Learning for Democracy in an Inclusive Education System: Implications for Teacher Development

NATIONAL WORKSHOP REPORT, 2–3 DECEMBER 2013

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION, PRETORIA



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Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Abbreviations

DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District-based Support Team
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IBST	Institution-based Support Team
IE	Inclusive Education
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
SBST	School-based Support Team
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities

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Learning for Democracy in an Inclusive Education System: Implications for Teacher Development Workshop

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their colour.

MAYA ANGELOU

Inclusion is a moral issue, a goal, indeed a value we decide to pursue or reject on the basis of what we want our society to look like.

DOUGLAS BIKLEN

1. Executive summary

Having reviewed the progress made in respect of Education White Paper 6 policy proposals during the first 11 years of this period, the DBE has found that there has been significant progress in many areas of implementation of IE. It is, however, deemed that the progress should be accelerated and expanded across the system over the next few years towards 2021. Thus, the Minister of Basic Education, the Hon. Ms Angie Motshekga, declared 2013 the Year of Inclusive Education. This decision gives a clear mandate to all sectors within the education system — to take responsibility for ensuring that the constitutional right of learners with disabilities to access quality education and support is realised in special schools as well as in ordinary schools.

The Minister hosted a national workshop from 2−3 December 2013 in collaboration with MIET Africa, under the theme, *Learning for Democracy in an Inclusive Education and Training System*. The workshop was arranged to coincide with International Disability Rights Day on 3 December 2013.

The overarching goal of the national workshop was to mobilise stakeholders at all levels of education in preparation for full-scale implementation of IE from 2014. The workshop aimed to give concrete and resolute expression to the Minister's December 2012 declaration on IE, as articulated in Education White Paper 6: Special Education − Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education July 2001). Key implications of the declaration were that:

- 2013 would be the year of consolidating and institutionalising critical systems for the implementation of the IE Policy on a system-wide basis. To date, implementation has been progressively introduced to selected districts and schools.
- It would be ensured that the implementation of inclusion would find expression across all programmes and levels of the education system
- The development of funding and human resource provisioning for an inclusive system would be prioritised.

The workshop outcomes were articulated as follows:

- A common understanding of what should be broadly understood by IE
- A common understanding of implications of IE for teacher education and development
- An understanding of what will be required in implementing IE in schools
- A broad understanding of how the IE learning community will function
- An established community of practice to take the IE initiative forward.

The workshop was attended by researchers from Sweden, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. These countries were participating in a North/South collaborative project, *Teaching for inclusion and democracy: a North/South partner-driven cooperation project* on Inclusive Education. Also attending were invited representatives from the provincial Departments of Education, teacher unions, disability rights and parents' organisations, higher education representatives as well as other education stakeholder organisations.

The workshop deliberations had important implications for teacher development if inclusive, democratic and socially just schools and their communities in South Africa and the SADC region are to be realised.

2. Opening speech by the Hon. Minister of Basic Education, Ms Angie Motshekga

On the first day, the Minister warmly welcomed all delegates to the two-day workshop. She pointed out that the workshop had been organised to coincide with International Day of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December.

The Minister valued the fruitful collaboration between partners from countries from the SADC region and of the North as it contributes towards achieving a common understanding of the best strategic steps to be taken to ensure that education systems in the region and elsewhere become truly inclusive.

To reaffirm South Africa's commitment to an inclusive education system and society, the Minister made two points. First, Education White Paper 6 on IE was internationally lauded as progressive and visionary. Second, South Africa was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations May 2008), thereby committing to the implementation of IE at all levels of education.



Figure 1: The Hon. Ms Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education in discussion with Prof Volmink and Dr Linda Chisholm

The Minister drew attention to the principles and strategies that underlie the South African government's commitment to an inclusive education and training system.

- IE is not only about learners with disabilities, but about *all* learners. There are still too many learners who are excluded from and within schools; and their needs are not met in such a way that they can reach their full potential. This includes children from rural communities, children and youth who live on the streets, and children from the poorest of the poor who have little access to the resources available to most urban children.
- Everyone in education and in society should be working together to ensure that all persons strive for and achieve their full potential in schools that must themselves be welcoming, enabling and geared to combating all forms of exclusion.
- Failure to provide for all individuals to learn and grow in environments that are conducive to quality learning renders the affected vulnerable to economic and social exclusion. The Minister quoted former president Nelson Mandela who stressed that to deny people of their human rights in this way is to challenge their very humanity.
- As education systems internationally strive to improve access to quality education for all, amid growing concerns about drop-out rates and youth unemployment, IE is increasingly seen as one of the critical mechanisms to achieve real positive change.
- Declaring 2013 the Year of IE gives a clear mandate to all sectors within education to take responsibility for ensuring that the constitutional right of learners with disabilities is realised.
- The Minister stressed that it was now 12 years into the 20-year implementation trajectory set out in Education White Paper 6. Thus, it is important to critically assess what has been achieved and to explore new and vigorous strategies to accelerate and strengthen the implementation of the policy towards 2021.

The Minister shared with the workshop delegates some of the critical achievements of the DBE in 2013 towards making IE a reality.

A significant new era in South Africa for deaf education has emerged. The curriculum for South African Sign Language has been completed and published for public comment. In 2014, teachers will be trained and the system will be prepared for the implementation of the new curriculum in 2015, starting with the Foundation Phase and Grade 9.

Curriculum differentiation has become a key focus in teacher development initiatives by the DBE. A process has been initiated to ensure that teachers are able to meet the needs of diverse learners in their day-to-day teaching by applying innovative methodologies, identifying any problem early and using pro-active steps to prevent further learning breakdown.

The department is collaborating with key partners in business to expand its e-learning strategies. Through the introduction of information technology and assistive technology, learners with specific learning support needs can be more effectively supported in ordinary classes. Workbooks that have been adapted for Braille, large print and augmentative and alternative communication will assist hundreds of learners in special and ordinary schools. Furthermore, the department is collaborating with stakeholders in the sector concerned with the education of learners with visual Impairment to ensure that all teachers are fully skilled in Braille. An audit has been conducted on the status in schools of visual impairment and an intervention strategy has been introduced.

A revised strategy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) has been finalised, and teachers and parents will receive the necessary support to ensure that learners can be included in their local neighbourhood schools.

The Minister further explained that an expert team in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and Training has been set up to develop a skills curriculum and exit-level qualification at NQF Level 1 (Grade 9) for learners who struggle to complete the academic general education and training band and would benefit from having access to vocational subjects at an earlier stage. It is anticipated that this process will be concluded by the end of this year. The expert team is also responsible for developing a strategy to address the needs of children with severe and profound intellectual disability who are currently mostly out-of-school and attending care centres of the Department of Health and Social Development.

Finally, the Minister shared that progress has been made with the development of a revised funding and post-provisioning system which will ensure that there are more resources allocated to mainstream schools to support inclusive education but also to ensure that special schools have access to the resources required to provide specialised and quality education and support. She stressed that there is a critical shortage of therapists and other health professionals in the country. There was an urgent need for the Department of Health and the DBE to collaborate to make more effective use of these services and of human resources.

In conclusion, the Minister quoted the preamble of Education White Paper 6:

> Let us work together to nurture our people with disabilities so that they also experience the full excitement and the joy of learning, and to provide them, and our nation, with a solid foundation for lifelong learning and development.

3. Setting the scene

What follows is a synopsis of inputs made by two presenters who set the scene for the national workshop. Dr Moses Simelane, Director, Directorate of IE, DBE and Prof Rolf Helldin, Stockholm University, examined issues related to the reconceptualisation of IE, and argued for the need for all stakeholders to interrogate the assumptions and ideologies that underlie their thinking about *Education for All*. The presenters argued that inclusion is not about adjusting school provisions for the special needs of a particular group of learners but largely about a shared educational ideology.

3.1 DR MOSES SIMELANE, DIRECTOR, IE, DBE

Dr Simelane presented a paper titled, *Reconceptualisation of IE: A South African Perspective*. He began by raising some of the tensions South Africa has been facing in the implementation of Education White Paper 6 since 2001. He explained that these include: an incoherent understanding of IE across all levels of the system; fragmented and disparate approaches in the development of an IE and training system; a dual schooling system (special and ordinary) resulting in a misaligned conceptualisation of inclusion; and inclusion/inclusivity not being seen as the core vehicle for re-engineering education systems.

Simelane argued that IE involves system change, the addressing of barriers to learning and participation, and increasing participation in education. Drawing on Humphrey (2008), Simelane identified four key principles of IE:

- *Presence*: promotion of visibility of persons (recognition) who are normally excluded from activities of peers in the regular learning context
- *Acceptance*: degree to which communities and societies acknowledge the diversity and rights of those who are different from them to operate in similar educational and social settings
- *Participation*: involvement of persons with differentiated needs in quality learning experiences
- *Achievement*: promotion of high academic standards and achievement outcomes for all learners.



Figure 2: Prof Rolf Helldin, Stockholm University and Dr Moses Simelane, Director of Inclusive Education, DBE

Simelane shared with delegates the focus of recent IE initiatives by the Department of Education. An important focus area has been early identification and intervention. The SIAS strategy, implemented from 2008, is being reviewed. The strategy now targets all children, starting before Grade R. The central role of stakeholders such as teachers, parents, learners, school-based support teams (SBST) and district-based support teams (DBSTs) is emphasised, as is the involvement of the various provincial and national sectors such as Health, Social Welfare, etc. The aim is to ensure an inter-disciplinary, more integrated approach to assessment, the focus on assessing barriers to learning and the development of quality teaching and learning rather than just the issue of placement options for learners.

A significant initiative has been professional development to institutionalise Curriculum Differentiation targeting all subject advisors and teachers in the system. To date, approximately 10 000 subject advisors in all provinces have been orientated. In addition, Simelane stated that together with civil organisations and related experts, the DBE is conducting teacher professional development initiatives to enable teachers to gain specialised skills in addressing the needs of learners with visual/hearing impairment, and building proficiency in South African Sign Language.

Simelane announced that the DBE has developed and finalised a draft South African Sign Language curriculum for Grades R–12, and will phase in implementation in 2015, starting at the Foundation Phase and Grade 9 levels. In addition, a process for developing the following curricula with skills components is underway: a curriculum for Moderately Intellectually Disabled; a curriculum for Severely Intellectually Disabled; and a Curriculum/Stimulation Programme for Profoundly Intellectually Disabled children who are mainly out-of-school. An important initiative Simelane announced is the development of policy on differentiated and alternative forms of assessments (accommodations) for Grades R–12.

Simelane highlighted other ongoing initiatives in the DBE, including the progressive designation and capacity building of mainstream schools which are being converted to Full-service Schools; progressive conversion of Special Schools to Resource Centres for outreach programmes within districts; the establishment of SBSTs in all schools. Further ongoing strategic DBE actions are:

- Establishing functional DBSTs comprising different disciplines
- Building capacity on inclusion across all levels in the system
- Ensuring that inclusive and integrated approaches are adopted across disciplines/programmes within and across systems and government sectors
- Providing ongoing training of teachers on early identification and intervention, progressively targeting full-service schools and special schools.

3.2 PROF ROLF HELLDIN, STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY

Prof Helldin's paper, *Partner-driven Cooperation: Access to and Use of Research Results*, stressed that inclusion is about the child´s right to participate in education, about rejecting exclusion, and maximising the participation of all learners in schools of their choice. It is also about making learning meaningful and relevant for all, particularly those learners most vulnerable to exclusionary pressures. Inclusive education involves rethinking and restructuring practices, curricula, cultures and policies in schools and other learning environments, so that diverse learning needs can be met.



Figure 3: Prof Rolf Helldin, Stockholm University

Helldin provided a brief overview of the collaboration between Sweden, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia on the *Teaching for inclusion and democracy: a North/South partner-driven cooperation project*. He argued for the value of action research in IE as a tool for transforming practice, building capacity of teachers, and sharing practices and experiences in IE. Helldin explained that the international project enabled a collaborative working synergy between government, universities, schools and civil society.

4. Country case studies: IE in practice

As part of the *Teaching for inclusion and democracy: a North/South partner-driven cooperation project*, researchers from Botswana, South Africa and Namibia conducted case study research in their country contexts to illuminate inclusive education policy implementation within the local contexts. The presenters were: Dr Cynthy Haihambo Ya-Otto (University of Namibia); Dr Sourav Mukhopadhyay (University of Botswana); and Prof Pholoho Morojele and Prof Nithi Muthukrishna, (University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa). The case studies were undertaken in clusters of rural and urban, primary and high schools. Multiple methods of data generation were used in each of the contexts, including individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation, document analysis and photo-voice.

The findings of the case studies reflect that policy implementation is never a smooth, linear and predictable process, as argued by Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins (2011). Further, what clearly emerged is the *role of context* in forming, framing, resisting and limiting responses to policy. Doing policy plays out within spaces such as history of schools, resources, staff capabilities, budgets, learner backgrounds, parental support etc.

In the sections below, key insights from the case studies are presented.

The case studies revealed that often, competing discourses of inclusion and disability exist in teachers' enactments of policy. It is evident that the social rights discourse versus the medical/deficit discourse plays out in contradictory ways. For example, there are both classes constructed as remedial classes as well as special classes. Further, language associated with the medical/deficit discourse operates alongside a social rights discourse. For instance, labels such as 'learners with severe psychological barriers', 'learners with learning barriers', 'remedial learners', 'slow learners', and 'normal versus disabled learners' continue to be used.



Figure 4: Prof Pholoho Morojele (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Prof John Volmink, MIET Africa

Morojele quoted Ball et al. (2011) who stated that teachers are policy actors and subjects – thus, incoherence can become evident in the course of the implementation process. Besides, teachers, school principals and school communities (networks of actors) have complex, multiple and diverse interests and values – personal, institutional and cultural that play out in policy implementation. The case studies point to the need for teacher professional development programmes to incorporate creative pedagogical methodologies to enable teachers to reflect on their deep-seated assumptions, ideologies, and values that shape their understandings of inclusion and constructions of difference.

In general, a positive picture emerges in that schools are welcoming and provide access to education to learners with diverse needs, including disability. Teachers see strong links between inclusion and their humanistic values, and cultural and religious beliefs. The question that arises, however, is: What is the quality of education that is offered to learners?



Figure 5: Dr Cynthy Haihambo Ya-Otto, University of Namibia

Mukhopadhyay indicated that classroom observations showed that learners with diverse educational needs were ignored and not engaged in the teaching and learning process. Little effort was made to create a cooperative classroom atmosphere. Also, there was no evidence of curriculum adaptation, or creative teaching methodologies and assessment practices that were responsive to diversity. Muthukrishna and Mukhopadhyay stressed that teachers need to develop skills in curriculum differentiation − a critical skill to enable access and full participation. Dr Cynthy Haihambo Ya-Otto stressed that in order to improve aspects of IE and democratic practices there is a need to focus on building inclusive and democratic values in schools and communities, and to develop mentoring programmes for novice teachers, in particular.

In the South African case study, there was evidence of some best practices in the implementation of Education White Paper 6 on inclusion. For example, the key support levers proposed in the Paper − the Special School as Resource Centre (SSRC), the Full-service School (FSS), the District-based Support Team (DBST) and the Institution-Level Support Team (ILST) − are engaging with the goal of creating supportive, caring, inclusive schools and communities and addressing contextual barriers to learning and participation.

For instance, the SSRC is committed to quality education for its learners. Staff engage in fundraising initiatives to address the shortage of specialised learning materials and equipment. The key focus of teachers and school leadership is ensuring quality education for their learners. Lesson observations and document analysis revealed quality teaching and learning, and high academic achievement outcomes.

Across the case study schools, the Learning Support Educators (LSEs) attached to the DBST are doing sterling work in building partnerships, teacher professional development, supporting the ILST, networking, etc. The support structures are building networks and partnerships to harness human and social capital. Powerful in the data is the reflexive, grounded nature of the responses by school management, the LSEs and teachers. However, all participants in these initiatives stated that there was urgent need for support in terms of funding, and material and human resources to facilitate the work that is emerging. The SSRC cannot fulfil its role as a resource centre for the reason that no funding has been allocated for this new facet of its work.



Figure 6: Prof Nithi Muthukrishna, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

4.1 PROF JOHN VOLMINK, MIET AFRICA

Prof John Volmink's paper, *Teacher Development for Inclusion and Democracy*, drew on the findings of the three-country case studies to illuminate implications of the research in the three-country contexts for teacher development. He began by drawing attention to the contradiction that IE is about creating and nurturing a socially just society, and yet the cultures and practices in many schooling contexts present serious challenges for inclusive and democratic practices. He drew attention to the three case-study findings that learners' sense of wellbeing and acceptance is adversely affected by the pervasive culture of bullying, an inordinate focus on quantifiable outcomes, and the prevailing deficit discourses. The question Volmink considered was: How can we together help build a teacher development programme for inclusion?

Volmink discussed what he envisages as some of the barriers to the implementation of IE related to teacher professional development. He identified these as the fragmentation in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) system (IE is located on the periphery rather than at the core of ITE programmes), an absence of commonly agreed-upon professional standards for teachers, an inadequate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) system, and the lack of induction programmes for beginning teachers. He stated further that for an inclusive system teachers need

to be able to make informed professional judgement driven by professional rather than by a craft culture only. He explained that the case studies affirm the critical role of teachers in developing inclusive schools as they are not merely policy compliant but enactors and enablers of policy.

Volmink stressed the need for teachers with a sense of agency and reflexivity in their practice who are equipped with professional knowledge (head), professional practice (hand) and professional engagement and commitment (heart). In this regard, he reaffirmed the words of the scholar and academic, Christopher Day who asserted that:

> the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives. (Day 1999:4)

Volmink drew attention to these important insights about teachers as policy implementers, and the implications for teacher professional development:

- Teachers need to understand how context can shape their agency and who they are as teachers.
- Teacher development programmes need to explore creative pedagogies to engage learners in troubling, deep-seated assumptions, ideologies, values that shape their understandings of inclusion and constructions of difference.
- Curriculum differentiation is a key component to include across all methods modules and CPD programmes.



Figure 7: Prof John Volmink, MIET Africa

- A values education-orientation component in teacher education programmes is of vital importance to engage learners in issues of personal and social morality, and how this shapes their responses to diversity.
- Building social capital to create inclusive schools is a skill teachers need to be equipped with – building networks, civic engagement, a local identity, and a sense of belonging underpinned by relations of trust, reciprocal help and support.

4.2 MY JOURNEY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – LUAN SWANEPOEL

Mr Luan Swanepoel, a young adult with Down Syndrome and self-advocate of the Down Syndrome Association of Tshwane, made a presentation on his experiences in mainstream primary and secondary schools. He emphasised the value of participating in all aspects of the curriculum, even though he only partially achieved the academic outcomes. He explained that his learning experiences in the mainstream prepared him more effectively for working in the open labour market. Today he works for an engineering firm and is socially well adjusted.

Personal accounts of successful inclusion such as this could be effectively used in teacher orientation and advocacy programmes.



Figure 8: Mr Luan Swanepoel with other workshop delegates

5. Summary of debates from the four commissions

In this section, a brief overview is provided of the debates that emerged from the four commissions that engaged in small groups during the workshop. The focus of the commissions was:

1. Inclusive teaching and learning and curriculum access
2. Implications of IE for teacher professional development
3. Implications of IE for systemic and institutional development
4. Implications of IE for education policy and implementation.

The important issues highlighted in the commissions are discussed below:

- The commissions identified teacher professional development as one of the crucial barriers to IE policy implementation. Teachers in regular schools lack knowledge on how to identify and address barriers to learning in their subject areas and day-to-day classroom practice. Teachers in special schools lack specialised knowledge in several key areas of disability, but most critically in the fields of education for visual impairment, deaf and hard of hearing, autism, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy and communication disorders. District officials lack skills and knowledge to support schools and teachers to manage and effectively implement inclusive education in schools.
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa are failing in their endeavour to integrate knowledge about inclusive practice into their teacher education courses as a core component of all phases of teaching. Where such training exists, it is an elective area of specialisation. Furthermore there are no higher education institutions that currently offer specialisation courses in the area of disability, with the exception of deaf education.
- The reskilling of teachers and personnel for an inclusive system at all levels is needed urgently, to change attitudes and mind-sets. This can be achieved through local structures such as the DBST, ILST, CBST, etc. IE must be situated in context by engaging with contextual needs within schools and their communities.
- Teacher education and professional development needs to be given greater priority. At initial teacher-education level, IE competencies (e.g. curriculum differentiation) must be infused into all existing ITE programmes. Continuing teacher development on IE should include qualification- and non-qualification-based programmes. Further Volmink stressed that registration of teachers by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) must be dependent on knowledge of diversity teaching.

- Action research is seen as valuable to initiate, reflect on, monitor and support change. Further, it may be a vehicle through which teachers and other stakeholders are challenged to question their own values and assumptions around issues of diversity.
- In all the commissions, the delegates raised the need for an infused approach to inclusion across all government departments, education sectors and departments at national, provincial and district levels. Further, there has to be a shared understanding of IE so that it can be positioned centrally to all operations.



Figure 9: Delegates at the workshop

- The fact that funding norms for inclusion are not in place is a huge barrier to implementation. There is no funding for mainstream support, for the functioning of the FSSs and SSRCs, or for assistive devices to ordinary schools. Post-provisioning norms are urgently required. Further, there is a need for equity and parity of human resource provision, especially in respect of health professional staff. A weighting system required for full-service and ordinary schools needs to be put in place. There is also a need for monitoring the implementation of the Principle of Universal Design as outlined in the Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure – it was pointed out that 95% of schools in South Africa are not accessible to learners with physical disabilities. Further, delegates

indicated that the DBE hostel policy does not include a policy for special schools. Also, national learner transport policy does not include provision for disability.



Figure10: Ms Marie Schoeman, DBE, Mr Suren Govender, Chief Director, Curriculum Implementation and Monitoring, DBE, Prof John Volmink, MIET Africa

- The implementation of IE requires monitoring and accountability mechanisms, across provinces and districts. In Botswana, the Disability Monitoring Desk in the Presidency has a stringent monitoring programme. Current legislation requires more focus on the protection of the right to quality education, not merely physical access. There is an urgent need for enforceable policies to compel provinces to implement the national policies.
- Although current legislation such as the South African Schools Act of 1996 and Education White Paper 6 have clauses that align with the principles and imperatives of IE, 'let out' clauses such as if practicably possible are barriers to inclusion. Further, implementation systems to enable the realisation of learner rights to quality education are lacking, for example, in respect of the monitoring of curriculum exemptions, School Governing Body representation, and admission to special schools.
- Although the National Curriculum Statements have inclusion embedded within them as a key principle, there is a lack of clarity on how to differentiate, straddle, manage pacing, etc. to accommodate diverse needs.
- Curriculum differentiation and differentiated assessment strategies are key to curriculum access for learners. Barriers to a responsive curriculum include teachers often not being qualified to teach the allocated learning area, inflexible content, inability of teachers to plan authentic learning experiences and assessment tasks linked to real life situations, and lack of teamwork which can enable creative, innovative teaching. Teachers need to be equipped with theory and strategies to enable multi-level and multi-grade approaches to teaching and curriculum differentiation.

- Crucial to curriculum access is early identification and intervention, and the creation of high quality teaching and learning at all schools, both special schools and regular schools. The limitations that schools suffer in respect of infrastructure, curriculum resources, learning materials and support materials, were raised as a critical issue in the goal of curriculum access. IE becomes mere rhetoric and cannot happen if these barriers are not addressed. There is also an urgent need to strengthen DBSTs and ILSTs to enable these structures to play a role in achieving a responsive curriculum for all learners, for example building capabilities, solution-focused approaches, teacher and learner resiliency, and innovative and creative pedagogies.
- The potential of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for teacher growth needs to be explored. The PLC hinges on simultaneous collaboration between key stakeholders, such as students, teachers, and administrators, in learning about inclusion, and can lead to the development of a collective vision and approach to inclusion in local school contexts.
- Delegates agreed that there is an urgent need for the establishment of a national and regional Alliance for Inclusive Education – which must have transversal representation at every level, from national and provincial to regional and local school levels. This structure would comprise a multi-sectoral network of agencies and organisations such as the Disabled People's Organisations, parent organisations, civil society organisations, the South African Council of Teachers, etc.
- Delegates called for closer collaboration between various sectors of government, including the Departments of Welfare, Social Welfare, Health, Correctional Services, Labour, Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, and Transport, to achieve the imperative that every child matters. Strong transversal teams working in schools must become a reality to address socio-educational issues such as child abuse, corporal punishment in schools, bullying and violence. Currently the process is extremely fragmentary and hence not sustained.

5.1 MR HAROON MAHOMED, DIRECTOR, TEACHER DEVELOPMENT, DBE

At the close of Day 1 of the workshop, Mr Haroon Mahomed presented the way forward in a paper titled, Developing Communities of Practice. The focus of the paper was on the notion of PLCs and the implications for the building of inclusive schools and communities.

Mohammed began by interrogating the notion of PLCs, and pointing out that in essence they were communities that provide the setting and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers, school managers and subject advisors to participate collectively in determining their own

developmental trajectories, and to set up activities that would drive their professional development. PLCs involve an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better schooling outcomes for learners.

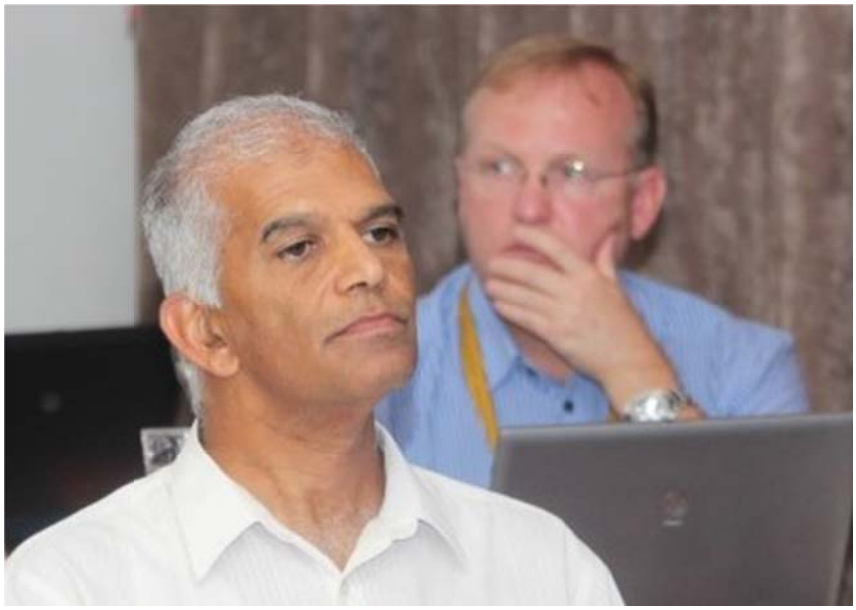


Figure 11: Mr Haroon Mahomed, Director of Continued Professional Teacher Development and Mr Gerrit Coetzee, Director of Initial Teacher Education, DBE

Mohamed argued that PLCs work on the premise that learning happens best in social settings and that professionals learn better from co-professionals working in the same or similar areas. Further, PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators. PLCs provide opportunities for stakeholders across a school system to learn and think together about how to improve their schools and their practice. Hence, they are important for the creation of inclusive schools and communities of practice.

Drawing on international experience, Mohamed stated that PLCs have the potential to enhance the professional culture within a school district in four key areas. They can:

- Build the productive relationships that are required to collaborate, partner, reflect on, and act to carry out a school-improvement programme
- Engage educators at all levels in collective, consistent, and context-specific learning
- Address inequities in teaching and learning opportunities by supporting teachers who work with students requiring the most assistance
- Promote efforts to improve results in terms of school and system culture, teacher practice, and student learning.

These four areas are the key to the teacher development for an inclusive and democratic education system. Participants in PLCs share common values and beliefs such as caring deeply about learning, feeling free to take risks, challenging one another and raising the expectations of everyone, respecting and valuing perspectives other than their own, building relational trust, seeking better practices, and continually building capacity of each member to work more smartly.

Mohamed's presentation suggests that PLCs can be a powerful strategy to build equitable, inclusive and democratic schools in which all learners can participate fully and succeed. PLCs could enable stakeholders to develop a profile of an inclusive school, gain a better understanding of inclusion and its vision. They can engage members in interrogating school cultures and educational practices, build a plan of action to constantly monitor inclusion/exclusion, and work towards school improvement.



Figure 12: Mr Enoch Rabotapi, Acting Chief Director, Teacher Professional Development, DBE

6. Concluding reflections

The workshop deliberations provided important insights that are of significance for the development of inclusive schools and communities in SADC countries. Some of these are discussed below.

Inclusion is a complex concept, and the ways in which complex local meanings are shaped by historical, cultural, political, and economic forces needs examination. The propagation of a universal notion of inclusion and IE suggests narrow notions of schools and their diverse communities. Such notions need to be disrupted. It must be conceded that inclusive models and practices will have limited similarity from context to context because of the heterogeneity of national socio-cultural contexts. There is little doubt also that local IE agendas will vary in terms of learner populations, the political will of education departments and other related government departments, funding mechanisms, the nature of resources and professional training in education institutions to support the required educational services, the envisaged outcomes, and the processes with which agendas are implemented.

In most SADC countries, including Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, there is political consensus on the need to adopt the global IE agenda. However, the critical question of how it is achieved and the degree to which a deep and sustained commitment to inclusiveness exists in government policy and practice is contentious.

The key question the national workshop has raised is: If education is seen as a human right, what mechanisms should be in place to enable all children to access this right? For example, are there issues of access, capacity, political power of families, communities and learners and the fundamental purpose of education contested in local contexts and in what ways are these manifested?



Figure 13: Workshop delegates

Any North/South collaboration project, such as the Teaching for Inclusion and Democracy: Partner-driven North/South collaboration on Inclusive Education involving Sweden, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, must occur within a comparative framework so that knowledge can be generated that illuminates contradictions and tensions in local implementation of global neo-liberal agendas. The challenge is: How do local and global influences shape the meanings of IE and the priorities across national contexts? Kozleski, Artiles, Fletcher, Engelbrecht (2009) suggest that there is a need for a cultural historical lens through which researchers, educationists, and government can explore how cultural practices, history, and context mediate the ways that families, teachers, and administrators negotiate and navigate IE. The case studies in the three countries and the debates at the national workshop reflected stories of localised knowledge and experiences that can inform and shape IE practice in significant ways. These stories must be listened to and responded to by government.

Action research may be a valuable tool in achieving sustainable IE through the cycles of inquiry, reflection and meaning-making that inform school transformation and extend teachers' knowledge bases and practices. Action research can also illuminate the strengths in local practices. Universalising policies such as EFA silences local knowledge and practice in favour of global agendas that may not benefit the ecologies of local communities. For example, disability is socially constructed in diverse ways in local communities.

The country case studies, debates and presentations at the workshop suggest the potential of PLCs as a collective enterprise to promote and sustain the learning of professionals, and foster and build democratic, inclusive schools and communities. Learning in the context of professional communities involves working together towards a common understanding of a vision, concepts and practices. The building of social capital, particularly networks and connections, within school communities can occur through PLCs.

Finally, in 2007 South Africa ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2008), which introduces a new dispensation for learners with disabilities. Article 24 makes provision for the following:

- Children with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live, and no person with a disability can be excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability.
- People with disabilities should receive the support they need within the general system which should offer 'reasonable accommodation' of the individual's requirements:
- Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

The ratification of the Convention poses a huge challenge to ITE. It becomes imperative that all teachers have skills in applying reasonable accommodation in fully inclusive environments. It also requires more specialist training in areas of teaching for learners with visual impairment, deaf and hard of hearing learners, and learners with autism and communication disorders. Thus, it should be a national priority that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach inclusively.

7. Recommendations for immediate actions to be taken by the DBE

- A Community of Professional Practice should be established as a sub-committee of the HEDCOM Committee on Curriculum Management and Teacher Development to explore ways in which to integrate all aspects of IE practice in ITE, continuing professional teacher development and Action Research.
- A National Alliance for Inclusive Education must be established with regional chapters in which there will be transversal representation from a multi-sectoral network of agencies and organisations such as Disabled People's Organisations, parent organisations, civil society organisations; the South African Council of Teachers, etc.
- Current legislation and policy must be reviewed and strengthened to be in line with the stipulations of Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- The way in which learners are screened and assessed for admission to ordinary and special schools must be reviewed at all levels to ensure that barriers to access and negative attitudes do not contribute to the exclusion of learners who are already vulnerable.
- The strategy for the institutionalisation of curriculum differentiation must be a central focus of the further implementation of IE. All subject advisors must be skilled to guide teachers on how to respond to diversity in the classroom.
- There must be inter-branch collaboration to ensure that the key structures introduced by Education White Paper 6, namely DBSTs and SBSTs are strengthened to ensure the effective implementation of the policy.

References

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: NATIONAL WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Education for democracy in an inclusive education system workshop

2 - 3 DECEMBER 2013, SOL PLAATJE HOUSE, 222 STRUBEN STREET, PRETORIA

Date	Time	Activity	Facilitator
Day 1: 2 Dec	08h00–09h30	REGISTRATION	
	09h30–10h00	National Anthem Welcoming remarks Purpose of the meeting	Sign Language Choir Transoranje School for the Deaf Mr SP Govender Mr E Rabotapi
	10h00–10h30	Developing a common understanding of Inclusive Education	Panellists: Prof Rolf Helldin Prof J Volmink
	10h30–11h00	Reconceptualising Inclusive Education	Dr Moses Simelane
Tea: 11h00-11h30			
	11h30–12h00	Discussion	
	12h00–13h00	Presentations of SIDA-funded Case Study Research reports	- Namibia Country Team - Botswana Country Team - SA Country Team
Lunch: 13h00–13h45 - Video clips			
	13h45–14h00	Words of encouragement	Ambassador Anders Hagelberg, Embassy of Sweden
	14h00–14h20	Keynote address	Minister Angie Motshekga
	14h20–14h50	'My experience in mainstream education'	Mr Luan Swanepoel, Down Syndrome Self Advocate
	14h50–15h00	Discussion	
Tea break: 15h00–15h15			

Date	Time	Activity	Facilitator
	15h15–15h30	A presentation on Communities of Practice	Mr Haroon Mahomed, DBE
	15h30–18h00	Work sessions: Group 1: Implications for Teacher Development Group 2: Implications for teaching and learning in the classroom Group 3: Implications for systemic and institutional development Group 4: Implications for Education Policy and implementation	Group 1 Facilitators: Mr H Mahomed & Ms B Daniels Group 2 Facilitator: Dr S Naicker Group 3 Facilitator: Dr Pholoho Morojele Group 4 Facilitator: Ms M Schoeman
Day 2: 6 Dec	08h00–08h30	Recap: Summary of key points/ outcomes from previous day	Haroon Mahomed Dr Moses Simelane
	08h30–09h00	Report-back and discussion: Group 1: Implications for Teacher Development	
	09h00–09h30	Group 2: Implications for teaching and learning in the classroom	
	09h30–10h00	Group 3: Implications for systemic and institutional development	
	10h00–10h30	Group 4: Implications for Education Policy and implementation	
Tea: 10h30-11h00			
	11h00–12h00	Summarising what has been learnt	
	12h00–13h00	The way Forward: Communities of Practice: - How this one will function; - Intended outcomes - Who will take the lead and co-ordinate Closure	

APPENDIX 2: THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP COMMISSIONS

Group 1: Implications for Teacher Development

1. Drawing the research reports of the three countries, what recommendations can be made to strengthen teacher development in inclusive education in:
   (a) Initial teacher education – how to include IE competencies into all existing ITE programmes and how to structure specialised IE ITE programmes
   (b) Continuing teacher development – qualification and non-qualification based programmes
2. Draw up a three (3) year plan in your country for strengthening inclusive education in:
   (a) Initial teacher education
   (b) Continuing teacher development

3.1 How can PLCs support teacher development?

3.2 How can we go about setting up PLCs?
   (a) At national level
   (b) Provincial level
   (c) District level
   (d) School level

Group 2: Implications of Inclusive Education for teaching and learning in the classroom

- How do we organise the curriculum to deal with diversity?
- Which challenges do teachers experience in meeting the curricular needs of diverse learners in terms of:
  - Content
  - Methodology
  - Physical and psycho-social classroom arrangements
  - Assessment
- How should support be strengthened for teachers to effectively respond to diversity in their classrooms (including learners with disabilities) – sharing of best practice, establishing professional learning communities?

Group 3: Implications of IE for Systemic and Institutional Development

- Which are the policies, systems and structures that would facilitate the implementation of inclusive education in a variety of national contexts?
- How to ensure the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in contexts where there are a small number of special schools, shortage of support services, challenging conditions in rural schools and other societal barriers.
- How can we explore best practice in district support services and inclusive education?
- What strategies are needed to facilitate access for out of school children and youth who experience barriers to learning?

Group 4: Implications for Education Policy and Implementation

- What legislative changes are required to strengthen policy implementation?
- Which are the critical partners in ensuring policy implementation?
- How to strengthen inter-government and stakeholder partnerships in ensuring the realisation of inclusive education – examples of practice.

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF DELEGATES

NAMES & SURNAME	ORGANISATION
Minister AM Motshekga	Minister of Basic Education
Prof Linda Chisholm	DBE
Ambassador Anders Hagelberg	Embassy of Sweden
Prof John Volmink	MiET
HM Mweli	DBE
Prof Cynthy Haihambo	Namibia
Dr Inaani L Kahikuate	Namibia
Sylvia Chidunka	Mainstream Foundation
Serefele Molosiwe	University of Botswana
Dr Sourav Mkhopadhyay	Botswana
Beauty Abbey	Botswana: Ministry of Education
Prof Rolf Helldin	Stockholm University
Prof Anbanithi Muthukrishna	UKZN
Dr Pholoho Morojele	UKZN
Thuli Dlamini	MiET Africa
Jude Zah	MiET Africa
Dawn Jones	MiET Africa
Victor Raneen	Embassy of Sweden (Pretoria)
Mohali Soga	JICA
Enoch Rabotapi	DBE
Suren Govender	DBE
Dr Moses Simelane	DBE
Haroon Mahomed	DBE
Dr Sello Galane	DBE
Erna Lubbe	DBE
Ralph Mehl	DBE
Marie Schoeman	DBE
Phindile Ngcobo	DBE
Pule Serero	DBE
Stanton van Schalkwyk	DBE
Lilly Brown	DBE
Mkhuseli Makhathala	DBE
Monkie Chaane	DBE
Kwena Nokeri	DBE

NAMES & SURNAME	ORGANISATION
Rosina Ndlhovu	DBE
Octavia Sithole	DBE
Marie-Louise Samuels	DBE
Enoch Rabotapi	DBE
Vanessa Tefu	DBE
Phumelele Zuma	DBE
Haroon Mahomed	DBE
Lesedi Magano	DBE
Judith Ngobeni	DBE
Susan Mtsweni	DBE
Faith Mmola	DBE
Sandile Mabaso	DBE
Malose Ngoepe	DBE
Letlhogonolo Raborethe	DBE
Mamela Fuzile	DBE
Molly Kutumela	DD
Marietta Sword	DD
Maluta Tshivase	DOH
Mmanoa Tshenye	DSD
Nelson Nkoe	DHET
Simmi Pillay	DWCPD
Benny Palime	DWCPD
Dr Elizabeth Walton	Wits / HESA
Ruth Mampane	University of Pretoria
Andile Mdikaha	UNISA
L Davis	DPSA
Vanessa Dos Santos	Down Syndrome SA
Luan Swanepoel	Down Syndrome Tshwane
Ancella Ramjas	DSSA
Johan Viljoen	NCPPDSA
Sandy Klopper	Autism SA
Cathy Donaldson	Blind SA
Thantshi Masitara	Bridge
Thabisile Levin	Intsatsakusa IE Consultancy
Robyn Bath	Western Cape Inclusive Education
Nyiko Hlekane	SAQA
Selaleo Moloisi	ELRC
Rej Brijraj	SACE

NAMES & SURNAME	ORGANISATION
Ella Mokgalane	SACE
Trishana D Soni	SAALED
Estelle van Schoor	SAALED
Brenda Ndelu	SADTU
Dorothy Zamambatha	SADTU
Tinus du Preez	NAPTOSA
P Mnabe	NATU
M Nel	SAOU
Sanette Jordan	SAOU
Dr Shimane Matabaqe	EMPA &WS
Z Njotini	Eastern Cape PED
B Qaga	Eastern Cape PED
NT Yabo	Eastern Cape PED
Dr T Reddy	Eastern Cape PED
S Maasdorp	Eastern Cape PED
TJZ Mtyida	Eastern Cape PED
Bukelwa Qwelane	Free State PED
MC Liphapang	Free State PED
Benjamin-Modutwane	Free State PED
WF Retief	Free State PED
TY Rapulumo	Free State PED
DE Msibi	Free State PED
KT Motuni	Free State PED
NSS Mochoari	Free State PED
LM Mofokeng	Free State PED
MA Kobuoe	Free State PED
DA Potsane	Free State PED
B le Roux	Free State PED
Brennand Smith	Gauteng PED
Rhulani Mabaso	Gauteng PED
Deshni Naidu	Gauteng PED
Zakes Dlamini	Gauteng PED
Tsakane Baloyi	Gauteng PED
Enid Smith	Gauteng PED
Hanlie Swanepoel	Gauteng PED, Tshwane South District
LW Leshilo	Limpopo PED
AD Mojapelo	Limpopo PED
J Mgiba	Mpumalanga PED

NAMES & SURNAME	ORGANISATION
MJ Sebola	Mpumalanga PED
Zelbia Sprang	North West PED
Gerty Mtotoba	North West PED
Lucy Tong	North West PED
Lucia Napo	North West PED
Pieter Smal	North West PED
Sophia Sekati	North West PED
Marubini Lukhaimane	North West PED
Gloria Bodumele	Northern Cape PED
Margaret Solomon	Northern Cape PED
Deidree Benjamin	Northern Cape PED
Daniels Berenice	Western Cape PED
Dr Naicker	Western Cape PED
Du Toit Stegmann	Western Cape PED
Gloria Monare	Icon SA