

The State of Inclusion in One South African Primary School: Evidence from the School Principal

Rosemary Chimbala Kalenga¹ and Vitallis Chikoko²

University of KwaZulu-Natal, P. Bag X 03 Ashwood 3605, Republic of South Africa

¹*Telephone: +27 31 260 3175, Fax: +27 31 260 7003, Email: Kalenga@ukzn.ac.za*

²*Telephone: +27 31 260 2639, Fax: +27 31 260 7003, Email: chikokov@ukzn.ac.za*

KEYWORDS Inclusive Education. Transformational Leadership. Asset-Based Approach. Zone of Possibilities. Zone of Impossibilities

ABSTRACT While South Africa has adopted the policy of inclusive education, the researchers' interaction with teachers and school managers suggested that schools face many barriers in this regard. This paper seeks to examine the state of inclusivity in one South African primary school from the point of view of the school principal's experiences of inclusion therein. The researchers purposively selected the school on two bases namely the presence of learners with special learning needs therein and its accessibility to them. The principal expressed willingness to share his experiences with the researchers. Through a case study research design, the researchers conducted a two-part semi-structured interview with the principal. In the first part they investigated the school's biographical information to do with inclusivity. The second part involved the principal's perspectives on how the school fared regarding addressing barriers to achieving inclusivity. The main findings include that the principal felt the school was not coping with implementing the inclusive education policy. He blamed education authorities for lack of support, and major barriers included lack of qualified staff, unsuitable infrastructure and a dearth of relevant equipment. The researchers conclude that all changes in a school will succeed or fail depending on the quality of leadership therein, hence the focus on the principal. The researchers foreground the asset based approach as an ideal lens through which to consider how a school can address its own challenges.