

Chapter 9

Inclusive Pedagogies and Social Justice for Transforming Teaching and Learning in South African Classrooms: Inclusive Pedagogies in Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter looks at inclusive pedagogies and social justice for transforming teaching and learning in South African classrooms. Learners should not be marginalised or be made to feel that they do not belong. Therefore, teachers need to utilize inclusive pedagogies to ensure that learners' individual needs are met. The first section of this chapter defines the concepts of inclusive education and social justice, followed by the contextualisation of inclusive education in South Africa. The section that follows then engages the reader with issues of inclusive education globally. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on instructional strategies that promote inclusive pedagogies and social justice.

INTRODUCTION

Education is key for the development of a country and the pursuit of social justice for its citizens. Education is regarded as a basic human right. The South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) protects children's right to education, and internationally, treaties such as the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights aim to address social justice, inequality, and human rights issues. However, the right to education is not practiced equitably among citizens owing to barriers to inclusivity (United Nations, 2016).

Inclusion and social justice play an important role in ensuring that quality education is accomplished and that learners are provided access to quality education (Polat, 2011; Hytten & Bettez, 2011). However, schools have not been seen to be acting in the best interest of the child and have systematically failed to

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plan for and accommodate the varying learners' needs (Kelly, 2012). Schools are seen as perpetuating the inequalities that exist in societies and disadvantaged children continue to be short-changed. Therefore, new policies and practices must be introduced to ensure that the school is ready for the child (Shyman, 2012) and that every learner is given the necessary support to attain the learning outcomes.

Inclusivity and social justice have dominated the discourse on educational reforms to provide quality education and ensure access to education. The two concepts, inclusive education, and social justice are interlinked as they address issues of equity, quality, access, the participation of all stakeholders, and learners' achievement.

Murungi (2015) regards the discourse on inclusive education as the most celebrated, yet controversial, in the current educational reforms and in respect of the right to education. Inclusive education is also contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were developed in 2012. SGD 4 focuses on education and its aim is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2016). SDG 4 talks about the equitable, inclusive, and good quality education that is needed to fully realize children's right to education. Inclusion in education pertains directly to giving opportunities to all learners to learn, irrespective of their differences. Inclusion suggests that all learners should be accepted and valued, irrespective of their differences (Ainscow, 2013). Learners can contribute meaningfully to their learning experiences if they are provided with the opportunity to learn despite their diverse backgrounds.

This chapter looks at inclusive pedagogies and social justice for transforming teaching and learning in South African classrooms. Learners should not be marginalized or be made to feel that they do not belong. Therefore, teachers need to utilize inclusive pedagogies to ensure that learners' individual needs are met. The first section of this chapter defines the concepts of inclusive education and social justice, followed by the contextualization of inclusive education in South Africa. The section that follows then engages the reader with issues with inclusive education in the South African context. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on instructional strategies that promote inclusive pedagogies and social justice.

CONCEPTUALIZING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The concept of "inclusive education" is not consistently or universally defined, as it means different things to different people, depending on the context (Booth et al., 2006; Murungi, 2015). Inclusive education generally refers to the type of education that does not discriminate against learners according to their race, gender, culture, or any other aspect (Makoelle & Malindi, 2014). Polat (2011, pp 50-51) maintains that inclusive education is about changing values, attitudes, policies, and practices within the school setting and beyond. Polat (2011) further contends that inclusive education deals with issues of social justice, inequality, and human rights. Inclusive education has the potential to enhance social skills among learners with and without disabilities and promote mutual understanding and acceptance among them (Shah, 2007). It aims at transforming the education space to rid it of practices that perpetuate inequalities and human injustices and to promote social justice. Research has shown that more needs to be done than merely placing learners in a particular classroom and assuming that they will learn, and more needs to be done than focusing solely on disabled learners (Celoria, 2016; Murungi, 2015; Polat, 2011). Celoria (2016) and Schugurensky (2010) argue that inclusion is about social justice, which places much emphasis on equity, solidarity, and human dignity. Inclusive education is not about access, but about the transformation of an education sector that discriminates against learners. It questions merit-

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