



Inclusive Teaching and Learning for South Africa

Unit 2 Learner Diversity



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Overview of study unit

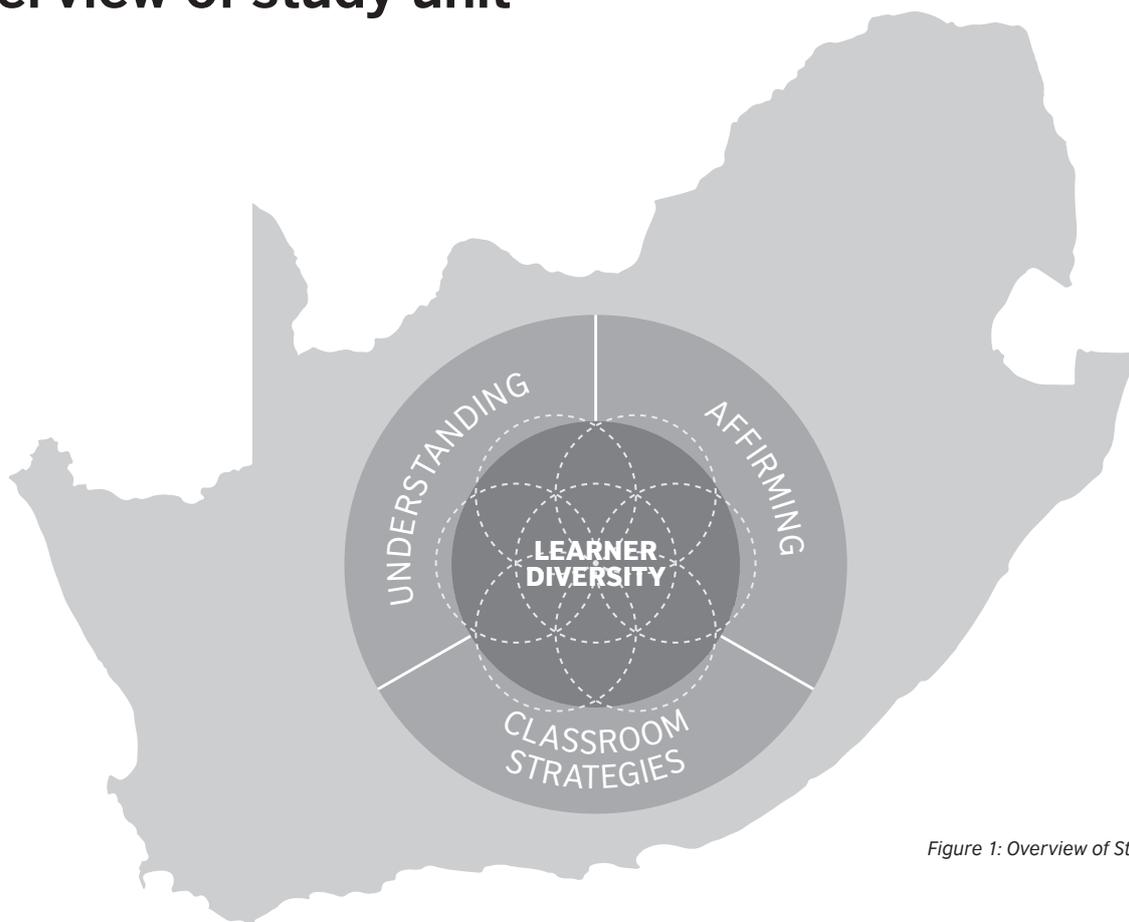


Figure 1: Overview of Study Unit 2

South African classrooms are a reflection of the richly diverse communities their learners come from. The idea of a **homogeneous**¹ classroom is simply not relevant to teaching in the 21st century. Learners speak different languages, come from different socio-economic backgrounds, religions and cultures. Children also learn in different ways, and have different strengths and interests. In an inclusive classroom, differences are valued so that all children understand and feel that they play an equal part in the classroom and school community.

This study unit investigates learner diversity in three parts.

Part 1 will consider some of the many ways in which learners are unique and the teacher's role in responding to this uniqueness or diversity in ways that value and affirm it. By doing so, Part 1 will examine the concept of "normal" as a construct that leads to the identification of some learners as "different" or needing something "additional" or "special" in the classroom, and how learners learn.

It will also examine learner diversity through a lens of **intersectionality**² in order to understand how the unique combination of identities of each child influences their education experiences. Many of these experiences include marginalisation or limited access to education. Some learners' exclusion or marginalisation is compounded by several intersecting oppressive systems such as race, gender and disability.



Definition

- 1 Homogeneous:** All the same or similar in nature.
- 2 Intersectionality:** The study of what happens when different forms of discrimination, domination and oppression combine, overlap and intersect.

In addition, Part 1 will explore how teachers' responses to learner diversity need to be guided by the principle of ensuring fair and equal opportunities for learning to all learners. All learners must have access to and participate equally in education. Central to this is an examination of the distinction between the concepts of "same" and "fair". It will consider how equity (fairness) in education involves giving every child what they need in order to fully participate in learning, even if this is different to what others may need.

Parts 2 and 3 will focus on two areas of learner diversity in more depth. Part 2 focuses on responding to learner difference, and exploring ways of thinking about planning for diverse classes. Part 3 focuses on language, culture and learning, which is of particular significance for South Africa given its linguistic and cultural diversity.

Introduction and aim

The main aim of the unit is that, through it, you will value and affirm learner diversity, and promote the values of equity, inclusion and social justice in your classrooms. To support this aim, by the end of the unit you will have gained:

- A deeper understanding of learner diversity and its central role in children's learning
- Insight into the crucial part you play as a teacher in creating and maintaining inclusive classrooms in which all children are invited, expected and able to learn

Specific outcomes

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

- Explain the concepts of learner diversity, intersectionality and equity for different relevant school contexts (with specific reference to disability, language, race, socio-economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, cognition, communication and interaction and psychosocial differences)
- Demonstrate how these concepts will enable quality teaching and learning for all in your own teaching context
- Demonstrate how understanding language and cultural diversity contributes to access, acceptance and participation in inclusive classrooms
- Demonstrate how understanding cognitive, communication and interaction, physical and sensory, psychosocial and societal differences contributes to access, respect and participation in inclusive classrooms

Abbreviations

ASC	Autistic Spectrum Continuum
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EMI	English Medium Instruction
FAL	First Additional Language
FASD	Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder
GAD	Generalised Anxiety Disorder
HOD	Head of Department
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
LOITASA	Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SASL	South African Sign Language
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (Policy)
TL	Target language
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

1

Learner diversity, intersectionality and equity

This unit aims to start your thinking about **learner diversity**³ and what it means for you as a teacher. It will introduce you to significant knowledge about learner diversity, ask you to examine beliefs about it—including your own—and begin to make connections between these beliefs and classroom practice. This process builds on your knowledge from Unit 1 and forms the next part of your journey towards becoming a teacher who works inclusively.

We are realistic about the challenges this journey poses; we know that, for many of you, it will take place in schools with large classes and overcrowded classrooms which need more resources. We have designed material and activities with these challenges in mind. At the same time we encourage you, where necessary, to think imaginatively about the unit material and take from it what will work for you in your context. There is always something teachers can do to work with learners more inclusively, no matter what their circumstances, and we ask you to keep identifying what this “something” is for you as you study.

We hope you find the unit useful and thought-provoking. Let’s begin it by defining what is meant by diversity.

1.1 What is learner diversity?

CASE STUDY: Progress Primary School, Grade 6

Ms Willemse is in her first year of teaching. She has been teaching English FAL and Maths to the Grade 6 learners at Progress Primary School for two terms. She is feeling overwhelmed and her class is completely out of control. Out of 42 children only about ten of them sit still and pay attention. Thapelo is always arguing with her and questions every instruction, Jayendra gets up every two minutes and is constantly talking to his friends and organising games for break time. Aminah stares out the window all day long and her friend, Funeka just sits next to her saying nothing. The others just don’t seem to get what she talking about half the time!

One break-time Ms Willemse overheard another Grade 6 teacher, Mrs Mbeki, talking and laughing in the staff room. “I have the most interesting children in my class. I have a lawyer, an astronaut and an entrepreneur. I love watching them grow up and develop their amazing personalities,” said Mrs Mbeki. It took Ms Willemse a minute, but she realised that Mrs Mbeki must be talking about the same class, because Mrs Mbeki teaches Grade 6 Natural Sciences and Technology.

Feeling even worse about her difficulties with the class, Ms Willemse went to see her HOD. “I don’t understand why the Grade 6s are so different for me and for Mrs Mbeki.” Concerned, the HOD asked what she meant. “They seem to be perfect with Mrs Mbeki

but I just can’t teach them!” she exclaimed. The HOD thought for a few seconds then suggested that maybe it would be a good idea for Ms Willemse to ask Mrs Mbeki to explain her thinking about the Grade 6 class to see if this would help.

The next day Ms Willemse approached Mrs Mbeki and asked, “Why do they behave so badly with me, but you seem to enjoy teaching them?”

Mrs Mbeki explained, “I love the fact they are all so different. Thapelo loves to argue, that’s why I think he will make a great lawyer. I try to plan at least one debate a week to keep him engaged. Jayendra is definitely going to have his own business one day. He is always making a plan and organising everyone. I put him in charge of classroom clean-up. That way I know it will always get done.

Aminah is my astronaut, she loves thinking about the earth, moon and stars. I gently bring her attention back when I see she is staring out the window, but I let her teach the class about the planets. They all love this, especially Funeka, who can be really quiet but she asks some great questions when Aminah is teaching them. You see, they are all so different and that is what makes being a teacher so interesting. I adapt my teaching to make sure they all stay engaged and I encourage them to be unique and to follow their dreams.”



Definition

3 Learner diversity: Group and individual differences among learners.

This case study is an example of something that the vast majority of teachers have been through—a class of extremely diverse children that you find really challenging but that one of your colleagues is really enjoying and also making good progress with. This situation can bring about challenging feelings for teachers including frustration and inadequacy. You know things aren't going well and need to change, but how do you make this happen? Where do you find the knowledge that will help you do something different? How do you put this knowledge into practice? And, sometimes most importantly, how do you change your beliefs about this class, some of the individuals in it, and your ability to teach them?

This unit focuses on the knowledge that is needed to understand diversity in the classroom and explores attitudes to and beliefs about diversity. It will prepare you for putting this knowledge into practice in an inclusive way, both for individual learners and whole classes, which is the focus of Units 3 and 4.

We will be coming back to the teachers and learners in this case study during the unit.

Let's continue by examining "diversity" itself—it's a term that is widely used in education and beyond, but what does it actually mean? In the following section we will define diversity and also consider it in the context of learning.

1.1.1 Defining diversity

ACTIVITY 1: Examining assumptions



Journal

Think about someone you met recently for the first time. Where did you meet them? Who introduced you? When we meet people we make **assumptions**⁴—it is part of human behaviour. Try to think back to what assumptions you made about this person when you met them. For example, did you assume that they came from, or have a particular:

- Type of family?
- Belief system?
- Political viewpoint?
- Economic background?
- Geographical place?
- Linguistic/cultural background?
- Race?
- Ability or disability?
- Sexual orientation?
- Gender identity?
- Academic background?

What do you think are some of the possible impacts on human relationships of making assumptions about others?

Next, think about a good friend that you know well. For two minutes, list all the ways you can think of in which you and this friend are similar. Then, in the next two minutes, do the same for all the ways you are different.

On what evidence did you base your lists, i.e. what do you know about your friend that led you to identify these similarities and differences?

What impact does this level of knowledge have on your relationship with this friend? Has it, for example, changed your understanding of them? If so, has this understanding had an impact on the way you behave at times towards them?

Assumptions are based solely on what we as individuals construct as our own "reality", rather than on actual evidence. They can lead us to make quick, uninformed and sometimes unconscious judgments about people. These judgments do little to help increase our knowledge of others and, in particular, our appreciation of their differences.



Definition

4 Assumptions: Something you accept as true without question or proof.

As Activity 1 has shown, while we share similarities, there are also many ways in which we are different.

For example, aspects of difference you identified might include: gender; sexuality; race; beliefs; family; language; financial situation; employment status; appearance; abilities; disabilities; likes and dislikes; interests; strengths; talents; attitudes; personalities; qualities and values—and more. “Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common” (Anonymous). Each of the differences listed is part of who we are—part of our unique identity. And if each of us is unique, then each of us has a responsibility to challenge our own assumptions and help create an environment in which these differences are understood and everyone can thrive. This is what diversity means, as illustrated by this quote:

It [diversity] is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual. (Queensborough Community College <http://www.qcc.cuny.edu>)

When we do what this quote suggests, we start to value diversity as a resource and an asset—a strength. In a school context, doing this makes it possible for us to hold high expectations for all learners. However, in order to value and affirm diversity in schools and classrooms, we need to understand in more detail what diversity means in relation to learning. We will unpack this in the following section.

1.1.2 Diversity in learning

Firstly, let’s consider how schools have often approached diversity.

ACTIVITY 2: Diversity in schools



Writing

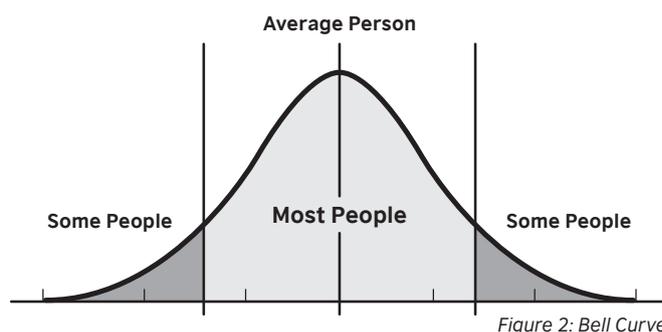
Think about schools you attended as a learner or schools you have worked in. Consider the following questions and note your reflections:

1. In what ways were learners grouped in these schools?
2. What reasons were used to justify the groupings?
3. What beliefs about learners and learning underpinned these reasons?

a. The concept of “normal”

Often, schools use a particular idea of “normal” to organise learners, which is based on a “bell curve”, as shown on the right.

The bell curve was originally used in the 18th century to test mathematical concepts and astronomical measurements. The mean, or average, of whatever data is being studied is shown at the middle point and “normal distribution” is defined from this point. More frequent values sit in the middle of the curve and rarer, very large or very small, values sit at either end.



During the 19th century, the bell curve started to be applied to non-mathematical concepts by sociologists, for example, to the incidence of crime and migration. This sociological use of the bell curve led to the concept of the “average man”, illustrated in Figure 2 above. When applied to human beings, the bell curve placed our most frequently-occurring characteristics in the middle of the curve. These became “normal”. Any characteristics that occurred less frequently, at the edges of the curve, became “abnormal”.



Definition

- 5 Normal distribution:** This concept is based on the idea that intelligence and ability is fixed from birth and therefore predetermines achievement in school, justifying sorting learners into those who can achieve and those who will underachieve or not achieve. Therefore, normal distribution can be used to justify exclusion.

Sometimes these “normal” and “abnormal” human characteristics became associated with a value. For example, judgements such as “good”, “desirable” or “appropriate” were associated with the middle of the bell curve, and “undesirable” or “inappropriate” with the ends of the curve.

Despite some opposition because of its origins in mathematics, “normal distribution” using the bell curve has become an accepted way of “sorting” people, as well as numbers, into categories. The field of education is no different, as Fendler and Muffazar (2008: 64) explain: “So many people believe that the bell curve represents the way things are in nature, the ideal of a normal distribution has been naturalized in education.”

For example, in schools we routinely talk about: “above-average” or “below-average” intelligence; “high”, “average” or “low” ability; or “normal” and “abnormal”—and even “extreme”—behaviour. All these concepts are based on the idea of “normal distribution”, as shown by the bell curve. They are such an embedded part of educational thinking and organisation that they have rarely been questioned by teachers, school leaders or policy-makers. The belief that intelligence is something fixed that you are born with, and that learners can therefore be “sorted” in terms of their intelligence via the bell curve, is still deeply entrenched in educational thinking. Despite ongoing debates about intelligence—what it is, what forms it takes, how and when to measure it—it is still widely used as a way of:

- Sorting learners in school settings, for example, grouping them based on test scores and/or teachers’ judgments about learners’ intelligence.
- Trying to understand the difficulties learners meet in schools, for example, in many parts of the world, identification of disabilities and/or special educational needs depends, at least in part, on some form of ability test score. These scores tend to reinforce the idea that groups of learners can be sorted into learners with and without special educational needs, or those who are “normal” and those who are “different” (or even considered “abnormal”). (Florian & Walton, 2018: 168-170)

This embedded idea of “normal”, based on a concept of what “average” is, promotes the idea that teachers should focus their planning on “average” learners in the centre of the bell curve. But what is “normal” or “average” in a school? And what does this concept mean for those who do not fall into this group? Let’s explore these questions in a context you are familiar with.

ACTIVITY 3: What is “normal”?



Journal

1. Think about a school you attended: What was considered “normal” there? Who decided this?
2. Now think about a school where you have worked or visited, or talk to a friend or child about their school: What is considered “normal” at this school? Who decides this?
3. Compare these two experiences: What are the similarities and differences between “normal” in both places?
4. What happens in these settings to people who are not considered “normal”?

b. Time for a change?

Inclusive education challenges bell-curve thinking and the concept of “normal” in a number of ways, which are summarised below.

Is “normal” a “good thing”, or even a “thing”?

In the previous section, we saw that the bell-curve concept of “normal” is connected to statistics and to ideas about what is good / not good. The scholar, Martha Nussbaum, questions why this second connection should be made:

*For, obviously enough, what is typical may or may not be very good. Bad backs, bad eyes and bad judgement are all very typical ... [while] much progress in human affairs comes from people who are unusual ... So why, in more or less all societies, has the notion of the normal as the usual also served a **normative function**⁶, setting up the different for stigmatizing treatment? (Nussbaum, 2004: 218)*

Nussbaum suggests that “normal” is a construction—a creation or interpretation of an idea—that:

- Allows us to protect ourselves from disruption
- Allows us to hide from our imperfections that cause us shame
- Reinforces the notion of “normal” as “good”, which also allows others to hide from the shame of their imperfections

Nussbaum also points out that different people in different places and at different times construct different ideas of what “normal” is. Here are some questions you might like to think about in relation to these constructs.

- Who makes these decisions?
- Who is on the receiving end of them?

With so much possible variation in the way it is constructed, do you think there is even such a thing as “normal”?

What we know about learning is changing

During your studies, you are learning about the theory and history of learning. Here we will focus on recent developments that are relevant to developing our thinking about learner diversity.

The study of the mind is undergoing a kind of revolution. New scientific studies of the mind and brain about the processes of thinking and learning, the development of competence, and the **physiology of learning**⁷ are generating new knowledge all the time.

Two National Research Council reports in the US (2000: 4; 2018, Chapter 2) are particularly useful as they summarise these understandings:

- We understand more now about people’s abilities to solve problems—how they organise information and how they use their problem-solving skills effectively.
- We have discovered that young children know more than we think they do.
- We understand more about the importance to learning of existing skills and knowledge; learning goals; and learning material. All of these are key to planning the structure and delivery of learning effectively.
- Learning takes place in cultural contexts. These—along with social, cognitive (related to the thinking process) and biological factors—influence learning. We therefore need to take them into account when planning learning.
- Most significantly, neuroscience is beginning to provide evidence that shows how learning changes the physical structure of the brain. Intuitively, we would assume that it is the physical structure of the brain that determines how we learn—not the other way round. However, research is indicating that the relationship between brain development and learning is reciprocal. This means brain development influences behaviour and learning, and at the same time learning influences brain development and brain health. This finding provides scientific evidence against the entrenched view in education that intelligence and ability are “fixed”.



Definition

6 Normative function: Has the effect of encouraging people to accept what is considered “normal”.

7 Physiology of learning: The human biological processes involved in learning.

What we know about learning is impacting on our understanding of pedagogy

There is an increasing understanding of the connections between different theoretical approaches to teaching and learning, and between social, emotional and cognitive aspects of educational experience. We have therefore come to understand that teaching and learning need to take account of the role of the **socio-cultural contexts**⁸ in which children live.

As a result, there is a growing understanding of the need to move away from the belief that one model of learning informs and justifies one model of teaching, towards a realisation that a combination of teaching strategies produces more powerful effects. Kershner (2003) offers a typology of teaching strategies that are linked to the type of learning (not the type of learner) that is the focus of a lesson. She suggests that a mixture of the following strategies is effective for learning:

- Directly raising attainment
- Promoting “active learning”
- Promoting participation and engagement
- Making use of knowledge about learning

Learners in the 21st century need different skills

Today, the concept of “knowing” has shifted from repeating and remembering information to being able to find and use it. Learners need different skills to achieve this different sort of “knowing” to enable them to access an ever-developing employment market, or have the skills for self-employment. So, the emphasis in curricula will need to shift (and some curricula around the world are shifting) from an emphasis on factual knowledge to an emphasis on problem solving and strategic knowledge—in other words, learners need to know where to get knowledge from a wide range of sources and apply it to a wide range of situations.

c. The reality of learner difference

Letsha always has music on when she is studying. She often makes up rhymes or taps out a beat to remember her periodic table. Her brother Dino always invites two friends around and they sit and study together, explaining concepts to each other and talking things through. Her older sister, Bokang reads her textbook, highlights the relevant sections, and paraphrases them in pages of notes.

Who studies in the correct way? They all do! They simply have different preferred ways of making meaning from learning.

Innate learner differences, such as temperament or personality, inherited characteristics, and other attributes, interact with the environment in a reciprocal way, i.e. each influences the other. It is therefore inevitable that the ways in which learners make meaning from their learning, and their support needs, will be different. Therefore, we think of an everyday classroom as one in which the “classroom community is inevitably diverse, consisting of individuals who differ in many ways and who may require different forms of support at different times in their school careers” (Green & Moodley, 2018).

These factors combine to deliver a powerful message that education based on the bell-curve concept of “normal” is no longer fit for purpose for our learners—it will not help us plan effectively for the what and how of teaching and learning in diverse classrooms. Davis asks whether this concept of “normal” is “playing itself out and losing its utility as a driving force”, proposing that “diversity is the new normality” (Davis, 2013, cited in Slee, 2018: 52). This is a significant shift in thinking that is starting to happen in educational systems across the world.

As part of this shift we are developing a growing understanding of the need to move away from the belief that one model of learning informs and justifies one model of teaching. Hart (2004: 3), for example, argues that real equity in learning “becomes possible when young people’s school experiences are not organised and structured on the basis of judgements of ability”. Achieving equity for diverse learners therefore requires a shift in practice as well as in thinking. This shift will be the focus of Unit 4, but it is worth exploring your initial thoughts here through an activity.



Definition

8 Socio-cultural contexts: Beliefs, customs, language, culture, practices and behaviours that exist in a society.

ACTIVITY 4: Thinking about learners' ability



Writing

1. What other ways are there of thinking about children's learning—different to judgments of ability—that you could use to organise and structure experiences for learners in your classroom? Consider a variety of different things you can notice or observe in what learners can do and what they may struggle with.
2. What might be some alternative ways of thinking about the difficulties children experience with their learning?
3. How can Indigenous Knowledge Systems play a role in changing perceptions about learning and difficulties with learning?

As we wrote at the beginning of this unit, throughout it we will be supporting you to start a journey towards becoming a teacher who works inclusively and who:

- Thinks about and plans for diverse learners
- Views their differences as an asset and uses them as a resource

We continue this journey by exploring some of the ways in which children are diverse; it is vital for you as a teacher to be able to recognise and understand diversity in order to be able to respond to it effectively.

ACTIVITY 5: Diversity in the classroom



Writing

Think of a class you have recently taught, or a class you were in at school. What differences did you notice between the learners in this class? Record as many as you can think of in whatever way makes most sense to you, e.g. written, graphic or audio.

Next, think about an iceberg in which you can only see part of the iceberg above the water line, as in the diagram below.

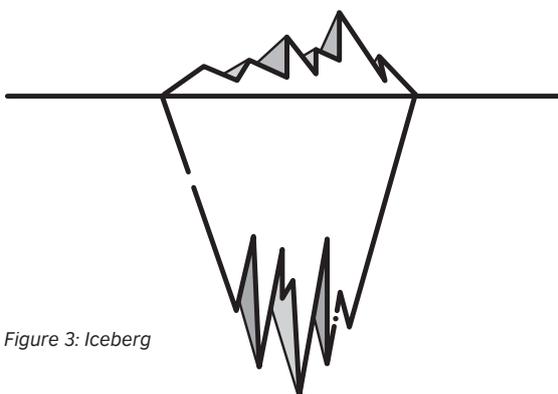


Figure 3: Iceberg

Look at the differences you recorded about the learners in the first part of the activity. Consider where they would be in the context of the iceberg, using the following questions:

1. Are all the differences you recorded observable just by looking or listening? These would sit above the surface of the water. Identify them on your list.
2. If not, which differences sit below the surface? These are differences that exist between learners but they are not so easily visible in the classroom. Identify these too.
3. Do some of the differences you recorded sit both above and below the surface? Can you see part of them but there is more to the difference than just what you can easily see. If so, which ones?

1.2 Recognising and understanding learner diversity

We have established that diversity is a reality in 21st century classrooms. Let's consider diversity in the context of your classroom.

It is likely that, through thinking about learner differences in relation to the iceberg, you have realised that:

- What you can actually see or hear in terms of learner difference in a classroom is a small part of what is really going on, and is related to deeper differences that are less visible or not at all visible.
- Differences that you are able to observe more easily in the classroom could be related to a variety of factors that lie below the surface. It is therefore crucial to plan your responses to learner diversity from knowledge about your learners rather than assumptions—otherwise you may give them inappropriate support for their learning. We will return to this idea later in the unit.

Let's now consider some of the learner differences—from above and below the surface—that are common in South Africa and classrooms worldwide. It's important to understand the range of possible differences so that you can notice the differences between your learners and get to know them well, and therefore know what they need from you in the classroom.

These differences are often grouped into five broad areas, which are commonly used to talk about learner difference:

- Cognitive (the way a learner acquires knowledge, how they think)
- Communication and interaction
- Psychosocial (social and emotional)
- Sensory and physical
- Societal factors (e.g. socio-economic and family circumstances, gender identity, sexuality, religious beliefs, culture)

The sections below are connected to these broad areas—please look out for and make links for yourself while you are studying them. Hold the image of the iceberg in your head, too. When you're reading, think about the connections between what you can see above the surface and what might be happening below the surface.

1.2.1 Levels of learners' access to the curriculum

In an average class of 40–50 learners you can be sure that not all learners are accessing the curriculum at their grade level. There are generally four levels of access to the curriculum that can be identified in any class:

- Learners who have already mastered the grade level content (these are gifted learners requiring enhanced or more complex content)
- Learners accessing the curriculum at grade level
- Learners requiring “scaffolding” or support to access or engage the curriculum at grade level
- Learners who are “grade straddling” or engaging the curriculum at one or more grades below grade level

The percentage of learners in each group differs from school to school, and even from grade to grade. When viewed in this way it becomes clear that planning a lesson that only allows for grade level access to the curriculum means that many learners in your class are excluded from meaningful participation and learning.

1.2.2 Ways of making meaning from learning

Each child has unique interests, likes and dislikes, and these will impact on the ways they make meaning from learning. Take the example of a child struggling with the mathematical concept of grouping. You know they are passionate about cars so you could ask them to go through old magazines and newspapers, cut out pictures of cars and sort them into big/small/different colours to learn about grouping in a way that is relevant as well as interesting to them. In addition to interests, likes and dislikes, just as children enjoy doing different things, they are also good at different things or have different strengths. The ability to recognise these different strengths in your learners is an important aspect of understanding the diversity of your classroom.

If you adopt an **asset-based**⁹ approach to teaching, you use learners' strengths to address challenges. This is different from the **deficit**¹⁰ model or **needs-based**¹⁰ approach, which focuses on the learner's weaknesses or areas that need "fixing" and ignores what the learner does well. An asset-based approach says "Let's take what we are already good at and build on that". For example, if a child is hyperactive and does not wait their turn but is a good leader, put them in charge of allocating turns in the game.

1.2.3 The ways that learners behave

In any class of learners you will notice a wide range of behaviours. Whole books are written about this, so we only have the space here to summarise. Let's think back to the Grade 6 class in the first case study, and the four children mentioned there: Thapelo, Jayendra, Funeka and Aminah. Each of these children displayed big differences in their levels and ways of communicating, interacting, concentrating and participating. For example, Thapelo communicates readily, but Funeka less so; Jayendra's likes to be active and maybe has a shorter concentration span, while Aminah seems to like to daydream in her seat; Funeka appears to participate less than some of the other children.

These are the some of the characteristics you would notice above the surface of the water if you were thinking about them in relation to Activity 5. Underneath the surface, differences in behaviour can be linked to many different reasons, including differences in the brain that lead to a variety of ways in which learners see and interact with their environment, changes in circumstances at home, or psychosocial issues.

We will return to working positively with behaviour and supporting learners with psychosocial challenges in Unit 4.

1.2.4 Learners' socio-economic circumstances

This refers to the interaction of social and economic factors within a community, looking at the differences between people, based mainly on their financial circumstances. In relation to education, the socio-economic circumstances of children have a direct correlation or link to their learning outcomes.

Economic advantage or disadvantage determines not only which schools children end up in, but also how prepared they are physically, socially and cognitively for school and how well they fare as they progress through the school system. Because economic advantage is still highly correlated with race, most black and coloured children, because they have less educated caregivers with fewer resources, enter the school system with a significant potential academic disadvantage relative to their white peers. SAHRC & UNICEF, 2014

In South Africa the resources and quality of education offered in schools are still largely unequal. In well-resourced schools children have access to textbooks, materials, and extra-curricular and a host of other activities, all contributing to their holistic education and development. This is in stark contrast to learners in poorly resourced schools where access to even basic amenities like electricity, toilets and a library are limited. The better schools charge higher school fees and are situated in more affluent or well-off communities. It is difficult for a poor family to access these schools. The situation is even more challenging for learners in rural areas.

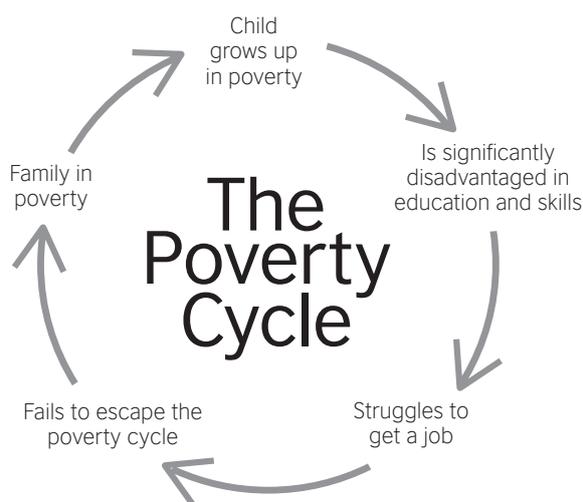


Figure 4: Poverty Cycle

Definition

9 Asset-based: Unlocking the potential of learners by focusing on their talents.

10 Deficit or needs-based: Focusing on your learners' weaknesses.

ACTIVITY 6: Impact of poverty on education outcomes



Reading

Read the following research paper and consider the following questions. <http://bit.ly/2lejKki>

1. In which ways do economic circumstances impact on education outcomes?
2. Do you agree that low quality education is a poverty trap? Explain.
3. Have your own economic circumstances enabled or posed a challenge to your receiving an education? Explain.

The South African legacy of apartheid means that children from poor communities still perform disproportionately worse in education than their more affluent peers. It is unfortunately also true that poor educational outcomes mean that it is more difficult for people to escape from poverty.

In addition to families living in poverty not accessing good quality education, the effects of poverty also have a direct impact on the ability to learn. A child who is cold, tired or hungry cannot concentrate on learning in class. It is important for you, the teacher, to be aware of this as you may need to access support for learners to address these barriers. In the same way as financial circumstances impact a child's learning, so do their family and community (social) circumstances.

Children with better-educated caregivers and more educational resources in the home are more likely to succeed at school and consequently later on in life. The educational expectations of family members and the broader community may, furthermore, influence child expectations of and behaviour towards educational attainment. SAHRC & UNICEF, 2014

Here it is argued that the attitudes and perceptions of both the family and community towards education impacts the level of the learner's educational achievement. Where education is not seen as important, or when achievement beyond a certain grade is not considered valuable, then the learner's motivation for and chances of success beyond this, are limited. In the same way, early childhood intervention impacts "school readiness" and later achievement in education.

In South Africa less than 30% of children in the poorest 75% of schools have attended two years of preschool or more, in comparison to 60% of children from the wealthiest 25% of schools (Spaull, 2013). These early inequalities precede, and arguably cause to some degree, the large inequalities that are evident later on in children's schooling careers. SAHRC & UNICEF, 2014

Community and family violence also have an impact on learning. Children living in fear or who have been traumatised by violence struggle to focus and learn. Moreover, they can suffer long-term psychological effects from trauma including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other emotional or behavioural challenges. These difficulties could include anxiety, depression and **deviant behaviour**¹¹.



Definition

- 11 Deviant behaviour:** Behaviour that goes against the norms and values of society. An example of this is criminal behaviour.

ACTIVITY 7: Put yourself in their shoes



Reading

Read the four case studies below. Choose one of these case studies and put yourself in the place of the child and situation described in it.

1. How would you want to be treated at school in these circumstances?
2. You have put yourself in that child's shoes. How could this impact on how you treat children in your classroom?

CASE STUDY 1: Maria

Maria is a five-year-old girl. She is in Grade R at the local primary school. She lives in a violent community in Cape Town. Rival gangs frequently battle over territory and drug dealing. Her teacher was concerned because Maria started crying every day at school. All she wanted to do was to go home. The teacher thought it might be problems with her friends or bullying, and called her mother in to discuss the situation. Her mom said Maria seemed happy when she got home. The first thing she did was run to her daddy to give him a big hug and then she would stop crying.

Her mom spoke with Maria and she said she liked her

friends and bullying didn't seem to be the reason.

One evening one of her dad's friends came to visit and Maria started crying uncontrollably and wouldn't let go of her father. Suddenly her mom knew the problem. Her father was a police officer. Maria had overheard her dad's friend warning him that a local gang had put him on their "hit" list. Every day when she went to school she was terrified that when she got her home her father would have been shot dead.

The teacher and her mom and dad were able to discuss this with Maria, reassure her and put some simple communication plans in place to ease her fears.

CASE STUDY 2: Lingwile Primary School

Lingwile Primary School is the local school next to a large informal settlement in an urban township. The community has high levels of unemployment and crime. The school is often vandalised. One Tuesday morning, the Grade 6s and 7s were writing exams. District officials from the Department were visiting the school. They had come in a minibus

which was parked outside. All of a sudden there were gun shots. The children all dived under their desks, screaming. It turned out that the driver of the mini bus was held up and the vehicle was hijacked. The learners were traumatised by the incident and exams were postponed.

CASE STUDY 3: Joshua

Joshua is 12 years old. He has always performed well at school, is well liked and appears to be happy and confident. But at the start of the third term things changed. He started fighting with other boys and picking on one of the girls in class. He often didn't finish his homework and his marks started to deteriorate. He ended up in detention more than once and didn't seem to care.

The teacher referred him to the school counsellor and set up a meeting with his parents. Only his

mother attended the meeting and explained that she and her husband were getting divorced.

Joshua's father had moved out. Joshua was angry about this and felt betrayed by his dad. It was clear he felt hurt and powerless and was acting out at school. His mother and father were shocked to realise the impact their divorce was having on him, made an effort to spend time with him and reassure him that they loved him. Joshua continued to go for counselling, and his school work started improving.

CASE STUDY 4: Thuli

Thuli lives with her grandmother and her five siblings and cousins in a peri-urban area outside Pietermaritzburg. Her uncles helped build onto the house and there are now three bedrooms, a big kitchen area and pay-as-you-go electricity. Because there is no running water the toilet is outside. Thuli is a good learner, and has dreams of becoming a clothing designer. She usually gets her homework in on time, takes part in activities and enjoys her projects and assignments. But over the past month things have changed. Thuli has become sullen. She won't respond to questions and she spends much of her time in class daydreaming. Her marks have fallen and when she was sent to the principal's office she

stared at the floor and refused to say anything. Last week Thuli's teacher had to break up a fight between Thuli and her best friend. The principal asked her grandmother to come to school for a meeting to find out what the problem was. She told him that Thuli was raped a month ago. It happened late one night when she needed to go to the toilet outside. She found her neighbour's son and his friend outside the toilet, smoking dagga and drinking. The neighbour's son held her down and his friend raped her. The principal contacted a local rape crisis NGO and Thuli is now receiving treatment and counselling. The two boys have been arrested and are awaiting trial.

1.2.5 Psychosocial well-being

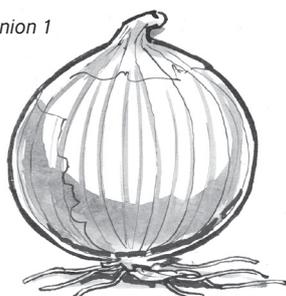
Psychosocial well-being is a term that is used to describe our mental, emotional and social health—how we think and feel about ourselves, the quality of our interactions with others, and our sense of belonging in our communities.

We all have different degrees of psychosocial well-being. It can be helpful to think about it as a continuum.



Where we are on this continuum can change over time. Our psychosocial health can be influenced by a range of factors including our biology, life circumstances and experiences—or, to use a technological analogy, our hard-wiring soft-wiring.

Figure 5: Onion 1



Let's explore psychological health by comparing it to an onion.

The outer skin of the onion represents our behaviour—how we present ourselves to the world and behave in different situations. The layers can be peeled back further and further, revealing various factors that influence our psychosocial well-being and, ultimately, our behaviour.

a. Behaviour

Let's have a closer look at this outer skin—behaviour—in relation to learners in a class.

ACTIVITY 8: Learner behaviour



Journal

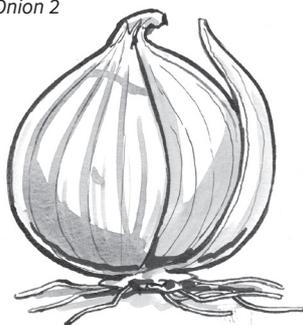
Think about a class you are teaching, or have taught, or a class you were in at school.

1. What were the ways in which the learners presented themselves to the world, i.e. what behaviours do, or did, these children show?
2. Did you ever notice changes in the behaviour of any of the children in this class? If so, what were they?

You have probably listed a whole range of behaviours from, for example, loud to quiet, active to passive, or kind to unkind. Human behaviours are another way in which we are diverse. This is not surprising given the differences in our life experiences. These experiences combine over time to make “scripts” for how we behave in different situations. In other words, we learn through our experiences to react and behave in a similar way in similar situations.

Behaviours are our way of communicating, or sometimes trying to hide—with different degrees of success!—what is happening underneath our outer skin. This is why it is important that, as a teacher, you are able to notice differences in behaviour, both between learners and also within a learner. When—as with Joshua and Thuli in the case studies on pages 16 and 17—a learner’s behaviour suddenly changes, this is an alarm bell that requires you to take note and question what might be happening in their lives.

Figure 6: Onion 2



Let’s peel back this outer skin to see what’s going on underneath.

b. Thoughts, feelings and emotions

Underneath our “outer skin” behaviour are a number of different layers. The first layer is our thoughts and feelings—about ourselves, about others, about situations. Let’s explore this from a personal perspective in a learning situation.

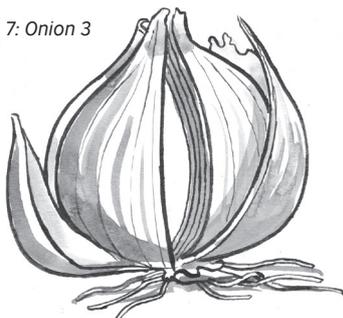
Again, it’s likely that you came up with a wide range of thoughts and feelings for this exercise, both positive and negative. Learning can bring about some amazing thoughts and feelings when things go well, but it also brings difficult ones. While we can’t know exactly what other people—including our learners—are thinking and feeling without asking them, we can at least empathise with them. We can put ourselves in their shoes and use our own experience to make some educated deductions which then inform our behaviour towards them.

Let’s peel back the onion layers again and look at some of the possible causes of how we think and feel.

c. External factors that affect thoughts and feelings

First, let’s consider some external factors that impact on how we think and feel about ourselves and our lives.

Figure 7: Onion 3



ACTIVITY 9: Remembering learning experiences



Journal

Think of a time when, as a child or adolescent, you felt good about a learning experience—this could be, for example, something you suddenly understood that had been challenging, something you really enjoyed, or a teacher who always made you feel confident.

1. What were you thinking at this time about yourself and about the situation?
2. What were you feeling at the time?
3. Now do the same exercise thinking of a time when you didn’t feel so good about something you were learning.

ACTIVITY 10: My community



Journal

Think about your own community. What factors—for example, family and socio-economic circumstances—do you think can have a significant impact on learners' psychosocial well-being? You could use the four case studies in the previous section as a starting point for your thinking. Think of as many factors as you can and record them as words, symbols or drawings.

Many of these factors are similar across the world, there are a number that are particularly significant for the psychosocial well-being of learners in South Africa. Here are some of them:

- **Family circumstances:** *Child Gauge South Africa 2018* reported that, compared to 48 of the other most populous countries in the world, children in South Africa are the least likely to live with two parents, and the most likely to live with one parent or no parents (Hall & Richter, 2018). There are a variety of reasons for this, including parental death or illness (notably from AIDS or substance abuse), parents working away from the home, and divorce (Singh & Steyn, 2013). The implications of these circumstances for South Africa are that there are large numbers of children who might be cared for by extended family members, are in foster care, or are themselves heading households. All these situations can impact on the level of emotional support a young person receives as they are growing up.
- **Community violence:** Many South African children regularly witness high levels of violence both at home and within their wider community (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Singh & Steyn, 2013; Jamieson et al, 2018). In one recent study of 2 000 children born in Soweto in 1990, it was found that 99% had experienced or witnessed some sort of violence, and over 40% had multiple experiences of violence at home or in their community, including school (Jamieson et al, 2018).
- **Peer relationships:** The incidence of bullying and peer pressure is significant in South Africa. The negative impact of bullying—including physical, emotional, direct and indirect, and online bullying—is well documented worldwide. Peer pressure can have a significantly positive impact, but is also connected to behaviour that leads to increased rates of teenage pregnancy and substance abuse.
- **Gangs:** In some parts of South Africa, gang culture—with its associated violence, aggression, substance abuse and crime—is widespread.

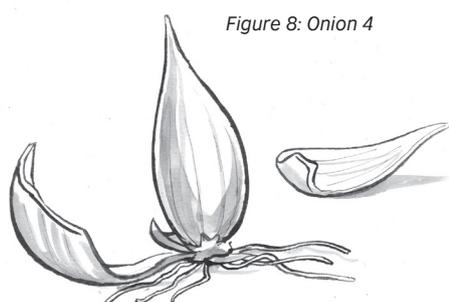
ACTIVITY 11: Impact of external factors



Writing

Choose two of the above issues. Discuss the possible effects of each on learners, and suggest ways that you, as a teacher, could support your learners who are experiencing these challenges.

Finally, let's peel one more layer of the onion back and look at internal factors, or needs, that impact on our psychosocial well-being.



d. Internal factors that affect our thoughts and feelings

We are now going to look at three factors inside each of us that also play a substantial role in our psychological well-being throughout life. These are:

1. Attachment
2. Adolescence
3. Needs

1. Attachment

Attachment theory suggests that the early relationship a child has with their mother or primary caregiver impacts on the child's social, emotional and cognitive development. Although the theory originated in Britain, it has been tested worldwide and—with some cultural differences—found to be universally applicable. The theory was developed by psychoanalyst John Bowlby in the 1940s. He worked in London with many children who had poor psychosocial well-being and found that the mother's early connection with the child ("attachment") had the most significant impact on the child's well-being.

Attachment characterises how, as infants, we get the **security** we need by seeking closeness to our primary caregiver (usually our mother, but this could also be another caregiver). Newborn babies seek this closeness by crying, and later by smiling and making sounds. Ideally, this communication creates a warm bond with our caregiver. This closeness and bond gives us the security we need to explore the world as we grow older.

Other psychologists expanded on Bowlby's theory and identified four main styles of attachment:

- **Secure:** The infant uses mother as secure base for exploration, is comforted by caregiver when reunited after separation
- **Insecure–ambivalent:** The infant does not show much evidence of using caregiver as a secure base for exploration, passive or upset when reunited
- **Insecure–avoidant:** The infant does not show much evidence of using caregiver as a secure base for exploration, keeps distance when reunited
- **Disorganised or disoriented:** The infant shows no predictable attachment response to caregiver; this style is often seen in children who have been regularly abused or neglected

These different styles of attachment are relevant to you as a teacher because they impact on how children behave as they are growing up. Attachment affects friendships, social skills, acceptance in peer groups, empathy, self-reliance, problem-solving ability, confidence, and level of aggression. Different styles of attachment also result in different learning behaviours, and impact on achievement, as [Table 1](#) shows.

ACTIVITY 12: Attachment in the classroom



Journal

Have a look at [Table 1](#) and see if you recognise any of the behaviours in yourself and any other learners you know. What implications do these behaviours have for classroom management? Can you think of ways that you, as a teacher, can support the different attachment styles of learners in your class?

Table 1: Attachment styles in the classroom

	Secure	Insecure—ambivalent	Insecure—avoidant	Disorganised/disoriented
Learner’s approach to school/classroom	Believes they can learn Classroom is safe Follows rules and routines readily	High level of anxiety	Shows indifference to uncertainty in new situations	Intense anxiety—may be controlling Needs clear structure, rules and routines
Learner’s response to teacher	Trusts teacher Asks for help readily Can wait for teacher’s attention Able to tolerate not knowing something so lets teacher teach it	Needs to hold attention of teacher Depends on teacher to engage in learning Hostile to teacher when frustrated	Denial of need for help Needs to learn to trust teacher but also needs to be independent of teacher	Finds it hard to trust the teacher’s authority, but may submit to higher authority, e.g. principal May not accept being taught by teacher—“I know this”
Learner’s response to tasks	Believes they can learn Takes risks and tries new things Sets goals and works out how to reach them Concentrates on tasks Able to manage difficult feelings associated with learning Resilient and optimistic—keeps trying	Finds it difficult to attempt task if not supported Unable to focus on task for fear of losing teacher’s attention—needs to learn that teacher will not forget them	Any hostility towards teacher is directed at the task Task is an emotional safety barrier between learner and teacher Can only start task on their own without help	Fears of incompetence, being humiliated through a task because of not knowing—may lead to rejection of task, particularly if new Gives impression of knowing everything
Learner’s skills and challenges	Likely to be achieving	Challenges with numeracy and concepts of time Likely to be underachieving	Limited use of creativity and language Likely to be underachieving	May seem unimaginative and uncreative Likely to be underachieving

2. Adolescence

For adolescents, another factor to take into account is the biological changes that take place starting roughly at age 13 and lasting until around 21, when the brain goes through a “re-wiring” process. The brain connections in the cortex, particularly the pre-frontal cortex—the part of your brain behind your forehead—need to be thinned out in preparation for adulthood. Many of the childhood pathways fall away, and new ones are formed. While this is happening, adolescents are more impulsive. They take more risks and do not think as rationally as they might when they reach adulthood, or even as they did when they were children! They can think things through, but they need more time to do so.

ACTIVITY 13: Impact of adolescence on learning



Journal

Think back to your adolescence at school. Did your behaviour and that of your classmates change, and if so, how? What impact, if any, did this have on your achievement and behaviour at school? Can you think of ways that you, as a teacher, can support your adolescent learners?

If you are interested in adolescents’ brain development, you might like to watch this TED talk:
<https://bit.ly/2JQCWSN>

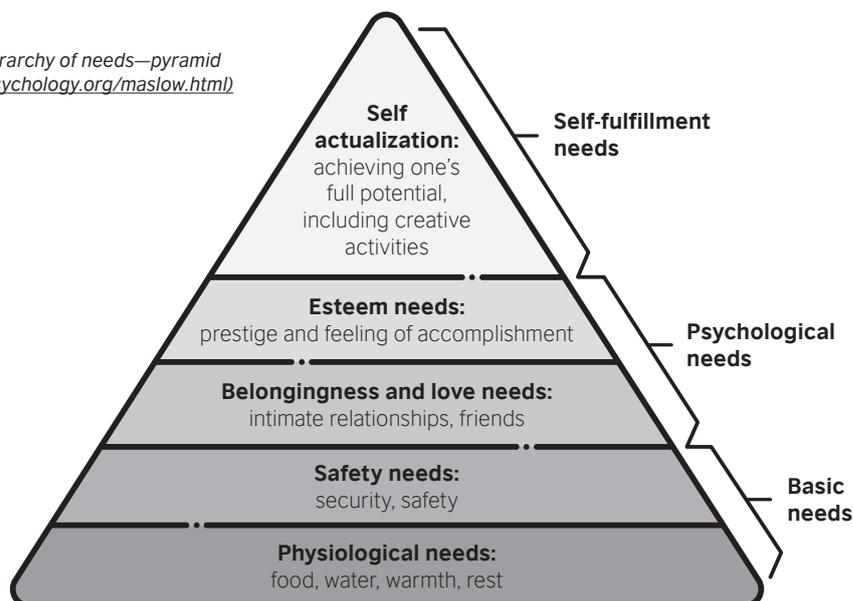
3. Needs

American psychologist Abraham Maslow’s **hierarchy of needs** is perhaps the most common model used to summarise human needs in relation to psychosocial well-being. His theory, which he first developed in the 1940s but continued to refine over several decades, is often represented as a pyramid (although Maslow never did this himself). Here is a pyramid version of his theory—please note that the visual size of each part of the pyramid is irrelevant.

The broad idea of the theory is that as humans we are motivated by our needs. Firstly, we try to satisfy our physiological needs and, once these are met, then we are motivated to move on to meet our safety needs (which is where attachment sits). Once these basic needs are met, we turn our attention to our psychological needs, starting with belongingness and love, then move on to esteem, and eventually to self-actualisation.

Let’s look at this model with a critical eye.

Figure 9: Maslow’s original hierarchy of needs—pyramid
(Source: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>)



ACTIVITY 14: Looking critically at Maslow's hierarchy of needs



Reading

Read the article below about the relevance of Maslow's hierarchy to Nigeria, and consider these questions:

1. What do you think about the author's view of Maslow's hierarchy in relation to Nigeria? Do you think each area of need has to be satisfied before moving onto the next one? Or do you think humans are motivated to work on different areas at once? Give examples to support your opinion.
2. Think about your own context. To what extent do you think Maslow's hierarchy is relevant to the psychosocial well-being in your community? Explain your reasons.

ARTICLE

By Ayodeji Morakinyo 2012/01/15

NIGERIA: DOES MASLOW'S THEORY OF NEEDS APPLY HERE?

Management history has it on record that in 1954, a year when even my father had not been born, Professor Abraham Maslow of the Brandies University developed a theory on human hierarchy of needs. In the theory which has been published in several management books since then, the Professor stated that motivation depends on the realisation of a certain priority of specific needs and he classified these needs into five levels: physiological, safety and security, belonging and social, self-esteem and status and self-actualisation needs. He further classified these needs into lower/primary needs and higher/secondary needs.

According to him, human beings try to satisfy the first level of need before considering the second level. Then the third, fourth and fifth levels of needs are pursued consecutively. As such, the physiological needs (food, water, sex, etc) are what bother human beings basically and once those are met, they seek to satisfy their safety and security needs (clothing, shelter, insurance, etc). When those too are met, they aim to join clubs and religious organisations, open a facebook or twitter account, know the latest fashion or music albums, etc (belonging and social needs). Next, they strive to own luxurious properties, organise parties, aspire for better jobs or more education, etc (self-esteem and status needs). Finally, they aim to reach the peak of their careers, become the richest, help the poor, etc (self-actualisation/fulfilment needs).

But opposed to these thoughts are the lifestyles of people in Nigeria. Many hungry people are now on social networks (facebook, linkedin, twitter, myspace) seeking to make friends with well-to-do people who might be generous enough to help or

employ them. Virtually all the religious adults in Nigeria belong to one religious group or the other. Even when they have not eaten and are not fasting, they give offerings and attend vigils. Many market women would rather pay their children's school fees before thinking of what they themselves would eat. And, a lot of youths would have renewed their blackberry subscriptions before they think of buying lunch. On a lighter note, even certain among the unhealthy politicians in Nigeria have evolved from humans to extraordinary beings whose physiological needs now include the accumulation of public funds. So, the assertion that human needs follow Professor Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not applicable to the current trend in Nigeria.

He also stated that only the human needs that are yet to be satisfied can influence people's behaviour. This applies to Nigeria because the reasons why people leave the comfort of their homes every day is to go and earn a living. But the Professor also stated that a time would come when the triangle will invert itself because majority of the people in a society would have attained the lower needs (1-3) and be yearning for self-esteem and self actualisation (higher 4-5) needs. By implication, lower needs in terms of clothing, food, shelter, insurance, memberships in clubs and associations, etc, will no longer be sought by most people since they would be satisfied. Now, that may be true for developed countries where electricity, food, housing, etc are available and well-catered for by government but it is precisely wrong in the Nigerian context. The poor quality of governance and ethical management in Nigeria and many African countries has negatively influenced the continent's developmental status which has in turn made this aspect of Maslow's theory inapplicable here.

(Source: <https://www.cp-africa.com/2012/01/15/nigeria-does-maslow-s-theory-of-needs-apply-here/>)

Critics of Maslow's model point out that it is:

- Hard to test scientifically, in particular the area of self-fulfilment, as it is so subjective
- Based on individualistic cultures rather than those that work more collectively, and therefore may be less relevant in some areas of the world than others

In addition, the idea of having to completely attain one level of need before you move on to the next has also been questioned. These criticisms of the model were put to the test in a worldwide study published in 2011. This study found that Maslow's identification of needs is broadly accurate, but it questioned the hierarchy aspect. Across the world people said that they were working successfully to meet their psychological and self-actualisation needs, even when their basic needs weren't being met. (Tay & Diener, 2011)

So, while you may want to keep thinking critically about Maslow's hierarchy, its content is a solid basis from which to think about the psychological well-being needs of your learners.

Let's bring all our layers together through an activity.

ACTIVITY 15: Getting to know your learners' psychosocial well-being



Journal

Think about a learner you know—this could be someone you are teaching or have taught, or someone you know from your family or community.

1. Using the continuum at the beginning of this section, how would you describe their overall psychosocial well-being?

Let's unpack what makes you think this. Think of this learner in the same way as an onion with layers:

2. What do you notice and observe about their outer skin—their behaviour?
3. What—as best you can, using your experience and your empathy—do you think some of their thoughts and feelings could be about themselves and the world? How do you think these relate to their behaviour?
4. For this learner, what do you think are the circumstances and experiences in their life that impact—positively and negatively—on their thoughts and feelings, and their behaviour?
5. Look again at Maslow's needs (remembering that the hierarchy is not so important). To what extent do you think this learner's psychosocial needs are being met? Explain your reasoning.
6. What do you think your role as a teacher is to support your learners' psychosocial well-being?

As a teacher, it's a challenge to get to know and understand the psychosocial make-up of all the children in all your classes. Just as your learners will rarely know what you have been doing between the end of school one day and the start of school the next, you can't assume you know what has been happening in their lives. However, acknowledging the range of psychological well-being of your learners and their diverse experiences, in combination with developing and showing empathy and understanding, will go a long way. By saying this, we are not advocating that "anything goes" in your classroom! We will explore ways of putting this empathy and understanding into practice within a structure of high expectations for all in Unit 4.

1.2.6 Disability

“Imbecile”, “retarded”, “lunatic”, “cripple”, “spastic”, “handicapped”, “educationally sub-normal” ... These are just some of the terms that in the past were considered acceptable to describe people that, today, we refer to as people with a disability or who have disorders, conditions, impairments or difficulties. These are terms that tend to have their origins in medical language, but which are used more widely across society.

Language evolves continuously along with the ways people perceive themselves and how society views them. For example, some people might prefer the phrase “person with a disability” because they define themselves as a person first, while others might view their disability as an integral part of who they are and prefer the term “disabled person”. Some may prefer the term “disabled” because they perceive themselves as “dis-abled” by society, while others prefer not to be labelled at all, as they see this as a label that is put on them by society.

As a teacher you will need to be aware of and sensitive to evolving language and perceptions, the advantages and disadvantages of labelling, and individuals’ wishes. In this unit we will use the terms “disability”, “disorder”, “condition”, “impairment” and “difficulty” as they are still widely accepted, but we ask you to remain aware of the problematic nature of terminology.

a. Defining disability

Defining disability has historically been a challenge and no single definition has emerged. Article 1 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN CRPD) describes disability as “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

The 2015 South African *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (WRPD) similarly avoids a finite definition, rather stating that:

Disability is imposed by society when a person with a physical, psychosocial, intellectual, neurological and/or sensory impairment is denied access to full participation in all aspects of life, and when society fails to uphold the rights and specific needs of individuals with impairments.

It is important to bear in mind that disability is the combination of an impairment with barriers that hinder full and effective participation on an equal basis with others. **It is not the impairment on its own, but rather the extent to which the person is prevented from full participation that determines the extent of the disability.**

Any attempt to marginalise, exclude or inhibit a person with disabilities from full participation is a violation of their rights. Barriers to full participation include aspects like policy, attitude, environment and transport, and be found at an individual, organisational or whole system level. See if you can identify what aspects of policy are represented below.

Example 1

In the classroom, teacher confidence can be a barrier. When the extent of a learner’s difficulty is larger than the teacher’s capacity to respond confidently, it is often assumed that the learner is disabled or needs specialist teaching. In this way, the difficulties children experience in learning come to be defined as disabilities.

Example 2

For a learner to get support, they often need to have been identified as having a difficulty, creating a further barrier as the learner is labelled as “different”. As we have seen previously, this labelling completes a cycle where learner diversity is marginalised rather than considered an asset.

Example 3

There is plenty of evidence that the structure of schooling institutionally discriminates against learners who are economically disadvantaged or speak languages other than English or Afrikaans by pre-judging their abilities. This discrimination leads to the overrepresentation of these groups in special education, again reinforcing the idea of diversity as a problem instead of an asset.

b. Diversity and disability

It is crucial to recognise that children with disabilities do not themselves form one homogeneous group. There is wide diversity in disability. Different types of disabilities and the severity of the impairment impact on the diversity of learning needs. The term “special educational needs” covers many kinds of difficulties in learning, and means different things to different people in different contexts. It covers an array of problems, from those related to particular impairments to those related to learning and behavioural difficulties experienced by some learners compared with other similar learners. These impairments include:

- **Physical:** ability to move or physical functioning
- **Psychosocial:** thinking, mood and behaviour, social and emotional state
- **Cognitive:** learning, reasoning, problem-solving, everyday social and practical activities
- **Communication and interaction:** acquisition and expression of language and speech, interaction with others
- **Sensory:** the use of the senses, most commonly, hearing and vision

Some of the terms you may be familiar with that are used to describe children perceived to have a disability that impacts on their learning include:

- Albinism
- Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Autistic Spectrum Continuum (ASC); Asperger Syndrome
- Down Syndrome
- Dyslexia
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD)
- Hearing impairment
- Stress, anxiety and depression
- Visual impairment

There is a series of Information Sheets in the **Appendix** that you can use to find out more about each of these conditions. These are provided as a way of increasing your knowledge so that you can use what you know to include more learners, not as a means for you to stereotype or label learners using bell-curve thinking. To go back to our iceberg analogy, the behaviours connected with these terms are only the tip of the iceberg above the surface of the water line; behaviour and diagnosis of a condition or disability do not define a person. Please remember this while you are interacting with the information sheets.

How do teachers tend to talk about children with disabilities, impairments and difficulties with learning? What's the impact of this language?

It is important to note that not all impairments are disabilities. As we have seen above, children who experience difficulties in learning are referred to as having “special educational needs” or SEN. The term has become an abbreviation that teachers use to talk about all kinds of learning problems. As a result, “SEN” covers many kinds of difficulties in learning, including those resulting from impairments and those related to learning and behavioural difficulties.

When teachers talk about learners' difficulties, they judge them to be experienced by some learners compared with others. This tendency to define differences between individual learners, or groups of learners, reinforces the idea of “most” and “some”. This idea, in turn, reinforces difference as a problem rather than an asset. In addition, identifying particular children in this way creates labels, which—as we have seen—can lead to marginalisation of some learners. Teachers also tend to think of this label as a characteristic of the learner rather than a problem of teaching and learning that they can work to solve. This thinking leads to teachers feeling unable to help the learner. We will explore this issue further in Unit 4.

c. Inclusive education and disability

Inclusive education is often incorrectly viewed as being about the education of children with disabilities. As you will have understood by now, this is not the case. Inclusive education is about affording **every** child the right to participate meaningfully in learning in order to reach their full learning potential. It recognises that children are different and have diverse learning needs. Learners with disabilities may have specific learning needs associated with their disability and may require additional support to participate on an equal basis with their peers—this is their right.

What is important to remember is that, regardless of the cause of a pupils' difficulty (whether that is because of an impairment, inappropriate teaching, or a lack of opportunity to learn), **there is always something the teacher can do** to support the learner.

d. The South African context

In South Africa, children with disabilities have been, and remain, the most excluded and marginalised group in education. Currently, between 500 000 and 600 000 children with disabilities are out of school in South Africa.

- Whereas some of these children were turned away from mainstream schools in contravention of the prohibition against unfair discrimination on the basis of disability, others were refused admission to special schools based on their particular disability or learning needs.
- Many children with disabilities do not attend school due to a failure to provide basic reasonable accommodation facilities such as wheelchair ramps and accessible toilets.
- Where children with disabilities do access schools, such schools often fail to reasonably accommodate them. For example, research conducted by Section 27 reveals widespread neglect of and discrimination against children with visual disabilities, as adequate learning materials are unavailable or teachers are not sufficiently trained to teach children with visual disabilities (SAHRC, 2013–2017).

When we consider intersectionality, we will see how disability is one of the systems of oppression contributing to this marginalisation.

ACTIVITY 16: Sunil and Thandeka's experiences



Reading

Read the case study and below and consider the following questions:

1. What are some of the barriers Thandeka experiences?
2. How differently do Sunil and Thandeka experience disability?
3. What reasons do you think account for these differences? Use the whole disability section, and your prior learning, to put together your list of reasons.

CASE STUDY: Sunil and Thandeka

Sunil is a wheelchair user. He attends Infinity Inclusive School. The school has wheelchair ramps and adapted toilet facilities. The school also provides transport for Sunil in an adapted vehicle. He is included in, and participates fully in, all classes.

His friend **Thandeka** is also in a wheelchair. She goes to Community Primary School. The Principal

was reluctant to include her as he said they do not have training to teach children like her. He also said the school does not have money for ramps but if her friends are willing to carry her to her classes, some of which are on the top floor, she can attend. Her caregivers have to bring her to school as the school transport is not wheelchair accessible.

Disability is often described as a “barrier to learning”. This is not strictly true, as we saw from the examples above. Thandeka’s barrier to learning is not the fact that she is in a wheelchair, but rather the lack of access to learning (wheelchair ramps). Similarly, a learner with intellectual disability may experience an inflexible curriculum as a barrier to learning. When the curriculum is adapted to meet the learner’s level of access, learning can take place.

If you are interested in learning more about disability, inclusion and teaching learners with disabilities, you can enrol in this EU-funded Massive Open Online Course developed by the University of Cape Town <https://www.coursera.org/learn/disability-inclusion-education>. For information about the course, view the promotional video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAFExsTyHNE>

1.2.7 Gender identity and sexual orientation

Gender discrimination has historically played a role in the equality-in-education debate. Today the issue is still as relevant but has become more complex and multidimensional.

The gender identity diversity in your classroom could potentially be quite broad. The LGBTIQ activism movement has ensured that the discussion about gender identity and sexual orientation is brought into the open and given the attention and recognition it deserves.

There is often confusion about the terms “sex”, “sexual orientation” and “gender identity”, so it is important to define these terms. Sex is biological and refers to the sex characteristics of the human body. Scientifically, people have been classified as either male or female at birth due to the appearance of genitalia. However, many people are born with a range of ambiguous sex characteristics and are Intersex. Sexual orientation is about who you are attracted to emotionally, romantically or sexually. Gender identity does not necessarily match the sex one was assigned at birth. Your gender identity is how you identify yourself and this can include a range of identities not limited to the binary definition of gender (male and female). For example, people can identify as transgender, where they identify differently to their sex assigned at birth or where they do not neatly fit into “male” or “female” boxes. It is important to respect the gender identity that a person chooses and to recognise that sex, sexual orientation and gender identity all exist on a broad spectrum. (GALA Queer Archive et al, 2017; Marnell & Khan, 2016)

The gender identity debate is influenced by the cultural and religious norms of the family and community where the school and learner are situated, but the rights of people regarding their sexual orientation and gender identity are protected by the constitution. However, it can be very difficult for a learner to openly discuss their sexual and/or gender identity if it is considered unacceptable according to these cultural and religious norms. As an educator, it is imperative to understand that young people can experience various forms of economic and social marginalisation for various reasons. These challenges are often exacerbated when individuals do not identify as heterosexual. Entrenched prejudices, conservative attitudes and persistent myths about sexual and gender diversity all help to create an environment in which queer youth struggle to exercise their basic rights. Things that many young people take for granted, such as attending school or having access to medical care, are often denied to queer youth. (Queer is an umbrella term to describe people who identify as LGBTIQ). (Ibid.)

Figure 10: I am human



“We are born as who we are, the gender thing is something that is imposed on you.” Laverne Cox, transgender actress and LGBTIQ activist



Definition

12 LGBTIQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer. These terms are used to describe a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

L **Lesbian:** A woman who is emotionally and sexually attracted to women.

G **Gay:** A man who is emotionally and sexually attracted to men.

B **Bisexual:** A person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to men and women.

T **Transgender:** A person whose understanding or expression of their gender is different to their physical sex. A transgender person may choose to dress, live and act in a way that is different to what society expects of their gender assigned at birth. Some transgender people may also choose to change their body to affirm their gender identity through surgery or other medical treatments.

I **Intersex:** A general term used to describe a range of biological variations in which a person is born with a sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the conventional definitions of female or male. These biological variations may manifest in different ways, some of which may be unnoticed throughout an individual's life, may be noticeable at birth and may only become noticeable during puberty.

Q **Queer:** An umbrella term used to describe anyone who is gender and sexually diverse, and does not subscribe to heteronormativity (i.e. the belief that heterosexuality or "straight" sexualities are normal and all other sexualities are abnormal).

A **Asexual:** An umbrella term used to describe people who are emotionally and psychologically/intellectually attracted to people. Their attraction is not limited to physical sexual expression.

A **Ally:** A person who aligns themselves with the struggles of LGBTIQ+ people and shows support in various ways.

P **Pansexual:** Derived from the Greek prefix "all" and refers to a person who is attracted to people regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Figure 11: Acrostic explaining gender and sexual diversity. (Source: Acrostic developed by Genevieve Louw, GALA)

Understanding prejudice and discrimination

As a teacher, you need to be aware of the various forms of prejudice and discrimination that is present in society and in some school communities. **Homophobia and transphobia**¹³ are forms of discrimination, just like racism and sexism. Discrimination impacts negatively on all members of a community, not just the targets. In your classroom, you will have to teach a diverse group of learners with varying personal experiences and it is therefore necessary to highlight that there is no one way that people experience discrimination. Personal experiences are based on a number of factors, such as race, ability, class, sexual orientation and gender identity. (Ibid.)



Definition

13 Homophobia and transphobia encompass a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward people who are homosexual and/or transgender. These negative attitudes can lead to violence and exclusion and are thus an infringement of basic human rights.

CASE STUDY:

Voices from transgender and gender non-conforming learners in SA schools

“The uniform is not there to learn, you are there to learn. They should allow you to decide what you’re going to wear in terms of the school uniform.”
Rowland, 17

“There was little engagement with any kind of identity politics in the school curriculum and in things like Life Orientation where we have Sex Ed regardless of all the issues that they covered, like sex and contraceptives and so forth, just in terms of the understanding of anything beyond heterosexual sex and even within that framework, it was about not having babies and getting AIDS and there was no discussion around pleasure ...

I got the sense that the whole education system is scared to engage with queer issues.” David, 22

“The problem started in school, because I was not that person to go to the toilet because I knew there’d be a problem. In the boys’ toilet they would say: ‘What are you doing here? Don’t you see that you’re a woman? Go to the girls’ toilet.’ So I was that person who didn’t use the toilet because even if I wanted to, I didn’t know which toilet to use ... I waited until I got home.” Pretty, 23

(Source: These experiences and quotes were taken from Gender DynamiX (2014) Young and transgender - <http://bit.ly/2YnPvNa>)

ACTIVITY 17: Understanding prejudice and discrimination



Reading

After reading the quotes from learners in the case study above, consider the following questions:

1. How do you think these experiences made the learners feel?
2. Does it seem like these learners feel included in their schools?
3. Have you ever encountered a learner or staff member with the same or similar experiences?
4. After reading the three quotes, what do you think are the main challenges that gender and sexual diverse learners face in schools?

Promoting a culture of safety, inclusivity and non-discrimination in schools

There is ample available information available to reference in order to create inclusive policies for schools. These documents include the Constitution of South Africa and the South African Schools Act, which management bodies and educators can draw on in order to promote a culture of safety, inclusivity and non-discrimination in schools. Let’s explore how school management teams can address bullying against sexual and gender diverse (LGBTIQ) learners in schools, and how they can promote a culture where everyone feels welcome and included in the school environment. (Ibid.)

ACTIVITY 18: Promoting a culture of inclusion in your school



Writing

Write a paragraph providing your own suggestions on each of the following questions:

1. How can a school’s management team prevent and/or respond to bullying against gender and sexual diverse (LGBTIQ) learners?
2. What resources do you need in schools in order to make this happen?
3. Does your school comply with the Department of Education’s policy around bullying? Does it comply with the Schools Act and the Constitution of South Africa? If not, how can your school policy improve in order to protect the rights of gender and sexual diverse (LGBTIQ) learners?

Visit <https://gala.co.za> to find out more about the LGBTIQ culture and education in South Africa.

1.2.8 Race, culture and religion

Although South Africa has come a long way from forced racial segregation in education, most schools still comprise learners from one dominant racial group. This is largely because learners attend the school nearest to where they live, and our social geography is still racially segregated.

Similarly, some schools are made up of learners from predominantly one religion. The risk is that this becomes the dominant system and learners from minority religious groups are excluded. For example, a school with predominantly Christian learners might impose Christian prayer or religious ceremonies on the whole school, even if there are other minority religions represented at the school.

Many urban schools are made up of learners from different parts of South Africa, Africa and the world, creating classroom environments rich in racial, cultural and religious diversity. This creates a wonderful opportunity for learning about different cultures and experiences and how to create an accepting classroom environment.

CASE STUDY: Kai

The Northern Cape is South Africa's largest province. It is a mineral-rich province with many mines. The mines attract mine workers from all over the country. At a primary school in one such community the learners were sharing their weekend activities during the morning lesson. Kai, who comes from the Namaqua district, shared how he had been hunting rabbits with his bow and arrow for the family to eat. The other

children laughed and teased him. The teacher wisely saw this as an opportunity for the children to learn about and appreciate his culture as much as their own.

The teacher asked Kai to bring his bow and arrow to school the next day and give the class a demonstration. The other learners were so impressed with his skills and were clamouring for a chance to try it out. Kai was proud to share his heritage.

ACTIVITY 19: Dominant and minority groups at school



Journal

Think back to your time at school. To what extent was your school racially integrated? Was there an assumed dominant culture or religion? Were you part of a minority group? Did you know anyone who was? How did you or they feel about being in the minority? What impact did this have on your experience at school?

Think of ways that you can include local indigenous knowledge in your teaching.

1.2.9 Language

Many learners are taught in their home languages for the first three years of schooling with English taught as a subject, and then in Grade 4 there is the switch to English as medium of instruction. The reality is that in Grade 4 many children are taught in a language that is not their home language and they have insufficient knowledge of English. This can pose several difficulties for the teacher. Added to this, with the migration of families from other African countries and further afield, in many South African classrooms there is often more than one home language represented. Moreover, in a country with 11, soon to be 12 (the inclusion of South African Sign Language) official languages, multilingual classes are common.

In post-apartheid South Africa, English is viewed as the preferred language of learning by many caregivers. It is seen as the global language of commerce and communication. Caregivers believe their children will have an advantage if they are able to converse fluently and learn in English. As a result, many send their children to English medium schools. Many children struggle to learn in English and the teacher must find strategies to support them.

The challenge of having learners in your class whose home language is not the language of instruction has become a common one in South Africa. So the next part of the unit focuses on creating a language and culturally inclusive classroom.

By now, you will have begun to understand the extent of diversity in the classroom. Another important aspect of diversity is that these differences intersect, or overlap. Let's explore this area in more detail.

1.3 Diversity and intersectionality

ACTIVITY 20: My personal profile



Journal

Create your own unique personal profile. Describe how you would define yourself. You can use some of the identities that were discussed in the previous section, such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability.

Many learners' education experiences are negatively impacted by several intersecting systems of oppression. We need to understand how different social, historical and political processes and personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others. (Queensborough Community College <http://www.qcc.cuny.edu>)

It is very important in the study of inclusive education to examine not only how your learners are different from one another, but also how some of these differences are shaped by power hierarchies in our society. More importantly, we need to examine how these intersect or combine to increase marginalisation.

In most societies that the dominant group imposes its views, opinions, value judgements and power over the oppressed group. However, the majority group is not always the dominant group, as we know from our South African history, but it is often the case. The dominant power hierarchies assert that their identity, belief system and values are considered “normal” or acceptable and differing views, opinions, beliefs or identities are “abnormal” or unacceptable. Sometimes these differences are tolerated but they are not given equal status. Members are privileged purely by virtue of their being part of this dominant group, and others marginalised or excluded because they are not. This dynamic has been clearly evident in the gender equality struggle worldwide. Even today, gender pay gaps exist in many countries, and patriarchal thinking dictates policy and law-making.

The concept of intersectionality takes this thinking a step further. It examines the ways in which several of these systems of oppression intersect or come together in one person's life to compound marginalisation or exclusion.

Look at the profiles of the two learners on the right.

While both children are marginalised by their gender and learning differences, their experience of being girls with learning differences will not be the same due to their different socio-economic and geographic locations. Living in more affluent socio-economic circumstances in an urban centre will give Jane an educational advantage over Lerato as she will be able to access better schools and a wider range of specialist services. Lerato will more likely attend a poorly-resourced school, far from home and with little additional support.

Therefore, it would be incorrect to say that they share the same experience as girls with an intellectual disability. We need to look at how their other identities or locations intersect with their gender and disability experiences and view their situations holistically.

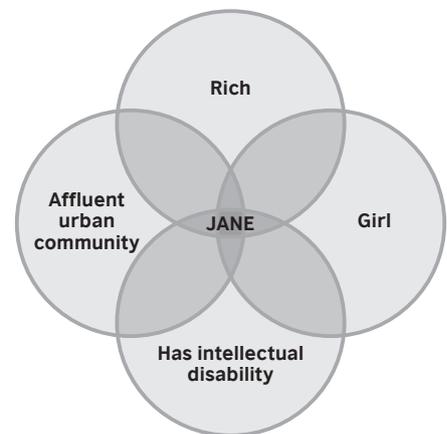
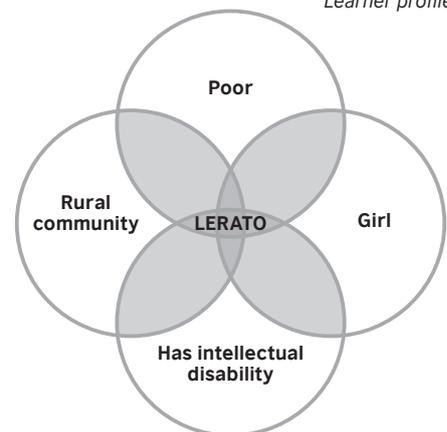


Figure 12: Learner profiles



ACTIVITY 21: Lerato and Jane



Writing

Think back to the iceberg concept. What other differences might there be between Jane and Lerato that we have not mentioned here, which affect their outcomes?

ACTIVITY 22: Intersectionality



Audio Visual

Watch the video clip using the following link: <https://youtu.be/w6dnj2lyYjE>

Think about—and if possible discuss with a colleague—the following questions:

1. Greta, Fatima and Jerry have unique combinations of identities that either privilege or marginalise them. Can you identify these for each of them?
2. Would each of them require the same support to reach their full learning potential? Why or why not? It might help to think back to the iceberg analogy here.

We will explore different ways of offering support during Unit 4.

To summarise: An **intersectional educational lens** enables us to understand the ways differences can compound to increase discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. In understanding these ways, we can plan to address them in order to create equitable education opportunities for all learners. Next, we explore in more detail what we mean by equity in relation to learner diversity.

1.4 Equity to ensure equal education for all

Often the concepts of “equality” and “equity” in education are used interchangeably. But there is an important difference between the two. The UNESCO World Education Forum in Korea (2015) defined equity as follows:

Equity in education is the means to achieving equality. It intends to provide the best opportunities for all students to achieve their full potential and act to address instances of disadvantage which restrict educational achievement. It involves special treatment/action taken to reverse the historical and social disadvantages that prevent learners from accessing and benefiting from education on equal grounds. Equity measures are not fair per se but are implemented to ensure fairness and equality of outcome.

Here is another definition:

Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same aid. Equity, on the face of it, appears unfair, but it actively moves everyone closer to success by “levelling the playing field”. It is important to recognise that not everyone starts at the same place, and not everyone has the same needs. (Solomon-Pryce, 2015)

These definitions take into account that our learners are not all the same. They do not share the same experiences, identities or characteristics. These differences impact their ability to access education and participate meaningfully in learning.

Information in the rest of this section has been adapted from Achievement and Inclusion in Schools (Florian et al, 2017).

Many decades of research have consistently documented that learners from poor families are less likely to do well in school. Consequently, there is a tendency to interpret lower standards of attainment in schools that serve these areas as poor-quality schools. Schools that serve children from different family backgrounds appear to be good or better schools because the academic attainment of learners is generally higher. What is missing from this comparison is an understanding of the prior experiences children bring to school. These create different starting points in terms of both advantage and disadvantage that not only obscure achievement but influence performance expectations. These are issues of “equity” in education.

The association between socio-economic status and attainment is so pervasive that it would be easy to assume that there is nothing that can be done. Yet, it is also clear that schools can lessen the impact of deprivation, even though certain factors are beyond their influence and control. Where schools are able to build links with the communities they serve, outcomes for disadvantaged learners improve. Also, when schools work together, rather than in competition, the capacity for improvement can be enhanced.

As we have seen, some children have been marginalised in education and others privileged. They do not experience equality in education—of access or of opportunity. There needs to be some measure of equitable, or fair, redress in order to level the playing field. Let’s look at an example.

CASE STUDY: Andre and Musa

Andre and Musa are two seven-year-olds who have just started Grade 1. Andre has access to books, his parents read him stories and taught him to write his name, he has educational toys, and eats three nutritious meals a day. Musa has none of this. Andre’s first language is English, Musa’s is isiZulu. The school is an English medium school. Andre

therefore gets a head start in his reading comprehension, language skills, vocabulary and many other aspects. Musa is a long way behind. They have not started at the same place, so to ensure equity and fairness, Musa needs a lot of additional support to access education.

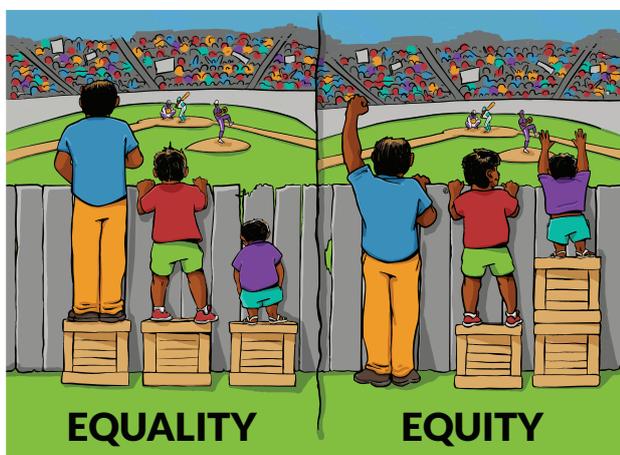


Figure 13: Equality and equity (1)
(Source: Interaction Institute for Social Change, Artist: Angus Maguire)

This popular image is used to demonstrate this distinction between equality and equity. Let’s explore it using Andre and Musa as an example. If we give them the same, as in the left-hand picture—the same learning tasks at the same curriculum level—it does not mean we would be giving Musa equality of opportunity to achieve the same educational outcomes, even if it looks fair. In order to achieve the same educational outcomes, Musa needs different educational input to Andre, as in the right-hand picture. This input may not be the same, but it is fair because it enables equal access to the same outcomes. It is fair even if some learners require input that may cost more and require more skills or resources.

Providing equitable access to education is vital for all learners but is written about specifically for learners with disabilities in order to clarify their rights. The duty to provide **reasonable accommodation** to learners with disabilities can best be understood in terms of equity. Article 2 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* defines reasonable accommodation as the “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

With respect to the right to education, reasonable accommodation means ensuring that the specific support needs of learners with disabilities are provided for so that they are able to equitably participate in learning alongside their peers in ordinary schools. Failure to do so amounts to discrimination.

Very often teachers make the mistake of preparing lessons assuming that all the children in their class are exactly the same. This is called a “one-size-fits-all” approach. The cartoon below clearly illustrates the difficulty of a one-size-fits-all clothing store. Animals without legs would certainly struggle to fit into a pair of trousers!



Figure 14: One size fits all

As a teacher teaching diverse learners you will need to **differentiate**—or adapt—how you teach, what you teach, and the way you assess learning, to make sure that all children are able to reach their full learning potential. Differentiation is for everyone. You will need to take their diversity into account when you plan and prepare your lessons and teaching methodology. This does **not** mean you need to prepare individual lesson plans for each learner in your classroom. It **is** about thinking about meeting the needs of the diverse learners in your classroom by extending the range of your practice on a day-to-day basis.

Let's go back to an extended version of the equality/equity cartoon to explain the impact of differentiation from Musa's perspective.

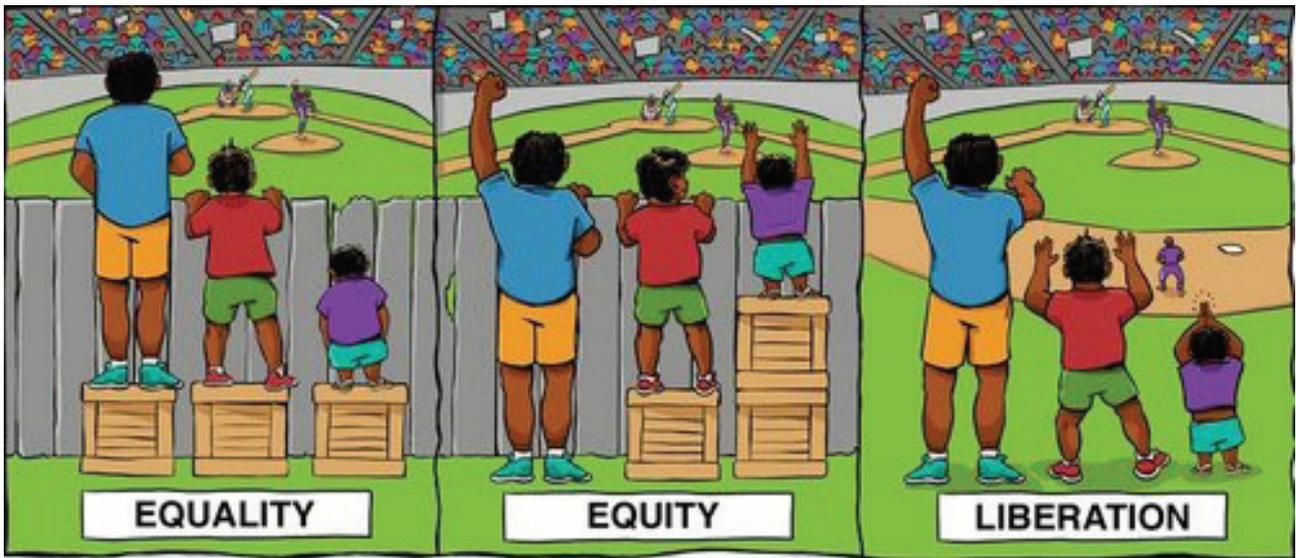


Figure 15: Equality and equity (2) (Source: Interaction Institute for Social Change, Artist: Angus Maguire)

We have seen that Musa needs different input to Andre in order for him to be able to access similar educational outcomes—illustrated by the middle picture above. Adding differentiation into the mix is the “maximising learning” piece of the jigsaw. By adapting what you teach, teaching the material in a variety of ways, and being flexible in how you assess children’s learning—all based on your knowledge of your learners—you will be offering them an element of choice. Have a look at the right-hand picture. For many children, this choice is like removing the fence, or barrier, that stands between them and being fully engaged in, and therefore maximising, their learning. We will explore differentiation in more depth in Unit 4.

To summarise: Adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching will exclude many of your learners, and lead to inequality of access, participation and outcomes. A focus on types of learners is problematic because of the many differences within and among identified groups of learners. Whatever can be known about a particular category of learners is of limited educational value. Inclusive teachers recognise, understand and value the rich diversity in their classroom. They actively plan for diverse learning needs, and offer all their learners equitable opportunities for achievement.

A **socio-cultural perspective**¹³ on learning encourages teachers to access and use knowledge about how people learn best when supporting children experiencing barriers. This approach sees learning in terms of the development of expertise, rather than differentiating groups of learners on the basis of perceived limitations.



Definition

14 A **socio-cultural perspective** emphasises the influence of society—language, culture, social structures, etc.—on our learning processes.

While individuals are characterised by multiple overlapping and intersecting identities that produce individual differences, learning occurs through shared activity in social contexts. Teachers should think about everybody in the class and how they will work together, as opposed to differentiating learning for some based on judgments about what they cannot do compared to others of similar age.

This does not mean that individual differences are unimportant. A teacher may have two learners, both experiencing similar difficulties in learning, but differences between the learners (for example, a learner with English as a second language and a learner on the autism spectrum), require different responses to their particular difficulties in learning. Teachers cannot know or anticipate every type of difficulty they will encounter in the classroom, but they can draw on knowledge about learning and ensure that diversity is treated as a resource and an asset when planning lessons that are accessible to all. This theme is developed further in Unit 4.

By now you will have noticed that treating diversity as a **resource** and an **asset** is a recurring theme in this unit. It typifies the attitude towards diversity of a teacher who works inclusively, but this attitude is not one that has been traditionally held within education or wider society. We will now examine attitudes to learner diversity in more detail.

1.5 Attitudes to learner diversity

In this section we will consider two broad attitudes to learner diversity and some of their impacts. Let's go back again to the Progress Primary Grade 6 case study. Go back and re-read it as a reminder. Think about Ms Willemse's attitude to diversity in the Grade 6 classroom. What words or pictures might you use to describe it? What about Mrs Mbeki? What words or pictures might you use to describe her attitude to diversity?

Here are two possible ways of thinking about these teachers' attitudes to diversity.

Firstly, Ms Willemse could be described as seeing the diversity of her Grade 6 learners as an **obstacle** that is getting in the way of teaching and learning. Thapelo's arguing, Jayendra's activity level and Aminah's daydreaming are all seen as deficits.

This is in contrast to Mrs Mbeki, who sees the learners' diversity as **strengths and assets**, and uses them as a resource in the classroom. She therefore values their diversity and, by using their differences, she is affirming for the children that their diversity is valuable.

Let's look further into each of these attitudes in turn.

1.5.1 Learner diversity as an obstacle

In Part 1.1 we discussed the concept of bell-curve thinking in education, i.e. thinking that supports the ideas of:

- "Sorting" learners into those who are "normal" and those who are "different" or "abnormal"
- Intelligence and ability as fixed

Both these ideas encourage teachers to think about diversity as an obstacle. A concept that enables teachers to consider the majority of learners as "normal" and a minority as "abnormal" can only promote the idea that the minority is an obstacle to the teaching and learning of the majority. The majority is a larger group and will be considered easier to teach because they are "normal".

The idea of viewing intelligence and ability as fixed is known as "educational **determinism**¹⁴", which will be explored in greater depth in Unit 4. Essentially, educational determinism is based on the assumption that we are all born biologically different, and this biological difference is what determines what we can and can't do and learn. What's more, it is believed that there is little that can be done to change this situation. A similar concept to determinist thinking is "fixed mindset". Researcher Carol Dweck has written about this extensively. This describes learners who believe that their intelligence is fixed and they can do little to change it. This mindset negatively affects a learner's belief in their ability to make progress and their motivation to attempt more challenging tasks.

A further concept that contributes significantly to the view of learner diversity as an obstacle is the **medical model** of disability. The difference between the medical model and the **social model** has already been discussed in Unit 1.



Definition

15 Determinism: The belief that all events including human choice are completely determined by pre-existing causes.

The **medical model** sees the person with a disability as the problem. In this model the focus is on the disability. The **social model** sees attitudes, as well as social and environmental barriers, as the problem. People are “disabled” by the world around them.

While its origins are in the discourse of disability, the medical model has a wider application and the word “disability” could be replaced for our purposes with “difference”. In Unit 1 the medical model was described as focusing on the “diagnosis of defects and possible interventions to ‘improve’ the learner”. The diagram below is a helpful illustration of this approach.

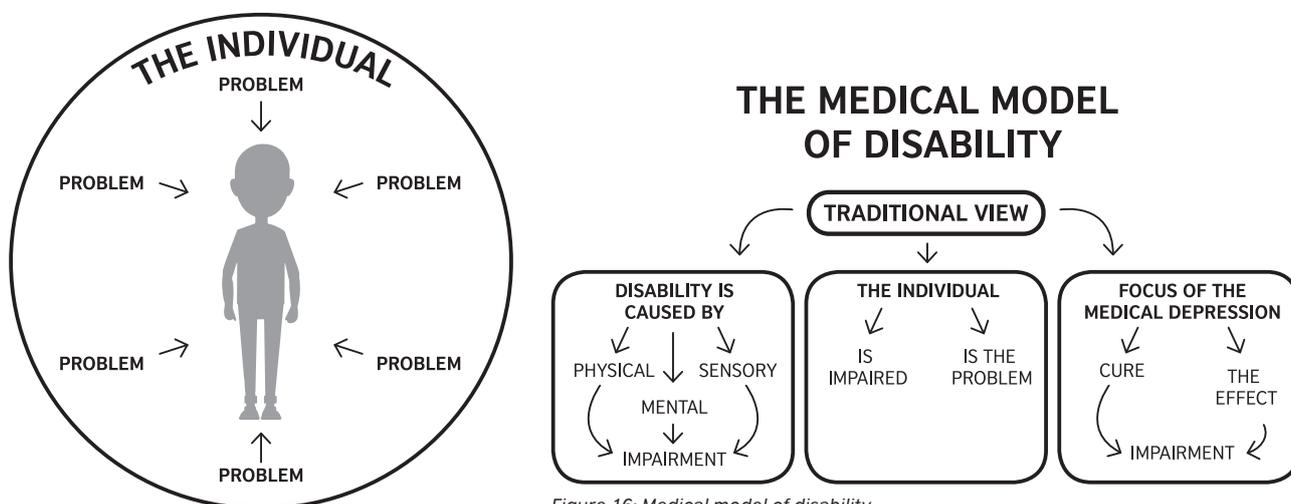


Figure 16: Medical model of disability
(Source: <http://ddsq.org.uk/taxi/medical-model.html>)

CASE STUDY: Farouk (1)

Farouk is a learner with low vision. In Science he’s achieving a high level, whereas in Maths his achievement is at a low level. This seems odd given that so much Maths is involved in Science, so the school investigates further. They find that the maths teacher seats Farouk at the back of the class and makes no effort to make any special accommodation for Farouk’s vision. When asked

about this, she says that Farouk has an impairment and that someone either needs to fix his eyesight or he should be moved because she doesn’t think that the school is the right place for Farouk—he should be in a full service or special school; he can’t learn in this school because she can’t teach him in the same way as the rest of the class.

As the diagram and case study show, the individual with a disability, or difference, is seen as the problem in the medical model. The maths teacher sees Farouk as the problem—he is “impaired” and needs “fixing” in order to fit in with others. She sees him an obstacle. He either:

- Needs to be removed to enable her to work unimpeded with those without a disability or difference: i.e. the “normal”, or
- Needs to be cured so that he fits in with everyone else, i.e. becomes “normal”

As Farouk’s story shows, the focus of the medical model on diagnosis and treatment can encourage us to think narrowly about people and to label them as “different” in a way that leads to stereotyping. While getting a diagnosis can be helpful—for understanding what is happening for a child, for putting the right support in place, and because in some cases it brings with it legal protection and rights—labelling as a result of a diagnosis can also be problematic. A label can become a way of defining a person, masking their strengths, interests and personality: people only pay attention to the above-surface part of the iceberg, not what’s underneath. In addition, as Ho (2004) illustrates, there are other reasons to think very carefully about labelling in schools:

- Some people don’t want to be labelled because of the judgmental way that society views people who are different as “abnormal” or “inferior”, which can also lead to a lowering of expectations

- Caregivers worry about their children being less integrated, more lonely, more likely to be bullied and more likely to be treated as an outsider if they have a diagnosed label
- Labels can sometimes be used by schools to move “certain children out of the regular classroom”, maintaining a focus on the child’s label rather than on what the school should be doing to support the child’s learning

We will explore individual support through diagnosis in more detail through the SIAS (Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support) model in Unit 3.

ACTIVITY 23: Seeing diversity as an obstacle



Journal

Think about a time when you have considered a learner’s difference to be an obstacle to the teaching and learning in a class you have taught. Or think about somebody you have taught something to in your family or community, whose difference you considered an obstacle to teaching and learning.

1. What were some of your beliefs about and expectations of the learner?
2. What were some of your beliefs about your ability to teach this learner?
3. What was the impact of seeing this learner’s difference as an obstacle on your teaching and their learning?

The impacts of seeing diversity as an obstacle often lead teachers to believe that:

- Some children are able to achieve less than others
- Certain children should be removed from the classroom or school
- They don’t have the right experience or skills to teach some children
- They should focus on children who are not seen as obstacles to teaching and learning

Viewing diversity as an obstacle can therefore lead to low expectations, marginalisation and exclusion from learning.

The alternative to this view, and how to put this alternative into practice, will be the focus of the rest of this unit.

1.5.2 Valuing and affirming learner diversity: an asset-based approach

Valuing and affirming learner diversity does not simply mean an acknowledgement of the ways learners are different from each other. It encompasses respect for our individual differences. Respect involves a recognition and appreciation for the qualities and experiences of others that are different to our own. In other words, these qualities and experiences are **valued**. When they are used as assets and resources in the classroom, learners understand that diversity is expected and valued, diversity is **affirmed**. Valuing and affirming diversity is an important element in South African schools, as this quote shows:

Our schools, public or private, must be proactive about increasing diversity. To do so is to create an enriching educational experience that prepares pupils for a complex and diverse world. Our children need to know and understand differences and diversity because these guide them in recognising and nurturing a person’s gifts and talents, which helps us to bring out the best in the person. **Panyaza Lesufi, MEC for Education in Gauteng**

In order for diversity to be valued and affirmed in South African schools, there are a number of steps schools and teachers need to take.

We have already talked about the first step earlier in this unit: developing a mindset where diversity is viewed as “the new normality” (Davis, op. cit.) and therefore moving away from bell-curve thinking as described in the previous section. This mindset sends a strong message about valuing learner difference and promotes high expectations for all.

The second step is to promote an alternative to determinist thinking about intelligence and ability—one where these traits are seen as being able to develop and grow, rather than being fixed. As we have already seen in section 1.1.2 recent neuroscience evidence that supports this ability. We also know that what teachers do can alter children’s capacity to learn, as Hart and her colleagues assert: “Children’s capacity to learn can change and be changed for the better as a result of what happens and what people do in the present” (Hart et al, 2004). Again, we will explore this transformative thinking in more detail during Unit 4. Here, you may want to explore the related concept of growth mindset by taking a look at this introductory film (which also considers fixed mindsets):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75GFzikhRY0>

Perhaps the most crucial step, and one that can transform school culture, is to shift from medical model thinking to social model thinking. Where the medical model sees the person with a disability or difference as the problem, the social model places the onus on society as the problem, as this model shows.

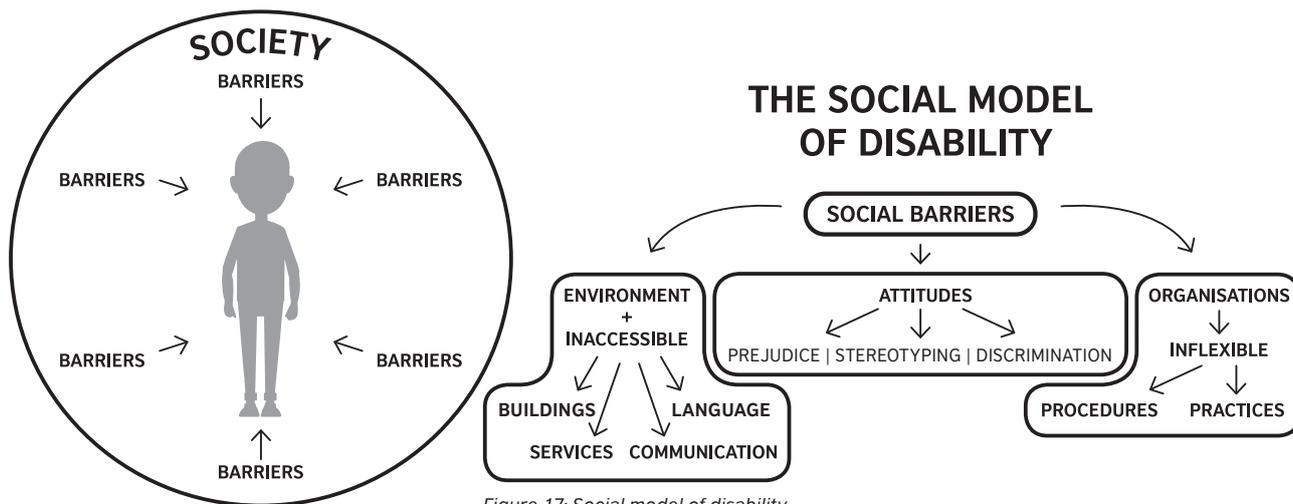


Figure 17: Social model of disability
(Source: <http://ddsg.org.uk/taxi/social-model.html>)

The social model also places the responsibility on society to remove the barriers it has put in place, to ensure that every person can play an equal role in society. In a school and classroom context, it places the responsibility on teachers and school leaders to ensure that barriers are removed to give learners equal access to the curriculum and to learning opportunities. Learners also have their part to play, though, in terms of taking responsibility—or exercising agency—over their learning. Let’s go back to Farouk, our learner with low vision, and look at the social model in practice.

CASE STUDY: Farouk (2)

Unlike Farouk’s Maths teacher, his Science teacher has worked with him quite differently. At the beginning of the school year he spent fifteen minutes with Farouk and his best friend, Junior, in the Science room making sure that Farouk could find his way round and knew where everything was. He and Farouk agreed on the best place for Farouk to sit, and what he would need to be able to fully participate in lessons. Since then, the teacher has:

- Made sure that the room is free of any unusual obstacles
- Made sure Farouk sits at the front of the class
- Produced worksheets with enlarged text for Farouk and agreed that it is Farouk’s responsibility to use his text magnifier when necessary

- Improved his writing on the board and now uses high contrasting colours so that Farouk can read from the board more easily

In addition, Junior has agreed to work with Farouk during practical experiments if there are things that he found challenging due to his vision. Farouk is happy with this. The teacher has emphasised to both boys that it’s important Junior works with Farouk rather than doing things for him. He has stressed to Farouk that he has high expectations of him participating as much as everyone else in the class and achieving well as a result.

These arrangements are not about Farouk being a passive recipient of support, they are there to make sure he can exercise agency—take the most active role possible in his learning. This last point is important as teacher estimates of learners’ achievement and learners’ beliefs about their own self-efficacy both have potential to accelerate learners’ achievement (Hattie, 2017).

ACTIVITY 24: Social model thinking



Writing

Read the case study about Farouk on [page 39](#) and consider the following questions.

1. How would you describe the Science teacher’s beliefs about himself as a teacher, and about Farouk?
2. Think of the learners in a class you are teaching at the moment, or one you have taught recently. What are some of the steps you could take, or could you have taken, to promote social model thinking in your classroom?

OR

Think about a class you were in at school. What were some of the steps your teacher could have taken to promote social model thinking in their classroom?

Let’s compare the impact of medical and social model thinking in schools. You will recognise at least some of the areas of impact from your learning so far.

Table 2: Medical and social model thinking in schools

Medical model thinking	Social model thinking
Child is faulty	Child is valued
Diagnosis	Strength and needs defined by self and others
Labelling	Identify barrier and develop solutions
Impairment becomes focus of attention	Outcomes-based programmes designed
Assessment, monitoring, programmes of therapy imposed	Resources are made available to ordinary services
Segregation and alternative services	Training for parents and professionals
Ordinary needs put on hold	Relationships nurtured
Re-entry if “normal” enough, or permanent exclusion	Diversity welcomed, child is included
Society remains unchanged	Society evolves

(Source: <https://ukdhm.org/what-is-ukdhm/the-social-model/>)

ACTIVITY 25: Medical and social model thinking



Journal

Read [Table 2](#) carefully and think through the meaning of each statement.

1. The bottom box states “Society evolves”. What does this mean? Do you agree that if social model thinking is followed through then society will evolve? Why, or why not?
2. Think about a school you have recently worked in, or are working in now, or the school you attended. Do you think this school’s policies and practices reflect medical model thinking, social model thinking or some aspects of each? Note your reasons for your thinking.
3. Now think about yourself. Would you consider your thinking as more medical model or social model? Why do you say this?

Medical and social model thinking are based on different beliefs, and therefore lead to different types of questions being asked about learners, which result in different actions being taken. Let’s go back to Jayendra from our Grade 6 case study to expand on this idea. Here is an example of a medical and a social model question that could be asked about him, with answers that show what might happen as a result:

Table 3a: Social vs medical model thinking

Medical model question	Medical model answer	Social model question	Social model answer
How can we change Jayendra’s hyperactive behaviour?	Give him Ritalin or other medication.	What can we do better to understand and support Jayendra’s behaviour?	Prepare a learning plan with Jayendra setting objectives and behaviour management support strategies over a six-week period. Monitor this plan—include regular feedback sessions with Jayendra.

To help you think through the implications of medical and social model thinking on learners and learning, we’d like you to try to come up with some questions of your own about learners you might typically meet in the classroom.

ACTIVITY 26: Medical and social model thinking



Writing

Drawing on [Table 3a](#), and the case studies about Jayendra, draw your own version of [Table 3b](#), and have a go at populating it.

Table 3b: Social vs medical model thinking

Description of learners	Medical model question	Medical model answer	Social model question	Social model answer
Thabiso has a significant hearing impairment				
Samkelo’s reading and writing is much weaker than his peers				
Rabia finds too much sensory stimulation—noise, colour, light—distressing and will run off if she feels overloaded				
Louis is going through a difficult time at home and is on a very short fuse at school. He has been getting into some heated arguments that have turned physical				

To summarise: Valuing and affirming diversity involves understanding and appreciating our differences and our interdependence. It also involves looking for ways to work together to eliminate all forms of discrimination and ensure equitable access to quality education.

In Part 1, we explored many of these differences, along with concepts and models that influence the ways that difference can impact on learners and learning.

We have discussed how important it is to really get to know the individual identities and personalities in your class in order to be able to respond effectively to their differences. This will help you to know how to plan for and accommodate diverse learner needs in your teaching.

We finish this part of the unit with a task that asks you to think about different ways in which you can get to know your learners.

ACTIVITY 27: Getting to know your learners



Writing

Choose one learner. If you are currently on teaching practice choose a child you are working with at the moment whom you can observe.

If you are not currently on teaching practice choose a learner in your local community whom you can interview about their learning in school. Maybe the learner is struggling with learning or is not being challenged enough, and is not achieving their full potential in the classroom.

How do you think you could get to know the learner? Think of some activities you could do, documents you could review, or people you could talk to. Record your ideas.

1. Start off by recording any patterns of behaviour you notice and their impact on the learner's ability to learn effectively.
2. Then record the actions you take, e.g. annotate any documents you review, make notes after conversations you have.
3. Create a learner profile for the learner you have chosen.

Reflect on what you have discovered about how to relate to the learner and how you could motivate them to learn more effectively.

In Part 2 we will move on to exploring how teachers respond in practice to learner differences.

2 Responding to learner differences

2.1 Introduction

In Part 1 of this unit, we considered many differences between learners, for example:

- The way a child acquires knowledge (cognitive)
- The way they communicate or interact
- Their social, emotional or mental health needs (psychosocial)
- Sensory and/or physical factors
- Societal factors (e.g. socio-economic, family, gender identity, sexuality, religious beliefs, culture)

It is important to remember that some aspects of difference may not be visible. You may only become aware of them as you get to know children and by noticing the ways that learners behave. Members of staff from the School-Based Support Team (SBST) may also let you know about children with learning differences that may not be obvious.

As you also learned in Part 1, these differences can intersect—both with each other and with other aspects of diversity. For example, a child with hearing loss may also live in an area where there is little or no access to learning Sign Language; a child who is HIV positive may also be on the autistic spectrum continuum.

Some children you teach will have an official diagnosis from a professional, but many will not. You can be sure, wherever you teach, that your diverse classroom will include learners with a range of intersecting differences. Your job as a teacher who works inclusively is to accommodate for these differences in how you plan and deliver learning if you wish to offer all learners an engaging, equitable education.

As we have already shown, there is not a list of disabilities, disorders and conditions that can be matched to interventions, or a list of questions to ask children about their differences, or a list of strategies to mitigate for these. This is because the assumption that individual differences between learners can be addressed by matching these characteristics with interventions has not proven to be effective.

Moreover, having a lot of lists and questions can be overwhelming and counterproductive. But there are deeper issues to be considered, too. Firstly, the “list method” would put you firmly back in the “diversity as an obstacle to be overcome” box that we talked about in Part 1. As we have seen, this attitude works against inclusive, equitable education rather than for it. Secondly, this approach doesn’t require you to really think about where **you** fit in as someone leading learning for these children. What are **your** attitudes to and beliefs about learner difference? How do these attitudes and beliefs impact on your classroom environment, your relationships with children and your teaching of diverse learners?

While knowledge about human differences is important (a learner who is an English language learner is different from a learner who has been diagnosed as having autism; a six-year-old is different from a 10-year-old, and so on), in practice teachers use strategies that are matched to the **purpose** of the learning, and they **adapt** these strategies in response to differences between learners. So yes, you need some knowledge about learner difference. But **what** you do with this knowledge and **how** you use it are equally crucial because developing effective inclusive practice is not only about extending teachers’ knowledge, it is also about encouraging them to do things differently and getting them to reconsider their attitudes and beliefs: in other words, it should be about “knowing”, “doing” and “believing”.

Here is a useful, more visual way of remembering these three areas and what they involve.

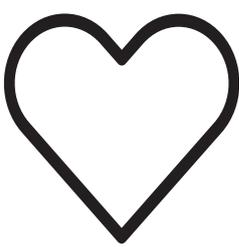
	<p>Head—Knowing</p> <p>Knowing what and how to teach and assess what needs to be learned</p> <p>Knowing about classroom organisation and management</p> <p>Knowing about learners' differences</p> <p>Knowing who to ask for help when you need it</p> <p>Understanding the law and your school's/district's policies in relation to learner diversity</p>
	<p>Hand—Knowing what and how to teach and assess what needs to be learned</p> <p>Having the confidence to try different strategies—and having the tenacity, drive and perseverance to keep trying, even when things don't go according to plan</p> <p>Taking part in professional development that helps you practise new strategies, not just know about them</p> <p>Developing good relationships with learners and their families</p> <p>Modelling learning behaviour that's good for the classroom</p>
	<p>Heart—Believing</p> <p>Believing all children can learn and are worth educating</p> <p>Believing you have the capacity to make a difference</p>

Figure 18: Head, hand, heart (Adapted from Rouse, 2018)

In Part 1 of this unit we introduced you to some knowledge about learner diversity and asked you, through activities, to consider a range of beliefs about diversity and learning. In Part 2 we will begin to explore the “doing” element of inclusive practice.

It is individual teachers' practice that collectively enables inclusive practice to develop. The extent to which you as teachers are empowered to develop inclusive practice is linked with the policies of your school and the education system. The more inclusive the policies and the more teachers are trusted—through healthy relationships with senior leaders—to try out inclusive strategies, the greater the empowerment to do so. However, teachers also have individual agency and there is a great deal you can do independently to develop inclusive classroom practice where these ideal conditions do not exist.

Therefore, in this part of the unit we will ask you to think further about **your** beliefs—about yourself as a teacher and about your learners—and consider the impact of these on teaching and learning in your classroom. We will consider what it looks like in practice when teachers think about classes:

- Through a “diversity as an obstacle” lens
- Through a lens that values and affirms diversity by using learner difference as an asset and resource in planning how everyone in the class will learn together

Remember the Grade 6 class taught by Ms Willemse and Mrs Mbeki in Part 1? If not, have a look back and refresh your memory. We are going to meet this class again and use them as our focus for this part of the unit.

2.2 Who's in the classroom? Two lenses

Following her initial conversation with Mrs Mbeki, Ms Willemse went back and asked if they could talk further about the Grade 6 class. We are going to examine this class from each teacher's perspective.

Mrs Mbeki asks Ms Willemse to draw and explain a picture of the Grade 6 class showing how she thinks about them as a whole and as groups.

Figure 19 shows what Ms Willemse draws:

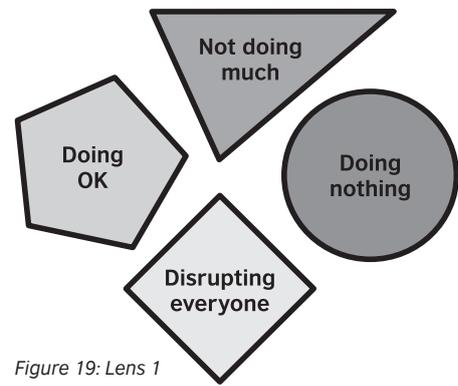


Figure 19: Lens 1

ACTIVITY 28: What is happening in the classroom?



Writing

Think of a school where you are teaching now or have recently taught, or a class from your own school days. Does Ms Willemse's grouping remind you of how you might think about one of your classes, or how one of your teachers thought about their learners? If so, think about some of the learners in each of the four groups Ms Willemse talks about. Make a note of them, grouped under the headings you can see in the diagram.

What do you notice about the learners in each group? Thinking back to the iceberg model, what's above the surface? What is below? Do these learners all share the same reasons for being in that group, for example: concentration span; interests, likes and dislikes; strengths; socio-economic circumstances; or a shared diagnosis? Or are they quite different from each other?

Do some of the learners shift into different groups at times? Are they sometimes doing well and at other times not learning much? If so, what reasons do you think are behind their movement from group to group? Might you, the teacher, be part of these reasons? If so, how? Don't forget that it's not just children who are diverse—teachers are too!

We are not suggesting that this is the most useful way of analysing a class if you want positive change! Our point is that it is much more likely that learners within each group are diverse, and some of them may move from group to group depending on a number of factors over time. Therefore, we cannot use diagnoses or labels to predict who will or will not make progress with their learning. Understanding a diagnosis or label is useful, but other factors are just as likely to be at play; it is combination of all the pieces of information to support the child's learning and what you do with this that is much more important.

We will go on to show you a more useful way of thinking about grouping your learners shortly.

First, let's return to Mrs Mbeki and Ms Willemse's conversation.

Mrs Mbeki: *OK. Can you talk me through your drawing?*

Ms Willemse (takes a deep breath and begins): *Well, first of all the whole class. I've drawn a messy line because that's how it feels. And there are lots of jagged edges in there too. It's not a smooth, calm experience! The whole class feels pretty much out of control quite a lot of the time. I thought I was coming into schools to teach English and maths, but it seems to me that lots of the children can't behave, some of them can't learn and some of them don't want to learn. So I can't teach most of them, their problems are too serious. Quite a few of the children from this class should be in a special school where there are people who have the right skills to help them learn. Then I could teach the ones who are right for this school.*

Mrs Mbeki: *And what about the groups you've drawn there?*

Ms Willemse: *That "Doing OK" one—that's the group that wants to learn and I can teach, they are actually making progress. They're pretty normal and they don't really have any problems as long as they can ignore the disruption from the others. The group at the top—they try but they're not doing much, it's really frustrating.*

The group that's doing nothing is quite small but I find them really worrying—they aren't really learning anything. And that just leaves the big group with another jagged edge. These are the children who are spoiling the lessons for everyone else because they can't behave normally. And this means they aren't learning.

ACTIVITY 29: Ms Willemse's beliefs



Writing

Think back to your learning in Unit 1 and in Part 1 of this unit. What do you think Ms Willemse's beliefs are about her learners? What theory, concepts and models might be influencing her beliefs?

Mrs Mbeki: Right. Let's unpack this a little. What do you notice about the children? If you were to imagine a film of the class, what would you observe?

Ms Willemse: Well, in the group who are doing OK, you'd see children who are able to follow instructions, read, remember, write, discuss, work independently, and put their own ideas together about what they are learning. In the group who aren't doing anything there are a few children who seem like they don't know what's going on when we're doing anything that's a bit abstract—they look quite confused and can't answer questions or follow the learning. Like Funeka, who is confused and also seems really withdrawn a lot of the time. She doesn't seem to have a lot of energy to participate. There are also a couple of children who get angry if they are asked to read anything or write anything in their books—but when I think about it I realise they sometimes contribute some good points verbally.

In the group who aren't doing much, you'd see a lot of different things going on. Some of the children pick and choose what they want to do, so if it's something they enjoy or understand then they'll try, but if it's something unfamiliar they just can't seem to get organised enough to make progress and they usually give up. A couple of them start something in their book but never finish it—they just seem really slow. And there are another few children who are really articulate when we discuss things but just won't write anything down. Plus, one or two—Aminah, for example—can talk or write individually about something that interests them in a huge amount of detail, but when you ask them to take part in a group discussion they either withdraw, or the other children get cross with them because they feel like they aren't getting their turn to speak. If you ask them to get involved with a topic they don't already know about, they just refuse or do nothing. When I ask some of the children what they are supposed to be doing they can't remember more than the first instruction. They can't remember the names of things—like verbs or nouns—even though I've written these loads of times on the board!

In the disruptive group there are children who are brilliant communicators but a couple of them use this skill to question everything I ask them to do—like Thapelo. There are one or two children who sometimes refuse to follow any instructions and can get quite aggressive, and a few who seem totally incapable of sitting in a chair and just like to distract others all the time—for example, Jayendra. A lot of this disruptive group clearly understand what we are doing and have fantastic creative ideas but can't get started with written work. They don't ever finish anything, or they rush it so much that it's full of mistakes. It's really frustrating!

ACTIVITY 30: Ms Willemse's views of strengths and challenges



Writing

Ms. Willemse has talked about a number of different strengths and challenges that the children in her Grade 6 class bring (notice the variety of learners she talks about in each group, too).

Go back and make a list of these strengths and challenges.

Mrs Mbeki: *I can see you're frustrated. But you've already taken the first step to change things by noticing all those differences between the children in the class and their strengths and challenges. I'd like to show you a different way of looking at the class using everything you've noticed—one that I find really helpful for planning for their learning.*

Mrs Mbeki shows Ms Willemse the following drawing:

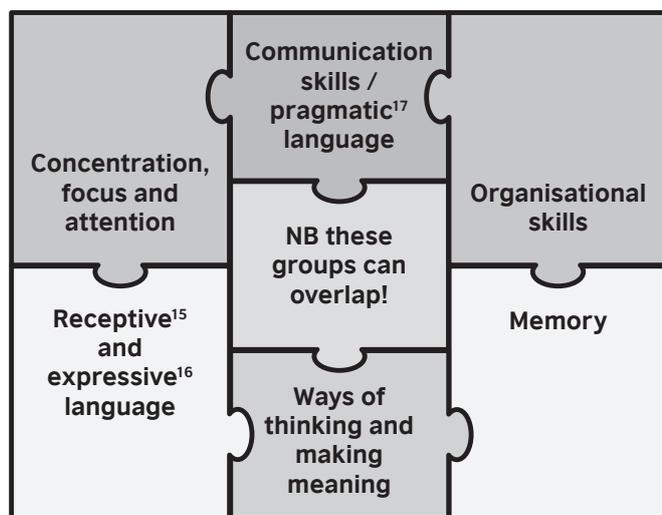


Figure 20: Lens 2

easier to express themselves and remember learning when it's being led by one of their peers, so Aminah's input helps her. Jayendra's need for short bursts of concentration, plus his need to move around and get people on board with his ideas becomes part of the classroom organisation routines. And Thapelo's unendingly curious, questioning brain is put to good use through activities like class debates—and sometimes I ask him to write down his questions so that we can pose them in class discussions.

I find that if they know they have a voice and an equal role in the class that appreciates them for who they are, they are more likely to try to get better at the things they find challenging. So, for example, if Jayendra knows that at certain points in the lesson, like when we need to get equipment out, he's going to have a chance to get up and have a concentration break, he's more likely to try to focus on learning in the times in between. In this way, thinking about the big picture of affirming diversity at a whole class level also works at an individual level. Of course it's never absolutely perfect—what is, in any class?—but it definitely helps with creating a supportive and affirming environment. Does that make sense?

Ms Willemse: *Yes, although it sounds like I need to do quite a lot of thinking about how I can build that kind of thing into my teaching.*

Mrs Mbeki: *At first it can seem like a lot to think about, but once you get going and focus on the children's strengths the ideas generate themselves—and I can give you some to get started. Ready for me to move on?*

We will give you some strategies to get started with building on children's strengths in Unit 4.

Ms Willemse: *Yes.*

Mrs Mbeki: *OK. At a group level, you'll see I've put some jigsaw pieces into my classroom map. Each of the jigsaw pieces represents a characteristic or skill that groups of children in the class share that are important for learning—you can think of these as strengths, challenges and needs. You talked about all of these when I was asking you about what you noticed about the groups you had identified. Some children will have strengths in these areas, others will find them challenging and need support with them.*

Definition

16 Receptive language: the ability to understand words and language.

17 Expressive language: the ability to express wants and needs—verbally and non-verbally.

18 Pragmatic language: the use of appropriate communication in social situations—knowing what to say, how to say it, and when to say it.

Do you remember the five broad areas of difference we usually talk about—communication and interaction, cognitive, psychosocial, physical and sensory and societal? There is a relationship between these and the characteristics and skills shown by the jigsaw pieces. It's useful to look at how this happens.

Here, Mrs Mbeki asks Ms Willemse to do an activity. Let's do the same thing so that we can follow her thinking.

ACTIVITY 31: Making connections



Writing

This is a substantial activity so we will break it into steps.

Step 1

On the left-hand side of a piece of paper, list the five broad areas of difference that we explored in Part 1. On the right-hand side, list the characteristics and skills shown in the jigsaw pieces in Mrs Mbeki's drawing. You will end up with something like this:

Area of difference	Connects to...	Characteristic/skill
Communication and interaction		Memory
Cognitive		Communication and pragmatic language
Psychosocial		Organisational skills
Physical and sensory		Ways of thinking and making meaning
Societal		Concentration, focus, attention Receptive/expressive language

Step 2

What we are going to do next is work out how the areas of difference connect with characteristics and skills, and the other way round. Read the following section and study the diagrams. We have used Aminah as an example.

The way that Ms Willemse and Mrs Mbeki talk about Aminah suggests that she:

- Has both strengths and challenges in the area of communication and interaction. Her ability to communicate at length about things she knows about shows a strong memory for some topics or ideas. Her memory also helps her to communicate her ideas.
- Has strengths with some forms of expressive language, which also help with her communication skills. So we would draw arrows that go both ways between "Communication and interaction" and "Memory", and "Communication and interaction" and "Receptive and expressive language":

Area of difference	Connects to...	Characteristic/skill
Communication and interaction	↔	Memory
Cognitive		Communication and pragmatic language
Psychosocial		Organisational skills
Physical and sensory		Ways of thinking and making meaning
Societal	↘	Concentration, focus, attention Receptive/expressive language

- Aminah seems to find group work a challenge at times—this would come under the psychosocial area as working in groups needs a particular set of social skills. Ms Willemse talks about the other learners getting a bit fed up with Aminah because they find it difficult to have space to speak when they are in a group with Aminah, or she doesn't talk at all. This behaviour suggests that Aminah's social skill challenge could be connected with pragmatic language—knowing what to say, and when and how to say it. It could also be connected with concentration, focus or attention. So we would add lines between "Psychosocial" and "Communication and pragmatic language" and "Psychosocial" and "Concentration, focus, attention":

Area of difference	Connects to...	Characteristic/skill
Communication and interaction	↔	Memory
Cognitive	↔	Communication and pragmatic language
Psychosocial	↔	Organisational skills
Physical and sensory	↔	Ways of thinking and making meaning
Societal	↔	Concentration, focus, attention
	↔	Receptive/expressive language

4. Aminah thinks about and knows a lot about a particular topic—space—but finds thinking and learning about other topics a challenge, which falls under the “Cognitive” area. From what we know about Aminah, we could say that her cognitive strengths and challenges have a connection with:

- Her memory (strong for some topics, not as strong for others)
- The way she communicates what she knows (articulately for things she knows about, less so for unfamiliar topics)
- Her ability to organise her learning (it’s often easier to organise your learning for a topic you feel comfortable with rather than something unfamiliar)
- Her ways of thinking and making meaning from learning about particular topics (for space, she clearly finds it easy to find and make meaning, but this seems to be a challenge for other topics)
- Her level of focus (very focused on familiar topics, less so on others)
- Her ability to follow language about topics and her ability to express her thoughts about them (strong for familiar topics, less so for unfamiliar)

So all the learning characteristics and skills on the right-hand side seem to connect with the “Cognitive” area on the left.

The connections for Aminah would end up looking like this:

Area of difference	Connects to...	Characteristic/skill
Communication and interaction	↔	Memory
Cognitive	↔	Communication and pragmatic language
Psychosocial	↔	Organisational skills
Physical and sensory	↔	Ways of thinking and making meaning
Societal	↔	Concentration, focus, attention
	↔	Receptive/expressive language

And these connections are just from the little we know about Aminah—Ms Willemse and Mrs Mbeki have only talked briefly about her, so we don’t know about the other two areas that need to be taken into consideration for this exercise—her socio-economic circumstances, and whether she has a physical or sensory challenge or strength.

Step 3

Now that you have seen an example, we want you to have a go at doing this exercise for three children you know. They might be from a school where you have worked, from your family or neighbourhood, from when you were at school—or a mixture. Go back to the table you have drawn and think about the first child.

Work through each area of difference on the left-hand side. Where you think an area of difference might have a connection with a characteristic or skill important for learning, or the other way round, draw a two-way arrow between them. Find as many relationships between the two columns as you can.

Repeat the exercise for the other two children, using a new table for each child.

Step 4

Once you have completed the three tables, consider the following questions.

1. What do you notice about the number of links between the two columns on your tables?
2. Compare the tables. How, and to what extent, do they look similar? How, and to what extent, do they look different? What do you think are the reasons for the similarities and differences?

3. Think about these connections from the point of view of two individual learners who share an area of difference. Would the connections between the area of difference and the learning characteristics/skills be the same for each learner?

You may have an example of this in your sample of three children, but here are two sample questions in case you don't.

- Would the connections with learning characteristics and skills be the same for two learners with low vision?
 - Would the same socio-economic background necessarily have the same connections on the learning characteristics and skills of two siblings living in the same house?
4. What assumptions might teachers make about the connections between areas of difference and learning characteristics and skills? What might the impact of these assumptions be?
 5. What learning are you taking from this activity?

Let's re-join the teachers' conversation.

Mrs Mbeki: *What I like about this way of grouping is that it takes me away from concentrating on who is in the classroom and how much they are learning—or not. Instead, it helps me to focus more on the skills and characteristics that are needed for really effective learning. The knowledge I have about individuals is important because I use it to help identify the learners' strengths, challenges and needs in these skill areas. Then I can use this information to concentrate on what I teach—using CAPS of course—and how I teach, rather than getting stuck on which learner has this diagnosis, or that problem.*

Let's take memory as an example. You might have heard of the term "working memory"—this is the place you store important information while you're doing something else that uses your brain. For example, if you're learning how to calculate "volume" in maths to work out the volume of a container, you need to hold the method for doing that in your working memory while you do the actual sum.

Some children find holding a method, or a formula, or any piece of key information in their working memory difficult. This applies to lots of other pieces of information in other subjects. Jayendra, Aminah and Funeka are all likely to have some challenges with their working memory even though they have "different differences". Thapelo's working memory is one of his strengths.

So I know that when I'm planning how to teach something, I need to include ways to support the children who have challenges with working memory to access it. Using the maths example, I might have a set of cards with the method for finding volume written on them. I wouldn't just choose who I think would need this, though. I would give everyone access to the cards and make it clear that if any of the children think they need it as a reminder they can pick up a card. Doing this supports the children who have challenges with their working memory without making them seem different or marginalising them. If someone who might normally remember is having an off day, or just needs to check the method, this plan also works for them. It's good for everyone in the class and puts the children in charge of their own learning. It means that everyone gets equal access to what they need to learn.

When I'm planning, I think about each of these six areas in the same way as I've talked about memory. Once you get to know the class, planning in this way isn't about doing a whole lot of totally new things, or having 42 individual strategies for 42 learners.

Rather think about each of the jigsaw areas in relation to what you know about the class; and extend what you have been doing to teach the "doing OK" group so that it includes and engages more learners.

It's never going to be as neat as the jigsaw model looks on paper! In practice it probably looks something like this, where all of the different characteristics/skills groups, and the children in them, overlap in some way:

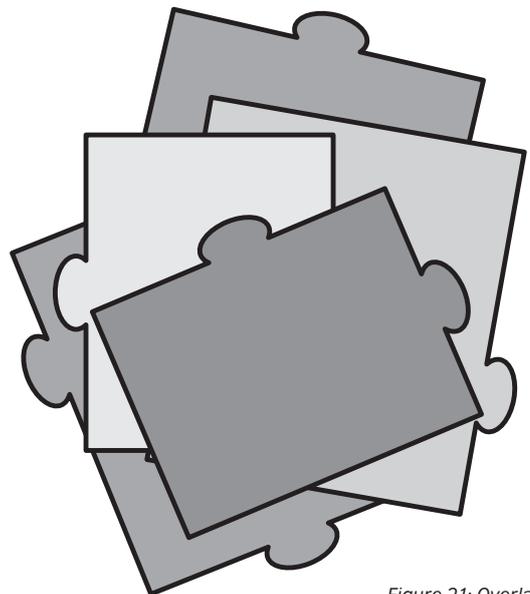


Figure 21: Overlap

ACTIVITY 32: Reflecting on Mrs Mbeki's grouping of learners



Writing

Think back to the same class that you thought about in Activity 28.

1. Apply Mrs Mbeki's way of grouping learners in this class. Think about their strengths, challenges and needs for each of the learning characteristics/skills.
2. How did thinking about the class in this way feel compared to the way that Ms Willemse grouped her class?
3. What have you learnt about the class from doing this?
4. How might this learning impact on your teaching?
5. Next, think of a concept that you teach learners in your subject area. What could you do to **extend** your normal way of teaching this concept so that it includes learners who may need more support to learn without drawing attention to their needs?

Ms Willemse: *I'm starting to understand ... but what about the individuals in your drawing? If we're thinking more about planning around shared characteristics then why are they there?*

Mrs Mbeki: *These are the children who will need support most at any one time in a class. Even when things are flowing, and you have strategies in place that include and engage more children, these individuals will always be there. There's no magic dust you can sprinkle to get everyone learning in exactly the way you would ideally like them to, even if you plan well! Who these children are and what they need might change, but the fact that there will always be individuals who need extra from you won't. We can use what we learn about these children through SIAS and from what we notice about them in the classroom to remove as many barriers to their learning as possible, but we will always need to respond on the spot for some individuals. At the moment, I think I have more time and headspace to respond to these children than you do—it's a big class, so it's not perfect, but it sounds better than the situation you're in at the moment.*

Ms Willemse: *So, by planning with those group characteristics and skills in mind, you manage to get the majority of the class engaged as much as possible, which gives you more time and space to work out who's really stuck and needs your help?*

Mrs Mbeki: *That's the idea. It is always going to be challenging with so many children and such a variety of needs. I find that planning to get as many of them able to access the learning independently means that I can be more responsive in the classroom. And I find it less stressful this way, too.*

Ms Willemse: *I like the sound of less stress! That just leaves the bigger person in your diagram. Is that you?*

Mrs Mbeki: *Yes. I've put myself there. How I am in the classroom has a big effect on what happens there. What I believe really matters as this has an impact on what I say and what I do. And what I say and what I do obviously have a big impact on the children.*

Ms Willemse: *So what do you believe?*

Mrs Mbeki: *My beliefs have changed over the years, but here's the short version:*

- *I've been teaching for fifteen years now and I've seen enough children to understand that a whole variety of difference in a classroom is just how it is. And, although this can sometimes make teaching challenging, I prefer this broader idea of normal—the whole world as it really is comes into your classroom and that's the reality. I find it a much richer experience and I try to pass this on to the children by finding ways to get them to notice it and use their differences positively.*
- *I've come to understand that I can make a difference to all the children—as long as I work to get to know them, support them and put the right strategies in place they can all learn and make progress. I don't have to be an expert in every difference in the world. Some knowledge has been really useful, but knowing my*

learners—what goes on under the surface—and having a good range of strategies for teaching and learning is just as important. This helps me put the most helpful strategies in place.

- For me, supporting the children doesn't just mean learning strategies. I believe an integral part of my role is to build good relationships with children so that they feel safe and secure, and supported emotionally. If I do this I find that they're happier, more confident and willing to take risks with their learning, and so make better progress. And it definitely improves everyone's enjoyment of learning, too.
- I think that it's my job to make the learning and the emotional support happen for all the children. Not just to teach what the bell curve identifies as "normal" children, but to make sure that—to the best of my ability—everyone can get engaged in what and how we learn. This means I really need to get to know them, not stopping at what I see on the surface but trying to understand what's going on underneath so that I know what will work for each of them.
- I think of myself as an agent of change for the future. If I can model some of the values we agree we'd like to see in the world, things like respect, democracy and equity, and teach the children in my classes through these, then I hope that in some small way I'm adding positively to the way society evolves in the future. That might sound idealistic, but it does help me understand why I do this job—especially when I'm having a bad day. I might teach life skills and natural sciences, but mainly I teach children, and I find that important to remember.

ACTIVITY 33: Mrs Mbeki's beliefs



Writing

Think back to your learning in Unit 1 and in Part 1 of this unit.

What theory, concepts and models might be influencing Mrs Mbeki's beliefs?

Look back at what Mrs Mbeki says. What phrases or sentences does she use that connect what she is saying with these theories, concepts and models? Pick out four and relate them to the theories, concepts and models you have learnt about.

ACTIVITY 34: My beliefs



Journal

1. What are your beliefs at the moment about your learners, and about your role as a teacher?
2. Reflect back to your thoughts and beliefs about learners and learner diversity at the beginning of this module. Have these started to change? If so, how?
3. What theory, concepts and models have influenced you? In what ways?

Mrs Mbeki: *So, what do you think? Are you ready to give this way of planning a try?*

Ms Willemsse: *I'm definitely ready to give it a try. And I'm ready to accept that no one is going to change things for me, I have to do it. I'm anxious though—what if I don't have the skills to make the difference?*

Mrs Mbeki: *It sounds like you feel "consciously incompetent" ...*

Mrs Mbeki draws a diagram on a piece of paper:



Figure 22: Four stages of competence

ACTIVITY 35: Learning a new skill



Reading

While you are reading the short section below, think about a time when you learned something new—it could be riding a bike, learning a language, learning how to use a piece of technology—anything that involved you learning a new skill.

The diagram above is commonly used to describe feelings in relation to the learning process. It is particularly important to know about the feelings you get when you:

- First understand that you need to change something (the “aha” moment, when you realise you have previously been unconsciously incompetent)
- Work on changing it (the shift from conscious incompetence to conscious competence)

Both these stages of learning can make you feel insecure and unsure of yourself. The “aha” moment does this because you understand that what you have been doing before may have been wrong or caused problems—you feel incompetent. The learning process does this because you are now aware that you are trying to learn a new way of doing something and this process always makes us vulnerable. The more we practise something and become competent at it, the less our feelings of insecurity.

Our point here is to remind you that these feelings are common and are to be expected when you are trying to change your practice in the classroom. Don't let them discourage you. It can help to work with a trusted colleague in school or remotely if you can. Take small steps and don't forget—getting to conscious incompetence is progress. Becoming aware that you need to change is a great starting point.

Mrs Mbeki explains the diagram to Ms Willemse in relation to where she is with Grade 6:

Mrs Mbeki: *You've moved from the first to the second step—you're aware that things aren't right and know that you need to make some changes. That's not a comfortable place to be for anyone. What you're feeling now is completely normal, and it will shift over time as you make changes and they start to work. The more you practise them, the more they will start to become second nature. I'm not saying that you'll be at the top step feeling like you have everything completely sorted out all the time—we are talking about children and they always surprise us. But as long as you're prepared to try strategies out, keep reflecting on what you're doing and keep learning, you'll find that you can learn the skills you need. And I'm happy to help you while you do this, if that would be useful.*

Ms Willemse: *That sounds like a good plan. When do we start?*

Here we leave Ms Willemse and Mrs Mbeki to their plan.

To summarise: It's not that learners differ that matters. They are always going to be different. It is how we respond to the differences. What we need as teachers is the resourcefulness not to know everything, but “to know how to know what is needed” in a given situation.

We will continue to explore how we can develop this resourcefulness in Part 3 of this unit, which focuses on language in diverse classrooms.

3

Language, culture and learning

3.1 Introduction

This module looks at how teachers, and you as prospective teachers, can build classrooms that are inclusive and welcoming to all learners. One of the factors that hinder teachers from building this inclusivity is that learners often come from different linguistic backgrounds, which are at times different from the teacher's linguistic background. For most learners in South Africa the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is different from their home language. This means that they may require additional support, but often this support is not forthcoming.

This section is designed to provide you with information and ideas about how to use language as an inclusive tool instead of a barrier. It addresses the crucial role that language plays in learning. For it is through language that children develop ideas or concepts of the world around them. It is through language that children make sense of the input they receive in the classroom from the teacher and written texts. And it is through language that children express their understanding of what they have learnt from this input. But when the language used for learning is not familiar to the learners, it becomes a barrier to learning. This barrier becomes more impenetrable when the teacher too is not adequately proficient in the language of learning and teaching, thus making the teacher input even more incomprehensible.

As the sociolinguist Bernard Spolsky (1977) said, "Incomprehensible education is immoral." The use of local languages familiar to the learners and the teacher, alongside a dominant language like English, is essential if we want young children to be actively engaged in learning. Despite the lack of resources in local languages, learners are able to express themselves much better in familiar languages, as research in South Africa has shown. Teachers too own the script if they use familiar languages.

A researcher in language and education, Carol Benson (2016), gives us three useful questions to think about in relation to language and its impact on education quality and inclusion:

- Is the learner taught and assessed in a language s/he understands and speaks well?
- Does learning and teaching draw on the learner's prior experiences and resources to construct new knowledge?
- Are teachers proficient in the language(s) of learning and teaching?

These are questions that guide the content for this unit and are useful for you to make a note of to aid your reflective practice.

ACTIVITY 36: My language history and profile



Journal

In order for you as a teacher to be sensitive to learners' language needs, you need an awareness of your own language history and profile. Reflect on your own language history:

1. How many languages do you speak?
2. Which would you consider to be your main language or mother tongue?
3. Which languages do you use most, why and what for?

3.2 Mother tongue

Increasingly, teachers and academics are beginning to acknowledge the role that emotions and identity play in language learning (see, for example, the writings of Bonny Norton (2013) and Rosemary Salomone (2010) on language and identity). Linguists have also become more interested in the social dimension of language. The next section therefore first provides you with information before getting you to look at your own language history/biography.

One of the terms frequently used in discussions on language policy and language histories is “**mother tongue**”¹⁸. However, it is a term that people understand and use differently. We therefore thought it useful to look at how the term has been defined by someone working in the field of language policy. The nuanced definition developed by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) is still very much in use today.

The terms “mother tongue”, “home language” or “local language” are often used interchangeably in discussions on language education. We have focused on “mother tongue” as it is the term widely used in the literature. However, we need to bear in mind that each of these terms can actually be pluralised, as multilingual homes often have more than one mother tongue or home language or, in the case of Tanzania, a widely-used local language like Kiswahili. It helps if we define what we mean by the terms we use.

Table 4: Definitions of mother tongue

Criterion	Definition
Origin	The language one learned first (the language one has established the first long-lasting verbal contacts in)
Identification	
a. internal	a. The language one identifies with/as a native speaker
b. external	b. The language one is identified with/as a native speaker of, by others
Competence	The language one knows best
Function	The language one uses most

(Source: Skutnabb-Kangas 2000: 106)

Skutnabb-Kangas points out that:

... defining “mother tongue(s)” is not only an academic exercise—it is necessary also for practical purposes ... [such as] (census, right to services which are given on the basis of mother tongue, assessment of linguistic qualifications for education, jobs etc.) (2000: 105–6)

She proceeds to identify what her mother tongues are, according to the four criteria mentioned above: origin, identification, competence and function. To concretise these definitions, we thought it might be useful to apply her definitions to two local contexts, using the background of a South African learner of Indian origin, Hamida, and a learner who is a speaker of African languages, Dumisani.



Definition

19 Mother tongue: The language a person learns first / identifies with as a speaker or is identified with as a speaker by others, or the language they know best or use most.

CASE STUDY 1: Hamida

Hamida's mother tongue by origin is Konkani, a language spoken mainly in Goa, but also in other parts of India, such as villages and towns in the State of Maharashtra. Her mother tongues by internal identification are Konkani and English, but only English by external identification. One explanation for the difference in internal and external identification is that, in South Africa, very few adults and even fewer children of Indian origin can speak an Indian language. Very few adults of Hamida's generation, and hardly any who are younger, actually still speak their "languages of origin". In

South Africa, it is assumed that "Indians" have English as their mother tongue and in most cases, such an assumption would be correct. With regard to both competence and function, Hamida's mother tongue would be English. However, if we were to follow Skutnabb-Kangas's approach in the description of her language biography, Hamida could include Afrikaans under competence, even though her proficiency in Afrikaans is not as good as it is in English when it comes to productive skills such as speaking and writing. She also has limited competence in isiXhosa.

CASE STUDY 2: Dumisani

Dumisani lives in Soweto. Unlike Hamida, he has two mother tongues by origin: isiZulu, which is his mother's first language, and Sepedi, which is his father's. Dumisani grew up with both these languages being prominent in his early childhood. He identified with both these languages in terms of internal identification. However, his friends regarded him as an isiZulu speaker because he used this language more, so isiZulu was the mother tongue by

external identification. One explanation for this difference is that, growing up, Dumisani spent more time with his mother, so ended up using isiZulu more often. With regard to competence, Dumisani was more proficient in isiZulu at an informal level, but in English when it came to the formal use of language in domains such as education. However, when it came to function, he uses English and isiZulu equally regularly, albeit in different domains of use.

The criteria of *competence* and *function* are particularly important. There is usually a link between the two—people use the language(s) they know best, most. However, when it comes to language and education in schools in South Africa, particularly with regard to the language of teaching and learning, there is very little correlation between the two criteria for most learners whose mother tongue (language of origin) is an African language.

When educationists and linguists make a case for mother tongue education, they are making the case with reference to the criterion of *competence*—the language one knows best. For even though African languages, like isiXhosa or Tshivenda, for example, are currently confined to limited domains (or areas) of use, they are the languages the learners know best and use most in their daily lives.

However, Skutnabb-Kangas alerts us to the fact that the definitions of mother tongue she provides may not always apply in multilingual contexts. In South Africa, there are many examples of children growing up with two languages like as Dumisani, particularly in Gauteng, where the father and mother might not share a mother tongue. Sadly, however, caregivers may choose to speak only English to the child.

According to Skutnabb-Kangas, the criterion that is most difficult to define is origin because:

... caregivers and children may not have the same mother tongue ... [in] situations where the mother tongue by origin may not be learned in infancy and may not be taught by the primary care-takers ... (2000: 111)

Skutnabb-Kangas's (2000) definitions and descriptions of mother tongue are helpful in discussions on language in education as they concretely describe various applications of the use of the mother tongue in daily interaction.

ACTIVITY 37: Mapping my language history



Journal

In order to assess your understanding of the term “mother tongue”, as well as to make you aware of your own language biography, map your own language histories, using the four criteria applied by Skutnabb-Kangas, namely, origin, identification (internal and external), competence and function.

ACTIVITY 38: Understanding my language practices



Journal

Write a journal entry about your current language practices, describing the contexts in which you use different languages. In addition, describe how you feel about your own language history and experiences in South Africa, particularly in an education setting.

3.3 Language in South Africa

The vast majority of South Africans are **multilingual**¹⁹, which means they are able to understand and speak two or more languages. There are, however, pockets in the country that are more **monolingual**²⁰, particularly in deep rural areas and particularly among older people. This section will introduce you to South African language policy and consider some of the ways that this impacts on educational inclusion in practice. We start by thinking about the benefits of multilingualism.

3.3.1 Multilingualism

ACTIVITY 39: Reflecting on multilingualism



Journal

Look back on your previous journal entry about your languages. Reflect on your experiences of being multilingual. What are the benefits that you have got from being multilingual? And the challenges? How do these affect your learning experiences and teaching practice?

There are many individual and collective benefits to multilingualism (Coetzee-van Rooy, 2010). A multilingual community reflects a rich and diverse cultural society. Multilingualism can contribute to inclusive economic development and increase individuals' employment opportunities. There is significant evidence that multilingual learners find it easier to learn new languages and have increased **metalinguistic awareness**²¹ compared to their monolingual peers.



Definition

20 Multilingual: Able to understand and speak two or more languages.

21 Monolingual: Able to understand and speak only one language.

22 Metalinguistic awareness: Ability to discuss and reflect on language.

There are also cognitive development benefits: multilingual children are more creative, are better problem-solvers and have increased critical thinking capabilities. These are cognitive skills that underpin most curricula throughout the world.

UNESCO promotes the value of linguistic diversity and argues that sustainable development depends on multilingualism, and that it contributes to global citizenship and peaceful co-existence. Every year on 21 February, UNESCO celebrates the benefits of multilingualism with an International Mother Language Day. The following is a useful website to find out more about this day and gives ideas of how to celebrate the day in your school: <https://bit.ly/2BrxyBn>

3.3.2 Language planning and policy

Despite these recognised benefits of multilingualism, we still see that the majority of classrooms globally are monolingual. Why is this? To understand this, we need to look at language planning. This goes beyond educational policy as it also relates to the choices of national languages and how they are used in different settings—for example, law courts or hospitals.

Richard Ruiz (1984) usefully categorises three types of language planning orientations. He describes **orientation**²² as “a complex of dispositions toward language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society”.

Ruiz’ three orientations are:

1. **Language as a problem:** Where monolingual policies are promoted and minority languages are marginalised from official spaces, such as schools. This can lead to assumptions that children who are not proficient in the dominant language are less able.
2. **Language as a right:** Where the linguistic rights of minority communities are recognised legally but are rarely given an equal status to dominant languages.
3. **Language as a resource:** Here multilingualism is seen as an asset and useful in economic and social community development. This can be seen as the opposite of “language as a problem” since policies will actively promote multilingualism.

This is a good reading to think more about the ways that language can be seen as a resource in South Africa: <https://bit.ly/2w7VeHe>

South Africa’s “eleven official languages” policy (RSA, 1996) has been hailed as progressive by many language activists and language practitioners. By the way, can you name the 11 languages? And can you name the many other languages that are spoken or used in South Africa?

A closer examination of language policy in practice, however, shows that the situation in South Africa is no different from the typical post-colonial situation, either in Africa, or elsewhere. As Desai has argued, “During Apartheid we had two official languages, now we have 11. Simple arithmetic tells us we should adopt a ‘two plus’ approach in addressing language issues. Instead we often have a ‘two minus’ approach, gravitating towards English monolingualism” (Desai, 2016: 346). The nine African languages continue to be used in limited domains.

Where have we gone wrong? Ironically, it is not in the policy sector, as even our language in education policy (DoE, 1997) is progressive and allows for the use of African languages throughout our formal education. The reality, however, is very different. In practice only English and Afrikaans mother tongue speakers are able to use their languages as languages of learning and teaching throughout formal education.

The clamour for English in Southern Africa, but particularly South Africa, is deafening. Interestingly, at the height of the “Fees must fall” campaign, when the call for a decolonised curriculum was very loud, very little mention was made of using African languages as languages of learning and teaching. Instead, the demand at many campuses was to stop using Afrikaans as a medium and use only English. See the Conversation piece on multilingualism above for more information on this.

Definition

23 Orientation: An integrated set of attitudes and beliefs held by a person.

You can also read this interesting article by Rosemary Salomone about the Constitutional Court judgement to uphold the decision of the University of the Free State to move from a parallel English and Afrikaans language programme to only English: <https://bit.ly/2Jxn0nE>

ACTIVITY 40: Talking to a caregiver



Discussion

To begin to address this question, interview a caregiver in your community about why they want their children to learn in English.

Why is this the case?

There are many complex reasons for such behaviour. Below are some possible explanations.

- English is seen as a global language that will open doors for its speakers. This despite the fact that for many it remains “unassailable but unattainable” in the words of the late South African language activist, Neville Alexander.
- During apartheid, South Africans were brought up on a diet of difference. As a result, any difference is viewed with suspicion and English is seen as an equaliser.
- There is a strong perception that African languages do not have the necessary or required technical vocabulary to be used as languages of learning and teaching. Proponents of this belief forget that languages develop through use and the more you use them, the more they develop.

Given such exclusionary practices and rigid views, how do we begin to give value to the African languages that many of our learners bring to the classrooms of South Africa? How do we acknowledge their linguistic resources?

As teachers we need to create a climate in the classroom that is inclusive and welcoming. Our experience is that the more languages we speak, the richer we are.

Have you ever noticed the reaction of someone when you thank them in their own language? A good starting point for an inclusive classroom could be a poster with “thank you” in as many languages and scripts as possible. Another idea could be to have children learn to sign words and phrases like “Hello”, and “How are you?”

Think of other languages you can add to the poster, e.g. South African Sign Language, isiXhosa, Setswana, siSwati, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Hebrew, Hindi, French, German, Portuguese, etc.

Ke a leboga
Nginyathokoza
Thank you
Nginyabonga
Dankie

shurans
Asante sana
Enkosi kakhulu

ACTIVITY 41: Colloquial language



Writing

Later in this section we refer to Professor Leketi Makalela, of the Division of Languages, Literacies and Literatures at the University of the Witwatersrand, who believes that using colloquial expressions, phrases and idioms can help us all to speak “South African”. Can you think of some “South African” phrases that are understood by most (e.g. amashwang-shweng = a nice hairstyle; kasi = your neighbourhood). Can you think of others that might enrich our society?

ACTIVITY 42: Celebrating multilingualism



Writing

We are going to look in more detail at specific multilingual strategies you can use in your teaching practice. But first, we'd like you to think about some other general ways that you can celebrate multilingualism in your classroom, viewing the languages that learners bring as a resource rather than a problem. Examples include encouraging learners to know the greetings of all languages in the classroom; celebrating UNESCO Mother Language Day; developing different multilingual resources, e.g. glossaries, posters. Please use these as a starting point for your group discussions.

3.4 Language and inclusive education

3.4.1 Why language is an important factor in inclusive education

We have mentioned a few times that language is an important factor for inclusive education. Why is this? This section introduces you to the challenges that many children face and provides space for group and personal reflection about how language relates to wider inequalities in the education system. Much of the evidence used in this section comes from a 2016 UNICEF report about language policy and practice in East and Southern Africa and a 2017 British Council report about English Medium Instruction (EMI) in low- and middle-income countries:

<https://uni.cf/2VDT0JO>

<https://bit.ly/2VH3GHG>

It is widely known that children learn better when they learn in their mother language. Research from many countries shows that learners learn faster and are able to communicate more clearly in their mother language. This is across different groups, such as gender or ethnic background, and is seen in countries worldwide (see, for example, the important work of Jim Cummins, 2006). South Africa's Language in Education policy recognises this, but in practice only implements it in Grades R to 3, after which there is a switch to English.

Research from South Africa and across the continent has shown that when learners transition to learning in English, the majority do not have the English proficiency to understand subject content in the language of learning and teaching. This is a significant barrier to children's learning and progression throughout basic education, particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Millions of children learn in English medium schools but have very low levels of English proficiency. This leads to disengagement and low school achievement. In the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries with EMI, learners switch to English at the end of year three.

At this point of transition, many learners are unable to **write** about complex issues or **read** textbook content (which is rarely adapted to second language learners) in any language. They also are unlikely to have the English proficiency to **listen** and fully understand what the teacher is saying or **talk** in group discussions in English medium lessons.

Prof Nontokozo Mashiya at the School of Education, UKZN, has stressed that learning in a language other than your home language tends to reinforce rote learning rather than understanding and application. So, not only are learners being taught in English, in addition there is an emphasis on memorising English text in a short timeframe, rather than understanding the concepts it represents, or engaging the ideas behind the words in a way that is meaningful and rewarding to them. Apart from the unnecessary anxiety this causes in a child, this meaningless reproduction of text alienates learners from the potentially valuable knowledge in the text.

If the focus was more on understanding, application, and the higher order thinking skills of critical and creative innovation, then teachers would be more likely to value home languages, and the **Indigenous Knowledge Systems**²³ (IKS) they are linked to, as useful tools in the learning process. This shift in focus is a shift away from skills that rely mainly on **extrinsic motivation**²⁴, towards skills that require the kind of **intrinsic motivation**²⁵ that home language and IKS can nurture. If the focus is on memorisation we hide the lack of understanding behind meaningless mechanical reproduction. Integrating home languages into our teaching is therefore essential in ensuring that all learners in our class are enabled to reach their full potential.

Privileging a learner's home language in a lesson, even if it is just to explore core concepts (which is more practical in a class with many different home languages), can have a powerful effect on the learner's self-esteem.

Imagine a teacher who is about to discuss gender constructs in a class. The teacher begins by asking learners to think of words, or phrases, or metaphors, or proverbs that express the ideas of masculinity and femininity in their home languages. Learners share and compare their concepts. They are even allowed to speak in their home languages while translating for each other (and even arguing about the translation). The lesson has begun by enabling learners to connect with their own knowledge (and ignorance) of the topic in a form that is meaningful to them. The teacher might continue to explore the role of initiation rituals, inviting learners to share their knowledge of rites of passage, and what they tell us about the way cultures communicate what it means to be a man or a woman.

The lack of value that our curriculum places on languages from Africa and knowledge from Africa entrenches **Afro-pessimism**²⁶ and subtly communicates an **inferiority complex**²⁷ connected to values, beliefs, languages and practices that come from Africa. Most curricula neglect the wealth of knowledge and practices that originated in Africa. Our curricula often imply that the African child must leave their values, beliefs and practices outside the school gate. How do we change this? We can address this in part by defending the learners' right to be taught in their mother tongue, or "home language" as the Department of Basic Education prefers to express it.

The research evidence shows that:

- The use of mother languages can increase girls' participation and achievement in school.
- Children in remote rural areas and children living in poor households find it very hard to learn in the medium of English. Many of these children do not have the opportunity to read, speak or listen to English outside the classroom. Their caregivers and the wider family may not speak English. They may not have regular access to English media (such as TV or the radio).
- When children do not feel confident in their English, they are less likely to talk or ask questions in class. They may feel more anxious or worried that they will not say the words correctly. This means that girls, children in remote rural areas and those living in poor households may not be practising using English which is so important to language development.



Definition

24 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. (Answers.com)

25 Extrinsic motivation: Behaviour that is driven by external rewards such as money, fame, grades or praise.

26 Intrinsic motivation: Doing something because it gives you satisfaction and you want to do it.

27 Afro-pessimism is a framework and critical idiom that describes the ongoing effects of racism, colonialism, and historical processes of enslavement including the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and their impact on structural conditions as well as personal, subjective, and lived experience, and embodied reality. (Wikipedia)

28 An inferiority complex consists of a lack of self-esteem, a doubt and uncertainty about yourself, and feelings of not measuring up to standards.

ACTIVITY 43: Do a language survey



Discussion

Take a look at some of the major educational inequalities in a school you are working in now, one that you have worked in previously, or a school in your community. Collect some information (data) about which children do well, or less well, in school. A useful way to find this out is through a short survey of a class at the start of the year. If you can't access a class you could possibly talk to member of a homework club, or an after-school group. Ask the children to tell you a little about themselves and what languages they speak regularly outside of class (in the playground, on the way to school, at home, in the market). This will help you to understand the range of languages that may be spoken in your future classrooms and possibly the ways that certain inequalities (e.g. gender) inter-relate with access to the language of learning and teaching. Together with Activity 40 (why caregivers want their children to learn in English) this may give you insight into the intersection of language and other barriers to learning.

While language is a key factor at all educational levels, it is important that we do not only focus on language. Addressing language issues is a necessary condition for making a classroom more inclusive, but it is not sufficient to merely improve all children's learning. A recent thought-piece by Carol Benson (2016) has highlighted additional equality and quality issues that need to be addressed:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002455/245575E.pdf>

In particular, Benson highlights (1) content-heavy and inappropriate curricula, (2) low levels of teacher education, (3) lack of adequate school facilities and (4) health and safety issues, particularly for girls. Does this sound familiar?

ACTIVITY 44: Socio-economic impact on learning



Writing

Let's take the example of socio-economic status. Think about, and if possible discuss, the ways that poverty and language may be related for learners in your class. As a starting point, think about: learning materials, time for study, access to language outside of the classroom. Consider the ways that these may inter-relate with some of the issues that Carol Benson highlights.

3.4.2 Language in the classroom

While much of the literature focuses on primary schooling, there is also lots of evidence from across Sub-Saharan Africa that language continues to be a barrier for learners in secondary and higher education. Why is this?

Firstly, policymakers and curriculum developers widely assume that post primary schooling children will be fully proficient, if not fluent, in English. This means that no allowances are made for other languages to be used as a resource. The level of English used in the curriculum (for example, in textbook content or for assessment) tends to be that of a native speaker. This is often because policymakers think that learning in English is an effective way to learn the language of English. However, we have already seen that many children, particularly those from rural and lower-income communities, leave primary schooling without even basic reading, writing or speaking skills in English.

Secondly, the curriculum demands of learners can be very high. Curricula can be overloaded with content so learners are expected to demonstrate a wide range of knowledge. The cognitive demands can also be very high. Do you think this is true of the South African secondary curriculum?

One recent project in Tanzania has sought to support learners and teachers who are struggling with the cognitive and language demands of the secondary curriculum. In Tanzania, the shift to learning in English happens at the start of secondary school, and the project's research has found that children find it very difficult to engage in their lessons, particularly in Science. They have found that children in rural areas are particularly affected. The project has designed textbooks which include a range of activities that would be very useful, particularly if you are working in secondary schools. You can find all of the project's publications, including chapters of the textbooks they have developed, on this website: <https://lstttanzania.wordpress.com/>

ACTIVITY 45: Language and inclusion



Journal

We've come to the end of the first half of the section. Take a moment to reflect on what you have learnt. In your journal, try answering these questions. You can use the section content, key readings and tasks we've looked at so far:

1. What are the benefits of multilingualism?
2. What do the criteria of function and competence mean in relation to mother tongue?
3. How can you promote language as a resource in your classroom?
4. What are the new things that you learnt about language and inclusion?

3.5 Classroom strategies: a two-pronged approach

Earlier we indicated that multilingualism is all around us but classrooms still remain monolingual when it comes to written work and assessment, even though both teachers and learners speak African languages in many classrooms. There is a tendency to see language in education policy rather narrowly. In this section we therefore give you some ideas on:

- How we can use learners' mother tongues in the classroom, even if the language of learning and teaching is English, to assist learners in accessing the curriculum and in making them feel included by being able to demonstrate what they **do know**
- Some ways to develop English language proficiency in all lessons

3.5.1 Mother tongue teaching and learning

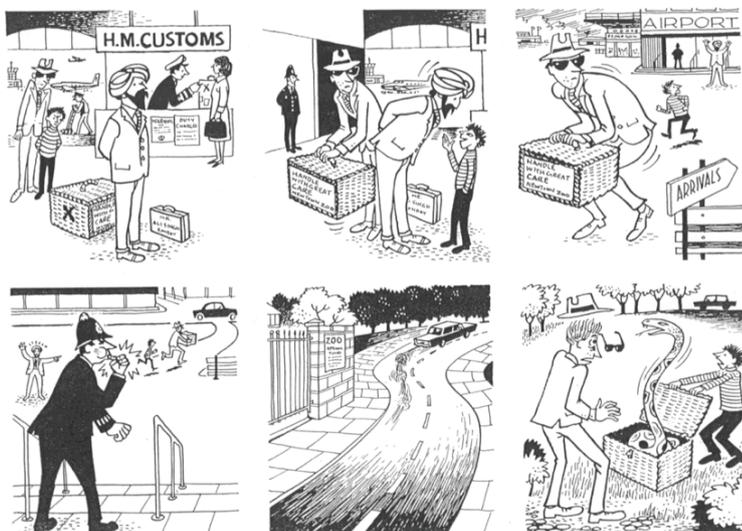


Figure 23: A surprise (Source: Heaton, 1971)

We will start off with an example from Desai's research (2016, op.cit.) in Khayelitsha in the Western Cape. She gave a writing task to Grade 4 learners based on the picture story on the left.

Below is a snapshot of a Grade 4 learner's narrative writing based on the picture story. The first example is a narrative piece written by the pupil in the mother tongue, isiXhosa. The second example is the English translation of the isiXhosa piece in the first example and the third example is the same learner's narrative piece written in English (see Desai, 2012 for more information on this project).

As English is officially the language of learning and teaching from Grade 4 at this school, we judge the learners on what they are able to do on the basis of the English version. We ignore what they can do in their mother tongue. You will notice that the English version barely relates to the picture story, while the isiXhosa version is clearly based on the story. Yet we judge the child on the English version only. The study showed that at Grade 4 level, the pupils performed significantly better in the isiXhosa version of the narrative task. Learner samples indicate that the isiXhosa version was almost always much richer than the English version and truer to the pictures in the *narrative task*. In fact, at Grade 4 level, learners expressed themselves with great difficulty in English, as is evident in the sample. The study showed that learners at this school, which is similar to many schools catering for African learners, are not ready to switch to English as a medium at the beginning of Grade 4. One of the recommendations from this study was that isiXhosa be extended as the language of learning and teaching at least until the end of Grade 6.

In multilingual societies people tend to use their “linguistic repertoires” (or their range of language varieties) as resources, not impediments. Educational institutions have to take this as their starting point, instead of ignoring the existing language proficiencies of learners. Languages develop through use, and creative solutions will emerge if there is a commitment to inclusive education, which accommodates linguistic diversity as a challenge rather than a threat.

There is often a tendency to adopt an “all-or-nothing” approach. This leads to the terms “medium of instruction” and “language of learning and teaching” being seen in rigid terms. If, for example, English is used as a medium of instruction the assumption is that only English must be used for all teaching and learning activities. The term can, however, be broken up into different aspects, for example:

- Language/s used for teaching
- Language/s used in the setting of tasks, assignments and exams
- Language/s used or allowed in the writing of assignments and exams
- Language/s in which text material is available
- Language/s learners use in their self-directed learning processes and activities

The question of medium of instruction then takes on a dynamic role. What guides the teacher is how to ensure that learners are engaged in the learning process. Such an approach is being implemented informally in many contexts, but it needs to happen on a more systematic basis. Two case studies from a PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) class illustrate this very well:

Figure 24: Grade 4 writing sample and example text

isiXhosa version

Kwakukho utata waza
wabeka ibhokisi yakhe phantsi
encokola notata wakhe
kwasukha kwathi gqi omnye
ubhuti wathatha ibhokisi yala
tata wabaleka waleqwa
ngumntwana omnye wakhalisa
impempe omnye emkhemba
wabaleka wayo kuqabela
imote. wayiqhuba kakhulu
abanye bavula ibhokisi
kwavela inyoka wathuswa
yinyoka kwade kwathaka
idimasi.

English translation of isiXhosa version

There was a father (old man) who put his box down, conversing with his father. Then a certain young man (brother) appeared and took that old man's box and ran away. He was chased by a child and the one blew a whistle, and the other one pointed at him. He ran away with it and got into the car and drove very fast. The others opened the box and a big snake. The other was shocked by the snake and his sunglasses fell down.

English version

Once upon a time
Long long ago
Ly Buter uteatsha fourboy late
my father
I taket my tyesi
I goiu my father is goiu
boeke
Look my boy

CASE STUDY 1: Use of mother tongue

In a lecture session to English Method learners, the professor asked the class whether they would allow their pupils/learners to use their mother tongues during discussions in the English class. There was a resounding NO.

That same day, the professor had some of the English Method learners in a tutorial group where

they were working on a task. As the professor walked around the class, she heard most of the learners engaging in their mother tongue with their fellow learners. She gently tapped one on the shoulder and said, “What did you say this morning about using mother tongues in the English class?” The learner smiled bashfully.

There is a tendency amongst speakers of African languages to deny their own useful practices, instead of drawing on them as a resource.

CASE STUDY 2: Use of non-linguistic tools

At times, non-linguistic tools can assist in clarifying a concept. The same professor was teaching a combined PGCE class on the role of language in learning. She wanted to illustrate the point that at times learners may have the right answer without knowing what it means, as there is a tendency to rote-learn (learn “off-by-heart”). The professor put this to the test by asking the class whether they knew what caused day and night. Several learners promptly answered correctly, “The earth rotates on its own axis in relation to the sun.” When the

professor asked volunteers to come forward to demonstrate this, you saw the earth running around the sun; the sun running around the earth and even the earth running around the moon. No one in the class got it right. When the professor demonstrated it, all the learners said they would never forget this because of the demonstration. What this illustrates is that teachers need to be resourceful to explain concepts to learners—mere words are not always enough.

a. Bilingual approach

The LOITASA Project

There are numerous examples of pedagogically sound approaches being adopted in South Africa, and elsewhere. One such example is a bilingual approach where learner workbooks were developed for Mathematics and Natural Sciences for Grades 4–6 by the Language of Learning and Teaching in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA) Project in which Desai was centrally involved.

The South African side of the project was a **longitudinal study**²⁸ spreading over three years (Grades 4–6) and involved two primary schools in urban townships in the Western Cape. At each school one class constituted the experimental group and the other a control group. The experimental group was taught Science and Mathematics in isiXhosa, while the control group was taught these subjects in English. The same learners were part of the project from Grades 4–6. The project monitored the progress of learners in the two subjects, Science and Mathematics. In addition, **qualitative data**²⁹ was collected through classroom observations and interviews with teachers, learners and caregivers. Existing learner support materials in English in the two subject areas were translated into isiXhosa. These materials were provided free of charge to both the experimental and control groups. There was also a teacher-training component to the project.



Definition

29 A **longitudinal study** uses continuous or repeated methods to study individuals or groups over a prolonged period.

30 **Qualitative data** is non-numeric e.g. interviews, observations, focus groups.

By conducting a study where the mother tongue of the learners (isiXhosa) was used as a medium of instruction in two key subject areas in Grades 4–6, the researchers wanted to explore whether learners would learn better through the use of this medium as opposed to an unfamiliar language (English). The study focused on the following questions: Would this switch to the mother tongue be in the best interests of the learners for the acquisition of knowledge in Science and Mathematics? Would it facilitate the acquisition of English? Would it be in the interests of national development? The study hoped to throw some light on the consequences of continuing with English as a medium of instruction, as opposed to using a more familiar medium.

Key findings

Nomlomo (2008: 88) outlines some of the findings that emerged from the LOITASA Project in South Africa in the Science classrooms taught in isiXhosa as follows:

Learners developed high self-esteem and better confidence as they participated in classroom activities in their own language. They were spontaneous in responding to teachers' questions and they could express themselves clearly in their mother tongue (isiXhosa). Their written work made more sense than their counterparts who were taught through the medium of English. They could elaborate on issues, making use of complex sentences, which showed originality and better understanding of Science concepts.

See Nomlomo (2008 and 2009) for details of actual examples from learners' scripts. Nomlomo also points to a positive correlation between the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction and learners' understanding and academic performance in Science. For example, the pass rate in Science in Grade 5 for the isiXhosa class ranged from 70 to 86%. Learners in the isiXhosa-medium class consistently out-performed their counterparts who were taught in English.

Similarly, Langenhoven states that “when pupils use their mother tongue to read and talk about a topic, they construct meaning, making sense of their world and thus generating a better understanding of scientific concepts instead of memorising scientific facts” (2010: 135). Langenhoven illustrates the complexities involved in assessing learners in a language that is not their first language. In other words, how do you know whether the concept in Science is misunderstood or whether a learner is simply not able to express it in English? For this reason Langenhoven asked learners to sketch their understanding of certain concepts. He argues that “drawings are revealing and although mere suppositions, can generate meaningful insights into how pupils' conceptual understanding develops” (Langenhoven, 2010: 140).

Despite important gains made by the project, as captured in the LOITASA-edited volumes (Brock-Utne et al, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2010; Qorro et al, 2008; Desai et al, 2010), there have been many challenges as well. Desai outlines some of these:

Concern was expressed by the research team after classroom observations that, despite a new curriculum which emphasized a learner-centred approach, teaching in both the experimental and control groups was characterized by a predominantly teacher-centred approach. Children spent most of their time listening to the teachers talking, with occasional choral responses from the students. Where questions were asked of pupils, they were largely of an information-seeking kind. The higher-order thinking that did take place in the four classrooms of these two schools was linked to assessment tasks in the learner support materials provided by the project. (Desai, 2010: 209–210)

The conclusion that Desai (and other researchers in the project) have come to is that:

Mother tongue education is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to remedy such teacher-centred approaches in the class o be encouraged. An intimacy with subject knowledge on the part of the teachers is needed to develop a confidence and boldness in teachers which, in turn, could lead to greater pupil involvement in learning. (Desai, 2010: 210)

ACTIVITY 46: Language of learning and teaching



Discussion

Given South Africa's enabling language in education policy of 1997, there are many ways in which you as prospective teachers can assist learners to access the curriculum if the pedagogical will is there. Demonstrate how you can assist learners to access a difficult part of the curriculum by drawing on their mother tongues.

So, what are some of the other ways that teachers help to support learners learning with English as the language of learning and teaching?

b. Code-switching

The most common pedagogic strategy used to aid learning in African classrooms is **code-switching**³⁰. This can be defined as "the use of more than one language or dialect in the same conversation" (Clegg and Afitska, 2011: 62). Studies by Probyn (2006) in South Africa have shown how many teachers use code-switching between English and languages that are more familiar in Science and Maths lessons. Code-switching can be an effective way to check learners' understanding and make the subject content more accessible. Teacher code-switching has some pedagogic value in allowing for access to the curriculum and has the potential to aid language development. However, it is often used by teachers when they themselves do not feel proficient in the language of learning and teaching. Some teachers also allow for large parts of the lesson to be in a language other than the language of learning and teaching.

c. Translation

Recent research in English-medium schools in Yaounde, Cameroon, has shown that the main strategy used by multilingual learners in classrooms and at home is **translation**. At given moments, for example when the teacher has turned their back to the blackboard, learners will ask each other for help in translating what the teacher has been saying. At home, they will also use different resources, such as dictionaries, to translate textbook content and homework. While this shows that learners are finding ways to access the curriculum, there are clear implications for the time it takes to engage in this practice.

These approaches—code-switching and translation—may help learners and teachers to navigate the English-medium curriculum. However, they do not systematically support English language development or draw on learners' multilingual resources like the examples above. A recent research project in Rwanda trialled an approach called language supportive learning.

ACTIVITY 47: Rwandan language supportive textbooks



Audio Visual

Watch the video of the Rwandan case study below and discuss:

1. What is meant by language supportive learning for all?
2. How is English language developed through using the textbooks discussed?
3. What can you learn from this case study for your own practice?



Definition

31 Code-switching: The use of more than one language or dialect in the same conversation.

A central aspect of this approach was helping to develop learners' English in every lesson using set activities and specially designed textbooks. In the section below, some examples of these activities are given. The findings from the study are discussed in this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUqS_WSwEv0&t=2s

Key to this language supportive learning approach is the use of mother tongue, not only to enable learners' access to the curriculum, but also as a resource to scaffold their English language development.

Lesson plans were designed to include activities related to listening, speaking, reading and writing. This gives learners opportunities to:

- Gain access to the concept (for example, through initial discussion in Kinyarwanda or reading a very simple text)
- Demonstrate their knowledge of the concept (for example, through structured written tasks)
- Practice their English (for example, through opportunities to speak in English with keywords or translations provided)

These are very useful principles for you to think about when designing activities within your own classroom. Perhaps you could ask learners which they would find the most useful.

d. Content and Language Integrated Learning

Another approach that is gaining a lot of support around the world is **Content and Language Integrated Learning**³¹ (CLIL). This has been particularly popular in Spain. In CLIL, some subjects are taught entirely in a second language (often English) but learners are fully supported to practise and develop their English within every lesson. In this way, the approach shares some similarities with language supportive learning that we have already looked at.

The positives of CLIL are:

- It recognises that learners are learning in a second (or often third or fourth) language. Activities are included that develop learners' language competencies and there are often a lot of visual aids to support understanding.
- Lessons are coordinated by both content and English language specialist teachers as required.
- It can be adapted to the context of delivery. For example, in Spain, different regional authorities have implemented it differently, with some giving a larger proportion of the curriculum over to CLIL than others. This is dependent upon whether learners live in predominantly bilingual or multilingual communities.

However, it has only been used in high-income countries and so it is not known whether it would work well in lower-income contexts. There is reason to be unsure. Some researchers, such as Anthony Bruton, are critical of CLIL because it can discriminate against less able and socio-economically disadvantaged learners (Bruton, 2013). It is also expensive to put in place because of the dual-teaching approach. This reminds us again of the importance of considering context when implementing language education programmes. What works well in one place won't necessarily work well somewhere else.

ACTIVITY 48: Use of CLIL in different classrooms



Audio Visual

This is a really good video that shows CLIL being used in different classrooms across Europe. Identify, and if possible discuss, aspects of it that you could use in your classroom.

<https://youtu.be/dFuCrXRobh0>

Definition



32 Content and Language Integrated Learning is a method of learning a content-based subject such as maths or geography through the medium of a second language, and at the same time, learning that second language by studying the content-based subject.

One of the comments one often hears is that it is difficult to use African languages as languages of learning and teaching as there are so few interesting children’s materials in them. As the sociologist and language scholar, Kwesi Kwaa Prah, states, although Africans are among the most multilingual people in the world: ... (their) command over languages is however mainly oral, with little or hardly any bases in literacy. This weakness means that the foundations of multilingualism in Africa are tenuous. It is a multilingualism which suffers from all the debilities of orality as opposed to literacy. (Prah, 2009: 259)

e. Stories

Given this caveat by Prah, how then do we enable learners such as those in Khayelitsha or Nongoma to gain real access to English?

One way of doing this is through **stories**. Throughout the world, young people are brought up on stories. But often these stories are shared orally and are not written down. What prevents you, as young student teachers, from writing a story that you know and like—in whichever language you wish to? If a particular story is not available in your language, you can always translate it. In this way we can develop plenty of written resources in African languages.

This is not a new idea. The African Storybook Project does precisely that, but has added an additional component—the stories are posted online, thus developing a rich source of online material readily acceptable to all and free of charge. Visit their website: www.africanstorybook.org to see the wealth of resources available currently in 152 languages.

ACTIVITY 49: Write a story



Writing

Write a children’s story that you know and like. Get a fellow student to translate it into another language. Now post it on the African Storybook website.

3.5.2 Multilingual teaching and learning activities

This section gives you some ideas for activities that will support learners in this two-pronged approach to both access the curriculum and develop their English language. It is useful to think about these activities across reading, writing and speaking. Some of these activities are taken from the two projects discussed in the section above. We recommend that you use these activities as a starting point for thinking about how you will include all learners in your classroom.

a. Reading

- It is good to check the text that learners are reading. Is it in simple language? Is there a simple sentence structure? If not, can you adapt the text to make it easier for your learners to understand?
- Are there any new words that you may want to check they know before asking them to read the text?
- When learners are reading a text, it is important that learners know why they are reading it. To help with this, try asking simple questions about the key thing that you want the learner to take from the text.

Read the text: What lives in soil?

Soil is the top part of the earth.
It is a non-living thing.
There are three main types of soil: loam, sand and clay soil.
Plants grow in soil.
Some animals live in soil.

Figure 25: Example text

b. Writing

Writing in English is very difficult for learners if they are not supported to write. It can help learners if the writing is a follow-on to a reading activity. Here are some ways to help learners:

- Give learners the heads and tails of different sentences to make single sentences:

Soil is	are some animals that live in soil
Plants grow	three different types of soil
There are	a non-living thing.
Insects	in loam soil

- Ask learners to write the sentences in a sequence to make a paragraph.
- Matching activities between sentences and visuals can also be a useful way to support language development.

Ask learners to fill out a chart, for example:	
	What is it used for
Loam soil	
Sand soil	
Clay soil	

<p>There are 3 types of soil:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loam soil • sand soil • clay soil <p>We use loam soil for growing crops. We use sand soil for building. We use clay soil for making pots.</p>			
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Figure 26: Sentence-building activity (Source: University of Bristol, Rwanda language supportive project textbook)

c. Speaking

It is good to first let learners speak in a language they are familiar with to allow them to know what they know and build their base level of knowledge. From here, talking in English can be scaffolded to help to build proficiency and confidence. Give learners all the words that they need to make sentences.

Here are two good activities to further develop their English language and confidence:

- Give a speaking frame where learners fill in the blanks. This could be adapted from the sentence-building activity above, for example:
We use.....for.....
- Give learners the starts to sentences for them to complete in discussion with each other. For example:
We use loam soil...

There is a tendency among some people to look down on non-dominant languages, as if they are not real languages with rules, etc. It is important to expose such perceptions. There are many fun activities that teachers can be involved in to make learners aware of how different languages function.

Below are two examples of such activities.

Example 1: Comparing languages

Learners can have fun **comparing** how different languages work, with regard to different aspects of language.

For example, learners and teachers can compare how different languages form plurals:

Cat—cats (English)
Kat—katte (Afrikaans)
Ikati—iikati (isiXhosa)
Bili—biliya (Hindi)
Mazru—mazriya (Konkani—Hamida’s mother tongue)

Teachers can then discuss these features with learners and get them to form other plurals. They can ask learners what they notice—in isiXhosa the plural form is created by adding something in front of the word (a prefix) while the other languages add something at the back of the word (a suffix).

Example 2: Comparing orthography

Another example is **orthography**³². In English, the sentence “I love you” consists of three words. However, in isiXhosa it consists of one word “Ndiyakuthanda”.

English has what is known as a “disjunctive orthography”—that is, the words are separated. isiXhosa has a “conjunctive orthography”—the words are combined into one word. There are many useful things that can be learnt by comparing languages and teachers can use such strategies to develop a metalinguistic awareness amongst learners.

This comparative task leads us into the next section.

ACTIVITY 50: Reflecting on strategies



Journal

Think about, and if possible discuss, the activities presented here. What do you think about them? Which do you particularly like or dislike? Why? Are there any you can imagine adapting for your own subject/classrooms? Use some of the strategies or activities to create a learning activity in your particular subject area. Make a note of these in your journal.



Definition

33 Orthography: The accepted system of spelling and writing words in a language.

3.6 Language, culture and identity

Thus far, we have focused on language and learning as we think that the language of learning and teaching plays a fundamental role in excluding learners from access to the curriculum and knowledge. However, we are aware that language is also a carrier of culture and identity—think back to our earlier discussion of Skutnabb-Kangas’s definitions of mother tongue.

ACTIVITY 51: Language and culture



Writing

How do you think language and culture are linked? What does it say about your identity?

It is clear that language plays a central role in the development of the child as a social being. As Halliday says, “Language is the main channel through which the patterns of living are transmitted to him (sic), through which he (sic) learns to act as a member of a ‘society’” (1978: 9). This does not, however, happen through instruction. It happens indirectly—in the home, on the street, in the shops, on public transport, through interaction with caregivers, brothers and sisters, neighbourhood children, school friends. In other words, there is an interweaving of language and culture as children grow up.

We would refer to culture in such a context as “culture with a small c”, as something that has helped to shape us and make us who we are. But when the link between language and culture is seen as an ethnic, often chauvinistic, marker used to assert difference and divide people, we refer to culture as “culture with a capital C”. This is what happened during apartheid when language was used to separate speakers of the different African languages into separate “homelands”. Given this history, there is a tendency in South Africa to view the link between language and culture with suspicion. It is in this context that the clamour for English during the “Fees must fall” campaign needs to be seen, but not necessarily condoned.

In this regard, one needs to distinguish between the symbolic (the ethnic marker) and the communicative role of language (language as a resource). African languages are the communicative resources of the majority of people in South Africa. It would be foolish to deny this. As such, we need to promote their use in educational settings and other high domains. Decolonising the curriculum inevitably has to involve the use of local languages, which encode cultural meanings, and are also facilitative in the learning process.

There are resources that we can use in the classroom to get learners to make the connection between their language and their identity, but also to see their language as a communicative resource. In an interesting chapter on using a multi-literacies pedagogical approach to developing texts, Cummins (2006) explores the use of multimedia to get pupils in a school in Canada to develop what he refers to as “identity texts”. By getting learners to invest in their identities, they are able to develop bilingual resources. It is important that young people are proud of their identities so that learning moves seamlessly from the familiar to the less familiar. (See Thornwood School’s website for more information: <http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual/>)

When we think about language, culture and identity, it is also important to think about the different ways that language is needed to more broadly include certain groups. There is a world of difference between those who are learning an additional language voluntarily to expand their linguistic repertoire, and those who are forced to learn an additional language in order to gain access to education and to participate in the wider society. You can sub-divide the latter group into two, that is, those learning the language in an immersion context, and those learning the additional language primarily in a school context. In the former case, there are those who are learning that additional language, immersed in it, such as immigrant children in Norway, the United States of America or the United Kingdom. Lily Wong Fillmore (1991: 52) sketches this situation very well in the following description:

The immigrant family is in an ideal situation for language learning since it resides in a setting that provides generous exposure to the language in use. The members of the family can hear and learn the language in the workplace, classroom, neighbourhood, and playground—wherever they come into contact with people who speak the target language well enough to help them learn it.

According to her, there are three necessary ingredients for second language learning:

1. **Learners** who realise that they need to learn the target language (TL) and are motivated to do so
2. **Speakers of the target language** who know it well enough to provide the learners with access to the language and the help they need for learning it
3. **A social setting** that brings learners and TL speakers into frequent enough contact to make language learning possible (Wong Fillmore, 1991: 52–53).

In Wong Fillmore’s opinion, if any of these ingredients are dysfunctional, learners will find language learning difficult.

In the case of learners at the school in Khayelitsha referred to earlier, only the first ingredient is present. In such a context, where people have to learn the additional language in an environment where it is not used often, learners are likely to encounter difficulties with learning English, let alone using it as a medium of instruction. In such a situation, mother tongue education should assume a greater role so as to facilitate learners’ learning, but also to acknowledge their identities.

ACTIVITY 52: Learning in English



Writing

Find out some of the reasons why South African and other policymakers think the best way for learners to learn English is by learning IN English. We have given you some ideas in the earlier sections. How does this relate to some of the points that are being raised in this section? See the list of references for resources to support this activity.

Are there any ways that you think you could get learners more “immersed” in the communities where they live? How could you work with caregivers and other community members to help with this?

Before we finish this unit, we would like to take a moment to think about the language that we all use when talking about inclusion and disability. The language we use is very powerful. It can make people feel included or excluded as has been explored through other units in this module.

Suggested study unit assessments

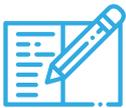


Assessment 1

Visit the Thornwood School website (<http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual/>) referred to earlier in the language, culture and learning section of this unit and study the school's approach to language and multilingualism. Now imagine you are starting a school like Thornwood in South Africa.

Develop a carefully-thought-through language policy and plan for your school. You should explain why you are making this policy and what theories or research evidence underpin this.

The references and resources that follow will help with this.



Assessment 2

In this study unit we have looked at the richness of learner diversity, and how a teacher who works inclusively needs to accommodate the different ways in which children learn, and draw on this diversity in their teaching methods so that every child is learning optimally.

1. What do you think are some of the characteristics of a teacher who works inclusively?
2. Think of one of your classes at school or a class in which you have taught or observed. Describe the diversity in that class. Describe a teacher who best accommodated this diversity. What were some of the strategies they used?
3. Did some of the teachers simply teach in a one-size-fits-all approach? Who was excluded from learning in that way? How could that have been addressed in order to give all the learners in the class access to a quality education and enable them to achieve to the best of their ability?

Study unit summary and reflection

Throughout this unit we have explored learner diversity from different angles: sociocultural, learning and language. We have examined the interplay between these different angles through intersectionality, and the potential impact of this interplay on equity in relation to education.

We have also explored how normative thinking in education impacts on beliefs about learner ability and the way that education is organised. As a result, normative thinking defines some learners as needing something “different” or “special”.

We have introduced you to a different way of viewing and planning for diverse classes, moving away from the “othering” of some learners, which can lead teachers to believe that they do not have the right skills or knowledge to teach some of the children in their class. The evidence, as we have shown, is to the contrary. Although it is clear that teachers do need knowledge about learners’ individual needs (and these will be explored further in Unit 3), there is no need for an expert level of knowledge. It is more important that teachers use this knowledge about their learners to extend what they do every day as a matter of course to make learning accessible to more learners in the classroom.

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Appendix: Information sheets on learner differences

Please note: These information sheets are provided to increase your knowledge of specific conditions so that you can more effectively include learners experiencing barriers, not as a means for you to stereotype or label learners. Do not assume that everyone who displays some of the listed behaviours has that condition, or that all the behaviours apply to everyone who has that condition. Also, people can have more than one condition and other facets of diversity will intersect.

Information Sheet 1: Albinism

Information Sheet 2: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Information Sheet 3: Autistic Spectrum Continuum

Information Sheet 4: Down syndrome

Information Sheet 5: Dyslexia (and other dys- differences)

Information Sheet 6: Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Information Sheet 7: Gifted and talented—or highly-able—learners

Information Sheet 8: Hearing impairment

Information Sheet 9: Stress, anxiety and depression

Information Sheet 10: Visual impairment

Information Sheet 1: Albinism

Albinism is a rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited difference present at birth. A person born with albinism is unable to produce normal colouring of the skin, hair and eyes. This lack of pigmentation (melanin) makes them vulnerable to the sun and bright light. As a result, almost all people with albinism are visually impaired and are prone to developing skin cancer. There is no cure for the absence of melanin that is central to albinism.

In almost all types of albinism, both parents must carry the gene for it to be passed on, even if they do not have albinism themselves. The condition is found in both sexes regardless of ethnicity and in all countries of the world.

It is estimated that in North America and Europe 1 in every 17 000 to 20 000 people have some form of albinism. The condition is much more prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, with estimates of 1 in 1 400 people being affected in Tanzania, with prevalence as high as 1 in 1 000 reported for select populations in Zimbabwe and for other specific ethnic groups in Southern Africa.

People with albinism face multiple forms of discrimination worldwide. Albinism is still profoundly misunderstood, socially and medically. The physical appearance of people with albinism is often the object of mistaken beliefs and myths influenced by superstition, which lead to various forms of stigma, discrimination and social exclusion. (<http://www.albinism.org.za>)

Children with albinism may have difficulties functioning in class due to their visual impairments. Teachers can make adjustments to the classroom environment to assist children with albinism:

- A seat near the front of the classroom
- Handouts of the content written on boards or overhead screens
- High-contrast printed documents, such as black type on white paper rather than coloured print or paper
- Large-print textbooks

Children with albinism may feel socially isolated from their peers, and may be experiencing bullying. Teachers can support learners by:

- Creating a positive and safe school environment all learners feel welcome and appreciated
- Being aware of signs of stress, anxiety or depression, and if necessary referring the learner for counselling. (Source: psyc.jmu.edu/school/documents/AlbinismFactSheet.pdf)



For more information visit the Albinism Society of South Africa at <http://www.albinism.org.za>

Information Sheet 2:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ACTIVITY 53: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



Audio Visual

If you are interested in finding out more about what is happening in the brain of someone with ADHD, you might choose to watch this short film:

Child/Adolescent ADHD and the brain

<https://adhd-institute.com/burden-of-adhd/aetiology/neurobiology/>

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is characterised by inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness. ADHD runs in families and studies now show that there are brain differences between people with ADHD and without ADHD that account for its most dominant characteristics.

Someone with ADHD can be:

- Predominately inattentive but with few or no signs of impulsivity or hyperactivity
 - Predominantly impulsive and hyperactive with little or no attention difficulties
 - A mixture of distractible, hyperactive and impulsive
- (Source: <http://www.adhasa.co.za>: South African support group for people with ADHD)

In South Africa it is estimated that approximately 1 in 10 children have ADHD. This means that in a class of 30 learners, teachers could expect around three children to have ADHD. Teachers often estimate much higher numbers. This is because of a lack of real understanding about ADHD and a tendency to jump to conclusions or label children. Here's a short film to watch that helps explain why this misunderstanding happens:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HI7Ro1PUJmE>

Sometimes, children might display what teachers think are characteristics of ADHD because they: are unable to access the curriculum; have another less-visible difference that shares characteristics with ADHD; are emotionally affected by something going on in their lives. There is no test for ADHD so it can be difficult to say definitively whether someone has it or not.

Medication—most commonly a drug called Ritalin—is only indicated in 7–10% all children with ADHD, and yet South Africa is ranked one of the highest countries in the world for prescribing Ritalin! Ritalin works to slow down the re-absorption of a chemical called dopamine, which is important for movement, attention, motivation and reward. It is thought that children with ADHD re-absorb dopamine more quickly than people without ADHD. Some people question the extent to which Ritalin is prescribed; the arguments surrounding the drug are rehearsed neatly in this article: <http://www.childmag.co.za/content/rethinking-ritalin#.XBTj6i2cY0o>.

Some of the characteristics you might spot in learners with ADHD are:

Possible strengths	Possible classroom challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • Friendliness • Sensitivity • Intuition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained attention and/or sustained mental effort • Distractibility • Impulsivity • Hyperactivity • Organisation—of learning, of equipment (often loses things) • Forgetful • Often does not follow through on instructions • Finishing tasks • Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly • Need to move or fidget • Often runs or climbs when inappropriate • Noise level • Excessive talking, interrupting, answering questions before they are finished • Social skills, e.g. turn-taking

Watch this film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFCKa9CVzGU>

What are some of the other possible strengths shared by people with ADHD mentioned in this film? Make a list to add to the qualities already mentioned above.

OPTIONAL: Follow some of the links in the text below the film to find out more about the possible benefits of ADHD.

Often, we focus on the possible challenges that ADHD can bring and it is therefore easy to see a child with ADHD as problematic, or naughty. Learners with ADHD can therefore suffer from low self-worth as they are often:

- In trouble
- Sent out of class
- Frustrated because they are not doing well in school
- Labelled as stupid and/or naughty
- Struggling socially
- Bullied or are bullies themselves
- Excluded from learning and from social activities

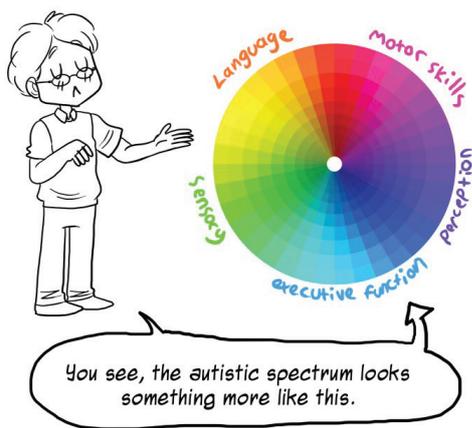
Children with ADHD are also more likely to have Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD). Children with ODD show “an ongoing pattern of anger-guided disobedience, hostility, and defiant behaviour towards authority figures that goes beyond the bounds of normal childhood behaviour. SADAG



For more information visit the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) at www.sadag.org

Information Sheet 3: Autistic Spectrum Continuum

The first thing to address here is the terminology. People commonly refer to this spectrum as a disorder, but there is a growing movement that would prefer it to be referred to as Autistic Spectrum Continuum (ASC). The autism community also refers to it as a “condition”. This is because of the view (referred to in Part 1) that being on the autistic spectrum is not a disorder, it is one of a huge number of naturally-occurring variances in the way the brain works. We will return to this view later in Part 3. We have opted to use to Autistic Spectrum Continuum as our terminology.



Executive function, which you see on this image, refers to working memory (our ability to hold on to new information), flexible thinking and self control.

(Source: <https://the-art-of-autism.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/UnderstandtheSpectrum.pdf>)

So, what is the Autistic Spectrum Continuum?

People who have traits associated with the Autistic Spectrum Continuum communicate, interact and behave in different ways to people who are considered “neurotypical”. Signs are often present from early childhood and should be observed across multiple contexts, for example, at home and at school before a diagnosis is made.

People with autism can be affected to a different extent in a number of different areas. The image below indicates these areas.

The circular spectrum replaces the idea of a linear one with “high-functioning” at one end and “low-functioning” at the other. There has been a move away from this language and from the linear spectrum because:

- The language suggests a value hierarchy between “high” and “low” functioning
- The linear spectrum is not an accurate way of portraying the diversity of people with autism
- By looking at the circular spectrum you can see that the combinations of difference between people with autism are endless.

Read the following document carefully. It explains the autistic spectrum in more detail, using the same comic-strip imaging as above: <https://the-art-of-autism.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/UnderstandtheSpectrum.pdf>

Asperger syndrome

You may also come across the term Asperger syndrome in relation to autism. This syndrome is included as part of the autistic spectrum but often referred to in its own right. Here is a short definition:

People with Asperger syndrome are of average or above average intelligence. They don't have the learning disabilities that many autistic people have, but they may have specific learning difficulties. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language. (www.autism.org.uk)

While it is clear that learners on the autistic spectrum are incredibly diverse, there are some common characteristics you might notice in the classroom.

ACTIVITY 54: Autistic Spectrum Continuum 1



Audio Visual

Watch this short film about autism. While you are watching it, look at the table of characteristics below and see how many of them you can see in the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fy7gUIp8Ms>

Possible strengths	Possible classroom challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention to detail • Problem-solving skills • Visual skills • Language skills, verbally articulate • See the world in a different way so bring new insights • Memory for facts and figures • Working within routines and rules • Level of motivation to learn about subjects of interest • Ability to focus for extended time on subjects of interest • Passion and enthusiasm for hobbies and interests—wish to share this with others • Creative skills/talents eg. art, music • Accurate • Efficient • Honest • Non-judgmental • Resilient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social relationships—difficulty in understanding non-verbal signals and/or pragmatic (social) language • Communication—may speak fluently but unable to engage in others' reactions; may talk on even though others have lost interest • Sounds over-precise or over-literal • Takes things literally, e.g. "pull up your socks". • Obsessive hobbies or interests, often involving organisable facts and/or figures • Repetitive patterns of behaviour • Finds change upsetting e.g. change to timetable • Understanding social norms and skills—can appear ill-mannered e.g. going to the front of the queue, interrupting • Appears clumsy and ill-coordinated • Oversensitive to light, sound, and/or noise

ACTIVITY 55: Autistic Spectrum Continuum 2



Reading

Read the following article, and answer the questions below.

<https://www.ecr.co.za/news/news/special-report-education-out-of-reach-for-kzn-boy-with-autism/>

1. Why do you think the school told Sboniso's mother that he "wasn't a child who should be learning with others"?
2. What messages do you think Sboniso and his family would like to give teachers about children with autism?



For more information visit Autism South Africa at <http://aut2know.co.za>

Information Sheet 4: Down syndrome

Down syndrome is a relatively common chromosomal disorder occurring at the time of conception. Most children with Down syndrome have an extra copy of chromosome 21, known as Trisomy 21 and this causes some delays in physical and intellectual development. There are other less common forms of Down syndrome, such as Mosaic Down Syndrome and Robertsonian Translocation. Not all children with Down syndrome experience the same extent of developmental delay. A wide range of learning potential is evident.

ACTIVITY 56: Down syndrome 1



Reading

Read the following article, and answer the questions below:

<https://library.down-syndrome.org/en-gb/news-update/06/1/inclusive-education-individuals-down-syndrome/>

1. What were some of the main benefits to inclusion shown by the research? Think back to the video clip where Erica's mom speaks about similar benefits Erica has experienced in being included in an ordinary school.
2. From this article can you identify some of the strengths and challenges of a typical learner with Down syndrome?
3. Name some of the strategies mentioned to support a learner with Down syndrome who could be included in a mainstream class?

Possible strengths	Possible classroom challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong visual learners • Strong social learners (observation and imitation) • Respond well to praise and reward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech and language skills • Short-term auditory memory (listening) • Ability to follow complex verbal instructions or stories • Shorter concentration span • Ability to consolidate and retain knowledge can fluctuate • Poor response to punishment

Some strategies to support learners with Down syndrome:

- Model behaviour and demonstrate activities
- Use group work and encourage peer learning
- Avoid reliance on workbooks and textbooks
- Use practical activities
- Use computer assisted technology.
- Use simple and familiar language in short and simple sentences
- Emphasise key words

- Encourage learner to speak aloud / read in class
- Provide additional listening activities/games
- Limit number of verbal instructions
- Offer short, focused and clearly defined tasks
- Reinforce abstract concepts with visual and concrete materials
- Provide visual support flash cards, key words, picture cues
- Encourage and support opportunities to form friendships that extend beyond the class



For more information visit Down Syndrome South Africa at <http://www.downsyndrome.org.za>.

Information Sheet 5:

Dyslexia (and other dys- differences)

“Dyslexia” is a Greek word. The English translation is “difficulty with words”.

Approximately 20% of people have dyslexia, obviously varying degrees of severity and different types. This means that in a classroom of 40 children approximately eight will be impacted to a greater or lesser degree by dyslexia.

Dyslexia is hereditary and runs in families. In a single family, different children can experience different types of dyslexia as well as different severity levels.

The type and severity of the dyslexia will influence the impact of the dyslexia on the child’s ability to read, write and comprehend what is being read, as well as the types of accommodations that could be recommended.

The International Dyslexia Association (2002) defines dyslexia as follows:

Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Let’s unpack this definition:

“Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.”

Children with dyslexia struggle to recognise words, even ones they seen often before. Decoding is the ability to recognise and sound out words using letter-sound relationships, letter patterns and blending of sounds.

“These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.”

The “phonological component of language” described in the definition consists of phonemes. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound which is significant in a language (e.g. b, d, p, t)
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/phoneme>

Many theories have been put forward about the causes of dyslexia. The most popular one in recent years is the Phonological Deficit Theory, which is supported by the IDA definition. This theory proposes that someone with dyslexia has difficulty with the system in the brain that processes phonemes; the IDA describe this as having a “phonological deficit”.

ACTIVITY 57: Dyslexia 1



Audio Visual

If you do not have dyslexia, click on the following link to find out what it can be like when you try to read if you do have dyslexia: <http://geon.github.io/programming/2016/03/03/dsxyliea>.

Now consider the following questions:

What was it like trying to read? What did you notice yourself doing? How did you feel? How do you think your learners with dyslexia might feel in the classroom?

If you do have dyslexia:

What do you wish teachers knew about what it is like to have dyslexia in the classroom? Turn these into tips for teachers and share them with your colleagues.

As success in a significant amount of school-based learning is reliant on success in reading, it is critically important to identify learners with dyslexia as early as possible. Children will have dyslexia their whole lives; they need to learn the skills and receive the right support to achieve success in academic learning and beyond.

Learners may exhibit different signs of dyslexia at different stages of learning and development. Below are some common characteristics:

Possible strengths	Possible classroom challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and imagination • Ability to see the holistic 'bigger picture' • Abstract thinking • Ability to think spatially and in 3D • Ability to think laterally—"outside the box" • Critical thinking and problem-solving • Spotting patterns and relationships • Good memory for stories/examples—"narrative memory" • Verbal, conversational skills • Analytical skills • Empathy, sensitivity • Achieving well in areas of the curriculum that are not related to spelling and word formation • Writing if the focus is on content, not spelling • High level of motivation • Perseverance • Resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning/forming the letters of the alphabet (and numbers) • Associating sounds with letters and letters with sounds • Breaking down words into individual sounds • Blending individual sounds into a word. For example th-i-ng = thing • Identifying words that begin with the same sound • Reading aloud, grouping words and phrases together appropriately • Keeping their place when reading • Reversing words when reading or spelling e.g. bat/tab • Sequencing letters when spelling • Missing out letters in words or words in sentences • Rhyming • Sequencing (e.g. days of the week) • Mismatch between spoken and written responses • Multi-tasking • Taking longer to complete tasks than peers • Organisation • Short-term working memory e.g. forgets long, complicated instructions • Cognitive fatigue

This three-minute film brings the table above to life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11r7CFIK2sc>

Other dys- differences commonly confused with dyslexia

Some less-visible differences share similar features, which can lead to confusion – so let's make them really clear. Here are some short descriptions of other cognitive differences often mixed up with dyslexia:

Dyscalculia: difficulty with reading, writing, remembering and processing numbers and mathematical concepts. Dyscalculia is quite likely to co-occur with dyslexia.

Dysgraphia: difficulty with writing. Children with dyslexia can have trouble with spelling and writing, but children with dysgraphia struggle with the mechanics of writing. For example, they might struggle with holding a pen or pencil, spacing of letters and words and forming letters (e.g. mixing cases), as well as spelling and finishing words when writing.

Dyspraxia: difficulty with movement. Children with dyspraxia can find it difficult to plan sequences of movement for both gross motor skills (e.g. walking, balance) and fine motor skills (e.g. cutting with scissors, handwriting). They can therefore appear clumsy and forgetful. Some children may also have heightened sensitivity to touch; others may have problems with speaking and pronunciation.

Learners with dyscalculia, dysgraphia and dyspraxia can share the same strengths as those with dyslexia.

Together with dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and dyspraxia are often referred to as “specific learning difficulties”.

ACTIVITY 58: Dyslexia 2



Audio Visual

Watch this film about dyslexic learners: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=303uulbfR3I>

Consider the following questions and note your answers:

1. 100% of families surveyed in the film believed teachers were not adequately equipped to properly teach learners with dyslexia. Do you think the situation is the same in South Africa? Note the reasons for your answer.
2. As this film suggests, learners with dyslexia suffer emotional or psychological difficulties at school. This is also true of children with dyscalculia, dysgraphia and dyspraxia. Having found out a little about these conditions now, why do you think this is? Think about and note your reasons.
3. All the children interviewed wanted their teachers to understand that they were really trying hard, but they struggled to do what comes easily to others. How will it help you as a new teacher to appreciate that these children learn differently?



For more information about dyslexia visit Dyslexia SA at <https://dyslexiasa.org>

Information Sheet 6:

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

FASD is caused when a foetus (unborn baby) is prenatally (pre-birth) exposed to alcohol due to the mother drinking alcohol during pregnancy. It is therefore, theoretically, 100% preventable, but due to a high prevalence of unplanned pregnancies and lack of knowledge about the harmful effects of alcohol, it is not so easy to prevent. It is the leading cause of intellectual disability in the world. The prevalence rates in South Africa range from 26/1000 (2,6%) to 282/1000 (28%), which is approximately 14 times higher than the global rate of 15/1000 (1,5%). Therefore it is highly likely that you will have at least one learner in your class who is affected by FASD.

When managing individuals with FASD it is essential to remember that it is a life-long condition with a severe impact on the family. Due to resource constraints, it is usually difficult to get a proper diagnosis, guidance and services for those in need. Ignorance and wrong information often lead to stigmatisation of the individual and his/her family.

ACTIVITY 59: Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder



Reading

Read the following article: <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/high-level-foetal-alcohol-syndrome-found-saldhana-bay/>

From this article, what do you understand about FASD?

FASD is a spectrum of disorders, the most severe form being Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). The diagnostic procedures for FASD include (1) a medical examination and anthropometric (growth) measurements by a trained medical specialist, (2) psychological/neurodevelopmental testing by a psychometrist (or psychologist), and (3) an in-depth maternal interview by a counsellor. The results of these three separate examinations are used to diagnose the different conditions in the spectrum, such as FAS, partial FAS, Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD), Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders (ARND), etc. There are no biological markers (e.g. blood or other tests), and the common symptom across the spectrum of disorders is permanent and irreversible brain damage. Individuals with FASD might also have organ damage. Currently, less emphasis is placed on the so-called “characteristic facial features” as fewer than 30% of people with FASD present with facial features. These facial features can also be misleading and result in labelling or incorrect diagnoses by lay people.

FASD can present in many different ways, but the following might be present in learners affected by FASD:

Possible strengths	Possible classroom challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring • Friendly and sociable • Verbally articulate • Creative • Skilled with animals • Skilled in natural environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short attention span • Impulsivity • Hyperactivity • Oppositional behaviour • Fine motor skills • Working memory • Literacy and numeracy skills • Visual and/or hearing loss • Language—understanding and expressing • Abstract concepts and reasoning • Cause and effect thinking (i.e. not learning from mistakes) • Cognitive fatigue³³



For more information about FASD visit the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) at <https://www.farrsa.org.za>



Definition

34 Cognitive fatigue simply means the brain gets tired because it has to work harder to maintain focus and concentration.

Information Sheet 7: Gifted and talented—or highly-able—learners

Francoys Gagne is a Canadian academic who coined the term “gifted and talented”. As Gagne’s model below shows, he proposes six domains (shown on the left-hand side of the diagram) in which a person might have a natural ability, i.e. a gift. He identifies people with these gifts as being in the top 10% of the population in this domain. Don’t worry about the alphabetical letter coding on the diagram below—focusing on the words is enough for our purposes.

Some people prefer to use the term “highly-able” rather than “gifted and talented” as they believe it is less stigmatising as a label.

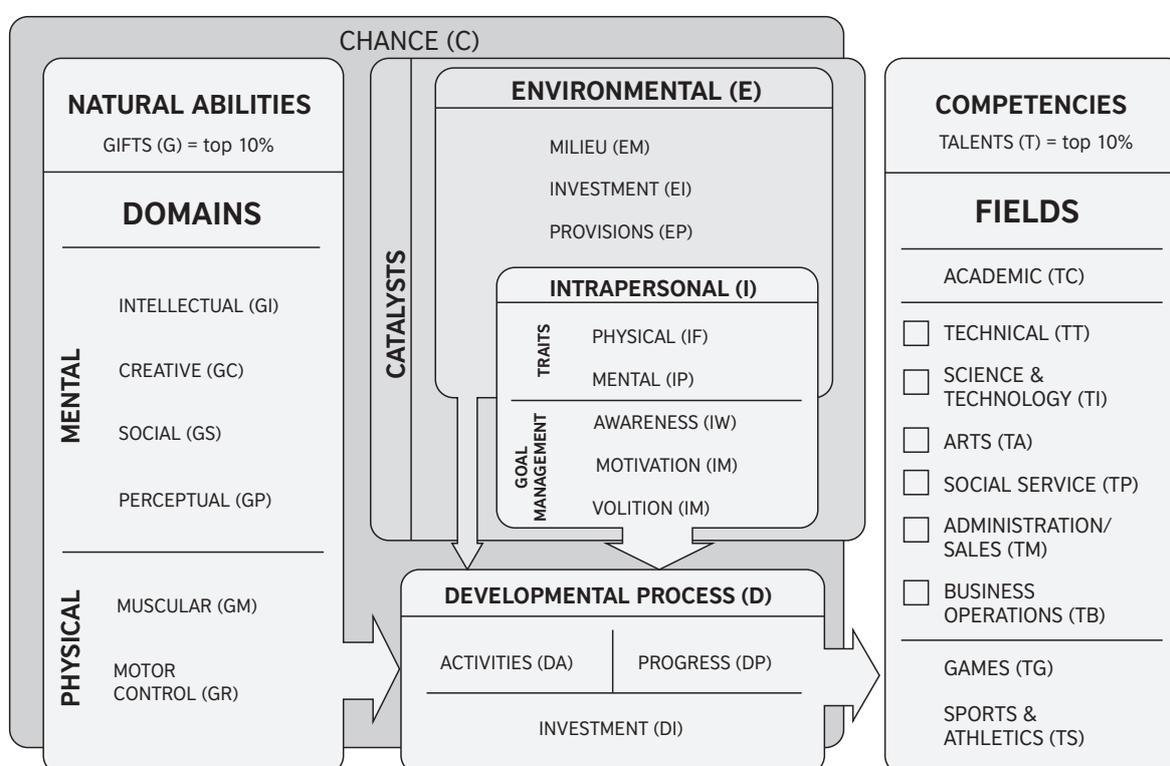


Figure 27: Gagne: Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent
(Source: <http://gagnefrancoys.wixsite.com/dmgt-mddt/dmgtenglish>)

According to Gagne, the gifts on the left have the potential to lead to competencies in various areas, or talents (on the right-hand side). People identified as talented also operate within the top 10% of competency in their field.

However, following this model, whether gifts develop into talents depends on:

- Investment—time, energy and resources
- Setting—physical, social and cultural environment, support from family and others, relevant programs to support development
- Personal traits—physical (for example flexibility in relation to a gymnast), mental (for example perseverance, self-belief)
- The gifted person understanding and managing their goals—why they are setting them, their awareness of how their strengths and weaknesses might impact on them, and much they want to reach them.

When you come across a gifted learner in your classroom, it might be useful to come back to these factors and explore them so that you understand your role as a teacher in more depth. Gagne’s own website is a good place to start.

As with all learners, gifted learners are diverse. However, they do share some common characteristics.

Possible strengths	Possible classroom challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced ability for abstract, complex and insightful thinking • Learned to read early and has a good vocabulary • Ability to learn and process complex information very rapidly • Gets good marks in tests • Explores subjects in depth and ask probing questions • Excellent, often photographic, memory • Enjoys problem solving • Idealism and sense of justice at an early age • Longer attention span and intense concentration • Acquires basic skills quickly and with little practice • Has skills and talents above age level • Helps other learners to learn and can show sensitivity in this • Enjoys the company of older people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs constant mental stimulation • Asks a lot of probing questions • Needs to explore subjects in depth • Is often a perfectionist • Can become preoccupied with own thoughts • Finishes tasks quickly and can appear bored easily • Sometimes rushes work to complete it and move on to something else—so classwork and homework might not reflect ability • Can be at a different emotional/ physical age to their intellectual age • Expectations of themselves and others can be hard to live up to • Family attitudes may lead to “squashing” of children’s abilities or even exploitation of them by families

ACTIVITY 60: Gifted and talented learners 1



Reading

Read the article: Including the gifted learner: perceptions of South African teachers and principals, Marietjie Oswald and Jeanne-Marie de Villiers, South African Journal of Education, 2013, 33 (1) <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/viewFile/603/336>

Consider the following questions:

1. Do you agree with the authors’ contention that gifted learners fall within the scope of inclusive education? Why / why not?
2. Why do you think gifted learners can be marginalised in the classroom?
3. What were some of the challenges to supporting gifted learners as identified by the participants in the study?
4. What do you think about curriculum differentiation as a solution to including the gifted learner in learning?

Joan Freeman (2013), an academic who has been working with gifted and talented children for over forty years, says:

We do have very clear information about what the gifted and talented need by way of support towards self-fulfilment—an education to suit their potential, opportunities to flourish and people who believe in them.

We know that getting gifted children access to the activities pitched to their particular abilities, or talents, can be a challenge. Co-curricular tournaments or competitions can be a good way of providing this access, so here is an activity to help you generate some ideas about these.

ACTIVITY 61: Gifted and talented learners 2



Reading

Research some different co-curricular tournaments or competitions in which you could involve learners—locally, globally or nationally—covering different areas of ability. Aim to complete notes on at least ten.



For more information visit Gifted Children South Africa on

www.giftedchildrensouthafrica.co.za

Or contact Linda Nel 082 494 5471, admin@giftedchildrensa.co.za

Information Sheet 8: Hearing impairment

Hearing impairment (HI) is a partial or total inability to hear in one or both ears.

Para 6.1.1.4 of the *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (approved by Cabinet 9 December 2015) states that: “Persons who are **hearing impaired and/or acquire deafness**, might however never utilise SASL as their language of choice. They require access to lip readers, note-takers, loop systems, captioning and sub-texting for access to information and communication.”

It is of the utmost importance for educators to understand the diversity in the field of hearing loss and the human rights of all persons involved. The approach regarding deaf or hearing-impaired children/people in education is completely different, compared with Deaf born children/people who use SL and who belong to the Deaf Culture.

The following definitions for these two groups were approved by the South African Disability Alliance in 2017 and confirmed by the SA Disability Rights Machinery in 2017:

Deaf (lower case d)

“Deaf with a lower case ‘d’ refers to persons with total hearing loss not using SASL as a primary medium of communication, who use various means of communication and assistive hearing technologies. These include speech, speech/lip reading, cochlear implants, Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA) and applicable assistive listening devices etc., or a combination thereof. This group primarily aligns with impairment, disability and the hearing world.”

Hearing impaired

“Hearing impaired refers to persons with varying degrees of hearing loss not using SASL as a primary medium of communication, who use various means of communication and assistive hearing technologies. These include speech, speech/lip reading, hearing aid systems, cochlear implants, Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA) and applicable assistive listening devices etc. or a combination thereof. This group primarily aligns with impairment, disability and the hearing world.”

Early identification of hearing loss is critically important as hearing affects language development and communication. Hearing tests for babies can be done after 24 hours! Unfortunately for many children, hearing loss is often only detected once they have already started school. It’s estimated that about 7.5% of school children in South Africa have some sort of hearing loss. (The South African Hearing Institute, which has a helpful website if you would like further information: http://www.sahi.org.za/about_hearing_loss.html)

ACTIVITY 62: Hearing impairment 1



Audio Visual

What is hearing loss like?

If you don’t have a hearing loss, watch this short cartoon (40 seconds):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EJ4g3J6cJM>

OR

Explore the wider variety of hearing loss simulators on this website:

<https://www.starkey.com.au/hearing-loss-simulator#!/hls>

- What was it like as the hearing loss got more pronounced? What did you notice yourself doing? How did you feel? How do you think a learner with hearing loss might feel in the classroom?

If you do have a hearing loss:

- What do you wish teachers knew about what it is like to have a hearing loss in the classroom? Turn these into tips for teachers and share them with your colleagues.

General Guidelines regarding the Reasonable Accommodation of Persons with hearing loss were developed under the mentorship of NCPD in line with the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCPD), the *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (WPRPD) and the South African Disability Legislation, Codes and Guidelines.

A deaf learner who uses oral language can be included in a mainstream class. At the moment, for a learner who is deaf and who chooses to communicate and learn in South African Sign Language (SASL), placement in a mainstream school may be less likely. South Africa has not reached a point where mainstream school teachers are fluent in SASL. Learners who are not able to use SASL feel excluded from learning and often feel socially isolated and unsupported.

Possible characteristics of hearing loss you might notice include:

Possible strengths	Possible classroom challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual working memory (i.e. remembering images) • Ability to interpret non-verbal cues • Resourcefulness • Resilience • Checking understanding before starting tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and/or speech acquisition • Acquisition of vocabulary • Verbal working memory (i.e. remembering words) • Attention span (through fatigue) • Processing time • Missing incidental learning from peers • Social skills and emotional literacy • Self-worth

Here are some general pointers to consider when talking to someone who is deaf or hearing impaired:

“Nice to meet you!”

Wave or touch the person’s shoulder to draw his attention. You needn’t make big waving gestures—a small movement of the hand will usually suffice. Waving in someone’s face is considered rude.

Make and keep eye contact with the person and talk to the person and not to the interpreter, lip speaker or note taker. Breaking eye contact will indicate that the conversation is over.

If you are in a noisy environment, see if you can move to a quieter spot.

Establish a comfortable distance between you and the person you are talking with.

Ensure that you stand in a well light area. The light should shine on your face. If you stand in front of a window, for example, the light from behind you may make it difficult for the other person to follow what you are saying.

“Sorry, I did not get that.”

Be patient when either you or the person experiencing hearing loss, have difficulty in understanding or getting the message across.

Rephrase, rather than repeat sentences that the person does not understand, over and over again.

Keep sentences short and use proper sentence construction. Changing the subject mid-sentence can make it difficult for the person with hearing loss to follow.

Speak clearly so that the person can see and read your lips. Speech reading is made more difficult if you chew gum or something obscures your face and mouth.

Use your regular tone of voice when having a conversation, unless the person tells you otherwise.

Use facial expressions to correspond with the topic and mood of discussion. A good old pen and paper can also help when either of you have a hard time understanding.

“See you later!”

Indicate unforeseen happenings like a phone that starts to ring or dogs barking.

Do not pass between two people talking, especially if they are using a signed language. If you have to, excuse yourself before passing through.

Use basic signs to support what you are saying, like pointing in a direction or waving goodbye.

(Source: NCPD pamphlet: Chatting with deaf or hearing-impaired friends)

ACTIVITY 63: Hearing impairment 2



Reading

Read the case study below, and answer the following questions.

1. List the signs that Busisiwe displayed in the classroom that made Mrs Kubayi suspect that she was having difficulty hearing?
2. List the strategies that Mrs Kubayi introduced to help Busi.

CASE STUDY: Busisiwe

Busisiwe began Grade 1 when she was six. Her birthday was in March and she turned seven but, despite being one of the older children in the class her speech was not as developed as her peers. She had a limited vocabulary and mispronounced words. She did not listen to her teacher, Mrs Kubayi, and constantly talked while instructions were being given. Mrs Kubayi made her sit in the “thinking chair” but this did not seem to help. Busi’s disruptive behaviour meant that she did not concentrate and argued with other learners, making her unpopular. She spent break time wandering about on her own not playing with others.

Mrs Kubayi worried about the fact that Busi was not grasping literacy and numeracy concepts and was also losing out on other important learning opportunities. She suspected that Busi was not

hearing properly. She asked Busi’s mother to take the child to the clinic for a checkup. The auditory (hearing) screening confirmed Mrs Kubayi’s suspicion.

Seating was rearranged in the classroom and Busi was placed near the front of the classroom so that she could hear better. Mrs Kubayi tried to look directly at Busi when she was talking to her. She also used visual aids like pictures and words on the blackboard to support her verbal messages. Simphiwe was appointed as Busi’s “buddy” and began to enjoy helping her. She joked that she was Busi’s extra set of ears! Mrs Kubayi planned a Life Orientation lesson about disabilities and encouraged tolerance and respect for all people. She explained how difficult it was not to hear well and said it was good to be patient when dealing with those who are hard of hearing.

(Source: DBE & UNICEF (n.d.) Supporting Grade R to Grade 3 learners with chronic illnesses:

https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resources_learnersill.pdf)

Watch the following YouTube clips on hearing impairment in the classroom:

<https://youtu.be/ln8NHZVfJkQ>

<https://youtu.be/JwWAHyD0f4w>

<https://youtu.be/jylb7TDn2Tk>

<https://youtu.be/ISWkl29SpwU>



National Council of & for
Persons with Disabilities

For more information on hearing impairment visit

<https://roadtoindependence.co.za>

Information Sheet 9:

Stress, anxiety and depression

Before we can understand depression and anxiety, we need to know a little about stress. Many of our learners come to school stressed, due to, for example, concern about circumstances outside school, the future, academic achievement, bullying or friendship issues.

Stress

What is stress?

At the most basic level, stress is our body's response to pressures from a situation or life event.

When we encounter stress, our body is stimulated to produce stress hormones that trigger a “flight or fight” response and activate our immune system. This response helps us to respond quickly to dangerous situations.

Sometimes, this stress response can be an appropriate, or even beneficial, reaction. The resulting feeling of “pressure” can help us to push through situations that can be nerve-wracking or intense, like running a marathon, or giving a speech to a large crowd. We can quickly return to a resting state without any negative effects on our health if what is stressing us is short-lived, and many people are able to deal with a certain level of stress without any lasting effects.

However, there can be times when stress becomes excessive and too much to deal with. If our stress response is activated repeatedly, or it persists over time, the effects can result in wear and tear on the body and can cause us to feel permanently in a state of “fight or flight”. Rather than helping us push through, this pressure can make us feel overwhelmed or unable to cope.

Feeling this overwhelming stress for a long period of time is often called chronic, or long-term stress, and it can impact on both physical and mental health.

Stress is a response to a threat in a situation, whereas anxiety is a reaction to the stress.

(Source: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/stress>)

Some stress, then, can be beneficial. In relation to learning, for example, there is evidence that if we experience the right amount of stress around the time of learning it can help with memory formation (Vogel and Schwabe, 2016).

However, we can see from the extract above that stress can be harmful. For example:

- In relation to learning, if stress comes at the wrong time it can affect our ability both to update and retrieve memories; this makes it more difficult to build on prior learning, or to be able to remember what we have already learnt. Stress can therefore have a direct impact on academic achievement. (ibid)
- After a significant, stressful and traumatic event—for example witnessing or being on the receiving end of violence—a person might develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can lead to vivid flashbacks, emotional shutdown, or a feeling of being constantly under threat.
- Chronic stress has wide-reaching health implications, one of which is to produce long-term anxiety.

Anxiety is common in the classroom, so we will explore this area further.

Anxiety

While there are a number of disorders related to anxiety, you are most likely to encounter Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) in the classroom.

People with Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) experience severe anxiety, which is excessive, chronic, and typically interferes with their ability to function in normal daily activities. (SADAG)

GAD appears to put the body into longer-term ‘fight or flight’ mode by making it think it is under constant threat. This state leads to the ongoing production of stress hormones. Sleeping and eating are commonly affected by GAD, plus—as we have seen above—so is the ability to take in and locate memories, both of which are essential factors in learning.

Learners experiencing high levels of stress or anxiety may have difficulty: concentrating, completing assignments, paying attention, participating in class, achieving at grade level, persisting with tasks, summoning or maintaining motivation to learn. They may also be irritable, withdrawn and/or experience difficulties with social skills.

People with GAD can also experience symptoms of depression, although this is not always the case. Depression is also more common than we think. You will definitely encounter learners with depression during your career, so we will explore this area next.

Depression

Depression is a complex illness with a variety of causes, including the body's reaction to chronic stress, or to a particularly stressful event, e.g. a bereavement; abuse. Genetics may also play a part for some people. Depression presents differently from anxiety. If anxiety is about "fight or flight"—a constant, heightened state of feeling threatened—depression might be described as being about 'withdrawal' from the world. It is different to feeling "low", as the following quote shows:

Life is full of emotional ups and downs and everyone experiences the "blues" from time to time. But when the "down" times are long lasting or interfere with an individual's ability to function at home or at school, that person may be suffering from a common, serious illness—depression. (SADAG)

Depression is not a sign of personal weakness or a lack of motivation. A person with depression cannot get over it by simply "pulling themselves together". It is a serious and debilitating illness affecting mood, thoughts and body and needs to be identified and treated. SADAG reports that depression is one of the leading causes of child suicide.

ACTIVITY 64: Stress, anxiety and depression



Reading

The following two articles highlight how South African learners are struggling with depression and suicide, and the risks of ignoring this problem.

Read both articles:

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-02-13-how-teens-suffer-at-the-hands-of-depression-and-anxiety/>

and

<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Local/Maritzburg-Fever/suicide-on-the-rise-among-the-youth-20180227>

What are some of the signs of depression to watch out for? Note these in your journal.

Other differences related to stress, anxiety or depression you might notice in the classroom

Attachment disorders: When babies fail to develop an attachment with their caregiver, this is called an attachment disorder. There are two forms: the first (and most common) is when the child has a lack of expectation around care and comfort. The second is when the child is over-familiar, even with strangers.

Bipolar disorder: This is a depressive disorder that has phases of mania and depression. "The dramatic and rapidly changing mood swings from highs to lows do not follow a set pattern, and depression does not always follow manic phases. A person may also experience the same mood several times before experiencing the opposite mood. Mood swings can happen over a period of weeks, months. The severity of the depressive and manic phases can differ from person to person, and even in the same person at different times." (SADAG)

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD): OCD is an anxiety-related disorder. "People with OCD are so preoccupied with a thought, or so compelled to check and recheck, that this interferes with their normal routine of the day. Obsessions are unwanted, recurrent and unpleasant thoughts that cause anxiety. Compulsions are repetitive, ritualistic behaviours that the person feels driven to perform to decrease anxiety. The obsessive thoughts, or acts of performing compulsive rituals, often take up many hours of each day. Although individuals with OCD may know that their thoughts and behaviours make no sense, they are compelled to continue them." (SADAG)



For more information visit the South African Depression and Anxiety Group at www.sadag.org

Information Sheet 10: Visual impairment

Visual impairment affects sight. It can range from no vision (blind) to low vision. The causes are varied and can be neurological, genetic or due to illness or injury or infections. There is no direct correlation between visual impairment and cognitive ability.

The following visual perceptual functions may be affected depending on the extent and type of the visual impairment: size, colour, shape, distance and direction.

Read this short web page for some further succinct information about visual impairment:

<https://guidedog.org.za/visual-impairment/>

Persons with albinism, due to limited pigmentation in the eyes, experience some visual impairment. They are stigmatised and victimised in many communities. For these reasons the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has said they are protected under the Convention.

Visual Impairment—Fast Facts about South Africa

The prevalence of sight disability in South Africa is the highest of all disabilities (32%).

Women make up 57% of the total number of blind and partially sighted people; 23% of visually impaired people fall between the ages of 15–36.

Only between 5–10% of the total blind population is braille literate.

Approximately 80% of the visually impaired population in South Africa live in rural areas where the unemployment figure can be as high as 100%.

It is estimated that 97% of all blind and partially sighted people in South Africa are unemployed.

For every one blind person there are three to four people with low vision.

(Source: South Africa National Council for the Blind, www.sanacb.org.za)

ACTIVITY 65: Visual impairment



Reading

Visual impairment is a sizeable issue for young people in South Africa. Read the following article to discover more about this issue, then consider the questions below and note your thoughts.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-06-16-almost-half-a-million-sa-youths-have-problems-with-their-vision/>

1. Did anything in the article surprise you? If so, what?

Re-read the final paragraph of the article, which is a quote from Lene Øverland. Do her comments reflect the reality in your community, i.e.:

2. Do people with visual impairments have jobs in your community?

3. Are visually impaired people in your community ostracised, or excluded? If so, how? What would need to happen to change this?

“Just because someone lacks the use of their eyes, doesn’t mean they lack vision.” Stevie Wonder

Over your career, you might teach children with a wide range of visual impairments. You might observe children who: squint or close one eye when reading; narrow their eyes and blink a lot; rub their eyes often; complain frequently of headaches or eyestrain; move or shake a book when reading it; are irritable or inattentive when asked to read; or work too close to their book for long periods. These are all signs that a child might have a visual impairment that needs to be followed up.

Possible strengths	Possible classroom challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening skills • Speaking skills • Resourcefulness • Resilience • Multitasking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow or hesitant reading • Reading columns and numbers • Scanning a page / following a worksheet with a lot of writing • Copying from the board • Sentence structures • Organising ideas in writing tasks • Anxiety about physical activities in classroom or being in the playground • Spatial or environmental awareness • Increased stress • Fatigue • Self-worth

We may be inclined subconsciously to have different expectations of academic achievement for learners with visual impairment, but there is no direct correlation between visual impairment and intelligence. Most learners with visual impairment have the same range of intelligence and abilities as their sighted peers, just with additional barriers. More than a third will have some additional needs that may affect their learning in a number of areas, such as the speed of working, communication skills (particularly reading or writing), environmental and spatial awareness, and social interaction, with a reduced ability to recognise body language and facial expressions. As a result, learners can suffer from lower self-confidence which can have a negative impact on learning.

Ideas for supporting learners with visual impairment

The classroom environment can have a significant impact on the success of teaching and learning for learners with visual impairment. Here are some strategies you can use to make learning easier for learners with visual impairment.

Ensure that:

- The space clear and tidy to allow easier movement
- Frequently used resources are kept in the same accessible place, and labelled
- There is adequate space for any special equipment or large print resources to be stored and used
- The learners are seated closer to the board so they can see easily
- The level of lighting is right for the learners
- The writing on the board is large and clear enough for them to see easily
- The level of lighting is right for the learner to see easily
- You use real objects to support your teaching
- You design activities that use all the senses, including hearing, smell, taste and touch
- Learning materials interesting enough to engage them, e.g. larger print and bolder colours
- You allow extra time for visually impaired learners to process information and complete tasks

(Adapted from: <https://senmagazine.co.uk/articles/articles/senarticles/supporting-the-visually-impaired-learner>)



For more information visit the South African Council for the Blind at sancb.org.za

