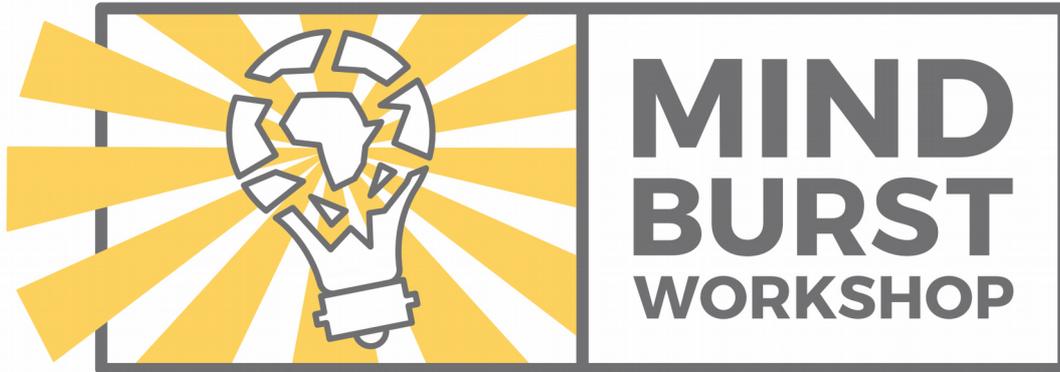# Overcoming legacies of segregation and exclusion - an introduction to Inclusive Education
by André Croucamp (MindBurst Workshop)

This resource is informed by collaborative work between André Croucamp, the British Council, the Department of Basic Education, and UNISA towards the development of *Teaching for All*, a module on Inclusive Education intended for student teachers at South African universities.

Embracing inclusion

Can you recall an experience of being excluded at school?

Maybe other children didn't pick you for their team? Maybe you took longer than other children to complete certain tasks and always felt you were not finished and that if you had more time you could do a better job? Maybe the language of instruction was initially unfamiliar to you? Maybe the teacher was using technologies and teaching aids that you were not familiar with, but the other children were? Maybe you were not allowed to play sport on the school fields because you were not part of an official team, or you didn't have the proper sports kit? Maybe you had been labelled as a "trouble maker" or "stupid" or even "brilliant" because of something you did and the label stuck imprisoning you in that role, reducing all other possibilities? Maybe you always felt awkward because the teacher represented families as a mommy and a daddy and two kids, when you lived with your granny and didn't know who your father was? Maybe you were always getting into trouble because of bad behaviour or a lack of concentration when the real issue was that you weren't getting anything to eat at home in the morning? Maybe you were part of a religious minority in your school and did not feel your beliefs and practices were valued, always feeling like you were being assessed according to ideals you didn't believe in? Maybe you were always expected to perform according to narrow expectations of your physical sex when your experience of your own gender was

different? Maybe you were not perceived as the most popular child or the most attractive or the most intelligent or the most representative of a privileged economic class? Maybe you had a stutter and your teachers avoided including you in dialogue? Maybe you were genuinely bored and felt the lessons didn't cover anything you were interested in?

◆ What would you do to help a child in a similar situation in your class?

Our Constitution offers a vision that challenges all of us to address the imbalances and exclusions of the past, and play a part in ensuring that all children are able to enjoy the fundamental right to basic education. As our *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* (1.3 b) makes it clear, education should serve the purpose of: "equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country."

This resource will explore a number of attitudes and techniques that increase inclusion in a classroom. We suggest that instead of trying to memorise anything, as you go along you can make a list of the attitudes and techniques that you would like to integrate into your teaching practice and school culture. We will revisit your list at the end of the reading. This list will be particularly useful if you are committed to creating an Inclusive Education strategy for your school.

Nokhuthula's class – Inclusive Education in action

Imagine a class where every learner is meaningfully engaged. Learners who are skilled in a particular task are challenged so that they do not get bored and learners who sometimes struggle at that task are experiencing activities that stimulate and motivate them to persevere and master the skills involved.

The teacher, Nokhuthula Zondi, has high expectations for all her learners. She has made an effort to get to know the strengths and interests of each learner, as well as the barriers to learning experienced by each learner. This understanding did not come quickly. She focused on a small group of learners every week, recording insights in her observation book, where she makes notes on how the different learners learn. Equipped with these insights she can give instructions, examples, analogies, visual information, role play exercises, art making activities and support materials that make sure all learners are

included and can participate meaningfully. The focus of her lesson planning is the creation of activities that provide diverse ways for learners to explore and discover the knowledge she is covering, as well as diverse ways for them to express themselves with confidence.

While learners have their favourite styles of learning, she makes sure that they also experiment with other styles and work together with learners who are skilled in or passionate about other styles.

She makes sure that the lessons she creates are flexible enough for her to adapt them when she can see that some learners are confused, frustrated or disengaged. This means having a few options that privilege different styles or modes for exploring the same curriculum content.

What is Inclusive Education?

Before reading further ask yourself the following questions:

◆ How would you describe Nokhuthula's attitude to the learners in her class?

◆ How could you identify and record the preferred learning styles, strengths and barriers to learning of different learners in your class?

◆ How can you offer more than one mode for engaging content?

Nokhuthula's approach is based on her growing understanding of Inclusive Education. Inclusive Education (IE) is about diverse children and young people learning together (and learning from each other) in ways that affirm individual learners' strengths, support them where they experience barriers to learning, increase their confidence concerning their own capacity for learning, and encourage them to participate in ways that are meaningful to them. Inclusive Education in the South African context is defined as "a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language" (Department of Education 1998).

To this end we try to recognise:
o diverse dispositions (the different ways learners learn)
o diverse abilities (conventionally abled and differently abled learning together)

- diverse home languages (and the ways different languages construct knowledge of key concepts)
- diverse prior and current experiences of learning (different social, economic and cultural contexts, including indigenous knowledge systems)
- diverse identities (the different ways learners construct their sense of self through language, relationships and lifestyle choices)
- diverse points of view (the different ways learners think and feel about what they are learning).

Inclusive Education is not about creating separate special spaces within a school where learners with special needs or disabilities can be accommodated. Inclusive Education is about learning together. Even when special strategies are offered to help certain learners they should whenever possible not take that learner outside of the social experience of learning together.

Some background on the history of Inclusive Education

In the late 20th century the concept of human rights began to challenge those education policies that categorised and separated learners with special needs and disabilities from other learners. Strategies that claimed to be helping learners with special needs and disabilities were often actually disadvantaging them. Such strategies focused on a "deficit" in the learner. This is sometimes referred to as "the deficit model." The deficit model focuses on "what is wrong" with the learner and defines the learner according to their weaknesses, reinforcing narrow, singular identities, and victimhood, as well as dependence on experts and authorities. Authorities decide what differences justify separating certain learners into special schools or programmes, where they are often given a watered-down version of education, in a condescending and patronising limitation of their possible futures. History has shown how this approach defines marginalised learners in a way that marginalises them even further.

Inclusive Education, informed by the culture of human rights, challenges the deficit model and focuses on all the ways in which a learner can participate in decisions about their future and be the active agent of their own knowledge production. It ensures that different ways of knowing, doing and being are valued and included. It also removes obstacles to the learner's human rights – their freedom to explore, discover, develop and express their potential. It encourages learners to use their strengths, diverse abilities, languages and multiple identities to participate as fully as possible, not in spite of whom they are, but because of everything they are.

Ideally Inclusive Education should not only focus on learners with special needs and disabilities. In developing countries practitioners of Inclusive Education began to recognise that poverty and chronic illness have to be carefully considered as factors that should not be allowed to limit a learner's participation in quality education.

From the mid 1990s the focus of Inclusive Education was extended to include other factors like gender, race, ethnicity, language, and sexual orientation. The World Declaration on Education for All, adopted in Jomtien, Thailand (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1990), promoted the vision of universalizing access to education for all children, youth and adults, and promoting equity – both through identifying barriers to education and identifying the resources needed to overcome those barriers. It says, "Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system." An emphasis was also placed on making sure girls had access to school and that "gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated." It recognises broad categories of exclusion saying, "the poor; street and working children; rural and remote populations; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous peoples; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; refugees; those displaced by war; and people under occupation, should not suffer any discrimination in access to learning opportunities." Depending on the context, Inclusive Education may include teenage mothers, orphans, refugees, unaccompanied minors, youth who have dropped out of school before graduation, those who have had their education interrupted by gang violence or substance abuse, etc.

International policy documents such as *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994) promote the idea of inclusive schools where all children are welcomed and allowed to participate regardless of their physical, intellectual, social and linguistic differences. The Salamanca Statement proclaims five principles (based on the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities). These include:

> "(1) Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning;
> (2) Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs;
> (3) Educational systems should be designed, and educational programmes implemented, to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs;
> (4) Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs;

(5) Regular schools adapting this inclusive orientation is the most effective means of combating the discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children, and improve efficiency and, ultimately, the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational programme" (UNESCO, 1999).

The World Education Forum meeting in Dakar, April 2000, declared that Education for All must take account of the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV and AIDS, hunger and poor health, and those with disabilities or special learning needs. It also emphasized the special focus on girls and women.

Inclusive Education in South Africa

In South Africa *White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (DBE 2001) challenged the legacy of apartheid and moved the focus away from categorising children with special needs and disabilities to a focus on the appropriate levels of support that are required for different children to succeed.

It proposes that children requiring low levels of support should be accommodated in ordinary schools and the educators trained to respond to their learning needs.

Children requiring moderate levels of support should attend full-service schools, which must be equipped and supported by the department to provide for a wider range of learning needs. It also sets a target of establishing 500 full-service schools at primary school level by 2021 and expresses that over time, all ordinary schools should become full-service schools.

Children with high or intensive support needs are to be accommodated in special schools, which must also serve as resource centres for ordinary and full service schools. Recognising the goal of full inclusion in society, special schools are meant to only cater for children with the highest support needs.

The 2014 *Strategy for screening, identification, assessment and support* (SIAS) provides the tools to realise the vision of *White Paper 6*. DBE has also established an inclusive education directorate at National level, as well as staff appointed in directorates in all provinces.

The challenge to embrace inclusion is not only about access but about creating supportive learning environments – "changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment, enabling appropriate education structures, systems and learning methodologies" (Department of Education 2001) so that a greater diversity of learners benefit from the learning experience in more diverse ways. To this end most schools will eventually become full-service schools.

SIAS (20014: 8) defines full-service schools as: "Ordinary schools that are inclusive and welcoming of all learners in terms of their cultures, policies and practices. Such schools increase participation and reduce exclusion by providing support to all learners to develop their full potential irrespective of their background, culture, abilities or disabilities, their gender or race. These schools will be strengthened and orientated to address a full range of barriers to learning in an inclusive setting to serve as flagship schools of full inclusivity."

It is difficult to create one definition for Inclusive Education. Teaching and learning contexts are the products of different cultural, political and economic systems, with different dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. What teachers who practice Inclusive Education consider as traditionally marginalised learners, changes from context to context. As a result the practice of inclusive education is as diverse as the classrooms, schools, communities and countries it is practiced in. If its core principles have been grasped it can applied in many different ways. We must take care not to allow models of Inclusive Education that have come out of developed countries to distort and obscure the dynamics, challenges and opportunities specific to South Africa.

In South Africa, because of our recent commitment to human rights as a way of avoiding the injustices of the past, and the fact that Inclusive Education is a human rights centred pedagogy, it could be argued that Inclusive Education is the educational strategy most likely to contribute to the creation of a democratic and just society. Our history tends to encourage us to interpret inclusion in a broader sense than a focus on learners with special needs and disabilities, which is the way Inclusive Education is framed in some countries.

In 2013 a draft Southern African Development Community (SADC) Strategy on Inclusive Education was compiled to deal with education for learners with disabilities in southern Africa, to respond to the holistic needs of all children and to address challenges that hinder access to education. It recognises that policies on inclusion in schools do not necessarily translate into full participation in learning. There are still concerns regarding other issues like acceptance, achievement, and support. One attempt to address

these concerns is the SADC Care and Support for Learning and Teaching Framework, or CSTL. The framework addresses different manifestations of diverse learning needs caused by factors including "poverty; hunger; poor health; lack of access to services like water, sanitation and energy; gender bias and other forms of inequality; parental illiteracy; orphaning; rural residency; and numerous other factors that remain barriers to education for thousands of vulnerable children and youth" (MIET Africa, 2013).

Nokhuthula's class continued …

Nokhuthula arranges the class so that she has quick access to learners with learning difficulties, but she does not label them or group them in any predictable way that could stigmatise them. She often changes the arrangement of tables and seating of learners so that the space is always opened up to new possibilities.

In certain lessons she makes sure that learners who are struggling get to work together with learners who can offer them peer support. She takes care to ensure the roles are reversed when there is an opportunity to do so. A child who needed help with maths on one day is asked on another day to offer drawing skills to the child who gave them peer support.

In other lessons she creates workstations that offer different challenges, all covering the same broad content, but allowing learners to choose the type of activity and level of difficulty themselves. She uses project-based learning techniques to create learning experiences in which learners work together to solve things or make things. She finds that assessing learners in the context of dynamic collaboration opens up possibilities for recognising a wider diversity of dispositions, skills, languages, knowledge systems, identities and points of view.

She focuses on planning lessons that will serve the top achievers as well as those with learning difficulties. In this way everyone is included. If she does need time to work with a specific group of learners she splits everyone into groups with different tasks. In this way no group is singled out.

While Nkhuthula takes academic performance seriously knowing that it opens doors, she doesn't believe that it is the most important part of the learning experience. She wants learners to acquire the skills that empower them to create sustainable livelihoods, satisfying lifestyles and meaningful life paths. This means learners need to be able to communicate

clearly and collaborate effectively. They need to be able to use thinking skills to decode the world around them effectively, to perceive opportunities, to imagine possibilities, to persevere when the going gets tough, and to innovate solutions.

All learners have barriers to learning and Nokhuthula helps each one articulate and explore their growing edges. In this way, each learner gets to take responsibility for their own learning path. A learner who is achieving academically, for example, may not have the disposition to collaborate. Opportunities for developing the skills of collaboration help them explore their growing edges.

Not a one-size-fits-all approach

We have inherited an approach to mass education that was based on Prussian military training camps and British factory production lines, designed to produce citizens who would faithfully reproduce procedures and obey established rules. The way we teach and assess learners still tends to be based on this vision of standardization, and the ranking of learners according to criteria based on a narrow set of predetermined and easily measurable outcomes. Not only are the outcomes we typically value limited and representative of a small percentage of human potential, but also the way we organize the environments we teach in constrains, filters and sorts learners' potential into a predictable but limited performance.

A one-size-fits-all approach also tends to reinforce a particular socio-economic worldview or dominant culture (like Christianity, neoliberal capitalism, scientific rationalism, or nationalism) when it comes to defining success.

Inclusive Education challenges this one-size-fits-all approach. All learners have the right to education that makes the most of their potential.

In the early twentieth century the Russian psychologist, Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, developed a theory of development known as the Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development. Vygotsky's insight was that learning takes place in a social context and is primarily a social process. A learner's cognitive development is shaped, enabled and blocked by their experience of relationships and their sociocultural context. While a learner may have invaluable potential it is their interaction with their society, its values, its practices, its languages, its aesthetics, its economic realities, its hierarchies, its institutions, its technologies, etc., that determine

what aspects of that potential are explored, discovered, developed and expressed.

Knowledge is not simply downloaded into a child's mind at an appropriate age. Instead a child uses the social resources, cultural capital, and role models available to them to participate (or not) in the construction of knowledge. Children in different cultures or different economic classes experience different social resources, cultural capital, and role models. We need to take care that we do not assume that learning materials that worked well in one cultural context can simply be transferred to another.

Zone of proximal development

Vygotsky coined the phrase 'Zone of Proximal Development' to indicate the growing edges of a particular child's ability, where they are developing mastery of a task or a skill. If a child's Zones of Proximal Development can be recognised, then a little additional support from a skilled adult, and additional responsibility given to the learner, can ensure mastery of the skill and they can go on to perform it independently of any support.

Each child's Zones of Proximal Development may be different. A one-size-fits-all approach is blind to these individual growing edges and is unable to adapt the learning environment or instructions to support a child to make the most of the abilities they are growing into. Instead of believing that there is some skill or performance that a child in a certain grade must be capable of (and then judging all children against that assumption), Vygotsky's approach encourages us to engage the individual child on their own terms. If we do this we can recognise where the child's ability is in their personal developmental sequence, offer more deliberate and personalised instructions, create specific learning opportunities and perhaps link the child to the support of a 'More Knowledgeable Other'. A More Knowledgeable Other can be an adult or a peer. Again, here is the insight that the learner is not developing in isolation, but in a sociocultural context.

Different learners require different kinds of social and environmental scaffolding in order to move towards their Zones of Proximal Development. Just as in architecture, scaffolding is there to offer temporary support to the child in the process of developing a skill and performing a task. Knowing what scaffolding a child needs to grow beyond their personal thresholds at different stages of their personal development is the key. This also means that the kind of feedback (assessment) you give a child cannot always be standardised, but often needs to be specific and personalised. An abstract mark cannot offer personalised feedback. A teacher can

help a child move into their Zone of Proximal Development by giving them accurate verbal feedback about their performance. To do this well teachers need an understanding of the component skills that a specific task requires, so that they can identify the child's Zone of Proximal Development and give them clear and specific feedback. This will also help the teacher to decide what support or instruction the child needs.

The more aspects of a child we engage and consider the more likely that child is to experience learning as meaningful, be motivated to discover knowledge for themselves and internalise what they have learnt (beyond rote memorisation).

Learners are not just intellectual beings being prepared for future studies, work and citizenship; they are sensual, physical, emotional, sexual, curious, creative, social, and cultural beings, connected to a complex world of personal, social and environmental contexts. A one-size-fits-all approach does not prepare them for a fulfilling life! School can become a place where learners discover, explore, develop and express *all their potentials*.

◆ How do you identify a learner's growing edges – their zones of proximal development?

Nokhuthula's class continued …

Nokhuthula sometimes works together with the learners to translate the core concepts of the lesson into all their home languages, by asking learners to think of words, or phrases, or metaphors, or even proverbs that express the idea they are exploring. She has learnt that integrating a learner's home language into a lesson can have a powerful effect on that learner's level of engagement. Learners share and compare their concepts. Learners even speak in their home languages, while translating for each other (even arguing about the translation). In this way she enables learners to connect with their own knowledge (and ignorance) of the topic in a form that is meaningful to them.

She recognises that every learner is connected to a community or multiple communities and cultures. This is their primary influence and it is the prior learning they bring with them into the classroom. All information will be filtered through perspectives they have inherited from their experience of being part of a community.

Nokhuthula knows that if a learner is expected to be assertive at school and at home they are told to be submissive and

silent, a cognitive dissonance (an inner contradiction that causes anxiety) can arise that could interfere with their performance at school and cause huge anxiety. This is especially true of a home life with authoritarian values, that are intolerant of 'outsiders' and resist social change, place respect for elders over independence of learners, obedience over self-reliance, good manners over curiosity, a well-behaved child over a considerate one, and physical force over dialogue. On the other hand, if they have a lot of unsupervised freedom at home they may experience the discipline expected from them at school as unfair, causing them to act out. She doesn't always have the answers to how conflict between knowledge systems can become a productive learning experience, but she encourages learners to talk about these conflicts, recognising that they may be experiencing a cognitive dissonance that interferes with their learning. Just respecting a learner's inner struggles as valid and allowing that learner to give voice to them empowers that learner's sense of agency. When she feels learners are not willing to talk about things directly she creates scenarios that resonate with the challenges she perceives, and they discuss them together as a class, without anyone feeling like they are being exposed.

When she is trying to understand a learner's context she tries to avoid being patronising and condescending. She starts by admitting to herself that she possibly does not understand and is ignorant – and that understanding comes from being willing to engage, not from responding too quickly to a learner's performance with assumptions and judgement. She acknowledges that in this process she has made many mistakes, but she has also seen how it gets easier if learners genuinely believe that she is learning together with them and is open to their questions and criticisms.

Languages and knowledge systems

Most curricula neglect the wealth of knowledge and practices that originated in Africa, and curricula often imply that the African child must leave their values, beliefs and practices outside the school gate.

Prof Nontokozo Mashiya (School of Education, UKZN) has stressed that learning in a language other than your home languages tends to reinforce rote learning in a short timeframe rather than understanding and application. When the focus is on memorisation we hide the lack of understanding behind empty mechanical reproduction and fail to engage the ideas behind the words in a way that is meaningful and rewarding. If the focus was more on

understanding, on application and on the higher order thinking skills of critical and creative innovation, then educators would be more likely to value home languages, and the knowledge systems they are linked to, as useful tools in the learning process. This shift in focus is a shift away from skills that rely mainly on extrinsic motivation, towards skills that require the kind of intrinsic motivation that recognition of home language and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) can nurture. The value of integrating home languages offers a serious and necessary challenge to our teaching methodologies.

As Nokhuthula has shown, privileging a learner's home language in a lesson, even if it is just to explore core concepts, is a practical technique that can be used in a class with many different home languages. Imagine a teacher that is about to discuss gender constructs in a class. The teacher begins by asking learners to think of words, or phrases, or metaphors, or even proverbs that express the ideas of masculinity and femininity in their home languages. Learners share and compare their concepts. Learners are even allowed to speak in their home languages, while translating for each other (and even arguing about the translation). The lesson has begun by enabling learners to connect with their own knowledge (and ignorance) of the topic in a form that is meaningful to them. The teacher might continue to explore the role of initiation rituals, inviting learners to share their knowledge of rites of passage, and what they tell us about the way cultures communicate what it means to be a man or a woman.

Professor Leketi Makalela (Division of Languages, Literacies & Literatures at Wits) speaks about engaging all official languages in class, not as singular languages that need to be learnt in their entirety, but as colloquial expressions, and idioms that help us all to speak South African.

- ◆ What kinds of literacy and forms of spoken language are privileged in your class and your school?

- ◆ How could you integrate home languages (including sign language and brail into your class) into your class?

- ◆ What are the learner's beliefs and attitudes concerning their own capacity for learning and the knowledge they are expected to learn?

Vestiges of apartheid

Apartheid was characterised by segregation. The fact that white people received a better education than other perceived race groups was based on the irrational belief that others did not need to be accorded the same dignity, status or capability of whites. This is an example of how education can often serve the ideals of those who are in positions of power. Children with special needs or disabilities were also labelled, segregated, stereotyped and offered an inferior education. Children with special needs or disabilities within the Bantu Education System were even worse off than white children with special needs or disabilities who, while they were marginalised, still had more resources made available to them.

We cannot think about transformation in education without a critical understanding of South Africa's past. We have inherited a weight of attitudes and practices from colonialism and apartheid, which even if we insist we object to, still exert an influence on our thinking habits and teaching practices. While we have achieved political freedom in our democracy, many of our social and institutional structures still reproduce the inclusions and exclusions of the past, often in subtle ways. Think of the language of instruction we privilege. Think of how little value we attach to indigenous knowledge systems. Think of how learning opportunities differ for a child whose parents have enough money to pay for a well-resourced private school, whose parents read and have a collection of books at home, who lives in a leafy suburb in an urban area with access to many services, who speaks English as a home language, and who is generally by virtue of the social class they belong to better prepared to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves.

Established paradigms are hard to shift. Some schools, for example, discourage teachers who do not have a heterosexual sexual orientation from being open. This means that LGBTI learners are deprived of the experience of witnessing a community that refuses to discriminate against them. A similar dynamic operates when LGBTI learners are told that they are accepted but simultaneously asked to tone down their gayness, so that others do not feel it has been forced upon them. "Now that you have been accepted you need to stop disrupting the process." No! It is the disrupting, not the well-behaved acquiescence out of gratitude that shifts the paradigm. Human rights are the product of struggle, not the generosity of those in power. The resistance of LGBTI learners makes many teachers uncomfortable because it makes the subjective experience that children and young people have as sexual beings explicit. We need a ruthless intellectual honesty and a willingness to really search our assumptions before we can fully embrace Inclusive Education as a strategy.

The difference between equality and equity

We need to become more aware of how our teaching practice and our school culture privileges certain differences between learners and oppresses specific learners on the basis of other kinds of differences. We should never assume that providing equal opportunities will correct this, because equality and equity are very different outcomes.

Our Constitution calls us to build a society based on dignity, equality and freedom. Crucial in 21ˢᵗ century discourses about diversity and inclusion in socio-economic opportunities, is the idea that being regarded as equal is not enough. This is because of specific privileges experienced by the …
o   white,
o   male,
o   heterosexual,
o   adult,
o   conventionally-abled (as opposed to differently-abled),
o   English speaker,
o   middleclass,
o   urban (as opposed to rural),
o   property owner,
o   capitalised wealthy elite (as opposed to almost everyone else),
o   neo-liberal capitalist (as opposed to the possibility of alternative economic value systems as represented in the economies of our BRICS partners or the value systems of traditional communities),
o   practitioner of western scientific knowledge systems (as opposed to indigenous knowledge systems),
o   Judaeo-Christian (as opposed to other religious traditions),
o   religious (as opposed to the agnostic or atheist),
o   "good looking" according to dominant body-image conventions,
o   employed,
o   married parent and nuclear family (as opposed to other kinds of relationships and family structures),
o   South African national (as opposed to the African foreigner),
… privileges that are often subtly hidden and reproduced in social hierarchies, moral binaries, prohibitions, the use of language, categories, media, institutional structures, access to technology and the symbolic use of space.

Look at the list of privileged positions above and think about the assumptions these inform in your teaching practice. Do you assume a family is always a mom and a dad with two kids? Do you assume everyone shares Christian beliefs about the nature of reality? Do you assume that an intimate loving relationship is always between a man and a woman? Do you assume someone who only has a few friends is lonely and socially deficient? Do you assume that someone who speaks awkwardly with a heavy accent is less

intellectually able than you? Do you assume that non-South Africans are less entitled to basic rights than citizens? Do you experience the opinion of a parent or caregiver that is a wealthy businessperson as worth more than that of a parent or caregiver who is poor and unemployed?

If you look at the list of privileged identities above, you can easily see how these positions of privilege give rise to power relations that determine what happens next. Giving all South Africans equal opportunities will not transform our society because some individuals and communities are advantaged or disadvantaged to begin with. Equality is not enough!

Listen to what this teacher has to say:

> "Treating everyone exactly the same actually is not fair. What equal treatment does do is erase our differences and promote privilege. Let me break it down … When Everyone Is Different, *Fairness* and *Success* Also Differs … Equity and equality are two strategies we can use in an effort to produce fairness. *Equity* is giving everyone what they need to be successful. *Equality* is treating everyone the same.
> Equality *aims* to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help. Equity *appears* unfair, but it actively moves everyone closer to success by "levelling the playing field." …
> Classrooms, for example, are made up of different learners. This means that students enter the classroom with different learning styles (such as visual, auditory, or tactile). … Visual learners and auditory learners will process information differently and, thus, have different needs. If the teacher always lectures, auditory learners have the advantage. Since everyone is different and we embrace these differences as unique, we must also redefine our basic expectations for *fairness* and *success* as contingent upon those individual differences *…* Take gender for example. Fairness between genders doesn't mean that everyone should become the same. The end goal is not for men and women to reach a complete genderless state. It means that men and women should be given the same opportunities to succeed *despite their differences …* We need to recognize our differences as unique, rather than reach for one definition of "success." By upholding just one definition of success, we actively erase our differences. Our differences are not the obstacles."
> - Amy Sun (2014)

Learners who are already in positions of power, who are confident, who are vocal and assertive, and who are proficient at the skills that are privileged by the system will almost always have an unfair

advantage. This is especially true when we frame learning activities competitively. The whole child only benefits when we ensure equity - ensuring that all learners can *access the means* to benefit from "equal opportunities." Part of accessing the means is removing the obstacles, removing the barriers to learning. This can only be done if we identify each learner's barriers to learning, and identify the resources and techniques the teacher needs to help the learner overcome those barriers.

Nokhuthula's class continued …

One of the learners that Nokhuthula teaches, Clara, is hard of hearing. Nokhuthula makes sure she is sitting near the front of the class and repeats what other learners say and the questions they ask so that Clara is always included. When she started doing this she discovered to her surprise that everyone felt heard and more included. Now she often paraphrases what learners say to make sure she has heard them correctly and give them a chance to add clarity. This has increased the level of participation in her class. She allows learners to ask questions about the things that they want to know because it gives her clues to how she is going to adapt the curriculum to make it more meaningful for them.

Matomi is a very shy young man with albinism. He is visually impaired so Nokhuthula always copies A4 worksheets onto A3 for him. He likes working on digital devices where he can enlarge things easily and sometimes listen instead of read. When Nokhuthula writes on the board she writes large so that he can read her handwriting. She also gives him and a few other learners extra time on tests (because, as she insists, she is not measuring how quickly they can answer the questions). Since she has been doing this, his maths marks have improved significantly. This has raised his confidence and he is slowly becoming more assertive and participating more in class discussions. He even designed a poster explaining what person-centred language is (language that puts the person before the condition) and why it is disrespectful to call someone an "albino". The way he designed it was genuinely hilarious and the learners' responses helped him discover that he has the valuable skill of a comedian.

Busi experiences dyslexia, battling to read and spell words. Nokhuthula has identified Helvetica, Courier, Arial, Verdana and CMU as more readable fonts for children with dyslexia (based on research that takes into consideration both, reading performance and subjective preferences). In her experience italic fonts definitely decrease Busi's reading performance.

Busi's dyslexia was not diagnosed in the lower grades. His disability was treated as a lack of intelligence and he lost a lot of confidence. Nokhuthula has had to help him overcome his resistance to reading. She tries to find material that he finds particularly interesting. As his confidence increased she convinced him to help her create flashcards, mnemonics and infographics to help other children with dyslexia. His memorable and meaningful mnemonic for consensus is an example: Consensus Only Needs Some Eager Network Seeking United Solutions. By being involved to solve his own barriers to learning in this way Busi became a highly motivated agent of his own knowledge production.

Tlali, a leaner with autism, doesn't always participate and often seems distracted and agitated. He is allowed to move in and out of activities as he can, but knows what disruptions are not tolerated. When he is involved in an activity he enjoys, Nokhuthula knows to warn him ahead of time when the activity will have to end, so he can prepare himself for the transition. Other learners have learnt to accommodate him and know that if they allow him to work things out himself he will sometimes surprise them with a solution or an insight they could not have imagined on their own. He has a few classmates that keep him on track. Nokhuthula has worked closely with Tlali's parents and a local professional service provider he trusts to make sure that his needs are being met as effectively as possible. It took Tlali a long time to trust Nokhuthula and even longer to trust his classmates, but he has achieved a huge improvement in his social skills and a significant decrease in his anxiety.

Some learners are facing challenges Nokhuthula does not know enough about. Instead of despairing she makes the effort to consult with fellow teachers, do a bit of online research and contact local specialists that have the expertise she needs. In the process she feels confident and excited about the fact that her own learning and professionalism is growing. That doesn't mean she is immune to making mistakes. She does, but she has created an understanding with her learners that they are "learning how to learn together." She has become more comfortable with saying, "That's a really good question. I don't know what the answer is. Who would like the mission to find out for us?"

Nokhuthula encourages feedback and involves learners in the process of creating project topics and even working together with her to identify assessment criteria so that the outcomes that are valued are explicit and clearly understood by everyone.

A moment of reflection

Here is a conversation you can have with your colleagues while reflecting on Nokhuthula's teaching practices.

◆ How do you think Nokhuthula would serve the needs of …
… Marius who uses a wheel chair?
… Aliya who has cerebral palsy and moderate intellectual disability?
… Selaelo who is battling with depression and a methcathinone (CAT)
addiction?
… Lehlonoholo who is a transsexual transitioning from male to female?
… Sophia who is pregnant?
… Annick who is a refugee from Cameroon?

In each case ask yourself the following questions:

◆ What kinds of discrimination (intentional and unintentional) could they face in your school community?

◆ What learning barriers might this child experience?

◆ What teaching methods would you use to serve them best?

◆ How would you involve other learners in creating experiences that recognise and affirm this child's dignity?

◆ How would you work with that child's parents or caregivers?

◆ What support services do you think you could collaborate with?

◆ Does your school have a policy for meeting the needs of a child like this?

◆ How can the inclusion of this learner help to increase a sense of belonging for all the learners in your class?

Collaborating with the professional services and support systems

The South African education system has begun a journey towards providing all schools with the support services and expertise that

can serve all children and ensure inclusion. This takes the form of support by specialised professional staff; the practice of curriculum differentiation adjusting the way assessments are done; provision of specialised Learning and Teaching Support Material and assistive technology; as well as training and mentoring of teachers, managers and support staff (SIAS 2014). While the logistics are still being solved, and professional expertise is still being developed, all teachers can already begin embracing the values and attitudes of Inclusive Education.

As it is explained in *Education White Paper 6*, addressing the risks of exclusion and marginalisation in education requires the collaboration of many actors and the capacity of various professionals to develop working relationships to bring together different kinds of expertise to address a specific situation. As teachers you need to collaborate with others as part of a concerted effort to reduce disparities in educational outcomes. Your capacity for working with others, including learners themselves and their caregivers, is essential for dismantling overlapping and complex barriers to learning and participation in schools. These capacities need to be developed as part of teacher preparation and professional development.

Nokhuthula's class continued …

One of her learners, Annick, is an orphan and a refugee from Cameroon. When he joined the class learners allowed their misconceptions and assumptions to isolate him. On one occasion he couldn't afford the proper kit for PE so a teacher sent him to the lost property office. He ended up playing soccer in clothes far to big for him. Some learners started laughing and teasing him. Nokhuthula dealt with the situation using the principles of restorative justice. Restorative justice doesn't seek to blame or punish, but to deepen understanding and heal relationships through dialogue. The challenge to find kit that fitted Annick cost-effectively was then solved together with his classmates.

For Nokhuthula the most important teaching objective is to create a sense of belonging for all her learners, without the need for consensus or uniformity. She always tries to promote the values of generosity and gratitude, and constantly creates opportunities for learners to develop a sense of wonder, an insatiable curiosity and a healthy scepticism.

She allows open discussion about barriers to learning and provides opportunities for learners to communicate how they prefer to learn and solve problems. She is determined that the

children become advocates for themselves and their fellow learners.

Nokhuthula puts a great emphasis on the skills of dialogue that she understands as essential to non-violent conflict resolution, knowledge production and participation in democratic processes. She frames respect as the willingness to engage the disagreements of others fully (in other words, giving the disagreement of others your time, energy and attention). This means making it clear that while the Constitution expects us to respect an individual's right to express their own opinions, it doesn't mean that we have to respect their opinion. When she gets a new class she always begins by working with the learners to create guidelines for productive dialogue. Then as conflicts or disagreements arise they adapt the guidelines together, constantly improving them on the basis of experience. She doesn't avoid sensitive topics. Her class also talks about difference, labelling, stereotypes, discrimination and injustice. She has learnt that instead of drawing attention to specific groups of learners, this kind of honest dialogue creates an opportunity for all learners to talk, whether directly or indirectly, about their personal struggles and aspirations.

Inclusive Education benefits ALL learners

The Salamanca Conference proclaimed that: "regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system" (p. ix).

Quality education is not a separate issue from Inclusive Education and is not competing with it. Where Inclusive Education is embraced with enthusiasm, the overall quality of education increases. As teachers apply the principles of Inclusive Education to accommodate more diverse learners, a by-product is that a richer diversity of all learners is recognised and affirmed more than before. Inclusive Education benefits everyone, because it is a movement against all forms of exclusion. It provides a vision of school, not as a meritocracy in which high achievers in academics and sport rise above the rest, but as a learning environment in which high quality teaching practices and appropriate infrastructure support every learner in an authentic experience of personal growth and achievement, that is meaningful to them and relevant to the society they will thrive in.

Inclusive teaching practice is not just about including diverse dispositions, abilities, languages, prior learning experiences, identities and points of view – but also about creating opportunities for all learners to benefit from this diversity, learning from each other. While this disrupts our assumptions about what is normal, it makes classroom activities rich inter-subjective learning experiences in which diverse approaches to learning complement each other in the process of collaboration. In this way teachers allow the natural diversity in the class to encourage all learners to explore the growing edges of their own natural ability, and their growing knowledge and skill, and go beyond the comfort zones of their predictable personal and cultural assumptions.

Inclusive Education is also not just about including under-represented races, genders and other identities in dialogue, but also about including other ideologies, cultures, languages, religions and knowledge systems. This ensures a diversity of thinking habits, acknowledging and engaging different points of view, allowing learners to see how disagreement can be mutually beneficial in the process of dialogue and collaboration. Instead of difference being experienced as inherently divisive or antagonistic, the differences in the classroom become a powerful source for the kinds of feedback and alternative points of view that are necessary for productive dialogue and that enable our society to produce knowledge. The key to dealing with diversity is not tolerance or agreeing to disagree, but inter-subjective communication that grows mutual understanding. This is about recognising the importance of simply allowing learners to be together, to play together, to work together, and to share their experiences, to argue, to help each other and to collaborate. It is about allowing different ways of knowing, doing and being to interact as learners produce knowledge together.

exploring different ways of knowing
through different ways of doing
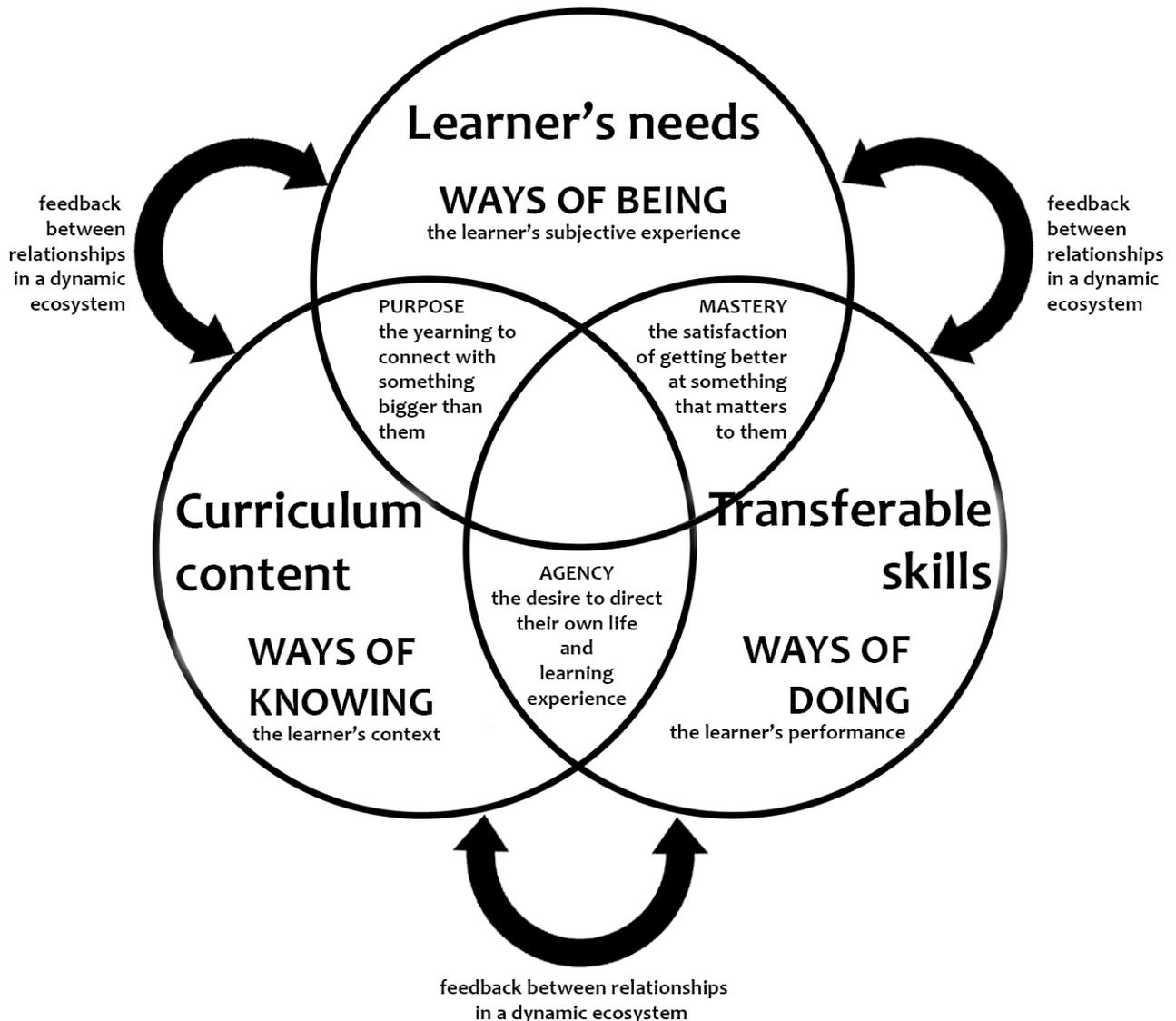*supporting different ways of being*

Success at school is often defined in academic terms almost entirely focused on preparing learners for university and the kind of economic wellbeing envisioned by neo-liberal capitalism, even though only a small percentage of learners end up following and benefitting from this path – and those who do, often end up serving it to their detriment. Even those who do go to university are no longer guaranteed of getting a job. Inclusive teaching practice allows learners to explore skills that will enable them to engage the world meaningfully and with satisfaction.

Many of the chief objectives of schools focus on conformity. We measure all learners against standardised tests. We encourage them

to memorise content and repeat procedures that they have rehearsed in class. Curricula are designed as one-size-fits-all. We are reproducing inherited knowledge. We want our learner's to give the right answer. The performance of the child should mirror the memo. We rank learners according to narrow criteria. It is a world of appropriate boxes, ticks and crosses. These practices all signal that we value predictability and that all learners will be assessed according to the same criteria.

◆ How can we disrupt this systemic bias and explore different ways of knowing, through different ways of doing, supporting different ways of being?

An Integrated Learning Experience

Learner's needs

WAYS OF BEING
the learner's subjective experience

feedback between relationships in a dynamic ecosystem

feedback between relationships in a dynamic ecosystem

PURPOSE
the yearning to connect with something bigger than them

MASTERY
the satisfaction of getting better at something that matters to them

Curriculum content

WAYS OF KNOWING
the learner's context

AGENCY
the desire to direct their own life and learning experience

Transferable skills

WAYS OF DOING
the learner's performance

feedback between relationships
in a dynamic ecosystem

Mind Burst Workshop developed this model in 2018 as a way of illustrating some of the principles of Inclusive Education.

The concepts of **agency**, **mastery** and **purpose** were taken from Daniel H. Pink's book on intrinsic motivation, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (2009). We have changed his use of the word 'autonomy' to agency.

An interesting thing happens when we challenge what is usually accepted as evidence of intelligence and the very narrow criteria of success that many teaching practices and school cultures accept as standard or "normal." We uncover sets of transferable skills that schools often neglect, including the skills that enable learners to:

o create deliberate strategies and reflect on them, monitoring their own performance by asking metacognitive questions;

o overcome the fear of failure and risk small, regular and reasonable experiments;

o persevere and not give up too quickly when the solution isn't immediately obvious;

o become more aware of emotional responses in themselves and others, articulating them, working out what triggered them, taking care not to over-identify with them, while becoming appropriately vulnerable and developing empathy;

o value intuition, imagination, spontaneity and productive play – recognising and seizing unplanned opportunities;

o innovate, by combining different variables (ideas, media, materials, technologies, processes, performances, languages, etc.) in unique and unusual ways;

o compare diverse sources of information, finding the similarities and differences that generate valuable insight (conclusions);

o transfer knowledge (techniques, perspectives, principles, insights) from one familiar (or rehearsed) context to an unfamiliar one;

o think systemically, zooming in to see the detail of parts, and zooming out to see the big picture in which the parts interact with and change each other in order to form the whole;

o resist the urge to collapse complexity into simple categories, moral binaries, singular identities and linear narratives of cause and effect;

o plan together with others, agreeing on a collective goal, imagining a production process, creating schedules and roles, as well as managing resources and time;

o communicate clearly and collaborate with diverse dispositions, being assertive while listening to other points of view, negotiating effectively while staying committed to creating the best solution possible together;

o give and receive feedback, willing to engage the disagreements of others;

o apply critical thinking to claims, explanations and arguments, recognising attempts at manipulation and the perpetuation of irrational prejudice;

o read an image (visual literacy) and other forms of media, identifying the devices that have been used to manipulate the viewer, as well as the intent of the producer; and

o adapt to change with as little anxiety as possible.

- How many of these skills do you think a young person may develop because they have had to deal with a disability or some barrier to learning?

- How many of these skills do you think a young person may develop because of being perceived as different by society?

A focus on skills rather than content not only benefits all learners, but also changes what we value and how we assess learners, going beyond narrow criteria and recognising the value of certain performances that we would have ignored in the past. These skills are sometimes called 21st century skills because they increase a child's chances of thriving in the future – a future that looks nothing like what their parents and teacher imagined. Learning experiences that focus on these skills rather than on memorising content and following step-by-step procedures often allow learners who do not usually perform well academically to shine.

(For a deeper look at the value of transferable skills see MindBurst Workshop's article *Embracing Transferable Skills*)

A learner's participation in democratic process does not begin when they reach voting age. It begins when they embrace the knowledge, values and skills that make participatory democratic processes a reality in their classroom, their school, their community and their homes. Learners can become active citizens long before they vote. Inclusive Education is integral to creating a democratic classroom. As stated in *Values and Rights in the Curriculum: A Guide* (DBE), a democratic classroom is characterised by:
o learner-centred methods and strategies for learning and teaching;
o relationships based on dignity, equality and respect;
o management of the classroom in keeping with democratic and human rights values;
o affirmation of diversity rather than homogeneity;
o participation of all members of the school community in decision making that affects them;
o anti-discriminatory policies and practices;
o availability and use of resources;
o inclusivity of languages, learning styles, disabilities and gender.

- How can you transform your class into a democratic community that learns to create knowledge together?

- How do we go beyond the narrow criteria usually associated with academic success and prepare learners to become entrepreneurs, artisans, writers, inventors, professional artists, founders of non-profit organisations, activists and ethical hackers?

Nokhuthula's class continued ...

She challenges her colleagues by asking: How can we create a space for diversity in our classrooms and school that opens up fresh possibilities for teaching and learning?

One of the ideas that she is passionate about is challenging the practice of labelling learners, positively or negatively. Even when she praises her learners, she doesn't label them, she tries to describe accurately what they are doing. It is always the performance that she is praising or critiquing, not the person. Nokhuthula believes that teachers should not trap their learners with labels, categories or stereotypes. She says, "The identities of my learners are not simple, singular or fixed. They are complex, multiple and fluid. They cannot be put into a box."

She makes an effort to represent different identities in her lessons, not just when they are the focus of a lesson's content, but more generally throughout:
o   in the words she uses (building the vocabulary of diversity),
o   the stories she asks learners to read (with inspiring LGBTIQ+ characters, heroes with disabilities and resilient refugees),
o   the examples she gives (even if it is a character in a word sum in mathematics),
o   the illustrations she privileges (for example, not just showing families as a middleclass mom, dad and two kids),
o   the assumptions she communicates in the tasks she asks male or female learners to perform, and
o   the diverse ways (and sometimes competing ways) she defines or represents intelligence, success, beauty, sex appeal, strength, health, sanity, morality and wealth.
In this way she constantly challenges the notion of 'normal' and 'natural' and 'right' – showing how these are social constructs that can be questioned and interrogated.

Challenging labels - a growth mindset

A lot of labelling has to do with a belief in a singular and fixed ability that a child inherits at the moment of birth, a 'type,' rather than how the abilities of a child can change and develop through the process of engaging the opportunities presented by their world meaningfully. We label a child because we think it helps us to make predictions about that child, but in the process we make assumptions and limit the possible learning experiences that could

be available to that child. Our norming processes might encourage us to see barriers to learning as a defining characteristic of the child, instead of seeing them as a characteristic of the system – that has been produced by our norms in the first place. (Think back to Vygotsky's work on the impact of environments on learning.) This is why people with disabilities were thought of as unfit for the normal labour force and in need of simpler skills appropriate to what was perceived as their diminished ability. This kind of perspective couldn't imagine someone who was deaf becoming a lawyer or someone who was blind becoming a mathematician. The kind of paternalism that often dominated specialised institutions prevented carers from imagining people with disabilities as capable of agency, independent thought or innovative ideas. In this way institutions that were created for the benefit of people with special needs or disabilities were often detrimental to their personal development and meaningful participation in society.

Education White Paper 6 (1.4.1) promotes the perspective that: all children can learn; all children need support; all children are different in some way with different learning needs which should be equally valued; all children can develop their individual strengths; and all children can participate critically in the process of learning. Its goals are to maximise participation and minimise barriers to learning.

A vital aspect of IE is the idea that a child's potential is not predetermined, limited and fixed, waiting only to be identified, categorised and assessed. A passion for learning and for creating knowledge cannot be nurtured if learners believe that who they are is fixed and that everything they are doing is just an expression of a given set of abilities that define them.

Carol Dweck called this a "fixed mindset" (Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, 2006). A "fixed mindset" believes that your personality, intellectual ability and creativity are permanent and unchanging aspects of yourself. Success becomes the quest to have these constants recognised and affirmed so that you know you are succeeding. Failure is avoided, because it can be experienced as a wholly defining moment, completely undermining what you are. Risk and effort, which have the potential to expose your weaknesses, are avoided.

A "growth mindset," on the other hand, thrives on challenge and sees failure as an opportunity to learn more about the growing edges you want to explore and develop further. With a growth mindset learners are motivated to make an effort to explore and learn. The effort feels satisfying and can be sustained even in the face of failure that requires the learner to reassess their strategy and what they know. In this way, instead of hungering for approval

and affirmation in a fixed mindset, you develop a passion for learning things that can help you choose and invent who you want to be.

Praising learners for what is perceived as their natural ability not only labels them (even if it seems positive) but also tends to affirm a fixed mindset. Put yourself in the learner's position. Once you have been praised based on your ability you tend to protect that label, avoiding challenges that could contradict it. You might also become too quick to judge yourself, and label yourself as deficient when you do not live up to that label. Praising leaners for their effort (often contrary to what they see as their natural ability), on the other hand, affirms a growth mindset, in which they move with curiosity and enthusiasm towards their growing edges (zones of proximal development) and may even be thrilled by the learning experience.

Learners with a fixed mindset find it difficult to deal with even minor inconsistencies in their expectations of themselves, others and the world. They are more likely to deal with conflict by blaming others (or accepting blame and being paralysed by guilt) and ascribing some fundamental and fixed flaw to those they blame. Learners with a growth mindset are more capable of integrating new and challenging information about themselves, their relationships and the world around them. They recognise that we are all on a learning journey and capable of change. This makes them more likely to collaborate and participate in productive dialogue.

Extrinsic rewards, like marks gained through standardised tests, are labels that tend to reinforce fixed mindsets. If they affirmed a growth mindset the highest awards would be given to those who had changed the most, regardless of their final score or comparisons with other learners.

Inclusive Education sees a child's potential as open-ended and fluid, that can be engaged and transformed through a continuous process of exploration, discovery, experimentation, development and expression. This engagement and transformation depends on the child's experience of the relationships, social structures and learning opportunities they are exposed to. Within a rich, diverse, meaningful and inclusive learning environment children can grow beyond expectations.

Inclusive Education represents a shift from seeing barriers to learning as something existing in the child to seeing those barriers as a product the society that child finds themselves living in. Sometimes our institutions are more disabled than our children. This kind of perspective is informed by social constructivism, a theory that suggests that ability and identity are not necessarily things a child is born with, but are constructed by social norms, categories,

labels, structures, institutions and the relationships that these all support.

- ◆ What social norms do you think are reproduced in our curricula, assessment criteria, the ways we rank learners, teaching practices and school culture?

- ◆ Do these norms support a fixed mindset or a growth mindset?

Becoming a superhero and reaching escape velocity

When we share Nokhuthula's story with teachers, we often get the response that Nokhuthula is a "superhero of a teacher" because no teacher can do all the things she does all the time. Teachers admit that they might do some of these things some of the time, but feel a little overwhelmed by the idea that they might need to become experts. At this point we talk about the importance of making small gains over time. We may not be able to change the whole system overnight, but we can keep growing the conversation and making incremental changes to our teaching practice and school culture. Clearly these are ideals, but there are also the small gains that can be made on a regular and incremental basis in a particular context.

A useful metaphor for thinking about this is 'escape velocity.' Gravity holds us to the earth. For a spaceship to overcome gravity (a metaphor for the way the past pulls us back to old habits) we need to build up sufficient speed or escape velocity. At a certain speed we only end up orbiting the earth (circling our old habits, still subject to their influence). Only at escape velocity, we soar into space and open up possibilities for new discoveries and new journeys. As Kader Asmal, a former Minister of Education, put it in his introduction to *White Paper 6, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System*, (DoE, 2001. p.4), "What will be required of us all are persistence, commitment, cooperation, support, evaluation, follow-up and leadership." We do not reach escape velocity immediately, but we need to constantly be making the choices and the changes that help us to build up enough momentum to overcome all forms of exclusion.

As teachers begin to explore the attitudes and techniques we have spoken about here, they begin to realise Inclusive Education is really just excellent teaching practice. Integrating diversity and embracing different ways of knowing, doing and being, is an opportunity for everyone to learn and grow.

- ◆ What kinds of teaching practices and forms of school culture exclude learners by creating barriers to learning? How can you start to change them?

Identifying your own your zones of proximal development

If you have followed our suggestion, you have been making a list of attitudes and techniques that you would like to integrate into your teaching practice. Don't try and do these all at once. Focus on a few at a time. Develop your own checklist that you consult, from time to time, to reflect on your use of inclusive education attitudes and techniques in your teaching practice.

◆   Looking back over Nokhuthula's story, what skills and teaching methods can you identify in her teaching practice?

Here follows a list of statements (perhaps a kind of manifesto) that you can use to assess the current state of your attitudes to diversity. They can help you identify your own growing edges – your zones of proximal development.

I consider the diverse experience of learners, with a genuine interest in each learner's subjective experiences (and the communities they come from).

doing this already   ready to learn   not ready to do this yet   not willing to

I create a learning environment that is meaningful and enabling for diverse subjective experiences and identities, with many opportunities for agency.

doing this already   ready to learn   not ready to do this yet   not willing to

I don't only engage diversity when lesson content covers it. I choose to use language, examples, narratives and illustrations that are inclusive of diverse life experiences and identities.

doing this already   ready to learn   not ready to do this yet   not willing to

I facilitate dialogue that deepens understanding between learners (and between teachers and learners) concerning different cultural identities and sexualities.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I recognise and question harmful generalisations, cultural assumptions, superstitions, prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination (especially the assumptions we communicate in the tasks we ask female learners to perform).

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I resist labelling learners. I describe and give accurate feedback about what they do, not who they are. I understand that labelling a learner, positively or negatively, reduces their complex, multi-cultural being with diverse dispositions to a single identity, that they then have to live up to or work against

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I try not to perceive a learner's disability or barriers to learning as the most important element in defining who they are. I do not label them on that basis and allow that label to cause me to neglect other aspects of their being and ability.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I pick up on serendipitous learning opportunities (through current events and popular media) to reflect on diversity and improvise discussions or activities based on what is happening in the classroom, the community and the world.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I recognise and prioritise issues of relevance to the everyday life of learners, and actively adapt the curriculum to accommodate those issues.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I try to understand a learner's attitudes concerning the subject matter I am teaching and their beliefs about their own ability to perform the tasks I expect of them – and create opportunities for them to reflect on and express their experience of learning.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I explore the ways that different languages (and uses of language) represent values, respect, success, intelligence, knowledge, beauty, power, wealth, health, identity, race, gender, sexual orientation, categories, cultural assumptions, social hierarchies, knowledge, truth, morality, sanity, freedom, etc.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I do not allow my own discomfort to ignore the fact that a learner is a sensual and sexual being who needs to explore and develop their capacity for meaningful and satisfying relationships – through safe and healthy experimentation.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I recognise that power is present in all places and is often invisible – and that if I am to perceive it I need to be willing to go beyond the surface, challenge my assumptions and question what I take for granted.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

I want to "go beyond the content" and equip learners with the transferable skills they need to engage any content to their advantage – enabling all learners to think critically; innovate without fear of failure; communicate clearly and confidently; collaborate dynamically and participate actively in productive dialogue; risk small, regular, and carefully designed experiments; persevere and not give up when a solution isn't immediately obvious; and adapt to change with as little anxiety as possible.

| doing this already | ready to learn | not ready to do this yet | not willing to |

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