



Inclusive Teaching and Learning for South Africa

Unit 1 Inclusive Education



Basic Education
Higher Education and Training



THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Teaching for All project is a partnership between the British Council, the University of South Africa, the Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, and MIET AFRICA, and is co-funded by the European Union. The Teaching for All project aims to provide teachers in South Africa with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to teach inclusively in diverse classrooms in diverse communities.

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ISBN: 978-0-620-84393-5

Published by British Council, June 2019

Revised August 2019

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Overview of study unit

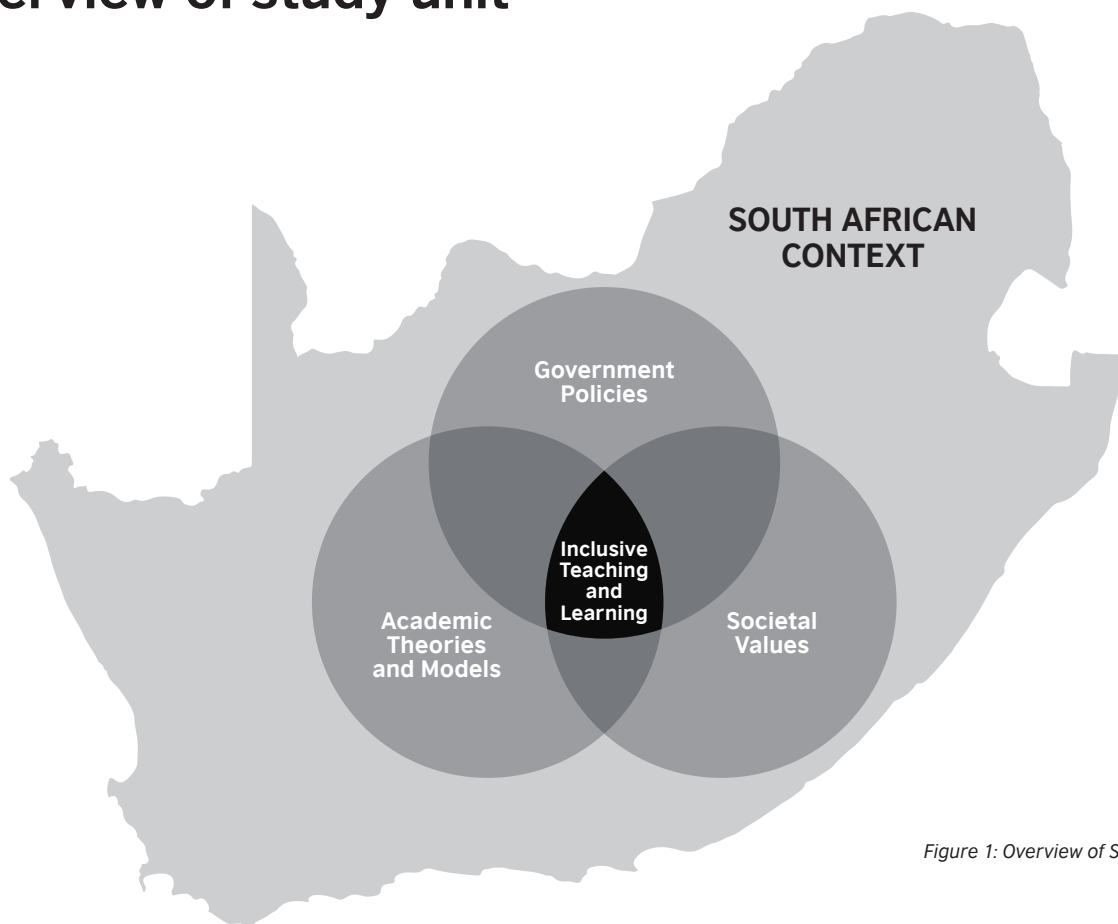


Figure 1: Overview of Study Unit 1

“The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation. Our previous system emphasised the physical and other differences of South Africans with devastating effects. We are steadily but surely introducing education that enables our children to exploit their similarities and common goals, while appreciating the strength in their diversity.” Nelson Mandela

Welcome to the start of your journey into inclusive education. It’s a journey that celebrates and works with the skills, knowledge, experiences and differences brought by each child—and teacher—into the classroom. This journey is about more than teaching children different subjects—important though that is. It’s about making sure that we offer education to all learners, and that this education is relevant, accessible, fair, and of the highest possible quality, enabling them, as our future adults, to contribute positively to an equitable South Africa that has high expectations and respect for all its people.

Inclusive education can contribute to nation building and reconciliation as described by Mandela in the above quote. As you will have realised by this point of your studies and experience, teaching children is not like following a recipe from a cookery book, focusing on set ways of delivering the curriculum. Teaching with broader, inclusive aims focuses on teaching human beings, not only the curriculum. It’s more like starting with a large cooking pot, into which goes: prior experience—yours and your learners’; knowledge and beliefs about both your learners and yourself; theoretical knowledge; teaching and learning strategies; and some essential personal qualities including commitment, **agency**¹, perseverance, patience, curiosity, sense of humour, fairness, understanding, plus a love of learning and for the children you are teaching. When you teach



Definition

1 Agency: the ability to put energy and commitment into working in ways, and developing skills, that are seen as important.

inclusively, you draw continuously on all of these ingredients, varying them as needed to suit your learners and your context. You also add to them as you progress through your life and career; this module is just the start of your learning.

This module, as the starting point for your learning about inclusive education, is designed to help you lay the foundations for becoming the teacher you want to be by finding out about and beginning to add to the ingredients of your cooking pot in readiness for the classroom. Our aim is that your journey through the module will help you become the sort of teacher who is: knowledgeable and positive about who your learners are and what they can do, a motivator, a good listener, and an active advocate for equity and social justice in your classroom and school. To reach this aim, the module will help you construct knowledge, develop skills and understanding, and give you ongoing opportunities to reflect on new learning as well as your own valuable prior experience as a learner in the South African education system.

We ask you to approach the module with an open mind and engage with it fully. As with anything worthwhile, there will be challenges. When these appear, remember times when you had to be resilient—you will have had many moments of having to dig deep on the road to where you are now. Break down what seem like big challenges into smaller, manageable chunks. Start from what you know, and trust that your unique prior knowledge and experience will help you—bit by bit—to build new knowledge, skills and understanding. Ask someone—a colleague, a friend, a family member—if you need help or need to talk something through to get your thoughts in order.

Let's turn now to the outline of this unit in more detail. In it we focus on helping you construct the knowledge you need to begin your inclusive education journey. This knowledge is crucial as it will enable you to understand and explain the reasons for making choices that you know are right for your learners. The ability to talk with colleagues (who may not see teaching in the same way as you) knowledgeably about how you teach is important for you as someone new to teaching. These conversations may also be important for teachers who have not had the same training experience as you. Time spent now building your understanding of concepts, policies, theories and models underpinning inclusive education in South Africa will be of great value to you throughout your career.

In the unit, we will give you an overview of the context and concepts of inclusive education from a South African perspective. We will look at how government, society and academics support the move towards inclusive education, and what this means for you as a teacher. The unit is in five parts:

In Part 1, we will explore exclusion from education in South Africa, and the roots of this exclusion in the apartheid system.

In Part 2, we will introduce government's move towards inclusive education. We will look at:

- International conventions **ratified**² by South Africa
- The development of South African and African policies (The Department of Basic Education [DBE] has recommended some of these policies for us to focus on in greater depth)

Part 3 looks at societal values underpinning inclusive education in South Africa. In particular we focus on the following, and how they impact on teaching:

- Ubuntu values
- Constitutional values
- Your own personal values

In Part 4, we will introduce you to academic theories and models that can inform the South African model of inclusive education. Some of these theories and models will be discussed again in more depth in later units.

In Part 5, we will begin to outline our approach to inclusive education, as well as key concepts and characteristics of inclusive teaching. This will lead into the rest of the module, where we will continue to unpack the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to teach inclusively in the South African context.

We hope you enjoy this introductory unit on inclusive education. Allow it to inspire your thoughts about the importance of teaching all learners to enable them to achieve to their highest potential.



Definition

2 Ratify: sign or give formal consent to.

Introduction and aim

The overall aims of this unit are for you to:

- Develop an understanding of issues related to inclusion and exclusion and the development of inclusive education in South Africa. We will help you do this by introducing you to a wide range of material that places the current situation in South Africa in context, including relevant: concepts, policies, laws and agreements; theories and models; and values.
- Use this material to begin to develop an idea of what it means to be an inclusive teacher.

Specific outcomes

By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Describe historical and current exclusion in education in South Africa, the region and globally
- Discuss the development of international, regional and South African policies of inclusion and how they inform inclusivity in education
- Critically examine the following relevant policy and guideline documents against the background of the South African Bill of Rights: Revised Schools Act; Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education; Curriculum Policy and Assessment Statement; Policy on Screening, Identification Assessment and Support
- Identify human rights principles and values of inclusion and link these to the philosophy of ubuntu
- Reflect on your own principles and values and how they can inform your practice as an inclusive teacher
- Critically analyse the relevance of at least three theories applicable to inclusive education in a range of other relevant school contexts (e.g. rural, urban, peri-urban, informal, mainstream schools, full-service schools, special schools, academic/technical/schools of skill)
- Evaluate the relevance of at least three models of inclusive education for different contexts
- Explain how differences in the classroom can be prioritised as the result of power relations and, as a result, positions of privilege and oppression can be reproduced
- Critically analyse key inclusive teacher attributes that promote teacher and learner agency and social justice in the development of inclusive school communities

Abbreviations

CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CDL	Critical Diversity Literacy
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSTL	Care and Support for Teaching and Learning
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SACE	South Africa Council for Educators
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SEN	Special Education Needs
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (Policy)
UN	United Nations

1

The context of exclusion in education

ACTIVITY 1: What do you know about exclusion in education?



Journal

Throughout this module you will be asked to keep a journal to write down your thoughts and reflections on various topics. The ability to reflect on and learn from your experience and practice—called “**reflective practice**”³—will be key to your ability to teach inclusively.

You can discuss questions for reflection with a colleague or a friend, and then record your main takeaway points. Or, if you prefer, you can do the journal activities as a reflection on your own.

In your journal, you can write in any language you like. You can also use audio or video recordings. If you are writing, you can use any style you like: for example, as well as sentences and paragraphs you could use lists, bullet points, mind maps, collages, drawings, symbols, or anything else that helps you make meaning from your learning. When we say “make notes about” or “note down your thoughts”, feel free to work in whatever way helps you most.

Here is your first journal activity:

Reflect on these statements and questions, and make notes about your thoughts.

- 1. Exclusion from education can mean a child is not attending school at all.** Do you know any children who are not in school? What do you think has led to the child or children being excluded from the school community?
- 2. Exclusion from education can still happen when the learner is present in the classroom.** This exclusion is evident when the learner is not participating, not engaged, not accepted or not being given opportunities to succeed. Do you know someone who has been excluded in the classroom? What do you think has led to the child being excluded from learning in the classroom?
- 3. Exclusion from education can even happen unintentionally.** Even the most well-meaning and professional teacher can exclude children without being aware of it. Have you ever noticed such types of exclusion? If so, give some examples. Why do you think these incidents of exclusion happened?



Definition

- 3 Reflective practice:** The ability to reflect on your actions in the classroom—using knowledge, experience, theoretical understanding and values—in order to gain insights and build learning.

1.1 Introduction

ACTIVITY 2: Overcoming barriers



Reading

Read the article about Mcebisi below, then consider the following questions:

1. From your experience of growing up in South Africa, from what you know of others' experiences, and from information in the case study, what sort of obstacles might Mcebisi have faced in his journey to reach university?
2. What, and who, helped Mcebisi to overcome these obstacles?
3. What sort of obstacles have you had to overcome to get to where you are now? What, and who, helped you overcome these?

ARTICLE

MIET AFRICA NEWSLETTER / MARCH 2019

“I MASTERED MATRIC!”



Lihlithemba Technical High School is in semi-rural Ndwedwe, and is one of the best-performing schools in the province. In 2013 and 2017 learners at the school were among the top 10 matriculants in KZN, and in 2018 the school did it again! Mcebisi Ntenga achieved an outstanding seven distinctions in the 2018 National Senior Certificate examinations, including 88% for Maths. His top mark was for Accounting, a subject he admits he did not like at first. He narrowly missed full marks in the subject by 2%.

“I mastered Matric!” said Mcebisi proudly.

“I am extremely proud of Mcebisi,” said principal Mr Zwane. “When he was in Grade 10 in my Physical

Sciences class I knew he was top 10 material. I have been working with him and motivating him since then.”

Mcebisi is the last-born of five children. His siblings have all excelled in one way or another in subjects like Maths, Accounting and Science. But it's not all in the genes, he said. “Yes, genes come into it, but I wouldn't say that's what it's all about. You have to enhance your smartness.”

And that's what Mcebisi set out to do. While most Grade 11s were enjoying the end-of-year holidays, he spent his days studying the matric syllabus and answering previous examination papers so that he could be one step ahead when he started Grade 12 in 2018. He spent all his spare pocket money on downloading past exam papers; by the time he wrote his final matric exams last year, he had over one gigabyte of past papers on his phone!

He also attended extra Maths lessons. “Simo Mthethwa [MIET AFRICA's Maths facilitator] helped me a lot. He assisted us with resources from the Internet such as Maths education websites.”

The hours Mcebisi spent studying rather than hanging out with his friends paid off. With his excellent results he would have been accepted to study medicine as his dream is to be a surgeon, but circumstances prevented him from applying to the university in time. So he will study his second option, Pharmacy, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where he has been awarded a scholarship. “I am looking forward to moving to Durban and studying at university. I will apply the same determination I did at school and I know I will do well.” With his tenacity and drive, we are sure Mcebisi will achieve his goals.

South Africa has made some—but limited—gains in addressing barriers, inequities and under-development in education since its attainment of democracy in 1994 and the adoption of inclusive education. There has been an improvement in the number of learners enrolling in schools—for example, *Statistics South Africa* (2016) suggests an overall annual increase in learner enrolment in all nine provinces. The enrolment rates in primary schools increased from 88.1% in 2002 to 94.2% in 2015, while in secondary school enrolment rates increased from 89% in 2002 to 94.5 in 2015.

Yet, despite these improvements in access to education, many thousands of children and young people in South Africa still remain marginalised and vulnerable to exclusion from education. They are unable to access their right to quality education due to attitudes and practices that sustain their marginalisation and exclusion. Most of these attitudes and practices are inherited from “over three centuries of colonial rule and over 60 years of apartheid” (Phasha, 2010). For example, the findings of the recent study conducted for the Teaching for All project (Majoko, Phasha et al., 2018) identified exclusion from and within the school system affecting—in particular—learners with disabilities and those from disadvantaged communities.

The result of this marginalisation and exclusion is an extremely high school dropout rate, to the extent that this rate has been described as “a national crisis” (Weybright et al., 2017). It is estimated that “approximately 60% of first graders will ultimately drop out rather than complete 12th Grade” (Ibid). This figure indicates that, although initial access to education rates seem to be rising, barriers to accessing education are preventing many young people from matriculating in Grade 12. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the dropout rate, over half of young people are unemployed, and almost a third of all youth are out of employment, training and education opportunities (Baumann, 2018). In addition, South Africa was the lowest performing country out of 50 in the 2016 *Progress in International Reading Study* (PIRLS), suggesting that there is also a problem with engagement in learning in South African schools.

So why has the situation not changed a great deal in the last 25 years? Some of the aspects of inclusion that might be influencing it include:

- The language of instruction
- Overcrowded classrooms and lack of resources
- Segregated special schools
- Bullying and abuse at school or on the way to and from school
- Outmoded, inaccessible and rigid curriculum (subject matter, pedagogy, assessment and available resources)
- Teachers who have low expectations of learners
- Teachers who lack the knowledge and skills to support a diverse range of learners
- Lack of opportunities in schools for genuine learner voice to be heard and acted on

ACTIVITY 3: Aspects of exclusion



Writing

Consider the list of aspects of exclusion above.

Give examples of situations you know about that show the aspects of exclusion in action, drawing on your own experience and knowledge.

Add other aspects you think are important.

To summarise: The current evidence suggests many schools and other educational institutions are still reproducing environments that maintain exclusions of the past. Many children and young people therefore still lack access to quality, equitable education. It is against this background that we clarify the term “exclusion from education” as we begin our journey to understand it further.

1.2 Definitions of exclusion

Various definitions of the term “exclusion in education” exist. As far back as 1996, Booth defined exclusions in education as “the process of **decreasing the participation** of learners in the cultures and curricula of the regular school”. Kearney (2011) defines the term as “**denial of access** to education, its **resources** and **rewards**”.

These two definitions clarify that exclusion is not only about physical presence—it also includes **learners’ experiences** at school. Therefore, the inability of the education system to provide learners with **quality education** in an equitable way also constitutes exclusion from education.



Figure 2: Exclusion from quality education

In June 1994 the World Conference on Special Needs Education, organised by the Government of Spain in co-operation with UNESCO, was held in Salamanca, Spain. More than 300 participants representing 92 governments (including South Africa) and 25 international organisations attended and ratified the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. The signatories undertook to “work towards ‘schools for all’—which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs” (UNESCO, 1994). Here is an extract from the Framework.

“The guiding principle that informs this Framework is that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups. Schools have to find ways of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities.” Salamanca Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, UNESCO, 1994

This extract from the introduction to the Framework indicates that every child is at risk of experiencing exclusion in education. Depending on the context, those who are most vulnerable to exclusion from quality education might include, among others, children or young people:

- With chronic illness
- From poverty-stricken households
- Who are teenage mothers
- Who are orphans
- Who are refugees, including unaccompanied minors
- Who have dropped out of school before graduation
- Who have had their education interrupted by gang violence or substance abuse
- Who are bullied
- From minority religious groups
- With physical impairments
- With neurocognitive differences
- With poor mental health

Can you add to this list?

In the next section we are going to look at how our education system in South Africa is shaped by the exclusionary practices of the past, and the challenges this poses for implementing an inclusive education system for all.

1.3 Inherited exclusions from the past

This section contains a brief discussion about the history of education in South Africa. Its aim is to help you understand the origin of the exclusionary practices that exist in the current education system and begin to deepen your understanding of inclusion within the South African context. In particular, you will understand who needs to be included, by whom and how, and you will begin to appreciate your responsibility to teach inclusively.

1.3.1 Arrival of the colonists

South Africa had a long history before the arrival in 1652 of European colonists and their education practices. Before 1652, children participated in a community-oriented oral education “intimately integrated with the social, cultural, artistic, religious and recreational life of the indigenous peoples” (Seroto, n.d.). In stark contrast, the establishment of the first formal European school in 1658 was specifically meant to train slaves to become servants of the “master” (coloniser). The suppression of the indigenous population went beyond their removal from their own countries of origin to include learning the language and religion of their master (Dutch). These slaves were driven physically and psychologically into the world of the masters (Molteno, cited in Kallaway, 1990).

Division in terms of class between the colonists and slaves became more evident as a separate schooling for slaves was established, separate from schooling provided for colonists and non-slaves. Discrimination along gender lines was also introduced as females and males were separated in schools for slaves. Females were taught domestic tasks and males were taught manual skills. Since the education was designed to make them fit into Western civilisation, they were forced to abandon their culture.

1.3.2 Mission schools

When the missionaries took over the education of black people in the 19th century, funding was limited and the standard of teaching was low. Schools continued to weaken traditional religious beliefs and the African way of life. Christie (1991) described how missionaries helped break people down, and how they imposed Western culture and undermined the African way of life. Mission schools also contributed to creating class differences through their curricula. Some schools offered well-resourced academic education based on European-type curricula, emphasised Christian values, and included technical training. Others had limited funds, poor facilities and poorly-trained teachers, which contributed to low educational outcomes. Some mission schools focused only on manual skills.

Racism and subordination were evident even in some schools that admitted both white and black learners, for example, learners from different races played on separate sports fields, ate at separate tables and slept in separate dormitories. Education continued to offer different experiences of the curriculum as it prepared females for domestic life and males for jobs in religion and teaching. For some children, however, opportunities for schooling were limited or non-existent.

1.3.3 Bantu Education Act

In 1953, the Nationalist government passed the Bantu Education Act. This act formalised, legalised and deepened the structures around exclusion and segregation. It created racially separate education departments for each of the South African population groups, at the time termed Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Blacks. The education for blacks was controlled by the Department of Bantu Education, and was further separated along the lines of ethnicity. As a consequence, the number of education departments rose to 18. Overall, blacks were to be trained to be what Hendrik Verwoerd termed “hewers of woods and drawers of water” (SA History online, 2019) and to serve white supremacy. Segregation, discrimination and exclusion were evident in the following:

- Gross neglect of education for blacks, which denied black people access to the same educational opportunities and resources enjoyed by white South Africans
- Denial of black people’s history, culture and identity, by promoting myths and racial stereotypes in its curricula and textbooks
- Limited educational funding for black learners’ education; education for blacks was funded by tax collected from them, whereas education for white learners was funded from the government’s General Revenue account

- Shortages of resources in schools for blacks, especially in rural areas; shortages of classrooms and teachers; inadequate facilities such as laboratories, textbooks and libraries
- Overcrowded classrooms, high teacher–student ratios, and poor teacher training, which negatively affected the quality of teaching and learning
- Creation of private schools to cater for learners from affluent and/or religious backgrounds
- Different educational experiences organised along gender lines: girls, for example, were trained in domestic science, history and typing, while boys did woodwork, physics and chemistry

Children with special needs or disabilities were also labelled, segregated, stereotyped and given an inferior education. Those within the Bantu Education System were even worse off than their white counterparts who, while they were marginalised, still had more resources made available to them (Naicker, 2000). White children received financial resources through a separate education system for learners with disabilities, often being educated in “special schools” (Phasha, 2010). On the other hand, black children with disabilities were not allocated any resources or support. As a result, most black communities resorted to sending their learners with disabilities to mainstream schools where they received no support (Gwala-Ogisi, 1990; Phasha, 2010).

The provision of education for learners with special needs consisted of two systems: special education and remedial education. Learners were rigidly categorised as having, for example: slight specific learning disabilities; moderate specific disabilities; and severe learning disabilities (Gwala-Ogisi, 1990). This labelling deepened segregation and discrimination.

1.3.4 Post-1994

Even post-1994 many children and young people are excluded from education because they:

- Cannot receive education in their home language, and/or
- Are not receiving the specific support they need to overcome the challenges preventing them from developing their potential

Learners continue to be marginalised because of: economic inequality; an inability to access quality education; the daily challenges of living in communities that are deeply affected by substance abuse and violence; and school cultures that are still burdened by sexism, racism, homophobia and xenophobia. Many learners are further held back by low expectations due to labelling, and the cultural assumptions and stereotypes attached to these labels.

Exclusion from quality education violates children’s constitutional rights and reinforces existing structural injustices. This in turn leads to marginalised groups being excluded from full participation in social, economic and political life as adults. They remain trapped in inter-generational cycles of poverty and exclusion, thereby increasing inequality. This situation exacerbates South Africa’s two key development challenges: redressing the high levels of poverty, and inequality (DBE, 2015: 3).

Inclusive education needs to be understood against this background of social oppression and educational exclusion. For this reason, education policies and Acts consistently acknowledge the role of teachers in building an inclusive education system. They call for teachers to advocate for social justice, human rights and inclusivity.

This call means that you, as a teacher, are expected to focus on learner well-being, classroom pedagogies and educational practices that strongly and clearly challenge exclusion and all forms of oppression and discrimination. In order to do this successfully, you will need to become a **change agent**⁴. The idea of teachers as “change agents”, who can help reduce educational inequalities, is linked to research showing that teachers are the most significant in-school factor influencing student achievement (Hattie, 2009; OECD, 2005).

We will talk more about teachers as change agents later in this unit, and will expand on the areas mentioned above throughout this unit and the rest of the module.



Definition

4 Change agent: Someone who puts their time and energy into making change happen in an organisation.

ACTIVITY 4: Exploring power dynamics, marginalisation and exclusion



Reading

Refresh your memory about the Soweto Student Uprising of 1976. The website link shown below is a good place to start, although there are many others. Through the link below you will find an in-depth article about what happened and the reasons behind the protests, as well as some interesting interviews in the left-hand side bar. <http://bit.ly/2wN9JjS>

While doing your research, consider the following questions and note your answers. Here we want you to focus on the issues of exclusion, marginalisation and inequality of power that you have studied so far in this unit.

1. What were the power dynamics underlying the protest? Who was being marginalised? Who had the power?
2. How was language used to racialise the education system under the Bantu Education Act?
3. Who were the change agents before, during and after the uprising? What qualities did they show as change agents?
4. To what extent do you think the power dynamics of the apartheid era persist: in South African culture? In schools? Draw on your own life experiences.
5. How do current power dynamics continue to shape the lives and outlook of many South Africans? How do they shape your own life and outlook?

ACTIVITY 5: Education for children with disabilities in South Africa



Audio Visual

Watch the Human Rights Watch film South Africa: *Children with disabilities denied education*. <http://y2u.be/17LdwV1gaVg>

Consider the following questions:

1. What is the definition, and what are the aims of, inclusive education for children with disabilities in South Africa?
2. What do you think are the values informing inclusive education for children with disabilities in South Africa?
3. Why, according to the video, are children with disabilities in South Africa not accessing quality education?

2 Inclusive education policies, laws and agreements: South Africa and beyond

ACTIVITY 6: Why do we have inclusive education policies?



Reading

Read the following case study, which is an extract from an essay by a Grade 10 learner in South Africa. Then consider:

How do you think an inclusive education policy might enable Aviwe to get support from:

1. The district education authority
2. The principal
3. Teachers
4. Family

CASE STUDY: Aviwe

I am a sucker for horror and supernatural movies, and a fan of metal rock and hip-hop music.

Being a South African teenager comes with its ups and downs.

Sometimes it becomes a living nightmare because there is not a single day that a person like me does not face discrimination, unless we spend our time indoors. This is because I was born with a medical condition called albinism.

Growing up and now as a teenager I've been called names such as "mlungu".

People also point at me and will say things like I bath with milk.

I once had an emotional breakdown, but through the support of my parents, I overcame it.

Policies⁵ for inclusive education play a vital role because they can:

- Motivate and empower—and sometimes give incentives to—districts, schools and teachers to work inclusively
- Empower families to ensure children get what they need to learn effectively

South Africa has been committed to building an inclusive education and training system since 1994. It has developed education laws and policies based on the Constitution that aim to develop a just, equitable, safe and productive society for the benefit of everyone. And since the end of World war II, the world as a whole—through the United Nations and other international organisations—has also been working to develop policies and guidelines around inclusive education. In this section we will look at the development of inclusive education policies, laws and agreements, explore the extent to which they are effective, and think about some of the barriers to their effectiveness.

We will start by considering the international human rights and inclusive education movement, then turn our focus to South African developments against this backdrop.



Definition

5 Policy: A course of action, proposed by the government for a particular situation, that has been officially agreed to.

2.1 International human rights and inclusive education

Education is seen as a fundamental human right. As a result, there is a range of United Nations (UN) **conventions**⁶ and declarations dating back over 70 years that inform the field of inclusive education. These conventions and declarations started life as a written document: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, agreed by the newly-formed UN after World War II. Over the last fifty years, though, the idea of human rights has developed from words on a page to become a global movement, driven by people from all walks of life and communities across the world. This movement has led to human rights becoming a fundamental, globally acknowledged part of every individual's life, and to their being integrated into international law.

Human rights policies in education aim to:

- Promote, respect and protect the universal right of all children to inclusive, quality education
- Recognise that every learner and teacher is free to explore, discover, develop and express their potential, with dignity, with equal opportunity and without discrimination

A rights-based approach to education is closely linked to human rights principles. These principles are defined in many international declarations, which many countries—including South Africa—have ratified (signed). Below is a timeline of the development of some UN human rights documents and a summary of how they inform inclusive education:

Table 1: International conventions on inclusive education

Year	Document title	How it impacts on inclusive education
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26)	Education is a right. Primary school should be free. We should learn about the UN and how to get on with others. Our parents can choose what we learn. Children should not be discriminated against. The best interests of the child and the child's view should be considered.
1965	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	Condemns apartheid and racial segregation and obliges countries to "prevent, prohibit and eradicate" these practices in all of their territories. Combats racial prejudice and encourages understanding and tolerance between different racial, ethnic and national groups.
1982	World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons	Strategy to enhance disability prevention, rehabilitation and equalisation of opportunities. Refers to full participation of people with disabilities in social life and national development. Emphasises the need to approach disability from a human rights perspective.
1989	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	Protects the rights of children in all areas of their life. Governments have a responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take all available measures to make sure children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled• Agree to review their laws relating to children Calls on governments to assess their social services, legal, health and education systems, as well as levels of funding for these services.



Definition

6 Convention: An agreement between countries covering particular issues; less formal than a treaty.

Year	Document title	How it impacts on inclusive education
1990	World Education Forum: Jomtien Conference Education for All (EFA)	Is a major milestone in the international dialogue on the place of education in human development policy. Makes education a top priority; broadens the discussion about education from its previous, limited focus on access to primary school.
1993	Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities: UN General Assembly	Emphasises strong moral and political commitment of governments to take action to attain equity for persons with disabilities. Document is still a basis for policy-making and cooperation between countries.
1994	Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education: 92 countries, 25 international organisations	Calls for major school reform. Recognises the need for and urgency of providing education for all children, young people and adults “within the regular education system”. Children with “special educational needs” must have access to regular schools as the most effective way of addressing discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving Education for All.
2000	World Education Forum: Dakar Framework	Culmination of a major assessment of the state of education across the world 1990–2000. Resulted in a set of priorities that aimed to address equitable access to quality education –particular focus on gender.
2000	UN Millennium Development Goals 2000–15	Sets out eight global goals, including halving the extreme poverty rate, halting the spread of HIV & AIDS and providing universal primary education.
2006	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Followed decades of work by the UN to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. Aims to shift culture of viewing people with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection to viewing them as “subjects” like anyone else—people with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights, making decisions and being active members of society.
2015	UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015–30	Sets out seventeen global goals, which followed on from the Millenium Development Goals. SDG 4 ensures inclusive, equitable, quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all, and has a specific focus on all marginalised groups.
2015	World Education Forum: Incheon Declaration	<p>Focused on the framework for action for SDG 4. Outlines a commitment to “addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes”, in practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides twelve years of free education • Ensures access to education and learning is equitable, with a focus on vulnerable groups • Ensures that outcomes are relevant and effective, and provide the building blocks for lifelong learning

ACTIVITY 7: International human rights documents



Reading

Read the timeline of international human rights documents and consider the following questions:

1. Which of the documents is most interesting to you from an inclusive education point of view (i.e. education is provided for all children, is relevant, accessible, fair and of the highest possible quality)? Why do you find this the most interesting document?
2. Look the document up on the internet and read more about it.
3. Think about a child or young person you know who is at risk of being marginalised or excluded from education.
 - How does the document you have chosen apply to them?
 - How could it help them—what is useful and relevant about the document?
 - Are there parts that are unhelpful or would need adapting to be relevant for this child or young person? If so, what are these? What do you think needs adapting and how?
4. To what extent do you think there is an awareness of human rights related to education in your community? What helps or hinders this awareness?
5. Do you think this awareness has changed over the last five to ten years? If so, how? What do you think might be the reasons for the change, or lack of change, in your community?

2.2 Inclusive education policies and laws: South Africa and Africa

ACTIVITY 8: What do I know already? What do I want to know?



Journal

Before we continue, spend a few minutes considering the following two questions. If you can, discuss them with a colleague. If you are working on your own, reflect on the questions and make notes in your journal.

1. What do you already know about inclusive education policies and laws in South Africa? For example, do you know which policies and laws exist? Do you know what they are designed to do?
2. What would you **like** to know about inclusive education policies and laws in South Africa? What do you think teachers working inclusively in schools need to know?

Following the dismantling of the discriminatory Christian National Education system in 1994, new education policies, laws and guidelines have been put in place in South Africa. These are grounded in the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights and are also in line with major international conventions, treaties and declarations to which South Africa is a signatory.

The Constitution was the country's first policy document to reflect a commitment to equity and equality. It embraced the international principles of human rights and committed itself to building an inclusive education and training system.

Since 1994, South Africa and Africa have developed a number of documents that show a clear national and regional obligation to implement inclusive education. In this section we introduce you to some of these documents. Once you know about them, you can use them to empower you to promote an inclusive culture and address exclusion from education in your classroom and school.

“This is our national soul, our contract with one another as citizens, underpinned by our highest aspirations and our deepest apprehensions. Our pledge is: Never and never again shall the laws of our land rend our people apart or legalise their oppression and repression. Together, we shall march, hand-in-hand, to a brighter future.”

President Nelson Mandela at the unveiling of the mural celebrating the adoption of the new Constitution, 8 May, 1996

The timeline below shows some of the most significant South African and African policies and laws, with a brief summary of some of the ways each informs inclusive education.

Table 2: South African and African inclusive education policy/law development

Year	Document title	How it impacts on inclusive education
1990	African Union: African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	Emphasises the need to include African cultural values and experiences when dealing with the rights of the child, as their realities are particular to Africa. Any custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice that is inconsistent with children’s rights is discouraged.
1996	The South African Constitution and Bill of Rights	Supports the rights to basic education, to a safe environment and to act in the best interest of the child.
1996	The South African Schools Act	Articulates the roles and responsibilities of public schools. Ended the system of separate schooling on the basis of race and created a single system for all learners. Right of equal access to basic and quality education for all learners without discrimination of any sort. No learner may be denied admission to an ordinary school on any grounds. The first step towards a single, inclusive education system for South Africa.
2001	DoE: Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system	Suggests structural and programme changes to South Africa’s education system so that diverse learners can be included in mainstream schools. Outlines an inclusive education system in which all learners have equal access to quality educational opportunities. Recognises the importance of developing learners’ strengths, and of empowering and enabling learners to participate actively and critically in the learning process.
2005	The South African Children’s Act	Protects the rights of children so they are able to grow up safely and develop well. If abused or neglected, they will be helped to recover. Children are allowed to have their say and participate in decisions that affect their lives. Values and protects families. Ensures proper and safe after-care, crèches, drop in centres, and child and youth care centres.
2015	DHET: Revised Policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications	All teachers need to be familiar with what is needed to implement inclusive education practices.
2011	DBE: Policy on Screening Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)	Framework of procedures to identify, assess, and provide programmes for all learners who need additional support to boost their participation and inclusion in school.

Year	Document title	How it impacts on inclusive education
2011	DBE: Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom	Strategies for differentiated teaching and learning to meet the diversity of learners' needs.
2011	South African Council for Educators (SACE): Draft Professional Teacher Standards	Details ten principles for professional teaching.
2012	DBE: National Curriculum and Assessment and Policy Statement Grades R–12	States what should be in the curricula for each grade in South Africa, and how it should be assessed.
2012	The South African National Development Plan 2030	Promotes nation building as a key element within social cohesion schemes. Identifies 31 actions that will help to achieve this based on values, equal opportunities, inclusion, cohesion, citizenship and leadership.
2013	African Union: Agenda 2063—Africa's Agenda for Children	Strategic plan for the socio-economic transformation of the continent. Emphasises the importance of education and children's civil and political rights as the foundations of sustainable, rights-based development.
2014	Southern African Development Community (SADC): Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) framework	Aims to realise the educational rights of all children, including those who are most vulnerable, by addressing barriers to learning and participation. Supports schools through nine programmes to become inclusive centres of teaching, learning, care and support.
2018	DBE: Draft Norms and Standards for Funding	Addresses how an inclusive education system will be funded and resourced.
2018	DHET: Standards for Inclusive Teaching	Identifies standards for the development of inclusive teachers in five key areas: valuing and understanding learner diversity; agency for social justice and inclusion; collaborating to enable inclusive teaching and learning; developing professionally as an inclusive teacher; employing classroom practices that promote learning for all.

ACTIVITY 9: South African policies



Reading

Look at the timeline of South African policies in relation to the timeline of international policies. Identify links between the two.

Choose three policies from the list below that particularly interest you and read the summaries, which can be found in Appendix 1.

- South African Bill of Rights
- Revised South African Schools Act
- Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education
- Curriculum Policy and Assessment Statement (CAPS)
- Policy on Screening, Information and Assessment and Support (SIAS)

Once you have read the summaries, think about and answer the following questions for each policy:

1. What is useful and relevant about this policy for inclusive education in your school and community? Why do you think this?
2. Are there parts of the policy that are not useful or relevant for inclusive education in your school and community? If so, which are they? Why do you think this?
3. Are there parts of the policy that, if they were adapted, could be more useful or relevant for inclusive education in your school and community? If so, which are they? How do you think they need to be adapted?
4. To what extent do you think this policy is put into practice in your school and community? What factors do you think help or hinder it being put into practice?
5. What needs to be done to overcome some of the factors that get in the way of this policy being put into practice in your school and community?
6. What have you learnt about inclusive education laws and policy in South Africa in this section that is going to be useful to you as a teacher working inclusively?

Remember: despite the limitations of some of the policies and laws about inclusive education, they are what we currently have in place to support us to teach inclusively. Use them to do everything you can to make sure that the education learners experience in your classroom is equitable and inclusive.

Another aspect of wider life that can support us to teach inclusively is our values. This is the next topic we are going to discuss.

3 Societal values underpinning inclusive education

In this section we will reflect on and analyse overall principles and values of inclusive education within South Africa. There are South African values that can provide a strong foundation for inclusive education and inclusive teaching and learning, including ubuntu/botho and constitutional human rights values. These include shared values that can unite school communities and prevent the exclusion of children from education. You will also have the opportunity to reflect on your own personal values, because an awareness of the values that motivate us will enhance the process of self-discovery and underpin the choices we make in our classrooms.

“One of the most powerful ways of children and young adults acquiring values is to see individuals they admire and respect exemplify these values in their own being and conduct.” Nelson Mandela, Saamtrek Conference, 2001

Before we begin, it is important to clarify the difference between values and rules. **Rules** are imposed from the outside, while **values** are grown from the inside. Our first glimmerings of values are experienced as instincts and emotions as we experience the world and respond to it. These first values are “written” by the culture in which we are growing up. As we grow and develop, our values are also formed through experience.

One of the reasons it’s so difficult to grasp what values are is because they are so fundamental and mostly operate in our subconscious. One of the biggest obstacles to understanding them is the assumption that they are all good and desirable; but values are in themselves neither right nor wrong. Their usefulness depends entirely on their impact on you and your community. This is why we need to become more aware of the values that motivate us, understand them and question them.

You, as a teacher starting out in the profession, bring your own set of values that will inform your thinking and practice, and over time with experience, these will develop and change. Learners, principals, parents and officials also come into the school community with their own value systems. Therefore, no education is neutral—all education, teaching practice and school culture is based on values. Having a better understanding of the role of values in our society is empowering. So, let’s first get a deeper understanding of what values are, and then expand that understanding through a discussion of ubuntu/botho and human rights values for inclusive education.

3.1 Schwartz’s theory of basic values

Shalom H Schwartz is a social psychologist, cross-cultural researcher and creator of the Theory of Basic Human Values. He also contributed to the formulation of a values scale in the context of social learning theory and social cognitive theory. Schwartz reasoned that since values are motivational goals, basic human values might be derived by considering the most basic needs of human beings, which he divides into three categories:

- Our biological needs as individuals
- Our need to coordinate our actions with others
- The need of groups to survive and flourish

By considering these needs Schwartz arrived at the following set of ten basic values:

Table 3: Schwartz's ten basic values

1. **Benevolence:** Preservation and enhancement of the people with whom one is in frequent personal contact—especially family
(helpful, honest, forgiving, responsible, true friendship, mature love)
2. **Universalism:** Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature
(broadminded, social justice, equality, world at peace, world of beauty, unity with nature, wisdom, protecting the environment)
3. **Self-Direction:** Independent thought and action—choosing, creating, exploring
(creativity, freedom, choosing own goals, curiosity, independence)
4. **Security:** Safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of self
(social order, family security, national security, cleanliness, reciprocation of favours, healthiness, sense of belonging)
5. **Conformity:** Restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate expectations or norms
(obedience, self-discipline, politeness, honouring parents and elders)
6. **Hedonism:** Pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself
(pleasure, enjoying life, self-indulgence)
7. **Achievement:** Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards
(ambitious, successful, capable, influential)
8. **Tradition:** Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion provides
(respect for tradition, humble, devout, accepting my portion in life)
9. **Stimulation:** Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life
(a varied life, an exciting life, daring)
10. **Power:** Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources
(authority, wealth, social power, social recognition, preserving my public image)

(Source: Potts, 2015 <http://bit.ly/31mT8BC>)

ACTIVITY 10: My personal values



Writing

1. Look at Schwartz's 10 basic values. Choose three that are important to you in your personal life. Why are these values important to you?
2. Choose three that you think would be important and appropriate to you in your professional life. How would these values influence your practice as a teacher who teaches inclusively?

3.2 Human rights values for inclusive education

In the section about policy we looked at human rights laws and conventions, including the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Depending on the context you are in, these human rights tools can represent a set of rules or a set of values. For example, as a set of **rules** our Constitution has to be obeyed by law, regardless of our personal or cultural beliefs. As a set of **values** that is experienced as personally meaningful and motivating, the Constitution can be an inspiring vision.

The *National Development Plan* (RSA, 2013) stresses that in the South Africa of 2030 “there will be broad-based knowledge about and support for a set of values shared by all South Africans, including the values contained in the Constitution”. The core values identified by the Constitution that determine an open and democratic society are **human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms**.

As a teacher, you can be one of the few authority figures in a child’s life who models a commitment to democracy and human rights, so it’s important that you understand their relationship to the classroom and your practice within it. Here is a reflective activity to help you develop this understanding.

ACTIVITY 11: My thoughts on constitutional values



Journal

Here are some questions for reflection. Record your ideas in your journal.

1. How do you imagine constitutional values being applied in your school and in your classroom?
2. How can a commitment to human rights inform your teaching practice and school culture?

Our responsibility as teachers with regard to human rights is to embed two areas into our practice, no matter whom or what we are teaching:

- **Human rights education:** teaching learners about human rights
- **A rights-based approach to education:** placing human rights at the centre of all teaching

The second of these areas is more radical. It involves more than teaching learners **about** human rights; it requires us to teach learners **through** human rights. As teachers, a rights-based approach to education means that we model and practise human rights in every interaction we have with learners, and make it clear we are doing so. We do this, both specifically in relation to learning, and with informal interactions we have with learners outside the classroom. Rights-based practice recognises that every learner and teacher is free to explore, discover, develop and express their potential, equally, with dignity and without discrimination. Essentially, it promotes, respects and protects the universal right of all children to access inclusive, quality education.

The CSTL *Children’s Participation Framework* (2018) calls for the mainstreaming of a rights-based approach to education. It is a tool to support the SADC region to reach its vision about children and young people’s participation as engaged and active citizens in their communities.

All education systems in the SADC region aim to provide 21st century teaching and learning that empowers and enables all children to know and exercise their civic and political responsibilities and rights.

Special measures will ensure the inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalised, so that they may be engaged citizens with agency to drive inclusive development.

In order to achieve this vision, the CSTL framework identifies a number of children and young people’s civil and political rights that all of them—especially those who are marginalised or at risk of exclusion from education—need to know, and be empowered to exercise:

- The right to express their own views and be heard in all matters affecting them
- The right to express their views without fear or prejudice
- The right to hold their own views and practice religion of choice
- The right to join groups or associations for expressing common or shared viewpoints
- The right to protection from interference with their privacy
- The right to access information that is socially and culturally relevant through diversity of sources, including the media

So, what does rights-based education look like in the classroom? As stated in *Values and human rights in the curriculum: a guide book* (DoE, 2003), a rights-driven, democratic classroom is characterised by:

- Learner-centred methods and strategies for learning and teaching
- Relationships based on dignity, equality and respect
- Classroom management strategies that are in keeping with democratic and human rights values
- Affirmation of diversity rather than homogeneity (sameness)
- Participation of all members of the school community in decision-making that affects them
- Anti-discriminatory policies and practices
- Equitable availability and use of resources
- Inclusive approach to: use of languages; different ways of making meaning from learning; diversity

ACTIVITY 12: A rights-based democratic classroom



Writing

Reflecting on what you have just read about rights-based education, consider the following questions:

1. What values do you think underpin rights-based education?
2. Reflecting on your own experience of education, to what extent do you think it could be described as rights-based? For example:
 - Do you think the curriculum, or/and the teaching style enabled you to practise the rights and skills needed to become an active and engaged citizen?
 - To what extent do you think the adults in the school were comfortable with the idea of children’s rights? What made you think this? If they were uncomfortable, why do you think this was the case?
 - Think of a situation where there was a conflict of rights. How was it resolved, or how could it have been resolved (or prevented)?
3. Now look back at Schwarz’s list of ten basic values. Which three of these do you think will be most important for you as a teacher in helping you create a rights-based, democratic classroom? Why are they important?
4. How could you put these values into action in a classroom to ensure that it is a democratic, rights-based community? For example:
 - What sort of structures—routines, norms, rituals—could you put in place?
 - What sorts of behaviours would you want to model as a teacher?
 - What sorts of activities could you set up with learners in order for them to exercise their rights and their agency within the school community, and for their views to be considered equally as important as adults’ views?

3.3 Linking human rights principles to the philosophy of ubuntu/botho

“We believe that in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in the field of human relationship. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa—giving the world a more human face.” Steve Biko, 1970

ACTIVITY 13: My thoughts on ubuntu/botho



Journal

1. Can you remember when you first became aware of the principles of ubuntu/botho? Describe the circumstances. What impact did it have on your life?
2. How would you define ubuntu/botho?



Figure 3: Ubuntu values means teaching for all—“Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”

At the heart of South Africa’s inclusive education policy—and of this module—lies the philosophy of ubuntu/botho, which holds unity, “humanness”, togetherness, interdependence and communalism at its core. A commonly used definition of ubuntu comes from the isiZulu phrase, “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” and the Setswana phrase “Motho ke motho ka batho”, which in English means: “A person is a person through other people.”

Mapadimeng (2009) suggests that the first intellectual attempt to define and explain the ubuntu/botho culture was in the 1950s, '60s and '70s by the journalist Jordan Kush Ngubane, in *The African Drum* magazine and in his novels. In his novel *Conflicts of minds*, Ngubane defined ubuntu as “the philosophy which the African experience translates into action” and “a philosophy of life and the practice of being humane which gave content to life for African people long before the arrival of white settlers” (Ngubane, 1979). Any attempt to define ubuntu must include the possibility that it has had oral traditions for a longer period of time.

“Out of the values of ubuntu and human dignity flow the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect which are at the very core of making our schools places where the culture of teaching and the culture of learning thrive.” **Manifesto on values, education and democracy, DHET, 2001**

Since Ngubane’s definition of 1979, many scholars have developed other definitions of ubuntu and, importantly, identified values related to ubuntu:

Table 4: Ubuntu values

NE Chikanda (1990)	Sensitivity to the needs of others; charity; sympathy; care; respect; consideration; kindness
Nhlanhla Mkhize (2008)	Social justice; righteousness; care; empathy for others; respect
Mokong Simon Mapadimeng (2009)	Respect; group solidarity; conformity; compassion; human dignity and humaneness; collective unity and solidarity; sharing; universal brotherhood; communalism; interdependence; hospitality
Mluleki Mnyaka & Mokgethi Motlhabi (2009)	Inclusive; deeds of kindness; compassion; caring; sharing; solidarity; sacrifice
Desmond Tutu (2011)	Our humaneness; caring; hospitality; our sense of connectedness; our sense that my humanity is bound up in your humanity
Polycarp Ikuenobe (2017)	Caring; humility; fraternity; mutuality

Ikuenobe stresses that “we can appreciate the merits of traditional African communalism when it is compared to the social and moral **pathologies**’ that are engendered by the extreme rugged individualism of Western modernity” (Ikuenobe, 2017). The main principle of ubuntu is a focus on the group. For example, in a small community in which you will probably live alongside the same people your entire life, more emphasis is put on maintaining relationships, rather than on ensuring fairness or justice. Compromises are made more quickly. Compensation for wrongdoing is focused more on reconciliation and restoring order.

This does not mean that these traditions cannot be abused. They can, especially when traditional leaders are backed by the administration, and when autocratic leaders try to justify privilege and oppression as “part of our culture”, perpetuating sexism, homophobia, xenophobia and maintaining the practices of corrupt elites.

Definition

7 Pathologies (in this context): Deviations from the “norm” that bring about social problems.

ACTIVITY 14: Critically examining ubuntu



Writing

Read the questions below then do some research—for example online, through books and articles, by interviewing people in your community—to help you answer them.

Make notes in your journal as you go along and, when you are ready, write answers to the questions:

1. What challenges to tradition and authority are permitted? By whom? In what contexts are these permitted?
2. How can individuals question the way things are done? What happens when they ask these questions?
3. To what extent do you think ubuntu is contradicted, or weakened, by the prevalence in Africa of: autocratic rule; patriarchy; corruption; the neglect of the poor; sexism; homophobia; xenophobia; contemporary slavery and the degradation of the environment?

Where ubuntu is understood as inclusive practice, it is true to the values in Table 4. These values empower teachers as agents of change, who combat exclusion by employing inclusive pedagogies that empower all learners. According to Professor John Volmink:

Inclusive education is a connectedness between learners, educators and communities of learning, which provides a positive environment which in turn positively affects self-worth, self-belief and achievement. The ability to learn depends on these networks of support. This is the essence of ubuntu—that we live in a delicate web of inter-connectedness and interdependence with each other. “I am because we are.” If I diminish, insult or mistreat another person, I do so similarly to myself. So, inclusive education calls for mutual respect and support. (Prof John Volmink, Teaching for All research report, 2018)

ACTIVITY 15: Ubuntu and inclusive education



Journal

Reflecting on what you have just read about ubuntu, discuss the following question with a colleague. If you are studying on your own, reflect on it and make some notes in your journal.

How could you use the values associated with ubuntu in your classroom to promote a culture that is inclusive and seeks to provide quality education for all?

3.3.1 Values that promote an inclusive classroom culture

We have considered a range of values, some coming from the Constitution and others from ubuntu/botho. These two sets of values are sometimes in tension with each other. However, it is important to consider how they can be integrated into our contemporary understanding of the values that benefit all South Africans, which can then be deliberately nurtured in our schools.

Both ubuntu/botho and human rights have the potential for manipulation in the interests of power. Together, though, they can hold each other accountable for delivering what is best in both of them. One can think of the individualism of human rights and the collectivism of ubuntu as a creative and productive partnership. In the classroom this is not just about encouraging development of all learners as individuals, but also about encouraging active collaboration between learners who have different characteristics. Here, the values of ubuntu and human rights combine to serve us well.

ACTIVITY 16: Values in the classroom



Writing

Ubuntu and human rights values can inform the way teachers respond to learners in the classroom. How would you personally respond to the following learners, and which values would inform your responses?

Think about a learner:

- Who has a physical disability
- Whose brain functions differently to yours
- Is of a different sexuality to yours
- Is of a different race to you
- Believes in knowledge systems that are different to yours
- Has a different faith belief system to yours
- Who is from a different family background to yours
- Who is living in poverty

By now, you have a solid understanding of the purpose of inclusive education, the policies, laws and conventions that support it, and the values that underpin it. Next, we turn to some of the key theories and models that influence our understanding of inclusive education.

4 Academic theories and models of inclusive education

There are many theories and models that influence our understanding of inclusive education, and as a result there is no one overarching definition of inclusive education. In this section, we will:

- Introduce you briefly to some of the theories and models that are most commonly referred to in discussions by educators discussing and writing about inclusive education
- Give you some opportunities to reflect critically on these theories and models, thinking about their usefulness in your context

You will meet some of the theories and models again in later units.

Before we get started, there are two points we would like to make about terminology.

First, a word about the word “theory”. Many people are deeply suspicious of this word because they believe theories are too rigid and abstract to be meaningful in any real life situation (Green, 2001), and that reality tends to be more complex than any theory can completely capture (Maxwell, cited in Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). These are valid arguments, and theorists tend to agree with them; all theories (and models) have limitations. However, theories are important in helping us construct knowledge so they are worth our attention.

Second, we want to clarify the difference between “theory” and “model”:

- **Theories** give us a set of ideas, or a framework, for understanding, interpreting and explaining an experience. For example, we might think we know the different ways in which children learn to read because there are plenty of theories written about this topic in books.
- **Models** are representations of how something works in real life. So, using the reading example above, we might set up a classroom with groups of children who are learning to read in different ways, with each group’s method based on a theory we have read about in books. Each of these methods is a **model**. Models can tell us whether the theory works in a particular situation. The findings from models can also bring new information that develops theories further.

Let’s move on to look at some theories and models that add to our understanding of inclusive education, and their limitations.

4.1 Theories and models related to inclusive education

When we are looking at theories and models related to inclusive education, we need to understand the context in which they have been developed, and the context to which they are being applied. This is because the context in which theories and models have been developed may not take into account, and therefore may not be applicable to, the context to which they are being applied.

South Africa has a unique context. Its past of colonialism and apartheid has led to deep, persistent inequalities that have left a legacy of power for some and oppression of others. Theories and models of inclusive education developed elsewhere may not adequately account for these inequalities. Theories and models could therefore, if applied without adaptation in South Africa, lead to the continuation of exclusion. (Phasha et al., 2017).

As an example, let’s look at the role of parents in the education of their children. The benefits of parental involvement and support in children’s education are well documented (Sime & Sheridan, 2014). Parental support and involvement go beyond topics like helping children with homework to include issues such as staying in constant communication with the school, volunteering, decision making, collaborating with community and learning (Epstein et al., 2002). The legacy of power and oppression left by the apartheid past continue to make such involvement unachievable for millions of caregivers in South Africa. A teacher in a school who understands the theory and ideal model of parental involvement, but does not take into account families’ unique contexts, is likely to exclude them further through feelings of frustration and a lack of understanding and flexibility.

So, as a teacher it’s important that you always ask yourself questions about theories and models. How do the unique contexts you know about influence your understanding of a theory or model? What do the contexts

mean for implementing it? Will the theory or model work—wholly, partially, with some adapting or not at all? Remember, you are the expert on your context, not the people who have developed the theories or models.

Keep the questions above in mind as you read the following section which introduces you to key theories and models for inclusive education. As you read:

- Analyse the theories and models against the background of historical and current exclusion—including the role of power and privilege—in the unique South African context.
- Be aware that these theories and models were developed in high-income countries of the North without taking **Indigenous Knowledge Systems**⁸ (IKS) of other countries into account (Phasha et al., 2017). We will look at the role of IKS in inclusive teaching in [Section 5.2.4](#).
- Ask yourself how relevant the theories and models are to your unique context. What could you do to develop an approach that makes use of these theories and models but in a way that works for this context?

4.1.1 Medical deficit theories

Medical deficit theories focus on what is “wrong” with a person—their “sickness” or “deficit”—and the causes of this problem (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). This focus has led to the view of people with a huge range of differences as having an individual condition. This condition is seen as being outside what is considered “normal”, and therefore thought to be at a social disadvantage.

Medical deficit theories have had a major influence in the fields of psychology and special education. This has had a profound effect on the education of learners seen as having “deficits”, including those viewed as having disabilities or learning difficulties, which are often referred to as “special educational needs” (SEN). Within a medical deficit model of practice, developed from the theories:

- Where possible, a diagnosis is made
- The learner is then categorised and labelled
- Learners with diagnosed “deficiencies” are viewed as qualitatively different—i.e. of a different nature and/or standard—to other learners
- Often, these learners are educated separately from their peers
- Specialist support staff intervene to try to improve or even remove the “deficiencies” within the learner; they do this by using specific educational responses developed for this “deficiency”

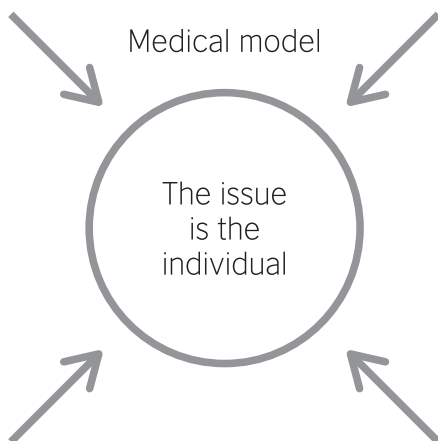


Figure 4: Medical model of disability

Within the model the view is that the **person** is the problem, and that it is therefore the person who needs “fixing” to fit in with everyone else.

Despite the general emphasis on inclusion and the creation of accepting inclusive school communities, the medical model described above is still deeply embedded in most countries, including South Africa. There are still widely held medical deficit assumptions about the nature and distribution of abilities (Florian, 2015). Research indicates, for example, that despite the fact that most teachers support the rights of all learners to be in their classrooms, they still describe them in medical deficit ways and prefer them to be moved to separate classrooms or special schools (Engelbrecht et al., 2015).

We will return to the medical model and see it in practice in Unit 2.

Definition

- 8 Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** The complex set of knowledge, skills and technologies existing and developed around specific conditions of populations and communities indigenous to a particular geographic area.

4.1.2 Social model of disability

In reaction to the medical deficit model, a contrasting view of ability/disability and special educational needs—the social model—was developed by people with disabilities. It counteracts the medical deficit model with a view that comes from, according to Terzi (2008: 44), the direct experience of disability, by people with disabilities.

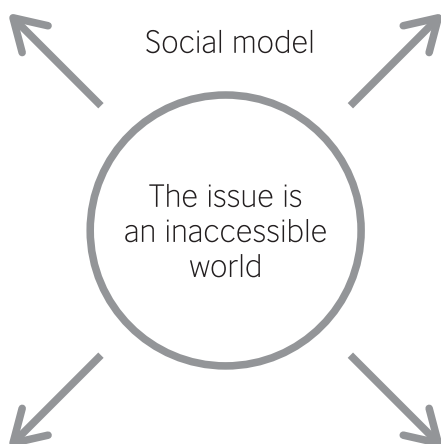


Figure 5: Social model of disability

The social model perspective does not deny challenges caused by diverse needs or the need for medical treatment. However, it challenges the view of difference as a “deficit”. It therefore sees the medical deficit view of “labelling” and defining individuals by their conditions as discriminatory, constructed by an ability-oriented environment.

In an education setting, the social model asks us to shift our view away from the learner as being, or having, the problem. Instead, it proposes that society itself creates barriers around diversity. The issue is not the person, it’s the world—as the diagram below shows. The social model proposes that, as inaccessibility is caused by society, solutions therefore start with society removing barriers to access. These solutions start with what can be done, not with what can’t.

As a result, the social model stresses the full inclusion of people with diverse needs in society, and advocates for diverse children to be educated and participate fully in mainstream schools. In South Africa, the social model underpinned the development of *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001).

We will discuss the social model in more detail in Unit 2.

4.1.3 Ecological systems theory and Bronfenbrenner’s model

Ecological systems theory aims to show how individual people and groups at different levels of society are linked in active, **interdependent**⁹ and interacting relationships (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). The theory evolved from combining ecological theory and systems theory.

Ecological theory is based on the interdependence between different organisms and their physical environment (Ibid.). Similar ideas have been applied to relationships among human beings, and the interactions among groups of people in their social contexts. The study of these relationships and interactions has led to the development of systems theory.

At the centre of ecological systems theory is the belief that different groups of people are interactive systems. The functioning of the whole depends on the interaction between these different groups. For example, a school as a system may look as if it is made up of staff and learners. However, teachers, heads of departments, and learners in different grades, for example, are all sub-systems. Therefore, to understand the school as a whole, you need to examine the relationships among these different sub-systems (Donald et al, 2010; Engelbrecht, 2006).

Urie Bronfenbrenner was a Russian-born American psychologist who developed a model of child development based on ecological systems theory. This model suggests that there are **layers** of different interacting systems that result in physical, social and psychological change and development (Swart & Pettipher, 2016: 11). The model explains how these systems, and the relationships among them, affect the development of the learner. It places the child at the centre of the systems and puts central importance on making decisions that are in the best interests of the child.



Definition

9 Interdependent: Describes the situation when two or more people or things depend on each other.

We will discuss the ecological systems model in relation to collaboration in Unit 3.

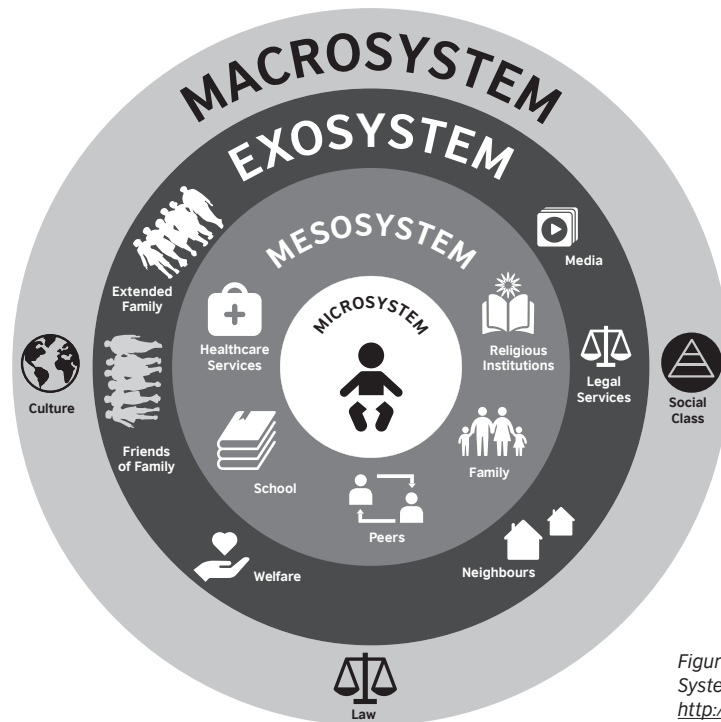


Figure 6: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (Source: Adapted from: <http://bit.ly/2KqobHv>)

Bronfenbrenner defines five types of systems which consist of roles, norms and rules that shape the development of the child: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem:

The **microsystem** is the family, classroom, neighbourhood or systems in the person's immediate environment. In the South African context, family as the microsystem where socialisation takes place first may include the extended family.

The **mesosystem** is an interaction of two microsystems, such as the connection between a child's home and school, or between neighbourhood and home. In the mesosystem, all of the microsystems interact together and contribute to the development of the child.

The **exosystem** is an environment that does not directly involve a child but affects them anyway. For example, when a child's parent's workplace requires a lot of travelling this impacts on the child. Or when a new community service is introduced that the child can access, this will have an impact on their life.

The **macrosystem** is the larger cultural context: the circumstances, beliefs, customs and laws shared by the community around the child. The cultural context can include, for example, socio-economic status, poverty and ethnicity. The macrosystem evolves over time, because each generation's circumstances change.

Chronosystems show change over time, for example to family structure, socio-economic status, schooling and living conditions, as well as events in the country, region and world (known as socio-historical events) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). These changes also impact on the child's life.

Bronfenbrenner places the child at the centre of all of these structures. The child is therefore continuously affected in one way or another by the continuous changes that happen in their environment (Howard & Johnson, 2000). It is crucial that teachers know about and understand these changes, and their impacts, so that they can understand how they affect the learners in their classroom and respond appropriately.

4.1.4 Critical Diversity Literacy (CDL)

One of the greatest challenges in understanding exclusion and inclusion is how to “read” the processes around exclusion, i.e. how to look at, analyse and critique them. Many of these processes use difference to reinforce privilege and oppression, and they therefore maintain an unequal society. The difficulty of this challenge means that we do not address these processes, which means that they, and the inequalities they maintain, continue.

In this section we discuss one way—Critical Diversity Literacy, or CDL—of thinking and speaking about the way power constructs privilege, oppression and exclusion. We also explore how using CDL can help us develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between power, privilege, oppression and exclusion (Reygan & Steyn, 2017). CDL with its broad focus on “current social problems” extends the scope of inclusive education beyond impairment, and follows a social model approach.

CDL is inspired by France Winddance Twine’s (cited in Steyn, 2015) “racial literacy”. Melissa Steyn (2015) describes it as “a sharply focused critical lens which examines those operations of power which implicate social identities to create systems of privilege, advantage, disadvantage and oppression”. Put more simply we might talk about CDL as being a combination of:

- Being **critical** in your thinking about social systems, without accepting them unquestioningly
- Understanding **diversity** and the issues related to diversity: power, privilege, advantage, disadvantage, oppression
- Having the language—the **literacy**—to talk and express clear views about diversity, the issues related to it and the systems that maintain the status quo (the current situation)

Steyn also explains CDL as a “reading practice”, i.e. a way of understanding and responding to the social climate and established structures of oppression and exclusion.

Steyn (ibid.) proposes that there are eight analytical skills involved in practising CDL. These are shown below (adapted from Steyn, ibid.) in a way that shows the skill and how it relates to: being critical; understanding diversity; or having the language (literacy) to express your views.

Table 5: Eight analytical skills of CDL

Skill	Skill Area
1. Recognise the symbolic and material value of dominant identities, such as whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, ablebodiedness, middleclassness, etc.	Understanding diversity and connected issues
2. Analyse how these systems of privilege intersect, interlock, co-construct and establish each other	Being a critical thinker
3. Define oppressive systems such as racism as current social problems and not only historical legacy	Understanding diversity and connected issues
4. Understand that social identities are learnt and are an outcome of social practices	Understanding diversity and connected issues
5. Develop and use grammar and vocabulary that facilitates a discussion of race, racism and antiracism, plus equivalent ideas used in the analysis of other forms of oppression (e.g. gender, sexism, age, ageism, sexuality, homophobia etc.)	Having the language—literacy—to discuss and express opinions
6. Interpret coded dominant practices, which might be hinted at but not made explicit	Being a critical thinker
7. Analyse the ways that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity hierarchies (putting differences into a “pecking order” so that some become more important than others) • Institutional oppressions (the systematic mistreatment of particular social groups) are facilitated by class inequality Analyse how the above process varies in specific social contexts	Understanding diversity and connected issues Being a critical thinker
8. Engage with issues linked to transforming these oppressive systems towards deepening democracy / social justice, in all levels of social organisation	Having the language—literacy—to discuss and express opinions

Steyn emphasises that people in positions of power in communities determine which differences influence exclusion and inclusion. For example, a single mother in a poor community and a suburban-based, corporate executive single mother cannot be said to have the same power of political persuasion or opportunity regarding the education of her children (Spren & Valley, 2006).

The differences between these women are not in themselves superior or inferior, but must be recognised as real distinctions that give some people advantages and privileges, including power over others (Spren & Valley, 2006: 353). We therefore need to develop a more subtle and sophisticated approach to power and privilege. This approach needs to include examining multiple forms of exclusion and the ways in which these play out in school communities, often in very tangible and material ways (Reygan, Walton & Osman, 2018).

Maintaining a position of power and exclusion can be illustrated as per the diagram on the right.

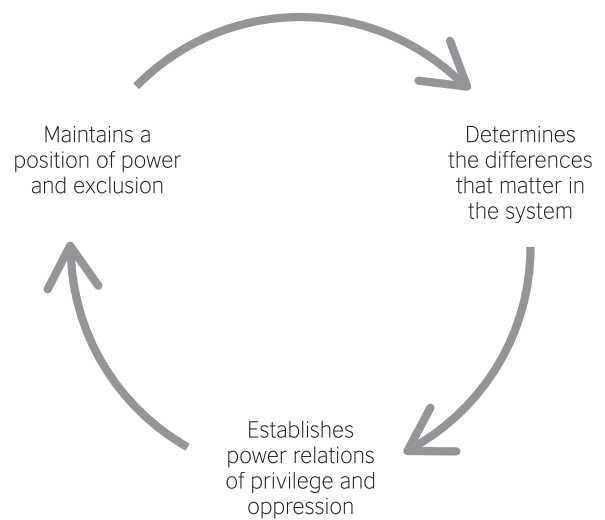


Figure 7: Critical Diversity Literacy

ACTIVITY 17: Practising CDL



Reading

Read the following article about how schools use language to exclude children.

Now re-read the table that shows the eight analytical skills linked to CDL.

Then read the article again, thinking about the following questions. Here, your aim is to put the eight CDL skills into practice. Use the article and the eight skills to:

- Think critically about the issues around diversity that are brought up by the article
- Deepen your understanding of these issues through your thinking
- Express your views about the issues brought up by the article

Here are some questions to think about. You are not limited to these; their purpose is to stimulate your thinking. If more questions come into your mind, note them down as well.

1. What dominant identities do you think are shown through the article? Why do you think this?
2. What systems of power and privilege do these dominant identities maintain? How do you know these are current social issues, not only historical? Explain your thinking.
3. What social identities might the children described in the article be learning? From which social practices might they be learning these identities?
4. Are there any dominant social practices that you think are “behind the scenes” of the article? i.e. they are going on in the background but not talked about explicitly. What are these? What makes you think they are there?
5. Is there a role being played by class inequality in the article that means:
 - Some differences are viewed as more important than others?
 - You can see there is systematic maltreatment of particular social groups?
6. What are your views on what needs to be done to transform the situation for the children in the article, so that they achieve equity and social justice?

How schools use language to exclude children

The Conversation, September 6, 2016, Carolyn McKinney and Xolisa Guzula

Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o once described language as "the most important vehicle through which that [colonial] power fascinated and held the soul prisoner".

He illustrated this with a disturbing account of receiving corporal punishment, being fined and wearing a plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. His "crime"? Speaking Gikuyu at his English medium school.

Today, decisions about which language resources should count in schooling— as the language of instruction, a subject, or a legitimate language for learning—continue to be informed by the relationships between language and power. Schools and universities in post-colonial contexts still operate within the logic of coloniality.

These realities have been thrown into sharp relief by revelations that some South African schools discipline their pupils for speaking any language but English (or Afrikaans) while on school grounds. At Cape Town's Sans Souci High School for Girls, pupils obtain "losses" (or demerits) for a range of "offences"—like being caught speaking isiXhosa. For many of Sans Souci's pupils, this is their home language.

African children—whose home languages are by and large not English—are generally not recognised for the experiences, knowledge and linguistic

resources they bring. They're expected to adapt to pre-existing school cultures.

African children in ex-Model C schools are expected to feel grateful at being given the "opportunity" of a quality education in a state school system that performs very poorly.

Many previously white primary and secondary suburban schools offer only English and Afrikaans as "home language" and "first additional language" subjects. This continues apartheid's ideology of bilingualism. Where an African language is offered, it is given marginal status as "second additional language". African languages get little space on the timetable and few resources.

Primary school principals have defended the fact that they offer only English and Afrikaans by saying their pupils continue on to high schools that only offer these languages. High school principals, in turn, reported that they had to offer English and Afrikaans because their feeder primary schools were not offering African languages.

This is a convenient cycle of blame which signals bad faith. If school leaders and parents were committed to embracing African languages and the spirit of the multilingual South African language in education policy, surely they would consult each other and design collaborative language policies?

We will explore language and diversity in more detail in Unit 2.

In **Appendix 2** we have included a summary of two other theoretical frameworks related to inclusive education: Capability Theory, and Socio-cultural / Cultural-historical Activity Theories. Once you are confident about the theories we have discussed so far, you can add to your knowledge by reading about these theories as well.

4.2 Theories and models of inclusive education in practice

Your head will now be full of theories and models, so let's take the opportunity to look at them in practice while they are still fresh. In this section, we will examine a continuum of inclusion. This continuum, shown below, allows us to describe different forms of inclusion that you are likely to come across in your career, which are influenced by the theories and models you have just been studying. We will not talk more about exclusion here, as we have covered it at length already. Below, we describe each of the four other steps shown along the continuum: self-contained classrooms (also referred to as segregation); integration; mainstreaming and full inclusion.

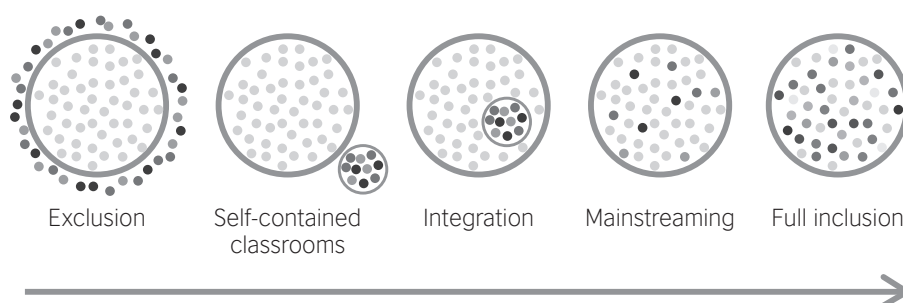


Figure 8: Inclusion continuum

4.2.1 Self-contained classrooms (or segregation)

This form of inclusion means learners who have similar academic or social needs are placed together in a classroom that is separate from the regular classrooms but within the same school. According to Nicole Eredics (2018) the learners could be at different grade levels working on different concepts. The special education teacher takes responsibility for teaching all the subjects. The traditional justification for this arrangement is that learners need, and will receive, specialised support. The challenge is that it limits opportunities for: learning from others with a wide range of abilities and talents; social interaction; and everyone being able to experience natural diversity.

4.2.2 Integration

Integration is a model of inclusion that seeks to make learners with significant learning challenges part of the regular classroom; they learn alongside their peers without significant learning challenges. Separate special education programmes are put in place for these children. These programmes are delivered either within the classroom or through “pull-out” services, where learners are withdrawn from the classroom to learn in small groups (which takes us back to segregation, although on a temporary basis). Phasha (2016) regards this model of inclusion as narrow; it views one group as having learning challenges in the context of “all is well” with the other learners. She cites Steve Biko (2004) as saying: “The concept of integration is full of unquestioned assumptions that embrace the values of the dominant group.” Integration expects learners to adapt to the practices, methods, curriculum, values and rules of the dominant group, rather than the system adapting to the learner’s needs.

4.2.3 Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming involves placing learners with significant learning challenges in a special education class for some of the time, and mixing them with their peers without significant learning challenges for some of the time. The belief behind this form of inclusion is that all children have the same needs and should therefore (where it is deemed appropriate and possible) participate in the same social and learning activities.

4.2.4 Full inclusion

The central ideal of full inclusion is that ordinary schools should provide for all learners, regardless of their differences: social; cultural; emotional; physical; sensory; cognitive; linguistic; gender; sexuality or otherwise (Florian, 2008). Full inclusion is about creating opportunities for all learners to benefit from this diversity and learn from each other. It requires the teacher to plan rich, differentiated, collaborative learning experiences that use diversity in the classroom as a resource. In this way teachers use the natural diversity in the class to encourage all learners to:

- Explore their growing knowledge and skills together, understanding and developing different ways of making meaning from learning
- Travel beyond the comfort zones of their predictable personal and cultural assumptions about themselves and others

Full inclusion is reflected in the teacher’s knowledge, attitudes, values and beliefs about learners and learning, as well as in their actions and responses when learners experience or encounter challenges in and outside the classroom.

We will explore teachers’ knowledge, attitudes, values and beliefs about learners and learning in more detail in Unit 2. In Unit 4 we will focus on practical strategies for supporting full inclusion in the classroom.

ACTIVITY 18: Forms of inclusion



Writing

For each of the four forms of inclusion described above, think about the following:

1. How are the theories and models you learnt about in the previous section reflected in each form of inclusion described above?
2. Next, think about your own experience at school, or experience you have had of a school as an adult—or both—and consider the following questions:
 - Which forms of inclusion have you experienced or seen in action?
 - Thinking about children's learning in this school—both academic and social—how well do you think these forms of inclusion worked? Explain your reasoning.
 - What attitudes and beliefs about children with learning challenges did you see or experience? Which attitudes and beliefs helped inclusion? Which did not?
 - Which of the theories and models you learnt about do you think underpinned the main beliefs, attitudes and culture of the school?
3. There are many different types of school in South Africa, for example rural, urban, peri-urban, informal, mainstream, full-service, special, academic, technical. If you have had experience of a school that is different from the one you wrote about above, compare and contrast these schools using the following questions:
 - Were the forms of inclusion you saw different? If so, how?
 - Were the impacts on learners of these forms of inclusion different? If so, how?
 - Were the theories and models that underpinned the main beliefs, attitudes and cultures of the schools different? If so, how?
 - Did you see differences in attitudes, beliefs and culture of the schools? If so, what were these?

5 Inclusive education in the South African context

In this final section we will clarify key concepts related to inclusive education and inclusive teaching, and the expectations for the actions and characteristics of teachers in South Africa.

5.1 The South African approach to inclusive education

There is not one, shared definition of inclusive education. Classrooms and schools are the products of different cultural, political and economic systems, with different dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Which learners are considered to be “marginalised” can therefore vary from context to context. As a result, the practice of inclusive education is as diverse as the classrooms, schools, communities and countries in which it is practised. If its core principles have been grasped it can be applied in many different ways.

“It is important to advance a rationale and understanding of inclusive education in South Africa that extends beyond universal values systems and examine own histories and cultural traditions of knowledge production and ground it in local community settings.” Phasha, Mahlo & Dei, 2017

In South Africa, we must take care not to allow models of inclusive education from developed countries of the global North to distort and obscure the dynamics, challenges and opportunities specific to us. **This module is informed by human-rights-based, strengths-based, Afrocentric, broad approaches to inclusive education.** Let’s examine these approaches in more detail.

5.1.1 A human-rights-based approach

Embedded in the **human-rights approach** is a strong belief that human beings are born equal and therefore must be afforded equal dignity and rights. In a human-rights approach:

- Education is a basic right for all learners
- Education should be accessible, good quality, and offered in educational environments that embrace and respect learner diversity
- Education should offer all learners opportunities to participate actively, learn to the best of their ability and, most importantly, succeed
- Those who hold responsibility for children’s development—the state, families, communities, teachers, civil society organisations, as well as the international community—should collaborate to provide an environment that enables quality, respectful, participative education to all in order that everyone has an equitable chance of success

Learners in South Africa have been denied quality education and have had unequal opportunities to succeed. It can be argued that even those who were historically privileged were robbed of the opportunities to understand and appreciate those who were different from them. In South Africa, inclusive education should be—and is seen by the government as—the educational strategy most likely to address the harms of the past and contribute to the creation of a democratic and just society where everyone’s rights are equally respected (Engelbrecht 2006).

5.1.2 A strengths-based approach

A **strengths-based approach** is a collaborative strategy. It involves identifying and building on an individual’s strengths and capacities to design support strategies that bring positive change (Pattoni, 2012). This approach values collaboration between an individual (learners) and stakeholders (teachers, families, communities and so on). It suggests that there are no deficits in an individual. Problems are external to an individual; the **problem** is the problem (Hammond and Zimmerman, 2017).

Hammond and Zimmerman further share the following social principles, which are embedded in the strategy:

- The rights of individuals to genuine ownership and participation in the process of change in which they are involved
- Enabling people to engage in strategies, relationships and reflection where they identify and define their strengths, aspirations and goals
- To embrace the sharing of power and resources, and to ensure that power imbalances among stakeholders are acknowledged and addressed fairly; all practice needs to be open, transparent, consultative, inclusive and collaborative
- Recognising and taking steps to address structural and cultural aspects of a person's life that limit their ability to control their own life

5.1.3 An Afrocentric approach

a. Aims of an Afrocentric approach

An **Afrocentric approach** advocates for the understanding of knowledge and reality from the position of Africans. This standpoint does not support the use of non-African approaches to understand problems in Africa, as that is seen as promoting colonial supremacy. Asante, cited in Phasha (2016) asserts that:

[W]hen Africans, continental or diasporan, view themselves as centered and central in their own history then they can see themselves as agents, actors and participants rather than as marginals on the periphery of the political or economic experience of Europe.

The adoption of an Afrocentric approach can contribute to the appreciation and acceptance of African values and ideals. Phasha et al. (2017: 5) stress that:

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 its 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.

b. Africa's vision of children's participation

The CSTL *Children's Participation Framework* (2018) identifies national education systems as being responsible for driving Africa's vision of rights-based inclusive and sustainable development. It recognises education as having a fundamentally transformative purpose: to prepare children to be active and engaged citizens in social, economic, political and cultural life and in so doing be the agents of sustainable development.

Agenda 2063 mainly attributes the failure to attain previous development goals to poor quality education, which has not adequately prepared the most marginalised children to take their place as active, engaged citizens and drive sustainable development. Crucially, education has failed to prepare them to be economically active and find employment in modern society. (African Union 2013, in CSTL, 2019)

To address the above challenges, it is required that by 2040 all African education systems should ensure:

- Access to and integration of affordable information and communication technology devices, content and connectivity
- A pedagogical approach that equips learners for employment and entrepreneurship, with a focus on technology, engineering, mathematics and informational technology, and that ensures girls participate fully in these subjects
- A rights-based curriculum with common features and standards across the continent, aimed at critical thinking and leadership, and espousing the values of integrity, accountability and transformative citizenship
- That children are prepared for change and equipped to be change agents; that they receive age-appropriate, informed and evidence-based education on sexuality and reproductive rights; that themes such as gender violence, discrimination and abuse and harmful cultural practices are addressed as part of a life-skills learning programme
- That every child knows their rights and responsibilities

(Africa's Agenda for Children, African Union, 2013: 12–13)

ACTIVITY 19: Facilitating sustainable development



Writing

Consider each of the above measures and say how you think provision of these measures could facilitate sustainable development on the continent.

What role could teachers play in implementing these measures?

What is the connection between sustainable development and inclusive education?

5.1.4 A broad approach

As we have seen, inclusive education is essential to ensuring sustainable development. While there is no one overall definition of inclusive education, there are some principles that combine to make up what can be described as a **broad approach** to inclusive education. We outline three key principles below.

a. Affirming diversity

Inclusive education affirms **learner diversity**. Each learner has natural, unique characteristics that influence how they make meaning from learning, and make them special and different from each other. These characteristics include: race; ethnicity; socio-economic circumstances; family circumstances; physical and mental health, gender and other identities; cultures; religions; beliefs; physical, cognitive and sensory differences.

b. Focus on all learners

You may previously have heard people talk about inclusive education as being focused on children who have a learning disability or difficulty that leads to them being seen as having “special educational needs”. As you can see from the list above, whilst these children make up one aspect of inclusive education, diversity in classrooms comes from a far wider base. “Special educational needs” and inclusive education are not the same thing, and these terms cannot be used interchangeably.

The approach adopted by this module rejects definitions of inclusive education that focus narrowly on “special needs” or disability. Inclusive education is a broad and dynamic approach for responding positively to all learners by:

- Giving them their right to attend school in their home community (physical access)
- Increasing their participation in a curriculum that is inclusive of their experiences and realities (engagement in quality education)
- Ensuring that they experience success in education and other areas of development

“An education system appropriate to the demands of the twenty-first century must be designed to establish a foundation of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills for all children and to nurture the particular talents of each child.” **Commission on Social Justice, 1994:131**

c. Responding to exclusion using the social model of disability

Inclusive education as a broad approach responds to exclusion from all spheres of life, and in particular at school, by paying attention to its culture, curriculum and community. It acknowledges the existence of **barriers to learning and participation**, which can prevent learners from access and engagement in the school system, much like a fence or a wall. Some of these barriers are a result of dominant systems of power and privilege, which we will discuss in more detail in [Section 5.2.6](#).

For some children, several of their different characteristics **intersect** or overlap, and they therefore experience the effects of more than one system of power and oppression. This experience can lead to them experiencing multiple barriers to learning and participation. The study of how these human characteristics overlap and the impact of these overlaps, is called **intersectionality**¹⁰.

The concept of intersectionality was introduced to feminist theory by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. She examined the interaction between race and gender, arguing that the experience of being both black and a woman could not be viewed separately, but that their intersection created a unique experience (Crenshaw, 1989). Since then, the concept has been broadened to include other factors that make us different. Intersectionality examines the ways in which several factors can intersect, or come together in one person's life to increase their marginalisation or exclusion.

In order to respond to everyone's unique experiences in ways that work to decrease marginalisation and exclusion, we need to understand intersectionality. Given the role of teachers as change agents in providing equitable, rights-based, inclusive education for all, we will spend some time exploring intersectionality further through an activity.

ACTIVITY 20: Examining intersectionality



Reading

Read the case study below, and consider the following questions (try and use some of the skills you learnt in the section on CDL—go back and have a look at these to remind you).

1. What's going on for Sihle? Note down the different factors in her life that have influenced her thinking about her life and her ambitions.
2. Next, draw lines between the factors that you think are connected, or overlap in some way. You will probably end up with something that looks quite messy—just like real life. Doing this should give you a good idea of how Sihle's circumstances **intersect** to compound the difficulties and inequalities she faces.
3. Now let's turn our attention to the roles of different people and institutions involved in Sihle's life. From your own knowledge and experience, as well as the case study, in what ways do the following have the potential to **increase** or **decrease** the intersecting inequalities Sihle faces?
Family
School
Services in her community
Friends
4. What do you notice about Sihle's agency as a learner and as a young woman? What do you think the role of agency is for young South Africans in overcoming the intersecting inequalities that many of them face?



Definition

10 Intersectionality: The study of what happens when different forms of discrimination, domination and oppression combine, overlap and intersect.

CASE STUDY: Sihle, Grade 10 learner from Johannesburg

Describing myself in conversation often proves to be a task without much difficulty. However, writing an article about my identity is more challenging.

At the turn of the century, 2000, I was born and named Sihle Mazibu. Many view this period to be a carefree one. However, it presents a great amount of introspection and self-development to prepare myself for the senior phase, as well as the future.

As a South African teenager, aspirations, goals and dreams play an important role in my daily life and are a necessity in motivating myself to strive for those dreams that seem unreachable. I aspire to get into a career that I am passionate about, hopefully in writing. I hope to pursue journalism and make a difference in society somehow, whether it is in my writing or motivating those who may not have their voices heard or the opportunities that I am exposed to.

I aspire to be an inspiration to women in order for them to realise their potential.

I want to be an inspiration to young black women, like myself, or those who come from underprivileged backgrounds so that they may realise that they are as powerful as any other demographic.

My biggest aspiration, although a cliché, is to be happy and fulfilled. As a female South African teenager, there are many challenges and obstacles that I may face in my progression into adulthood. I think my biggest challenge is doubt, especially self-doubt. Believing that you are not as good or worthy as your seemingly overachieving peers is a detrimental belief to hold. This is what stood in my way of doing my best to accomplish or initiate certain activities, such as simple extramurals or even sharing my passion for writing with many

others that I subconsciously convinced myself I was inferior to.

Socially, my challenge is attempting to excel as a female South African. For instance, a 2016 report by McKinsey & Company, Women Matter Africa, showed that in the private sector in Africa, only 5% of women are CEOs. This is just one of many statistics that show the difficulty and inequality that women face.

The economy proves to be an ever-challenging factor in South Africa and this too may be a challenge for me. Economical and financial difficulty also feed into my dilemma of deciding whether I want a career that I am passionate about or a career that I can excel in financially. Personally, I think South Africa is a beautiful country regardless of the difficulties and negatives.

I believe that one of the ways for us to grow further as a nation is to stop choosing to dwell on the negative events and allowing them to define the country, but rather to mend these negatives and to strive to reach for a place of freedom and contentment. I believe South Africans need to be hopeful and patient, no matter how difficult this proves to be.

I get extremely annoyed when I hear my peers discussing how they will leave the country for good in the future and then complaining about our current leadership.

I think travel and educating yourself on a global spectrum is incredible and even necessary. However, I believe that young people have a duty to take the initiative to better the country in as many ways as possible, instead of simply wanting to leave and abandon the country.

While it is crucial that you understand intersectionality in the context of dominant power and oppression, seeing and affirming it as something positive, which makes each person unique, is also important. Without our overlapping characteristics, identities and choices, we wouldn't be ourselves. As you have seen already, it's natural to be different. What is key about intersectionality is that by understanding its relationship to power, oppression, marginalisation and exclusion, we can plan to make sure this does not happen in our classrooms. Instead, we can plan for socially just, equitable educational opportunities for all our learners, at the same time acknowledging and affirming their uniqueness.

A broad approach to inclusive education enables this planning through the social model of disability: seeing the **barriers and inequalities** a child experiences as the problem, not the child. The responsibility for removing these barriers lies with the community around the child, in consultation with the child. In the classroom, this approach requires teachers to shift views they might have of learner diversity being an **obstacle**. Instead it asks them to **use** learners' diversity as an **opportunity** to extend and enrich teaching and learning activities, so that barriers to learning and participation are removed. We will come back to this idea in more detail in Units 2 and 4.



Figure 9: Inclusive education is everyone's responsibility

To summarise: Inclusive education involves **everyone** in school communities: caregivers, teachers, principals, officials, and the wider community, redefining school culture, policies and practices. The following aspects underpin schools' role in developing a broad approach to inclusive education:

- **Widening access**, both physically and to the same broad educational outcomes for all learners (Sands, Kozleski & French, 2000)
- **Affirming diversity:** difference is understood as an ordinary aspect of human development; exclusion, marginalisation and inequality are rejected
- **Meeting the learning needs of all learners:** no learners will be marginalised because of pre-determined judgements about who they are and what they can learn (Florian, 2017: 10–11; Phasha et al., 2017)
- **Aiming to improve all learners' outcomes:** academic, social and personal development

Taking this broad approach to inclusive education requires rethinking—or at least extending and enhancing—our approach to teaching and learning. We will explore practical ways of doing this in Unit 4. Here, we want to spend some time looking more closely at the roles of teachers in an inclusive education system. We will explore these roles in the next section.

5.2 What is inclusive teaching?

In this module we sometimes refer to an effective teacher within an inclusive education system as “an inclusive teacher”. By this we don't mean that an inclusive teacher is different from or additional to a science teacher or a Grade 1 teacher. We mean that an inclusive teacher is “**a good classroom teacher who teaches inclusively**” no matter what their grade or subject. But what do we really mean by “teaching inclusively”?

In South Africa and elsewhere there are many policies giving guidelines on what constitutes inclusion and how teachers and schools should be engaged in realising the goals. These policies reflect an understanding about the need for and goals of inclusion. However, a concern expressed by many is that the policies have not translated into reality in many classrooms (Hodgeson & Khumalo, 2016; Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Among the reasons attributed to this gap between policy and classroom practices is that teachers' thinking, practices and attitudes might not be attuned to principles of inclusion, as well as the constraining effects of poverty and inequality that are a common feature of schooling in South Africa. Many teachers, experienced and new, seem to have a very narrow understanding of what inclusive education is and who it is meant for. Often, teachers and other sectors of society regard inclusion as the specialised and separate kind of teaching and classroom accommodation that is afforded learners with disabilities only.

However, good quality teaching for diverse learners is not a specialised kind of teaching for a certain group of learners, but good quality teaching by all teachers, which caters for every learner in their classroom.

To prepare you for your career, in this section we seek to understand and identify a “teacher who teaches inclusively” in the South African context (not a specific “inclusive teacher” versus “teachers in general”, as all teachers in South Africa are required to teach inclusively). We identify the knowledge, attitudes and values that teachers need, as well as the roles they are expected to play.

Successfully teaching every learner in a diverse classroom requires a new way of looking at society and the function of schools, at learner diversity, and at our role as teachers.

5.2.1 Sociocultural consciousness and affirming views about diversity

Teachers can bring many assets into teaching–learning interactions. Unique personal experiences, and exposure to a teacher education curriculum that reflects current developments, can develop some of these assets. In particular, teachers who affirm diversity and who have **sociocultural consciousness** are key to the development of inclusive education in South Africa.

Sociocultural consciousness is the awareness that a person’s life experiences shape their view of, and about, the world. These experiences are influenced by a variety of factors, including ability, gender, race, ethnicity and social class. The awareness that my life experience might be different to your life experience is key. Villegas, Ciotoli and Lucas (2017) stress that teachers who lack it will unknowingly depend on only their own personal experiences to try and make sense of learners’ lives. This can lead to a mismatch of values and a lack of understanding. We will explore this further in Section 5.2.4.

To be socioculturally conscious teachers need to understand privilege and inequities in society and how these give rise to differential access to power. Being socioculturally sensitive and culturally literate enables teachers to understand that the medical deficit view of individual differences is maintaining the existing social hierarchy in schools (Pantic & Florian, 2015).

In order to develop a sense of belonging and interest in the classroom, teachers need to know their learners and recognise and accept that all learners are different (Florian, 2017; Oswald, 2010). In understanding who their learners are, teachers need to embrace African indigenous knowledge and values of social justice in education. Young (1990) argues that a school or society that embraces ubuntu and promotes values of diversity amongst race, gender, human dignity, HIV status, disability and social class, breaks down barriers to success and inclusion. The development of affirming views of differences therefore enables teachers who teach inclusively to recognise that learners already know a great deal and have experiences, ideas and language that can be built up and expanded (Villegas et al., 2017).

5.2.2 Knowledge

The South African Policy on *Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications* (MRTEQ) states clear expectations around what knowledge student teachers should graduate with in initial teacher preparation programmes such as PGCE and B Ed (RSA, 2015). The policy states that teachers as knowledge professionals should have a three-tier composite knowledge of what to teach, how to teach it and why. Underlying these is the understanding that the initial teacher education curriculum will have exposed student teachers to knowledge in the form of disciplinary, pedagogical, practical, fundamental learning and situational learning. The policy further sets the tone for basic competences of a beginner teacher that include:

1. Sound subject knowledge
2. Knowledge of how to teach the subjects including the selection of relevant teaching methodology, sequencing and pacing of content
3. Knowledge of their learners, their needs and how they learn so that they can tailor their teaching accordingly
4. Understanding of diversity in the South African context in order to teach in a manner that includes all learners. Additionally, they must have knowledge about inclusive education and be skilled in identifying and addressing barriers to learning, as well as in curriculum differentiation, to address the needs of individual learners within a class. Their knowledge of barriers to learning must enable them to identify learning or social problems and work in partnership with professional service providers to address these. In addition, they must be able to manage classrooms effectively across diverse contexts effectively in order to ensure a conducive learning environment.

Teaching inclusively therefore demands that teachers should have the necessary knowledge to:

- Understand that people’s ability is not fixed, but can change and develop
- Demonstrate how the difficulties learners experience in learning can be considered as challenges for teaching rather than problems within the learners
- Model new creative ways of working with and through others
- Demonstrate inclusive pedagogical perspectives and practices for teaching diverse learners that include understanding how learners construct knowledge
- Using the insights they gain from being socio-culturally literate to know more about learners’ lives and applying their inclusive pedagogical teaching skills to provide learners with the space in their classroom to express who they are and how they experience the world (Florian, 2017; Villegas et al., 2017)

The application of these inclusive teacher attributes will be explored in more depth in Units 2, 3 and 4.



Figure 10: The teacher’s role: ubuntu in the classroom
(Source: Adapted from Shockley, 2011)

5.2.3 Teachers’ roles in inclusive school communities

Teachers perform an array of social roles that go beyond what they do in the classroom. The teacher assumes the role of being an employee, caregiver, citizen, counsellor and so on in the school setting. Education Acts and policies, including *Education White Paper 6* in South Africa (DoE, 2001), consistently acknowledge the role of teachers in building an inclusive education system and place teachers at the heart of the initiatives for developing inclusive human-rights-based learning communities characterised by equity, equality and inclusivity.

The teacher’s role in promoting ubuntu values, including interdependence and communalism, is to promote the respect and value for diversity in the classroom, and plan to differentiate lessons to suit their learners’ needs. To do this they should:

- Be aware of their own identity, beliefs and practices; of who they are as people
- Be change agents and be sensitive to gender and racial issues by educating, empowering and instilling values of respect, ubuntu, humanity and inclusivity
- Respect and encourage other peoples’ perspectives, histories, cultures and traditions in their classrooms
- Allow space for learners’ voices and diverse perspectives on events that have shaped human history (Shockley, 2011)

5.2.4 Indigenous knowledge systems as part of inclusive teaching and learning

For over two decades, scholars have criticised the dominance of so-called Western epistemologies in African education and advocated for the integration of indigenous knowledges (Abdi, 2006; Breidlid, 2013; Dei & Simmons, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2016; Odora Hoppers, 2002; Odora Hoppers, Moja, & Mda, 1999). In this section we explore some of the practical aspects of indigenous knowledge integration and how this contributes to inclusive teaching and learning practice. The ideas in this section are largely drawn from Maren Seehawer’s study of South African Science Teachers’ strategies for integrating indigenous and Western knowledges in their classes (Seehawer, 2018).

Dei & Asgharzadeh define indigenous knowledge as:

... knowing developed by local/indigenous peoples over generations as a result of sustained occupation of or attachment to a place ... with the result that such occupancy allows peoples/communities to develop a perfect understanding of the relationship of their communities to their surrounding natural and social environments (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2006: 54).

ACTIVITY 21: What do you know about IKS?



Journal

Reflecting on the above definition, discuss the following question with a colleague. If you are studying on your own, reflect on it and make some notes in your journal.

What is the relevance of African indigenous knowledge systems to teaching and learning in South Africa?

Sosibo (2013) noted that teachers play an important role in socialising learners in the real world, and need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to demonstrate and impart to their learners what cultural diversity is. African indigenous knowledges are seen as fundamental to reshaping African curricula and education systems in order to advance the “cultural and socio-educational transformation of the African continent” (Higgs, 2016: 90), create an African identity (Van Wyk & Higgs, 2012), and counteract colonial influences.

Abdi (2005) does not propose a return to pre-colonial education, but rather a constructive integration of both indigenous and Western knowledges in education. This integration would include a critique of the way power and knowledge have been used to marginalise and exclude local knowledge and perspectives.

a. Why integrate indigenous knowledges?

The teachers who participated in Seehawer’s action research study identified the following reasons for integrating indigenous and Western knowledges:

- **Decolonisation:** To decolonise people’s minds and advocate against the perception of IK as inferior (Abdi, 2006; Breidlid & Botha, 2015; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2006; Dei & Simmons, 2009; Ngara, 2012)
- **Relevance:** Making classroom science more relevant through:
 - Teaching knowledge that is relevant for learners’ daily lives (Keane & Malcolm, 2003)
 - Using indigenous knowledges as a tool to make Western science more accessible, moving from the known to the unknown (Mawere, 2015)
- **Widening perspectives:** To offer alternatives and broaden horizons: There are several options in the world to know or do the same thing in different ways—“two-eyed seeing” (Aikenhead & Elliott, 2010: 326)
- **Sustainable development:** To promote local solutions and a healthy, sustainable lifestyle, environmental protection (Breidlid, 2013; Glasson et al., 2010)
- **Cultural identity:** To connect learners with their culture and bring back the role of parents, community, and elders into education (Khupe, 2014; Mawere, 2015; Msimanga & Shiza, 2014)

b. Challenges to integrating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum

Let’s consider some of the challenges to integrating IK into the curriculum, and ways to overcome these.

ACTIVITY 22: Identifying and overcoming challenges



Reading

Refer back to the article, *South African Science teachers’ strategies for integrating Indigenous and Western Knowledges in their classes: practical lessons in decolonisation*, pages 97 to 100 (<http://bit.ly/2WI03XF>).

1. What did the co-researchers (teachers) identify as the three main challenges to integrating IK into the curriculum?
2. How did the internalised idea of indigenous knowledges as inferior contribute to the challenges?
3. What strategies did the teachers come up with to address the challenges?
4. Can you think of any other strategies?

Sayed, Motala and Hofman (2017) suggest that trainee teachers need to empower themselves with **epistemic**¹¹ agency so that they can instil in their learners the ability to be creative and accept all forms of knowledge. In the next section we look at the importance of **teacher and learner agency**¹² in inclusive classrooms.

5.2.5 Teacher and learner agency

a. Teacher agency

Schon (2018) defines **teacher agency**¹³ as: “The ability of a teacher to actively shape their work in order to successfully progress the challenges they encounter. Agency is grown through a complex interplay of a teacher’s qualities as an individual and the school conditions in which they operate.”

Central to government’s strategy to build an inclusive education system is the understanding that teachers, in particular, hold the key to transforming the system—they are the “**change agents**” in the system. Research shows that teachers are the most significant in-school factor influencing learner achievement (Hattie, 2009; OECD 2005, cited in Oswald & Engelbrecht, 2018; Swart & Oswald, 2008). Bhatnagar & Das (2013) suggest that teachers are the most important variable in the implementation of inclusive education.

So, what does being a change agent for inclusive education mean for you as a teacher? At a broad level, you need to understand that, as a teacher:

- You have a significant, vital role in transforming the education system
- This role is underpinned by a social justice agenda
- To make inclusive education meaningful for South Africa, you need to contextualise the theories, models and approaches to inclusive education, and embed them in relevant, local cultural ideas

More specifically, **teacher agency** involves:

- A **sense of purpose**, including a commitment to social justice in education
- **Competence** in using an inclusive pedagogical approach, including **working collaboratively with others**
- **Autonomy**: understanding and making thoughtful and responsible use of your power and position in relation to other relevant stakeholders, including learners
- **Reflexivity**: a capacity to systematically evaluate your own practices and school setting

Teacher agency in an inclusive education system implies a shift from viewing teaching as the implementation of policies designed by others, to a strong focus on **teachers shaping conditions in their own practice**. This shift is needed in order to develop alternatives to policy and practice based on a different way of thinking about human difference (Florian, 2017: 18–19).

Teachers who consider themselves to be agents of change regard teaching as an ethical activity and assume responsibility for intervening in inequitable school practices that affect quality teaching and learning. Teachers are guided by a code of professional ethics which recognises the values of ubuntu. The South African Council for Educators’ (SACE) *Code of Professional Ethics* (2017) stipulates the following professional ethics for teachers.



Definition

11 Epistemic: Relating to knowledge or knowing

12 Teacher and learner agency: Their active contribution to shaping their work as teachers and learners and its conditions—for the overall quality of education. In this way agency speaks to what teachers and learners do and not what they have.

13 Teacher agency: The individual and collective actions taken by teachers in situations in which they find themselves. In this sense agency is not given but involves a negotiation of power as constituted in the individual teachers, structures and conditions in which they find themselves.

When working with learners, teachers must:

- Respect the dignity, beliefs and constitutional rights of learners and in particular children, which includes the right to privacy and confidentiality
- Acknowledge the uniqueness, individuality, and specific needs of each learner, guiding and encouraging each to realise their potentialities
- Strive to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution of South Africa
- Exercise authority with compassion
- Avoid any form of humiliation, and refrain from any form of physical or psychological abuse
- Refrain from improper physical contact with learners
- Promote gender equality
- Refrain from any form of sexual harassment (physical or otherwise) of learners
- Refrain from any form of sexual relationship with learners at any school
- Use appropriate language and behaviour in their interaction with learners, and acts in such a way as to elicit respect from the learners
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of learners

ACTIVITY 23: Dealing with behavioural issues ethically



Writing

Consider a Grade 9 class that is chaotic and unruly, with learners that bully each other and don't listen to instructions. Refer to the SACE *Code of Professional Ethics* and explain how you would deal with these issues in an ethical way.

b. Learner agency

It is important to remember that learners also have agency. **Learner agency**¹⁴ involves learners being actively engaged in their learning. It means they have the power to act and the skills to take responsibility for their own learning; they therefore rely less on the teacher, the curriculum or other structures. There is growing evidence that children do better personally, socially and academically when they are encouraged to take ownership of their learning. Let's look at how both teacher and learner agency can support inclusive education and address issues around exclusion and marginalisation.

ACTIVITY 24: Using teacher agency to empower learners



Reading

Read the scenarios below, which represent challenging situations that you might encounter as a teacher. Consider the following questions:

1. How could you use your agency to support the learner in these scenarios?
2. How you could draw on the policies, values and models discussed in this unit to help you with this?
3. Are there opportunities for the learners in some of these scenarios to use their agency? If so, can you suggest how?



Definition

14 Learner agency is when learners have “the power to act”, when they take responsibility for their own learning, and don't only rely on inputs from the teacher, the curriculum, the resources and so on.

Scenario 1

Leon is being verbally and physically bullied because of his perceived sexual orientation. His anxiety around the bullying is affecting his academic performance, which in turn lowers his sense of self worth even further. To report the bullying would necessitate a conversation with school management about his sexuality, which he is not confident enough to talk about. Homophobic staff members oppose the bullying weakly, or choose to remain silent when the bullies make homophobic remarks. The school management avoids dealing with it because it would mean directly confronting their community's prejudices around sexuality and taking a stand. A conspiracy of silence persists.

Scenario 2

Noma has just started working at an isolated rural school. Soon after beginning work she is sexually harassed by the principal. When she talks about it with some of the other female teachers, they laugh and encourage her to not make a big deal out of it. When the principal eventually forces himself on her she threatens to report the incident to the police. On resuming her duties at school, she suddenly finds she is ostracised by the other female teachers. When she pushes for an explanation, she is told that her threats against the principal are making it difficult for all of them. She discovers that many teachers have had the same experience but are afraid of losing certain privileges they enjoy at the school and perhaps even their jobs.

Scenario 3

Khotso uses a wheelchair. His parents make an application to send him to a school, but are turned away. The school states that it is unable to meet Khotso's access needs. They had already rejected another child a week before on the same grounds, so the procedure for refusing a child who uses a wheelchair is already in place. Khotso's parents, however, are assertive and insist on hearing exactly what the school feels it is unable to do. The parents argue that barriers to access are a fact of life for a person who uses a wheelchair. They also argue that the school's fear of not being able to meet Khotso's access needs should not prevent them from at least exploring how to make practical, proactive and inclusive arrangements.

Scenario 4

Christelle, a refugee child whose parents were killed in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, arrives in South Africa. A school gives Christelle's caregiver misinformation about application dates and documentation. The caregiver has all the legal asylum papers, but Christelle has no birth certificate and is not related to them. The school is aware of how difficult it is for them to fulfil all the red tape required for "unaccompanied minors". In South Africa, the Constitution, the Child Care Act, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Refugee Act protect unaccompanied foreign children. But schools that do not produce the proper paperwork risk being fined by the Department of Home Affairs.

As we saw earlier in Section 5.1.3, according to the CSTL *Children's Participation Framework* (2018), learners' participation in democratic processes does not begin when they reach voting age. It begins when they embrace the knowledge, values and skills that make participatory democratic processes a reality in their classroom, their school, their community and their homes. Learners can become active citizens long before they vote.

The next activity asks you to consider ways in which teachers and learners can play an active role—using their agency—in challenging some of the policies and practices that persist in the South African education system. Despite the clear requirement for a rights-based approach to education, policies and practices that undermine human rights still exist in South Africa. You might remember the case of Pretoria Girls High School and hairstyles that were prioritised as "normal" over others. We are going to use this case to consider ways that both learners and teachers can use their agency to address policies and practices that undermine human rights.

ACTIVITY 25: Challenging institutionalised racism in schools through learner and teacher agency



Reading

Read the blog and article below about the #StopRacismAtPretoriaGirlsHigh protest. Then consider the following questions:

1. Why do you think racist policies and practices have persisted so long after the end of apartheid?
2. Why do you think a word like “neatness” has been allowed to become a tool for applying racial prejudice?
3. How do you think learners internalise the racist (or sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, etc.) practices of institutions and begin applying them to themselves?
4. What role can school-going youth play in leading or invigorating the struggle for dignity, equality and freedom?
5. In what ways can you as a teacher be a social justice activist?

BLOG

OUR SCHOOLS ARE THE BREEDING GROUND OF RACISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Will-Ed Zungu 31/01/2017 02:58 GMT | Updated 31/01/2017 02:58 GMT

It's no longer individuals that are racist per se; it's institutions like schools that perpetuate white supremacy in more surreptitious ways.

Apartheid ended 22 years ago but its racism has stuck around and become institutionalised. It particularly manifests itself within schools... In August [2016], the #StopRacismAtPretoriaGirlsHigh protest made international news. At Pretoria Girls High School a group of Grade 8 girls, led by 13-year-old Zulaikha Patel, protested over racial abuse by teachers and institutional racism in their school, which prohibits black girls from having cornrows, afros, dreadlocks, and any other African hairstyles that don't meet the school's white Eurocentric standard of “neatness”. At the school, black girls were given brushes and told aggressively to “look at yourself in the mirror and neaten your hair.” When girls spoke in their mother tongue with their friends, teachers would say, “Stop making funny noises or you will have to sit in my office.” In reaction to this, the black girls mobilised and stood as one. The girls held hands and silently walked to the front of the school. Security guards shut the gates and pushed the girls back. They kept walking and were met by the school's governing body, extra security, and police threatening to arrest them.

Most South African schools, private and public, don't allow black boys and girls to have African hairstyles because of “neatness”. Black girls' hair is a central component to their identity and culture, and for decades these schools have robbed them of it. Black girls in schools are subjected to intense scrutiny by their peers and teachers.

If you're told from your school years that you are not enough, you eventually start to believe it. South African schools are sending a message that their standard of beauty does not include black girls, and certainly not their natural hair. Fight against this, then you're labelled as an “angry black woman”. This is not just an issue of hair. This is racism.

At one school I attended, black boys weren't allowed to shave their heads because the school claimed white boys would want to do the same, and it would look untidy (I know, it made absolutely no sense to me either). Schools not only make black people hate their hair at an emotional level but at an institutional level. As a junior in high school, I was the kid with a mini Afro. People stared at me and asked to touch my hair. All I wanted was to be able to comb and gel my hair like the white boys. The institutionalisation of white supremacy even made me hate my own hair. I would constantly ask my mom to relax my hair. I'm thankful, in retrospect, that she refused. I have an Afro now, and it's not just a styling choice, it's a political statement.

I believe high school students with different opinions can educate one another through conversation. This agonizing process involves sitting down with the same people who have discriminated and oppressed you. I've been called “monkey” for demanding racial equality, a “faggot” for identifying as a feminist. I've been accused of constantly playing the “Race Card” (which does not exist, by the way). Insults like these make it easy to become cynical about the possibility of change. But part of the fight is believing in everybody's capacity to rethink their racist views.

To all my beautiful black people: I love your hair, I love your shape, I love your skin, don't ever let society tell you any different. Stand up for yourself, believe in yourself and join the fight.

(Source: Zungu, 2017: <http://bit.ly/2Kmx0WW>)

GAUTENG / 30 AUGUST 2016, 07:27AM /
TANKISO MAKHETHA

RACISM FURY AT PRETORIA GIRLS HIGH: MEC STEPS IN



Pretoria - Sometime last week, a pupil at Pretoria High School for Girls presented an assignment highlighting inequality in South Africa.

The girl was allegedly taken to the principal's office and reportedly threatened with suspension. By Saturday, during the spring fair, black pupils at the school marched, claiming they were fed-up with institutionalised racism and discrimination at the school.

On Monday anger vibrated across the country as footage of heavily armed security personnel patrolling the schoolyard appeared. They threatened to arrest the pupils.

The pupils were protesting against the school's hair policy and for being questioned whenever they were in groups of two or more. They also claim they were barred from using their home languages in private discussions.

An online petition was created requesting Lesufi and headmistress Karen du Toit to ensure the school's code of conduct did not discriminate against black and Asian girls. It also requested that disciplinary action be taken against teachers and staff who have implemented racist policies or racist actions, while also demanding that pupils who protested not be victimised.

Lesufi met with pupils, management and the school governing body to resolve the problems. Hundreds of young black girls emerged from their classrooms at break-time, repeatedly chanting "We are tired".

In an emotion-filled two-hour meeting, pupils related some of the incidents they had experienced at the school. Several schoolgirls, who cannot be named because they are minors, made horrendous claims of being insulted and manhandled. "I was called a monkey by a teacher. It pains me even now because we are treated differently at this school. We are made to feel that we do not belong," recounted one tearful girl.

"This was necessary because race has been an issue for a long time," said Neo Kgobane. "We should have done something about it a long time ago. The school needs to step up its efforts in changing some of the rules that have kept many girls oppressed."

Following another meeting by Lesufi, parents, pupils, governing body and management, a committee will be appointed to investigate the matter.

Lesufi said there would be a review of the code of conduct and setting aside of the regulation regarding black hair. The committee set up to look into the matter must report back within 21 days. Schooling was expected to resume on Tuesday.

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Pretoria News

(Source: Makhetha, 2016: <http://bit.ly/2L2TpUu>)

Teachers who consider themselves to be agents of change take their ethical commitment seriously and assume responsibility for intervening in unfair, unequal school practices that negatively impact quality teaching and learning. Many of these unfair school practices are connected to power, so it is important that we examine the role of power in schools in more detail.

5.2.6 Power dynamics in school communities

ACTIVITY 26: Think about power dynamics



Journal

Consider the following questions. If possible, discuss them with a colleague. If you are working on your own, note your answers in your journal.

1. Think about the power dynamics in your family when you were growing up.
 - Who paid the bills and supported the family financially?
 - Who made the decisions?
 - What power did you have in decision-making?
 - Was access to opportunities equal? Why or why not?
2. What about power dynamics at your school when you were a learner?
 - What power dynamics and power relations did you experience at school? Give examples.
 - What did you experience more of: being empowered or people having power over you? Give examples.
 - How have the above experiences affected the way you will approach your practice as a teacher?

All around us things are happening that give some people power, take power away from others, or result in power being shared. We call these processes “power relations”. We find power relations in families, schools, sports teams, communities, religious institutions, workplaces, countries, and the global community. Understanding the power dynamics of a system means understanding the ways in which energy flows and is exchanged in that system.

For example, think about the power relations between caregivers and teachers; and among different learners. In theory, while both parties (the caregivers and teachers are adults, the learners are children) have equal power, many factors can shape the dynamics and create the context. For example, both parties have power related to their respective roles, but both may at times feel powerless. Sometimes, there may be unspoken or invisible hierarchies within schools. Some caregivers may have more influence or personal power in the school, or they may have a personal relationship with the principal. Power relations arising from social inequity and exclusion can be complex. Let’s look at this complexity through a short case study.

ACTIVITY 27: Power in the classroom



Reading

Read the case study below and consider the following questions. Link your thoughts to ecological systems theory discussed in Section 4.1.3.

1. To what extent do you agree with the idea that teachers are in a position of power? Explain your answer by giving examples.
2. What aspects of power, in your opinion, are missing from this description of teacher power?
3. It has been noted that there is a potential conflict between meeting diverse learners’ needs and expecting everyone to meet the same standards. How does this change or expand our understanding of teacher power?

CASE STUDY: Hester

Hester, a student teacher doing teaching practice at a school in Cape Town, overhears her tutor teacher saying to a colleague:

As a teacher you are in a position of power. Every day you make choices that affect your learners directly and have a significant impact on their

actions. Use your power creatively to empower your learners. To do this effectively, you need to understand the nature of change and learn how to use your power to influence the process of change in your classroom. With enough knowledge and time, you can do anything, change anything.

The above conversation overlooks the complex relationship between a teacher's personal agency and the conditions at the school. This relationship involves power, which works in different forms and at different levels. As a result, Miller (2001: 6) suggests teachers need to understand four different types of power that impact on teacher agency:

- **Power over:** Top-down power, typically found in hierarchical or patriarchal relationships (the most common form of power in society)
- **Power with:** The collective power of people and groups working together
- **Power within:** The potential power and strength within each person, which comes from the intimate relationship an individual has with their psyche or self
- **Power to:** The power to act and achieve something (agency), the power to make a difference

ACTIVITY 28: Reflect on teacher agency and power



Writing

Consider the following questions in relation to the four types of power:

1. What do each of the four types of power above mean to you as a teacher? What challenges do you foresee related to each type of power?
2. The discussion around inclusive education refers specifically to the human power teachers have. This enables them to make a difference within structures and cultures, and to either transform or reproduce these (Pantic & Florian, 2015; Pantic, 2015). What are the implications of this idea of human power for inclusive education and social justice in classrooms and schools?

By now it is clear that a teacher's contribution to inclusive education is not confined to content knowledge. Instead, this contribution includes creating an environment where the intersecting domination of power—"power over" in Miller's terms—is questioned and disrupted by inclusive education.

People who hold the "power over" role often believe that they have earned this power or that everyone could have access to it if only they worked to earn it. Dominance here is not about numbers, it's about the amount of power or status awarded to a feature of society. For example, the language of teaching and learning is often not a home language for the majority of learners and teachers. Yet from Grade 4 learning happens in English, or Afrikaans in an Afrikaans-speaking school. If you are an English or Afrikaans speaker, this makes you part of a dominant group because power lies with the English or Afrikaans languages. Power in this and many other contexts is not earned; it is granted to people in the dominant groups—whether they want it or not.

Because they don't have to think about whether they have power or not, people in dominant groups are frequently unaware that they are members of a dominant group. They have the privilege of being able to see themselves as individuals rather than stereotypes. People who do not have power, and are oppressed, do not have this privilege. We can therefore understand privilege as unearned power, which works on many levels: personal, cultural and institutional. It means advantages and benefits are granted to dominant groups at the expense of oppressed groups.

Equally important is how power and privilege **intersect** to give rise to power relations, which in turn determine who decides what happens in a situation. Generally, people are privileged because of their identity—the characteristics that make up who they are. Recognising privilege is sometimes difficult for people who have it, because they don't have to think about it. However, a person's understanding of their own privilege provides them with an opportunity to foster empathy, increase understanding and play a part in correcting some of the inequities that exist in society.

There are many ways that teachers can contribute to questioning and disrupting dominant models of power and privilege. In relation to “power over”, for example, a teacher might use CDL to reflect on and disrupt features of classrooms that appear to be second nature in the classroom, such as:

- Routines, rules or customs that reinforce stereotypes of privilege, prejudice, language use or actions
- Who decides what is best for everyone
- How these decisions are made

It is also crucial for teachers to create an environment where everyone can question their own attitudes towards power and privilege. For example:

- What assumptions do learners in a class have about the concept of a family, religious beliefs, people in loving relationships, accent and intelligence, citizenship, socio-economic status and class?
- How are these ideas portrayed in textbooks, in classroom activities, in school culture, etc?
- What worth do learners place on the opinion of different members of society, e.g. a wealthy business person, a poor, unemployed person, a woman, a scientist, a chef?

By working in this way, teachers bring their own life experience into the classroom. This experience has the potential to be an important quality of inclusive teachers in South Africa—as long as it is accompanied by awareness that others have different experiences.

ACTIVITY 29: A call to educators



Audio Visual

Watch the YouTube video, *TED Talk: Every kid needs a champion*, in which Rita Pierson delivers a rousing call to educators: <http://y2u.be/SFnMTHhKdkw>

Watch it a second time and answer these questions:

1. What is Rita Pierson's call to educators?
2. What attributes does Rita Pierson have that make her a good educator?
3. What strategies does she use to build relationships with her learners?
4. What impact do you think Rita Pierson's mother had on Rita's classroom practice?
5. Do you think it's important for teachers to have role models? Give reasons for your answer.

ACTIVITY 30: Interview a teacher



Discussion

Now, conduct an interview with a teacher in the phase you are studying. Aim to find out about their:

- Personal vision of themselves as a teacher and the ethos they aim to create in the classroom—including their views on power
- Commitment to social justice in their teaching practice
- Thoughts about diversity in the classroom
- Ability and willingness to constantly re-examine their personal vision of teaching and the impact this has on their teaching practice
- Familiarity with local knowledge and customs and whether this helps to make their classroom more inclusive

If you are able to, record the interview—many mobile phones now have a good recording facility. If not, take as many notes as you can during the interview then review these straight afterwards, adding further notes from your memory.

Next, analyse the teacher's responses to each of the five areas above. Give clear examples and explanations for each of these areas. In addition, highlight where the teacher is facing challenges with working inclusively.

5.3 A summary of inclusive teacher characteristics

For the purpose of this module we have developed a summary of inclusive teaching characteristics in the South African context, and concepts stemming from the policies, values, theories and models discussed in this unit, as well as findings from the Teaching for All research report (Majoko, Phasha et al., 2018).

Teaching inclusively means:

- Understanding learners' individual needs and abilities
- Changing and modifying teaching and learning content, approaches, assessment, structures and strategies to support meaningful learning
- Collaborating with key stakeholders as equal partners in education
- Researching, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on learners' progress

Inclusive teachers:

- Exhibit high expectations for all learners
- Subscribe to and protect the rights of children
- Are agents for social justice
- Value and affirm learner diversity
- Understand how intersecting identities manifest and can compound exclusion
- Act in the best interests of the child
- Collaborate with fellow teachers and other stakeholders
- Engage in classroom practices that facilitate and support learning for all
- Are reflective, critical and creative thinkers
- Are lifelong learners who continue to hone their own skills as inclusive professionals

Another way of summarising some characteristics of teachers who work inclusively is shown in the table below. We will revisit each of these areas in more detail in Units 2 and 4.

Table 6: Knowledge, attitudes and skills of an inclusive teacher

Knowledge	See the difficulties learners experience in learning as challenges for teaching rather than problems within the learners.
Attitudes	Be aware of your preconceptions about learners' abilities, especially when these might marginalise or stigmatise learners in the classroom, or exclude them from learning in some way.
Skills	Model new creative ways of working with and through others. Demonstrate inclusive pedagogical views and practices for teaching diverse learners, which include understanding how individual learners construct knowledge. Use the insights you gain from being socioculturally conscious to find out more about learners' lives. Use your inclusive pedagogical teaching skills to provide learners with the space to express who they are and how they experience the world.

(Source: Adapted from Florian, 2017; Villegas et al., 2017)

ACTIVITY 31: My personal vision



Journal

Think of a teacher who had a positive impact on your life when you were at school. What impact did this teacher have on your life?

1. What qualities did this teacher have?
2. Why do you want to be a teacher?
3. Consider the summary description of an inclusive teacher. Which of those characteristics are already personal strengths for you? Which areas do you feel you need to develop?
4. What is your personal vision for yourself as teacher?

Suggested study unit assessment



Assessment 1

Read and complete the task below.

Critically discuss:

- The development of inclusive education policies, laws and conventions, internationally and in South Africa
- The principles and values of ubuntu and human rights in relation to inclusive education
- How the theories and models of inclusive education embrace the learner as important and able to reach their full potential within the South African context

Consider, for example:

- How useful you think each of these areas to inclusive education in South Africa, explaining your thinking in detail
- How relevant you think these areas are to a variety of school contexts in South Africa (rural, urban, peri-urban, informal, mainstream, full-service, special, academic, technical)

To help you plan your response, you may find it useful to refer back to the notes and reflections you have made in your journal as you have progressed through the unit.

Show your own, original thinking in your response, as well as making reference to the unit content and the key readings.



Assessment 2

Read the following case study and complete the task below it.

CASE STUDY

Naledi is a newly qualified Senior Phase and FET teacher at Diqhobong High school. She is the youngest in both age and experience at the school and these two realities somehow make her feel insecure. But she is enthusiastic about teaching, and has lots of ideas she would like to try.

As an “insider-outsider” at Diqhobong she feels there are a lot of things that need to be reconsidered. There are many learners that she has learnt are struggling with reading and writing skills across Grades 8–12. She has started getting good results with some of these struggling learners in her classes by putting into practice some of what she has learnt through her module on inclusive education. She knows she still has a lot to learn, but she has been pleasantly surprised at the positive effects of:

- Making sure the content of the lessons is relevant to the learners
- Having high expectations of everyone in the classroom
- Creating an atmosphere of respect and dignity in her classroom where disrespect and “put downs” are openly addressed with the learners concerned
- Encouraging her learners to take ownership of their learning, i.e. increasing their learner agency
- Really listening to her learners to understand their experiences and needs

- Responding to their needs as best she can, and getting support from colleagues when she can’t

Naledi discovers that her colleagues believe that anything that has to do with inclusive education (which they understand as special education at Diqhobong) is seen as a primary school matter or something that should be left to special schools. For example, there is no school-based support team, even though the policy says there needs to be one. She has noticed that at Diqhobong some of the issues highlighted in her Inclusive Education module—in particular an inaccessible curriculum, low expectations, lack of opportunity for learner voice, and bullying of learners who are seen as “different”—are “taken for granted” occurrences. Some are just accepted as “normal”, some are so embedded in the culture that no one is thinking about them, and some are obvious issues that are not being addressed.

Naledi decides she would like to share some ideas about inclusive education with her colleagues. She discusses the idea with her HOD, who is enthusiastic and supportive. The school holds fortnightly staff “bonding sessions”. Naledi volunteers to share information about barriers to learning and participation for high school learners, and some of the things she is doing that seem to be increasing learner achievement and well-being in her classroom.

Your assessment task

Imagine that you are Naledi. Use the material from the unit to develop aims and a plan for her presentation.

You can present your plan in any way that makes sense to you. It could, for example, be a mind map, a written document, a series of posters, a PowerPoint presentation, or an audio or video recording.

Your plan will work successfully if it:

- Shows your thinking clearly: anyone else looking at your plan should be able to follow it
- Presents key values, theories, models and concepts you think are particularly important for your colleagues
- Shows the key issues for each idea that you present
- Shows how the ideas are related to each other
- Shares what you have done to make a difference in your classroom, and any future plans you have
- Suggests some ways forward for teachers and for the school as a whole

Study unit summary and reflection

In this unit you have learnt about a number of concepts related to inclusive education, including:

- The context of exclusion and its impact
- The development of policies, laws and conventions that support inclusive education
- Ubuntu and human rights values and the role of IKS in inclusive education
- Theories and models related to inclusive education
- The qualities and attitudes you need as a teacher working inclusively
- How all of these areas impact on the vision for inclusive education in South Africa

In addition, you have learnt—through CDL—a way of thinking critically about concepts that are presented to you.

Inclusive teaching requires you to have some knowledge and skills. However, as we have emphasised throughout this unit, more importantly it requires a positive attitude, genuine curiosity, understanding, and commitment to being a change agent. Even within the constraints of the existing school system, it is always possible to take significant steps that ensure the inclusion of all learners in classrooms and schools. In particular, following a social model approach, where the education system itself is seen as the barrier to learning and participation—as opposed to a medical model approach, where the learner is seen as the problem, can be transformative in the way that you think about and respond to your learners.

Through this unit, you should now have a solid theoretical base from which to build further knowledge and skills to teach inclusively; these will be developed further as we continue through the module.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: South African policies supporting inclusive education

Appendix 2: Two other theories underpinning inclusive education

Appendix 1: South African policies supporting inclusive education

These policies have been summarised for use with Activity 8.

South African Constitution and Bill of Rights (Act No 108 of 1996)

The South African Constitution is the foundation on which all legislation and policies around education are instituted (RSA, 1996). Chapter two of the Constitution (Bill of Rights) sets out the fundamental rights of all South Africans, but also states when rights may be restricted. All the ensuing education policies are premised on the principles well established in the constitution. Developed within a human rights discourse, the policies support the following rights:

- To basic education
- Not to be unfairly discriminated against
- To life and integrity, privacy; freedom and access to information
- Of freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion
- Of freedom of association
- To a safe environment
- Of the best interests of the child

South African Schools Act (No 84 of 1996)

This is a multi-pronged policy (DoE, 1996) with six chapters that establish guidelines to schools with regard to:

- Compulsory attendance, admission to school and exemption from compulsory attendance
- Suspension and expulsion from school
- Code of conduct including disciplinary parameters within which schools should operate
- Language policy
- Governance and professional management of schools
- Funding
- Establishment of governing bodies, including terms of reference, roles and responsibilities
- Rules for the establishment of independent schools
- Transition issues
- General provisions

The policy emphasises inclusion and clearly articulates the roles and responsibility of public schools to ensure an environment conducive to teaching and learning. It is positioned within a social justice and transformative framework and therefore seeks to promote equality and create equitable opportunities in schools.

However, the policy presumes that schools are all in the same circumstances, so implementing the policy is doable for everyone, as well as being something that everyone will want to do. It assumes that each school has a similar level of capacity, equal distribution of decision-making powers, competency, willingness, availability of resources, and attitude towards inclusive education. However, there are huge differences among schools—for some the policy areas outlined in the act will be part of their everyday practice and inclusive education is embedded in school culture, and for others this is not the case at all—but the policy does not offer any answers about how to address these differences.

The policy is also vague on how to implement ways of monitoring that all children are attending school, or are even in a position to attend school. Many families, schools and communities face social and financial challenges. Some of these are beyond the control of children and their caregivers, for example in communities where families have been severely affected by HIV and other diseases. Children who should be in school may have to take on added, adult responsibilities such as providing for their siblings in child-headed households. (Brookes et al., 2004)

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (2001)

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001) focuses on creating an inclusive education system in which all learners have equal access to quality educational opportunities. It aims to change the following so as to meet the needs of all learners:

- Attitudes
- Behaviour
- Teaching methods
- Curricula
- Environment

The primary focus of the policy is on changing the understanding of and attitude towards learners previously labelled as “deficient”, “lacking” or “disabled”, replacing these labels with an understanding that these learners have diverse needs, which need to be met by the education community. The policy states that systems, and not people, are lacking and deficient. As a result, it suggests a major change to structures and systems that will facilitate access, particularly for those learners not previously attending mainstream/ordinary schools. It calls for a continuum of support throughout the education system, covering the three types of schools it discusses: ordinary, full service and special.

The weakness of *Education White Paper 6* is that, although it lays strong foundations that support the concept of inclusive education, it does not offer clear, practical pathways that schools can follow to implement inclusive education. This has slowed implementation, and the progress that has been made is not consistent across groups of learners or geographical areas.

Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2014)

The key purposes of the SIAS policy are:

1. To provide the framework for a standardised approach to screening, identifying, assessing and supporting learners who require additional support, to enable them to perform to their potential in school.
2. To promote early identification of learners who experience barriers to learning and participation, enabling learners to have a positive experience of participation and inclusion at school.
3. To assist teachers, School-Based Support Teams and District-Based Support Teams in their efforts to meet the needs of all learners, and to provide quality teaching and learning.

The SIAS policy grew from an identified need to provide practical pathways for schools to follow around inclusive education, following *Education White Paper 6*. It also draws on the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, and is a rights-based policy that places the onus on the education system to work to remove barriers to learning and participation. Its view of support is that it needs to be holistic, taking into account learners’ individual circumstances and taking a multi-agency approach, bringing in specialists from different areas as needed. It acknowledges that barriers to learning and participation are multiple and various, as are suitable support strategies. It categorises these support strategies into three levels:

- **Low:** generally met within the school’s usual provision, proactive and preventative
- **Moderate:** over and above the school’s usual provision, usually short term and of moderate intensity
- **High:** more specialised, of higher intensity and frequency

The organising principle for support within SIAS is that every learner has the right to receive quality basic education within their local community. This means that, as far as practically possible and affordable, the support must be brought to the learner with little or no movement from their local community and home. It every type of school—ordinary, full service and special—is expected to offer an inclusive community that provides quality education, care and support for its learners.

One of the questions that the SIAS policy raises is about the capacity of stakeholders (for example teachers) to participate at the different stages involved in organising and monitoring support. In order to make the policy and expectations clear, there is a need for teacher training—both at Pre-service Education and Training (PRESET), and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) levels—and ongoing support. Training and support for teachers in schools depends on support from the district office, and may be a challenge in some areas.

Curriculum Policy Statements (1997; 2002; 2012) and Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom (2011)

While respecting the rights of all children to education has been the main driver of policy changes in South Africa, an equally pressing matter has been whether all children receive quality education once they are in schools. Several reviews of the curriculum have taken place, as follows:

Curriculum 2005 (DoE, 1997): the first unifying curriculum after the democratic elections

National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002)

Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2004)

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2012)

Curriculum 2005 aimed to ensure that all South Africans were provided with education that was not demarcated along racial lines. Since then, the main principles behind curriculum developments have been equity, redress and equality.

However, the disheartening performance of South African learners in regional performance measures indicates a need for the curriculum to focus on engaging, quality learning opportunities. This curriculum needs to be delivered in ways that close the achievement gaps among diverse learners. In response to this need, the DBE developed *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom* (DBE, 2011), which are intended to be used by teachers alongside the CAPS. These guidelines include the DBE's recommendations for responding to learner diversity in the classroom, proposing strategies for differentiated teaching and learning for the delivery of the CAPS. Throughout the guidelines, the DBE emphasises that all schools are required to offer the same curriculum to learners, while simultaneously making sure that teaching, learning and assessment strategies are differentiated to include all learners.

There are three main problems with these guidelines, which could unintentionally promote exclusion:

1. There is evidence of a silo approach towards inclusive education within the document. For example, a case study of Brenda, who has a visual impairment, is presented like this: "When it was time for her to attend high school, her parents could not afford to send her to a boarding school catering for partially sighted children in Johannesburg." Implicit in this case study is the message that separate education for children with a visual impairment is the preference, but if this is not possible, teachers are encouraged to consider how to include Brenda within their mainstream classrooms.
2. No practical tools are suggested to address resource challenges that arise from suggested policy changes. For example: "Learners who experience significant barriers to learning and participation must also have the possibility of straddling grades, which allows them to take certain subjects at grade level and others at a different level" (DBE, 2011). The timetabling implications of this suggestion are a big challenge, yet no systems or tools are offered to enable schools to implement this strategy.
3. The approach to support taken in the guidelines leans towards a "one-size-fits-all" model. They are simplistic, and do not take into account the complexity of some learners' situations and the barriers to learning and participation these can bring. For this reason, it is unlikely that educators will take the guidelines seriously.

Appendix 2: Two other theories underpinning inclusive education

Here is some information about two other theories that may be of interest to you when developing your understanding of inclusive education.

Capability Theory

The Capability Theory (CA) was developed by Sen and Nussbaum (cited in Terzi, 2008). It asserts that well-being and agency are equally important, and interdependent, aspects of human life.

Sen (Ibid.) draws a distinction between functionings and capabilities. When employed in an educational setting, **functionings** refer to educational “beings and doings/actions”, such as: “access to” and “participation in” education; learning and achieving (e.g. reading and writing, mathematics grades); and completing basic education. **Capabilities** are opportunities to fulfil educational functionings. Although outcomes/functionings (e.g. mathematics grades) might appear equal, learners’ actual opportunities to function might be very different; for example they may be influenced by gender and (dis)abilities (Okkolin et al., 2018).

As a result, the theoretical framework asserts that the ultimate goal of any social and political reform, including education (from wide-ranging policies to school-level practices), should be to enhance people’s functionings and capabilities **and** support agency. Similarly, the assessment of people’s well-being should be based on the various “beings and doings” that they can achieve **and** the opportunities or freedoms to realise these.

In other words, strategic policy priorities and practices should be assessed, with equal importance placed on their:

- **Impact on people’s functionings** (e.g. grades in mathematics)
- **Influence on their capabilities** (e.g. the set of opportunities needed to achieve a valued grade in mathematics)
- **People’s freedom to act** “in line with his or her conception of the good” (Sen, 1985: 206).

Terzi (2008) and Norwich et al. (2016) point out that this framework clarifies the relationship between education and a just society in terms of the **equality of capabilities** rather than of resources, and presents genuine opportunities for people to achieve.

Sociocultural and Cultural-historical Activity Theories

Ecological systems theory helped to form more contemporary theories including Sociocultural Theory and Cultural-historical Activity Theory (CHAT). At the heart of these theories lies an understanding of human learning processes as social and cultural rather than individual or psychological (Swart & Oswald, 2008) experiences.

Vygotsky emphasised that knowledge is constructed socially, i.e. individual and social learning processes are interdependent. Meaning from learning, therefore, cannot be separated from its sociocultural contexts and interaction between people (Donald et al., 2009; Swart & Oswald, 2008). Everyday activities take place in contexts in which individual identities and cultural histories are being interpreted continuously.

Cultural-historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is a theoretical framework that helps to develop an understanding and analysis of the relationship between the human mind (what people think) and activity (what people do). The roots of CHAT are, like Socio-cultural Theory, found in the work of Vygotsky. Today they are closely intertwined with transformation in education via socio-cultural and cultural-historical approaches to the implementation of inclusive education.

CHAT’s central principle is that learning is primarily a social accomplishment “achieved through situated moments in the interactions between the individual(s) and the material and social environment, where the transactions between active individual(s) and an active environment co-construct each other” (Blanton et al., cited in Oswald & Engelbrecht, 2013: 438). Core ideas (e.g. Foot, 2014) are that:

- Humans act collectively, learn by doing and communicate via their actions, e.g. in classrooms
- Humans make, employ and develop tools of all kinds to learn and communicate, e.g. classroom routines and policies
- Community and its cultural history are central to the process of making and interpreting meaning and thus to all forms of communicating and acting

Using CHAT, for example, helps us understand: the structure of interaction and activity in classrooms; and the gaps between what currently exists and what might be the imagined outcomes (Kozleski, in press).

