



Does pre-service teacher education enable beginner teachers to teach inclusively?

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THE NEW SEGREGATION

Human Rights Watch's report on education for children with disabilities, "Complicit in Exclusion", contains some damning findings.



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AFRICA

South Africa's disabled children excluded from school

Human Rights Watch says 500,000 disabled children are excluded from school in South Africa. Education

HOME

...EE AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

"Complicit in Exclusion" South Africa's Failure to Guarantee an

The Human Rights Watch report on education for children with disabilities attracted international attention

Teacher capacity to respond with appropriate pedagogies to learners who experience barriers to learning is vital to reverse trends towards marginalisation and exclusion.

2006 report from a roundtable discussion organised by The Human Sciences Research Council and Disabled People of South Africa noted: studies showing teachers' negative attitudes and lack of preparedness for inclusion had been overemphasised and offered little in terms of the way ahead for inclusive education.

One of the key research questions which emerged in the report was: "What is the most appropriate Human Resource Development Strategy to ensure integrated and inclusive teaching, learning and management practice in all educational institutions in South Africa? For example such as models of teacher development emerging from international experience and for the South African context and the basic minimum that must be provided to ensure effective implementation of an inclusive education system" (Lorenzo & Schneider, 2006, p.9).

Florian (2012:214) concludes that “few [teacher education] initiatives have been subject to rigorous evaluation or empirical investigation”.

She identifies that globally there has been “little rigorous and systematic research on teacher preparation and continuing professional development” for inclusive education and asks, “Is it possible to see benefits for students and developments in inclusion that are linked to particular kinds of teacher education?”

(Florian, 2012:217)

**NRF
funded
project into
teacher
education
for
inclusive
education**

**Question:
To what
extent do
teachers draw
on their
learning about
inclusive
education to
enable the
inclusion of
learners with
diverse
learning needs
in their
classrooms?**

Pre-service

**Beginner
teachers**

**Early career
teachers**

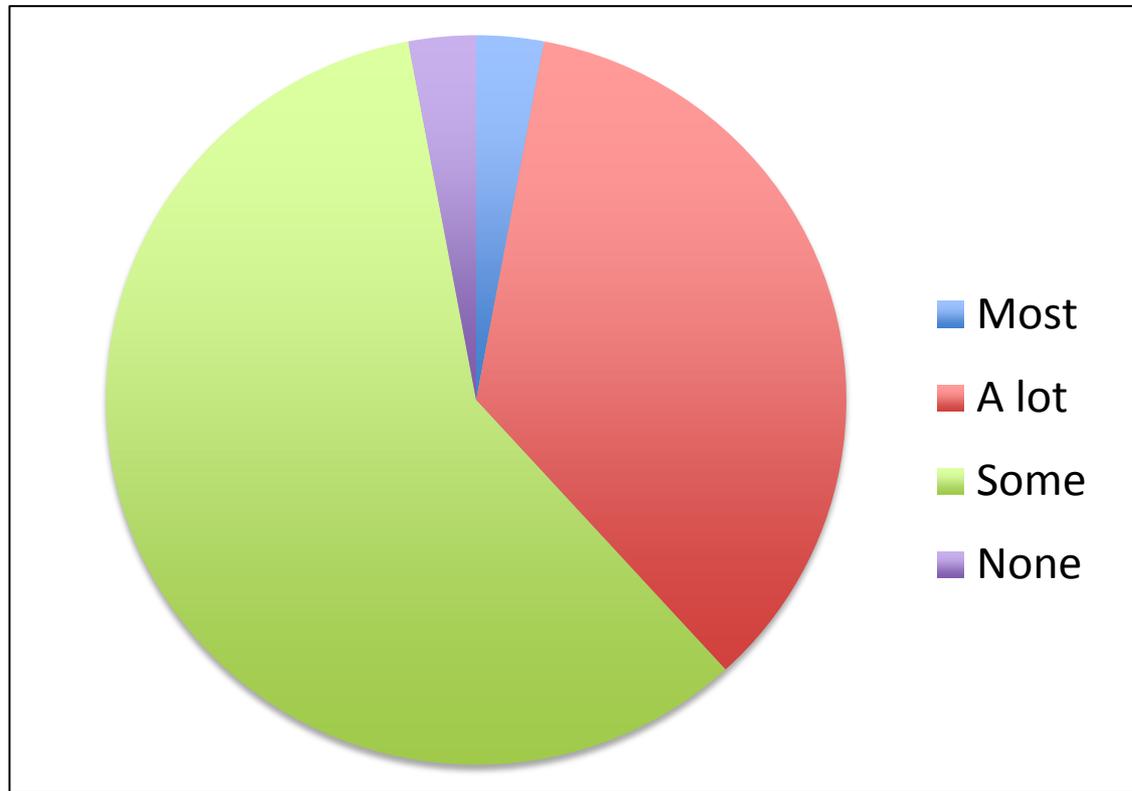
In-service

**Teachers in full
service schools**

SMT members

SBST members

How much do beginner teachers remember from their inclusive education coursework?



“The only thing I can really remember is... some of the different teaching techniques that they taught. Not that I really remember anything specific thing. But I do remember like... um... mostly I remember the content had to always be inclusive ... It was always making sure your pictures were appropriate for all the learners and ja, maybe that’s the only thing I really remember.”

“I don’t remember a lot. But I do remember that it is important to have an inner awareness within yourself of the abilities in your class, of the different strengths and weaknesses of children, um of the way that they learn and the different backgrounds that they come from, and teaching in a way that tries to accommodate all of them.”

What we wanted to find out:

1. How does the teachers' knowledge of Inclusive Education impact their pedagogical reasoning?
1. How does knowledge of Inclusive Education impact the teachers' attitudes towards learners?
1. What evidence can be found of inclusive practices in beginner teachers' classrooms?

Key Concepts:

Inclusive Pedagogy

Florian (2012:277) identifies inclusive pedagogy as “(encouraging) open ended views of all children’s potential for learning and encourages teachers to extend the range of options that are available to everyone in the community of the classroom.”

Pedagogical Reasoning and Action

Shulman (1987) provides a framework for expressing the cyclical nature of the teaching and learning processes.

Teachers’ actions are guided by level of thought, as their reasons directs their decisions and actions that are made.

Design and Methodology

Quantitative



Qualitative



Participants:

- Survey sent to first year teachers (Intersen and Foundation phase)

Limits in design:

- Single Higher Education Institution
- Small sample
- Those participating not representative of all beginner teachers

- **Limits in execution:**

Low response rate (especially Intersen)

- More affluent schools represented

Tentative Research Findings

Although beginner teachers are not confident about teaching inclusively, there is evidence of inclusive practice informed by coursework in initial teacher education.

Pedagogical reasoning

Content selection

“I knew that I had a Jehovah witness in my class, I had all different religions. So I did try (include all the religions), even though the curriculum only spoke of four”

Learner difference

- Survey illustrated that teachers were conscious of the different pedagogical strategies that they knew their children would respond to.
- The interview reiterated data obtained from survey through the intermediate participant discussing why she planned on using everyday objects in her lesson.

Reflections on non-inclusion

- Exclusion for not using concrete materials.
- Silent learners: unknowingly exclude

Pedagogical responsiveness in action

Individual learner needs

- Both participants responded to the individual learner needs as they identified children that were struggling with concepts.
- Foundation Phase teacher discussed quietly approaching children that were battling.
- Intermediate teacher reflected on calling the children to her desk.

Group characteristics

- Learner engagement during the lesson

Classroom discourses

- Participants discussed cultivating respect and acceptance amongst the learners, by respecting each other's voice to be heard and working pace of learners.

Multi-modal learning

Participants were sensitive to how children learn

Human and material contexts that enable and constrain inclusive pedagogy

Supportive school leadership

- Recognition of school HOD discussing with the teachers about including all the learners.

Smart boards/ availability of technology

- Inclusive: allowing for easy interaction
- Exclusive: not all children have the background experiences of working with technological devices.

Classroom configurations

- Addressed issues of strategic seating arrangements

Reflections on previous, current and future learning for Inclusive Education

Previous learning:

- For example: Learning modalities, making content inclusive

“I remember the content had to always be inclusive... for example...It was always making sure your pictures were appropriate for all the learners and ja, maybe that’s the only thing I really remember”

Current Learning:

- Learn on site whilst you are teaching.

Future Learning:

- Inclusive Education in ITE needs to be more practical and less theoretical.
- Attend courses as a first year teacher.

“I know we have to join unions and then we go on courses... (Inclusive Education) should be one of the courses offered. Or it should even be a course that you have to go on as a first year teacher”.

Conclusions

- Inclusive education in ITE does enable some inclusive pedagogy
- Inclusive education in ITE provides conceptual tools for reflection on inclusionary and exclusionary school and classroom practices
- Inclusive education is best taught in standalone courses and infused into the programme
- There is a limit to the impact of ITE courses – personal and school factors enable or constrain inclusive pedagogy

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Thank you

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