

Inaugural lecture

14 September 2018

Mirna Nel

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: ALL ABOUT HUMANITY AND YET ...

Since the adoption of the Universal Human Rights Declaration (UDHR) in 1948 the world has attempted to move towards a more humane society where human rights and social justice were integrated as fundamental principles to foster humanity. Education was regarded as a guiding force to achieve a more humane society which culminated in the Education for All (EFA) movement. The primary goal of the EFA is to develop inclusive education systems in order to provide equal access to education for all children and eradicate discriminatory attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability. South Africa is an ardent signatory of the movement towards a more inclusive education system and through its policies encourage a growth mindset in asserting the belief that all children can learn. However, the implementation of a successful inclusive education system continues to be a challenge. Through an autoethnography I have identified my main concerns that I believe contests the conceptualisation, philosophical framework and practice of inclusive education. These include understanding inclusion, a fixed mindset, and curriculum inflexibility – stuck in a fixed mindset.

1. Introduction

Throughout human existence humanity has always been challenged, contested, troubled, and in many instances, annihilated by acts of discrimination, exclusion, oppression, and even violence all over the planet. After the atrocities of World War II, the human race at last took a stance against inhumane actions whereby the Universal Human Rights Declaration (UHRD) of 1948 was proclaimed and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The fundamental premise of the UHRD is that, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (UN, 1948, article 1, p.3) “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (article 2, p.6).

This humanistic philosophy¹, emphasising values such as human rights and dignity, social justice, inclusion, and respecting diversity, was also taken forward by several fervent international and national actions to infuse it in education theories, policies and practices. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) sanctioned these values by enforcing the right of the child to education on the basis of equal opportunity (UN, 1989). Consequently, organisations (such as the United Nations Education, Scientific and Culture Organisation [UNESCO]), governments, and individuals advocated that a move to a more inclusive education approach is fundamental in building and ensuring a more humane society (UNESCO, 1990, 1994, 2000; UNESCO et al. 2015).

Central in the development of more inclusive education systems is the global Education for All (EFA) campaign which asserts that quality, basic education should be provided to *all* children² to reduce disparities. This means education policies and practices must enforce principles of no exclusion and discrimination against children based on age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases. Furthermore, acknowledgement should be given to the fact that the pace, style, language and circumstances of learning will never be uniform for all, and therefore room should be provided for a flexible curriculum (UNESCO, 1990, 1994, 2000; UNESCO et al. 2015). These goals are also encompassed in the UNESCO Sustainable Developmental Goal 4 (SDG4), namely: “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*” (UNESCO et al. 2015, p. iii).

As South Africa has been dominated by discriminatory and exclusionary policies and practices until the political transformation in 1994 these international developments have profoundly influenced the South African progress to inclusive education. However, the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) forms the basis on which all laws, acts and policies are built on. In the context of this paper, the Human Rights Bill (HRB), in the constitution, has specific emphasis. The HRB reinforces the principles of the HRD which is summarised in this statement “Everyone

¹ Philosophy can be defined in the following ways: a pursuit of wisdom; a search for a general understanding of values and reality; an analysis of the grounds of and concepts expressing fundamental beliefs; a theory underlying or regarding a sphere of activity or thought; and the most basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

² Young people and illiterate adults are also included in this vision, but for the purpose of this paper the focus is on children of primary and secondary school age

has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected” (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996). It was further asserted in the constitution that education is a basic human right (RSA), article 29, 1996). Consequently, influenced by the above-mentioned international developments and informed by the constitution Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) was introduced in 2001 (DoE, 2001). EWP6 declared that an inclusive education and training system must be the foundation of an integrated and caring society. This meant that all learners, with and without disabilities, must be given adequate opportunity to pursue their learning potential to the fullest (DoE, 2001). The constitutional values and the directions given in EWP6 have been integrated in all further education related policies.

It is evident in the above deliberation that globally and nationally inclusive education is sanctioned as the most appropriate approach to enact a more humane society and yet there is a continuous contentiousness in implementing it effectively (Human Rights Watch, 2015; Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2015; UNESCO, 2015)

2. Conceptualisation of this paper

The above statement (in some way or another) have influenced researchers to explore and investigate inclusive education from a plethora of angles, such as an ideology and philosophy, value, and/or principle; how it should be defined, conceptualised and theorized; how it is understood and perceived by different role players in education (such as learners, teachers, parents, and department officials); what is the attitude of these afore-mentioned role-players, as well as the rest of society towards it; and then of course the success of the implementation thereof. My own personal journey as an academic and researcher was and continues to be influenced by many of these research studies, as well as the research I was and am still involved in. Although I can definitely not pronounce myself yet as an authority on the field of inclusive education, I have reached a point where I am doing a lot of analytical reflection when conducting my own research, conversing with co-researchers, reading through publications on the topic, listening to educationists in practice, and observing what is happening in schools and the classroom. Gtowacki-Dudka, Treff and Usman (2010) describe this process as stepping outside your immediate personal

constraints to examine your social world, in this case, my academic and professional world in the field of inclusive education, through critical eyes. This road has steered me to a deepening self-awareness and consequently to the decision of doing an autoethnography.

An autoethnography can be defined as “highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding” (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). The value of autoethnography research, within a social science research framework, is that it can be used as a persistent shoving against the domain of traditional science, which holds emancipatory possibilities for new knowledge about the social world (Wall, 2006). As an autoethnography creates an opportunity to share unique and subjective experiences, it has the power to allow us to reflect on what could be different because of what we have learned and thus results in a better understanding of the social world (Wall, 2006). Consequently, “it says that what I know matters” (Wall, 2006, p.3).

My autoethnographical journey are determined by various sources over a 15 year period as a speech therapist and thereafter an advisor on inclusive education in three different education districts, as well as 12 years as a teacher educator and researcher at a higher education institution. It is important to mention that although I include the research projects I was and still am involved in, as well as my students’ research as sources, it only reflects my own interpretations. The sources include:

- i) Scientific findings from national and international collaborative research projects I was and currently still am involved in. They include the following topics: teachers’ knowledge and understanding of barriers to learning³; investigating the role of teachers in inclusive education; teacher education for inclusion; High Performance Learning (HPL) in an inclusive Full-Service School (FSS); and the social participation of learners with special needs in FSS’s. These projects used quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as mixed methods;
- ii) scientific findings of my Master and Doctoral students;

³ Barriers to learning are divided into two areas. Intrinsic barriers to learning refer to disabilities as conceptualised earlier. Extrinsic barriers to learning are systemic and socio-environmental barriers that cause learning difficulties

- iii) personal notes after informal discussions with colleagues (i.e. teacher educators and co-researchers), teachers, principals, departmental officials, pre-service teachers, post-graduate students, and parents of learners with disabilities. These discussions were during or after presentations I have done at conferences; workshops; reflection sessions with my pre-service students of their practical teaching experiences and with my post-graduate students after they conducted their data collection and analysis; and during school and classroom visits. These were very valuable sources as they revealed actual experiences of those who teach and learn in real-life contexts (Jansen, 2017); and
- iv) extensive literature reviews.

In an attempt to present an in-depth ethnographical research paper I will first present my philosophical framework which always guides my arguments in my narratives and empirical research. As the clarification of concepts are crucial to better understand arguments this is infused in the text and footnotes throughout the paper. More crucially, in an attempt to challenge the real world human-made obstacles that I believe trouble and contest the practice of inclusive education in South Africa, I will deliberate on certain areas that are of deep concern for me.

3. My philosophical framework

I believe that the ideological and philosophical foundation of inclusive education is built on two fundamental premises, namely, inclusion and humanity. It is acknowledged that there are different meanings attached to the concepts of humanity and inclusion, depending on the perspective it is viewed from. In this paper I will refer to humanity in the context of the human race, but more essentially, lay emphasis on it within a philosophical framework, by viewing humanity as being humane, i.e. kind, caring, compassionate, and understanding towards other people (Merriam Webster Dictionary). In Mahatma Ghandi's words: "The greatness of humanity is not in being human but being humane". Inclusion I define as treating everyone as of equal value and worth, by showing acceptance and respect, without stereotyping and/or labelling someone simply because he/she looks, thinks and believes differently; thus endorsing a social approach to inclusion (Nel, 2013). A social approach to inclusion aims to abolish social exclusion that persists as a consequence of discriminatory attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity,

religion, gender, and ability (Vitello & Mithaug, 1998). The philosophical basis of a social approach to inclusive education is, therefore, the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society (Ainscow, 2014). Accordingly, I strongly believe that education should be the guiding force to help the human race in being more humane and inclusive. As Nelson Mandela said: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. Hence, education, should not be a guileless mechanism whereby children merely acquire a limited range of basic knowledge and skills. It should be used as an indispensable asset in social and personal development, “to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and justice” in order to, “foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development” which will reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression, and war (Delors, 1996, p.11).

4. Areas of concern

In this section, I will present and discuss three overarching areas of deep concern which I have identified as problematic fields in attaining full realization of an inclusive and humane education system in South Africa (i.e. creating an education system where the primary focus is on truly caring that all learners have ample opportunity to develop personally and academically in order to have a successful and fulfilling life). These areas of concern include: Understanding inclusion; A fixed mindset; and Curriculum inflexibility - stuck in a fixed mindset.

4.1. Understanding inclusion

This is a critical point for me to commence with as it seems there is still a general lack of in-depth thinking in the universal society about what inclusive education really means and entails. The field of inclusive education has been criticized for inadequate theoretical rigour and conceptual clarity (Walton, 2016; Black-Hawkins, 2014; Allan, 2014; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013) which I believe is one of the reasons it remains a troubled, problematic, and contested field (Allan, 2014) especially in the South African context. The reason for this is that it is a very intricate task to describe the multifarious ways that inclusive education is understood in South Africa, as it is influenced by different backgrounds, experiences and contexts, which are also impacted by societal, national and

international beliefs, definitions, and educational approaches. However, it appears that there are five broad positions:

- i) Full inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream⁴ education (i.e. no special education). This is also referred to as mainstreaming or integration (e.g.; Smyth et al, 2014; D’Alessio & Watkins, 2009). In this instance it is mostly parents who insist that their children with disabilities are accommodated in mainstream education. Despite the perception that children who experience barriers to learning are accommodated in mainstream education contexts, there still appears to be the tendency that they need *to fit into* the classroom, because they are the “*abnormal ones*” that must adapt to “*normalness*” (Nel, 2018; Swart & Pettipher, 2016). This is reflected in one teacher’s words: “I feel that those children are expected to cope under normal circumstances, but they are not normal” (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit & Van Deventer, 2016). Thus, the flow of learning in the classroom should not be disturbed in order to accommodate the learner with a disability.
- ii) Children who have profound physical, sensory, mental and intellectual disabilities are automatically assumed to be placed into special education.
- iii) Inclusion of learners with mild disabilities (e.g. dyslexia, higher order functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Down syndrome, cerebral palsy without intellectual impairments and physical disabilities) who will be able to “cope with/fit into” mainstream demands, but if they struggle to adapt then they need to be placed in special education facilities.
- iv) Separate education for learners with any kind of disability or special needs in specialized settings, meaning no inclusion i.e. a fully segregated education system. I have full empathy with this position, as well as with the previous three, because of the general failing of the South African education system to sustain quality inclusive education. Consequently, this continues to enable a disempowering effect for children with disabilities as it facilitates the views of a majority non-disabled population, who do not understand disability, and view it as a hindrance to the educational and economic development of the majority. The result of this is isolation, stigma, low self-esteem, and restricted access to the full range of educational opportunities (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Bornman & Rose, 2010; Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009; Shakespeare, 2002).

⁴ Mainstream education is also termed ordinary education in many texts and dialogues (E.g. DBE, 2014; DoE, 2001)

- v) A social inclusion approach affirming that: “*all inclusion and exclusion are socially created*” (Booth, 2011, p. 307). Social inclusion does not de-emphasize the importance of dealing with the exclusion of children with disabilities but advocates that inclusion should be seen as a societal and systemic issue. This involves discriminatory attitudes, beliefs and actions by society and systems resulting in the segregation and exclusion of people who are seen as “different”⁵. There seems to be three integrated sub-divisions in this approach:
- a. Dealing with diversity. The focus is on addressing diverse learning needs, which can occur as a result of different religions, cultures, genders, languages, socio-economic circumstances, systemic challenges and (dis)abilities, and possible discriminatory attitudes and actions against these diversities.
 - b. Acknowledging that vulnerability, emotional, psychological and learning difficulties occur, not only as a result of intrinsic barriers (i.e. disabilities), but also because of various cultural, societal and systemic factors, such as: violence, poverty, abuse, illnesses and diseases, child-headed households, orphan status, teenage pregnancies, limited proficiency in the Language of Learning and Teaching [LOLT], poor quality of teaching, an inflexible curriculum, ineffective support systems, insufficient infrastructure, inadequate policies, and more recently, immigrant status.
 - c. Discipline and behaviour. Many teachers will maintain that they are not against the inclusion of children with disabilities or dealing with diversity, but that poor behaviour is very difficult to accommodate. This poor behaviour can be as a result of conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Tourette syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), as well as traumatic life experiences (i.e. abuse, violence, natural disasters and war) and frustration because of unsatisfactory academic progress⁶.

The first four broad approaches predominantly focus on learners with disabilities, which is understandable, because they are still one of the most marginalised and vulnerable populations worldwide (Nel & Neethling, 2018; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Bornman & Rose, 2010) and

⁵ Different is in inverted commas, because how I view different and how someone else views different is a divergent topic. In my view, different can be regarded as looking, thinking and believing differently and not regarding the “different” as of equal value and worth by showing acceptance and respect, without stereotyping and/or labelling someone.

⁶ It is acknowledged that the cause of behaviour problems can be much wider than mentioned here.

therefore, most conversations about inclusive education revolves around these learners and their special needs⁷. This is evidenced throughout history where people with disabilities have been excluded and even mistreated by being killed, abused, hidden away, misdiagnosed, experimented on and labelled as sick, retarded and/or idiots (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2011). Currently, in South Africa, there are between 500,000 and 600,000 children with disabilities out of school (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The reasons for this are that most are turned away from mainstream schools, because these schools believe that they cannot accommodate them, and certain special schools refuse admission when the child's specific disability is not included in the school's range of disabilities that they do accommodate (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

However, the understanding of inclusion is not only determined by these afore-mentioned positions. It is also about the processes that are involved in either the inclusion or exclusion of learners, which are determined by two dominant paradigms. The first one is the socio-ecological model and the second one is the medical-deficit model. The socio-ecological model is influenced by systems (e.g. Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) and social theories (e.g. Bandura, 1986; Vygotsky, 1962; Piaget, 1970), and is embedded in a social inclusion approach. This means that it is recognised that cultural, social, environmental and systemic factors can cause, as well as impact on, barriers to learning a learner may experience. Thus, when learners are identified as experiencing learning difficulties, all of these factors are investigated and considered in the assessment and support process (Nel, 2018; Swart & Pettipher, 2016). This also implies that pedagogical approaches should be adapted and systemic challenges must be addressed. A transdisciplinary⁸, inter-sectoral collaborative approach emphasising equal participation between all role players (such as teachers, parents, learners, district and school support teams, and health professionals⁹) is recommended as integral to the socio-ecological model (Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018). Ironically, education policies such as EWP6 and the current Screening, Identification,

⁷ Special needs as term seems to be applied in most of the international contexts. In South Africa it is recommended by policy that this term is replaced by “a learner experiencing a barriers/s to learning”, as Learners with Special Needs (LSEN) is linked to the labeling and categorization and subsequent exclusionary practices (DoE, 1997; DoE, 2001). Paradoxically, the term LSEN persists to be used in colloquial educational, in departmental language, as well as in policy documents (e.g. DBE, 2014). E.g. LSEN numbers are given to learners who are placed in special education.

⁸ Transdisciplinary collaboration transcends professional boundaries, emphasising belongingness, and meaningful participation of all group members (Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018).

⁹ Health professionals can include medical doctors, remedial-, speech-, occupational- and physiotherapists, social workers and psychologists

Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy is built on this model (DoE, 2001; Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2014).

I say ironically because as the medical-deficit model has been employed for eons by education and health departments, it persists to be applied in practice by education departments and schools (Engelbrecht et al. 2016; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Nel et al. 2014). A medical-deficit model is entrenched in the belief that the deficit-within-the-child must be diagnosed and remediated by experts (such as health professionals), emphasising an individualised approach. Decisions on the intervention are usually made after a once-off or series of medical and psychological tests. Although these tests can provide valuable diagnostic information, the emphasis is, as a rule, primarily on the pathology and the special needs the learner has. Collaboration in this model generally follows a multidisciplinary approach whereby specialist professionals provide their expertise to the client independently from each other, and collective decision-making is not high on the agenda (Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018). Within this medical-deficit perspective, the word “special”¹⁰ is a recurring and exclusionary label that is given to learners who are considered to have special needs, because it is believed by educationists that the learner needs special help in a specialised education setting. The learner is usually told “you are very special, so that is why you are going to a special class/school”. In the mainstream teaching society, it is also believed that only teachers “who are a special kind of teacher” can teach “special” learners. The deficit model is mainly applied to learners who have disabilities. However, the disturbing occurrence in the South African scenario is that a broad scope of learners who experience barriers to learning as a consequence of cultural, environmental, social and systemic factors (such as developmental backlogs, poor socio-economic circumstances, large classroom numbers, learning in a second language, an inflexible curriculum, inadequate qualified teachers, poor teaching, ineffective support systems and many more) are too easily labelled by the education system as “special needs” learners. This continuous conviction that learners who are deemed to have special needs cannot be accommodated in mainstream education is evident in the increase in referrals, long waiting lists, and placement of children into segregated special education institutions (DBE, 2015).

¹⁰ In this instance the use of inverted commas indicates irony or scepticism

Remaining within the deficit divisionary viewpoint is the ingrained notion that everything to do with inclusive and special education is the sole responsibility of people who study and work in this field. Thus, in schools, districts, education departments, and teacher education institutions there are separate units/departments/people, with limited collaboration or integrated effort between different disciplines, to infuse an inclusive philosophy and pedagogy in all teaching and learning activities across all areas of learning.

The persistence of a segregating medical-deficit model in minds and practice can also be connected with a fixed mindset about ability.

4.2. A fixed mindset

A large proportion of humanity (the human race) has a fixed mindset about ability (Dweck, 2007) which is evident in the South African education community. Within a fixed mindset people keep on believing that children are born with a certain ability that will determine their finite performance level and that nurturing potential is unnecessary (Eyre, 2016; Dweck, 2007). The interaction with the environment and the influence thereof (e.g. at home, in the community, and at school) is mostly ignored. When children then achieve something, which is generally believed is beyond their born ability, it is applauded as “extraordinary”. This deficit, fixed mindset results in labels which stunts a growth mindset that successful learning is possible for all learners. Labels that I have heard include: “the lazy child”, “the problem child”, “the child will never achieve anything in life”, “the slow child”, “the retarded child”, “I can see it in his eyes that he is not able” and “the crazy child”. Furthermore, it is believed by teachers that it is just so much simpler and less trouble to teach homogeneous groups, which results in learners generally being grouped in ability cohorts, within and between classes, into three main categories, i.e. clever, average, and the slow learners. The afore-mentioned labels then usually get attached to the learners in the “lower” classes, which continues in perpetuating the ‘otherness’ of children who seemingly struggle to cope with the academic demands both within and outside the education system (Runswick-Cole & Hodge 2009).

Within a medical-deficit model and fixed mindset about ability the design and application of a curriculum plays a central role in the continued implementation thereof. The inflexibility of the

South African curriculum is one of my biggest concerns in the perpetuation of exclusionary and inhumane actions towards learners who struggle to cope with the demands set by people in power who seem to ignore the harmful impact it has on learners' successful flourishing¹¹ as optimal functioning human beings.

4.3. Curriculum inflexibility - stuck in a fixed mindset

A significant barrier to all learners, achieving their full potential in an inclusive education system that was identified by the NCESS and NCESNET report (DoE, 1997), and asserted in EWP6 (DoE, 2001), as well as the current SIAS policy (DBE, 2014), is an inflexible curriculum. Consequently, curriculum policies (the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (DBE, 2011a), the SIAS policy (DBE, 2014) and Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom through CAPS (DBE, 2011b) assert that a flexible curriculum must ensure that learners' diverse abilities are catered for, and should not be prescriptive, but rather provide a broad framework for teachers within which they are allowed to adapt the curriculum to the specific needs of learners. Flexibility in a curriculum also upholds an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths; sensitivity to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors; building the ability to identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking (DBE, 2011b) which are all essential skills for becoming flourishing human beings.

Yet, the South African curriculum is overwhelmingly dominated by centralized control over content, blended with predominantly top-down-management, monitored through standardized and systemic testing, comparative statistics in form of rankings, which is tempered by a culture of low trust and a sense of diminishing professional autonomy (Knoop, 2013, p. 199). Thus, a content-, and results driven doctrine currently dictates education. This involves an unrelenting pressure on teachers and learners to complete prescribed content within fixed time limits and a predominant

¹¹ The term human flourishing originated in Aristotelian ethics, and asserts that the highest good that everything aims at in life refers to a state that combines 'doing well, behaving well and faring well' (also called eudaimonia) (MacIntyre 1967, p. 59).

focus on pass-rates and an unhealthy prominence on high levels of performance (e.g. Booysen, 2018; Payne-van Staden, 2015). In one of my Masters student's research, focusing specifically on the application of a flexible curriculum, the following comments were made by teachers: "Coz now my hand are like this [shows that hands are tied]. I have to do A, B and C even if it doesn't benefit the learners, I have to do it I think CAPS is very rigid." and "It has a lot of fixed requirements for teachers, we require this from you, we require that from you" (Booyesen, 2018). Thus, there is an over-emphasis on regurgitating content and products of formal learning and very little on informal¹² learning, as well as the process and progress/development of learning. The quality of learning is constrained by what can be measured (Sayed & Ahmed, 2015) and therefore, fails to engage with the development of all learners as fulfilled human beings¹³ and meaningful participants in society as citizens. In one teachers' words "It is all about quantity and not about quality". In this inflexible approach teachers complain that they are allowed little leeway by the education department to accommodate diverse learning needs by adapting to learners' pace and level of learning, or being creative in using a variety of teaching strategies, learning activities and assessment methods. Recent comments made to me by several teachers and principals are that they have to ask permission at District Offices to use "differentiation¹⁴" in teaching and assessment for learners who experience barriers to learning. This should be an integral feature of an inclusive and flexible curriculum and asking for permission should not be a requirement. The Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom through CAPS affirms that it is imperative to ensure differentiation in curriculum delivery to enable access to learning for all learners (DBE, 2011b).

Integral to my concern about the rigid, inflexible approaches to curriculum implementation (which I believe is aggravating exclusion and limiting the capacity of teachers to develop learners as

¹² Informal learning can include learning that occurs spontaneously, i.e. not always planned for both inside and outside the classroom. For example, a learner will add some interesting information about a topic and the teacher would use this opportunity to stimulate further thinking and exploration.

¹³ Fulfilled human beings can be defined in Aristotle's words that each human being should use his abilities to their fullest potential and should obtain happiness and enjoyment through the exercise of their realized capacities (Younkins, 2003).

¹⁴ The SIAS policy defines curriculum differentiation as "a key strategy for responding to the needs of learners with diverse learning styles and needs. It involves processes of modifying, changing, adapting, extending and varying teaching methodologies, teaching strategies, assessment strategies and the content of the curriculum. It takes into account learners' levels of functioning, interests and backgrounds. Curriculum differentiation can be done at the level of content, teaching methodologies, assessment and learning environment" (DBE, 2014, p. viii).

flourishing human beings), is that there are a range of factors impacting negatively on learners' learning and which seem to be largely ignored. Some of these factors (but are not limited to), evidenced in several research studies, include high poverty levels (e.g. Buck & Deutch, 2014; Taylor, Van der Berg & Burger, 2011), large numbers of learners in classrooms (e.g. Marais, 2016; John, 2013; Venktness, 2011), poor language proficiency in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) as a consequence of learners not learning in their mother tongue (e.g. Sibanda, 2017; Schaffler, 2016; Nel & Theron, 2008), limited and poor functioning support structures (e.g. Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016), exposure to violence and abuse (e.g. Humm, Kaminer, & Hardy, 2018), inadequate training of teachers to implement an inclusive education approach (e.g. Engelbrecht, Savolainen, Nel, Koskela & Okkolin, 2017; Engelbrecht et al. 2015), and poor parent involvement (e.g. Smit & Liebenberg, 2003).

5. Conclusion

It is obvious that I exert a feeling of despondency about the progress of the South African education system towards a fully functional inclusive system, where humanity (i.e. inclusion and being humane) is actualised. I do acknowledge that there are many educationists, especially teachers and principals, who are trying their utmost best to transform their education practices into inclusive ones. However, this should be an unexceptional and integrated practice and not only a few teachers and principals positively trying to disrupt the system, because they feel it is the appropriate action to take in order to make sure all learners experience successful learning. It appears, at the moment, that what has been envisioned in our constitution and EWP6 and what is continuously asserted in further education policies, are universes away from what is happening in practice. Thus, maybe, in Jonathan Jansen's words, "it is time that we got angry about the failing education system" (Jansen, 2018).

6. Recommendations

As can be deduced from this paper, I am pleading for a total re-thinking and re-approaching of policies and practices. The first order of business should be to re-visit the constitution and EWP6

and all follow-up policies to thoroughly do introspection of the principles of humanity and envisioned practices in these documents and how it should be applied. In addition, the following needs to happen:

- i) Transdisciplinary inter-sectoral collaboration between national and provincial Departments of Higher Education, and Basic Education, Higher Education Institutes (HEI), District Offices, principals, teachers, parents, Non-governmental Organisations (NGO) and Community-Based Organisations (CBO). This is critical in order to bring policy, research and practice together.
- ii) Through the means of collaboration and purposeful discussion groups (including the above role players), establish an in-depth conceptualisation of what inclusive education means and entails within a humane (human rights and social justice) approach.
- iii) Infuse all teaching practices (developing knowledge, as well as cognitive-, technical-, technological and life skills) with a strong philosophical approach where the following three approaches are suggested to be integrated and used as a foundation and building blocks:
 - a. A growth mindset as already implied in EWP6, which acknowledges that all children can learn and that all children need support (DoE, 2001, p. 6). A growth mindset asserts that ability can grow and develop through education. Increasingly, research is showing that intelligence can be developed and that the brain has great malleable potential for growth and change throughout life (Schulz & Hausmann, 2017; Dweck, 2007). However, children and adults must believe that this is possible and be actively involved in unleashing the learning ability everyone possesses. This requires purposefully motivating children to strive to do well, supporting them throughout and praising all efforts (Eyre, 2016; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Furthermore, it promotes equitable practices by moving away from "good" and "poor" cohorts. This emphasises that all learners are capable of significant academic success and a class should represent learners with mixed abilities and varied achievements (Bešić, Paleczek, Krammer & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2015).
 - b. Immersing Amartya Sen's capability approach where the primary focus is on what individuals are able to do (i.e., capable of) and be. Thus, developing their capabilities for living a life worthy of human being, where human needs are articulated and

accomplished in ways consistent with their humanity, i.e. their ‘valuable doings and beings’ (Walker, 2005; Saito, 2003).

- c. Focusing primarily on human flourishing, i.e. having a good life, which according to Aristotle is both a morally good life and an enjoyable life; a life in which things go well. This means that flourishing should be perceived as feeling and being intrinsically worthwhile, as well as achieving the actualisation of human potential (Wolbert, De Ruyter & Schinkel, 2015). This encompasses a life that denotes goodness, generativity¹⁵, growth, and resilience¹⁶; referring to emotional (hedonic)-, social and psychological (eudaimonic) wellbeing. Flourishing individuals are thus resilient, productive, and experience a high level of positive emotions (Keyes, 2002).
 - d. In relation to human flourishing positive education should be integrated as a fundamental approach where the emphasis is building resilience, character strengths and well-being. This is essential as Walker Percy (as quoted by Yeo, 2011, p. 6) declares: “You can get all A's and still flunk life”. Positive education is thus about the application of psychological knowledge regarding individual strengths, well-being, and positive social relations (Knoop, 2013). This implies that no inequality must be created by segregating “differences”, but that diverse and individual needs should be accommodated in a flexible and positive manner. Furthermore, the predominant emphasis on meaningless rote learning of content and then using it as the primary measure to promote learners and compare results, should be abolished. Content knowledge must rather be drawn on to broaden critical and creative thinking in order to develop learners in becoming unbiased, unprejudiced and progressive thinkers (i.e. inclusive and humane), but also prepare them adequately for the challenges and demands of the 21st century. Knoop (2013) asserts that education worth its name should not be a negative and boring experience to learners and teachers as this is counterproductive in that it tends to shy people away from learning, and boring learning is highly ineffective. Education should be a positive and inspiring experience.
- iv) In terms of changing practice, the following is suggested:

¹⁵ Caring for others without expecting something in return

¹⁶ Resilience is the ability to overcome adversity when facing significant life challenges (Nabi & Rizvi, 2017).

- a. The infusion of an inclusive pedagogy throughout the curriculum should be given precedence to. This entails the creation of a learning environment where all learners' different abilities and needs are recognised and they are given the opportunity to strengthen the skills that they already possess and develop those that they do not possess. In such a way all learners' needs are accommodated despite their abilities or disabilities (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2015; Florian, 2011). Therefore, teachers need to have the capacity, understandings, skills, critical sensibilities, and contextual awareness to provide quality educational access, participation, and outcomes for all learners (Waitoller & Artilles, 2013).
- b. The embedding of well thought-through philosophical and theoretical approaches related to all aspects of humanity and inclusion in all disciplines and subjects, should be made a priority in all teacher education programmes. This necessitates that teacher educators, as well as field trainers of in-service teachers, should be role models as inclusive pedagogists, as well as train the theory and practice of an inclusive pedagogy well.

The core message that I want to carry over with this paper can be summarised in the Dalai Lama's tweet on 17 August 2018:

“I am one of the 7 billion human beings alive today. We each have a responsibility to think about humanity and the good of the world because it affects our own future. We weren't born on this planet at this time to create problems but to bring about some benefit.”

Available at <https://twitter.com/DalaiLama/status/1030390693846573056>

Reference list

Ainscow, M. (2014). Struggling for equity in education: the legacy of Salamanca. In F. Kiuppis & R. S. Hausstatter, (Eds.), *Inclusive education: twenty years after Salamanca* (pp. 41-56). New York: Peter Lang.

- Allan, J. (2014). Inclusive education and the arts. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 44(4), 511-523.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Bešić, E., Paleczek, L., Krammer, M., & Gasteiger-Klicpera, B. (2017). Inclusive practices at the teacher and class level: the experts' view. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32(3), 329-345.
- Black-Hawkins, K. (2014). Inclusive education and the philosophy of education: what can inclusive education learn from philosophy? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 44(4), 445-450.
- Bochner, A. P. (2001). Narrative's virtues. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(2), 131-157.
- Booth, T. (2011). The Name of the Rose: Inclusive values into action in teacher education. *Prospects*, 41, 303-318.
- Booyesen, R. (2018). *The perspectives of secondary school teachers regarding the flexible implementation of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement*. (Unpublished Master's dissertation). North-West University, Vanderbijlpark.
- Bornman, J., & Rose, J. (2010). *Believe that all can achieve: increasing classroom participation in learners with special support needs*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Buck, R., & Deutsch, J. (2014). Effects of poverty on education. *International Journal of Human Sciences*, 11(2), 1139-1148. doi: 10.14687/ijhs.v11i2.3043
- Brighouse, H. (2006). *On education*. London: Routledge.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2007). *The bioecological model of human development*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- D'Alessio, S., & Watkins, A. (2009). International comparisons of inclusive policy and practice: Are we talking about the same thing? *Denmark Research in Comparative and International Education*, 4(3), 233-249.
- Dart (Disability Rights Activist). (1992). Retrieved from <http://www.libertyresources.org/dc/dartbio.html>>.
- Delors, J. (1996). Learning: The treasure within. *Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. Paris, UNESCO.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE) **see** South Africa. Department of Basic Education.
- Department of Education (DoE) **see** South Africa. Department of Education.
- Donohue, D., & Bornman, J. (2014). The challenges of realising inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2), 1-14.
- Dweck, C. S. (2007). *Mindset. The new psychology of success*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Dyson, A., & Forlin, C. (2004). An international perspective on inclusion. In P. Engelbrecht, L. Green, S. Naicker & L. Engelbrecht (Eds.), *Inclusive education in action in South Africa* (pp. 24-43). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, 27.
- Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., Smit, S., & Van Deventer, M. (2016). The idealism of education policies and the realities in schools: the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(5), 520-535
- Engelbrecht, P., Savolainen, H., Nel, M., Koskela, T., & Okkolin M-A. (2017). Making meaning of inclusive education: classroom practices in Finnish and South African classrooms, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, doi: 10.1080/03057925.2016.1266927

- Engelbrecht, P., & Hay, J. (2018). Creating collaborative partnerships in inclusive schools. In P. Engelbrecht & L. Green (Eds.), *Responding to the challenges of inclusive education in southern Africa* (pp.213-228). Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Eyre, D. M. (2016). *High performance learning. How to become a world-class school*. London: Routledge.
- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), 813-828.
- Florian, L. (2015). Inclusive pedagogy: a transformative approach to individual differences but can it help reduce educational inequalities? *Scottish Educational Review*, 47(1), 5-14.
- Graham, L., & Slee, R. (2008). An illusory interiority: interrogating the discourse/s of inclusion. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 40(2), 277-293.
- Gtowacki-Dudka, M., Treff, M., & Usman, I. (2010). Research for social change: using autoethnography to foster transformative learning. *Adult Learning*, 6(3/4), 30-31.
- Haimovitz, K., & Dweck, C. S. (2016). What predicts children's fixed and growth intelligence mind-sets? Not their parents' views of intelligence but their parents' views of failure. *Psychological Science*, 27(6), 859-869.
- Human Rights Watch. (2015). *Complicit in exclusion: South Africa's failure to guarantee an inclusive education for children with disabilities*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Humm, A., Kaminer, D., & Hardy, A. (2018). Social support, violence exposure and mental health among young South African adolescents. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health*, 30 (1), 41-50.
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43, 207-222

- Knoop, H. H. (2013). Positive education, or just education. In C. Proctor & P. A. Linley (Eds.), *Research, applications, and interventions for children and adolescents: a positive psychology perspective* (pp. 199-210). London: Springer. doi 10.1007/978-94-007-6398-2_12
- Jansen, J. (2017). It's time to have those difficult conversations 'We ignore warning signs at our peril. Retrieved from <http://www.isasa.org/memo/Jonathan-Jansen-Schools.pdf>
- Jansen, J. (2018, July 12). It's time we got angry about the failing education system. *Business Live*. Retrieved from <https://www.businesslive.co.za/rdm/lifestyle/2018-07-12-jonathan-jansen-its-time-we-got-angry-about-the-failing-education-system/>
- John, V. (2013, March 8). Forgotten schools of the Eastern Cape left to rot. *Mail & Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-03-08-00-forgotten-schools-of-the-eastern-cape-left-to-rot>
- MacIntyre, A. (1967). *A short history of ethics*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul plc.
- Makhalemele, T., & Nel, M. (2016). Challenges experienced by district-based support teams in the execution of their functions in a specific South African province. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(2), 168-184.
- Marais, P. (2016). We can't believe what we see": Overcrowded classrooms through the eyes of student teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(2), 1-10.
- Merriam Webster Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/humanity>
- Nabi, M., & Rizvi, R. (2017). Positive emotions and resilience as predictors of flourishing in women. *International Journal of Advanced research* 5(11), 143-151.

- Nel, M. (2013). Understanding inclusion. In A. Engelbrecht, H. Swanepoel., M. Nel, & A. Hugo (Eds.), *Embracing diversity through multi-level teaching* (pp. 1-20). Cape Town: Juta.
- Nel, M. (2018). Inclusive education: the Global movement. In I. Eloff & E Swart (Eds.), *Educational Psychology* (pp. 256-262). Cape Town: Juta.
- Nel, M., Engelbrecht, P., Nel, N. M., & Tlale, D. (2014). South African teachers' views of collaboration within an inclusive education system. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(9), 903-917.
- Nel, M., & Neethling, M. M. (2018). Children with disabilities and their rights. In A. De Wet (Ed.), *Diversity and Difference in South African Schools*. (pp. 239-270). Cape Town: Juta.
- Nel, M., & Theron, L. (2008). Critique of a language enrichment programme for Grade 4 ESL learners with limited English proficiency: a pilot study. *South African Journal of Education*, 28, 203-219.
- Nel, N. M., Tlale, L. D. N., Engelbrecht, P., & Nel, M. (2016). Teachers' perceptions of education support structures in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. *KOERS — Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 81(3). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.19108/KOERS.81.3.2249>
- Payne van Staden, I. (2015). *Exploring Full-Service School teachers' self-efficacy within an inclusive education system*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). North-West University, Vanderbijlpark.
- Piaget, J. (1970). *Main trends in psychology*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Pring, R. (2007). Reclaiming philosophy for educational research. *Research Educational Review*, 59(3), 315-330.

- Republic of South Africa (RSA). (1996). *The Constitution*. Pretoria: Government Publishers.
- Runswick-Cole, K. A., & Hodge, N. (2009). Needs or rights? A challenge to the discourse of special education. *British Journal of Special Education*, 36(4), 198-203.
- Sayed, Y., & Ahmed, R. (2015). Education quality, and teaching and learning in the post-2015 education agenda. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 40, 330-338.
- Saito, M. (2003) Amartya Sen's capability approach to education: a critical exploration, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 37, 17-34.
- Schaffler, D. (2015). *A support programme for Foundation Phase English Second Language learners to improve the teaching of phonological awareness*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). North-West University, Vanderbijlpark.
- Schulz, J. B., & Hausmann, L. (2017). The malleable brain - an educational review from students to students. *Journal of Neurochemistry*, 142(6), 788-789.
- Shakespeare, T. (2005). Solving the disability problem. *Public Policy Research*, 12(1), 44-48.
- Sibanda, J. (2017). Language at the Grade Three and Four interface: the theory-policy-practice nexus. *South African Journal of Education*, 37(2), 1-9.
- Smit, A. G., & Liebenberg, L. (2003). Understanding the dynamics of parent involvement in schooling within the poverty context. *South African Journal of Education*, 23(1), 1-5.
- Smyth, F., Shevlin, M., Buchner, T., Biewer, G., Flynn, P., Latimier, C., Šiška, J., Toboso-Martín, M., Rodríguez Díaz, S., & Ferreira, M. A. V. (2014) Inclusive education in progress: Policy evolution in four European countries, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 29(4), 433-445.
- South Africa. Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2001). *Education White Paper 6: Special needs education. (building an inclusive education and training system)*. Pretoria: DBE.

- South Africa. Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2011). *English First Language (FAL) Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement*. Pretoria: DBE.
- South Africa. Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2011b). *Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through curriculum and assessment policy statements*. Pretoria: DBE.
- South Africa. Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2014). *Policy on screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS)*. Pretoria: DBE.
- South Africa. Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2015). *Report on the Implementation of Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education: An Overview for the Period 2013-2015*. Pretoria: Sol Plaatjie House.
- Department of Education (DoE). (1997). *Quality education for all. Overcoming barriers to learning and development. Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS)*. Pretoria: DoE.
- South African Human Rights Commission. (2017). Research brief on disability and equality in South Africa 2013 – 2017. Retrieved from:
<https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/RESEARCH%20BRIEF%20ON%20DISABILITY%20AND%20EQUALITY%20IN%20SOUTH%20AFRICA%202013%20to%202017.pdf>
- Sparkes, A. C. (2000). Autoethnography and narratives of self: Reflections on criteria in action. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17, 21-43.
- Swart, E., & Pettipher, R. (2016). A framework for understanding inclusion. In E. Landsberg, D. Kruger & E. Swart (Eds.), *Addressing barriers to learning. A South African perspective* (pp. 3-23). Pretoria: Van Schaik

- Taylor, S., Van der Berg, S., & Burger, R. (2011). Low quality education as a poverty trap in South Africa. *Research Paper*. University of Stellenbosch.
- Thobejane, T. D. (2013). History of apartheid education and the problems of reconstruction in South Africa. *Sociology Study*, 3(1), 1–12.
- United Nations (UN). (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Retrieved from <<http://www.jus.uio.no/lm/un.universal.declaration.of.human.rights.1948/portrait.a4.pdf>>
- United Nations (UN). (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved from <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>>.
- United Nations (UN). (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Retrieved from <<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>>.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). 2000. *The Dakar framework for action. Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments*. Retrieved from <<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/dakar-framework-action-education-all-meeting-our-collective-commitments>>.
- UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. Salamanca, Spain, 7–10 June. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF
- UNESCO. (2000). *Inclusion in Education: The Participation of Disabled Learners. Executive summary for World Education Forum*. Dakar, Senegal: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2014). *The Muscat Agreement*. Paris, France: UNESCO. Retrieved from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002281/228122E.pdf>
- UNESCO. (2015). Fixing the broken promise of Education for All. Montreal, Canada; UNESCO. Retrieved from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/oosci->

global-exsum-en.pdf

- UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women & UNHCR. (2015). Education 2030 Incheon Declaration Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. Retrieved from http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/education_2030_incheon_declaration_en.pdf
- Venktesh, K. (2011, March 10). 150 pupils in one classroom. *Mercury*. Retrieved from <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/150-pupils-in-one-classroom-1039256>
- Vitello, S. J., & Mithaug, D. E. (Eds.). (1998). *Inclusive schooling: National and international perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Walton, E. (2016). *The language of inclusive education*. New York: Routledge.
- Waitoller, F. R., & Artiles, A. J. (2013). A decade of professional development research for inclusive education: a critical review and notes for a research program. *Review of Educational Research* September, 83(3), 319-356.
- Walker, M. (2005). Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Education. *Educational Action Research*, 13(1), 103-110.
- Wall, S. (2006). An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(2), 1-12.
- Wolbert, L. S., De Ruyter, D. J., & Schinkel, A. (2015). Formal criteria for the concept of human flourishing: the first step in defending flourishing as an ideal aim of education. *Ethics and Education*, 10(1), 118-129.
- World Health Organisation (WHO). (2011). *World report on disability*. Geneva: WHO. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/>.

- Yeo, Sha-En. (2011). Resilience, Character Strengths and Flourishing: A Positive Education Workshop for Singapore Teachers. Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) Capstone Projects. Retrieved from <http://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone/25>
- Younkins, E. W. (2003). Aristotle, human flourishing, and the limited state. *Capitalism & commerce*, 133. Retrieved from <http://www.quebecoislibre.org/031122-11.htm>