, learner-centred and democratic (UNICEF, 2010). The question arises: what kind of school is gender sensitive? The South African CFS Implementation Guidelines (2008, p. 35) state that:

> A gender sensitive school promotes equity and equality. It is welcoming, nurturing and accessible to families and children in need of special protection measures, including those affected by abuse, disability, discrimination, orphaning, poverty and HIV. It promotes gender equality and redresses gender imbalances.

In Africa, communities are predominantly patriarchal and male chauvinistic, with women often regarded as inferior to their male counterparts. This view is influenced by culture, religion and ignorance (Slee, 2011), a stumbling block to the realisation of an inclusive schooling and education. To grasp a broader view of inclusive education it is important to factor in issues of gender and equity, therefore redefining inclusive education differently from the parochial and for schools to work hard to eliminate any gender bias and discrimination.

To address this objective, schools need to set targets to improve enrolments, especially for learners who are from disadvantaged communities, such as girls from informal settlements and rural communities. Girls in particular should be encouraged to stay in school by addressing their social needs, and encouraged to participate in classroom discussions and other extra-mural activities, including sporting codes that were traditionally reserved for boys, such as soccer. Other school activities may include the Girls Education Movement, to create space for girls to participate in activities that are meant to affirm them. Girls, especially those from poor socio-economic status in rural settings are faced with numerous challenges, which include lack of time to study due to household chores, lack of support structures from school such as sanitation and water, lack of support from teachers and peers (boys), and lack of support from parents and the community at large. Studies show that they are not successful with their schooling if there is no support to prepare them. Their success in schooling is made possible by the presence of a female adult, who will readily be available to serve as a mentor. More specifically, they need to be supported by their educators if they are to succeed with schooling because of the schooling challenges they face (Chigona & Chetty, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted issues related to the reconceptualisation of inclusive education, issues that take cognisance of the African world view. This suggests a new paradigm of understanding inclusive schooling and education as encompassing the social context and not just focusing on learners with special needs. It has also proposed the use of the Child Friendly Schools approaches to create schools that are inclusive, democratic and learner-centred.

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JABULANI MPOFU AND SEREFETE MOLOSIWA

# 3. DISABILITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the historical and contemporary events influencing disability spaces for learning, teaching and administration of education in Zimbabwe. We reconceptualise and operationalise related practices from a power, knowledge and social difference perspective, projecting social policy driven agendas increasingly inclusive of organisation of and for people with disability. We propose an education community participation that is driven from a democratic citizenship education perspective, rather than one of inclusive education as accommodation, to best represent the development of inclusive learning spaces for learners with disabilities. Concepts from a democratic citizenship education perspective are directly linked and relevant to understanding the history or evolution of inclusive education spaces in the Zimbabwean education system. Applying democratic citizenship education perspectives, we consider the extent to which spaces for learning are welcoming places for all, driven by need rather than [disability] label. This approach shifts the focus away from the service providers to learners making education participation choices or enacting their school community citizenship rights. Prospectively, a rights oriented approach to inclusive education following the UN Conventions on disability rights as human rights will make for more inclusive learning spaces in the Zimbabwean education system, although the government is yet to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol, a cornerstone for inclusive education.

**Keywords:** disability, inclusive education, Zimbabwe, policies, human rights, democratic citizenship, education.

## THE AUTHORS' BACKGROUNDS AND VIEWS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The authors of this chapter are native Africans and professional special educationists, whose conceptualisation of inclusive education is shaped in part by this background. Their perception of inclusive education is greatly influenced by their cultural background, which centred on *Ubuntu* (being human), that places emphasis on collective community efforts to upgrade the quality of lives for people. The perception of the authors on disability and inclusive education is also immersed in professional preparation and work experience that is Western-based, as with most professionals

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 49–63.*

in Southern Africa. Western perspectives on disability and inclusive education perspectives are also centred on the influence of learned societies (e.g., psychologists, teachers, medical doctors, and legal practitioners). The one on inclusive education calls for the provision of education with special needs in an ordinary school setting and general education classrooms with supplemental supports or adaptations (which could be tutoring, resource rooms and specialist training) (Mpofu et al., 2007). It also states that education is a basic human right (Chakuchichi & Kaputa, 2002). The authors' backgrounds influenced this position of this chapter that diversity in learners should be valued and education made available to all.

## INTRODUCTION

Several models of disability have influenced professional thinking on disability and education over the years, notably the medical, social and biopsychosocial (Petersen & Elliot, 2008). The medical model on disability influenced the development of various educational policies and procedures, whose implicit premises, namely, those defining the privileges and obligations of the sick role, unobtrusively control and indeed oppress persons with impairments and render those with physical disabilities disabled and dehumanised (Oliver, 1990; Charlton, 1998; Barnes et al., 1999). It cancels the impaired person's obligation to take charge of his or her own affairs and encourages him or her to accept dependency under the sick role as normative for the duration of the impairment. In short, the sick role works to deprive an impaired person of autonomy and control of personal affairs, which are the defining marks of human personhood. According to the medical model, disability is explained primarily by objective physical qualities (WHO, 2001), as impairment of anatomical structures from disease or physical trauma. It suggests that disability is a personal aspect that could be evaluated and defined or diagnosed and is the focus of healthcare intervention that seeks to ameliorate or eliminate the condition. It focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of disease, disorder or injury (WHO, 2001) and although it continues to be influential around the world its limitations and activism have given rise to more competing perspectives (Petersen, Mpofu, & Oakland, 2010).

The social model proposes that disability is social construct impairment, as it manifests in a given context in society and that in and of itself it is not problematic. It comprises only societal attitudes and barriers (Petersen, Mpofu, & Oakland, 2010). Positing that the issue of inequalities among citizens be addressed, this position is preferred by human rights activist who are subsequently proposing a democratic citizenship education perspective by which spaces for learning are equitable for all needs rather than driven by a disability label (Dahl, 1989). The democratic citizenship education perspective shifts the focus away from the service providers to the learners with learning disabilities making education participation choices or enacting their school community citizenship rights (Oakes, 1992). Such an approach to teaching and learning of learners with learning disabilities in an inclusive education setting, if it follows the UN Conventions, will likely make for more inclusive learning spaces

in the Zimbabwean education system. In this chapter we examine the historical and contemporary events influencing learning spaces for learners with disabilities in Zimbabwe, which like other social action fora are platforms for participation on equal terms with citizens in education. We propose a democratic citizenship education framework to characterise the evolution and enactment of inclusive education in Zimbabwean schools

## DISABILITY, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health defines disability as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions (Petersen, Mpofu, & Oakland, 2010). Functional limitations occur as a result of interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and his or her context, environmental and personal (WHO, 2001). Disability impacts on a person's ability to perform major life activities, such as walking, breathing, seeing, hearing and communication, to a level beyond that experienced by the average person but not across all situations. Persons with specified disabilities may function differently from others in some settings, and can function better in disability-friendly environments that are inclusively designed or with appropriate assistive aids.

An inclusive education setting adapts structures and procedures to facilitate the inclusion of learners with disabilities rather than expecting them to fit into the existing arrangements (WHO, 2001; Mutamiswa & Mapepa, 2000). The process cannot be attained overnight because it is not easy to respond to all needs of learners at one time, and needs change as the learning period progresses. The main core value of inclusive education is that all learners are different and that diversity should be valued (Chakuchichi, Chimedza, & Chinze, 2003). Inclusive education also ascribes to the notion that education is a basic human right (Oakes, 1992). To obtain the core values identified above, practices are concerned with identification and removal of learning barriers for people with disabilities and increasing participation and achievement of all learners with and without disabilities.

A democratic citizenship education perspective suggests that authority in the school leads by persuasion and negotiation (Oakes, 1992), distinguished from its two antitheses, guardianship and anarchy (Dahl, 1989). Students who are ill-served by schools are bridled under one and denied an education under the other. The perspective suggests that no education can be inclusive if no persuasive case can be made for it, and as Oakes, Gamoram and Page (1992, p. 571) argue, inclusive teachers cannot make a persuasive case that what is being taught is worth learning, or, when students accept the value of the curriculum, that all students in the class are capable of mastering that which is being taught (p. 573). It also suggests that a classroom is socially inclusive to the extent to which it welcomes all students (male and female; with and without disabilities; different ethnic, linguistic, religious, financial backgrounds; facing varied health status, migration or other vulnerability

challenges) as equally valued members of the school community (Good & Brophy, 1991, p. 132; Slee, 1995, p. 87). Exclusivity is found in the hierarchical education powerfully reinforced over the past century, in a hierarchy manifested formally by tracking and ability grouping (Oakes, 1992; Oakes et al., 1990), and informally by differential encouragement given to students by classroom teachers. Hierarchy is a necessary component of conservative thought (Kirk, 1986) but has no scientific legitimacy (p. 121), therefore inclusive education classes must demonstrate that the different formulations of deficit thinking (e.g., learning disabilities) are false (p. 121).

We stress that the democratic citizenship education perspective does not deny that learners with learning disabilities grasp concepts at a different rate from those without disabilities, but the perspective accepts that difference is a positive aspect. When differences are exhibited by learners with disabilities it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to modify the learning environment for the benefit of all, a positive aspect of inclusion as a concept that also acknowledges the importance of an inclusive curriculum (Oakes, 1992), whereby students with learning disabilities acquire important knowledge and develop important skills rather than going to school to waste time in special classes.

The curriculum, according to the perspective, must be persuasive and coherent to existing curriculum directions (Oakes et al., 1990, p. 573). All students, not just the oppressed minorities, resist efforts to coerce them to master that which they find irrelevant. Even the few who excel do so for utilitarian reasons, as a necessary means to succeed in a credentialed society. It should benefit the school to include all students in its catchment area or zone (Oakes et al., 1990), with focus on transition to an active life that is heavily inclined in a functional and vocational direction. An inclusive education curriculum must be innovative and flexible, emphasising the need to cater for individual needs and strengths (Badza & Chakuchichi, 2003). Expertise such as specialist teachers and resources should be brought to the school to cater for the needs of the different learners. The question of rights is also important from a democratic citizenship education perspective. In an inclusive classroom, students are guaranteed a finite number of specific rights and if the foundation for inclusive education is to be established everyone in the school must be protected by them, and they cannot be taken away by the whim of adult authority. While there is a necessary connection between rights and responsibilities, rights precede the responsibilities (Oakes, 1992). Students enter an inclusive education classroom with rights established and then learn to be responsible.

The nature of participation in decisions that affect one's life is another key attribute of the democratic citizenship education perspective. For an education to be inclusive all students have to be prepared equally to exercise a responsible vote, and all have to be equally skilled in the participation process. Schools must then organise classroom activities to create opportunities for all students to develop a variety of citizenship arts (Good & Brophy, 1991; Slee, 1995). They must strive to establish optimum environments for learning that encourage learners to reach

their optimal potential and equality, bringing with them diversity and becoming the greatest strength in inclusive education (Kirk, 1986).

## CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

Located in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe has a population of 13 million, comprising eight major cultural-linguistic communities: Asians, Kalanga, Ndebeles, Shangani, Shona, Tonga, Venda and Whites (ZIMSAT, 2014, p. 32). The Shona's and Ndebele's constitute the majority of the population. The national literacy rate of over 90% is one of the highest in the world (UNICEF, 2005), with about 3 million children attending school. If one applies the WHO estimate that 5 percent of children worldwide have a learning disability (WHO, 2001; Heward, 2003, p. 74), Zimbabwe is likely to have about 150,000 school going age children in the category. However, Kaputa and Ndoro (2003) suggest that a significant number of these are out of school for other reasons, including attitude (p. 33), for example family members considering their children incapable of learning (Choruma, 2006; Mpofu, 2003), and lack of financial resources, as most children with learning disabilities come from poor backgrounds. The Zimbabwean Schools Psychological Services and Special Education department, which has the primary responsibility for supporting schools in their inclusive education practice (Mpofu et al., 2007), provides a wide range of educational counselling services.

Contextualisation of inclusive education in Zimbabwe cannot be achieved without looking at the history of treatment and care for people with disabilities in general. Changes in European countries influenced global trends in the development of special needs education that also resulted in the birth of inclusive education. Special education, as a concept, moved through phases, from isolation, institutionalisation and integration, to inclusion, during which education systems explored different ways of responding to disabled students and to those who experienced difficulty in their learning. The phases were also embedded in four theories on the treatment and care of people with physical disabilities in Zimbabwe, namely, fatalism, religious-philanthropy, medical model and social model.

Like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe has a well-documented nomadic history in which persons with disabilities were considered as impediments because they were unable to contribute to their survival or wealth of their tribe (Mutamiswa & Chakuchichi, 2003). Killing a child with a disability was normal so that the tribal function of a nomadic nature would remain uninhibited (Swann, 1981). This fatalism stage is known as the isolation stage in the history of special needs education. The coming of missionaries in Zimbabwe ushered in the religio-philanthropy era, characterised by acts of patronage, sympathy, compassion, humanity, benevolence and charity towards people with physical disabilities (Badza & Chakuchichi, 2000). Communities were becoming less suspicious and less afraid of people with disabilities as education became available from missionaries, basing its curriculum on bible studies. In the 20th century disability was thought to be a

problem inherent in individuals, commonly known as the medical model (Badza & Chakuchichi, 2004), whereby disability was seen as something 'wrong' with a person, to be 'cured' or at least contained. Solutions took the form of government and wider society helping to fix or accommodate the problems of those afflicted individuals, by segregating and providing a service to meet their 'special' needs. As a result, the human needs of many individuals were unmet. This phase saw the birth of educational institutions that catered for persons with disabilities, such as Jairos Jiri Schools, Emerald Hill School for the Deaf, and Rubatsiro.

As people become more enlightened on disability issues, Zimbabwe adopted the social model, as reaction to shortfalls of the medical model (Mpofu et al., 2010). This drew a distinction between impairments (which people have) and disability (which lies in their experience of barriers to participation in society). Emphasising the role of communities in addressing the needs of people with physical disabilities, this paradigm came as a relief to the Zimbabwean government as its resources were struggling to adequately meet the needs of people with disabilities from the medical model (Mutepfa, Mpofu, & Chataika, 2007). The country needed to contain the spread of special schools in the country with their costly overheads, lower teacher-student ratios, specialist teachers and equipment. Subsequently, rights-based influences affected services in Zimbabwe and inclusive education was seen as enacting citizenship rights. International conventions, such as the Jomtien accord (1990) and the Salamanca declaration (1994), gave added impetus to the adoption of inclusive education for learners with learning disabilities in Zimbabwe (Chimhonyo, Kaputa, Mamvura, Hlatwayo, Munemo, Nyatsanza, & Mutandwa, 2011, p. 5). Special education schools were now seen as not giving desired learning space for participation of learners with learning disabilities (Mpofu, 2003; Thomas & Loxley, 2007), as children with learning disabilities were underachieving from lack of equitable spaces (Majoko, 2005, p. 44; Makuyana, 2004, p. 47; Mkandla & Matarutse, 2002, p. 18; Hungwe, 2005, p. 13; Mpofu & Shumba, 2012, p. 328). With inclusive education, students with learning disabilities were tending to achieve higher or on similar levels to the typical (UNESCO, 2003).

The Zimbabwean government also adopted inclusive education as a democratic right of children with disability and their families (Chakuchichi et al., 2003, p. 49), therefore it was adopted to minimise the marginalisation and exclusion of pupils with learning difficulties in public schools, an empowerment intervention for full school community citizenship with disability. Although Zimbabwe is following global trends in disability perspectives there is still misunderstanding and lack of knowledge about disability among cultures as myths prevail (Choruma, 2006). The country is also yet to have specific legislation on inclusive education, although a UNESCO (1998) study with regards to special needs education legislation regarded its policies as amongst the most comprehensive, with early identification and intervention, integration, development of local training facilities, procurement of equipment, provision of support and monitoring services, and assistance from non-governmental organisations. The report also noted that the Zimbabwean education

system was supporting inclusive education of learners with learning disabilities and had embarked on a serious awareness programme that focused on the creation of child-friendly schools. However, the country was found facing a number of challenges that affected teaching and learning of learners with special needs in an inclusive setting.

## CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

Inclusive education is a rights approach to education (Dahl, 1989; Sikdmore, 2004, p. 183). For instance, both the United Nations (UN) and Organisation of African Union (OAU), now African Union (AU), have articles on the rights of children with disabilities. The UN Convention on the rights of the child 1989 has a number, but articles 2, 23, 28 and 29 are for education and serve as its basis for defining inclusive education (Chakuchichi et al., 2003, p. 72). Article 23 can be said to be the most important for making inclusive education a reality as it focuses on 'non-discrimination', clearly stating that every article applies equally, irrespective of gender, race, disability or any other status. Articles 28 and 29 are for access to quality education, reinforcing the right of all children to education regardless of impairment and disability. These UN conventions on the rights of the child contribute to how the UN defines inclusive education (Alindiamao et al., 2009, p. 49), as a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and seeing individual differences not as a problem but as an opportunity for enriching learning (UNESCO, 2005, p. 13; UN, 2008). The aim of inclusive education from a UN perspective (Kochung, 2011, p. 143) is to remove the historical exclusion within and outside the school through enactment or modification of legislation, policies and educational management practices in order to promote the reorganisation of the educational systems and the acceptance of all students (Rustemier, 2002; Reiser, 2008). It involves changes in context approaches, structures and strategies (UNESCO, 2003).

The OAU also made a declaration on the rights and welfare of children on its sixteenth ordinary session in Monrovia in 1979, and the African Charter was later adopted in 1990. This was after they noted with concern that the of most African children with learning disabilities remained critical due to unique factors of their developmental circumstances (Chakuchichi et al., 2003, p. 75). In order to address this challenge the OAU reaffirmed its adherence to the rights of the child contained in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, the key rights of which are embedded in inclusive education under article 3 on non-discrimination, with every child being entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedom recognised and guaranteed in the African Charter. Article 4 of the OAU states that in all actions undertaken by any person or authority the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration. Article 11 on education also explains that every child shall have a right to education, which will be directed to promote and develop the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (Chakuchichi & Kaputa, 2003). Section 3 implores states to take measures in respect

of gifted and disadvantaged children, to ensure equal access to education to all sections of the community (UNESCO, 2003). As with the UN, the African Charter on the rights and welfare of children also influenced how it understands and defines inclusive education.

The AU views inclusive education as an approach that challenges exclusionary policies and practices so as to address learning needs of all learners in regular schools and classrooms (Mutamiswa & Mapepa, 2003). It includes all children who are left out or excluded from school and can be catered for in both formal and informal settings (UNESCO, 2007). The UN definitions of inclusive education view it as both a holistic approach to the development of learners with disabilities and as a means to take care of their individuals and societal needs. It fosters an attitude of unqualified acceptance and the need to support the growth of learners with disabilities at all levels of learning in the community.

A member of the UN and OAU, Zimbabwe was once a model for inclusive communities in Africa, with a high level disability advice to the president and progressive inclusive legislation (Choruma, 2006). It was one of the first African countries to adopt disability legislation, in 1996, but has yet to ratify or sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol (UCRPD, 2008), regarded widely as the cornerstone for inclusive education practice. An effort was made in 2008 to review several pieces of legislation pertaining to creating learning spaces for children with disabilities, including the Disability Act 1996 and the Public Mental Health Act to align them with the CPRD (Mpofu & Shumba, 2013, p. 329). The country's Department of Schools Psychological services and Special Needs Education is responsible for integrating people with disabilities into mainstream schools but is operating with limited resources for addressing inclusive educational needs for the group (Mpofu et al., 2007).

Zimbabwe currently has no legislation for inclusive education (Mpofu et al., 2007) but does have several policies and circulars with an intent to support it (Choruma, 2006; UNESCO, 2005). For example, the Zimbabwean Education Act (1987) advocates education regardless of disability. The Education Act of 1987, as amended in 1996 and 2006, states respectively that every child has the right to access education at the nearest school and should not be discriminated against by the imposition of onerous terms and conditions in regard to admission to any school on the ground of race, tribe, place of origin, national origin, political opinion, colour, creed or gender. However, the Zimbabwe Disabled Act (1996) is an anachronism in that it specifically prevents citizens with disabilities from suing the Zimbabwean government over government facility access issues that might impair their community participation. Section 83 of the Zimbabwean Constitution on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also limits provisions of services and resources by the state to people with disability (Amendment No 20, 2013, p. 32). Under this section the state and all its institutions and agencies of government at every level can only assist persons with disabilities to achieve their full potential and minimise the disadvantages suffered by them within the limits of the resources available to

the state. Given that the country's resources are stretched, the idea that provision of services to persons with disabilities be subject to availability of resources may reduce learning spaces for children with disabilities.

In the absence of any mandatory order stipulating the services to be provided, there can be no meaningful inclusive education services for learners with disabilities in Zimbabwe. However, the country operates with a number of government policies and circulars that are consistent with the intent of inclusive education.

## POLICY INSTRUMENTS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SPACES

Policy instruments are for the institutionalisation of public welfare programmes with or without laws, however, they are implementable only within the limits of existing related laws. Policy instruments in Zimbabwe are typically issued by heads of ministries (permanent secretaries). The following are examples of pro inclusive education policies that operate in Zimbabwean Schools:

Secretary's Circular No P36 of 1990, as the primary policy instrument for the regulation of inclusive education in Zimbabwe, seeks to implement provisions of the Education Act of 1987 which states that every child shall have the right to school education. It defines children with special needs as those who cannot be expected to benefit from schooling without the provision of either special equipment or special teaching, or a combination of these. Secretary's Circular No P36 of 1990 makes special educational provision in ordinary schools intended for children with varying degrees of disabilities and special education placement and procedures for special classes, resource units and special education schools. The circular also stipulates age limits of handicapped children on special needs programmes. Education Secretary Policy number P 36, (1990) also requires that all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, creed and disability, have access to basic or primary education up to grade 7. The circular also includes presentation of special needs children for national examinations. The CEO's Circular Minute 1988 states that "All Special Education institutions are to follow curricula laid out by the curriculum Development Unit in the Ministry". The intention was to equalise curriculum access for all students. The circular acknowledges the need for development of new pedagogical approaches in teaching of students with special needs.

Secretary's Circular No 2 0f 2000 provides minimum guidelines intended to ensure full participation and benefit from the educational system by learners with albinism, outlining special needs and defining the ministry's position on teaching and learning of students, as well as what classroom support is expected and suggesting guidelines for meaningful inclusion of the learners in co-curricular activities. Director's Circular No 7 of 2005 provides guidelines for the inclusion of all learners with disabilities in all school competitions, setting up a category in all competitions and awarding of special prizes for competitors with a diversity of disabilities, and making necessary adjustments or modifications to the requirements of the competitions with children with disabilities so that they can participate fully while

their special needs are taken into consideration. The Director's Circular minute no 24 of 2001 provides Braille transcription and sign language interpretation for students with visual and hearing impairment respectively. It instructs all examination centres to provide education for learners with Braille transcripts for their candidates and interpreters with sign language during examinations. The Director's Circular No 3 of 2001providesguidelines on equal access to education for learners with disabilities.

## CHALLENGES TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

Although the Zimbabwean government adopted policy of inclusion, the country is facing several challenges, which include non-inclusive education supportive school administrators, non-existence of legislation on inclusive education, negative attitudes towards disability, teacher capacity development, and curriculum, physical and psychosocial environment (Chakuchichi et al., 2003). While educational policies do not openly discriminate against people with disabilities, educators may not understand disability or school community citizenship rights of students with disabilities (Choruma, 2006). Most school heads are reluctant to enrol children with special needs, to a point where families of children with disabilities have to negotiate with authorities to have them in school (UNESCO, 2005). These negative attitudes are largely attributed to uncertainty among educational personnel about how to handle students with disabilities and the overload of work responsibilities associated with public schools. School administrators in charge of a heterogeneous student population are increasingly expected to foster new meanings about diversity, promote inclusive school cultures and instructional programmes. Administrative work that accomplishes these tasks can be thought of as a forum of practice, with moral epistemological, constructive and discursive dimensions (Riehl, 2013). Rooted in values of equality and social justice, inclusive administrative practice requires administrators to bring their full subjective to bear on their practice, and regards language as a key mechanism for both oppression and transformation (UNESCO, 2005).

Students with special needs and their families experience significant barriers to participation in education spaces to which they are entitled, compared with other learners. Zimbabwean students without disabilities and the general public have the impression that students with disabilities are second-class citizens in schools and community, since their needs are ignored without accountability by either the government or local education authorities. This then makes inclusive education in Zimbabwe look more like a theory (Chimhonyo et al., 2011), for example, when students with disabilities fail school tasks the general public may attribute lack of success to disability-related attributes rather than to barriers to learning imposed on the students by the environment.

Learners with disability experience challenges related to curriculum access, because it is examination driven. There is need to develop a curriculum which is inclusive for all learners and this may involve broadening the current definition of

learning to what is in place when students are actively involved in making sense of their experiences (UNESCO, 2003). This would emphasise the role of a teacher as a facilitator rather than instructor. The Zimbabwean curriculum should be flexible enough to respond to the needs of all students, allowing not only school level adaptations and developments but also adaptations and modifications to meet the individual students' needs and to suit each teacher's style of working. National curricula are usually inflexible and content heavy and so become the major cause of segregation and exclusion. The development of an inclusive curriculum is arguably the most important factor in acknowledging rights to education for all.

The practice of inclusive education demands that special teacher practices be brought into the context of the regular schools. Special education increases the manageability of children with special needs (Chakuchichi et al., 2003) and teachers who have a defined responsibility have considerable expertise in handling them at an ordinary school. In this context it becomes imperative for every teacher to have an awareness of special needs education but findings from various studies indicate that most regular schools in the country do not. This situation puts learners with special needs at an elevated risk of their right to access quality education, unlike their counterparts without disabilities.

Another important challenge to access to education spaces by most students with special needs in Zimbabwe is the issue of negative attitudes against people with special needs from the society (Mpofu et al., 2007), reaching down to the family level as reflected in the view that sending children with special needs is a waste of time and money. From teachers, the view may be that people with special needs are difficult to teach as they are unable to learn. This suggests that there is a need for enhancement of disability awareness programs at community level and teacher training in inclusive education practices.

Funding provision for learners with special education needs may be problematic in a country with no legislation governing such activity and no separate funding for mainstream education and special needs activities. If the government cannot provide all the resources from state funds alone it becomes necessary to establish partnerships with potential funding partners. International donors and NGOs are obvious sources of additional resourcing, as are the business and industry sectors which have a vested interest in establishing goodwill and helping to produce a well-educated workforce (UNESCO, 2003).

Students with disabilities in Zimbabwe also face limited accessibility to spaces for educational participation in their communities due to inaccessible physical environment of general education classrooms, such as adapted desks, classrooms entrances, and toilets. These are also important for peers' social acceptance, as successful interaction at school by students with disabilities also includes the extent to which individuals take advantage of environmental opportunities. Active participation in and mastery of the environment is an important ingredient of an integrated framework of positive psychological functioning among students with disabilities. Removal of physical barriers also enhances curriculum access in general

education classrooms, and provides perceptions of greater competence in a wider variety of curriculum areas than would be the case were no such accommodation made.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND DISABILITY STUDIES

Given the foregoing analysis of inclusive education in Zimbabwe and democratic citizenship perspective on teaching and learning of people with disabilities, there is a serious need of mainstreaming disability issues at all levels of community activities. Research is important for community development, as evidence from literature on inclusive education in Zimbabwe suggests that there is little large-scale research on inclusive education. This position may also be true in other low income countries. Most research in this area (Makuyana, 2004; Mkandla & Matarutse, 2002) was conducted on a small scale and in most cases not supported by national governments. Research by individuals does not adequately influence policies that are key to the successful implementation of inclusive education programmes. Laws and policies act as legal definitions of human services and are essential to ensure that the required services are provided and act as a basis for quality control. This suggests that advocates of inclusive education (people with disabilities, organisations of and for people with disabilities, human rights advocacy groups) should campaign for mainstreaming disability issues in any research activities planned in their countries. This will assist in building inclusive communities that will address social justice, equity and democracy within communities.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, inclusive education is one of the main strategies for counteracting exclusion and marginalisation in schools. Inclusion is not synonymous with integration as it addresses the question of access and quality education. Integration carries with it the notion of bringing together people who are different without regard to quality of life. Inclusive education is about making educational and social sense to those children with special needs (Chakuchichi et al., 2003), and should be seen as a process of increasing participation in learning and removing barriers that may inhibit the learners with special needs from accessing the curriculum. The essence of inclusion lies in accessing the appropriate curriculum in an environment that promotes development of relevant social skills, therefore requiring curriculum modification. Inclusive education is based on the common beliefs and values that: (1) we are all different; (2) societies are involved in creating both similarities and differences; (3) diversity can and should be valued in both education and society; (4) we all have a human right to education; (5) it is illogical to demand our human rights while at the same time neglecting those of others; and (6) we all belong to one society and have important roles to play (Kokkala, 2000, p. 131).

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SEREFETE M. MOLOSIWA AND JABULANI MPOFU

# 4. PRACTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is fundamental to addressing the needs of diverse learners though it continues to be controversial due to the varied understandings and practices of inclusive philosophy. This chapter highlights inclusive education practices and opportunities in the context of Botswana, particularly paying attention to how inclusive practices have evolved under the different education policies. International policies that cut across countries, such as child-friendly schools and the pastoral care, have contributed immensely to shaping inclusive education practice in most African countries. As signatory to UN conventions, Botswana is mandated by EFA and the MDGs to provide accessible and equitable education opportunities in pursuit of inclusive education, but in practice the country remains somewhat exclusionary due to its special education approach to teaching and learning that is evident in the existing special schools and classrooms. This chapter argues that the special education approach is justifiable, though it may be antithetical to inclusive education. In this chapter inclusive education underscores three theories that are important in guiding the reader to appreciate the authors' perceptions of the concept, namely social constructivism, socio-cultural theory and the community of learning, all of which draw upon diversity and how learners support each other as they learn together in inclusive classroom settings.

**Keywords:** inclusive education; diversity; Botswana; child-friendly school; pastoral care policy; social constructivism; socio-cultural theory; community of learning; special education.

## INTRODUCTION

In the introductory phase of the chapter the authors situate themselves in the inclusive education space to help the reader understand their shared inclusive education perspective. Following the descriptions of practices in the Botswana context they discuss the current inclusive education practices and highlight the available opportunities for the country to improve its approach. Education practices are generally informed by theories, and inclusive education is no exception. Theories that influence it are therefore presented and a justification of their relevance and meaningfulness provided. The chapter progresses to discuss inclusive education

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 65–84.*

practices in Botswana to build a case of what generally happens in some countries on the African continent, identifying flaws that may not be peculiar to that country.

International policies are adopted by most countries in Africa, such as child-friendly schools and pastoral care, which provide common ground for countries as they strive to provide equal education opportunities to all their citizens. It is evident that inclusive education in Botswana has for a long time been driven by special education which led the country to adopt exclusionary practices that nevertheless were justified as supporting inclusive education practices. Looking at the broad view of inclusive education, the readers are challenged to question, critique and suggest the way forward for inclusive education in their own countries. For Botswana, it is critical to unpack the available opportunities that would add value to inclusive education practices, particularly with the advent of the current (2011) inclusive education policy that advocates a much more comprehensive understanding of it, but still endorses special education practices. The way forward for Botswana and other African countries is to reconfigure teacher-preparation to align it with inclusive education, educate the nation as a whole on it, improve parental and community involvement in the education of their children, collaborate with other professionals in the health and social services sectors, and adopt universal design to learning so that classroom learner diversity is catered for much more effectively.

## THE AUTHORS' VIEWS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Being professional special educationists, the authors' conceptualisation of inclusive education is shaped in part by this background. Their perception of realistic and successful inclusive education is that all learners are entitled to an education irrespective of their difference from the general population. Nevertheless, placing learners in an inclusive classroom will be determined by the extent to which they are responsive to the general education curriculum, teaching, and learning opportunities with appropriate support. Such responsiveness is determined by the level of support that each requires in order to benefit from the general education classroom instruction. Based on this viewpoint, the authors are convinced that the majority of learners in school in the African context can receive their education in an inclusive classroom environment, but within this same inclusive school a few will still need to be pulled out to receive specialised instruction in content areas such as reading, writing, and mathematics, as these are the foundational subjects. Therefore, if students acquire the skills and knowledge from the foundation subjects it should boost performance in other academic subjects. Once they demonstrate improvement they would be moved to their respective inclusive classrooms.

The smaller percentage of the learners who may still require separate classroom teaching in an inclusive school setting are those with severe and/or multiple disabilities, whose cognitive functioning is extremely low and who display mannerisms that could seriously distract their own learning and that of others. However, these students will interact with the other learners in any other activity, such as during meal

times or at play, to promote acceptance of each other and to enhance socialisation skills. Such a group of learners require functional academics to equip them with self-determination skills that promote independence, communication, self-advocacy, assertiveness, personal hygiene, and self-help. The last group of students may only be included in the education system through mobile schooling or distance learning. In the context of Botswana, these are remote area dwellers or the chronically ill, and the mobile school visits them in their homes and communities, or through distance learning, provided the requisite support is in place.

## DEFINITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education requires removal of barriers to education for the marginalised learners or those who the current education regime does not serve satisfactorily. Such barriers must be removed in different contexts, including the school, community, home, and workplace. Though it is about education this broad understanding of inclusive education embraces learning beyond the school boundary because for inclusive education to be successful there is a need to practice it across all the social jurisdictions, then it becomes much easier to facilitate inclusive education in the school once the community adopts the inclusive philosophy. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005a, p. 1.) describes inclusive education as "a developmental approach seeking to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable," to being marginalised and excluded. In the Botswana school context, inclusive education means that all students learn and participate together within the same school or classrooms. Learners with severe disability that adversely affects their learning, participate in their education in special schools or in special units within the mainstream school. Some countries, such as South Africa, may not necessarily agree with such an approach as it may be seen to be against the principles of inclusive education or inclusivity in general. This raises the question of which inclusion or inclusivity is the most appropriate, a legitimate question that addresses issues of resources, expertise, context, or the type of disability to unpack the concept and to appreciate its complexity.

## BOTSWANA – AN OVERVIEW

Botswana's education system has adopted the resource classroom approach, by which learners with intellectual disability attending government schools are physically included and attend the same school as those without a disability, but learn in separate classrooms and receive special support. Such a practice may create a social barrier between the two groups, and lead to further suppression and marginalization of those with severe and multiple disabilities. For this reason, the inclusive education practice and opportunities fall short of achieving full inclusion of all the learners, and social discrimination is still prominent. Such an approach takes the country

back to the integration system more than inclusive education. Currently, inclusive education in Botswana fails to empower a portion of the population it is meant to serve. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process that equips the individual with survival, interrelation, or self-determination skills that lead to independent living. Providing an education to learners in special units may have good intentions for the learner but still promotes social discrimination, lowers education standards or expectations, and acts against the inclusive education ideals.

Approximately 3.5% of Botswana's population live with disabilities (Central Statistics Office Botswana, 2011). Inclusive education in Botswana, as described in the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) and the 2011 inclusive education policy, mandates all school-age individuals' entitlement to an education, which according to the RNPE can translate into physical inclusion as the learners attend the same school, but though they may be of similar age they attend different classes. Botswana, as signatory to UN conventions, must provide equal educational opportunities for all. Bound by frameworks such as the Salamanca Declaration and Education for All, Botswana in its educational reforms should promote equity and entitlement to a quality education, but these cannot be achieved without looking at the available resources and expertise. Inclusive education is influenced by some theoretical underpinnings, and since Botswana is not isolated in approach to inclusive education it is important that the reader appreciates the role of such theories and their implications for the country, to African schooling, and for education as a whole.

## THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN SCHOOL CONTEXT

In the advent of inclusive education, several theories become relevant, for example Vygotsky' social constructivism and the disontogenesis frameworks. The latter specifically refers to the atypical development and the former view of disability. As is true of the identified theories, inclusive education embraces differences and part of the diversity stems from the social conditions of the learner's development. Such differences include the learner's home background, the culture, environmental and community influences, the interface between the school and the communities. It makes sense therefore to draw upon Vygotsky's ideologies as the basis for this chapter. His theory and the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) are particularly important (Bodrova & Leong, 1998), and relevant in inclusive classrooms, particularly when a less able learner interacts with a more knowledgeable one, a peer or significant other. There is a sense of egalitarianism as the learners in inclusive classroom work together for the good of all.

Once the learners are inside an inclusive classroom the personnel must ensure that they benefit from instruction and from the overall school and education experiences. Together, Piaget and Vygotsky believed that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner, and often with peers, though the influence of the adult may remain important as he/she guides and monitors learning. Their theories become current as

the less competent learner could benefit from working with a more able one. Socio-cultural theory is also meaningful in the inclusive education context as it promotes cooperative learning between the learners, particularly in diverse circumstances. The constructivist theory then becomes pertinent as students attempt to mutually understand a task on which they can work together. Collaboratively, the learners are able to make inferences, discoveries, and conclusions as they inclusively reach a consensus.

Scardamali and Bereiter's (1994) community of learning theory emphasises collective learning with proponents supporting diversity as they argue that, in any given problem, one member within the learning community has some experiential knowledge about that particular problem, and the expectation is not for everyone to assimilate content as others do because the learners are a heterogeneous group. Constructivism, Socio-culturalism and community of learning theories support a joint problem space that promotes negotiation and co-construction of meaning as the learners jointly attempt tasks in inclusive settings. Adopting the theories discussed in this chapter would not be difficult since in our view Africans as communal societies have been inclusive in their practices, and therefore inclusive education may be perceived as an extension of what has been the norm within the homes and the community. While education is a basic and fundamental human right, inclusive education gives it an impetus for ensuring that every learner accesses an education that is relevant and meaningful from the same neighbourhood school that all other children in the community attend. This includes those with disabilities as well as those who are historically vulnerable and have been marginalised.

Although inclusive education is founded on certain theoretical and philosophical backgrounds that promote democracy and social justice, the dissonance between theory and practice is evident in Botswana. For instance, the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education specified equality and equal educational opportunities for all. Nevertheless, presently, learners who are differently able and who do not conform to the conventional ways of learning and assessment generally receive sub-standard education that does not empower them to become as employable as their able-bodied counterparts. Failure to provide quality education to any section of the nation is a violation of human rights and cannot be condoned. Such practices promote a variety of injustices (Mahlo, 2013). Disability and marginalisation by default go hand-in-hand with poverty. Denying an education to learners with disability, those from poorer backgrounds or the marginalised is also against the principles of inclusion, such as social justice, democracy, and deinstitutionalisation. Education is a powerful tool that improves individuals' lives, therefore receiving an inferior education because of one's social or disability standing is not only inhumane but should be disparaged in its entirety. The *Ubuntu* or *Botho* principle that is fundamental in the African context is eroded if there is little or no regard for others because of either a disability, lower social standing or different ethnicity. Core pillars such as compassion and caring, that are fundamental in the Ubuntu or botho culture, may lose their meaning and relevance when true inclusive education is not wholly practiced. It is important

that in the adoption of inclusive education Africans do not lose sight of the rich Indigenous knowledge and practices that are characteristic of their cultures. Inclusive education emphasises the same or similar beliefs and attitudes that Africans withheld for centuries.

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES IN BOTSWANA

The Botswana Ministry of Education and Skills Development subscribes to access to education regardless of personal attributes (Lekoko & Mukhopadhyay, 2005), and this is an important component in the inclusive education practices, particularly since its pronouncement in the education national policies is prominent. For instance, the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education states that education is a right and not a privilege for everyone, including children with special educational needs. One of the goals of this policy is to provide children with disabilities with appropriate educational programmes and services, in terms of equal educational opportunities. It is however evident that emphasis is on disability more than on other groups of learners with special needs. The authors perceive such a narrow view as problematic since inclusive education has a much wider outlook. The presence of other policies which promote it, such as the child-friendly schools and the pastoral care programme (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014), enrich the inclusive education continuum practices in Botswana.

Child-friendly schools, as the name implies, are those that deliberately address the learner's psycho-social, academic, and developmental needs holistically. In attempts to promote child-friendly schools Botswana accepted some recommendations to mainstream human rights as part of the education system through the development of a national strategy for human rights education in the school system, in agreement with the Plan of Action 2005–2009 of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. The country also endorsed the recommendation to introduce mother-tongue schooling, taking positive steps to provide for the primary education of the children of distinct tribes and Indigenous groups through using mother tongue to teach in the early years of their education (Child Rights International Network, 2013). This practice ensures that, from early school years, children feel at home as there is no struggle in their learning due to the use of a foreign language. In subsequent years, when the child is settled, English is gradually introduced.

## THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL POLICY

The Child-Friendly School (CFS) policy initiative brought about possible solutions to the plight of essential services and care as well as supporting schools expressed by some Eastern and Southern African countries, Botswana included (Mannathoko, 2007). The policy goals are not different from those of other national members as they are guided by the UNICEF – Child Friendly Schools manual but what makes these schools child-friendly and pastoral care oriented is their addressing the challenges of

education access, quality and management through advocacy, capacity development, service delivery and partnerships: (1) Children who are school-age but do not attend school are sought out and provided an education. This strategy is broad as it targets children who are not enrolled in school irrespective of gender, race, ability, and social status. (2) These schools purport to promote equality and equity in enrolment and achievement among children. They intend to achieve this by enhancing learning in a safe and inclusive environment in which all children are valued, irrespective of their ability. (3) Cooperation between schools, communities, parents and children are fostered. (4) While the Child Friendly Schools policy advocates life-long learning, emphasis is also on physical and emotional health. This is achieved through school-feeding programmes and by providing meals with a nutritional value that enhances children's general wellbeing (UNICEF, 2009, 2012). The identified components will make the schools respond to the diversities that exist among and between the learners. In the interim, fulfilling the goals of the Child Friendly Schools policy also strengthens the pastoral care components and achieves the second Millennium Development Goal on access, equity and gender parity.

The Child Friendly Schools policy strength lies in the multi-sectoral partnerships which are necessary for speeding up the service delivery to schools. Such practice facilitates children's learning, motivates school management systems and is a timely initiative as it mitigates against various types of social-ills, including hunger, drug abuse or misuse, child molestation, lack of sanitation or clean water, and HIV-AIDS. Child-friendly schools reinforce their systematic use as centres of learning and places for delivery of other social services for children (including care and support), in instances when the normal provision of those services by family and community is lacking or inadequate (Mannathoko, 2007).

## THE PASTORAL CARE POLICY

Due to deteriorating student behaviour at secondary school level, the Botswana government saw a need to transform the pastoral system in schools. The policy was aimed at empowering and equipping school-going children and the youth with skills that would uphold accountability, responsibility and patriotism. Similar to the Child Friendly Schools, through a multi-sectoral approach, the pastoral care policy sought to increase the involvement of students in school-governance, while the parents, community, and school staff took more responsibility in the running of the school's pastoral programme. It was intended to address the psychosocial, academic and co-curricular needs of every learner, to enhance inclusive education principles and promote more humane ways of addressing inappropriate behaviours that support CFS and a client-oriented pastoral care system. Discipline is important for any school but inflicting physical and emotional pain is likely to work against inclusive education as the learners may eventually skip classes or opt to drop out of school. Botswana is faced with a major problem of practising corporal punishment (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014), a strategy that works against the intents of the

child-friendly schools and the pastoral care policy, which both support inclusive education efforts. This does not imply that inclusive education practices condone indiscipline, however, the predominant use of punishment by teachers may be an indication that they are not well prepared in managing student behaviours in a more child-friendly, less invasive, and effective manner.

For the education system to change the teachers' attitude to using punishment for any type of misdemeanour it is important to empower them with alternative measures that may not inflict physical pain but remain effective, and answer the dissenting teacher voices on the abolition of corporal punishment (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010). Introducing techniques such as functional behavioural assessment or applied behaviour analysis that teach accountability for rule-infringement and emphasise self-management skills for inappropriate behaviours are invaluable. Alternate discipline strategies in inclusive education settings are an option because Botswana, South Africa, and other African countries ratified the (1989) Rights of the Child, which mandated the protection of the physical and psychological welfare of the child, as well as respecting them.

Lack of student discipline in Botswana schools and in other Southern African Development Community countries is a problem that requires a concerted effort by different stakeholders to come up with effective measures (Garegae, 2008) if inclusive education is to become a success and not just an illusion. Child-friendly and pastoral care inclusive schools therefore are those characterised by a holistic approach to the welfare of the learner. This approach addresses the academic, psycho-social, physical and material needs of a particular learner in a neighbourhood general education classroom and school setting. It is important to understand how Botswana as the case country of this chapter fulfils the child-friendly education that also takes into account the pastoral needs of its learners.

The government of Botswana used special education as a drive for social inclusion and democracy, though in essence it has been exclusionary (Hopkin, 2004) and fell short of having an education system that embraces inclusive education in a holistic manner, instead focussing primarily on learners with disabilities. Unfortunately, they were to a large extent still excluded in the effort of the government to have them included in the education system, as they provided assessment-based individualised educational programmes to enhance the learner-abilities, while minimising the effect of the disability (Government of Botswana, 1994). In our view, this still fell far below inclusive education standards. Practices were either functional or locational if a learner lived with a disability. The classroom as a microcosm of the community to a large extent epitomises the society's values and beliefs.

## FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION

Functional integration is a practice whereby learners with disabilities receive their education alongside those without them in mainstream classrooms. The former are able to access the school curriculum to the extent it is compatible with their capability

(Shumba, Lekoko, Montsi, Mpofu, & Lopez, 2008). In Botswana, this happens for learners with visual and hearing impairments at primary and secondary schools but only rarely at tertiary education levels because most fail to proceed with formal education. Other learners with disabilities, such as mild learning difficulties, are found at all levels of education, with or without the removal of barriers to learning, so no support is provided. However, views exist that support separate schools for children with special education needs since the curriculum is believed to be more accessible (and hence inclusive) and the schools are better resourced to cater for students with severe disabilities (Shumba et al., 2008).

Functional integration in Botswana works better for learners with sensory impairments because the programme is built into the national education system, making it mandatory for the school administration and staff to ensure that the learner receives appropriate education to the maximum extent possible. For example, there are 500 learners with visual impairment enrolled in schools, with the highest number at primary schools (380), 100 at secondary schools, and only 20 at tertiary (Matale, 2005). The lowest enrolment number at the tertiary is partly due to low performance which hinders them from proceeding with their formal education (Habulezi & Phasha, 2012). Functional integration does not favour learners with low cognitive functioning, especially those with intellectual impairments, as they hardly make progress to be in the mainstream class (Molosiwa & Mangope, 2011). These learners do not enjoy equal educational opportunities hence some with intellectual impairment are educated within NGOs, such as the Cheshire Foundations, Camphill, or I Am Special.

## LOCATIONAL INTEGRATION

Learners with intellectual impairments are placed in special education resource units within mainstream schools in the name of inclusive education (Molosiwa & Mangope, 2011), being only physically included but with access to the school curriculum limited (Hopkin, 2004). In a typical day, except during recess, when locational integration is practiced learners with intellectual impairments are transported to school by a government vehicle straight to the resource unit, where they spend the whole day and may if possible mingle with learners from the mainstream classes. In principle, learners with intellectual impairments are physically included, but receive all the teaching in the special unit classroom. They have their school assembly, meals and even use the ablution facilities within the resource unit. Socially and academically, learners with intellectual impairments are isolated for much of the school day and barely interact with those from the mainstream classrooms (Molosiwa & Mangope, 2011). Discriminating against learners on the basis of their disability and providing them with an education separately from their siblings, peers, cousins and friends is contrary to the principles of inclusive education and maintains an inequitable, discriminatory, disabling education system (Slee, 2004). In view of these integration practices, which do not resemble inclusive education, it could be asked what recent Botswana education policies subscribe to in support of inclusive education.

## POLICY FOUNDATIONS

Botswana's visionary goals aim, by 2016, is to see the country with its inclusive education policies characterised by traditional values, including *Kagisano* (peace) and *botho* (humaneness/humanity). Its educational policy is also grounded on the country's inclusive four-tier national principles of democracy, self-reliance, unity and development, which support equal educational opportunities for all (Government of Botswana, 1993). Botswana's rich cultural diversity consists of languages such as Setswana, the national language, and English, the official language used in business and most government affairs. In addition, the people of Botswana speak 28 languages and many are trilingual, the third language being tribal (Darlington & Seboni, 2013), that is Indigenous and includes several ethnic groups dominated by those who are Setswana-speaking, all of which are known as 'Batswana' (SADC, 2012). As of 2001, English was spoken by 2% (official), Setswana 78%, Kalanga 8%, Sekgalagadi 3%, and the remaining 9% distributed among other languages (2001). Minority languages constitute a total of 23, as reported by Molosiwa (n.d.). These numbers account for the rich cultural diversity.

Promoting inclusive education in Botswana has been relatively slow, due to lack of legislation that backs up existing policies supportive of it. It is also due to the teachers' attitude as some prefer learners who experience fewer barriers because of the mild difficulties that they face during learning (Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa, & Moswela, 2009). In the school system, inclusive education is viewed as disability-oriented, which gives it a narrow focus in terms of the population who experience barriers to learning in school. A large number of learners experiencing barriers to learning will as a result be excluded and under-served, therefore Botswana has to establish structures that promote an understanding and appreciation of inclusive education to enhance its implementation.

The Department of Special Support Services in the Ministry of Education and Skill Development is mandated to ensure that: (1) Botswana citizens, irrespective of their special needs, deserve equal educational opportunities; (2) opportunities for social integration between children with special educational needs and their peers without special needs are available in mainstream schools; (3) comprehensive assessment is conducted for each child's unique learning needs and that instruction is individualized; (4) early identification and intervention for children with disabilities is availed to ensure maximum benefit from the existing programmes; (5) community and parental involvement is promoted through an education and information campaign; (6) learners with disabilities are equipped with survival and appropriate pre-vocational skills that are enabling for them to become productive members of their communities; and (7) the learners have increased employment opportunities and are self–reliant (Government of Botswana, 1994). With such visionary goals this department mission to promote inclusive education and accommodate every learner's needs is highly achievable.

The Department of Special Support Services advises the Ministry of Education and Skill Development and other government ministries and NGOs on issues pertaining

to the education and training of learners with special educational needs. It is also within this same department that the inclusive education policy is housed and where its practice and implementation are promoted, guided and monitored. With the above discussions it is inevitable that there are many problems that the Botswana education system needs to address for inclusive education to be feasible, relevant and meaningful.

## CHALLENGES IN BOTSWANA

In practice, inclusive education in Botswana has for a long time had a narrow disability-focused perspective, remaining exclusionary as there are far too many children with varied needs who deserve a quality education but are often under-served or not served at all. Another important component that exacerbates the exclusion of other children in Botswana is a school curriculum that has remained too prescriptive and [paper] examination-oriented rather than inclusive of diversity in learner potentialities (Nthebolan, 2013). A prescriptive curriculum does not cater for the needs of the many learners with varied educational requirements, including their different learning styles and their multiple intelligences (Botswana, Ministry of Education, 2002). Thus, even if Botswana adopts inclusive education and implements it the curriculum and assessment requirements as well as methods will have to be reviewed.

## THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

International policy frameworks and practices argue that inclusion in a school environment is incomplete and meaningless without an inclusive school curriculum (Kisanji, 1999; Matale, 2005). The envisaged curriculum as described by UNESCO (2005b, p. 19) is "…flexible enough to provide possibilities for adjustment to individual needs and to stimulate teachers to seek solutions that can be matched with the needs and abilities of each and every individual, [that] teaching should facilitate rather than hinder." According to Slee (2010), a prescriptive curriculum is anti-inclusive education in its "reductionist trap of making 'defective' kids fit the school as it is" (p. 170). Placing learners in a school means that they have been diagnosed and are eligible for support. There should not be any compromise if Botswana implements inclusive education, because the learners will be the ones suffering. For example, the "fixing" approach subscribes to a medical model, and therefore it is not amenable to the social scientist's practice. The ideal curriculum for inclusive education should be comprehensive while being diverse in terms of the teaching and learning materials, classroom instruction, knowledge representation, and response mechanism. It takes into cognisance the school-community interface and the socio-organisational life of the schools, hence Botswana faces some serious hurdles in providing the learners with a curriculum that suits the diverse learners' needs. The curriculum problems are worsened by the limited teaching and learning materials or total lack of resources (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010).

Inclusive education in Botswana is faced with diminishing fiscal resources, whilst other resource limitations include a lack of teachers trained in inclusive education (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010). The majority of teachers are not adequately prepared in inclusive education, especially general education teachers (Mukhopadhyay, 2013), yet they are expected to implement the policy. Given the interface between language, cognition, and culture inherent in classrooms with diverse learners, special and general education teachers need a template that guides them on how teaching and learning will occur inside inclusive education classrooms. Within ordinary school classrooms there are no set standards on the types of accommodation and modifications for successful inclusive education (Brandon, 2006; Matale, 2000, 2005; Okumbe, 2006), therefore, when teachers help learners who experience barriers to learning each school or teacher will probably do what they (but not necessarily the learners) find suitable or that works for them.

The enrolment of learners experiencing barriers due to having a disability decrease as one goes up the educational ladder. Inaccessible educational space due to the rigid and prescriptive curriculum (Nthebolan, 2013), teachers lack of knowledge and skills (Mukhopadhyay, 2013), and grounds that are a barrier to movement and play (Mthombeni & Fidzani, 2011) contribute to the low performance of some learners in school. Botswana lags behind in terms of serving the academic needs of learners with other types of disabilities, and focuses more on those with sensory impairments. This is unfortunate as the system has disadvantaged too many learners. The question arises, what is the way forward if Botswana is to achieve inclusive education?

## PROSPECTIVE SOLUTIONS

The Ministry's Education for All: National Action Plan (Botswana Ministry of Education, 2002) articulated the need for a modified curriculum or one with inclusive education features. Similarly, Mokubung and Letshabo (1999) called for the development of proactive policies, predicated on legislation that mandates equitable educational opportunities for those with disabilities. This implies a right to an education approach as explained by the Commission on Human Rights (2005). The Ministry of Education and Skill Development adopted a rights-approach to education (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014) that has inclusive education as the pivot that anchors all the mechanisms required for effective inclusion which takes into account the processes, resources and a pro-inclusive education mind-set in all the stakeholders. It is important that as we unpack inclusive education practices and opportunities in Botswana we discuss the role expected of the family and the community as these are co-partners in raising and educating any nation.

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Inclusion is centred on democratic tenets, therefore everyone must have a voice in inclusive education. The ecological models of human development hold that

children are nested within families, and families are nested within their communities, resulting in numerous and complex reciprocal relationships and interactions at multiple systemic levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The roles of the family and community are essential if all learners are to succeed in their education, but even more so for the vulnerable and those who have been marginalised. The family and the community are the mouthpiece for all learners, irrespective of their special educational needs. The government has not involved the family or the community fully as it is noted that learners with disabilities "…do not access programmes because the community is not fully sensitized on the disability problem…" (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 17). For inclusive education, the country would need to ensure that the community is aware of the different special needs of the learners and not only for those with disabilities.

Partnerships between communities and schools in Botswana have existed but should be improved because their effectiveness has been uncertain. Such cooperation has not been without difficulties, with underutilisation of a rich resource of the naturally existing Indigenous community support setups that are sensitive to culturally appropriate interventions (Kisanji, 1999). Among these is the extended family, especially grandparents and siblings, particularly following the HIV-AIDS scourge that killed some parents and left many children as orphans. Grandparents and the siblings are a much needed resource for inclusive education to work in some families, and their roles in helping younger children learn are documented in African societies (Kisanji, 1999), while parents may be busy and unable to attend to the education of their children.

In efforts to promote school-community partnerships, Matale (2000, 2005) outlined the need for establishing partnerships amongst all stakeholders, including families and community-based entities. Kisanji (1999) promoted the use of child-to-child programmes and community-based rehabilitation, whilst Okumbe (2006) highlighted the importance of establishing alliances with significant family members to enhance the out-of-school development of cognitive and psychosocial skills of learners with special needs. A modest degree of success has been realised with these types of efforts in Botswana, and the way forward is to continue strategic planning that effectively paves the way for effective collaboration.

Involvement of the community in school management is an essential practice towards a democratic and inclusive education system. The involvement of the parents and the community in the education of all school-going children and youth in Botswana has not received the importance that it deserves, in most cases their being part of the school management as members of a parents-teacher association. However, the strength of their voice in this relationship with the schools management needs to be investigated. Evidently, parental participation and involvement has been found to be minimal in terms of collaborating with the teacher in the education of their children (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014), however, the government is committed to ensuring that parents become an important part of the school system, as has been the case in the RNPE.

It is the society's responsibility to provide care, security, health, and other types of support to promote the children's rights to education. As signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Botswana is mandated to abide by the fundamental rights of children, including the right to be protected from economic exploitation, harmful work, all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, and physical or mental violence (Child Rights International Network, 2013). Inclusive education as discussed so far appears to be a worthwhile endeavour to explore and promote, however, there are hurdles that range from individually held beliefs and systemic ones. One of these problems is about fulfilling access to inclusive classrooms or schools so it is important to find ways of overcoming any barrier that impedes access to inclusive education.

## RESOLVING BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Among the many barriers to inclusive education in schools are assessment practices and expectations. For inclusivity to be fully realised, assessment should be equally accessible to all the learners. First, barriers to learning should be identified because it is from understanding those that proper accommodations, using alternate assessment or adaptations, will be possible. Accommodations imply differentiating classroom instruction, access to how the learner learns and how they are assessed. Alternate assessment may target the same standards but the test shall be different, and a less difficult version of the same test. Adaptations refer to providing different modes of learning or assessment, such as presenting material through drawings, or orally and sometimes in writing, using computer assisted learning and learning conventionally. These techniques promote inclusive education as learners who do not conform to traditional ways of learning or conventional ways of assessment are provided with meaningful and non-intimidating ways of doing the same task. Because of the wide range of learners experiencing barriers to learning, and due to the wide range of the barriers themselves, the type of assessment required to support inclusivity demands psychological and clinical testing, but it requires a reconceptualised way of assessment. Africans are an oral people so allowing learners with writing difficulties to present information verbally is an ideal way of demonstrating knowledge or content mastery.

Based on the above discussion on accommodating diversity there is a need for a more diversified, multi-professional assessment team. For vulnerable children, such as the street child, the assessment team may comprise among others the social worker, the school counsellor, the parent or guardian, and the medical expert. Maybe Botswana could learn from and adopt what other countries have done to support inclusivity that is informed by assessment data. The South African Manual on National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support is used to determine the type and extent of the support package for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. This is dependent on a range of assessments of support needs that include the assessment of:

1. the nature and extent of the support needs to address the barriers,
2. the existing resources and support available to the learner and/or school,

3. what additional support is still required, and
4. what is available within provinces/districts (Department of Basic Education, 2008, p. 16). This type of assessment is aligned with an individual's needs and the extent to which they experience barriers to learning, and it is therefore likely to include realistic learning goals.

The Central Resource Centre was established to be responsible for early intervention programmes and advising on remedial services, and on how teachers may inspire learning for young children with intellectual and multiple disabilities. In this regard, the CRC identifies the child's level of functioning through interviews with parents, using observation schedules, checklists, and other diagnostic and standardised assessment tests. Psychologists are responsible for the assessment, while remedial therapists advise on instructional strategies. Recommendations on placement of children with special educational needs are determined by the assessment findings. For example, stimulation and therapy service is given to children with severe and multiple impairments from ages 4 to 7 years. Low vision services include screening and assessment, teaching/training parents and teachers, and training with optical devices. Psychological services determine a child's intellectual level of functioning, diagnose the underlying dysfunctions and define their interrelationships, develop effective strategies, and provide behaviour therapy where there is a need. The Central Resource Centre also offers guidance and counselling to parents and family members, emotional support, information about the child's disability and their level of functioning, as well as on how their individualised educational programme may look. Parental involvement is promoted in the child's training programme as well as encouraging parental advocacy through contact with other parents whose children have similar disabilities.

As the Central Resource Centre is mandated with referring children with disabilities for further assessment, the staff also liaise with the medical specialists required for further examination and/or treatment for a particular disability. The ranges of medical services sought for collaboration with education experts include audiology, various types of therapy and psychological services. There are also outreach services by the Central Resource Centre staff as they visit schools to screen and assess children who have been identified as having special educational needs, and provide teacher pedagogic support within a functional inclusive setting (Shumba et al., 2008). Assessment is an important concept for successful inclusion of the learners but equally important is how teachers are prepared to provide services for the assessed.

## TEACHER TRAINING

The Report of the National Commission on Education reiterates the critical need of preparing teachers of students who have not been able to benefit from the general education classrooms, and requires individual assessment, modified curricula and

evaluation (Government of Botswana, 1993). However, it should be noted that (1) the success of inclusive education rests on quality teacher preparation gearing towards inclusive education, and (2) how teachers are prepared is intrinsically linked to the quality of education provided in the schools (Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa, & Moswela, 2009).

General education teachers and special educators are generally inadequately prepared for inclusive education in Botswana. Though preparing for it is critical, the authors of this chapter argue that teachers as individuals have deep-rooted beliefs and attitudes, and different ways of perceiving themselves and their roles in the advent of inclusion, and these must be respected. Inclusive education brings with it a different teaching and learning space that requires certain skills, knowledge and attitudes. Like other Southern African countries it has an insignificant number of teachers who received training which creates opportunities for the country to consider preparing teachers in inclusive education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Such an opportunity may lend itself to exploring possibilities of collaborative education between the general and the inclusive education educators since the schools are already overpopulated with generalists. For African countries to reach out to a large teacher cohort, distance learning and in-service programmes will have to be running throughout the year and provide the teachers with appropriate skills and knowledge. Teacher preparation for inclusive education requires cooperation with other stakeholders and principal among them is the family.

Since the family is critical in the education of children, the inception of inclusive education is likely to bring a different understanding about the family-school interface as teachers may have different expectations for either party. Family members and other relevant organisations will need some introductory workshops so that they are empowered to appreciate the move towards inclusive education. This calls for a mind-shift on teacher preparation, family education such that all the important key players acquire the needed knowledge, values, and skills to support the implementation of the existing policies. It is the Botswana government's policy that the community should participate as much as possible in development and management of education, especially following the inception of inclusive education.

## CONCLUSION

There are several problems that hinder inclusive education implementation, even though the Botswana Policy has not gone into full implementation. For example, community involvement within the school system is not well-guided. It is important for the government to recognise that involvement of the communities within which government policy and practice in education is implemented is involved as a partner for successful inclusivity. This is so because factors that operate in society may aggravate obstacles facing the government to make it a reality. Due to lack of coordination between the many ministries (e.g., Health, Local Government, Home Affairs and Education) that work with school children, there is a problem

of sustainability and that of the school staff implementation of what they perceive as imposed programmes (Molefe, Pansiri, & Weeks, 2014). Inter-ministerial involvement poses problems of teacher-resistance, as teachers receive directives from the various offices. This calls for urgent review of such an approach. Botswana also has the challenge to implement policies and practices to overcome the sources of exclusion. Embracing what happens in and out of school, especially from children's daily realities in their homes and communities, is important because the education system should take an interest in what they are actually learning and under what conditions.

From a broader perspective, Botswana has dwelled much on access and equity and now has to challenge itself to provide access coupled with success for inclusivity to be meaningful and beneficial. Access should therefore not be equated to inclusivity if the learner is not making progress, as is the case with students who have intellectual impairment whose benefit from the school curriculum is limited (Molosiwa & Mangope, 2011) or not fulfilled. For democratic teaching and learning to take place the parents and the community need to be actively involved and must have a voice in the education of their children and in the national school system. Parental involvement remains a challenge for Botswana to address, and as Kisanji (1999) noted it is limited and of serious concern in schools. The learner too must have a voice and students' representative councils must be encouraged at the primary school level.

For Africa as a whole, education systems are challenged to ensure that inclusive education practices are anchored on some theoretical frameworks that give them focus. For inclusive education to be a success in the African context there is also the need to (1) conduct action research to improve practice and learner results; (2) benchmark with other countries, including in Africa, because there are many more similarities than differences and adopting each other's practices is much easier than borrowing those from the developed world; (3) hold conferences at which inclusive education issues can be unpacked and opportunities to learn from internationally recognised best practices availed; (4) educate all important stakeholders, including communities, about inclusive education; (5) design inclusive education teacher preparation programmes both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels; and (6) advocate training of support personnel in health, social work, and other fields to promote inclusive education in schools, and adopt the universal design for learning so that most, if not all, learners receive their education inside inclusive classrooms.

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ELIZABETH WALTON

# 5. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

*A Tame Solution to a Wicked Problem?*

ABSTRACT

Realising a vision of an educational system that is accessible to all, fosters participation, enables belonging, and results in powerful learning is not easy. This difficulty is caused by the pervasiveness of exclusionary pressures in education that have the potential to confound and constrain efforts towards greater inclusivity. While South Africa has policy and legislation to promote access to education for learners, and secure support for their diverse learning needs, there is still evidence of exclusion from and within schools. This chapter proceeds from the premise that an understanding of the problem of educational exclusion is necessary to ensure that inclusive education is imagined as a reform initiative to promote social justice. Given the complexity and intractability of educational exclusion I use the concept of a 'wicked problem' to explore some of the workings of exclusion in education, with particular, though not exclusive, reference to South Africa. Wicked problems are problems that are complex, dynamic, multi-faceted and intractable. I argue that given the complexity of the problem of educational exclusion we cannot afford a 'tame' or watered down idea of inclusive education that is merely concerned with ways of 'accommodating' learners with additional support needs in ordinary classrooms. Instead, it needs to be a social and political project that is bold enough to identify and challenge the impediments to meaningful inclusion and make the radical changes necessary to ensure quality education for all.

**Keywords:** Educational exclusion; wicked problems; inclusive education; social justice in education

## INTRODUCTION: INCLUSION, EXCLUSION AND WICKED PROBLEMS

As an academic involved in teacher education, and interested in the promotion of socially just and inclusive education I believe in the transformative power of education and expect it to make a difference to individuals, communities and societies. However, I see schools playing "a major role" (Ferri & Connor, 2006, p. 11) in the reproduction of the very inequalities they are supposed to erase. Perhaps this is why inclusive education captures my attention. As a white South African woman schooled in a system that segregated by race and dis/ability I find the vision

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 85–100.*

for an inclusive education system that addresses the many exclusionary practices and pressures of a previously divided and discriminatory education system compelling. It offers an imagination of schools in which all learners are welcomed and supported in accessing the deep and powerful knowledge that represents the 'goods' of education. My years of high school teaching and school leadership offered many opportunities to work first hand with the possibilities of more inclusive education. These possibilities included subject choices that went beyond the traditional disciplines, teaching strategies that promoted epistemological access for learners who previously might have been deemed to need 'special education', and a variety of arrangements to give learners access to learning materials and assessment.

Drawing impetus from the human rights movement in the 1960s, and the growing awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, parents, activists and academics began questioning the practice of segregated special education for children with disabilities and 'special needs'. An article by Lloyd Dunn in 1968, calling for the abolition of separate classes and the inclusion of "the retarded" (p. 5) in general education classrooms became a seminal idea in what is now known as 'inclusive education'. Variously described as an ideology (Brantlinger, 1997), a field of study (Slee, 2011), or bandwagon (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995), its impact has been felt in education systems around the world. UNESCO has taken up the cause (UNESCO 1994, 2005, 2009) and many countries, including South Africa, have sought to give effect to it through policy or legislation. Defining and characterising inclusive education is challenging but there has been useful scholarly work to capture the discursive breadth of the concept (e.g., Dyson, 1999). Debates rage over whether it is best understood as a broad education reform issue, concerned with all children vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation, or whether 'special needs' and disability should be its focus (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006). For Slee (2011) there are a hierarchy of questions, first questions about "the power relations articulated through the structures, processes and culture of schooling" (p. 157) and a "recognition of the unequal social relations that produce exclusion" (p. 39). These questions, he maintains, need to be addressed before the policies, reorganisation, strategies and resources required to pursue it. Failure to ask the first questions first results in the child seeking inclusion perpetually being positioned as "an outsider and potential burden".

It is with this injunction in mind that I turn my attention in this chapter first to educational exclusion. For as much as my experience in schooling convinced me of the possibilities of inclusive education I also found promoting inclusivity to be a Sisyphean task against the mountain of exclusionary pressures that the education system presents. Ferri and Connor (2006, p. 13) affirm that real change will only happen "if we begin to think critically about all kinds of exclusions and how they work in tandem". It seems that all kinds of educational exclusions have become commonplace. It is difficult to imagine an education system in the globalised, competitive world that is not exclusionary in some way. Exclusion might be seen as necessary (Dorling, 2011; Slee, 2011) at certain levels of the education system for various reasons, one of which is economic efficiency as limited fiscal resources

demand choices about who will get what education. Families, faced with the high direct and indirect costs of education may thus be forced to make choices that result in one or more children not attending school (Meny-Gibert & Russell, 2012). Countries, too, make choices about where in their education systems to invest. When countries implement free universal primary education, children from poor families who are unable to afford secondary school fees find themselves excluded (Lewin, 2009). The pressure of competitiveness might also necessitate exclusion. When schools are set up to compete with each other using pass rates as the measure of success, self-preservation could lead to the admission of learners "without significant academic problems" (Ferri & Connor, 2006, p. 11) and the avoidance of "low-attaining, troublesome, or 'needy' children" (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, & West, 2012, p. 13). The South African Schools Act specifically prohibits entrance testing for school admission (Republic of South Africa, 1996) and this provision may go some way towards mitigating exclusion at admission. Once learners are admitted, though, there is a significant risk of drop-out, particularly in the 16–18 year range, when schooling is no longer compulsory (Meny-Gibert & Russell, 2012).

Linked to this are deeply held beliefs about who is deserving of certain kinds of education. Education is often thought of as a finite commodity, and in a zero-sum way of thinking, including children who might need additional support means 'less' for the rest. In my encounters with parents who hear about inclusive education I have found deep concern expressed that 'our' children's education would be compromised if they had to share the teacher's time/expertise with 'those' children (Walton & Lloyd, 2011). This is borne out by Ferri and Connor (2006, p. 162) in the context of the United States of America, where the fear has been expressed that "the rights of "regular" students who make up the majority are said to be endangered by a *resource-grabbing minority*" (emphasis mine). The exclusion of 'someone else' reflects "a hierarchy of valuing in which some characteristics and cultures are more welcome than others" (Ainscow et al., 2012, p. 8). Those with a vested interest in the preservation of the status quo in education may sit comfortably with a discursive commitment to educational inclusion, but still wish their own children to enjoy a "segregated and advantaged status", convinced that in practice, inclusion is "impractical or impossible" (Brantlinger, 2003, p. 54). Whatever the rationale, exclusionary pressures and practices are prevalent and pervasive in education systems worldwide.

Educational exclusion is a complex issue, reflecting unequal social and economic relations and embedded values, beliefs and traditions. 'Exclusion' is difficult to define, given that the term is so "evocative, ambiguous, multi-dimensional and elastic" (Silver, 1994, p. 536). A useful account of the ways in which exclusion has been conceptualised is offered by Silver (1994), who suggests three 'paradigms' of exclusion, all of which have some traction when thinking about educational exclusion. The first, *solidarity*, focuses on exclusion as a result of particular national or cultural ties. In South Africa, a history of apartheid education reflects this paradigm, as educational exclusion was administered on the grounds of race. Exclusion from school on the grounds of race is now unconstitutional, although

perpetuated, often by proxies for race, such as language (Sayed, Subrahmanian, Soudien et al., 2007). The second paradigm, *specialisation*, reflects an Anglo-Saxon liberalism and is based on the assumption of individual difference. We see educational exclusion operating within this paradigm when individual differences are seen as the (benign) reason for the inclusion or exclusion of some learners from certain schools. This might be on the grounds of their individual talent (performing arts or sports academies, or schools for the 'gifted') or lack of talent (necessitating 'remedial' or 'special' education). In Silver's third paradigm, *monopoly*, exclusion "arises from the interplay of class, status and political power and serves the interests of the included" (p. 543). Educational exclusion in this paradigm in South Africa may be associated with discriminatory measures such as school fees, language policies, the expectation of assimilation into a dominant cultural order, and the promotion of the idea of 'standards' from which to judge deviance (Sayed et al., 2007). Silver acknowledges that these three paradigms are "ideal types" (1994, p. 544) and that exclusion cannot simply be defined against its opposite – integration or inclusion. This point is elaborated upon by Popkewitz and Lindblad (2000), who contest the analytic and empirical distinction between inclusion and exclusion, as well as by Sayed et al. (2007), who argue that it is dangerous to categorise inclusion and exclusion as binary opposites. This chapter, in its way, is an attempt to re-insert some issues of educational exclusion into the discourse of inclusive education.

Despite legislation and policy in South Africa that supports inclusive education, educational exclusion persists at the point of access, through school cultures, policies, governance structures and through the curriculum (Sayed et al., 2007). While educational exclusion may have become endemic in many education systems, including South Africa's, it can also be challenged and resisted. It is, after all, socially produced and can be analysed and addressed as a social problem. It is also a particularly persistent and pernicious problem, and one that seems to defy the well intentioned policies and programmes instituted to address it. It requires analytical tools that account for its complexity. Where social problems are "dynamically complex, ill-structured, public problems" (Batie, 2008, p. 1176), they have become known as "wicked problems". It has been over 40 years since Rittel and Webber (1973, p. 160) published their description of the their characteristics, noting that they were "wicked" in the sense that they were "malignant", "vicious", "tricky", and "aggressive". Tame problems, by contrast, were "definable", their "mission … clear" and their "solutions … findable". While Rittel and Webber's work is certainly dated, the idea of the wicked problem has been productively taken up in a number of fields, including healthcare, poverty, crime, environmental management, and food production (Batie, 2008). Researchers in the field of education have also recently found the concept useful, with Southgate, Reynolds and Howley (2013) considering the teaching practicum as a wicked problem, and McCall and Skrtic (2009) engaging with disproportionality in special education as an instance of a wicked problem.

It is my contention that the idea of the wicked problem as presented by Rittel and Webber (1973) is particularly generative in thinking about exclusion both from

and within schooling. First, it offers a valuable space in which to understand and interrogate exclusion, and how it is entrenched and perpetuated. Too often, I would argue, inclusive education discourse makes exclusion almost invisible in the clamour to find 'what works' for teachers, learners and education managers at various levels. Second, the 'wicked problem' provides a conceptual repository for the conflicting and competing voices of those concerned with inclusion and exclusion, by showing the complexity of the problem, the challenge of the solution and the ultimate interconnectedness of problem and solution.

Analysing educational exclusion as a wicked problem builds on the work of others who have explored this issue both in South Africa and internationally. These authors include Sayed et al. (2007), who studied educational inclusion and exclusion in South Africa and India, recommending that "A key starting point of effecting inclusion is to address the nature, form and content of the policies designed to overcome exclusion" (p. x). Examining patterns of access in Sub-Saharan Africa, Lewin (2009) identified 'zones of exclusion' as a nuanced phenomenon, with different factors exerting pressure in different countries, and at different stages in the schooling cycle. Unlike other countries in the region, the pressure to leave school early in South Africa is not felt as acutely at the end of the primary school cycle, but rather in grades 10 and 11. This is confirmed by researchers such as Fleisch, Shindler and Perry (2012) and Meny-Gibert and Russell (2012), whose studies attest to the "scale of the problem of exclusion" (Sayed et al., 2007, p. 4). Too often, however, it is inclusion that is positioned as the problem, or at least a challenge in education (Engelbrecht, 2006). While not wishing to diminish the real obstacles confronting the implementation of inclusive education I contend that much can be gained by shifting the discourse to locate the problem within the many forms of educational exclusion.

## THE WICKED PROBLEM OF EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION

It is my contention that educational exclusion bears many of the hallmarks of wicked problems, in that it poses a complex, dynamic, multi-faceted and intractable challenge to the realisation of an inclusive and socially just education system. Rittel and Webber (1973) described ten characteristics of wicked problems and I suggest that these offer a useful framework in which to explore educational exclusion in South Africa. While I believe that a case can be made for the relevance to educational exclusion of each of the ten characteristics I focus on five, namely, that wicked problems have no definitive formulations; they are unique; they can always be considered as symptoms of other problems; solutions to them cannot be true or false, but good or bad; and there is no test of a solution to them, with each attempt at a solution counting significantly. Thinking about solutions is inextricably bound up with thinking about problems, and I wish to integrate thinking about inclusive education as a solution to the problem of educational exclusion. While conclusive solutions to wicked problems are likely to remain rare, I concur with Head and Alford (2013, p. 2) that "it is possible to frame partial, provisional courses of action against

wicked problems". In this light, I make my case that inclusive education can be seen as a solution to the problem of various kinds of educational exclusion, provided that inclusive education is not "tamed" (Slee, 2009) or designed in a way that ensures that nothing fundamental has to change (Ferri & Connor, 2006). In the sections that follow I use the characteristics of wicked problems to discuss educational exclusion further.

## THERE IS NO DEFINITIVE FORMULATION OF EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION

The first way in which educational exclusion is a wicked problem is that there is no definitive way to formulate the problem. As Rittel and Webber (1973, p. 161) wrote, "The information needed to *understand* the problem depends upon one's idea for *solving* it" (original emphasis). In other words, we cannot progress in understanding the problem apart from identifying the solution because once we have finally and comprehensively defined the problem we have also identified the solution. There are a number of ways to illustrate this, and here I consider a few questions to show that any particular lens on the problem of educational exclusion presupposes a solution.

### EXCLUSION FROM WHAT?

Answering this question forces us to define our object of analysis – are we concerned with exclusion from schooling altogether, in what Morrow (2007) and others call issues of 'formal access' to education? If so, we are concerned in South Africa with out-of-school children and young people who have variously been numbered at 280,000 (DoE, 2001); 386,000 (Fleisch et al., 2012) and 200,000 (DBE, 2010). Here we might look further, to understand whether these numbers represent absolute non-enrolment, that is, children who will never enrol in school, or point-in-time non-enrolment, accounting for those who may enrol late, drop out early or not enrol for a particular year. Fleisch et al. (2012, p. 531) maintain that in South Africa the number of children who never enrol is actually "very small, at less than 1% of all children between the ages of 7 and 15". Nevertheless, if formal access is how we understand the problem of educational exclusion we are already presupposing a solution that is concerned with making this access possible through various means. If, however, we understand the problem of educational exclusion as more than formal access, and consider that children with formal access may be excluded from the goods of education (i.e., enjoying what Morrow (2007) and others call 'epistemological access'), then we are already presupposing a different solution. Our focus shifts to issues of teaching and learning, and the quality rather than availability of schooling. Educational exclusion may also refer to exclusion from the ordinary ('mainstream') classroom, in which case we might direct our gaze more specifically to intervening in the processes whereby some children are deemed to have 'special' learning, behavioural or physical needs which have to be met in 'specialised' settings. We

might also consider the problem of educational exclusion as exclusion from a peer group or particular school community, and in so doing begin to suggest solutions in terms of school cultures, bullying and addressing discriminatory attitudes.

## EXCLUSION FOR WHOM?

Implicit in the formulation of the problem of educational exclusion from the perspective of who experiences it is another set of possible solutions. The Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025 (DBE, 2010) suggests that learners of school-going age who are not in school tend to come from poor households, sometimes with no parents, live in remote locations, or have special educational needs that cannot be met in local schools. Each of these problem identifiers specifies the direction in which a solution can/should be found: in poverty alleviation, infrastructure or transport development and building capacity for support of special needs in local schools. Lewin (2009, p. 157) recognises learners who experience "silent exclusion", enrolled in school but attending infrequently and having low achievement in relation to national curriculum expectations for their age. Other predictors of exclusion include being out of the age range for a cohort, usually being overage (Lewin, 2009); gender and race (Fleisch et al., 2012, report that mixed-race boys are significantly more likely to be out of school in South Africa); pregnancy or being a mother (Morrell, Bhana, & Shefer, 2012) and geographical location (Fleisch et al., 2012).

This discussion is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather is designed to show that wherever we focus our gaze to understand the problem we are already implicitly orienting ourselves towards a solution. Any number of fruitful questions could lead to considerations (unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter) of the problem of educational exclusion. These might be "who excludes?" – a question that would require us to consider overt and covert agents of exclusion, and to confront privilege, vested interests, prejudice and discrimination; or "how is exclusion perpetuated?" – a different question which would take us to the means of educational exclusion, and direct our attention to tests, curricula, infrastructure, and exonerating policies which require only 'reasonable accommodations' to be made; or "exclusion when?" – a question that grapples with the points in schooling where exclusionary pressures are most acutely felt. The complexity of educational exclusion quickly becomes apparent as we try to understand the problem, and it becomes clear that in order to amass the information needed to define the problem, some "orientation of a solution concept" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 161) is required.

## EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION CAN BE A SYMPTOM OF ANOTHER PROBLEM

Identifying the level at which a problem is best formulated is a particular challenge of wicked problems. Starting with Rittel and Webber's (1973, p. 165) premise that "every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem",

we can see that educational exclusion can be seen to be part of societal exclusion more generally, which in turn manifests the effects of particular configurations of political and economic power. In South Africa, exclusion both from schools and from quality schooling can be seen as a symptom of the wider and more general problems of poverty and inequality (Fleish, 2007; Meny-Gibert & Russell, 2012; Taylor, van der Berg, & Mabogoane, 2013). Broad and more general formulations of the problem, however, make addressing it difficult. Conversely, addressing the problem at too low a level is also not advised by Rittel and Webber (1973, p. 165) on the grounds that "marginal improvement does not guarantee overall improvement". This seems counter-intuitive to the idea that systemic improvement can be achieved by the cumulative effect of small scale interventions, thus, while the efforts of individual schools and organisations to combat educational exclusion may be lauded (see Walton & Nel, 2012), they represent little more than individual solutions to a systemic problem (Geyer & Walton, 2015). While individual learners may be benefitting from particular schools' measures to mitigate exclusionary pressures (such as providing financial assistance) or practices (such as making access arrangements for specific learners with disabilities), these do not translate into systemic improvement. This echoes a concern voiced in the more general context of school improvement by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, pp. 4–5), who note that gains resulting from interventions in individual schools usually disappear once intervention teams and key leaders leave, or when "the overworked and isolated staff finally run out of steam". Ad hoc interventions may thus have immediate contextual relevance, but the risk is that they may not be sustainable.

The challenge, then, of addressing educational exclusion is to find the right level/s to formulate the problem. In Dieltiens and Motala's (2012, p. 4) schema of educational exclusion being at the nexus of teaching and learning, household, society and policy factors, we have the problem formulated at societal, governmental, school, classroom and domestic levels. While this represents a comprehensive account of educational exclusion it begs the question of whose responsibility it is to address the problems. White Paper Six, South Africa's policy on inclusive education (DoE, 2001, p. 18), clearly identifies teachers as pivotal in the inclusion endeavour, stating that, "Classroom educators will be our primary resource for achieving our goal of an inclusive education and training system". Teachers, though, may not be willing or able to assume this role. In a Johannesburg primary school, teachers exonerate themselves from responsibility for learner underachievement by identifying the parents as the problem (Nel & Walton, 2013). One says, "…the parents don't play their part, they don't even bother to go that extra mile", while others complain that parents do not come for meetings, and when they do attend they do not "follow up". According to these teachers, nor do parents assist with homework, and they "can't spell or read". Teachers may also deflect responsibility for inclusive education to the 'department' (Walton & Lloyd, 2011) or to specialised support personnel (Nel, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Tlale, 2013). The contention that the solution to the problem lies elsewhere works to indemnify individual actors in the education system from

responsibility to address instances of exclusion, but, perversely, where individuals are proactive their efforts are negligible in effecting systemic and sustainable change. So, do we give up and resign ourselves in the face of the intractability of the problem of educational exclusion? Certainly not. The following characteristics of wicked problems refer to the challenges of finding solutions.

## THE UNIQUENESS OF WICKED PROBLEMS

The problem with wicked problems is that each is essentially unique and despite similarities with others there will be characteristics that distinguish a wicked problem from others that seem similar. The problem of educational exclusion in South Africa will therefore be, at least in some respects, different from educational exclusion in other sub-Saharan countries (Lewin, 2009), and differ between and within provinces in South Africa (Fleisch et al., 2012). This makes transferring solutions difficult, because, as Rittel and Webber (1973, p. 165) wrote, "one can never be certain that the particulars of a problem do not override its commonalities with other problems". Educational exclusion in the developing world has particular characteristics as a result of the legacy of colonialism and the impact of globalisation. In contexts in which mass access to quality education, defined by Lewin (2009, p. 151) as "attendance, achievement, and progression and completion at appropriate ages", remains an elusive target, meeting the additional support needs of children with disabilities may be a distant concern. Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2010, p. 33) even suggest it may be "idealistic" for first world countries and donor agencies to expect countries in the developing world to "adopt inclusive education as a policy prescription to address system failure and individual disadvantage". These authors raise concerns about the "export of first-world thinking" (p. 30) to address the problems of educational access in developing countries. So, for example, small classes and the availability of specialised resources are prescribed for the effective implementation of inclusive education (Mitchell, 2008). The reality in many developing countries is that of large classes and lack of basic resources.

This characteristic of the wicked problem of educational exclusion is vexatious, particularly when combined with the previous characteristic that highlights the difficulty in identifying where best to formulate the problem. Idiosyncrasies are increasingly apparent at lower levels in the system, as the more closely we focus on specific contexts the more we become aware of the nuance of difference in the 'particulars' of the problem. This poses a conundrum in that solutions that are fine-tuned to meet the particular exclusionary pressures of a specific context may be at too low a level to result in significant systemic change. The challenge in going forward is to ensure that inclusive education is conceptualised and operationalised as a systemic reform issue, with implications for whole school development. This means that leadership and administration, pedagogy, assessment, teacher development, intersectoral collaboration and stakeholder involvement need to be affected by a move towards greater inclusivity. This shift in view, from inclusive education as

a response to individual 'support needs' to one that demands responsiveness to diversity in its many forms is necessary if we are to begin to dismantle educational exclusion.

## THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION CANNOT BE TRUE OR FALSE, BUT GOOD OR BAD (OR BETTER OR WORSE)

The nature of a wicked problem, as opposed to a tame problem, precludes its solution being true or false, right or wrong. At best, some solutions are better or worse than others, and judgments made about this rest on particular ideological assumptions (Rittel & Webber, 1973). It is at this point that I focus on inclusive education as a solution to educational exclusion. As discussed above, inclusive education is hardly a unified concept and debates rage over what it is or should be, as well as over which actors and issues are or should be within its providence. South Africa (not uniquely) has coupled inclusive education with special education and has set it up as a directorate in its own right within the Department of Basic Education. This choice, I argue, is both good and bad. The good part is that a drive for greater inclusivity, especially (although not exclusively) for learners deemed to have 'special needs' or 'barriers to learning', is advocated by people who can focus on this issue. The concerns of learners with disabilities cannot remain invisible when there are people with the resources and mandate to secure their educational access and achievement. Miles and Singal (2010) share this position with regard to the Education for All movement, where they note the "continued exclusion of disabled children from the international agenda and planning" (p. 5) and see that inclusive education has a particular role in the "championing of marginalized groups" (p. 11).

On the other hand, as Miles and Singal (2010) acknowledge, when inclusive education is conceived separately from wider issues of educational access, there is "a danger that disability could become further separated from more mainstream debates, and perceived as an issue for 'specialists' (p. 5). This is where I see some of the 'bad' of South Africa's positioning of inclusive education as a solution to educational exclusion. First, that it is a separate entity has the potential to reduce concerns about marginalization. In drives for curriculum reform and improved educational outcomes measured by standardised assessments, inclusive education can easily become another programme to be implemented or resisted, depending on how actors on various levels in the system engage with the policy. Herein we find some of the challenge that inclusive education has in solving the problem of educational exclusion. As discussed above, education as we know it and practice it has many exclusionary features. To 'include' the previously 'excluded' in current systems may require such an investment of resources and effort that the newly 'included' will be marked as the outsider, so instead of engaging at a deep level with first order questions (Slee, 2011) of who benefits from current arrangements and whose interests are served by the way we do things in education, inclusive education in South Africa is concerned with second order questions of resources and

reorganisation. I thus argue that by positioning inclusive education as a discrete entity, those concerned with inclusion are badly positioned to ask: how do we radically and fundamentally reconstruct education in ways that are premised on the necessity for inclusion? Instead, their task is to ask and answer: what 'accommodations' and arrangements must be made to include learners with certain identity markers into the current system? There is a real danger that inclusive education is reduced to a list of 'accommodations' to be made for learners deemed to have additional support needs, rather than a challenge to exclusionary pedagogies and practices.

The second aspect of my disquiet regarding the positioning of inclusive education in South Africa as a solution to educational exclusion is that it is firmly linked to special education. This is exemplified by Rembe (2012, p. 11), who writes that, "The policy on inclusive education [is] usually understood as special-needs education". Coupling these is problematic for a number of reasons, not least of which is the ambivalence it suggests about the place of separate special education in the country. The continuum of services approach (ordinary schools, full-service schools and special schools, depending on 'level of support' required) suggested by current policy might be pragmatic, even expedient in the light of current realities, but it may not promote inclusion. Teachers in mainstream schools may be unwilling to see it as their responsibility to promote the epistemological access of all their learners if they believe that some learners belong in a specialised school further along the continuum. This is confirmed by the Gauteng province's Inclusion Strategy (GDE, 2011, p. 12), which notes that "a great number of learners are unnecessarily refer[red] to special schools". Narrowing inclusive education to a special education concern also has the potential to obscure the intersectionality of special needs and disability with other identity markers. Disability is embedded within the lived experience of gender, class, race, rural space and socio-economic status (Ferri & Connor, 2006). Isolating disability means that we risk ignoring the compounding effects of disadvantage. In addition, schools may congratulate themselves on being inclusive by admitting children with disabilities or special needs but overlook the overt or covert exclusion of children who, for example, are LGBTQIA+, represent a religious minority, or are migrants.

In judging solutions, Rittel and Webber (1973) remind us that ideology will influence how good or bad we deem a solution to be. The role of ideology in issues of inclusive education has been well interrogated by the late Ellen Brantlinger (1997) and others, and is beyond the scope of this chapter. I would suggest, however, that the solution of inclusive education tends to be judged according to two main perspectives, the first of which is the optimism of those who identify and commend incremental 'progress' towards greater inclusivity. Within this orientation, any efforts, however small, are recognised as part of the ongoing process of inclusive education. This 'something is better than nothing' approach is appealing, and possibly necessary, given the enormity of the task. It lends itself to a discourse of "checklists" for the "incorporation of inclusive approaches" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 31), lists of indicators (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), and, in South Africa, goals and milestones (DBE, 2011). As a result, facts and figures can be reported (see, for example, Surty, 2013) with

the satisfaction of knowing how successful implementation has been. The second lens used to judge the solution of inclusive education is a more critical theoretical approach. Impatient with what can be seen as an assimilationist endeavour, Slee (2011, p. 107) exemplifies this critique:

> Inclusive education … is not achieved through charitable dispensations to excluded minorities. It is not about the movement of people from their tenancy in the social margins into unchanging institutions. Integration requires the objects of policy to forget their former status as outsiders and fit comfortably into what remain deeply hostile institutional arrangements. There is an expectation that they will assume an invisible presence as they accept the dominant cultural order.

In this critical tradition, many of the strategies associated with the implementation of inclusion, such as curriculum differentiation, assessment accommodations and support provision through classroom facilitators, can be shown to perpetuate labelling and entrench the marginalisation of learners that inclusion was supposed to abolish. This, then, links to the next characteristic of the wicked problem – that solutions cannot be tested, because once implemented, a series of (possibly unintended) consequences arise.

## THERE IS NO TEST OF A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION, WITH EVERY ATTEMPT TO SOLVE IT COUNTING SIGNIFICANTLY

A characteristic of wicked problems is that "any solution, after being implemented, will generate waves of consequences" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 161), as illustrated both in terms of systemic interventions and the specific domain of inclusive education. In South Africa, the 'solution' to the problem of the epistemological exclusion of learners that results from underperforming teachers with poor content and pedagogical knowledge is a combination of annual national standardised assessments, a content-rich and rigorously paced curriculum (the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) and in some cases scripted lesson plans. There are a number of (unintended) potential consequences of these initiatives, all of which resonate with findings from similar interventions internationally. These include the marginalisation of learners who cannot keep up with the pace and demands of the curriculum, or meet the standards demanded by assessment. As a result, these learners are labelled as deficient in some way (Bacon & Ferri, 2013). The de-professionalisation of teachers occurs as their work is reduced to a list of "simple techniques" that can be prescribed and performed by teachers with minimal training (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 25).

A specific focus on inclusive education reveals exclusion as the perverse consequence of inclusion. We hear of schools who talk about the "inclusion learners" when referring to those admitted according to an inclusion policy, and these are often taught separately from their peers (Walton & Nel, 2012). Despite well intentioned acts of inclusion and support, 'refugee' learners in a Durban school experience marginalisation and exclusion (Sookraj, Gopal, & Maharaj, 2005). Young

mothers return to school but encounter school cultures and practices that conspire to marginalise them, and ultimately to push them out of school (Bhana & Ngabaza, 2012; Chigona & Chetty, 2008). Engelbrecht (2006, p. 260) finds "discriminatory practices towards 'outsiders' and those who are 'different'" in schools, noting that "… children with disabilities […] are viewed by both teachers and learners as 'different'" and that "[t]hey are bullied". Significantly, many of these consequences then become 'wicked problems' in their own right.

Related to this characteristic is the contention that wicked problems do not allow for trial and error attempts at solution, because there are irreversible consequences to every action, thus, "every trial counts" (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 161). At the individual level, learners have one life each, and (ideally) one turn at being in any particular grade. We cannot treat lightly the responsibility for each child's experience in a grade. A learner who joins a school which claims to be inclusive, and who finds him/herself subject to bullying by peers and epistemological marginalisation because teachers are not pedagogically responsive to his/her learning and support needs does not get back the year to try it again elsewhere. He/she might change schools or teachers but the traces of the failure of the inclusion effort will be difficult to eradicate. As Slee (2010, p. 2) reminds us, "Exclusion and inclusion are about real people who ought not to be abstracted". At a systemic level, money spent on a solution can never be unspent. Changes to policy and practice can (and should) be made, but not without acknowledging that a price has been paid for previous solutions, irrespective of how successful they were.

A number of policy and programme initiatives in South Africa seek to promote inclusivity, including an updating of the National Strategy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, providing in-service development opportunities for teachers, considering post-provisioning norms for full-service/inclusive schools, and developing curricula for learners with intellectual disabilities. These are necessary but not sufficient measures to realise genuine inclusive education in the country. To address the exclusion that is associated with Silver's (1994) monopoly paradigm, we need to ask 'who benefits' from current arrangements? (Slee, 2011), and so identify who is privileged or dis-privileged by schooling practices. School zoning, for example, perpetuates privilege by securing access to well-functioning schools in more affluent areas whilst post-provisioning norms dis-privilege learners in poorer, usually rural schools. Gateway subjects such as Mathematics and Science cannot be offered, resulting in the *de facto* exclusion of learners from many fields of further study. These examples serve to illustrate the point that trying to implement inclusive education without acknowledging or addressing the problem of educational exclusion will, in the overall scheme, be a frustrating if not futile exercise.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of educational exclusion results in a response at two extremes, one being that the sheer complexity and extent of the problem convinces us that

exclusion is inevitable, and we become paralysed in the face of the enormity of the task of addressing it. The other is that we fail to grasp the wickedness of the problem, and treat it as a tame one that can be solved by the conscientious implementation of programmes at school and classroom level. Having questioned in this chapter whether inclusive education was a tame solution to a wicked problem I offered a discussion of educational exclusion through some of the characteristics of wicked problems, with a focus on inclusive education as a solution to the exclusion and marginalisation of learners, particularly those deemed to be experiencing barriers to learning. I conclude by asserting that if we continue to tame inclusive education by reducing it to a series of strategies and interventions that we have to add to our educational endeavours we are guilty of not recognising the wickedness of the problem of educational exclusion. However, if we are willing to engage critically with the matrices of power and privilege that sustain educational exclusion, and can envision education in which exclusion is neither necessary nor inevitable, inclusive education may offer elements of a solution that begins to match the problem. South Africa is one of the second generation inclusive education countries (Kozleski, Artiles, & Waitoller, 2011) and finding a way forward for inclusive education means resisting the simplification of the problem of educational exclusion, and refusing to be satisfied with an inclusion that merely tinkers on the edges of our pedagogies and practices. It seems that pursuing inclusivity in South Africa and beyond should not be a focus on the inclusion of previously excluded individuals defined by their 'barriers to learning' and the recruitment of a myriad of strategies to facilitate their access. Instead, we need to identify, confront and dismantle policies and practices, which, intentionally or not, perpetuate the advantage of some to the disadvantage of others.

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DIKELEDI MAHLO

# 6. RETHINKING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

ABSTRACT

Influenced by Paulo Freire's idea of critical pedagogy, this chapter argues for new ways of thinking about Inclusive Education in African contexts. This is so because of the complexity of the subject within the African schools. Inclusive Education challenges the practice in the whole schooling system, particularly the traditional way of teaching. It calls for the new and innovative ways of teaching and learning which take into account of the diversity of learners in the classroom. Learners with profound learning disabilities should not be discriminated. Teachers are expected have to develop intervention strategies that will cater for all learners including the ones with profound learning disabilities.

Teachers may feel overwhelmed by the expectations and responsibilities for teaching learners with diverse need of learning; this may be, because teachers sometimes lack the skills and attitudes to engage with different kinds of learners. Teachers need to be prepared and ready to go an extra mile for learners with profound learning disabilities as they were previously excluded. Learners with profound disabilities should be socially and educationally accepted in the African context.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, African schooling, tradition, culture, exclusion, profound learning disabilities.

## INTRODUCTION

Rethinking inclusive education in an African context is debated in education around the world, but mostly in African countries, and different opinions have evolved on how best to make schools (as sites of justice or injustice) more inclusive. Inclusive schooling is a relatively new concept, with focus on special education, stemming from failure to acknowledge difference as a significant site for schooling and education as well as a conceptualisation that students who have been traditionally excluded have been those with profound learning disabilities and in need of special assistance. We need it to accommodate these learners, whilst the majority of children need to be given an effective education that will improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994). According to Phasha, Mahlo and Maseko (2013), children from foreign countries and immigrants to South

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 101–113.*

Africa may experience barriers to learning because of language, ethnic barriers and prejudice from teachers and other learners.

Inclusive Education has become a frequently debated topic in institutions of teaching and learning, with schools, colleges and universities being urged to become inclusive places of learning. The focus is shifting away from individual learners to the structures of educational delivery, such as structures of teaching and learning, and administration in education. It is the recognition of difference as a site of strength, power and knowledge, and it is also about how we connect the complexities of our world and our identities. The practice is about values and beliefs, celebrating differences in culture, family background, language, sexual orientation, class, gender, religion, socio-economic background and disability.

Inclusive Education is a relatively recent policy phenomenon, embodying ideas and arguments that have long been discussed and debated. Philosophically, it reflects values and principles and is concerned with challenging the ways in which educational systems reproduce and perpetuate social inequalities with regard to marginalised and excluded groups of students across a range of abilities, characteristics, developmental trajectories, and socio-economic circumstances. For this reason, inclusion is closely linked to the principles of equality and social justice in both educational and social domains (Ainscow, 1999; Artiles et al., 2006; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Sapon-Shevin, 2003). However, according to Makoelle (2012), inclusive pedagogy is still a mystery to teachers because they are not certain as to what constitutes an inclusive pedagogy in the South African context. In his study on the state of inclusive pedagogy in South Africa, it was found that the way inclusion is understood, it still has associations with special needs that were dominant in the apartheid era in the education system prior to 1994. He recommends that there is a need for a move from the special needs attitude to a better definition of inclusion, one that should clearly define the agenda to provide and facilitate quality education for all learners, irrespective of their characteristics or backgrounds

Given that oppressed learners should be provided with equal opportunities, some developed countries have made progress but developing and underdeveloped countries have gone backwards. In theory, the implementation of inclusive education sounds simple but in practice it presents enormous challenges to those who have to implement it (Stofile, 2008). There is a strong link between policy flaws, and Education for All policy and Millennium Development Goals, particularly in South African schools located within disadvantaged communities. Meanwhile, disabled children still significantly excluded, marginalised and stigmatised in ostensibly more inclusive schools.

According to Ball (1990, p. 2), by nature, policy is not value neutral but rather “a matter of authoritative allocation of values”. This author further observes that policies cannot be divorced from interests, conflict, domination or justice as they are contested, negotiated and fought over by different interest groups or policy communities. How one judges the implementation of outcomes is therefore subjective and depends on whose values are validated in the policy (Stofile, 2008).

Furthermore, the failure of implementation, like its success, is a highly contested concept in itself. Its description depends on the intentions, expectations and values of those involved.

Increasingly, teachers are supposed to improve their skills in teaching learners with diverse needs at schools. In inclusive schooling, teachers should see value and appreciate 'Africanity' (Indigenous African institutions, knowledge systems and technique) and be able to take the continent to another level through education (Nsamenang & Tscombe, 2011, p. 12). This can be achieved if a clear and comprehensive meaning of inclusive education is conceptualised. The education system should ensure that schools are welcoming for all, and they should respond to the needs and concerns of a diverse range of learners. How does a school address and respond to the differences in learners? Diversity and power as defined through the lens of class, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, religion and language schools should be able to consider these aspects.

Inclusive education can mean different things to different people in different contexts. The thrust of this chapter is to explain it in an African context, how inclusivity is understood by African people in regards to the unique challenges and successes. An African proverb says: "It takes a village to raise a child", meaning a collaborative, communal activity that requires all the stakeholders to own. All children are brought together in one classroom as a community regardless of their abilities and strengths. Booth (2000, p. 78) argues that inclusive education is the process of increasing participation of learners within and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of neighbouring centres of learning. It promotes a tolerant and humane society that cares about the wellbeing of each and assists them, relating to issues of social justice and equity. Every adult is responsible for teaching the child, whether his/her own biological one or not, and the teachings can be academic or social. Students receive their educational instruction within the classroom setting for the entire or substantial portion of their school day in inclusive schooling.

## PAULO FREIRE'S CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The subject of inclusive education has dominated numerous debates in and outside academia, because of the belief that educational systems reproduce and perpetuate social inequalities and contribute to policy flaws. Drawing from Paulo Freire's framework, which is regarded as a humanist and liberating praxis, the oppressed section of society is used as a subject of discourse and research appears to be gaining favour among researchers, administrators and practitioners in both Western and developing nations. As a humanist and libertarian, his pedagogy has two distinct stages. Firstly, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and, via this praxis, commit themselves to its transformation. Secondly, once the reality of oppression has been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes that of all people in the process of permanent liberation. More specifically, it becomes

one of formerly oppressed inclusive education learners. In the abovementioned stages, it is through action in reflection that the culture of domination is culturally confronted. Students, as they are increasingly confronted with problems relating to themselves in and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to these problems, understood by them as interrelated within a total context, rather than as theoretical problems, and their resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus less alienated. Their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings, and gradually they come to regard themselves as committed (Freire, 1999). Educational inclusion has been documented as a social discourse and constitutes an international policy imperative that promotes the rights of disabled children to be educated alongside their peers in mainstream classrooms (Armstrong & Barton, 2007; Kenworthy & Whittaker, 2000; Rioux, 2002).

This chapter focuses on educational environmental factors that maintain and perpetuate social and educational injustice. Within this context, a social justice discourse in inclusive education policy and practice in an African context necessitates changing systems that perpetuate power and exclusion. Disabled learners (as the oppressed) often experience intersectional subordination, hence inclusive education should draw on the notion of intersectionality whereby the notion of disability is conceptualised in conjunction with issues of race, socio-economic background and gender, thereby providing alternative analytical lenses through which to challenge reductionist and neo-liberal discourses.

On the other hand, Giroux (2003, p. 13) observes that interrogating how power works through dominant discourses and social relations, particularly as these influence young people who are marginalised economically, racially and politically, provides opportunities for progressives to challenge dominant ideologies and regressive social policies that undermine opportunities for connecting the struggles over education to the broader crisis of radical democracy and social and economic justice. I argue that understanding the intersections of systems of oppression and challenging the multiplicity of factors that disable certain groups of students entails critiquing dominant ideologies, educational policies and institutional arrangements that maintain and perpetuate social and educational injustice. The notion of intersectionality is adequately reflected in the lens of Freire's critical pedagogy, with focus on issues of marginalisation, power, justice and social transformation, and can mobilise new theorising concerning the complex nature of disability and the ways in which disabled students are socially and educationally positioned.

Ainscow (2000) acknowledges that different views of inclusion exist and there is no single perspective within a single country or school. The former South African Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, emphasised that the complexity of a fast-changing society meant the formal teaching system is expected to address issues which were not previously regarded as part of education (*Values in Education Manifesto,* 2001), such as supporting learners who experienced barriers to learning

and development. As a policy which acknowledges that all children can learn and need support, inclusive education is also about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricular and environment to meet the needs of all learners, thus enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies accordingly (South Africa, 2001). As the Department of Education (South Africa, 2000, p. 28) puts it, the establishment of an inclusive education system in schools would require appropriate district as well as institution level support services, and involve more than simply accepting learners with different learning needs in mainstream classrooms. Against this backdrop, there is a divide between theory and practice, as at present learners' environmental factors continue to perpetuate social and educational injustice, and lack the substance of intersectionality.

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Debates on inclusive education date back to the apartheid era. Although such discourses tended to be almost exclusively about previously disadvantaged communities they were discussed before the democratic government was instituted in 1994. South Africa developed a legislative and policy framework in which inclusion functions are mentioned with particular emphasis in the *Education White Paper Six: Special Needs Education* (South Africa, 2001) so as to be on par with what was happening globally. Inclusive education is defined as a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners, irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language (NCSNET\NCES, 1998). In the South African context, the term refers to the education policy based on the principles of inclusion, which acknowledges that all children can learn and need support. It is also about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment, enabling appropriate education structures, systems and learning methodologies (South Africa, 2001). I argue that the successful implementation of the inclusive education policy is critical in achieving a democratic and just society. Given that educational contexts in South Africa are characterised by a diverse learner population in every classroom it is my contention that the specific support strategies needed are the cornerstones of successful inclusive education.

The post-apartheid South African Constitution emphasises respect for the rights of all, with particular emphasis on the recognition of diversity. This calls for an inclusive approach to education in the sense that all learners, as the oppressed and the marginalised, are entitled to appropriate education in an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Given the high levels of social inequalities in South African society, implementing inclusive education is a challenging task. Within this context, the question, "What are the implications of Inclusive Education on Education for All policy ideals and Millennium Development Goals?" becomes critical for thinking around policy issues and for the roll-out and implementation of South Africa's inclusive education policy.

In South Africa, many in-service teachers have not had the benefit of being trained to teach learners who experience barriers to learning in their initial training, hence classroom teachers often find it difficult to teach them. I argue that the success or failure of the inclusive education policy depends on those processes, structures, conditions and other mechanisms that need to be in place to promote the development of inclusive practices within the education system. The main aim of this chapter is to explore and reflect on the barriers to the implementation of the inclusive education policy in South Africa, with focus on learners' environment and factors that maintain and perpetuate social and educational injustice. Central to this is the assumption that inclusive education should draw on the notion of intersectionality, whereby the notion of disability is conceptualised in conjunction with issues of race and socio-economic background.

Inclusive education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning and providing quality education, especially to learners who experience barriers to learning and development, and the participation of all learners who are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation. It is important to recognise that inclusivity is complex, but it should not be seen as an issue of placing learners with diverse needs and barriers in regular classes without the support related to their actual barriers. It should be seen as a model of holistic development, modifying and adapting teacher attitudes to enable all learners to fully engage with the curriculum. It further relies on collaboration between the systems to which the learners belong, and their various forms of participation in the process of teaching and learning (Bouwer, 2005, p. 48).

White Paper 6 states that classroom teachers now have a responsibility towards learners with diverse needs since they are being educated in the ordinary classes. Giangreco, Carter, Doyle and Suter (2010, p. 251) acknowledge that support provided to classroom teachers is essential, and although they are not expected to have all the answers or undertake the task alone they must realise that while the foundational principles of teaching and learning do not change those principles may need to be applied differently or used more systematically. Singal (2010, p. 52) maintains that even when children with disabilities do attend the mainstream classrooms teachers do not always regard them as their primary responsibility. This is contrary to the guiding principle underpinning inclusion, that regular schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, sensory, emotional or other special needs (Forlin, 2008, p. 76). They should therefore have appropriate skills and as such the expectations of teachers are greater, in turn affecting attitudes towards inclusive education, with research showing that differing attitudes of teachers may contribute to its effective implementation.

## INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICAN EDUCATION

Inclusive schooling is a setting in which students receive their educational instruction within the classroom setting for the entire day or for a portion of it. White Paper 6 (2001, p. 16) defines inclusive education as a policy which acknowledges that all

children and youth can learn and need support, accepting and respecting that all are different in some ways and have different learning needs that should be equally valued. The structures of education are to be enabled through systems and learning methodologies designed to meet the diverse needs of the learners. It is broader than formal schooling, with learning occurring in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures, intended to change attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula, and the environments to meet the needs of the learners. In maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions, and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning, it aims at empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning. In an African context, inclusive schooling can only be achieved through upholding and observing norms and societal values, mostly because African education is based on being morally upright, observing ethical norms and societal values, and combining these with specific survival skills (Abubakar, 2011, p. 71).

African Education's goal is to produce citizens who are honest, respectful and part of the community. In Sepedi, the saying *"motho ke motho ka batho*" means a person is a person because that person exists among others, not in isolation. Inclusive schooling promotes accepting learners and respecting their differences. The system of education is supposed to change in order to meet and accommodate the educational demands that are brought by learners, implying that the whole school community, together with the parents, are responsible for making sure that the learner receives quality education. This is affirmed by Higgs (2008): "Within the concept of African communalism, belonging to a community of people constituted the most vital aspects of one's personal experience." Inclusive schooling cannot be detached from the African way of living because a learner is treated in an acceptable way that society envisages.

Research indicates that inclusion is a major challenge to African school systems, with a lack of human and material resources not uncommon. Uganda has been addressing the educational needs of disabled children as part of universal primary education since 1996 (Ndeezi, 2000, p. 28). Evidence suggests that many African countries have made efforts to implement inclusive education, although there are diverse challenges that all face. In a study in Botswana, Abosi (2007, p. 196) argues that schools are already experiencing difficulties in meeting the needs of regular learners due to large class size, untrained teachers, inadequate teaching techniques, transportation problems, lack of resources and lack of facilities. A learner develops to be what he or she has been brought up to be regarding beliefs, values and the way of doing things.

## THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING IN AFRICAN EDUCATION

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations,

concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (Texas A&M). Some elements of culture are positive and prepare the young to be responsible adults, and as education occurs in a specific ecological and cultural context the eco-culture shapes the educational environment because every facet of education is deeply influenced by the local context (Nsamenang, 2011, p. 11). According to Clough and Corbett (2000, p. 4), inclusive education is a social process which engages people in trying to make sense of their experience and helping one another. Schools in South Africa are faced with a challenge of being inclusive and building a culture of learning and teaching in which quality education becomes a reality (Naicker, 2005, p. 232). Research revealed that the attitudes of teachers towards educating learners with diverse barriers to learning have been put forward as a decisive factor for making schools more inclusive. Culture can also mean the characteristics of a group of people defined by language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. When a learner attends school there are some cultural beliefs that he or she has been taught at home which shape and influence the way that individual thinks and goes about daily life. Culture plays an important role in inclusive schooling and the skills learnt in culture are usually transferred to the school.

The socialisation of an African child not only occurs within school, communities and societies, but there are also cultural norms that are informally taught to the young so that they can grow up to be responsible adults. Cultures are usually transferred to the young by elders, taught as practices, values, African beliefs and a way of living. Nsamenang and Tscombe (2011, p. 12) point out that: "Africa's education landscape is incomplete without an account of the Indigenous patterns of education that existed prior to the intrusions of Islamic-Arabic and Western-Christian educational heritage." It is important to note that teachers also play an important role in education as they are ones who may be able to realise that a learner is experiencing a barrier and be able to intervene.

The concept of learning support acknowledges the potential of learners each to grow at his or her own pace towards a maximum level of independence in learning, and can be achieved by using strategies and practicing learning styles so that all reach a level of achievement in line with their own unique abilities. To provide quality education there should be policies and plans to deliver such services, including appropriate allocation of resources. The future of African children is bleak if in some instances they are still being taught under the trees, by unqualified teachers and without water and sanitation.

## TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING

Forlin (2004, p. 13) asserts that inclusive education is not only a new paradigm that has its own language, but also challenges traditional attitudes, beliefs and understanding of inclusion, which is challenging the traditional ways in which education is organised, with the classroom teacher no longer being the only person

who teaches. Kisanji (1998), for example, paints a different picture of growing up disabled in a traditional African community from the often-accepted one of being hidden away and mothers being ostracised. Another problem was related to negative attitudes, myths and beliefs, associated stigma and discrimination at all levels (Mmatli, 2009). If such is the case the goal of inclusive education will not be reached.

## CHALLENGES TO INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

The performance of learners in the classroom suffers if their basic needs of food, shelter and parental care are not met. Most in this situation are depressed, tired and held back by a poor concentration span. Research has shown that a learner needs to be educated holistically, that is, as a total person, overcoming any social, normative, physical, cognitive and affective factors that might make it difficult for him or her to learn. Teachers need to be alert to the needs that prevail in learners and address them as soon as possible. Learners learn better at school if their home environment is not presenting problems that will inhibit them.

The socio-economic background of learners can influence the success of inclusive schooling, with learners from poor backgrounds likely to experience barriers to learning because their basic needs are not being met, and so their performance in the classroom suffers. If a learner's domestic environment is not conducive to learning it impedes motivation, and barriers to learning reduce the attention span in the classroom. The domestic environment is also important and lack of support from the home will make inclusive schooling difficult. Classroom teachers in situations in which they are supposed to intervene in social problems, such as abuse and/or violence, are sometimes unable to help because they do not know what to do.

Teachers in South Africa teach learners from communities or societies, which implies that both groups are social beings, and whatever happens in the communities can affect them directly or indirectly. As social beings, whatever affects them will also affect the progress of making schools inclusive. Experiences of learners differ according to their context, where they live, and the kind of experiences they have had in life. Some of the learners' negative life experiences, such as abuse, neglect, and chronic disease can have a significant impact on their schooling and they might not be able to concentrate in class. One could argue that the education authorities need to find a way to deal with the negative life experiences affecting learners, thereby rendering the schools not inclusive. Life experiences can include issues such as poverty, abuse, violence, travelling long distances to school, staying with grandparents, HIV/AIDS, xenophobia and illness. Learners' experiences in their homes, society and school are having a profound impact on the implementation of inclusive education and unless dealt with adequately the vision will not be realised.

Africa can only boast that inclusive schooling is successful if the partnership between the home, school and learner is in order, but due to the socio-economic

status and unemployment most parents in Africa leave their children in the care of grandparents or siblings, for whom it is sometimes difficult to take care of the wellbeing of the children, especially when they are illiterate and cannot help with schoolwork. The lack of parental or caregivers' involvement in the learners' education is having a significant impact on making schools more inclusive. If parents and caregivers are not involved in the activities of learners at school, performance and confidence in the classroom can suffer, giving rise to more barriers to learning.

Parents and caregivers who neglect their responsibilities create a challenge for inclusivity in Africa. The school should involve them as learning partners to play a role in education, as this can result in a learner improving or even succeeding in his or her academic career. Schools can help parents to understand how their involvement can support performance in class through meetings and community gatherings. Support the learners receive from home can contribute greatly to their confidence and performance in the classroom. In some households learners are heading the family and it is difficult for them to parent themselves, in which cases there is no one to give them guidance. Schools have to take responsibility for making parents feel that they are accepted as partners in the education of their children, hence the learners' confidence and performance in the classroom will improve as they realise that even their parents and caregivers are interested in their wellbeing.

Parents should be supportive of classroom teachers, especially in solving problems of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. If parents take responsibility for their children the classroom teachers will also be encouraged to support them because they know they also have the parents' support. Support of parents is regarded as the most important factor in the education of learners, for when parents know what is happening at schools they are able to support and motivate the learners. Parents need to be convinced that learners experiencing barriers to learning are not 'bewitched', but rather require support in areas with which they are struggling. Literature from many African countries shows that often disability is linked to 'curses', 'sinful' behaviour and disobedience to religious expectations (Haihambo & Lightfoot, 2010, p. 80). The perceptions of parents about learners experiencing barriers to learning can distort the whole idea of inclusive schooling. When learners are identified by teachers as having problems, some parents deny it, thus delaying the process of assisting the learners and reducing their chances of getting assistance. Parents may be reluctant to become involved because they do not feel there is anything they can offer the schools, or maybe they do not understand how it can change the lives of learners. Therefore, schools should find creative ways to include them in schools activities, and so improve performance and confidence. It is thus evident that if parents are not receiving the correct information about inclusive schooling they may react negatively to it. Training parents, communities and society at large is, with adequate and relevant information, important if they are also to play their part.

In most African classrooms the numbers of learners are too high, making inclusivity difficult to achieve. Teaching and learning will not take place as planned if there are too many learners in a classroom and that can make the teacher's task difficult, especially when they need to accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning, therefore classroom teachers exclude those learners in teaching and learning activities. Overcrowded classrooms result in teachers neglecting the learners who really need help, and they only move with those learners who are able to grasp the concepts.

Learners in the classroom who are taught in a language that is not their mother tongue may appear slow, and are often unable to follow instructions because they are confused about the meaning and so do not cope with their schoolwork. As such, for much of the time such learners are labelled as 'slow' and sometimes this might contribute to the perceptions that there are many learners in the classes who are experiencing barriers to learning. In such instances the real problem might be that the learners are unable to follow the teacher's instruction, because he or she is not using the student's mother tongue. Classroom teachers sometimes identify learners as having barriers to learning, without considering that the Language of learning and teaching of the school can be a contributory factor.

A framework which incorporates classroom teachers receiving the opportunities to deal with learning problems would pay special attention to the environmental or situational factors that may be contributing to the problem and so enhance the success of dealing with them in an appropriate manner. A learner's problem in the classroom can be understood if the teachers also understand the background of the learners and whether they have had similar problems before.

## CONCLUSION

When working with learners, teachers should acknowledge that all have the potential to learn, but that potential is waiting to be unlocked by an adult. This means also helping learners who experience barriers to learning, affording them recognition, respect and a sense of belonging. Collaboration between the teacher, the parents and the whole community is important. Teachers should try to teach learners the ways in which they can learn by using different ways of teaching, as learners have different learning styles. It may be possible to effectively implement inclusive education for the benefit of all learners, including those experiencing difficulties in learning. The vision can only be realised if appropriate support structures are in place, and the system is functioning effectively to form a complete whole.

According to Engelbrecht and Green (2001, p. 6), inclusive education is not about how to assimilate individual learners with identified barriers to learning into existing forms of schooling, but rather about restructuring schools and education systems so that they can accommodate the learning needs of every individual. It implies that in an inclusive setting, schools and teachers should create a positive learning environment that supports the diverse needs of all learners.

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ANNA J. HUGO

# 7. LANGUAGE AS AN EXCLUDING FACTOR IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

ABSTRACT

In this chapter the choice of learners' home language as the language of learning and teaching at school is discussed. It is indicated what influence the choice of English as a second language which is used as the language of learning and teaching could have on learners' progress at school. It is proposed that an additive bilingual approach should be used to support non-English speaking learners in the classroom. The important issue of cultural heritage and language is explained and it is also discussed that some teachers' weak command of English could add to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development because for them the language of the classroom becomes an excluding factor.

**Keywords:** Home language, the language of learning and teaching, English as a second language

## INTRODUCTION

Language is the vehicle that carries content and knowledge, and well-developed language abilities and language skills are essential for learning to take place. Wolff (2006, p. 50) aptly states: "Language is not everything in education, but without language everything is nothing in education." When the issue of the language of learning and teaching in the school system is discussed in Africa it seems as if the colonial yoke prevails. In a report, Alidou, Boly, Brock-Utne, Diallo Heugh and Wolff (2006, p. 10) state that when young children are not taught in their home language (mother tongue) it is usually only the teacher who speaks. Kgosana (2006) aptly opines that although Africa has shed colonialism a silent revolution is necessary to save its children from the burden of colonial languages. This also applies to the school system in South Africa, where at times the language of learning and teaching is an extrinsic barrier to development and progress at school, even causing a breakdown in learning for some learners.

In this chapter, different issues surrounding the accessibility to language and the use of the various official languages in the school situation are considered. The ability to read with comprehension is also included as the acquisition of reading is necessary to make a success at school, especially from Grade 4 onwards. It sheds

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light on some reasons the language of learning and teaching can lead to a learner failing to attain his or her full potential at school. If learners have not mastered the language of learning and teaching up to an academically competent level it becomes an extrinsic barrier to learning, thus impeding the learning process. The principles of inclusive education should be upheld to grant all children the right to develop their potential. The content of this chapter is based on personal observations as researcher and on feedback from teachers during school visits. It also contains valuable information obtained from my students during my years in teacher training.

South Africa has 11 official languages and, according to the law, young learners in Grades R-3 should be taught in their home language. This is important as the strengthening of one's home language eventually helps with the acquisition of a second language. The following graph provides information about the 11 languages and the percentage of people who use them as home language.

The language rights of the citizens of South Africa are protected in the Constitution, in which it is stated: "Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable" (Bill of Rights, 1996). Thus, all children can be taught in Grades 1–3 and in the pre-school classes, which are Grade R (Reception year) or Grade RR in one of the official languages. With the exception of Afrikaans, all children who do not speak English are taught in English from Grade 4 onwards, which means an early departure from home language or mother tongue, referred to as 'transitional bilingualism' (Heugh, in Fleisch, p. 105).

Afrikaans is a quasi-scientifically developed language and Afrikaans-speaking children have for many years been in the privileged position of being taught from Grade 1–12 in their home language. All school textbooks up to Grade 12 are available in English as well as in Afrikaans and there are a growing group of Afrikaans-speaking parents and caregivers who are, however, of the opinion that it is better to send their children to a school in which English is the medium of instruction. There are many reasons for this decision, including English being the international language of business and Information and Communication Technology, and the availability of job opportunities in South Africa and abroad. The decision to use English as the language of learning and teaching has, however, consequences, such as loss of cultural heritage.

Before 1994, Afrikaans was the language of the government, oppressors and colonisers, with all learners compelled by law to learn it as a second or third language at school. This was the spark for uprisings in Soweto and other parts of the country, ushering in the establishment of universal suffrage in the country. However, with the development and acceptance of all the official languages spoken in the so-called 'new South Africa' the perception has changed. In the larger metropolises, such as Johannesburg, there are schools which are attended by black learners who do have Afrikaans or English as a home language, but Afrikaans is offered as the second language. The reason is that schools sometimes do not wish to favour a language

spoken only by a group of learners in the schools, thus it is chosen almost as a neutral language.

## CHOICE OF A SPECIFIC HOME LANGUAGE AS THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

According to language and literacy acquisition theories it is ideal that children be taught in their home language or the one spoken at home when they enter school. The proficiency of children in the language spoken at home forms the basis on which they can extend their language knowledge into formal academic learning and acquire reading and writing as language skills (Fleisch, 2008, p. 105). However, for some children it does not become the language of learning and teaching they enter school. For certain reasons, another group of learners are also taught in a language other than their home one, that is, in one of the other ten official ones. For instance, sometimes a child who speaks Setswana at home, because it is the language the mother speaks, is sent to a school in which isiZulu is the language of learning and teaching in Grades R-3, perhaps because the father is isiZulu-speaking. The father of a child may be Sesotho-speaking, but the child speaks isiXhosa because it was brought up by the parents of his or her mother in an area in which isiXhosa was the dominant language and the one used in the schools. Another factor could be the availability of schools in which a specific child's home language is used as the language of learning and teaching. A child whose home language is isiXhosa might live in an area with no schools in which it is used. If parents and caregivers cannot afford the cost of transport to a school in which isiXhosa is used the child might attend one in which one of the Sotho languages is used in Grades 1–3.

## LACK OF DEVELOPMENT OR MODERNISATION OF HOME LANGUAGES

According to theory, young learners enter school with proficiency in at least one language, their home one. Ideally, they are able to extend this language knowledge into formal academic contexts and learn to read and write in it. Young learners are expected to master high-order thinking skills in a range of school subjects as they progress up the grades, but for the majority the shift to a second language in Grade 4 means that often most do not master the skills and knowledge required by the school in their home language and they have not developed their language abilities in the second language sufficiently to use it well as the language of learning and teaching (Fleisch, 2008, p. 105). According to Wright (2012, p. 3), most people believe that the development of South Africa's official African languages in all technical and modern domains:

> … is too daunting, too expensive, and intrinsically counter-productive, when the existing alternative (English) offers national access to the global store of

> knowledge, a degree of cohesion in government and the central economy, as well as significant opportunities for international communication, trade and exchange. (Wright, 2012, p. 3)

Attempts to develop and modernise the African languages have in some instances been met with resistance among some academics, for example the so called Nhlapo-Alexander proposal in which it was suggested that the various Nguni language should be 'harmonised' into one standard Nguni language, and the various Sotho languages into one standard Sotho language (Alexander, 1998, pp. 269–270).

There are pockets of people whose home language is an African language and who live in deep rural areas who do not wish their languages to be modernised or interfered with. They do not wish to have new modern words and concepts added or spelling rules to be revised, and as Wright (2013, p. 3) states, "these languages carry traditions, values and sonorities of significant cultural importance, so that many rural speakers would prefer them to be respected and preserved just as they are." Some parents would prefer their children to be exposed to modern life by means of English, leaving the old certainties accessible in their original home languages.

With the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement textbooks for Grades 1–6, which were all translated into the 11 official languages, great strides were made to expose all learners in government schools to correct modern texts in their various home languages. From feedback received from teachers, many were pleased with the new textbooks because for once modern updated ones were available in the classrooms.

## CHOICE OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AS THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

Many parents who do not speak English at home prefer to send their children to schools in which English is the language of learning and teaching from Grade R or 1 onwards. Parents are willing to make an investment in English for their children because in their opinion it will support access to the curriculum (Heugh, 2009, p. 98). South Africans tend to elevate the status of English and perceive it as an imperative for economic empowerment (De Wet, 2002, pp. 119–120), and it has become the language of business in South Africa with parents believing that a good command of it will provide their children with better employment opportunities.

According to 2011 statistics, English is the home language of only 9.6 percent of the South African population, widely used as the language of commerce, communication and all government departments, effectively the *lingua franca*. In schools, fewer than one-in-ten learners speak English as their home language (Fleisch, 2008, p. 98). The discussion in education circles about learning through the medium of one's own home language or in English as a second language is a

continuous one as development of home languages is neglected. The view on the importance of well-developed home language skills was enhanced in a research project conducted into teachers' opinions of the choice of English as the language of learning and teaching, the majority indicating that they believed that learning would be enhanced if teaching were through the medium of home language (De Wet, 2002, p. 23). This is the ideal situation, but many parents and teachers have a different opinion.

English is not an easy language to acquire if it is not the home language, mainly because, unlike European languages such as Italian and Spanish, and the other ten official languages spoken in South Africa, it is not a regular language. It is not phonetic, having been influenced by historical events and this resulting in changes in pronunciation and speech (Bald, 2007, pp. 2–3) so when learning to speak and write young learners find it difficult to translate all letters into sounds or *vice versa*. According to second language acquisition theories, most children enter school with a knowledge of their home language or the one spoken at home adequate to mastering formal academic content and learning to read and write in that language. The language of learning and teaching should, however, be the learner's home language or dominant one spoken at home, but when the children have to learn through the medium of English, also known as 'subtractive bilingualism', on entering school few master the knowledge or skills required (Fleisch, 2008, p. 105). Both subtractive bilingualism and transitional bilingualism "have the same consequences – failure at school" (Heugh, in Fleisch, 2008, p. 105). Many English as a Second Language learners face barriers to learning, their own home language not being sufficiently developed to help them with the academic content of subjects in Grade 4 and onwards. They have the opportunity to learn English for three years only and often the teaching that they do receive in it is offered by teachers whose own command of it and knowledge of second language methodology is inadequate.

Based on research conducted in the United States of America it takes four to eight years to become sufficiently proficient in English as a second language to achieve the ability to read or to communicate abstract ideas, whilst researchers in Canada found it takes four to seven years to develop the ability in a second language to make a long-term success at school (Feinberg, 2002, pp. 10–11). Basic concepts and learning skills should be mastered in a person's home language before a second language can be introduced, and then it should still not be the language of learning and teaching.

A distinction should be made between the two acronyms coined by Jim Cummins, namely BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Communicative Academic Language Proficiency). When one has to learn through the medium of a new language such as English as a second or additional language it is necessary to be academically proficient in that language. Cummins opined that it is necessary to have CALP in one's home language or in the language of learning and teaching to make progress at schools. If not there may be a special

academic disadvantage (Aukerman, 2007, p. 626). Based on the results of research and reports one can deduce that many learners in South Africa have not acquired CALP proficiency in English as the language of learning and teaching.

Small-scale studies, such as the Broom report (2004), provide feedback on the complex multilingual situation with regard to reading and writing abilities of non-English learners and English-speaking learners. Another report completed by Hugo sheds light on some of the problems with which English as a Second Language learners in primary schools, as well their teachers, have to grapple (Hugo, 2008, p. 63). From the research it is evident that there is a need to address all the language skills, as well as pronunciation and vocabulary when teaching English as a second language as the language of learning and teaching in primary schools in South Africa.

## PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

When English is taught as a second language, or according to the policies of the Department of Basic Education as a first additional language, it is proposed that the additive bilingual approach to language teaching is used. This recommends the use of the home language "as a stepping stone to the acquisition of the additional language" (Lenyai, 2013, p. 8) and that children first have to learn literacy skills in their home language then use these skills to master the second.

On pronunciation, Hewings (2004, p. 15) lists five important features to be taught:

- Consonants
- Consonant clusters
- Vowel length
- Word stress
- Tonic words

Learning vocabulary is an essential part of mastering a second language, but learning a new one requires more than a large number of lexical items that have to be mastered. The learner also has to know much about each, referred to as the 'depth' of vocabulary knowledge, and so teachers should be acquainted with various teaching approaches and methodologies (Schmitt, 2008, pp. 292, 333–334).

McDonough (2002, p. 81) states that there is choice of two strategies that could be used to improve the reading abilities of poor readers in a second language, firstly, that teachers in Grades 1–3 should be well informed about reading methods and skills. Young learners should be taught reading skills in their home language well so that they can become skilled readers; and secondly, they should be taught more of the second language so that their home language reading skills can be transferred to it. Hence, teachers who teach a second language need to know about and be able to teach reading skills, be it in the learners' first or second language. More strategies to teach reading, as well as the other language skills, in ESL should be investigated.

## ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION FOR THE MAJORITY OF LEARNERS IN GRADE 4 AND ABOVE

The majority of young South African learners are taught in their home languages from 1 to 3, and sometimes 4, after which in English. Many researchers have pointed out that in the rural areas of South Africa English is like a foreign language, seldom heard, spoken or even read outside the classroom. As noted in the previous section, it takes children four to eight years of learning a new or additional language before acquiring sufficient language skills in the additional language to be able to use it as the language of learning, hence the situation for many South African learners in Grade 4 upwards is problematic.

Fleisch's (2008, p. 98) research on the links between learners' poor achievement and language practices in schools found that:

> While these studies provide strong evidence that shows the relationship between failure to master the basics of literacy and numeracy and the disjunction between the language of instruction and the language of the home, they often provide few real insights into the generative mechanisms, the underlying reasons or causes that link children's experience with language at school and their failure to become proficient in reading and mathematics.

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Although learners in Grade 4 and upwards are taught in English as their First Additional Language, or in English as a Second Language, they should be encouraged also to continue to develop their home language development. Parents should be persuaded to speak in their home languages to their children at home, encouraging them to talk about what they did at school, even more to explain a science experiment, a concept in mathematics or an historical event. Thus, the children's understanding of academic concepts could be enhanced. Cummins (2011, pp. 2–3) states that "Conceptual knowledge developed in one language helps to make input in the other language comprehensible. If a child already understands the concepts of 'justice' or 'honesty' in her own language, all she has to do is acquire the label for these terms in English."

Teachers in Grade 4 and the higher grades should take care to scaffold the academic learning of their non-English speaking learners. Three types of scaffolding have been identified as effective for second language learners:

1. Simplify the language by shortening sentences and selections, speaking in the present tense and by avoiding the use of idioms.
2. Teachers could ask for completion and not generation by letting learners choose answers from a list or by completing sentences or paragraphs.
3. The use of visual learning materials to scaffold difficult academic content, such as graphic organizers, tables, charts, outlines, pictures and graphs (Bradley & Bradley, 2011, p. 1).

Ways to scaffold learners' use and understanding of English as a second language should be included in in-service and pre-service teacher training. If learners understand what they are being taught in English as their second language and also as their language of learning and teaching, they will be helped to make good academic progress at school.

Communication lies at the heart of second language learning and teaching and teachers should thus allow learners to participate actively in class discussions. They should also reduce their own talking time as much as possible, for example by asking questions rather than continuously explaining. In this way learners can use vocabulary and practically apply grammar rules that they have learnt. Teachers should not concentrate on the mistakes that learners make when using the second language, whilst learners should have enough time to think and be allowed to correct their own mistakes. It is important that visual materials, practical applications and different methods be used in the second language classroom.

The use of well-selected Internet sites should be encouraged when teaching what is known as generation X (people born after the so called 'baby boomers' and during the late 1980s), and generation Y (also known as the 'millenniums') and could thus be an excellent asset to teaching English as a First Additional Language. Great strides have been made to introduce the use of electronic devices in classrooms in South Africa, but from personal observations and research reports it is clear that older teachers with a lack of training in ICT are impeding this. Unwittingly, teachers themselves may be presenting barriers to learning and development.

## LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Language researchers, Alidou, Boly, Brock-Utne, Diallo, Heugh and Wolff (2006, p. 10), have conducted intensive research into the language factor in education in Africa, finding the socio-economic and cultural realities of the multilingual population could be addressed if children were taught in their home language or an African language familiar to them when they enter school. Culture is an important part of language and should form part of the language classroom. Many learners in South Africa are not always exposed to their own cultural heritage when they are taught through English as the medium of instruction. In the past, the South African education system was predominantly based on a Western culture, and because the curriculum had nothing in common with their own cultural milieu the children whose own traditions, values, customs and even language differed from those of the school might have underachieved (Prinsloo, 2005, p. 37). Culture cannot only be learned through superficial aspects, such as food, clothing and holidays, but rather it is experienced through language. Learning a second language requires learning the linguistic aspects of the target culture and as such second language acquisition is also second culture acquisition (Spackman, 2014, p. 2). In addition, South Africa is a multi-cultural society, therefore a better understanding and more respect for various

cultures could be fostered (Al-Jafar & Buzzelli, 2004, p. 42). Singh (2011, p. 38) states that when stories are told to children they should be inclusive and as a result "reflect the 'rainbow' nature of its nation."

## TEACHERS' COMMAND OF ENGLISH

Research has shown that often South African learners' lack of fluency in English could be traced back to their teachers' inadequate command of it. Ardington (1992, p. 39) reported that it was especially in the rural areas that teachers were not fluent in English, so many learners had a problem acquiring it as their second language. In many schools in these areas there are no libraries or resource centres. Fleisch (2008, p. 111) states that it is especially learners in rural areas who experience problems with English as the language of learning and teaching as it is seldom heard or spoken, and as teachers have limited English proficiency "these learners inhabit a world in which English is essentially a foreign language."

According to Barkhuizen (2004, p. 569), the segregated teacher education system in South Africa which existed prior to 1994 produced black teachers who were under-qualified with regard to modern language teaching methods, a problem that often persists today because in-service teacher training has not addressed it. The English proficiency of many African teachers who teach English is inadequate, similarly for many Afrikaans speaking teachers who now teach through the medium of English. Like their African counterparts these teachers learned English as a second language at school and were not prepared to teach the subject content through the medium of English as their second language.

There have been attempts to standardise the English used in Africa. Although it is not necessary to pronounce in English perfectly, the ideal is that it should be understandable. Chimbganda (2005, p. 29) is in favour of the nationalising and re-standardising of the regional varieties of English spoken in Southern Africa, because the purpose of any language is to act as a tool of thought. In an attempt to address teachers' proficiency in English, the introduction of a Certificate in English for Teachers has been my ideal for many years. At my own institution such a certificate will be offered soon.

## SIGN LANGUAGE: THE FORGOTTEN SILENT LANGUAGE

A group of people in South Africa who are excluded from many activities and from becoming full members of society are the deaf community. In the statistics of 2012 (SAlanguages.com, 2012) it is indicated that in 2011 there were 234,655 users of sign language in South Africa, many lobbying to have it accepted as the twelfth official language, but to date successfully. Awareness is growing slowly and there are instances, such as some news broadcasts on national television and official ceremonies, when it is included. It can also be used in courts. There are a few schools in the larger cities that have embarked on programmes to teach learners sign language as an additional

non-examination subject, for instance in Johannesburg where it has led to a removal of the physical fence between the St Vincent School for the Deaf and its neighbouring private school. The learners in the private school learn sign language as an additional language, providing them the opportunity to mingle with the learners from the school for the deaf during break time, and the two schools are sharing sport facilities. This is a positive approach to teaching young people about inclusion and the training of all learners in basic knowledge of sign language could be pursued by other schools.

As a consequence of apartheid there are many different forms of sign language used in South Africa (Mesthrie 2002, p. 140). Currently, the Department of Basic Education is addressing this problem, having embarked upon a project to train all teachers at the various schools for the deaf and hard of hearing in the correct use of the official South African sign language. Thus, the teaching of different variations of the official sign language to learners could be prevented, helping to modernise it and so contribute to attempts to have it officially accepted as the twelfth official language. It would include the deaf community in a wider sense and lead to a more official form of inclusion.

## FOREIGNERS WHO DO NOT SPEAK ANY OF THE ELEVEN SOUTH AFRICAN OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

South Africa has become the haven for a growing number of migrants from other countries in Africa and from the East. Many bring their children and these usually attend public schools. In some ordinary public schools they are taught in a home language not spoken or used at home whilst others are sent to schools in which English is the medium of instruction. Many of the children of foreigners do not know or speak English. During research in some schools in the Gauteng province in areas in which most members of the community had a low income, it was reported by teachers that they had learners in their classes who did not understand a word spoken in class. These were the children of predominantly from other countries in Africa and they could not speak any of the official South African languages. Although they had the right to be admitted to government schools, the Department of Education made no provision for them to receive additional support to learn the languages of learning and teaching or to be taught in their own home languages. They thus felt excluded from understanding what was taught in the classroom.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF READING COMPREHENSION

Even though this chapter reviews various language issues in South African schools and not specific language skills, a picture of the school situation will be incomplete if reading as a language skill is not included. Reading is a basic requirement to access information in an information-driven society. As far as reading is concerned, South African learners do not fare well. Large-scale studies such as the annual systemic evaluation conducted by the Department of Basic

Education or the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) report (conducted with 40 other countries) bear witness of South African learners' poor performance in literacy. The Annual National Assessment (ANA) is an external assessment of literacy administered nationally every year in February. Although there is a slight improvement in the results of some of the provinces over the years, the majority of learners in South Africa do not fare well in this literacy assessment. South Africa is one of the 40 countries that participated in PIRLS in 2005/2006, with Grades 4 and 5 learners participating, scoring the lowest (Martin, Mulls, & Kennedy, 2007).

In South Africa, the teaching of reading occurs mainly in Grades 1, 2 and 3, and often stops there, but from Grade 4 onwards learners have to read in order to learn properly. Some Grade 4 teachers have aired their concerns about their lack of knowledge to teach reading. In a study conducted in the Gauteng province, Phala (2012, p. 91) showed that teachers in the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) were not trained in the teaching of reading and lacked knowledge, support teaching materials and time to support the learners with limited English proficiency. This means that if learners' reading abilities are not developed adequately by the end of Grade 3 it is probable that when entering the next grades there will be no teacher to support them with reading or language-related problems.

The art of reading requires many skills, such as decoding letters and words and making meaning of what is read. This requires good memory skills, especially what is known as working memory, necessary when reading and processing limited pieces of information. If English as a Second Language learners have to read English but their reading abilities have not been developed properly there are comprehension problems. Inexperienced English as a Second Language readers have to devote their working memory to processing letters and words, and hence are unable to hold additional information in their working memories to comprehend meaning from the text that they are reading (Vale, Brown, & Murray, 2012, p. 67). It is important that when entering Grade 4 they should have well-developed decoding skills in reading that allow them to concentrate on the meaning of what they are reading.

In a small-scale study conducted in Grade 3 classrooms in schools in which Tshivenda is the home language of the learners it was clear that no comprehension strategies were taught to learners. Teachers had no access to literature about the teaching of comprehension and some relied solely on their own experience, thus the teachers could not equip their learners to develop and apply reading comprehension strategies (Mudzielwana, 2012, p. 188). Reading comprehension is directly linked to learners' achievement because if one does not understand what one is reading one cannot learn from the reading, often referred to as 'barking at words'. As stated, learners in Grade 4 and above have to read in order to study, so one can understand why some learners in South African schools do not make progress at school and why many leave the school system.

## LANGUAGE AND THE GROWTH IN NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Electronic communication and digital networks are transforming the working world and this has an influence on learning and teaching. There are many benefits to using ICT to teach language and literacy because it allows access to a wide range of new information in different forms. Teachers have the opportunity to adapt and change teaching materials allowing for well-planned multi-level teaching in the classroom. Different levels of work could be made available for learners with different levels of functioning and thus inclusive education can become a reality in the ordinary classroom. By using ICT, teachers have vast numbers of activities and resources available, but to be able to use it in the learning process learners have to understand the 'language' of the new technologies and be able to read. Thus, training and research about the requirements to understand and be able to read various forms of technology are essential. The growth of the use of technology in the world is changing the notion of literacy to the idea of literacies. The growth in the use of mobile telephones and associated applications is evidence that the people of Africa are able to master the technology but it is imperative that the skills acquired be transferred to other forms of technology so that they may be included in the use of them. This process should start at an early age at school, when young learners should learn the language of ICTs and be taught to read information on computer screens.

There is also a growth in the use of technologies to make words, texts and documents readable and understandable for people with certain impairments such as blindness and deafness. The Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills programme is for instance a modern programme using a phonological approach to teach the acquisition of language skills, with a phoneme machine, *Cued Speech* software, which uses moving human lips to demonstrate the associated mouth positions to represent the phonemes that make up the 500 base words in English (Mumford, 2013, p. 117). This section of the programme has been used successfully to teach speech sounds to learners with hearing disadvantages.

For persons who are visually impaired there are various software programmes available. Screen reading software can translate print into braille and scanning software can scan print and 'read' it in an audio format. Reports about young blind children who use computers and various forms of software to access information are available. Because these types of software are imported, the exchange rate makes it expensive and not affordable for many South Africans. If economic barriers could be overcome the exclusions as far as accessibility to the language of information may be minimised.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident that there are many instances in South Africa when the choice of the language of learning and teaching, accessibility to the language of knowledge and the acquisition of well-developed home language skills are the factors that cause

learners in South African schools to have a breakdown in learning. If language is not a well-chosen option and if learners are not provided with appropriate support to master the language of learning and teaching it could lead to exclusion with regard to academic progress at school, leaving some learners unable to develop their potential to the full because of some form of language barriers. Ultimately, many of them become excluded from the school system and proper career opportunities.

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ISAAC NORTEY DARKO

# 8. CONCEALED MARKET AND THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF EDUCATION AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR INCLUSIVITY

ABSTRACT

The opening up of the educational system to private corporations, churches and individuals in Ghana has exposed education to the whims and caprices of the capitalist economy. Similar to other countries in Africa, the involvement of businesses by virtue of outsourcing, development of market-oriented curricula and research schemes at institutions of higher education, has resulted in a paradox of consequences. As much as the commercialisation of research and teaching has shifted the load from the various government and increased education infrastructure it has created a situation in which many forms of inequality are encouraged, with few checks or balances. Higher education has become the privilege of the few and has excluded many citizens by gender, religion, and social class. This chapter examines the particular situation of Ghana and how the opening-up of higher education to private participation has become an enigmatic problem, difficult to diagnose and treat.

**Keywords:** Market-oriented education, Academic capitalism, Capitalist economy, Privatisation, Out sourcing , Ghanaian education, Marketable research, Deregulation.

## INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in education around the world, specifically in Africa, reveal a socio-political movement that supports a change in educational policies and assumes that education should be viewed from a business and market perspective. The practice of universities opening their doors to the market dates back many years, beginning with intercollegiate athletics (Bok, 2009). Business terminology, such as *outsourcing*, *competition and choice*, *limited government regulation*, and *market-oriented education* are now commonly used in the education circle (Bruch, 2009), especially visible in higher education, involving universities and colleges, with a great shift of power from government control of educational institutions to corporate bodies and individuals, beginning slowly in the late 1980s and increasing in the 1990s. According to Ochilov (2008), a business or a market-oriented education presents a radical shift from the common purpose of education, requiring close

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 129–137.*

attention by those who want an equitable, responsible and effective schooling (Burch, 2009). For Ocholov (2008:1), "by imposing market terminology and practices, a new epistemology emerges, transforming education from a public good into a commodity, eroding state accountability for education". This development has many implications for the inclusive nature of education, especially in developing nations. A market-oriented understanding and operation of education privileges learning and makes education the right of the rich, and particularly difficult for the disabled. It is also important to note that making education inclusive for all will not only create a just society but also contribute to the democratic development of many African countries (Engelbrecht, 2006).

Engaging the theory of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), this chapter examines the various ways university education in Ghana is being controlled by the private sector and the consequences of these actions for inclusive education. Apart from the privatisation of faculties and departments of universities, the role of the private sector in Ghanaian higher education will also be examined. Specifically, I look at the establishment of institutions of higher education by churches and individuals in the Ghanaian context. Discussion is guided by issues such as whether the privatisation of higher education should be restricted, the role of a market-oriented economy vis-à-vis educational curricula; how to balance the need to train graduates who are ready for the job market and an over-reliance on the demand of the market in designing curricula; what lies at the core of higher education; in the midst of a growing and sophisticated market, how higher education can survive if it is not tailored to the specific needs of the market; the consequences of certain forms of knowledge or bodies and whether higher education should be tailored to market needs; how society will preserve those forms of knowledge that may not be necessary tailored towards the needs of the market; and which bodies and processes will be left out in this process.

## DISCURSIVE FRAMEWORK: ACADEMIC CAPITALISM

Academic capitalism is used to describe the developing trends of universities and faculties making market potential the main thrust of research and other educational processes (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). It occurs when faculties concentrate more on the marketability of research and academic activities. In the light of diminishing funds for public universities, staff, students, and faculty seek outside support, placing them in the position of having to look forward and answering to the unpredictable nature of the market, by liaison with businesses and industries through partnership focused on innovative product development, and through the marketing of educational and business services (Fairweather, 1988) According to Slaughter and Leslie (1997), the antediluvian quest for knowledge in universities was not inspired by the detractions of the market but present research in the academy has become more market-driven than curiosity-driven. Additionally, it is argued that faculty's reliance on market vagary stems from less public money and has less control over what little money

there is (Mazzolini, 2009). Unlike public money, that from nongovernmental entities comes with conditions, attachments, and anticipation that there will be returns from the investment in the form of profitable products or processes. Hence, products in the form of students and research must satisfy the marketing needs of the sponsoring bodies.

Although Slaughter and Leslie (1997) argue that most humanities receive less attention because of their dismal market performance, I argue that in the case of Ghana and most developing countries, research and development policies have, since World War II, emphasised the central role of technology in global competitiveness, and therefore academic capitalism is more noticeable in applied science and technology departments than in the humanities. To the authors, the humanities only become important or necessary insofar as they support marketable research in the university. As in most developing nations, trends in student admission, assistance and scholarship are having an increased intake of students for the businesses programmes over those of technology. A critical look at admission records from universities in Ghana shows an increase in business students and the influx of private involvement in their programmes (Daniel, 2007). I also disagree with Slaughter and Leslie's opinions to the effect that the outdated university education was a stronghold of pure inquiry and protected from outside influence where money is the motivating factor. If universities and institutions of higher education are responsible for producing the workforce needs of a country then whatever is studied will be tailored to the market. There has not been a time when education in higher institutions has been clear of market influence, but, whilst the phenomenon may have increased recently, to state that it never existed is untrue. This raises the question as to the extent to which higher education must be dominated by market needs and, if so, how prepared government is to ensure that inclusivity is guaranteed.

## THE REGULATION FACTOR

Educational policies in most African countries are determined and shaped mostly by economic factors, hence governments have had to implement reforms that assure adequate funds to support their educational policies. Since most of these financers come from industrialised nations, Ghana, like many developing countries around the world, has become a source of production for companies in exchange for financial assistance. Many developing countries, especially in Africa, have relatively low costs of production and maintenance (Burch, 2009) and are forced to deregulate their education systems to accommodate the demands of the business world.

Deregulation of education is based on the concept of American capitalist free market that believes a nation's economy functions well when the government allows individuals to control resources and establish competitiveness in the market (Babalola & Adedeji, 2007). When education policies are structured to reflect a capitalist free market style it denies quality education and training to those who cannot afford it. It may also change the traditional role of education to a money-making system,

resulting in the elimination of certain forms of knowledge and pedagogical practices. Indigenous knowledge, for example, may not flourish under such a system because there is no direct benefit to the economy. Deregulation of education policies often leads to an overhaul of elites who may not necessarily be needed for development. In Ghana this policy has led to the overproduction of many administrative bureaucrats, and not the necessary prioritisation of technical and infrastructure manpower needs. Educational policies encouraged by financiers, mostly from developed nations, tend to produce administrators who have less administrative work to do. It is therefore not surprising that government policies on polytechnics are not as favourable as those on the universities. Ghana, like many developing nations, is blessed with natural resources but needs more technical education and expertise to harness them for the good of the nation. That over 50% of infrastructural developments are contracted to foreigners, mostly from the West, is blamed by government on lack of technical personnel.

Daun (2000) noted some contributory factors to the continuing commercialisation of education in many African countries, notably colonial history, religious composition, type of state, economic gains and the type of strategic development adopted after independence. Emerging from colonialism, educational policies shaped after the Eurocentric Christian education system continue with syllabi structured after British models. As a democratic socialist state, Ghana has an education system partly owned by state and private entities and conflicts of interest often arise from three parties demanding separate policies: the government, financiers and religious bodies. An example was a controversy over school uniforms for pupils, with the government wanting a single uniform for all schools but mission schools preferring separate ones that represented their beliefs and practices. The government had to give way because of the importance of these schools to the general educational system. A history of frequent change in government, signalled by a coup d'état immediately after independence in 1957, has introduced various educational reforms. Following earlier ones introduced by the first president Dr. Nkrumah reflected a socialist perspective, successive ones since 1966 have followed the American capitalist system. Deregulation also advocates a blend of private and public education systems (Findlaw, 2004) but in African conditions it has called for access, quality, equity, gender parity, school retention and completion rates, provision of infrastructure such as school facilities, and HIV/AIDS (Uwakwe et al., 2008). As a policy pushed forward by the International Monitory Fund and the World Bank, deregulation has had a predictable impact on developing economies, prescribing the kind of educational curriculum that usually fails to take into consideration the particularity of the nation in terms of culture, beliefs and practises of the inhabitants. It is also perceived as interference in the internal affairs of economies, raising questions as to the sovereignty of independent nations and impacting on their political climates.

According to Uwakwe et al. (2008), privatisation as a concept has to do with the transfer of resources of ownership from the public to the private sector. The World Bank and other international bodies promote it in order to reduce poverty

through the efforts of the private sector. As noted by Tooley and Dixon, (2006, in Uwakwe et al., 2008, p. 164) *de facto* privatisation of education extends provision of education and services to the poor, meaning the underlying reason for it is the making of education accessible to both rich and poor. Belfield and Levin (2002) believe that since the needs of developed and developing countries vary, so do the motives and form of privatisation adopted, specific to the country and its economic and demographic situation.

In all these the most important questions become: who and what is left out the process of education and how inclusive are these policies to the equal development of knowledges and human resources in the countries? A close observation of the education in Ghana and most African nations indicates a marked shift to higher education. The dividend is likely to come from higher education that is producing the direct workforce needs of the nation. It is not surprising that, in Ghana today, universities and colleges are nearing the number of primary and secondary education. This becomes problematic as the majority of the population are below higher education level and casts doubt on the quality of education that will be pursued at this lower level. If governments and individuals are spending so much on higher education, what happens to the others including vocational training?

## GHANA IN PERSPECTIVE

Higher education in Ghana, previously known as the Gold Coast, began with a number of commissions, the Asquith Commission being the first, appointed by the Government of the United Kingdom in August 1943 to:

> … consider the principles which should guide the promotion of higher education, learning and research and the development of universities in the colonies; and to explore means whereby universities and other appropriate bodies in the UK may be able to co-operate with institutions of higher education in the colonies in order to give effect to these principles. (Daniel, 1996, p. 1)

After various attempts to persuade the colonial government set up a university, an ordinance was passed on 11 August 1948, establishing the University College of the Gold Coast to promote university education, learning and research. After independence in 1957, the government appointed the International Commission on Higher Education to advise the new government on the way forward in higher education. Based on the commission's recommendation, the University of Ghana was, by an act of parliament of 1961, created from the former University College of the Gold Coast. Secondly, based on the recommendations of the commission, the college of technology in Kumasi was also changed to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. An additional outcome was the establishment of a new university college to be created from a post-secondary college for training science teachers at Cape Coast. As a result the University College of Cape Coast was established in 1962 to produce graduate teachers. The University College since

1971 has become the University of Cape Coast. Other universities established more recently include the University of Development Studies, established in 1992 with the aim of increasing access to higher education and to find keys to the deprivations and environmental problems which characterise northern Ghana in particular, and are found also in varying degrees in rural areas throughout the country. The University College of Education at Winneba was also established in 1993 to serve a special relationship with the University of Cape Coast in providing higher education and foster the systematic advancement of the science and art of teacher education in Ghana (Daniel, 1996). In addition to these universities, there are a number of teacher training colleges and polytechnics, but for the purpose of this discussion I focus on the universities in Ghana.

Government subventions have been the main source of operational income available to these universities since their establishment. In addition, they are expected to raise some funds from the sale of application forms; fees from student registration; tuition paid by foreign students; issuance of academic transcripts; consultancies; rent from university housing and from floor space leased for private catering and other businesses; the sale of produce from university farms; hospital and veterinary fees; bookshop sales; and monies generated from printing houses on campus and from vehicle servicing at the estates' organisation. As noted by the visitation panel appointed to the University of Ghana in 2007, the period following the 1966 coup shifted the organisation of the University of Ghana to the 'state-supervised model' (1966 to 1981), largely dominated by military rule. As government control of universities diminished so did the state support they received. Deteriorating economic, political and social conditions in the country resulted in serious budget cuts for universities, damaging their academic activities. The universities therefore increased their efforts at raising funds to run the faculties, departments and administration, resulting in the practice of resource dependency. According to resource dependency theory, organisations that are deprived of critical revenues seek resources from elsewhere, and the universities increased activity in what they termed "Entrepreneurial Academic Units", such as admitting international students who pay full fees, by developing partnership with industry for research and training, developing products, services, possesses suitable for the market and open research for companies. These moves were made to maintain research resources and maximise prestige. Universities and faculties that were able to put up or engage in market-like behaviour and services received the greatest resources (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

Though government still claims a major stake in public university education, the influx of company-sponsored activities on campuses have questioned government control over university finances. Although the government claims to be the major stakeholder in the running of these universities the doubling and tripling increases in residential and user fees questions this stand. Very important segments of halls of residence such as catering, laundry, accommodation have been taken over by individual and corporate entities in the name of providing better services. Halls

of residence have been given a large degree of autonomy in running their affairs, whilst most departments, especially the physical sciences, have also recently found themselves in this web. Most engage in research purely for corporate bodies who intend to pay them in return. This is a direct demonstration of academic capitalism as propounded by Slaughter and Leslie (1997). Research works are tailored to meeting the demands of the market instead of the outmoded motivation of curiosity. Students are compelled to follow courses that promise employment and pay more outside the university even if they lie outside their learning interest. Most companies in diverse ways contribute substantially to the activities of departments, such as sponsoring departmental week celebration and special events. In view of their immense contribution most indirectly affect the type of student population admitted. As individual and corporate bodies support departments and programmes that directly affect their businesses it is not surprising that, for example, the business schools in the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and Cape Coast Universities received the largest amount of sponsorship.

An emerging phenomenon that has left educators asking many questions is the increased number of private universities around the country. Taking advantage of the government's open policy on private tertiary education, most churches, companies, and individuals are establishing private universities. As part of a millennium challenge goal, the government adopted an open policy initiative to allow private participation so as to achieve education for all by 2015. The major reason for the rise in private participation in tertiary education is to reduce the illiteracy rate and provide educational opportunities for all. The establishment of these universities, though not negative, raises a number of questions, not least on the quality of education. Many have questioned the real motive for these establishments:

- Why is there little private involvement in establishing primary, junior and senior high schools?
- Why are all these churches and individual investing only in universities?
- Could these institutions have another agenda, of making financial profit?
- In the case of churches and other religious bodies, is the aim to spread their teachings and doctrine?
- Can government streamline academic curriculum of these universities to reflect its manpower needs?
- What is the government's financial stake in the running of these schools and what regulatory mechanisms have been put in place to standardise their activities?
- Are these universities recognised internationally?

## CONCLUSION: THE PARADOX

A critical look at policies that promote market participation in higher education presents important questions around its promotion of inclusivity or otherwise in community development. Proponents of privatised higher education in developing

countries may have a number of valid arguments, such as easing the pressure on governments to meet increasing demands of enrolment, relieving excessive costs and the promotion of a more efficient and effective school system through competition. It is also argued that as a tenet of democracy and good governance, the citizenry must be allowed to participate in all sectors of the nation, of which education is one of the most important. It may also be argued that privatising education provides communities and individual choice to the type and form of education they want to acquire or want their children to have that reflect their beliefs and practises. Adu and Orivel (in Daniel, 2007) note that:

> … strong demand for higher education in Ghana comes from families rather than from the labour market. Rather than try to suppress this demand, which is inappropriate in a democratic society, it is legitimate for the Government to shift more of the cost of tertiary education to those who seek it and to limit the demands on the public purse. (p. 14)

Opponents on the other hand argue that a privatised higher educational system may create hierarchy in programmes studied at universities. Those not directly relevant to the business world and market, or in the case of religious institutions not promoting or encouraging teachings, will not be offered for study or receive funding. There will be a general lack of interest in such programmes from the business community, promoting segregation, discrimination, and other forms of bias which challenge the inclusive nature of higher education. Educators are more concerned about the quality of education in Ghana. With so many universities, questions have arisen as to the efficiency of existing regulatory bodies. If such an important sector as education is left in the hands of private bodies who seek to promote their individual interest and profits, important levels of personnel may not be adequately met. University education has become one of the main market centres for the nation, from which government should benefit, whether financially, from monies paid by individuals to established universities or universities funding their own activities. This would save government substantial funds, so it is the responsibility of the government of Ghana to put in place adequate measures to regulate activities of these individuals. It will ensure that companies, individuals and organisations sponsoring activities in universities do not abuse their power by streamlining subjects, departments and students. It falls on the government to ensure that every agreement or contract with individual or group is beneficial. In other words, government must protect its citizenry's interests by ensuring that equity, inclusivity, equality and accessibility play well in its educational setup.

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DIONISIO NYAGA

# 9. NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR SCHOOL CURRICULUM

*Praxis of Indigenous Peoples in Kenya*

ABSTRACT

Kenya achieved its independence in 1963, after which the post-colonial government promised it would eliminate poverty and illiteracy. To date, this remains a mirage, even after the introduction of free primary education. This chapter interrogates the Kenyan school curriculum, particularly the space under which the curriculum is taught. Most students are not connecting with it because what is taught is mired in colonial thought processes. Consequently, teaching is perceived as alienating and foreign to both the students and educators. Teachers need to invoke Indigenous ways of knowing in order to decolonise themselves, the 'place' in which education is delivered, and curriculum.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Indigenisation, Hybridity, decolonisation, colonisation

## INTRODUCTION

Kenya secured independence from Britain in 1963, when the first president, Jomo Kenyatta promised to eradicate illiteracy. However, even after the introduction of free education in 2002 there have been major challenges, notably quality of education based on the number of children enrolled. The ratio between the teacher and student was overstretched and the government did not have sufficient resources to properly initiate the programme, coupled with a high dropout rate. In 2002, Kenya promulgated a new Constitution that was seen as a new beginning in terms of enshrinement of the rights and freedoms of Kenyans. Though it received positive responses both nationally and internationally there is still no renewal of the education system, with the curriculum remaining Eurocentric.

This chapter examines incorporation of other ways of knowing that allow transformation of the classroom and the curriculum in Kenyan schools. Teachers find themselves tied up with so many issues that hinder them from having time to critique and analyse their curriculum. Colonisation and neo-colonialism have placed enormous pressures on the Kenyan teacher. Among these pressures are the precariousness and amount of work they are expected to undertake, for instance the growth of temporally, part-time and seasonal teachings jobs. This has left teachers concerned for survival rather than quality of what they are delivering to the student,

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 139–149.*

with less choice but to uncritically undertake teaching. A solution would be a classroom in which some social bodies feel unrepresented in terms of teachable and 'place', of importance for any curriculum. According to Benabed (2009):

> "Place", then, should be understood as "space to which meaning has been ascribed" (Carter et al., xii); in other words, space becomes place when it acquires historical meaning. In places, not spaces, important events have occurred and are remembered across generations. For the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, place is not only perceived "through the eyes and mind", but also through "more passive and direct modes of experience". It is a point "in a spatial system", to which a person is attached with "strong visceral feelings" (152). Hence, the "sense of place" refers to the feeling evoked by a specific location. It can be negative, which Tuan calls "topophobia" (fear of place) or positive, which he calls "topophilia" (love of place). (p. 85)

This show that for teachers to connect with the students there is a need for a deconstruction of the place and the tool used to govern it. The Western curriculum has historically controlled the learning space, so to decolonize the place it is necessary to deconstruct the curriculum. This can happen through indigenising the teachable.

Indigenous knowledge production and integration in a school curriculum is a question of power (Dei, 1996). This chapter seeks to ask how Indigenous knowledge can transform a Eurocentric Kenyan school system and curriculum, with the author having been located within both the Eurocentric Kenyan curriculum and Canadian school system, in which he has been a student and educator. This will be followed by discussion of the history of school system in Kenya, exploring the colonial legacy within the school system. In order to transform a colonised curriculum it highlights the Indigenous perspectives as a way forward in the transformation of the school curriculum in Kenya.

## LOCATING MYSELF

Born and raised in Kenya, I am a product of a Kenyan school system called '8-4-4', which entailed eight years of elementary school and four years of high school. I later migrated to Canada and took a social work degree over four years. As somebody who has experienced both worlds I believe this hybrid understanding and experience can help fill gaps present in the current Kenyan curriculum. Hybridity has power of transforming and dislocating taken-for-granted thoughts and ideas, and with its temporalities one is able to go between and beyond a sentence or story and identify possibilities. One is able to look at those sentences and thoughts as temporal and contingent such that they hold a gap that can be questioned and filled later in life (Bhabha, 1994). Being in Canada has allowed me to appreciate the importance of inclusive education and how that can necessitate better and holistic academic results for the student and community as a whole. As such, my experience as an educator and social worker in the Canadian context allows me to look at the current Kenyan

curriculum from a more informed vantage point. In the Canadian school system students and teachers have a role to play in shaping the teachable, but there is intense marginalisation of students according to race. This is caused by many factors, such as the failure to connect with the curriculum, teachers and space, the latter being predominantly white. The curriculum is Eurocentric (Dei, 1996), so some students' failure to identify with the system has had serious consequences in terms of high drop-out rate of black students, culminating in the introduction of an Afrocentric school system. This experience resonates with the Kenyan school system, as examined in this chapter.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF KENYAN CURRICULUM

The current education system in Kenya of 8-4-4 means that a student has to undergo eight years of primary level, four at secondary level and four for the bachelor degree (Somerset, 2009). This system was introduced in 1985 with the aim of inculcating a holistic and well-rounded student, but though the plan was noble the system continues to face a myriad of problems. Focus is on reading rather than technical skill, with the aim of passing examinations (Buchmann, 1999) and on preparing for the market (Bagaka, 2010; Sang, Muthaa, & Mbugua, 2012; Ngware & Ndirangu, 2005). The system also fails to encourage students to specialise on particular areas of interest (Buchmann, 1999) and there is a need to look at marginalisation of some ways of knowing in the school system, among them African Indigenous ways of knowing and practice.

Before the 8-4-4 system was introduced, Kenya had a system called '7-4-2-3' (Buchmann, 1999; Otiende, Wamahiu, & Karugu, 1992; Somerset, 2009), in which a student had to undergo seven years of elementary schooling, then four of secondary education, two of 'A' levels and finally three of university education. This system was community based under the guise of *Harambee*, which translates as 'getting together' (Buchmann, 1999), adopted from the colonial system. As a way to decolonise the newly independent Kenyan in 1964, education stakeholders proposed that the school system accommodate cultural diversity in what was teachable (Otiende, Wamahiu, & Karugu, 1992). This was expected to decolonise the curriculum and as such 'Kenyanise' the school system (Buchmann, 1999; Somerset, 2009), and represent a rebirth of a curriculum that incorporated Kenyan views and touch.

The education stakeholders did not focus on how the structure could be revolutionised entirely using Indigenous ways of knowing, but rather there were piecemeal changes that maintained colonial fragments. It was what Kenyans would call 'colouring a donkey to look like a zebra'. Except for the introduction of mother-tongue language in the first three grades the rest were predominantly instructed in English (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Each Kenyan dialect was allowed to be taught in the lower grades, but this had more to do with civic education and politics than deeper understanding of Indigenous perspectives (Buchmann, 1999). The system became

more political than educational (Ngware & Ndirangu, 2005), showing up how a colonial government system worked in new submission to a post-colonial state

It was also assumed that Kiswahili as an Indigenous language could indigenise the curriculum but placed alongside English it could not stand the test of time (Odiemo, 2008). The system was structured in such a way that English was predominantly espoused and recognised, with schools encouraging young people to speak and write in English more than other languages. Those in upper level classes would be punished by their teachers if found speaking in their mother tongue, through passing of *munitu,* a term for 'monitor', meaning to govern and control. A horn from a cow would be tied to a string and in the morning the teacher would move around looking for students who were expressing themselves in their mother-tongue. The teacher would hang the *munitu* on the neck of the one who was thus publically shaming, punishing and disciplining to warn others of the consequence. This supposed way of accommodating other ways of knowing dehumanised the very language that they were supposed to enhance and those who wore the horn would be punished through caning or other means. As such, the student started feeling alienated from their schools and peers, leading to high dropout rates as they could not connect with a system that did not recognise who they were, whilst undermining their language and identity.

The curriculum continues to colonise the space in which students are expected to learn. The current curriculum fails to connect with students due to a failure to critique colonial liturgies present in most school curricula (Dei, 1990). The answer to this is critically evaluating, analysing and questioning its normalcy as well as self-reflecting the role of the educator in presenting a Western curriculum as a norm in the Kenyan school system. Is the educator ready to invoke other ways of teaching in their curriculum? Does the educator favour some ways of teaching while alienating other? Is the educator questioning the space and the curriculum that inform the class? These are major pedagogical questions that need to be asked within the academic system, but they can only be answered in an environment in which healing is possible through incorporation of other ways of knowing and practices. As such I propose employing Indigenous ways of knowing and practice within the curriculum to enhance critical thinking and a reconnection of the space with bodies within and without it.

The curriculum fails to connect either with the teacher or the student, with the former becoming alien to it because it dictates what they need to do (Sifuna, 1992). As such it denies the innovativeness and creativity of the educator (Wanja, 2002). The teacher become a means of inscribing colonial processes and thoughts to the students and so is alienated from the process and the product (Marx, 1964). On the other hand, the curriculum makes the teacher and the student become disconnected, because it is geared towards seeing the student as a product of its own and following its own agenda. The only connection between the learners and the educator is the governing power of the curriculum, which by looking at students as objects of introspection makes them fail to connect with the teacher and course (Sifuna, 1992). The teacher is an 'other' who represents the establishment.

Most students cannot express themselves in their ethnic language whilst most parents support the idea that their children should be enlisted in Eurocentric academies, even encouraging them to speak in English (Mule, 1999). This is meant to enhance their chances of securing well-paid employment, in line with prosperity and the politics of respectability closely connected to Eurocentric culture and language (Mule, 1999). Annuik and Gillis (2012) write that "In Canada, Methodist clergyman Egerton Ryerson believed all children needed a common set of skills: English literacy and numeracy as a means to become citizens of Canada (Curtis, 1987, 1992, p. 65). Language and cultures have become tools for acquiring citizenship and recognition, seen as backward and heathen by those connected to colonisation and its place in the school system (Mule, 1999; Robbins & Dewar, 2011).

What we are encountering now is a scenario whereby teachers in such schools cannot work well with students, and there has been an outcry by teachers that today's students are disrespectful (Sorin, 2007). On the other side, students claim that their teachers do not understand the concept of inclusive teaching (McCabe, 2007), because the curriculum and colonial liturgies that inform schools cannot allow a connection between teacher and student. Asante (1998) writes that cultural underpinnings can also affect economic practices of any society.

The curriculum is top-down in such a way that there is the 'knower' and those who are supposed to consume the knowledge. This kind of expert-based kind of curriculum de-skills the teacher and does not recognise the experience of the student. The curriculum de-socialises the classroom, creating an antagonistic relationship between student and teacher as it has no place to allow unity of purpose between or exchange of ideas to enhance classroom theorising. It denies the place for reciprocal relationship whereby the teacher is allowed to guide and facilitate students in knowledge production. This kind of relationship is guided by respect between the co-creators of knowledge (student and teacher) rather than having a relationship based on power. With a Eurocentric curriculum, the teacher becomes more emotionally, spiritually and physically fatigued. Looking at the school system as an industrial complex, more so under a neoliberal regime, the teacher is constantly unprepared to counter colonial discourses that pervade today's school curriculum.

Most of these students cannot connect with who they are, because identity is informed by that which is not theirs. Such disconnection needs to be handled through infusing a decolonising process into the curriculum, so teachers identify who they are through genealogically excavating their histories and cultures. It is through this that other ways of knowing can flourish within the classroom and help critique Western colonial thought process in the curriculum. However, for this critical decolonisation to happen, teachers and students need to heal their spirit from colonial injury, because they constantly face colonial academic process in their everyday teaching experience. We are therefore seeing 'marinated' instructors who are out of reach with themselves and others. As Mazama (2002, p. 387) wrote,

> … to use Afrocentric terminology again, we do not exist on our own terms but on borrowed, European ones. We are dislocated, and having lost sight of ourselves in the midst of European decadence and madness, it becomes increasingly difficult for us to orient our lives in a positive and constructive manner.

This affects the teacher and the student based on the way it punishes and disciplines the student and the teacher. As such, both look at each other as enemies rather than co-creators of knowledge. The curriculum is set in such a way that it divides to rule.

## COLONIAL LEGACY AND STATE OF GOVERNMENTALITY IN KENYA'S SCHOOLS

Colonialism brought with it erasure of come cultural beliefs and cultures, identified by Wa Thiong'o (1986) as when the white man came to Kenya and told Indigenous peoples to close their eyes for prayers. Upon opening them their culture and wellbeing had been taken away. Some of the ways of colonisation was through education, by which young people and children became object of instruction in the school system. Today, colonial practices and ways of knowing continue to rule supreme in most educational curriculum (Robbins & Dewar, 2011; Odiemo, 2008). The Westminister educational structure is common in most learning spaces, including teacher training colleges, with colonial learning sentiments continuing to be passed on to students (Annuik & Gillis, 2012).

Having undergone elementary and high school teaching in Kenya, there are some practices that were averse and common in most learning institutions. In my school we were not supposed to speak in our mother tongue, there was a disciplinary mechanism set to curtail and monitor any student from expressing themselves in their local language, and the *munitu* was used. Fanon would call this wearing a white mask in a black skin.

## KENYAN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE – THE WAY FORWARD

Against the above background, I propose that Indigenous ways of knowing can help deconstruct a Eurocentric curriculum and make it more accepting and inclusive. Indigenous ways of knowing allows for free flow of power by which everyone is expecting and is expected to help others under an environment of respect and love. As such, a curriculum laced with Eurocentric ideals brings more torment to teachers and consequently the students by making them look and behave like experts. It sets up standards that a teacher is supposed to meet. The space in which the curriculum is unravelled becomes a prison where everyone is under surveillance from each other and themselves. A teacher who seeks the help of students is seen as unprofessional, irrational, and undeserving. To that end, the curriculum becomes a tool to economise power within the classroom through putting students and teacher within separate

social spheres in which they can be policed and police each other. This makes it easy for the establishment to enforce rules with little or no critical analysis.

Inclusive teaching allows reflexive ideas to flourish and recognises that students bring with them rich experiences that when combined with other knowing can enrich knowledge production. A classroom is a space in which everyone participates in knowledge production. Leaners and educators have a responsibility to add and critique expert and Eurocentric curriculum, free to bring their cultural beliefs and thoughts to the discussion. An inclusive classroom deconstructs the masculine, rational and colonial aura present in the classroom, helping it become a place for mutual learning and understanding. This widens up the scope of learning and makes students go beyond their cultural borders while enhancing pride in their own cultural backgrounds. It strengthens confidence and a sense of responsibility among students. Inclusive teaching allows for the liberation of the classroom by recognising identity and cultural politics, allowing others ways of knowing to enter it. This includes Indigenous practices and knowledges as part of the teachable.

This chapter therefore argues that we need to invoke Afrocentric Indigenous ideals into the curriculum so that it reflects the needs of the students. As with inclusive teaching and practice, Afrocentricity is a discourse that allows centring of other ways of knowing and practices within spaces of learning. The curriculum thus becomes a tool that is not constant but rather temporal and contingent. We need to look for ways through which the curriculum will allow Indigenous knowledge production and processes to find entry into the academic spaces. The stage would thus be set to identify how this Indigenous knowledge production can work to invoke re-orientation of the classroom as a space for healing, relationship creation, and reciprocity and respect as espoused through an Afrocentric Indigenous practice and knowledge production (Dei, 1996).

Most Indigenous communities have principles that define their everyday work and ways of understanding their environment, key among which are respect, reciprocity, relationship building, and reconciliation. These values define how communities and individuals connect. Kenyan Indigenous communities continue to use this ways of socialising to enhance their relationship and participation in the community. To make sense of values and how they feature in the society it is important to understand some cultural practices and spaces in which those practices are made real. For instance, among the Aembu people, environment was an essential resource for survival. Like most Indigenous communities, they had a place in which they would seek solace and help from supernatural powers, especially when the community was facing natural catastrophes (Karangi, 2008), but also when the community had a bountiful harvest. They would go to special oracles to give thanks to their creator, such as under a mountain. Many believed that a powerful spirit lived in the mountains (Karangi, 2008), and the closest they would come to the mountain was at its base, usually forested, where they would meet to undertake their prayers and seeks advice from the ancestors. Within this forested area there was only one tree under which all sacrifices, healing and other cultural rituals would be undertaken, a fig tree also called

*Mugumo* (Karangi, 2008). The *Mugumo* tree continues to have immense political and educative purpose among the Aembu, and when young people undergo initiation they are invited to this space so that they can be taught the ways of life of Aembu people (Karangi, 2008). The assumption was that these young people were to take leadership in the future. As such, among the Embu community the *mugumo* tree is a classroom space in which youth would be taught different lesson on ways of life and their identity. When the youth were invited to meet an elder under the *mugumo*, it was expected of them to be respectful to the space and the elder (Karangi, 2008), but the same respect was supposed to feature in how the elders were teaching the youth. The elders were supposed to allow young people to speak their mind in an environment of love and respect, based on an assumption that the youth had a power to see how the future needed to be shaped. The elders were supposed to be comfortable with the ideas coming from the youths, a culture of reciprocity necessary for new forms of knowing to be fronted and allowed to flourish. They recognised that youth had new forms of knowing which could inform how the society needed to be. At the same time, the youth recognised the wisdom and experience of elders and how that would inform their thought. All this was conducted in an environment of respect as young and old would not only learn from each other but forge a mutual relationship.

However, as much as the tree acted as a place of instruction it also acted as one n which to infuse spirituality and healing to young people (Karangi, 2008). The youth would be invited for blessing by a traditional healer before the start of the 'class', and a shaman would be called with prayers to Mwenenyaga (Embu God) offered up. Spirituality was an important component of healing the spirit of the elders and the youth (Baskin, 2012; Campbell, 2012; McCabe, 2007; McKernan, 2007; Simon, 2002; Wanja, 2003), and through this process of healing by spirituality, youth and the elders would be psychologically, emotionally and physically prepared for what was to be learned (Mbunga, 2013; Wanja, 2003). It was a way to connect the learners to their ancestors. Through spiritual healing, an elder and the youth would be deemed connected to the living, non-living and the cosmos, thus restoring balance and interconnectedness necessary for learning (Baskin, 2012; Campbell, 2012; McCabe, 2007; Wanja, 2003).

There is a need to connect the contingencies and temporalities present within mainstream schools. The narrative present within the curriculum needs to be disturbed and interrupted, but this gives rise to its own challenges. Battiste, Annuik and Gillis (2009) write that "…this modern knowledge does not coexist in the classroom with the knowledge of how to achieve a decolonized education", the response to this criticism being that "all must become critical learners and healers in a wounded space". Part of this healing involves honouring and practicing Indigenous teachings that stimulate the heart as well as the brain to collaborate in education (Chilisa, 2012).

The classroom needs to become a holistic space meant not only to instil scholarship to the learners but also to heal their pains (Baskin, 2012; Burgess & Agozino, 2011; Dei, 2000; Smith, 1999; Torres, 2012). Annuik and Gillies (2012)

write that "This learning with only half of the body—mentally and, occasionally, physically—impedes learners from achieving their full capacity and purpose" (p. 65), which calls for the indigenisation of the curriculum so that elders can be involved in decolonising the schools and the curriculum (Dei, 2000). There should be a way whereby the elders can be called to the university to perform spiritual healing for the social work students so that when they graduate they are ready to undertake what they have learnt (Kithinji, 2000; Torres, 2012). Spirituality allows healing of the body and the mind, helping open up a critical mind-set for both learner and teacher.

There should be a recognition that a hybrid way of practice within the classroom can enhance future practice (Chilisa, 2012; Stevenson, 2010), serving to re-connect the instructor to their own cultural identity (Dei, 2000). Failure to do this we will be perpetuating colonial academic liturgies in the curriculum that have failed to live up to expectation (Asante, 1983; Dei, 2000; Smith, 1999). Conversely, allowing other ways of knowing to flourish in the classroom will help in healing historical and generational traumas that teachers and student face. To that end, their practice will be enhanced and thus be able to offer quality service.

There is a need to look at the power imbalance that exists between the Indigenous peoples and the colonial classroom. Waldron (2010) writes that:

> …initiatives to nurture collaborations between Indigenous healers and Western practitioners are often fraught with challenges because the moral space in which psychiatry is located is characterized by a discourse that construes Indigenous healing as unprofessional and naive. Moreover, they argue that the professionalist discourse within which Western medicine and psychiatry are couched marginalizes and stigmatizes Indigenous healing as 'the other'. (p. 52)

Who should seek the other? Why should it be the Indigenous healer and elder going to the academic space? Can the converse be possible? As the warriors used to go to the *mugumo* tree to seek blessing and guidance from the elders and the ancestors, is it possible for students to go to the tree to seek the help of the elder? These questions will help unravel power dynamics that continue to exist between the formally colonised subjects and the coloniser (Dei, 2000).

Repeatedly, we have seen Indigenous ways of knowing and practices being commodified and co-opted by the colonial regimes in the process of conquering and profiteering (Asante, 1983; Lavallee, 2010; Smith, 1999; Yee & Wagner, 2013). It is possible that some educators and students in the academy will take up ways of Indigenous healing and use them for their own benefit. The past will continue to inform the future and we are living in an era when modification of Indigenous people's ways of being and living are being normalised. Institutions bent on profit-making have turned Indigenous people's practices and knowledge into a commodity that is ready for a market, under the pretence of modernising the Indigenous ways of knowing (Spero, 2012). I call for us to be cognisant that we are wiser this time, and power dynamics need to be recognised in going forward.

## CONCLUSION

In this time and era there is an urgent need for the inclusion of other ways of practices and knowing in classroom settings, to help in healing the past pains that teachers still feel. This will help to open new ways of understanding the curriculum, and consequently critiquing it. It will also help in making teaching more effective and efficient with a ripple effect from teachers to the student. Through this, the classroom can turn into a space in which mutual respect and relationships are core values that direct the classroom. This does not mean that such traumatic moments will not show up while teaching but should resolve the issue of how we infuse African Indigenous ways of knowing as a way of informing and decolonising the classroom and curriculum such that the educator and students feel a sense of ownership of the teachable.

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HARRIET AKANMORI

# 10. A GHANAIAN TEACHER EVALUATES ACCESS AND EQUITY TO EDUCATION IN CANADA AND GHANA – JOHN DEWEY'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATION FOR ALL INITIATIVE

ABSTRACT

*Education is the point at which we decide whether or not we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by that same token save it from that ruin which, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices.* (Arendt, 1961, p. 196)

Education has become one of the most important social institutions in most nations of the world, commanding the attention of governments, politicians, civil groups, and international agencies. It influences all aspects of human life, be they social, economic or political. Indeed, education is one of the main foci for political campaigning and influences on voting patterns. It is a strong determinant of future employment, wealth, and social status, thus, it is no wonder that so much passion and resources have been invested in educational issues and debates across the world. Drawing on the wisdom and inspiration in the words quoted above of Hannah Arendt, an educationist long gone, the main preoccupation of this chapter is for all children, no matter their geographical location, economic status, or cultural background, to be given an opportunity to have basic education. This means different things in different societies, but on average it would be compulsory until a certain standard, normally high school level or a certain age, varying between the ages of 15 and 18 years, depending on the country.

I centre my discussion on education within the theoretical framework of equity, and the conceptual lens of access, exploring the factors that contribute to lack of equity and access within Canada, a developed country, and Ghana, a developing one. I seek to evaluate how similarly or differently equity and access are manifested in these two given contexts. An immigrant teacher in Canada, I have spent much of my academic endeavours comparing and contrasting perspectives regarding equity and access as they relate to education in my home country Ghana, and my host country Canada, also a ranking member of the G-8.

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 151–171.*

Based on the premise that there is a wide disparity in access to wealth, resources, and opportunities between Western developed countries and poorer, lesser developed economies in Africa, the assumption is that there will be different issues pertaining to the discussion of equity and access to education.

**Keywords:** Equity, Access, Minorities, Educational opportunity, Developed and developing contexts

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION

An international school teacher for over 20 years, I experienced two different worlds in my teaching career. Within the international, private schooling environment, teaching privileged children of the higher social class I was able to see the stark reality of the lack of educational resources for the majority of Ghanaian children within the public schooling system. The sharp contrast between private and public schooling demanded concerted and sustained efforts to promote higher standards and achieve some level of access and equity to quality education for children in government provided schooling.

I am engaging in this discourse firstly to seize the opportunity for deeper personal reflection on how equity and access in education can be made a growing reality for Ghanaian children in the twenty-first century, and secondly to investigate what this means to children in Canada, where I now reside. I believe education, formal or otherwise, is the basic building block for the socialisation of individuals in society, no matter how small the unit, be it conjugal, familial, communal or national. Thus, I am interested in how these relevancies differ or converge in the two countries. The immediate conclusion is that there will be equity and access to education in developed countries such as Canada, given that they are richly endowed with the resources, but is this actually the case? I draw on my international teaching experiences over two decades and the literature to identify markers of exclusion in both countries, and end by making recommendations for improving opportunities for all groups of students. In particular, to better understand the North American context, I draw on the work of John Dewey, a well-known American educational philosopher and contemporary sociologists anti-colonial writers such as Molefi Asante and George Dei, amongst others, to explore the assumption that many in the developing world seem to hold that equity and access to education can be taken as a given in Western developed countries. No doubt, ‘the grass is always greener on the other side’, or so we want to believe, until we actually get there to ‘chew it for ourselves’, then we can be better judges.

## THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Father of modern day American schooling, Dewey had much to say on varying perspectives on the subject of access and equity in education and schooling. I find his ideas continue to be central to the more contemporary international drive of the “Education for All” Policy, which seeks to address imbalances and huge disparities

in the quality and access to educational opportunities in the poorer countries of the world, especially in the light of globalisation and global capitalism, and more urgently, with the growing threat of environmental and natural disasters, health pandemics, continuing civil and regional wars, and the ever-looming fear of terrorism. The world community is compelled to pay attention to the role of education in preserving peace and harmony, establishing civic and political stability, promoting sustainability of the environment, and, importantly, to fostering intercultural tolerance and multicultural understanding. This makes it imperative to uphold the ability of all nations, especially the lesser developed, to provide equity and access to education, primarily for forthcoming generations but in general all its citizens. I draw on the work of scholars such as Dei (1997, 2010, 2012, 2015) and Asante (1991, 2003, 2007) who continue to critique the dominance of Eurocentric education in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies in North America and who continue to raise questions about the exclusion of Indigenous knowledges from such educational curricula. Their critiques and continuous problematising of the Eurocentricity of education in a system represented by vast diversity has added value to the discourse of equity and access to education.

## EQUITY, ACCESS AND THE STATE OF EDUCATION

In this section, I define the term or concept of access and equity to clarify what, within the context of education, this means. Dei (2015) explores this concept in depth, citing the urgent need to provide a counter-vision of contemporary schooling that serves the needs of diverse students represented in the Canadian classroom, in terms of instruction, pedagogy, curriculum initiatives and other such educational practices, as well as school culture. I also trace the historical concern for equity and access in education in the early 20th century to Dewey, and link his views to their significance today, how is it being visualised or experienced and by whom. I explore how the same issues are being addressed today in the 'Education for All' initiative, adopted in 1990 by the international community to face the growing problems of ineffective educational systems and their effect on social progress or lack of it.

When I refer to "access" in education I allude to the availability of, and the ability to enter into formal schooling. It includes the notion of physical access to an educational venue, and to selection criteria in which often particular categories of students or children are discriminated against. Within a multicultural and multilevel learning environment, access can mean adapting teaching and learning activities to include and address the needs of all levels and kinds of student. Access can be influenced by factors such as geographical location and distance from schooling facilities, the unequal distribution of resources, paucity or lack of infrastructure, physical and learning disabilities, and the corresponding lack of support structures to deal with such, cultural and religious limitations and practices, and also most notably, socio-economic status and class. All these identified issues are also closely related to issues of equity, which are further discussed below.

Equity in education refers to questions of justness, fairness, impartiality and even-handedness in every aspect of selection for educational opportunities, and in whatever relates to the practice of teaching and learning. Equity implies equal quality of treatment and opportunity, and equal access to, and potentially equal outcomes from teaching and learning, regardless of a student's circumstances, background, or identity. Equity in education has the potential to be affected by social class and status, race, ethnicity, gender, physical or learning disability, and in the case of contemporary global migration trends, even immigration status. The reality is that educational experiences of Black children in North America have largely been characterised by labelling, stigmatisation, low teacher expectations, push outs and dropouts, and, unsurprisingly, low achievement rates (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine 1997; TDSB, 2009). Elaborating on the schooling experiences of black youth in Euro-American society, Dei (2010) cites the constant invisibilisations they face within the curriculum and the teaching and learning environment, and what Dei refers to as the "the processes of [in]validation and [de]legitimation of [their] knowledges" (p. 15). When certain knowledges count more than others and students come to a realization that knowledge is applied differently this is not equity, and for this reason Dei (2010) continually problematises the hierarchy of knowledges.

## JOHN DEWEY'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT

It is widely documented that the industrialisation of American society in the early 1900s, and the sociological evolution of rural-urban migration surrounding this development gave birth to schooling. Organised schooling was designed to train lower class citizens to make a transition to the working class in order to fuel the current labour needs and drive of the fast growing industries. Once institutionalised, however, established schools began reflecting the social realities of the greater society and evolved into exciting sociological places, becoming microcosms of American society. Schools began to reflect socio-economic realities, such as social class systems, which developed, in part due to ownership of industry and estates, and in turn led to the stratification of education. In addition, the rapidly changing socio-political environment impacted on the formulation of educational policies and resulted in the politicisation of the curriculum, thus academic training and classic education prepared the aristocratic and upper class children to rule and control economic and political wealth, while vocational training focused on practical mass training of the lower working class to ensure there was a continuous supply of skilled labour to power greater production in the factories. Gender, religious and ideological prejudices and discourses in the general society all began to reflect in the evolution of institutionalised schooling.

Increasing recognition of the importance of education for national development, its influence on social progress, and its benefit for economic growth resulted in vigorous debate amongst the thinkers and philosophers of the day over matters

and theories of educational policy, and it is from this backdrop that Dewey rose to the national scene with his philosophy of education in the 1950s. He stood out and denounced the lack of coherence and relevance that he observed between the social values and educational systems of the day, blaming this for the sorry state of public schooling and its total unpreparedness for the social evolution of the late 19th century. He called the schools of the day a "waste in education" (Dewey, 1900), and is generally recognised for his leading role in revolutionising the North American philosophy and system of education. Dewey's philosophy of education can be summarised in three main points.

*i) Theory of Experience*

For Dewey, education must be experiential, a learning process that is relevant to the reality of the world outside the classroom. It was to be one that enabled a person to interact with self-awareness, in a meaningful relationship with others in society and with the environment in a manner that resulted in intelligent use of it to solve problems. In effect it prepared students to face the challenges of the present world but he was averse to an educational experience that resulted in a passive acquisition of knowledge and had no relevance to the world of work, family, and life in general.

*ii) Belief in Democracy*

In speaking of democracy in education, Dewey was not only referring to political democracy but more specifically to educational practice that was committed to equality of opportunity, and for self-liberation. Dewey believed firmly that education was the most important factor by which society would develop, starting with the individual. Without equality of concern for the individual there would be no opportunity for discovery of personal potential and capabilities. Dei (2015) addresses these concerns as he confronts issues about power in the discourse and representation of youth experiences that produce and contextualise dropping out of school, and in his proposals for breaking down hierarchical relations of power in schooling. Dewey was not alluding to equality of treatment, or using a blanket system for everyone, which would lead to the same mediocrity he was criticising, but giving each individual the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential intellectually and socially. With this concept of democracy he advocated "character education", whereby students were taught to take responsibility for their own moral behaviour and sense of judgement.

*iii) Faith in Basing Educational Practice on Scientifically Proven Methods*

Dewey believed in acting on empirical evidence, through methods that had been tested and tried, and had proven excellent. His conviction was that educational methodology and systems must be based on observation and reflection, not

uncritical ideology, and this formed the basis of his entire career as an educational sociologist. He believed in the scientific, psychological study of how people learn, in order to form conclusive opinions and philosophies for educational practice. He denounced the modern tendency for bureaucrats outside the educational arena to make important decisions on education without having the necessary knowledge and background experience.

## DEWEY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS

At the time of John Dewey, industrialisation had attained new heights, yet the resources invested in and attention paid to educational institutions did not reflect the increasing demands scientific and technological advancement placed on education and training institutions. In particular, the American public school system, which was expected to churn out labour able to meet the workplace challenges of the day, "suffered from malnourishment and neglect" (Handlin, 1971, p. 6). Dewey was appalled by the lack of access students had to experience education in a way that would be meaningful and productive to them as individual learners, and at the lack of equity in the quality and stratification of education.

The social realities of his day reflected a growing multicultural population fuelled by immigration and domestic growth, mostly concentrated in urban, metropolitan areas (much like Canada of today), resulting in an unpreparedness for extension of educational facilities, which were at the time "public, secular, compulsory and free", yet unable to cater adequately to prepare products for the fast changing socio-economic climate. This lack of development to correspond to the realities of social change resulted in a widening gap between the functionality of and demands of society for schooling. This discrepancy between philosophy and practice, and the attendant compounding of social problems in America was what Dewey sought to address. For many countries in Africa today, national educational systems are at the same crossroads.

Thus, for a North American society claiming to practice democratic values there was a large gap in wealth and socio-economic opportunities. On one hand were the wealthy, property-owning capitalists, on the other the drudgery of the working classes, who were still chasing but rapidly becoming disillusioned by the American dream. Additionally, in the era in which school was almost synonymous with the influence of Christian morality, "It was not enough to teach children who lived in slums that a healthful, beautiful location, good construction, perfect drainage, perfect plumbing, and perfect sanitary conditions generally, are indispensable to make the house beautiful" (Handlin , 1971, p. 29). Things had to change.

Clearly, from the above historical account, issues of equity and access to education are not a new phenomenon, and Handlin traces its evolution to the creation of a 'new society' by a wealthy or aristocratic minority nouveau riche who sought to validate their status by creating a new social order or code of inclusion (1971, pp. 33–36). Their main criterion was culture, through which they defined who was eligible to

belong or not. This became a powerful force, influencing education, as this class of people funded the universities and colleges, which in turn took in the children of the elite, educated them according to the demands of the culture of this 'new society' through the study of science, history and politics, economics, art, music and literature. This led to denying free access to several areas of study or professions that were considered elite to those outside of the fraternity of that 'new society'. Thus, increasingly, education began to be far removed in relevance and function from the greater working class population, and catered mainly to "the interests of a small class having a highly privileged position maintained at the expense of the masses" (Dewey, 1964, p. 80). Handlin records that this attempt to control education and make certain disciplines exclusive to the children of the wealthy and powerful aristocratic class was fiercely resisted, especially by the medical profession, and against this background, Dewey as a university instructor began to decry the lack of meaningful relationship between education and real life experience and a belief that education needed to be made accessible to the masses. Happily, it can be said that in general, higher education in Africa has been well understood to be the engine of growth for nation building, but as in the days of Dewey there is still a deep need to make such schooling meaningful to the current need for social, industrial, and economic growth and development. There is also an urgent need to bridge the relationship between education and real life experience in Africa for Africans. In this regard, Dei (2010) further decries the continuing legacy of colonial educational systems and structures that many African countries perpetuate, to the disadvantage of African children, and advocates "the power and efficacy of teaching relevant knowledge, knowledge anchored in African people's aspirations, concerns, and needs… knowledge local peoples' can identify with… based on the philosophical position that we must understand Africa on its own terms" (p. 17).

Dewey's university kept close watch over public or state schools, giving him the opportunity to deepen his philosophical inquiry into what knowledge truly was, how it was acquired, and the problems of education of his day. His first main publication of his ideas, *The School and Society* (1899) profoundly criticised the educational system, as did his later work, *Democracy and Education* (1906), reflecting his displeasure at schools and their culture being divorced from society and real life. His ideas were popular with many in American society at the time because he articulated clearly the weaknesses of the educational system and schooling. Education as it stood was far removed from the reality of many of the poorer working class children and therefore not truly accessible, nor would it prepare them for the rapidly changing world outside the school. Thus, they were being alienated from a meaningful and authentic educational experience that might allow them to profit from or climb the ladder of success with fast expanding business, or take up professional opportunities in the newly urbanised and industrialised America. He advocated a meaningful, realistic, and pragmatic system of learning which would also be incidental to lived experiences, which led to the opening of his experimental school in Chicago, and a new age in the philosophy and practice of education,

whereby teaching and learning technique and substance of subject matter were closely associated.

Though Dewey's criticisms date back to the nineteenth century, they are still relevant today as we see in different forms the age-old problems that speak to equity and access in education. Contemporaneously, scholars such as Ladson-Billings (2006) continue to raise questions of equity and access to the curriculum in North America, and the negative impact this has on achievement. She calls it the 'achievement debt' and posits that it is the result of inequities in the educational system. Thus, the current revitalisation of Indigenous cultures and cultural knowledges as a counter-narrative to dominant Eurocentric ways of knowing is a welcome development (Smith, 1999; Dei, 2000).

Similarly today, in Africa there is a keen need for academia to make this investigation of how education in the national context can serve the needs of contemporary life by inculcating in students realistic and pragmatic learning experiences that will enable them to be innovative and productive in envisioning meaningful ways to resolve the current challenges facing African societies, thereby allowing them to profit from and ascend the ladder of success through the creation businesses or industrial and professional opportunities of 21st century Africa. Access to such opportunities must begin with not only adapting to contemporary global changes but also resisting encroaching negative effects of globalisation (Dei, 2010). Asante (2009) and Karenga and Karenga (2007) issue a call to "de-Europeanize our [colonized] minds" in order to deal with both the knowledge and "cultural crisis".

Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1974) was an analysis of both traditional education, which focused on content of subjects, and progressive education, which shifted the focus to the student, and how he or she could learn content in a manner that reflected the current social reality. He asserted that both were necessary, in balance, and insisted that the rigid traditional scheme of education was imposing "adult standard subject matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly towards maturity". He pointed out that the gap between what they were being required to learn and their ability to learn it was so great that it was a "brutal imposition". In other words, the educational system of the day was not accessible, nor was it equitable to the children. To Dewey, it had resulted in making the students "callous to ideas", and robbed them of their "impetus to learn", so it was not that they did not have some experiences but that their educational experiences were negative, not quality. How different is this situation for many students today, both in the developed world and in developing societies, who are outside the educational system because they have been alienated by the present system of education, and have thus been denied access to opportunities to learn? Dei (2015) documents in his article on the drop out/push out phenomenon the disillusionment of minority children in Canadian schools. Dewey's firm belief that democratic social arrangements promote better quality of human experience, and were more accessible and preferable to non-democratic and anti-democratic social systems,

as strongly demonstrative of his commitment to equity and access as a way of life (p. 34).

Dewey (1964), in discussing the relationship between education and democracy, stated that educational problems at that time were deeper and more acute because of the great socio-political upheavals taking place at the time. Citing the war in Europe, racial intolerance in Europe and pervasive racial discrimination of blacks, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigrant sentiments in America, he pondered how education and schools could constructively cultivate in their students the goodwill and understanding to foster true democracy (1964, p. 42). Dewey would have protested against similar forms of discrimination in our educational system and schools were he alive today, for though he commended the American public school system for being able to break down class divisions he pointed to the room for improvement regarding "snobbishness and prejudices". Social equity was of significance to Dewey. Multiculturalism in Canada has meant that, in principle, diversity is welcomed as a policy, however, this has not been reflected in reality, leading to the release of the 2009 "*Realizing the Promise of Diversity Document"* by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Equality, Dewey believed, was an essential tenet of democracy, and though he did not espouse the viewpoint that this implied a belief in the equality of natural talent, he believed "all individuals are entitled to equality of treatment by law and administration". The democratic faith in equality gave every individual the chance and opportunity to contribute what he or she was capable of, and that the value of such a contribution would not be decided on the basis of any sort of prior status (1964, p. 60). Molefi Asante (1991), in this regard, adds that education should be aimed at developing the learner's agency and social responsibility.

Dewey mentions the phenomena of living in times of both economic scarcity and economic abundance, both a present reality in the 21st century, and confronting people in both developed and developing countries. He accurately predicts and diagnoses socio-economic problems facing youth who also find themselves deprived of opportunities, and for many whose legitimate desires and aspirations have no hope of being fulfilled. In Canada it is not uncommon to meet minority youth who have lost faith that democracy through schooling can be used to bring about change. Alienated by a school system that has failed them and killed their hopes that social and academic intelligence can help them face socio-economic realities of life, they turn to violence (1964, pp. 78–79). Dewey boldly attributed this despair to the inability of society in his time to create orderly development which was characterised by absence of class divisions and struggles, to the lack of a humane orientation in the society. Education was an important factor in creating socio-political equity and training the youth for good citizenship.

Dewey went as far as to recommend that every teacher read a book by Julian Huxley, *Scientific Research and Social Needs* (1934), because it argued that one aim of education should be to teach people to discount the unconscious prejudices that their social environments impress upon them. He also recommended *We Europeans*,

which appeared in 1935, arguing that ethnic characteristics are determined mainly by environment and cultural history, not genetics. Huxley was of the view that man should better himself through science and technology, and more importantly through the improvement of the social environment. Thus, the onus was on teachers as the facilitators in the classroom to first develop that crucial ability to critically discriminate between intelligent knowledge and prejudiced social codes within their society, then to impart a balanced and intelligent understanding of the current social forces to their students, in order to curb the prejudices and inflamed emotions that result from wrong orientation and mass propaganda, such as emerged in the extreme example of Hitler's Germany. It is a great task that is laid at the door of teachers, but Dewey was convinced it was the business of education to play this role. Teacher training is therefore a pivotal consideration for ensuring the direction of productive education and positive educational experiences. This remains true for educating teachers in an African context also.

Even regarding the classification and organisation of educational programmes, Dewey was critical of it it having been arranged according to social division and strata, and labelled accordingly. Intellectual education, or "liberal arts", was the preserve of nobles of society, and the "useful arts", for the lower working classes serving the drive of the industrial revolution. His preoccupation was that whatever the educational system or programme it would be liberating and "acquire a humane direction." Dewey proclaimed boldly that "it is through the processes of education that knowledge is obtained … They attempt to integrate the knowledge gained into enduring dispositions and attitudes" (1964, p. 165). This addresses the streaming found in the Canadian system and similar streams of university and vocational learning found in many African educational systems.

Dewey was concerned that the educational system was not sufficiently cognisant that the membership of students in American schools at the time had changed considerably following the growth of technology and industrialisation, yet the curriculum had not changed to reflect that social reality, thus making education less meaningful, accessible and equitable for large numbers of students, both immigrant and local. These students did not come from the same background and traditions and the educational system had originally not been planned to meet their needs. This situation, he believed, was responsible for the many students finishing school with no real skills or clear sense of socio-economic perspective to pursue a living in large cities, where there was keen competition for existing employment opportunities. Dei (2012) refers to this as "the coloniality of education" and describes it as having decentred the learner of African descent (p. 51). This is the situation in many African countries, where the legacy of colonial education persists yet bears no relevance to the current realities or skills needed to participate and compete successfully socio-economically. The educational system is thus instrumental in deepening lack of equity and access both socially and economically. As Dei (2012) reiterates, "African families always speak of the importance of education. We need to understand the conditions that make it possible and impossible for

this understanding to materialize in the everyday schooling experiences of their children" (p. 45).

In speaking of democracy and education from the perspective of liberty and socio-political control, Dewey made a general statement about equality and liberty:

> The democratic ideal that unites equality and liberty is, on the other hand, a recognition that actual and concrete liberty of opportunity and action is dependent upon equalization of the political and economic conditions under which individuals are alone free… The tragic breakdown of democracy is due to the fact that the identification of liberty with the maximum of unrestrained individualistic action in the economic sphere … is as fatal to the realization of liberty for all as it is fatal to the realization of equality. (1964, p. 116)

Dewey realised that socio-economic status was the main defining factor accountable for inequitable opportunities in education and beyond, and blamed unbridled capitalism for this state of affairs. He outlined the study of sociology as the study "of family life, of politics and economics, of war and peace" (1964, p. 180), asserting that many political issues had economic roots, such as the relationship between capital and labour, wealth concentration and its distribution, economic security and unemployment. These have deep implications for equity of human and social relations, and in the light of Dewey's observations, as an observer of these debates and their relevance in the 21st Century, when I consider contemporary issues of equity and access to education, and the factors that contribute to the same old disparities, I conclude that there is 'nothing new under the sun'. In the next section, as a Ghanaian teacher studying the Sociology of Education in Canada, I closely examine how equity and access to education has been operationalised in a multicultural context.

## EQUITY AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN ONTARIO, CANADA

Within the international community, Canada is known to have a good quality of education, and a high percentage of university graduates. However, a recent communiqué from the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) (Nov. 3, 2010) stated that there had been a dramatic decrease in dropout rates over the previous two decades, from 16.6% in 1990–91 to 8.5% in 2009–10, a remarkable 50% fall. These statistics, released by the Centre for Education Statistics, also record positive gains in the gender gap, stating that though male youth continued to lag behind the young women in terms of dropping out, the gap had narrowed considerably (from 19.2% to 10.3% for males, and 14.0% to 6.6% for girls in the same timeframe as above). This was an impressive statistic for which Canada is to be commended, but a closer look at the actual identities of the people who represent those statistics, and the causes for their being described as "drop outs" is what attracted my attention for this chapter. In the same communiqué, mention is made that there are persistent challenges of certain groups with the highest

dropout rates, especially aboriginal youth. I was surprised that no mention was made of racialised youth, specifically young black males between the ages of 15 and 24, who make up a major percentage of inmates in the prisons and correctional facilities of Ontario.

In the *Realizing the Promise of Diversity* document (2009), the Ontario Ministry of Education shows its commitment to improving equity and access in education for all members of Canadian society, in its diversity and multiplicity. The document sets out the vision for this new strategy as an equitable and inclusive education system in which all members of the school community, parents, teachers, and students will be welcome and respected, and all students supported and inspired to succeed (p. 10). Their priorities to attain high levels of student achievement, reduce the gaps thereof, and above all increase public confidence in public education are laudable. This they admit clearly cannot be achieved without an eye on inclusiveness, equity, and access to educational opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Ministry clearly recognises this is the sole means by which the region can benefit from its diversity, and the document went as far as to state that provincial high quality "education for all" would be a key means of fostering social cohesion. This informed the Ministry's directive beginning September 2010, expecting each school board in the region to have in place an equity and inclusive education policy which focused on disability, race, and religion, factors identified as the intersecting grounds of discrimination (pp. 5–6). Interestingly, disability included linguistic inability to access the curriculum at grade level in English, and required all boards to provide ESL programmes and services. Other Additional Special Education Programmes and Individual Education Plans were to be adopted, not as "tools of discrimination and exclusion" but as equity tools designed as modifications to ensure students stayed in school, accessed the curriculum to the best of their ability, and above all, achieved their full potential.

These are all noteworthy efforts by the municipal government to address the issue of equity and access in a multifaceted manner, but it is equally noteworthy to say that despite the best efforts there is much documentation in the literature to suggest that the Ministry has made good progress in recent years to remove existing barriers and combat racism and discrimination in schools. As recently as 2008, the Ontario Human Rights Commission reported that:

> The presence of discriminatory biases and systemic barriers remains a concern … complaints based on race and disability outnumber complaints based on any other prohibited grounds … the Supreme Court of Canada in 2005 acknowledged that racial prejudice against visible minorities is so notorious and indisputable that its existence needs to be treated as a social fact … racial minority students and their parents tend to experience racism as a "collective attribute that is expressed overtly and indirectly" [and not strictly as] "isolated acts of overt individual prejudice". (Berger, n.d., p. 98, quoted in Realizing the Promise of Diversity Document, 2009, p. 10)

This admission by the Supreme Court of Canada is an indictment on the educators, administrators and school staff of Canadian public schools, and a blight on the international image of Canada as a country seeking to project itself to the global community as a leading multicultural society that derives national pride in its diversity. Thus, the literature and contemporary discourse cite the main factors that have accounted for the lack of equity and access to education in Canada:

- racial and ethnic politics, and perceived widespread white privilege
- robust immigration trends, multiculturalism and attendant potential for marginalisation and social disadvantage of minority ethnic groups
- a growing gap between wealthy and poor localities and neighbourhoods, and perceived inequality in educational resource allocations
- overt and underlying racism, and discriminatory implementation of school board policies such as the "Safe Schools" policy, which has resulted in the exclusion of mainly youth of African descent and other minorities from schools
- the continuing and troubling treatment of Aborigines or First Nations Peoples as second-rate citizens of Canada.

According to the literature, though the issue of discrimination within the educational system is perhaps the most central to the question of equity and access to education in Canada, and can be said to hang most notably on two main threads – discrimination against people of African descent and Aboriginal natives, I draw particular attention to the plight of Aboriginal peoples in the Canadian educational system and to the efforts of sovereignty activists who are fighting for Indigenous education reforms and support.

Historically, the Aboriginal populations of Canada have viewed the Canadian education system as "a pillar of Canadian colonialism", and a primary weapon of cultural genocide in Canada. In a recent forum (Nov. 2010) co-sponsored by the Centre for Urban Schooling (OISE/UT), the Aboriginal Education Centre (TDSB), the Model Schools for Inner Cities (TDSB), and the Faculty of Education at York University, it was accused of having "shaped racist images of Indigenous peoples in public discourse", and causing the disappearance of "Canada's history of colonialism, so that non-Native people do not see or understand their role in Canadian colonialism", alluding to the historical evidence that "generations of Indigenous people were forced to go to residential schools where they were brutalized and forced to forget their languages, customs, and cultures". The forum complained that education for status Indians was woefully underfunded and inadequate, with the Canadian government spending considerably less on education for on-reserve Native Aboriginal students than for non-Native populations in Canada. They see the government as doing little to address issues of language loss and cultural alienation that haunt their youth. As a result, Indigenous people are coming together to fight against attacks on their access to education, at the same time creating their own Indigenous models of education. It is noteworthy to mention at this point that bowing to intense political pressure, Canada has finally signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

and is working on making the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a major focus for governmental attention.

Nor did the other most dissatisfied interest group within the educational system, those of African descent, rest unconcerned with the state of affairs either. In the light of continuing discrimination, disproportionately high dropout rates among black students in the Toronto school system, especially boys, and their subsequent criminalisation in January 2008, the black community succeeded in pressuring the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to approve the establishment of the controversial Afrocentric School, a school which according to the TDSB "uses the sources of knowledge and experiences of peoples of African descent as an integral feature of the teaching and learning environment." Molefi Asante (2003) argues that African-centredness is "a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate" (p. 21), thus emphasising that in making decisions that affect African people the consideration for what is best for them and what honours their values, in other words, an African-centred approach, must be adopted. This provided a firm justification for advocates of the first Toronto Afrocentric School.

This was a means of finding innovative and working solutions to improve school achievement for those vulnerable black students who had been marginalised by the current public school system (CBC News, Sept. 4, 2009). According to the school board's statistics, 40% did not graduate, compared with about 25% board-wide. The "Eurocentric" school system was failing black students and though there were many who objected to the idea, many others thought the proposal for an Afrocentric school was worth trying, as it would give students choices, as well as work "to stop systemic discrimination" in public schools (*National Post*, Jan 30, 2008).

Following these developments, in April 2009 a new document, "*Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*" was released, spelling out a new vision for a more equitable and inclusive educational system in Ontario. In one of the resources developed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission there was a clear statement indicating the need for a "positive school climate that fosters and promotes equity, inclusive education, and diversity" (Ontario, Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 11). That it sought to encourage school boards to apply an antiracist approach in identifying and removing systemic barriers for racialised students is evidence that the message was getting across clearly to the Ministry of Education. This was in response to the "Safe Schools Act" and school board's "Zero Tolerance" policies which had been passed in 2000 in a bid to make schools safe and free of violence. However, a strong perception supported by empirical evidence showed that the Act and the policy had a disproportionate impact on racial minority students, particularly Blacks. Many school administrators applied differential treatment to school discipline in high schools and Black students were much more likely than their White counterparts to be suspended from school, reported to the police by school authorities, or expelled entirely from school. Eventually, in 2007, the Toronto School Board was compelled to remove all

references to "zero tolerance" from the school board's safe schools policies (Ontario Safe Schools Act, 2007). Today, people of African descent in Ontario continue to press on for the TDSB to make a firm commitment to expand the Afrocentric School to the secondary level.

In the subsequent section, I focus on an examination of the Education For All initiative, how it reflects many of John Dewey's philosophical approaches to providing equitable education, and how it is being operationalised in Ghana, my country of origin.

## THE EDUCATION FOR ALL INITIATIVE

This section examines contemporary efforts to engage discussion about persistent issues of imbalances in availability and quality of education in African countries in general today. In the last two centuries, education has been recognised internationally as a basic human right. In acknowledgement of the need to promote this understanding across the international community, in 1990, the Education for All (EFA) Initiative was launched to ensure that by 2015 all members of the international community would commit themselves to collectively and individually ensuring that all children, particularly girls, children living in poor economic conditions of the developing world, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, would have access to free and compulsory primary education. The concern was for children to receive not only a basic education but one that was of good quality. This was reiterated in the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals, of which three out of the eight focused on access to and equity in education. Thus, clearly, the issue of access to education has become an important consideration universally. A 2007 UNESCO and UNICEF report evaluating the Education for All initiative at that point highlighted three main interrelated rights upon which the initiative stands:

1. *The right of access to education* – Education must be available for, accessible to and inclusive of all children.
2. *The right to quality education* – Education needs to be child-centred, relevant and embrace a broad curriculum, and be appropriately resourced and monitored.
3. *The right to respect within the learning environment* – Education must be provided in a way that is consistent with human rights, equal respect for culture, religion and language and free from all forms of violence.

These general guidelines are almost parallel to the three tenets of Dewey's philosophy of education discussed above, namely his theory of experience, belief in democracy, and faith in basing educational practice on empirically proven methods. Therefore, in short, all children must have equal opportunity to go to school, be given quality education irrespective of who or where they are, and must be nurtured in a safe, respectful learning environment. In the light of civil wars and ethnic unrest that have erupted across Africa, and which have had disastrous consequences for the education of African children, commenting on the EFA initiative, Brock-Utne (2000)

cites the significance of ethnic differences in the African context, stating that they carry powerful political and material effects for advantage or disadvantage, just on the basis of ethnic affiliation. This is similar in importance to the impact of gender, class, linguistic, and religious differences, and the currency these carry in the social setting. Brock-Utne (2000) further explicates that ethnicity is a legacy of a colonial history of distinctions, of a "divide and rule" tactics of the colonial administration in Africa that resulted in unhealthy tensions and fostered competition among different ethnic groups and communities who, in reality, had interrelated histories. This has been the remote cause of many of the civil wars that have characterised the African continent.

## GHANA: EQUITY AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

Access to education in Ghana is seen both as a fundamental human right and an essential element in the national development strategy (Akyeampong et al., 2007). Section 2 (1) of the Education Act of 1961 at the attainment of Independence in 1957, and more contemporaneously, Article 38 (2) of the 1992 Constitution secures the right of all Ghanaians to basic education. In 1996, the "Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education" programme was introduced as the policy framework to implement this vision for access and equity in education for all Ghanaian children. The Ghana Education Service is responsible providing pre-tertiary education, with a stated mission being to ensure that, irrespective of age, gender, religion, ethnic group or political affiliation, all children receive equal opportunities for basic education. Their vision statement is guided by the principles of "Quality Education, Efficient Management of Resources, Accountability and Transparency, and Equity" (Education Strategic Plan Document, 2004).

In Ghana, patterns of access to schooling are based on social and economic factors. Serious issues that impact equity and access to education in Ghana negatively include the socio-economic class of parents and their level of literacy; the prevalence of poverty and resulting lack of affordability; the practice of prioritising boys' education when there are large family sizes; youth or child employment on farms during the farming seasons; working at stone quarries or as market porters; the increase in streetism due to a breakdown of the traditional extended family system; the stereotyping of gender and the notion that a girl's place is in kitchen, resulting in her being used as domestic servants or doing household chores to help the mother with water and wood fetching, as well as taking part in economic ventures such as assisting in selling at markets and stores, or hawking for a living; the cultural and social roles of girls and the traditional procreative role that limits their education in favour of early marriage and childbearing; and rural/urban migration and low youth employment which act as demotivation for staying longer in school.

The government is aware that without enhancing equitable access to basic education, poverty and social disadvantage will remain as barriers to national growth (Akyeampong et al., 2007), and has identified lack of infrastructure, specifically

availability of classrooms, administrative blocks, and teacher accommodation, mainly in non-urban districts, as the principal challenge to achieving their full aims in providing accessible and equitable education. Therefore, with funding from the World Bank, the government began a special programme of expansion of educational facilities in 2000. Equity in distribution of resources was central to this programme, and between the years 2001 and 2004 other international development partners, notably, USAID of the USA, and DFID of the UK joined in the effort (Education Strategic Plan Document, 2004). Though the improvement of quality and quantity of infrastructure is an important strategy, it is not by itself adequate. In my opinion the government needs to establish pro-education programmes which target poor students' inability to pay for the cost of schooling to ensure equitable access to quality basic education.

Another area of concern was the gap in gender equity in education, with girls falling considerably behind in representation at all levels of education, particularly from science and technology. Ministry of Education figures for 2006 recorded a dropout rate of girls at 3.2%. This led to special programmes in Mathematics, Science, and Technology, targeting girls. Also, conscious efforts were made to achieve gender balance in curriculum content and development, and training of teachers was targeted as a major component of the efforts to increase gender access to education.

As far back as I can recall, the general funding of education in Ghana has been a main and continuing challenge, one for which finally, at the dawn of the 20th century, the government finally established the Ghana Education Trust Fund by increasing VAT taxes by 2.5%. This surcharge went to the fund to boost the provision of facilities and infrastructure in education. The government also introduced cost sharing in tertiary education, whereby students now had to pay realistic user fees for university and polytechnic accommodation and tuition, in order to make basic education accessible for all. These were all laudable measures taken by the government and development partners, but there are serious social factors mitigating against the achievement of equity and access in education for all Ghanaian children, outlined above, and summarised here:

- The most obvious and pervasive is poverty in many rural districts of the country and within the inner cities
- Certain socio-cultural and religious practices place limitations on education for girls, and in some circumstances boys too
- Poor quality of teaching and learning.

In response to these identified challenges, there has been a flurry of activity in the past two decades by government and nongovernmental organisations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, and Catholic Relief Services to redress the gender imbalances in particular, and the training of teachers in general to improve enrolment and retention of girls in school (Ghana Country Paper, 2000–2010). Another area of challenge to achieving equity and access in Ghana is the issue

of disability. About 10% of Ghanaian children fall into this category, and though the Special Education Unit of Ghana Education Service has some programmes in place for the sight and hearing impaired, as well as for those who are mentally and physically challenged, they are woefully inadequate. Architectural barriers and inaccessible learning environments, lack of specialist trained staff and suitable curriculum materials to enhance teaching and learning, all pose major hurdles for access and equity to education for special needs children, hindering their full inclusion in quality education.

Apart from household poverty, cultural and traditional beliefs and practices about gender roles and aspirations, the cost of schooling however modest, the opportunity cost of sending girls to school, and in the case of rural communities sometimes the distance involved in walking to school all influence enrolment of girls in school, Akyeampong et al. (2007) identify other factors that impact equitable access to education in Ghana. On distribution of resources, and therefore enrolment, retention and performance of children in schools there exist geographical disparities, evident in a north/south, rural/urban divide. The northern sector and the rural areas of Ghana are much less developed, and children from these parts of the country are also significantly less likely than their southern and urban counterparts to enjoy the same opportunities for quality education. Child labour due to poverty is a key determinant of access or exclusion to education and where there are high levels of poverty there is low access to education. The phenomenon of dropping out is usually related to economic factors surrounding basic survival needs. Many poor children contribute to family income and go to school at the same time, and when dire circumstances dictate it are forced to give up school to work. Without doing this, the family wellbeing is threatened, as well as chances of younger siblings completing basic education (Ghana Child Labour Survey, 2003, 2005). Akyeampong et al. (2007) call upon the government and perhaps Ghanaian society as a whole to identify causes for the rise in basic school dropout rates in recent years, the high number of school-age children being out of school, and, after years of educational policy initiatives, the proportion of children out of school remaining largely unchanged. Answers to these questions will enhance access to and equity in education in Ghana.

## CONCLUSION – SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

From these discussions, it is apparent that there remain significant gaps in educational opportunity in both the developing and developed worlds, though this reality occurs differently. Left unresolved, the effects of the widening gaps between those who benefit from educational opportunities and those who do not are profound, and have the potential to create much social unrest and contribute to the current insecurity in our societies and worldwide. The implications for the growth, peace, and security, and the current threat of terrorism, both in developing and developed countries, make ensuring equity and access to education an overarching priority. Canada and Ghana, as well as all other developed and developing countries, need to focus attention on

addressing the shortfalls in educational opportunities to the benefit of all. Since 2009 the government of Canada has shown some commitment to addressing the issue of equity in schooling, but more is needed to back paperwork and words with positive, decisive action, and to delve further into why schools are failing.

Ghana in turn needs to address lack of scholarship opportunities for bright but needy students as a long-term solution to the issue of lack of access to education due to poverty. Some have pointed out the mismanagement of public funds allocated to education at the municipal level, and poor motivation of teachers which has affected teaching and learning. Others have blamed the refusal of good qualified teachers to go to rural areas as an issue needing resolution, to enable wider equity and access to good education.

Education has been characterised by its capacity to respond to change and diversity in society, and one of the greatest strengths of a good educational system is its ability to identify areas that give cause for concern both in terms of needs of disadvantaged students and the needs of society in general. Handlin (1971) points out that Dewey was not static or stagnant in his points of view, in his stated criticisms of the educational system of his day or his recommendations for solutions to the problems he identified. In the same way, Asante (2007) urges us as Africans to embrace our Afrocentric identities and engage critically with the social realities that evolve and unfold around us day by day, in an effort to confront the complexity of social problems they bring, and find solutions which are relevant and progressive to the good of all.

What then is the future of our schools? The alienation from schooling and subsequent criminalisation of youth of African descent and other ethnic minorities, resulting in the increased allocation of funding to expand state prisons to accommodate more of these minors, is a time bomb waiting to explode in the face of Canadian society. This cannot be the way forward, especially in view of recent terrorist attacks by disenfranchised racialised and minoritised youth in Western societies. To maintain the security of city streets in Canada, there is an urgent need to frankly appraise the current climate and social reality of today, and to make an honest effort to come to grips with the iniquity of excluding others, especially immigrant minorities already coming from a heritage of slavery and colonisation. Helping first nation peoples from a historical background of oppression and multiple levels of loss, and any efforts to institute systems of equity and access to education and opportunities for social mobility, will be steps in the right direction.

Though this is in no way an exhaustive account of the topic and subject matter in comparing access and equity in education as they pertain to Canada and Ghana, it nevertheless showcases a snapshot of what is happening on a global scale across developed and developing countries in general. Interestingly, the literature makes frequent references to the UK, Europe, and the USA in comparison to Canada, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Kenya and Senegal, in comparison to Ghana. In conclusion, and with the burden of the evidence in the literature, barring other factors which have not been discussed here, such as linguistic barriers, lack of equitable distribution

of educational opportunities and resources in both developed and developing countries have serious, but differing implications. Notably, poverty remains the major factor for lack of access and equitable educational opportunities in Ghana, and racial discrimination remains the main factor for lack of access to, and equitable educational and social opportunities in Canada.

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ROSE ANN TORRES

# 11. TRANSFORMING INDIGENOUS CURRICULUM IN THE PHILIPPINES THROUGH INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES

*A Case Study on Aeta Women Healers*

ABSTRACT

This paper bears witness to the Aeta women healers' epistemology and practices, medical, political and culture. It is also, tacitly, an examination of human prejudice, exclusion, and methodological bias including those practiced by those educated in Western academic institutions. It is important that we, as scholars, stop excluding Indigenous People from the knowledge production arena simply because they do not originate geographically or paradigmatically in zones or interests from which we come. The department of Education in the Philippines created an Indigenous curriculum that they called "Education For All". However, this curriculum is considered inappropriate to the Indigenous People in the Philippines because it does not serve the needs and interest of the community. This paper, explores why this curriculum is not useful for Indigenous People in the Philippines. I discuss how this curriculum can be transformed through the knowledge and practices of Aeta women healers. The principles of "ayat", "dayaw" and "pinagkakadua" will be examined and analyzed to highlight ways of knowing of the 12 Aeta women healers who participated in the study that I conducted in the Philippines.

**Keywords:** Aeta women healers epistemology and practices, Indigenous curriculum in the Philippines, education for all, inclusion

## INTRODUCTION

Much of what I glean in academic literature as the "History" of Aeta people mirrors the tactical abuses and Eurocentric gaze found in accounts constructed from stern perspectives which were, I argue, Eurocentric and frequently explicitly or tacitly racist. Aeta people are surely not unique in this experience, thus it may be argued to be a modal category of experience when describing the effects of Western colonisation on the Indigenous people. It is difficult, for example, to read the 10,000 some pages of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples or RCAP (1996) that gives testimony of the experiences of personal and collective brutalisation, residential schools, and

*N. Phasha et al. (Eds.), Inclusive Education in African Contexts, 173–189.*

theft of children, appropriation and destruction of lands and customs and other inhumanities without emotion. Similar experiences occurred around the world, from Africa to Asia, South America and beyond, to virtually all of the inhabited world (Olson, 2012). The experiences are unique to the people experiencing them but they are scarcely so when considered in their entirety. In *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* Chua (2003) comparatively illustrates how importing 'market democracy' has too often resulted in 'ethnic hatred' and 'social instability'. The changes are often multi-dimensional. Crosby, in *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972) persuasively argues that the main effects of the European invasion and subsequent 'Columbian Exchange' were as profoundly biological and ecological as social, political, pedagogical, theological¸ linguistic and institutional impositions and transformations. The ideas of Fanon (1963) and many others in the growing literature on critical discourse on Indigenous people lead to what Genovese (1965), in describing the experiences of American Blacks with slavery, says were variations and permutations in which he labelled 'accommodations and resistances' in evolving and episodic strategies to reclaim culture (and self-determination). The Aeta in general, including their women healers, who participated in the talking circle are a case study in the interactive dynamics between oppression and liberation, inhumanity and irrepressible parts of humanity which resist this form of repression. I shall argue that they are a classic case study in these processes regarding the dynamics of colonisation and resistance.

The post-colonial society has been used in transmitting seemingly educational curricular plans and alien lessons in a mandatory way. This has an effect in the breaking of the knowledge transmission linkages and traditions in native communities, affecting socialising agencies as wide ranging as family, community sharing and traditions. Through this mechanism, cultural belief systems of Aeta People are deemed outdated and instead, Western educational beliefs and cultures permeate their lives. Again, this was not an unintentional goal of the colonisers. The goal of residential schools in Canada and elsewhere in the British Empire was that a successful school was one in which the child ceased to identify with his or her Indigenous heritage and instead declared being 'Canadian'. This meant giving up claims to land, exemption from taxation, and right to education in one language. In Canada, such schools were not only state sponsored but also state mandated. Residential schools were administered by the four dominant Christian sects which operationally and legally administered them on behalf of the state. The goals of this operation by settler institutions were land appropriation and cultural genocide, aimed at eliminating Indigenous claims of Souvenir against the Empire. The empirical results included the highest youth suicide rates among any ethnic group globally; violations of agreed treaty rights; land poaching; introduction of alcohol and unscrupulous and usurious relations; child kidnapping; illegal use of police to commit human rights abuses, such as leaving children in freezing conditions in remote areas with no transportation; and use of torture instruments, such as pins

through tongues on children who spoke in Native languages in schools. The list goes beyond what is 'civilised' to read (RCAP, 1996). They were purported to be 'helping' and 'educational' formal social sectors of Canadian and British foreign society which administered this state violence towards children and their communities.

Western processes of assimilation and domination constitute an array of mutually supportive socialising processes with varying modalities. One such tactic is to assign, as the measures and instrumental datum points of 'authenticity', standards which are their own and devalue Indigenous culture. Defining the criteria, units, goals and standards, in other words acting as arbiter of the measuring rod, creates an inbuilt cultural bias to the process, which is far from being open as it does not make its own judgments and measures to counter argument or discourse (Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 1987). Aeta women healers offer a textbook instance of these spurious intellectual processes of knowledge evaluation and epistemology as the colonizers dictate standards and practice in all but absolute disregard of their cultural existence. Eurocentric school rules are self-referencing and fail to engage in discourse, exchange or respectful co-learning (Tauli-Corpuz, 2006). The technocratic and ideological inflexibility is an implementer of this indoctrination, as the exact counterpoint to their practices, which are community-based and dialogical, in the terminology of Freire (1973). This is evident even in the smallest detail, including the canonical ordering pedagogy in their discourse and presentation. For instance, the healers commence cultural healing vocation by acknowledging the existence of their Creator, despite the alleged backwardness or superstition, this is different from the homage and pledge of allegiance given to the state and often God by parochial schools of Euro-Christian demonisation, as was mandated in Ontario School Act until late in the 20th century (Wotherspoon, 2009). They believed that their healing knowledge was an endowment of their Creator, who also aided in the healing process. Spirituality is thus embedded in their healing practices and transforming colonial curriculum.

This chapter provide ways of transforming the Indigenous curriculum in the Philippines that has been established by the Department of Education. The main objective of this curriculum is to be inclusive. However, it does not conform to the real needs of the Indigenous peoples in the Philippines. To amend this gap in the Indigenous curriculum, the Aeta women healers are offering some strategies. In this connection, I explore deeper a case study that I conducted with 12 Aeta women healers in Cagayan Valley in 2010. Talking Circle was used as a key methodological tool because it is a part of their culture. Having a conversation in a circle is considered a much fairer way. Three Talking Circles were held with four Aeta women healers in each.

I discuss the historical overview of Aeta women healing practices and their healing practices as a form of resistance against imperialism, including colonial education. Aeta women healers have been employing their oral tradition to transmit their culture and healing practices, knowing that the society is changing and that they need to start having written materials that relate to their culture, education and healing practices, as a means of both reaching out to the people outside of their community and of sustaining their knowledge. They know that non-Aeta people

need to know them in order to change their perceptions and how the curriculum needs to be transformed. In addition, I present the Indigenous curriculum mandated by the Department of Education of the Philippines. In this section, I include the critiques of this curriculum. I will then discuss the strategies of Aeta women healers on how to transform it.

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S CORE CURRICULUM IN THE PHILIPPINES

There are more than 160 different ethno-linguistic groups with more than 500 Indigenous people communities in the Philippines. There are 2.5 million Indigenous children who live in remote areas of the Philippines (http://www.gov.ph/2011/07/11/deped-offers-special-curriculum-for-Indigenous-peoples/). The current issues that Indigenous children face are: (a) public schools offer limited services to them or no service at all; (b) they are unable to access education that is relevant or responsive to their own culture; (c) there have been a high risk of dropping-out due to poverty; and (d) they do not have access to public transportation (ibid.). Due to this, the Department of Education in the Philippines established a curriculum of Education for All, defined as "an alternative learning system curriculum to members of Indigenous cultural communities to address their learning needs" (ibid.). According to Luistro (2011), it should reach:

> … even those in the margins of society who need to be provided with a specially-designed curriculum owing to their unique circumstances. The curriculum was specifically-written to be culture-sensitive with the end-view of helping them become functionally literate and be net contributors to our society. The learning competencies of the Indigenous People curriculum were drawn from the existing … curriculum for the basic literacy, elementary and secondary levels. The curriculum content, however, was based on Indigenous Peoples Act (IPRA) or Republic Act 8371.

The Indigenous People curriculum is focused on their daily lives. For example: family life, health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene, health and food. It discusses how Indigenous people take care of themselves and various sicknesses and diseases, as well as their rights to ancestral lands, economics and income. It contains an explanation on supply and demands, ways of earning a living and how to take care of their communal source of livelihood. On the lesson of how to deal with the environment, the curriculum emphasises their close relationship to the environment. According to the Department of Education, the curriculum is focused on their communication skills, problem-solving and critical thinking abilities, development of self and sense of community, practice of ecological and sustainable economics and expanding worldview (http://www.gov.ph/2011/07/11/deped-offers-special-curriculum-for-Indigenous-peoples/).

However, Jocson (2010) a professor at University of the Philippines, states that this curriculum does not respond to the specific needs of Indigenous peoples in the

Philippines. Jocson (2010), claiming that: their communities are seldom or never consulted in curriculum development. The mediums of instruction are English and Filipino. In terms of implementation the following problems are: (a) effort was seen in producing such materials and the process was rigid; (b) not all of the 13 materials were readily available for communities; (c) there were problems with translation and cultural translation; (d) problems arose with representations in the pictures; (e) there was a lack of thorough research for the different Indigenous Peoples' communities that were the target beneficiaries of the programme; and (f) text is present, context is lacking. In line with these problems on the Indigenous curriculum established by the Department of Education, Jocson (2010) recommends the following:

(a) strengthen inter-agency participation in pursuing cultural preservation of the development of education; (b) solve problem of having diverse educational needs; (c) address the expressed learning and skills, interests and aspirations; (d) revisit the basic literacy materials used and recommended; (e) evaluate certain constraints; (f) study the use of the said materials and document them accordingly; (g) conduct proper research on the different groups for purposes of fair representation in such translated texts; (h) make effective usage of the culture as a tool for cultural preservation alongside development, not development only; (i) seek harmony between cultural preservation and development; (j) introduce sustainable agriculture; (k) re-assess health myths among the communities; and (l) use communities as agents of positive change in the country.

When I asked the Aeta women healers about this curriculum they informed me that they did not know of its existence and were unaware of the mandate of the Department of Education so the question arose as to how it could be effective in the development of lesson plans. Nevertheless, they wished to offer some strategies on how to transform it.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AETA WOMEN'S HEALING PRACTICES

The Aeta have been called different names, depending on their geographical locations. For example: Ata (in Zambales), Batak (in Palawan), Dumagat (in Sierra Madre), Mamanua (in Mindanao), Negrito (in Panay) (Shimizu, 1989, p. 9), Agta (in northeastern Luzon). In most of the Philippine history books, writers such as Gagelonia and Zaide refer to Indigenous peoples in the Philippines as "early Filipinos".

Gagelonia (1974, p. 25) makes the following observation about their cultures:

> Before the first foreigners landed on our shores our ancestors already lived their own way of life. Even before the first traders from foreign lands came to trade with early Filipinos, we already had our customs and traditions… The early Filipinos had their own unit of government…they helped each other whenever it became necessary. In time of war with other groups, they came to each other's aid.

Presently, the Filipino peoples speak 87 dialects or languages. Our ancestors had their own language and system of writing. "All these islanders, related Father Chirino, are much accustomed to reading and writing, and there is hardly a man, much less a woman, who does not read and write" (Zaide, 1957, p. 72). They also "had both oral and written literature" (Zaide, 1957, p. 74) and education, which was a combination of academic and vocational training. They taught their children reading, writing, arithmetic, music, spirituality, and customs. Their system of education was informal, with some parents teaching their children while some learned under tribal tutors.

The Aeta and the other Indigenous people greatly valued morals. They possessed a codified and structured epistemologically integrated notion of right and wrong. For instance, "offenses against life, property, honor, and religion were severely punished, as evidenced by the customary laws and by the Code of *Kalantiaw*. They were honest in their commercial transactions and true to their word…" (Zaide, 1975, p. 76). Furthermore, they had various art forms. Zaide gives an eloquent description of the various attributes of the Indigenous peoples in the Philippines:

> Long before the arrival of the Spaniards, they knew something of medicine, astronomy, and engineering. Although much of their medical knowledge was associated with religion…they were familiar with the curative powers of many herbs and plants. Their herbalist or physicians cured diseases with these medicinal plants. They also knew certain antidotal herbs for all kinds of poisons. The Filipinos were inspired to learn about astronomy because of the flashing constellations and cosmic mysteries of the sky which intrigued their curious minds…The engineering knowledge was a marvel to modern scientists. Ages before the white men came to the Orient, they were already building their irrigation ditches and water canals. The greatest monument to their engineering genius is the world-famed Ifugao rice terraces of Northern Luzon, which were built before the Christian era. (pp. 77–78)

Concepts of organisational relations of gender, family and community obligation to the group were ontologically systematised and codified. Akin to numerous other Indigenous peoples (including many pre-Christian era Europeans), they recognised that both male and female qualities were important in performing religious sacrifice, thereby setting a framework for group cohesion and commonality. Aeta in particular did not believe in overpowering one another, rather they believed in working together for the betterment of their community. In the area of religious work, gender division of labour did not exist in the value exchange and value extraction of labour which is understood by Westerners and also the foundation of the twin pillars, capitalism and colonialism. The Aeta believed that the existence of women and men was of equal significance, which corresponds to Western anthropological typologies about the division between *Gemeinshaft and Gasellshaft* whereby the relations and bonds of the community are centred on group and collective values, rather than one's individual achievement and wealth. Ethically this raises an interesting question if understanding and respect

for others is the sign of emotional maturity, as, for instance, Piaget (1973) argues in developmental psychology, or as Kolhberg (1966) argues in moral values education.

Valuing knowledge is a part of virtually all human ethical systems as is an acknowledgement of one's obligations to others. How does colonial schooling and imposition of rules without regard to history, culture or desire, such as in residential schools or as imposed upon the Aeta, measure up by these standards? Even the so called 'facts' were frequently unproved in these careless epistemic intrusions. For instance, the First Nations in Canada still deal with what is vernacularly called "Indian Affairs". Columbus did not actually step in what we now label North America, thought he was in India, a myth no one from the supposedly "superior" or "fact based" methodology has deemed sufficiently important to correct. Examples of such contradictory and sloppy epistemology abound. In Australia, the First Fleet that "discovered" Botany Bay in 1989 (several weeks after their fellow Europeans, the French and Dutch had been in what is now Australia) deemed the land "vacant" as embodied in the *terra nullius* doctrine. They did not acknowledge the humanity of Aboriginals. How then was it that these supposedly invisible non- beings ended up on both British and Australian postage stamps before they were recognised as "persons" in 1944? Bias is a simple charge to lay but it seems hard to see such practices and claims as having any other root in this instance (Connor, 2005). We compare these as 'moral' constructions with Aeta values.

Women had economic independence during this time, given the responsibility to take charge of the conjugal purse in the family. They had the freedom to buy and spend their own money without the permission of their husbands and the ability to make any decision with regard to the economic and financial situation of the household. They could obtain or possess wealth and property, and had the power to manage and to dispose of it when they wished. Zaide (1957) describes women's status during this time as follows:

> Tribal laws and customs recognized them as the equal of men. They could own and inherit property. They could engage in trade and industry. If they were daughters of datus who had no sons, they could inherit the chieftaincy and rule the barangays. Moreover, the mother in the family enjoyed the exclusive privilege of naming the children. Quite a number of famous women had appeared, like shooting meteors, across the firmament of Philippine history. Among them were Luluban, legendary Bisayan lawgiver…Princess Urduja, said to be the Amazonic ruler warrior of ancient Pangasinan…and more. (p. 54)

Spirituality for the Aeta, as is commonly practiced by many cultural groups globally, entails giving thanks to their Creator for life and for the knowledge and wisdom that they possess. It is also a way of giving thanks to all other creations, dead or alive. Spirituality is, in addition, a means of respecting and abiding by their worldview that has existed for generations and has historically been embraced by their ancestors.

From the Aeta perspective, worldview is about the values and morals to which they have to adhere in order to be in harmony with both the material and spirit worlds. These worldviews encompass respect, love, forgiveness, and looking at things in a cyclical and non-linear manner. Aeta women healers accept true equality among all creations. Their credence is that each one of us is purposely ordained with a celestial purpose.

The Aeta people acknowledge the presence of *laman nin lota* (spirit of the earth). According to Shimizu (1989), "it is no wonder, therefore, that the Aetas have tremendous knowledge about medicinal plants and their prescriptions" (p. 51). Healing the sick for them is a combination of using medicinal plants and asking for help from the benign spirits. This is the endogenous source of the Aeta imperative to respect and care for nature and everything on earth, both living and non-living.

History tells us that the Aeta women performed healing in their community. The Aeta women's healing was diverse, ranging from exorcised illnesses such as dire spirits, and stomach ailments, among many others. Infante (1969) states that, "almost all pre-Hispanic and contemporary non-Christian Filipinos agree in their preference for women religious practitioners" (p. 167). Infante (1969) refers to Chirino and Loarca who state the following about Aeta women:

> Whenever an occasion demanded it, such as a sickness, a phase in the agricultural activities, or war, a male or female religious practitioner was summoned to offer a sacrifice. It was more usually a woman religious practitioner, preferably old, who officiated at these ceremonies. At times she was helped in the officiation by young girls being initiated into the office. (p. 168)

In his description of the Aeta healing protocol, Shimizu (1989) explains that they include the use of medicinal plants and *anito* (good spirit), and provides an example of how an Aeta woman healer performs and communicates to the spirit (pp. 54–55, in Fox, 1952, pp. 317–319):

> A man had become sick after burning a slope while clearing a piece of land for planting corn. The symptoms of the sickness, according to his statement, were a heavy body and dizziness. The medium was called, who in this séance was a woman, and the entire village was called upon to attend. As in most cases, this curing séance took place at night, and in this particular instance it was rather festive occasion…In this particular curing-séance, the spirit which had been antagonized and which had caused the man to become ill, had been captured immediately by the spirit-helper of the medium.

In this curing séance, the cure was accomplished by merely removing, and appeasing, the spirit. In other séances, the medium would use medicinal plants, and/or destroy the endogenous source causing the sickness.

The *Manganito* medium is not accorded special status, but is still required to adhere to cultural norms and the wishes of the members of the community.

However, she is regarded as a 'skilful *manganito*' and is well respected in the community, who acknowledge her presence and trust her knowledge on healing. Their form of healing is not only performed by a *manganito* medium but also assisted by other members of the family. In other words, the healing practice in the Aeta community is about collective effort, not just individual. Here we can discern that healing is a form of power within the Indigenous community of the Philippines, but that healing cannot be used as a way of asserting oneself in the society. Instead, it is seen as a form of objectifying and actualising one's talent for the wellbeing of the society. Having a talent is not a way of creating class hierarchy within the society, but a way of bringing the society together for collective celebration. It is a route through which other people learn different ways of healing, and an aura through which knowledge is passed to each other within that celebration. It is not seen as a way to enrich oneself but rather as a way to enrich the society's wellbeing.

## DISCUSSION ON HOW TO TRANSFORM CURRICULUM THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF AETA WOMEN HEALERS

### *Ayat-Love*

Ayat has stood out through all the narratives of the Aeta women healers, able to continue healing Aeta or non-Aeta people, despite different locations, and despite needing to resist colonisation and to work for the betterment of their community by reducing its impact, because of their belief in the principles of love that they embrace. According to Aeta women healers, no matter how hard we work, without love, our endeavours are ephemeral. They told me that *ayat* is the most powerful tool to make a change in our society.

Love bestows respect and understanding. The Aeta women healers believe that we must be respectful to our students, to others, and to ourselves. Fight for social justice will be futile if we are not earnest and loving. Even after we have achieved our goal the question remains, "How can we sustain an equitable society with love?" It is impossible to live in a healthy way without love since we are a product of the same love. In order to reclaim our indigeneity, agency, spirituality, and land, we need love as a recipe. For this reasons *ayat* is the foundation of transforming curriculum.

Aludig states:

> The Department of Education of the Philippines tries to include us in the curriculum, however, they never consulted us. They think they know everything about us. But in reality, they do not even acknowledge our existence. So, whatever they are trying to develop for us, it will never be useful to us. Our community may not be perfect but for us the foundation of everything is "ayat". If a person does not know how to apply "ayat" it will be very difficult to accomplish something that is useful or successful. We heal because we love one another, but the foundation of our healing is "ayat". The

> creation and implementation of curriculum should be done through "ayat" but not colonising us.

What makes the Aeta unique as a community is that they possess a unique and cosmologically integrated love-ayat. Even though there has been intrusion in their community, perpetrated in the name of "educating" and "civilizing" them, they remain culturally, and spiritually connected, and their familial network has been strong amidst these atrocities. Love is a useful recipe in ameliorating the effects of colonialism. They understand that they cannot win the war against the arrayed elements that would dominate if they do not speak with their voices. This is the philosophy that they apply when their women healers heal the sick, not only their own people but also non-Aeta. With their healing practices they are able to reach out to the rest of the colonised non-Aeta people because of love. Through this, they know that they can withstand the current global capitalism which has its grounding in colonialism. The reconfigurations of these new forms often mirror what Caribbean scholars such as Curtin (1990), Watts (1987), and Mintz (1958, 1953) have labelled 'the new Plantation system'. In this paradigm, formal colonialism is gone but the practices, procedures and many of the same institutions of oppression remain in a reconstituted form. One can argue that these effects and are embodied in many of the so-called "progressive" policies. An instance in the Aeta relations with the dominant Philippine government may be illustrative. The Philippines, in many educational conferences, now touts itself as a world leader in "multi-culturalism". The lynchpin of this argument is that it is one of the only State orders globally which constitutionally guarantees minorities the right to educational instruction in their own language (Philippine Education for All 2015: Implementation and Challenges). This is valid legally, however, in practice, most instructors come from colonial and dominant backgrounds and implement pedagogy, curriculum and frequently even language of the dominant order. The law is progressive, but the practice is too often regressive and repressive. This therefore appears, to the Caribbean scholars arguing for blacks and minorities, as a reconstructed plantation model while seemingly adopting participatory and "entitled" organisational models.

Aeta in this context know that they need the help of others to win the war on misrepresentation in Philippines society regarding prejudice about their 'backwardness'. They are willing to continue this difficult relationship with the non-Aeta community because they know that it is important in vanquishing the work of the coloniser. This exemplifies the power of their love for their community and, as such, their powerful agency at work. In terms of the transformation of the curriculum, the Aeta women healers are asking the Department of Education to employ *ayat* in the creation of this educational document. This means that if that if they want to create a curriculum they should allow the Indigenous people to do it for themselves. In other words *ayat* means acknowledging the knowledge and wisdom of the Indigenous people, allowing them to formulate this curriculum. The Aeta healers inform us that they know what their children needs. Cena states:

> *We ask the Department of Education to include us in the discussion. We, the Indigenous peoples of the Philippines should be at the forefront of the creation of this curriculum. This curriculum is for our children, therefore, we know what they need to learn. We are the one who know our culture, traditions, worldview, practices, spirituality, language, identity and our history. These are all important component of a curriculum. Now if the Department of Education does not know what is "ayat" how can they allow us to be included in the creation of this curriculum? Then, if they will not allow us, what kind of curriculum are they trying to create?*

*Dayaw – Respect*

*Dayaw*, or respect, starts with recognising the members of the society. The Aeta women healers talks about it as the second most important philosophy that they carry in their community. Cena states:

> *Each of us have a role to perform. This role may not be as important as the role of others but we have to respect one another. Because we believe that we are important in this community. For example, an Aeta man can plough the field, I can't, but I know how to plant rice. So, if we start abusing each other, than, we can never achieve anything. Outside our community, some people are very disrespectful to women. As a healer we do important work in our community, but, some people they discriminate us. They don't recognize our work, our knowledge and power. The Department of Education never consulted us because we are women. That curriculum that you are [referring to me] talking about will not going to be successful because they never respect Aeta people, and most especially Aeta women. We possess the knowledge that they need to in order to develop this curriculum. We know our culture. We know how to educate our people. We know the lessons that need to be included. Not teaching us how to be clean, how to heal disease, how to take care of the environment. We know all of these things. But they want to teach us about all these things? This in itself is disrespectful to us.*

According to Cena, *dayaw* starts with respecting women and all other members of the community. The Aeta women and men do not see each other as "different", although each uniquely holds a different social role. The Aeta men (like all men) are incapable of childbirth, but this does not connote their inferiority. Men and women comprehend that they are both instruments of the Supreme Being, who has preordained joint procreation. Child rearing is hence understood as conjoint coalescence to insure that their child grows healthily and learns culture and traditions. Both women and men understand that it is imperative to be instrumental in instilling their community's cultural values in their children (Torres, 2008) as this process actualises both the character and the wellbeing of their children. Parents are meant to give guidelines to their children as agents of cultural transmission on social norms, including traditional

healing practices. This is done by both the men and the women since unity of the sexes is pivotal in the maintenance and sustenance of their beliefs. According to one of the healers, Singli:

> *If they do not respect us how can we work together? Curriculum is important, but, what is more important is the content of the curriculum. We appreciate what the Department of Education is doing for us. Nevertheless, if they do not respect us, then, they do not also respect our culture, worldview, spirituality, practices, belief and so on. Therefore, how can they formulate a curriculum that is for us? Of course, they can, but it will not be suitable for the needs of our children who will be receiving the education. If they do not respect us, that curriculum will only bring more problem to our people and community. So, the second thing that they should do is to treat us all equal.*

This kind of practice existed prior to the advent of settler immigration (Martin & Sunseri, 2011; Agoncillo, 1960; Smith, 1997; Oyewumi, 1997). Both women and men needed to facilitate each other for the betterment of their people. The Aeta women healers recognise that there have been changes in their community and assert that this started when colonisers established their rule in the Aeta community. Smith (1999) explains how colonisation had a tremendous impact on gender relations:

> Colonization is recognized as having had a destructive effect on Indigenous gender relations which reached out across all spheres of Indigenous society. Family organization, child rearing, political and spiritual life, work and social activities were all disordered by a colonial system which positioned its own women as the property of men with roles which were primarily domestic… Indigenous women hold an analysis of colonialism as a central tenet of an Indigenous feminism…colonialism has influenced Indigenous men and had a detrimental effect on Indigenous gender relations. (pp. 151–152)

The Aeta healers must repeatedly remind their people, especially the Aeta men, that their culture affirms the equality of women and men. Subsequently, women emerge as agents of decolonisation detaching their men from patriarchal beliefs that have been codified as part of the "hidden curriculum" through modelled experience of colonial subordination. They are diligent in refreshing the Aeta men's consciousness, going beyond the underlying colonial dynamics of occupation of mental space to remind their kin that such luminal division is a divisive practice meant to control all the Aeta through gender polarisation. Hence, countering this would be a fundamental part of the resistance work against oppression and transforming curriculum.

The Aeta feminist healers posit that abandoning this culture is a form of enslavement. The Aeta women are aware that if they start to agree on the notion of gender differences it would be too easy for them to assimilate into the culture of non-Aeta people, based on colonialist ideology. Our interviewees as both healers and *de facto* feminist activists are lucid on the impact of colonisation on their community. They also form the vanguard community defence response through

continuous cultural education. This kind of activism is not only carried out by Aeta women healers in their community but also by other Indigenous communities around the world, such as the First Nations Peoples in Canada, the Maori Peoples in New Zealand, Aboriginals in Australia, and the Maasai Peoples in Kenya, among others.

This kind of work has been theorised by Aboriginal/Indigenous Women in the West. While this study does not claim that Aeta women healers have the same issues and challenges, it underlines that there are common issues facing these communities. For example, colonisation, imperialism, racism, land expropriation/swindling, assimilation, sexism, and classism have been major impediments to their survival. These are some of the issues that the Aeta women healers face, which are different from those faced by the non-Aeta. They know how to strategically fight and apply precise tactical instruments in specific combat situations as feminist activists. They want to be seen as distinct from others and, as such, to be treated based on their unique lived experiences (Torres, 1996).

Evidently, Aeta women healers have been fighting strenuously against repressive legislation and historical forces. Policymaking by the colonial regimes continues to be applied by current governments, consequently wreaking havoc and despair. Aludig, an Aeta participant in the Talking Circle, elucidates:

> *One of our biggest problems is that when our community members complain about a non-Aeta people who come and claim that our ancestral land belongs to them, the municipal government usually tells us that, according to Act number…you Aeta People do not have that land. What I would like to say is that the person who works in the municipal hall uses this Act or legislation to oppress us. Again, most of the people in the municipal hall are the ones who make the law, interpret the law and implement the law. So, they use it for their own benefit and for violation of Aeta community. But you know, Rose… we believe that there is an end to this oppression. We, Aeta women healers, fight back by means of healing our people. We also sometimes explain to the person at the municipal office our notion of ancestral land, our way of life, and our culture and traditions, because, we want this person to be educated. Sometimes, we go to the municipal hall to rally against this legislation that exists to violate our very existence, however, nobody listens to us. So, we have tried to use different means to counteract this oppressive treatment that we experience from non-Aeta people.*

The Aeta women healers are also excluded by default and disinformation from knowledge production, facing misrepresentation and exclusion in school textbooks and other academic resources. What mention is made of them is objectified and seemingly clinical. One can read about them as the people who travelled by land bridges who were the first people in the Philippines, yet when one wants to animate them from this dead history file, one cannot find information about them as people who contributed to the rich cultural background of the Philippines. This exclusion and reification of them as object versus subject deprives their community of self-

reference or the opportunity to see their potential come alive in official texts: Aeta children who go to school hence start questioning the authenticity of their culture because they cannot find their stories and legends in assigned literature in government schools.

Language can also be used to understand the strength of a particular culture, and its curricular exclusion tends to consign the Indigenous language, such as that of Aeta to a marginal position. The languages that are permitted in those schools are not the Indigenous ones. The Aeta women healers have been reclaiming their position in knowledge production by educating the Aeta youth in their community about their culture. Shimizu (1989) states:

> This process of selective assimilation contributed to the stability and continuity of the Aytas' culture. Their antagonistic feeling towards the lowlanders made the Aytas preserve their own culture. While it is true that they have experienced various changes in their language, culture and society, still the Aytas are distinctly different from the culture that influenced them…Within their own micro cosmos, they have maintained their own autonomous society, especially because their village was seldom visited by the lowlanders who feared the Aytas as savages. (pp. 14–15)

It is important for the Aeta people to maintain their own culture and to continue with the traditions that have been passed down to them by their ancestors.

### *Pinagkakadua – Collaboration*

Aeta women healers is focus on "building bridges to their movements working for social justice" (Green, 2007, p. 23). The Aeta women healers believe in unity, not just among themselves, but also unity that extends to non-Aeta people. They believe that they need to reach out to their allies and through that they can win the war against repression, brought about by colonisation. That is why they do not choose who to heal or who to educate. They know that unity brings power with regard to fighting against the process of colonisation. This power has been used to dismantle their community and, so, to retaliate, they also need the power of collaboration.

Power is the ability to influence individuals to take a certain direction, with or without opposition or resistance. They know that they are going to face resistance in their quest for change, but the power brought about by their agency keeps them resilient and focused on the prize. They do not see others as enemies but rather as allies that they need in order to attain their wishes. That is why, when I went to their community and asked if I could listen to them and learn about their healing practices, they saw this as an opportunity to bridge the gap that had been created by colonisation. The Aeta women healers welcomed me because they believed that this was now the beginning of collaboration and unity, despite our differences. The issues of colonisation, racism, sexism and global capitalism, among others, have had a robust foundation and, therefore, need a strong force to dismantle them. The Aeta

women healers opt for collaboration and unity as one of the most effective weapons of suppressing colonisation. Amay, one of the Aeta women healers who participated in the Talking Circle, states:

> *When we, Aeta women healers, gather at night to sing a song and tell a story we also talk about issues in the society. There are so many, like the issue of the colour of our skin, the notion that women like us are submissive to our husband, mining, our government who do not really protect us, companies that come and take our plants and ask us the use of them and afterwards use them to make money and many more issues. These issues have been there, so the question is, what do we do now? We realise that we need friends to help us fight against these problems. So, you… Rose, we take you as one of our daughters who has gone to educate herself and decided to do something for the Aeta community. You may not be an Aeta, but we believe that what you are going to write about us will educate those people who will read your study.*

The Aeta women healers were aware of my privilege as a student in the West but they were not threatened by it because they understand that we need to know how colonisation, and now global capitalism, works so we can fight back. These women understand that knowledge is power, and they know that combining their ways of knowing with the knowledge from the Eurocentric academy is the beginning of the victory against culturally-attrition forces.

Rima states:

> *If the Department of Education will not collaborate with us to formulate and implement the Indigenous curriculum, it will not going to be useful to us, for our children and for our future generation. That is why we are offering our help, but, first and foremost they have to apply these three principles that we are suggesting, "ayat", "dayaw", and "pinagkakadua". This is the only time that we can move forward. We know what we need, we possess the knowledge, and we know how to make a change in our community.*

## CONCLUSION

The Aeta women healers face systemic prejudice and ridicule. This is not an inquiry into obtaining knowledge but rather is implicitly categorical and classic racism that seeks to dehumanise the other, which traffics on the deep psychological human fear that those unlike us may in fact be contagious. It is a childish and ill thought out pedagogy. It is analogous to the kinds of brutalisation Western school children do to one another when they are taught by the jaundiced elements of the hidden and informal curriculum of classrooms (the true mentor of "othering") to fear their fellow pupils. It is a childish discourse in many ways but as the eminent sociologist Thomas (1903) observed, "things perceived as real are real in their consequence".

This certainly applies to prejudice and bias. From the academic perspective, we should conclude that such others (be them the child with supposed "cooties" or the Aeta labeled as "dirty") are artefacts of our systemic oppression of others which claims to be based on their diseases but in reality finds its base in nominal endemic factors, such as skin colour, gender and class. The toxic environment of racism becomes oppressive and nominal. We forget that in their own narratives the women do not see this as a form of oppression but as an opportunity to exercise their power and a chance to teach how to transform Eurocentric curriculum. It is akin in its own context to what in the West is sometimes called liberation theology: a proactive stance to blend belief and action for liberation.

Through their healing, the women are able to diminish the learned prejudices of non-Aeta people through allowing them to join them in on their healing practices. As women healers, they are contacted by the non-Aeta people in times of sickness. This entry point, what in education we address as a 'teachable moment', enables the Aeta women healers to gain respect and credibility for themselves and their communities by being open to providing their services, even to those that oppress them. Acts of oppression, thus, serve to create an arena for show-casing the Aeta women healers' way of life as well as exposing their identity, respect and recognition as well as agency. It is an opportunity to showcase the principles of *ayat*, *dayaw*, and *pinagkakadua*. What might academic discourse need to learn from this narrative on how to transform Eurocentric curriculum? In this study, the Aeta women healers are informing us that we, as scholars should see knowledge, not from, but from one but multiple dimensions of interactions and consequences so it maybe usefully recast if we alter our perspectives or paradigms.

Operationally, this means that we should interrogate our own assumptions and acts of oppression and get past these to value and learn from information we previously overlooked, in turn employing this additional knowledge as a source of empowerment (or disempowerment). We can decide to use knowledge to uplift or to degrade. The Aeta women healers have decided to embrace marginality, process and transform it for their good-their own, their community and for others. They hold their own knowledge as self-evident and hope others will see their principles can be utilised in transforming Eurocentric curriculum.

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**Mahlapahlapana Themane** is the head of department in the Department of Education Studies at the University of Limpopo. His thinking on inclusive education has evolved from three research projects, the UNICEF project Child Friendly Schools, where he and his colleagues, the Limpopo Department of Education and LINK studied conditions of schools in the Limpopo Province. The second project is the National Research Foundation collaboration research between the University of Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Limpopo on Inclusive Education in Teacher Education. The third project involves his involvement with the University of Pretoria on schools as enabling environments.

**Elizabeth Walton** came to teacher education after 20 years in high school teaching and school management, where she was introduced to inclusive education, undertook postgraduate study in the field, and actively pursued inclusivity in the school. She became convinced that inclusive education cannot represent additional inclusive strategies layered onto existing practice. Instead, it must challenge the exclusion in educational structures and practices. Her current teaching and research builds on this, focusing on teacher education for inclusion. This extends to work with full-service schools to develop professional learning communities for inclusive education.