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Establishing inclusive schools: Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education teams

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The international debate on colonisation is gaining momentum, primarily in the Americas, Africa and Australasia. Recent incidents in South Africa, such as the Fallist movement and the protest over rules on black girls' hair at certain schools, have sparked renewed debates on (de-)colonisation in the education system. It has become critical that those concerned with the transformation of education in a post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa consider socio-political and historic contextual factors. This is especially the case when it comes to their endeavours to implement inclusive education, with its imperative to provide equal and quality education and support for all. Educational transformation in South Africa is based on systemically positioned support structures. However, these structures have their roots in countries that do not have the same socio-political history and current contextual constraints as developing countries. This research aims to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the role Inclusive Education Teams (IETs) play in establishing an inclusive school in the Western Cape Province. For this case study, participants were purposefully selected from an inclusive school. Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion. The findings show that, despite the in-service training provided by the IET, teachers still need continuous, contextually responsive support.

Keywords: colonisation; contextually responsive support; District Based Support Teams (DBSTs); educational transformation; Inclusive Education Teams (IETs); inclusive school

Introduction

Inclusive education (IE) debates in South Africa have become entrenched in the larger debates on democratisation. The South African constitution marked a break with the colonial, apartheid socio-political dispensation, which had divided people primarily on the basis of race to the advantage of the settler colonialists. The term "decolonisation" has been domesticated both internationally (Tuck & Yang, 2012) and in the current South African socio-political climate, with the pursuit of social justice on all fronts. Tuck and Yang (2012) caution activists and theorists not to use the term "decolonisation" as a metaphor for social justice. However, it is important to be cognisant of the current contextual realities in South Africa. As with other countries that were colonised, South Africa still struggles to salvage the remnants of the indigenous peoples' knowledge (among other elements) in order to build and restore the country and its peoples.

Inclusive Education in South Africa is inextricably linked with building a new democracy based on social justice, specifically by eradicating exclusionism in education. It is acknowledged that IE has its roots in the discourse on disability and the justification for including those with disabilities in mainstream education (Dreyer, 2017). The understanding of Inclusive Education (IE) in South Africa, however, led to a broader definition, one which includes not only those with disabilities, but also those excluded on the basis of race, language, or culture (Department of Education [DoE], 2001). This broad understanding of IE recognises that both extrinsic (systemic) and intrinsic barriers can lead to exclusion.

Nonetheless, the debate on IE has matured from the stage of justification to that of implementation (Dyson, 1999). Both internationally and locally, several publications discuss collaboration as part of the implementation of inclusion, such as those of Moran and Abbot (2002) as well as Nel, Engelbrecht, Nel and Tlale (2014). The Education Department in South Africa has decided on a systemic approach, one which would foster collaborative efforts to implement IE. Given that implementation ultimately takes place in the classroom, it is evident that teachers need to be supported. One of the key drivers of IE is the establishment of DBSTs and Institution-level support teams (ILSTs) (also named School-Based Support Teams) whose function is training and supporting teachers to implement IE within a new democratic dispensation (DoE, 2001).

In the international arena, the Incheon Declaration envisioned the implementation of IE within the Education 2030 Framework for Action. The aim was to ensure quality, equitable and effective learning outcomes for all as an integral part of the right to education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2016). A recent progress report on the Sustainable Development Goal 4, however, found that "The lack of trained teachers and the poor condition of schools in many parts of the world are jeopardizing prospects for quality education for all. Sub-Saharan Africa has a relatively low percentage of trained teachers in pre-primary, primary and secondary education (44 per cent, 74 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively)" (United Nations, 2017:7).

Both internationally and locally, significant developments in educating learners with disabilities and learning difficulties need to include a commitment by teachers to create mainstream schools capable of educating all learners (Dyson & Forlin, 1999). At the same time, it is important that teachers are supported in the face of the myriad systemic and contextual challenges. This speaks directly to the 'the pragmatics discourse within the inclusive education movement,' and thus also to implementation in the classroom (Dyson, 1999;

Dyson & Forlin, 1999:42). Mitchell (2005) alludes to the fact that countries have different interpretations, philosophies and practices of IE that are embedded in a range of contexts and social-historical perspectives. It is therefore imperative that educational systems are contextually responsive to the local needs. By exploiting the favourable conditions for international knowledge exchange (through the internet, international conferences and research collaborations, scholar exchange programmes), developing countries such as South Africa too often take on structures from the wealthier countries that once colonised them. In this globalised world it is not uncommon for a country to take on models from other countries. What is of concern is that these models or structures, if not adapted to suit the needs of the people they are intended to serve, will not be contextually relevant (Dreyer, Engelbrecht & Swart, 2012).

The implementation of IE poses major challenges to educational systems around the world, in both developing and developed countries. UNESCO (2017:18) urges countries to ensure that “inclusion and equity are [the] overarching principles that [...] guide all [their] educational policies, plans and practices.” IE forms an integral part of the democratisation and transformation of the education system in South Africa. In the 24th year since the first democratic elections, it has become critical that this transformation of the education system should reflect a decolonising character. Adopting a systemic approach to implementing IE within a framework of social justice would support this.

In establishing inclusive schools and converting special schools into resource centres, DBSTs were appointed in all education districts. The primary aim of these teams is to help strengthen the skills teachers need through systemic support (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). They help the teachers with the development of inclusive learning programmes, curriculum differentiation, alternative assessment strategies, the use of assistive devices, etc. (DoE, 2001). The support is thus focused on dealing with the challenges related to multi-level classrooms, as well as ensuring effective teaching and learning within an inclusive education system (Wilderman & Nomdo, 2007).

The initial short-term steps in the plan to implement IE involved the conversion nationally of 30 primary schools to inclusive schools (DoE, 2001). In 2014, there were 147 full-service/inclusive schools in the Western Cape Province, with 1,420 learners with disabilities enrolled (Department of Basic Education [DBE], Republic of South Africa, 2015). The DBE, Republic of South Africa (2009) uses the terms ‘Inclusive School’ and ‘Full Service School’ interchangeably. In this article, however, the term ‘Inclusive School’

is used. The DBE, Republic of South Africa (2009:7) presents a five-pronged definition of an inclusive school, summarised as a mainstream school that will provide quality education to all. Eventually, the Western Cape Education Department ([WCED], 2016) envisions that all ordinary public schools receive training and incrementally be developed into full-service/inclusive schools that will be able to support learners with mild to moderate special educational needs. This is in line with the UNESCO (2005:13) notion that “inclusive education involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.”

Research has found that few schools in South Africa have adequate access to support services from the DBST (Nel et al., 2014). However, the WCED expanded support for schools through Inclusive Education outreach teams (IETs) based at Special School Resource Centres, supporting both inclusive schools and ordinary mainstream schools (WCED, 2016). These IETs were formed in response to the contextual needs in the inclusive schools. Each IET is comprised of a school counsellor, a learning support teacher and a therapist (occupational or speech therapist).

The WCED guidelines for the operation of IETs coincide with those of the DBSTs. Compared to the DBSTs, however, they have fewer schools, which they support on a weekly basis (Mfuthwana, 2016). In the Metropole East Education District, where this study was conducted, the job description of these teams was as follows:

- IET assists the ILST with the development of Individual Support Plans (ISP) for resource class learners at the Inclusive school.
- Assists with the development of a Care Plan and Exit Plan for resource class learners.
- Assists in early identification of learners experiencing barriers to learning, and provide support.
- Contributes to the development of preventative, curative and developmental support programmes to reduce barriers.
- Assists resource class learners with career orientation and vocational guidance.
- Assists with the development of networks within the community for possible work-related placements (WCED Metropole East Education District, 2010).

Despite numerous initiatives offering formal systemic support aimed at promoting the policies on IE, research suggests that teachers still find it stressful to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms (Dreyer, 2014; Nel et al., 2014). Dreyer (2017) explains that this is because 65% of mainstream primary school teachers have no formal qualification that would enable them to address learning barriers, and their perceived levels of

competence to provide high-level support to learners in their classes are quite low at 38 percent. It is imperative that teachers are skilled and receive sustained, contextually responsive support, as they play an essential part in successfully implementing IE (Pearce, Gray & Campbell-Evans, 2009). The role played by systemic support structures, such as the DBST and the IET, ought to be to significantly develop mainstream primary schools as inclusive schools.

Systemic Implementation of Inclusive Education

Internationally, there is a strong move to address the challenges of implementing inclusive education and systemically providing support. This approach challenges those inflexible educational organisational systems which fail to respond with significant insight to all learners' needs (Dreyer, 2008). Decades after the declarations and conventions were accepted by many countries, they still struggle to implement policies on IE effectively and systematically within the system.

Nonetheless, educational restructuring in South Africa embraces this systemic approach. Structures have been established at national, provincial, district and school levels. Various conceptual and operational guidelines have been published to support the systemic introduction of IE. One of these is the guidelines for the establishment of full service/inclusive schools (DoE, Republic of South Africa, 2005). Systemic support is also provided at the different levels needed, i.e.: 1. low-intensive support in ordinary mainstream schools; 2. moderate support in full-service/inclusive schools; and 3. high-intensive educational support that will continue to be provided in special schools/resource centres (DoE, 2001).

Despite all these efforts, the DBE has identified several challenges which have delayed the development of an inclusive education system in South Africa. Among these is the need for "effective and ongoing support to be given to schools on how to address barriers to learning through measures of early intervention including remediation" (DBE, Republic of South Africa, 2015:6–7).

Positioning Teachers in Inclusive Schools

It is internationally acknowledged that teachers play a significant role in establishing welcoming, inclusive learning environments. It is further accepted that their understanding of inclusive education, their attitudes towards it, as well as their pedagogical knowledge and skills impact largely on their practices (Dreyer, 2017; Shevlin, Winter & Flynn, 2013). Traditionally, mainstream teachers were not trained to address barriers to learning, but the transition towards IE has obliged them to accept the full spectrum of learners in their mainstream

classes. Not surprisingly, therefore, research indicates that, due to teachers' lack of the skills needed to practise inclusive pedagogies in their classrooms, policy implementation is not undertaken effectively (Nel et al., 2014).

According to the literature, many teachers do appear to have a sound knowledge of IE (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2010; Pearce et al., 2009; Razali, Toran, Kamaralzaman, Salleh & Yamin, 2013). The teachers in these studies agreed that integrating learners with special needs in the mainstream classroom was only the first step towards inclusion (Anati & Ain, 2012). They highlighted the need for a team of specialists to address the issues of IE. This might suggest that they still tended to rely strongly on experts and to hold onto exclusionary practices. In light of this, Nel et al. (2014) question whether teachers truly understand what their role is in an IE system when faced with learners who encounter barriers to learning and need support. On the flipside, it could also be claimed that teachers realise that they cannot do this alone, which further adds to their frustrations. It stands to reason that in order to implement IE successfully, teachers must be adequately trained, and require ongoing support. Razali et al. (2013) concur that, in establishing inclusive schools, class teachers need to be empowered with knowledge, skills and support; allowing them to identify the needs of students, and to apply the methodologies and strategies that respond to these needs.

Peters (2004) refers to improving the skills teachers need to implement IE as a developmental process, requiring much more than once-off work sessions and in-service development. In order to ensure sustainability it is imperative that teachers receive continuous support, giving them the confidence to attend to the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning. Research (Donohue & Bornman 2014; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016) indicates that the current deficient implementation of IE in South Africa is closely related to an overall lack of support and resources, which is exacerbated by teachers who lack training; overcrowded classrooms; and poor support services. These findings are not unique to South Africa, but echo the World Bank Report (Peters, 2004) on the state of inclusion in the countries in the Global South.

Inclusive School

A mainstream school that embraces the values of inclusive education accepts the principle that a learner is no longer required to 'fit in,' but schools have to adapt in order to accommodate for the needs of all learners. They have to challenge the obstacles that limit learning and participation, and identify the strengths of each child (DoE, Republic of South Africa, 2005).

In line with the UNESCO imperative, the DBE, Republic of South Africa (2009:6) defines an inclusive school as “one which has the capacity to respond to diversity by providing education appropriate to the individual needs of learners, irrespective of disability, differences in learning style, or of social difficulties.” Each teacher ought to have a repertoire of methods to support both curriculum and institutional transformation. Additional support should also be available to both learners and teachers. The DoE (2001) acknowledges the importance of improving the skills and knowledge of teachers and developing new ones. The DoE (2001:19) therefore prioritises the “orientation to and training in new roles focusing on multi-level classroom instruction, co-operative learning, problem solving and the development of learners’ strengths and competencies rather than focusing on their shortcomings.”

In line with the systemic approach to implementing IE, the newly established IETs in the WCED are designed to offer systemic support through teacher development, instead of through learner-level interventions. Working systemically requires working together collaboratively. Collaboration has been recognised as heightening the proficiency of teachers that can lead to promote inclusive practices (Nel et al., 2014). Collaboration between the IET and teachers is thus essential towards the development of an inclusive school.

The research question for this study was formulated as: what are the teachers’ perceptions regarding the role of IE teams on the establishment of inclusive schools? The main purpose was to examine teachers’ perceptions of the role of the IET as a collaborative partner in implementing IE. This research was guided by Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-systemic model as the theoretical framework (1979). This allowed for understanding the dynamic interactions in pursuit of the systemic implementation of inclusive education.

Research Design and Methodology

A qualitative case study design was used in this study. The methodology was thus embedded in an

interpretive paradigm. An interpretive approach helps to explore the subjective reasoning and meanings which inform social actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The rationale for this was that participants would be able to provide rich data on their experiences and their expectations of the role of the IET at their school. In order to commence with the research, ethical clearance (Number: May 2014/19) was provided by the university’s Research Ethics Committee.

Population and Participants

One school was purposefully selected for this case study. It was one of six mainstream primary schools that are supported by the IETs in the vicinity of the special school resource centre (SSRC). The WCED and the principal of the selected school gave written permission for this research project.

Purposeful convenient sampling was used to identify the participants. This was a convenient sample, since the IETs have established a good working relationship in the school. Eight teachers were chosen using criterion-based selection. The criteria were that they: 1) were teachers at the identified inclusive school; 2) volunteer their personal perceptions of the development of an inclusive school; and 3) were willing to provide details about their qualifications as well as their experiences. These teachers could contribute significantly to this research as they have experience of the identified school. Although eight participants were identified, only six teachers eventually participated in this case study.

All the participants stated that they received no formal training in inclusive education. One of the six teachers was male, teaching in the senior phase, and was a Head of Department. The other five were females teaching from Grade R up to Grade Six. Their experiences ranged from 10 years to 22 years. In Table 1 below is a short summary of the participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identity. They also were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage.

Table 1 Description of participants

Participants	Age	Years teaching experience	Grades taught	Formal education in IE
Lungiswa*	41	13	R	Workshops
Nosicelo*	51	19	2–7	No training
Vuma*	43	13	4–7	No training
Wendy*	52	22	2	No training
Maji*	42	7	4–7	Scanty training
Nuzuko*	45	15	4–7	No training

Data Collection

Data were collected through both semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion. These methods are preferred by researchers who work in an interpretivist paradigm (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2011). The interviews were conducted at the school in isiXhosa, the mother tongue of the participants, and then translated and transcribed verbatim in English.

Semi-structured individual interviews

Semi-structured individual interviews were the main data collection method. An interview guide was developed which helped the researcher to formulate a list of questions to be explored in the course of the interviews (Patton, 2002). The questions focused on eliciting the teachers' perceptions of IE; and how they understood both their own role, as well as the role of the IET in establishing an inclusive school. A total of six interviews were carried out and audio recorded with permission from the participants. The interviews were conducted after formal teaching hours and the duration ranged from 45 minutes to one hour.

Focus group discussion

Although all eight teachers were invited to join in the focus group discussion, only six participated. The same questions asked at the individual interviews were used to inform and guide the focus group discussion. This allowed for a deeper probing of the issues which emerged from the individual interviews. The participants could con-

tribute to a deeper understanding as they could respond to each other's comments (Patton, 2002). The focus group discussion was audio-recorded with the permission from the participants and lasted about one hour.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to systematically analyse data. The data collected were manually transcribed verbatim. A process of coding and categorisation was then carried out. Coding involves the labelling of data in order to give meaning to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through data analysis regularities and patterns were identified and coded to represent the topics covered. These codes were reduced and categorised accordingly. Themes relating to the research topic emerged from these categories.

Results

Three broad themes were identified as they emerged during the qualitative content analysis. The themes and sub-themes are given in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Establishing inclusive schools	Top-down approach Training
2. Role of mainstream school teacher in establishing inclusive schools	Support each other Need to differentiate curriculum Individual support
3. Role of IETs in establishing inclusive schools	Follow-up and classroom support IET based at school Strengthen ILST

Establishment of an Inclusive School

Generally, the participants in this study perceived the school to be unsuitable for development into an inclusive school. Their rationale focused on insufficient material and human resources as major challenges. Participants noted that the department looks at the pass rate, whereafter the school is compared to other schools. They are of the opinion that this should not happen, as they are required to address challenges that learners experience. Participants argued that equating teacher effectiveness with learner academic outcome stands in conflict with policy on IE. This apprehension stems from their concern about the low pass rate at the school and the teacher-learner ratio. Class sizes varied between 45 and 50 learners. This situation was exacerbated by curriculum advisers who reportedly do not understand the concept of inclusivity.

Top-down approach

The responses of the participants revealed that they had not been consulted when their school was selected to be developed as an inclusive school. According to them, they were simply told that the

school was now an inclusive school. These views were expressed during the focus group discussion:

Nosicelo: *"This school is said to be an inclusive, the department just said so without coming to us and ask whether we want. Now when we are complaining about these learners, they say we must remember that we are an inclusive school."*

Wendy: *"The department must consult with us first before the implementation of the policy. It must stop to make decisions for us, because the policies are implemented by us."*

It was clear that the participants were not in favour of the top-down-approach that the department used.

Training

In their responses during the focus group interview, the participants seemed to have a sound knowledge of IE. This seems to be contradictory to their responses in Table 1. However, it seems as if they understand the concept of IE but are concerned about their level of skills in working with learners who experienced barriers to learning. All the participants agreed that there was a desperate need for training. Two of the six participants have attended a few workshops on IE. However, they

claimed that these were not sufficient, as seen in Vuma's response below:

Well, the IETs must give us intensive workshops, training teachers on how to handle barriers to learning. Secondly, they must train the teachers on how to do intervention strategies, and lastly they must enrol teachers to do remedial education, perhaps in one of the recognised institutions.

The participants also referred to the fact that they had large classes and the need for support to provide quality inclusive education and support. This is how Maji expressed herself:

If they can organise an assistant teacher for each class, I am sure we can get a chance to see to these learners. At the moment with our big numbers in class, I don't see this school as suitable to be an inclusive school. While you are busy with your lowest group, they are chasing each other and making noise.

Role of Mainstream School Teacher in Establishing Inclusive Schools *Support each other*

Participants view collaboration to be the first step towards accommodating learners with learning barriers in an inclusive school. However, they mainly highlighted challenging behaviour, as an obstacle to them. This verbatim account of Nozuko is an example of how they deal with it:

They [colleagues] sometimes give some advice on how to handle certain cases. For instance, the boys with behaviour problems, there are teachers who know how to handle them. So I go and ask.

It was clear that the participants saw collaboration as one way of decreasing the burden of managing bad behaviour. They acknowledged that certain teachers in the school had specific skills in dealing with learners.

Need to differentiate the curriculum

All the participants agreed that curriculum differentiation ought to be compulsory to ensure inclusion. The following verbatim transcripts are representative of the efforts they made to help those who struggled:

Nozuko: I am differentiating my work because I know that there are those that are in the middle. Some are very slow. So you try and work on their different levels.

Maji said: We try to give them work, if we see that they are not coping with the work you gave the whole class, you try to give work from the previous grade.

However, in general they reported to work in accordance with departmental expectations, even if they don't always find it easy.

Individual support

In the individual interviews, all the participants agreed that learners with barriers to learning, when given individual attention, would benefit from the lesson. However, they reportedly experience several challenges to provide individualised support.

In the following responses participants explain how they go about addressing this:

Lungiswa: When you identified this learner, I take her intervention book and let her work from my table. I give the rest of the class work to do, and I work with that learner according to her pace. I find this difficult because we have big numbers in our classes.

Vuma explained that she ... take[s] those learners that are struggling and try to work with them individually. I don't do that more often, I must say. You see, I am in the Intermediate Phase and we change periods. I don't see the time in 40 minutes to accommodate these learners.

Wendy said that she ... group[s] my learners and their work is not going to be the same. Those that are struggling, I give them work that is at their level.

According to the participants, the IET expected them to provide individual support. Similar studies concur that in order for the learners to acquire new skills and knowledge appropriate to their ages and abilities, as required in an inclusive classroom, the curriculum has to be individualised (Pearce et al., 2009). However, this is not a simple task, particularly when contextual constraints, such as large classes and the teachers' limited range of pedagogical strategies, are taken into account.

Role of the Inclusive Education Team in Establishing Inclusive Schools *Follow-up and classroom support*

All the participants agreed that the IET should follow up after training and provide hands-on, support in class. In the individual interviews Nosicelo voiced the following opinion:

What they tell us in these trainings is not practical. When you get to your classroom, you struggle alone. They must come and show us in front of the learners.

Lungiswa was of the opinion that:

The IET must come to my class and sit here. They must observe me half of the period, and next half they can show me how to do it. If they can be hands-on I will be happy.

The importance of practical demonstrations after the training is validated by several studies which found classroom support to be crucial in establishing inclusive schools (Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012; Pearce et al., 2009).

School-based IE teams

The participants in this study recommended that support staff should be based at their school. Generally they display confidence in the ILST at their school. According to them, it was "just a program within the school, with members who were not sure of what to do." They suggested that the IET be based at the school in order to help them on a regular basis, as seen in Nozuko's opinion expressed below:

We have an IET that comes to our school once per week. That is not enough. If we talk about the

DBST in general, they only come once per term. For example, you have a burning issue that needs a social worker. When you call the district you are told that the social worker is fully booked. Since they say we are an inclusive school, we are supposed to have those people here. The IET must work full-time at our school. At the moment, I don't think they are hands-on with us as a school.

Strengthen ILST

The participants emphasised that the ILST in this particular school was not functioning well. They felt that the members of the ILST were not skilled enough to fully support them. According to them, the ILST provided a platform to teachers to complain about the learners, and did not address the problems. They suggested that it was part of the role of the IET to strengthen the ILST in order to adequately deal with the challenges, as noted in the response below:

Vuma: Well, there is an ILST, once they found out that the learner cannot cope, they refer them to the district. Even the ILST is composed of teachers who do not have any specialisation. If the IET can be based at our school, it will be easy to strengthen our ILST.

Discussion

According to Sium, Desai and Ritskes (2012:iii), the "history of colonisation [*sic*] is one of displacement and replacement." The majority of South Africa's indigenous peoples still find themselves in abject poverty, not only dispossessed of land but also marginalised into invisibility in all spheres of mainstream society. As early as 1966, Cabral stated that decolonisation is not just about liberating (decolonising) the mind. It is about the "fight for material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future for their children" (Sium et al., 2012:v). Equal opportunities for quality education and support are regarded as an important vehicle for achieving this ideal in the context of post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa.

As part of the national initiatives to establish an inclusive education system in South Africa, both DBSTs and ILSTs were instituted to give systemic support to all schools. The mandate of these structures is to systemically and systematically provide training and support to schools. However, research (Dreyer, 2008) has shown that DBSTs generally do not succeed in providing the much-needed support to schools and teachers, while in many cases the ILST is dysfunctional. The ILST consists of full-time teachers who serve on the team in addition to their already heavy workload, and many of them do not have any training in the provision of support for learning disabilities.

In line with this systemic approach, the WCED has additionally introduced IETs to provide more focused and contextually responsive support within a school system influenced by colonial rule.

Implementing inclusive education in a contextually responsive way can contribute significantly towards the decolonisation of education in South Africa. In being contextually responsive, recognition is afforded to the indigenous way of Ubuntu. Phasha (2016:15) asserts that "Ubuntu is founded on collectivism, which is consistent with the agenda of inclusive education: to provide quality education for all in mainstream education settings."

The IET are required to visit the school on a weekly basis. It can be inferred from the job description of the IET in this education district that they have the responsibility to train and support mainstream teachers, the resource class teachers and the ILST while considering their local context.

The school in this case study was identified to have been developed as an inclusive school. The teachers therefore expected that they would be given sufficient support from the IET assigned to them. However, it was clear from the findings that both the support and the training from the IET were experienced as inadequate. Teachers expected ongoing, hands-on help and follow-up on implementation, in addition to the training sessions. This is consistent with the call for contextually responsive support to teachers. The participants' call for continuous support arose from their fear that they did not have sufficient training and lack the skills to provide "specialised" support to those learners with barriers to learning (Dreyer, 2017; Nel et al., 2014).

Despite the notion that inclusion has a global agenda, it is accepted that localised, contextual factors brought about by the socio-political history of countries like South Africa favoured the colonialists to the disadvantage of the indigenous peoples. According to Dreyer (2008), South Africa continues to be characterised by great inequalities, with contexts comparable to those of both developed and developing countries. The school in this case study represented the latter. With an average age of 46 years, these teachers had received their training in an apartheid era, during which people of colour did not need to have a matric (Grade 12) qualification in order to be trained as teachers. Given this socio-political and contextual background, the teachers' self-perceived incompetence (Dreyer, 2017) and insecurities need to be appreciated as authentic.

Nevertheless, the participants agreed in principle with the goal of developing schools that are inclusive. They were also aware of the role they would have to play regarding differentiation, individualised support, and collaboration. They admitted to a lack of confidence in doing this, basing it on contextual factors such as the large classes, inadequate material and human resources, little or no support from the DBST and ILST, and inadequate training. This data is supported by findings on the lack of support given to learners

who require high levels of it (Dreyer, 2017). These contextual factors ultimately seem to culminate in teachers being overwhelmed by this “mammoth” task. It is important that these factors be considered if IETs are to provide contextually responsive and sustained support to schools. While it is acknowledged that teachers are expected to be the first to provide pedagogically sound inclusive classroom practices, the participants in this study reiterated the dire need for support in their quest to successfully establish inclusive practices and pedagogy in the school. Most of the respondents emphasised the need for classroom-based support, such as class assistants. Indeed, several studies emphasise the vital role support in classrooms play in developing inclusive schools (Dalton et al., 2012; Pearce et al., 2009).

It is clear that strengthening the skills of teachers is not in itself enough to guarantee the successful implementation of inclusive education. Additionally, the participants called for a sustained support structure in the form of an IET based full-time at their school. In many wealthier countries the setting up of inclusive schools is accompanied by a support team at the school to whose services the teachers have regular access. However, this is a “luxury” that a developing country such as South Africa at present cannot afford. Research (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016) has shown that many schools in South Africa have to do their best with the limited human and material resources available. However, this does not diminish the need for contextually responsive support from the IET to teachers, even if they are to serve several schools. Teachers require sustained and context-appropriate support.

Conclusion

From the literature reviewed and the responses of the participants in this case study, it is clear that developing countries such as South Africa still struggle to transform their education systems effectively. This is largely due to the fact that structures for implementation of IE, adopted from wealthier developed countries, are perpetuating the colonialisation of the education system by taking no account of the local contextual factors brought about in the first place by colonialism and apartheid legislation. The findings from this research come from a single case study, and it is acknowledged that more research needs to be done on a wider scale. However, the conclusion that teachers need to be supported in order to implement inclusive pedagogical principles in class, and to do this need adequate material and human resources, is corroborated by both national and international literature.

While a systemic approach to implementing IE across the country is essential, it must be acknowledged that workshops and in-service

training alone are not enough to support teachers. It is similarly imperative that historical, socio-political and current contextual constraints are taken into account in South Africa, a developing country still struggling with an enormous burden of inequality brought about by colonialism and apartheid.

Although the IETs provide more focused and contextualised support, there is still a gap between training and implementation. Contextually responsive support is thus required in order to develop sustainable pedagogical practices which can confidently be used by all teachers in their pursuit of a form of inclusive education that recognise and values indigenous knowledge such as *ubuntu*.

Note

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