

Exploring Effective Teaching Practices for Inclusion: A Case of a South African Secondary School

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ABSTRACT The South African education system has undergone several changes at different levels since the advent of democracy in 1994, yet it still bears the hallmarks of the fragmented education system that was based on the policy of apartheid. Although Inclusive education has been adopted as a way of promoting access to education for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development, challenges persist. In this paper the researcher explored classroom teaching practices that are effective in promoting inclusion in South African secondary school, based on a case study in which a collaborative action research method was adopted. The research was qualitative and non-positivistic, and assumed a critical emancipatory approach. Data were collected from 15 teachers and a focus group composed of 12 learners. Various data-collection methods were employed, namely participant observation, interviews, focus group interviews with learners and research diaries. The researcher employed the principle of group interpretative analysis together with the teachers to analyse data and arrive at conclusions. Furthermore, findings indicate that knowledge about practices of inclusion is influenced by context of each school and the teachers' need to collaborate and reflect on practice in order to develop practices that enhance inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1994 the South African education system has undergone transformation. In 1997, the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) published a report on the quality of education for all, with special reference to overcoming the barriers to learning and development (Department of Education 1997; Khothule and Hay 2013). The report constituted the one of the steps among many in transforming the educational needs of all learners and moving towards inclusive education (Department of Education 1997:1).

Despite this move, some teachers in South Africa have little or no skills to deal inclusively with learners with additional abilities and needs and that there are different ways by which schools implement and conceptualise inclusion (Makoelle 2014). This continues despite the adoption of the ambitious Education White Paper 6 in 2001 (Department of Education 2001).

The researcher served in the education department in South Africa for over 15 years in various capacities, including teacher, Head of Department (HOD) of natural sciences, deputy principal and principal of a secondary school. Having been in the education system where

teachers are mostly not involved in change initiation and design, but rather required to implement policies without having participated in their development, this study provided the opportunity for teachers and the researcher to reflect on their role as change agents towards inclusive education.

The aim of the study was to answer to the following research questions: *How can the teaching practices in classrooms of South African secondary schools be more inclusive?*

The following sub-questions were stated:

- ♦ How are the notions of inclusion in a South African context conceptualised?
- ♦ Which classroom teaching practices are known internationally to be effective in promoting inclusion?
- ♦ Which of those effective classroom teaching practices are applicable to the South African context?
- ♦ How can change from current state towards inclusion be initiated?

While the study draws lessons from the international context (due to available international literature), its relevance to education research is that of forming the basis from which to develop inclusive practices within the context of the education system of a developing and transforming country such as South Africa. Findings of this study made an important contribution

and serve as guidelines for inclusive teaching in an emerging economy.

The international literature on classroom teaching practices and strategies effective in promoting inclusion evolves in two dichotomous positions. Firstly, there is a view that in order to promote classroom inclusion, teachers have to adopt specific strategies and teaching practices (Makoelle 2013). According to the European Agency for Developments in Special Needs Education (2003), cooperative learning, collaborative teaching, collaborative problem solving, heterogeneous grouping and effective teaching are among the practices that were found to be effective in promoting inclusion in European schools. Similarly, the work of Walton et al. (2009) supports the significance of collaborative learning as an inclusive strategy in South African classrooms. Various authors suggest different strategies and practices for promoting inclusion in the classroom. For example, improving learner participation through planning learner-individualised education programmes (Lorenz 2002); determining the needs of learners using computerised curriculum-based measurement (Florian 2007); using behavioural teaching alongside interactive teaching (Farrel 1997); emphasising interactive analysis processes during teaching (Nind et al. 2003); fostering teacher cooperation through team, co- and collaborative teaching (Thousand et al. cited in Lorenz 2002; Kruger and Yorke 2010); the importance of classroom-relationships (Gross 2002) and parental support (Florian 2007).

Secondly, while recognising the significance of adopting practices that promote inclusion, Ainscow (1999) and others hold that inclusion in the classroom has to be driven by teachers' creativity and innovation. In his work *Moving classrooms*, Ainscow (1999: 35) says: "Indeed my experience over the years leads me to believe that in most schools the expertise needed in order to teach all pupils effectively is usually available amongst the teaching staff".

These views continue to influence the way inclusive education is conceptualised worldwide. The issue of available resources plays a pivotal role in either adopting strategies (with the use of technology) or encouraging teachers to be creative in designing an inclusive teaching approach (Khothule and Hay 2013).

In South Africa, the implementation of inclusive education comes amid the process of phas-

ing in outcomes-based education (OBE) the form of education based on the assumption that learners have to construct and discover knowledge for themselves, which holds the same assumptions as inclusive education, that all learners can learn and succeed and that they can direct own learning (Kruger 1998; Lemmer and Van Wyk 2010; Makoelle 2013).

In a poorly-resourced country like South Africa, there are serious doubts about how successful inclusion could be in mainstream schools (Donalds et al. 2008; Pillay and Di Terlizzi 2009), therefore extraordinary measures are required for teachers to be in a position to change their beliefs and practices and implement full inclusion (which is education responding to needs of all learners).

According to Engelbrecht and Green (2001), South African teachers have developed a resistant attitude towards change because of the autocratic style of change implementation during Apartheid. The main question therefore is how can teachers be assisted to change their attitudes from traditional (separate education based on classification of learners into categories of perceived special needs) methods of teaching to inclusive teaching (which focuses rather on providing support to learners in a similar pedagogic space or environment)?

Various approaches to teacher change have been used in different contexts. Developing communities of practice through participatory (collaborative) action research is one approach known for its involvement of teachers in reflecting on their teaching practices with a purpose of improving them (Ainscow et al. 2006). The purpose of action research is to bring about change and to empower individuals or groups perceived to be disempowered (O'Hanlon 2003; Makoelle 2012). Teachers are willing to accept and implement change when they are involved in the initiation, planning, implementation and monitoring processes (Fullan 2001). Collaborative action research is a strategy to get teachers together to reflect on and be critical about their practice to improve it. This is enhanced by developing a "community of practice", a process where individuals become participants in a collective community, engaging in a practice through which meaning is negotiated by members from their historic cultural context that shapes their identity (Wenger 1998). Therefore, the role of the researcher is to create conditions under which prac-

tioners can test theories of practice for learning-purposes (Reason and Bradbury 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The research was a collaborative action research study of a secondary school where the researcher was the principal. The study was initiated by the researcher, but he worked with 15 teachers and a focus group of 12 learners as a community of enquiry. The community of enquiry therefore jointly determined the purpose of the study which was to explore practices of inclusion. Action research was conceptualised by Lewin (1952) and developed further by Kolb (1984), Carr and Kemmis (1986) and others (White, 2005). This is the form of research conducted by the practitioner to reflect on their practice in order to improve it (Makoelle 2012). Because teachers thought there was a need for them to reflect on their practice in relation to inclusion, the action research method was more appropriate. This collaborative action research approach where participants of research become co-researchers was instrumental in their empowerment hence the critical emancipatory approach (Escobedo et al. 2014). Emancipatory in a sense that participants are able to critique, and reflect on their practice for improvement (Makoelle 2010).

The school was chosen because it served a previously disadvantaged community with a student population with diverse socio-economic, linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds which presented barriers to learning. The position of the researcher at the time as the principal made it easily accessible. The school is one of the models of the new South Africa; it has characteristics of both previously disadvantaged and advantaged schools in the sense that while it had good physical facilities it had inherited a bad lock of learners with serious learning barriers drawn from its diversity alluded to earlier. Because of its relevance to the new educational dispensation in terms of student composition, the research results could easily be generalised to other schools. The research process took the form of collaborative action research. Firstly, teachers acknowledged that their practices were less inclusive and therefore aimed to improve their practice in this regard. Teachers were collaborative in that teachers worked together and supported each other and jointly defined inclu-

sive education, inclusive teaching and inclusive classrooms, identified practices of inclusion through observation, adopted identified practices in their classes, determined the effect on inclusive teaching and learning and finally drew conclusions on those practices that were effective in the context of their school. The process was critical in that the teachers questioned and challenged each others' existing notions of practice, thereby resulting in the development of their own local theory about contextually effective inclusion-strategies.

The sample of 15 teachers, who were conveniently sampled in that they voluntarily took part in the study, was spread as follows: junior teachers (0 to 10 years of teaching experience), specialist teachers (10 to 20 years of teaching experience) and senior specialists (20 and more years of teaching experience). The Representative Council of Learners (RCL) (20 peer-elected learners who represent all grades to look at matters of learner interest) took part as a learner-perspective focus group.

The research process was a four-stage action research study consisting of the following stages: planning, observation, action and reflection. These were planning (during which objectives for CAR will be determined), observation (current practice observed), action (new practices put into action) and reflection (reflecting on CAR processes) (see Fig. 1).

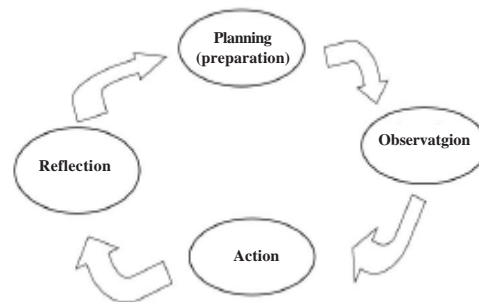


Fig. 1. Action research cycle

Data was interpreted in phases as the research progressed. Group interpretative meetings were held after each phase to analyse data. Bryman and Burgess (1994: 6) explain the descriptive or interpretive method of data analysis as one that seeks to establish a coherent

and inclusive account of a culture from the point of view of those being researched. The meetings took the form of a dialogue.

The transcripts were jointly read (from our minute book/diaries and observation schedules). A spreadsheet was used to classify similar patterns of data into categories from which a theme were derived. Quotes were then assigned to themes, and then patterns to derive meaning and interpretations were determined.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role was to be part of the research team as an equal partner. The researcher, however, had to give purpose and direction for the study to start because teachers were doing this kind of research for the first time. At the start the researcher dealt with ethical issues. During the first stage of action research teachers requested that the researcher give a presentation on current research literature on inclusion. The researcher thought it would be easy for teachers to engage freely with their practices during our discussions, however that was not the case, the researcher initiated the discussions. The researcher kept the teacher's choice records of research proceedings and allowed teacher access to them whenever it was needed.

RESULTS

The inductive analysis of data yielded the following themes:

Making the Teaching in the South African Classrooms More Inclusive

The empirical study has found that while there was an attempt on part of the teachers to implement inclusive education, there appeared to be challenges in terms of how this needed to be done. Firstly the understanding of the concepts of inclusion among the teachers was varied and not uniformly articulated (Makoelle 2014). Teachers were unsure about whether or not their practices were inclusive or not. Moreover the responses of the learners indicated that the practices of teachers were not adequately inclusive.

The practices that were applied in their teachings were not necessarily enhancing inclusion. Furthermore teachers were not collaborating and

there seemed to be an absence of a convergence of strategies on part of teachers to make teaching more inclusive (Makoelle 2013). Therefore, it is appropriate to argue that the absence of these afore-mentioned factors in the South African context poses a hindrance to any attempt to make the teaching more inclusive, so it suffices for one to suggest that these aspects need be prioritized if progress was to be made in that regard.

So, in view of the above mentioned assertions, to make teaching more inclusive, one would therefore argue that teachers would have to curtail their divergent views on inclusion in favour of a coherent and well articulated conceptualization of inclusion within the context of their school. A culture of reflective practice would have to be initiated and learners be made to participate in determining ways of making them included in the pedagogic discourse. Practices will have to be developed in relation to context and teachers will have to collaborate in developing their inclusive practices.

Well, what is known from the reviewed international literature about making pedagogy more inclusive is that the notion of inclusion in other parts of the world are enhanced, firstly because inclusion is clearly and contextually conceptualized; teachers are reflective and work together in developing practices (Ainscow 2010). However the difference is that this is not the case in South African classrooms, therefore one can conclude that there is a need firstly to transform the attitudes and beliefs of teachers to change the culture of how things are done.

Conceptualizing Inclusive Education, Inclusive Classroom and Inclusive Teaching

The study has indicated that there are various factors influencing the conceptualization of inclusion. Therefore, in this section the researcher discusses how the notion of inclusion (with reference to inclusive education, inclusive teaching and inclusive class) is conceptualized, then draws lessons from the study to substantiate how a contribution to the understanding of the concept inclusion has been made to both international and national literatures on inclusion.

Inclusion as Global Discourse

The study has confirmed that in South Africa, inclusion is seen as a human and political

right that inter alia conceptualized within political transformation agenda of the country from apartheid to democracy (DoE 2001; White and Cooper 2014). The utterances of teachers have emphasized the dominance of a political discourse in the articulation of what constitutes inclusion (Wright and Stickley 2013). Therefore one would argue that any attempt to define the concept one must draw from the dominant discourse prevalent because the discourse provides the framework from which notions of inclusion are derived. Therefore one may further conclude that any attempt to define inclusion in the South African context must take into consideration the dominant discourse because that creates a lens by which inclusion is viewed. So, inclusion is viewed from the political lens and understood to be part of the entire transformation of the society. This is understood given the history of exclusion in the past South African political system.

While according to the reviewed literature various discourses influencing the conceptualization of inclusion are found, these discourses shape and map out a framework through which the concepts of inclusion are defined and understood.

However, it suffices to maintain that other discourses are not as relatively prevalent as the one of politics in influencing inclusion in South Africa. Therefore they might not strongly feature in the conceptualization of inclusion.

Historical-political Context

Furthermore, the notion of inclusion in South Africa goes beyond just the provision of education, it transcend into the process of altering the history of exclusion that was entrenched in the country by the apartheid system (Makoelle 2012). For example at the beginning the researcher has e referred to his schooling background as an example to illustrate how education was in the past used to perpetuate exclusion and entrench government policy of separate development for various population groups. This notion was evident in the study as teachers viewed the study as part of a process to emancipate themselves from the oppressive practices of the past; the same was also applicable to the learners. Therefore unlike in other countries the conceptualization of inclusion is embedded in dealing with the legacy of the past political dispensation. Therefore, in view of these aspects inclu-

sion is viewed as a tool to rewrite history again, to redress the past imbalances and empower those marginalized. It is therefore appropriate to argue that the conceptualization of inclusion and developing inclusive education practices must take cognisance of the historical-political context of South Africa as the bases from which it should be derived.

Comparing the above with international literatures from other countries, it is appropriate to suggest that the notion of inclusion is an idea developed to ensure that education is accessible and equitably provided to all learners (Ainscow 2013). However while its conceptualization in South Africa came amidst political changes towards democracy in 1994, and therefore mapped within the framework of a broader process of political redress in South Africa, it is significant to caution that a distinction must be drawn between state of envisaged political change in reality and state of political change in rhetorical political terms which never materialises. The little coherence about what inclusion meant by teachers in this study was evidence of the fact that policies has not translated into practical benefits but have been a political window dressing that subtly maintained the status quo.

Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

In this study various beliefs and attitudes among teachers were witnessed. These include among others less participatory mood, lack of initiation, non reflective tendencies and being authoritarian to learners (Makoelle 2014). Firstly, the challenge of non participation hinders the processes of developing inclusive practices, therefore it suffices to maintain that in South Africa the level of teacher participation will enhance the speed and rate at which inclusive practices could be developed and implemented in schools. Secondly, the inability of teachers to take initiative disturbs their ability to be creative along practices of inclusion as they do not think out of the box to unearth innovative practices. Thirdly, the non-reflective tradition suppresses the potential improvement of practice as teachers cling dogmatically to past experiences and uses those as their points of reference. Lastly the authoritarian attitudes towards learners hinder effective learning and compromises learner intuition and initiative because teachers act as the sole sources of knowledge which compromises prior knowledge possessed by learners.

During this study teachers exhibited these beliefs and attitudes which formed the basis of how they would understand the concept of inclusion. The evidence from study suggests that teachers find it difficult to make a shift from their current beliefs about what constitutes best inclusive teaching practice (Makoelle 2014). The beliefs are usually the result of the kind of training and experiences they have undergone. For example teachers exhibited a culture of non involvement in policy development, this impact negatively on how well the practices of inclusion are developed. Therefore it would be in order to argue that in the conceptualization of inclusion teacher beliefs and attitudes have to firstly be transformed which is a challenge in the implementation of inclusion currently in South Africa because attitudes and beliefs have not changed. Internationally, according to the reviewed literature, similarly to what transpired in this study when practices of inclusion are developed teachers also show some beliefs and attitudes which hamper the implementation of inclusion; however the difference is the nature and context of beliefs and attitudes in South African schools makes it unique, thus making it difficult to borrow approaches to changing such from other countries because of the past history of exclusion due to apartheid system.

Context as a Prerequisite for Inclusion

Context seems to play an important role as far as the understanding of inclusion is concerned (Makoelle 2013). This became clear in the study for example the practices identified by teachers were similar to those found in the international literature however the difference is that for such practices to work in a South African context had to be adapted and made relevant to local context. Therefore it would be appropriate to claim that the conceptualization of inclusion is not transferable between contexts but needs to be derived from local theories.

In the international literature several contexts by which inclusion is conceptualized were discussed (Ainscow 2013). These varied contexts derive from the dominant discourses underpinning the aetiology of the concept of inclusion and often are based regionally or in a particular country. This makes the conceptualization of inclusion different and therefore inclusion becomes a context dependent notion. However the

trend in many studies is the tendency to attempt and universalise the practices regardless of context, for instance some countries have used the index of inclusion developed in a UK (Ainscow and Booth 2002) context with different background, therefore based on the finding of this study the researcher would argue against such a practice because the developing practices of inclusion in different contexts may not necessarily work in other contexts making it difficult to talk about universal way by which practices of inclusion can be used.

Education Structure and Policy Context

Firstly, the study has found that in South Africa although there has been some shift in the policy framework from exclusion to inclusion, very little shift has been registered from special needs education in terms of the practices of inclusion (Makoelle 2012, 2013). The conceptualization of inclusion as alluded to earlier is still highly influenced by special needs education, for example some of the concepts used by teachers during the study were evidence in this regard. Therefore one can argue that although South African policies advocate inclusion little has translated into actual shift from special needs education to inclusion. Therefore in developing practices of inclusion a more hands-on (practical) approach is required than mere policy rhetoric.

However what is known from the international literature reviewed is that in defining the concept of inclusion the philosophies of normalization, integration, mainstreaming and special needs education were influential (Nkoane 2006). All the philosophies at a point in moment determined how inclusion was understood. Therefore the policy context of inclusion in parts of the world was influenced by defining inclusion within the framework of these ideals, consequently impacting on individual inclusion policies. Given this and what was revealed by this study it is in order to conclude that special needs education still influences how inclusion is implemented in South Africa and that inclusion will need a re-conceptualization away from this line of thought.

Secondly, the way the research site (school) was structured very little change was visible in terms of accommodating diverse learner population. The physical setting was meant for a uniform type of learner population. Therefore the

types of schools in South Africa (research site as an example) seem to be inherently exclusive and fall short of eradicating the prevalence of special needs education, for example not all schools are fully inclusive (research site as example), and there is a handful of school identified as full service schools. The way schools are arranged sought to perpetuate the status quo with regard to the fact that schools are still by nature and operation classified according to the service they ought to provide to the learners which according to this study, stalls the implementation of inclusion in schools. The researcher would therefore suggest that schools be de-classified and that all teachers be trained on how to develop inclusive practices (more on this later).

Similarly, in support of argument above, it is evident that internationally in defining inclusive education a significant emphasis is put on the need to accommodate all learners in the mainstream of education and provide pedagogic support according to the varied educational needs of learners. Furthermore it is clear that any form of segregation (separation) of learners would not constitute an inclusive practice.

Defining Inclusive Teaching and Inclusive Class

As mentioned earlier the study has maintained that the way inclusive teaching is understood by South African teachers is influenced by special needs pedagogy, that they have been trained to adopt. The conceptualization of inclusive pedagogy was simply derived from the medical model, where learning barriers are attributed to the learner rather than looking at how the teacher and his/her pedagogic practice impact on the learning process (Makoelle 2012). The study has shown that there was a tendency on part of the teachers to refer all problems to the perceived learner's inadequacies hence the learners were not regarded as partners during the teaching and learning process.

Relating this to existing international literature reviewed there are two views to inclusive pedagogy, namely, one informed by adopting practices borrowed from special needs education and the other of being creative in developing inclusive practices (Makoelle 2012, 2013). I would therefore posit that South African teachers need the latter approach as the past special needs approach stifles the transition to full inclusion.

It is important to note that an inclusive class goes beyond the physical composition of the class; both the social and pedagogic aspects are interwoven with the physical. However the study has revealed that in the South African context these aspects seem not to be fully given attention as there are still problems in crippling with how they could be interconnected to enhance inclusive environments.

Classroom-teaching Practices that are Known to be Effective in Promoting Inclusive Education

Firstly, with reference to earlier argument the study has confirmed that South African inclusive education has not parted ways with special needs education. The learning barriers seem to be associated with the learner. Hence the practices teachers knew were those from the special needs education background and the practices used were in response to this line of thinking. One would therefore maintain that inclusive education is a reaction to special education and therefore the two should not be equated. Secondly, while the study has also shown that peer tutoring, group work, cooperative and collaborative learning are popular in South African schools; the indication is that inclusion is enhanced when learners collaborate and cooperate during the learning process. Furthermore while peer tutoring, group work, cooperative and collaborative learning are among popular practices perceived to be inclusive (Meijer 2003), the form in which they are applied have to be adapted to local contexts, like it was the case during this project. It is important though, to caution that the application of these practices might not necessarily be inclusive in other contexts.

For instance, in view of the above, the international literature reviewed showed that there are two dimensions from which the practices of inclusion are derived. There is a strong inclination to borrow practices of special need education and apply them for inclusion. On the other hand there is a strong indication from others that special needs strategies are not necessarily inclusive, the advocacy is for teachers to be creative in developing the practices of inclusion (Makoelle 2012, 2013). Therefore the study has confirmed that South African teachers are inclined to the former approach and that to enhance inclusion the latter approach will have to be inculcated.

Thirdly, the study has shown that South African teachers do not collaborate, nor co-teach. This has not contributed positively to the development of inclusion. On the contrary, in the literature we know that in other countries where inclusion has been relatively successful collaboration of teachers is relatively high, however according to the study this was not the case in South Africa and therefore one could argue that non collaboration of teachers is one of the aspects which needed attention in developing practices of inclusion.

The Classroom Teaching Practices That Are Applicable to and Effective in Promoting Inclusion

Earlier mention was made of the fact that practices of inclusion in South Africa are influenced to a large extent by the special needs education background of the education system of the past. However, the study has shown that while South African teachers regard practices such as peer tutoring, collaborative and cooperative learning and group work as inclusive, the problem is how well these practices can be used given the existing culture of non reflection by teachers. In the first instance the study has demonstrated that there is a need to develop a culture of reflection and being critical. So, there cannot be a recipe for inclusive practice the researcher would therefore advocate that rather than giving teachers the practices, rather focus on how teachers in their context can creatively develop practices that could be applicable in their situation. Therefore teachers are strongly cautioned against one size fits all approach.

Assisting Teachers in Adopting Inclusive Teaching Practices in Their Classes, and Evaluate Their Impact on Teaching and Learning

This section discusses the notion of developing inclusive practices into perspective. Firstly, discusses the need for collaboration in developing inclusive practices, then focus on change processes and how implementing change may impact on developing practices of inclusion.

Collaboration as a Prerequisite for Inclusion

In this study it became apparent that the South African teachers are still far from the lev-

els of collaboration with their counterparts in other countries (especially developed countries). This is despite policy requirement of the establishment of School Based Support Teams (SBST) which are by default suppose to be collaborative platforms for teachers to engage in reflective practices to enhance their inclusive practice (Makoelle 2013). Despite this policy requirement the study has shown that no evidence of co teaching or collaboration on part of the teacher existed. Therefore one can argue that for the development of inclusive practices collaboration is very significant, and that in its absence it will be very difficult to fully develop practices of inclusion in South African schools. What was clear in the international literature reviewed was that in other countries where inclusive practices have been developed an emphasis have been on teacher collaboration and that reflective teaching was a corner stone of the success of inclusion (Bigby et al. 2014).

The Role of Change in Developing Inclusive Practices

The study has shown that unlike in other countries (especially developed) where participation of teachers is relatively higher the participation rate of teachers in South Africa seem to be pathetically low (attendances of teachers during the action research project declined from original expression of interest). This is an indication that teachers in South Africa are still hesitant and unsure about how well they can initiate change by themselves and lead through to see its full implementation.

Teachers still look up to outsiders (in this case the researcher) to give guidance about probing their practice and being critical about it. Furthermore teachers in South Africa are not forward about initiating reflective engagements.

The study has also shown that because very little contribution was expected of South African teachers and that mostly they had to implement policies developed elsewhere, their ability to be critical about everything was severely compromised. For instance, while teachers could be fairly qualified, the ability to do reflective and creative analysis of their practice is not clear. Furthermore the struggle against apartheid has entrenched the culture of resistance among teachers and therefore any process of initiating change is viewed politically and might be challenged.

Therefore in this study the community of inquiry was established but in view of the reasons articulated in the previous paragraph, most processes were initiated by the researcher. While teachers were excited about the project it is still not clear whether the excitement was because the project was conducted by their principal or whether they genuinely bought into the idea of improving their practice. Therefore developing practices of inclusion in the South Africa will require high levels of teacher participation, reflective culture and ability to form effective communities of practice.

CONCLUSION

It could be concluded that the conceptualization of inclusion in the school context is influenced by teacher beliefs (such as their past-political involvement in determining their practice) and knowledge about inclusion. That practices of inclusion from the international perspective may not necessarily be applicable to the South African context but will need to be adapted to suite local context. The conceptualization of inclusion has to take into account the context of schools in the south and local theory development about inclusion is in escapable. Unlike internationally the study indicated that collaboration is not prevalent among teacher and learners in South African schools. Therefore collaboration of teachers is pivotal and has to be improved for enhancing reflective practice and developing practices of inclusion. While action research is an appropriate strategy to enhance reflective practice, it presented challenges as far as the sustenance of participation of teachers was concerned and that plans may not necessarily be successful ones put into practice. The form of action research that will be successful in developing inclusive practices will have to firstly attend to issue of improved participation in reflective practices by teachers. The culture of not being reflective and critical about inclusion among South African teachers seemed to be a hindrance to effective action research process. While acknowledging that findings of the study might not be applicable to other contexts it however lays a foundation on how change could be implemented towards developing inclusive practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, the conceptualization of inclusion is derived from the special needs background, sec-

only while the White paper 6 (2001) makes provision for the implementation of inclusion in schools it is very silent on how such practices could be developed, there is an assumption that teachers will adopt a recipe of practices (as suggested in the 2010 guidelines) in their classes and that all these practices will work in all contexts, thirdly that the SBSTs are more diagnostic groups and in no ways are they probing practices with an aim of developing inclusive practices. In view of the above it suffices to suggest the re-conceptualization of inclusion in the White paper 6 away from the special needs approach embedded it, drifting away from the medical model of understanding inclusion. It is also in order to suggest the enacted procedures and guidelines on how teachers can probe their practice and develop practices within their context be put in place away from one size fits all approach evident in current practices.

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