Disseminating our knowledge in an inclusive society: An inaugural editorial statement

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Abstract—Inclusive research is essential at all stages of research, including data collection and dissemination. This essay investigates how current literature and the practical application of inclusive practices in the academic setting illuminate this critical but often overlooked aspect of research. It offers the South African policy of Working Paper 6 (WP6) to clarify how the principle and policy of education for all learners can be implemented in inclusive societies and development, which confront various obstacles due to psychosocial issues. It discourses the purpose of the South African Policy of WP6 and its discourses in multiple contexts by adopting innovative and more inclusive techniques for dissemination, intellectual and developmental disability research, and analysis that can reach far beyond the academic walls. It finally discusses barriers to inclusive dissemination and methods to overcome them. Even though further research needs to be explored in this regard, this article would be beneficial to scholars to champion and implement inclusivity to make research more meaningful and accessible to all who are affected by any form of exclusion and discrimination in our society.

Keywords: Disseminating knowledge, Inclusive society, Inclusive education

I. INTRODUCTION

OVER twenty years, this concept of inclusive education has influenced our society and community globally and locally. For example, this article approaches the historical background of WP6 in South Africa, its various viewpoints, its philosophy as an inclusive education, and its difference between mainstreaming and inclusive education.

WP6 policy-special needs education: Building an inclusive education and training system in South Africa

South Africa now has an inclusive education and training system thanks to the WP6, a special needs education policy. Recall that researchers and theorists advocated inclusive education for all in the twenty-first century and criticised mainstream education (Lindsay, 2003; Stofile, 2008; Weeks & Erradu, 2013). Engelbrecht (2006, p. 254) notes that the extent to which radically entrenched attitudes and the institutionalisation of discriminatory practices are the central characteristics that differentiate South Africa from other countries regarding inclusive education. This is because historical and colonial legacies of inequality harmed education development in South Africa (Lam, Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2011).

These inequalities are based on the curriculum content and structure of education. During the apartheid era, the social and political frames were extremely designed with a lack of provision for most children. These inequalities were treated differently between three ethnic groups: White, Coloured, and African. Lam et al. (2011) pointed out that whites had advantages in most areas; Africans received "Bantu Education" and had the least access to services and the most restrictions, with a large gap in school expenses. Coloured occupied an intermediate status with higher expenditures on schooling than Africans. Education was inaccessible for Africans, Indians, and coloureds (Clark & Warger, 2004).

After the introduction of the new democratic government in 1994, it was declared that segregation had become unconstitutional (Giliomee, 2009). To eliminate these, however, in 1996, the South African Ministry of Education considered two main bodies, including the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), to find out what are the characteristics of special needs and support services in education structure. The NCSNET and NCESS could not effectively respond to various learning needs. However, in 2001, the South African government acknowledged the failure of the education system to answer to the needs of a substantial number of children. The government adopted a new policy on WP6, inclusive education, to build the country on equality and respect for human rights principles, particularly on appreciating diversity (Prinsloo, 2001, p. 344). These assignments have been assigned to the Education Department to improve the quality of education by focusing on implementing inclusive education and providing the necessary support for all learners (DoE, 2001). This WP6 was inspired by the international commitment that the final Salamanca statement pointed out regarding the development of inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994). The Department of Education proposed how the policy will systematically move away from using segregation according to categories of disabilities as an organising principle for institutions directed how the policy will maximise the participation of all learners in an inclusive education system. It also stated how equality will be achieved in the educational environment. All these issues are reviewed in the "White Paper 6 policy-Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System" curriculum.

Objectives of the South African Policy of White Paper 6

According to the South African Department of Education (DoE, 2001), the central objective of WP6 is to extend the policy foundations, framework, and programmes of existing policy for all bands of education and training so that our education and training system will recognise and accommodate the diverse range of learning need. The advance of inclusive training in the education system would provide educational opportunities for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate their learning needs (DoE, 2001, p. 4). The Ministry of Education recognised that the growth of an inclusive training system would take progressively over long-term, short-term, and medium-term actions. This allows the wide system to clarify capital, material, and human resource development and, consequently, the funding requirements for building an inclusive education and training system in South Africa (DoE, 2001, p. 4). To develop investment plans to improve the quality of education. It is to create special needs education as a non-racial and integrated all components of South African education systems (DoE, 2001, p. 4).

Inclusive education with different discourses

Over twenty years, many researchers, scholars, and theorists debated the explanation of these concepts of inclusive education. What does inclusive education exactly mean in this study? Who are the "subjects" of inclusive education? What factors make inclusive education seem accepted worldwide and in South Africa? The discussion of these questions is still an open subject of debate, and the study continues to explore its deeper implications and values among scholars and researchers. Miles and Singal (2010) debated the education issue for all and inclusive education as conflict, contradiction, or opportunity. Engelbrecht (2006) stated that no one approach to inclusive education exists within a particular country or school. The meaning of inclusive education is a complex and problematic concept and depends on multi-dimensional perspectives (Barton, 2003; Mitchell, 2005). There is no universally recognised definition of educational inclusive (Mitchell, 2005). This concept can be linked to what is expected and abnormal in the group (Kearney & Kane, 2006). It includes marginalised minority learners (Sayed & Soudien, 2003). For Zelaieta (2004, p. 37), inclusive education increases a school's capacity to respond to diversity and promote greater participation for all pupils. Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, and Shaw (2000) point out that the cultural context of the state should determine inclusive education and should principally depend on the political values and processes for its inaction. Ainscow et al.'s (2006) analysis proposed five ways of thinking on inclusive as follows:

1. *Inclusive as concerned with disability and special educational needs,*
2. *Inclusive as a response to disciplinary exclusions,*
3. *Inclusive as about all groups vulnerable to exclusion,*
4. *Inclusive is the promotion of a school for all,*
5. *Inclusive as education for all.*

UNESCO (2000) reported that inclusive means protecting against discrimination based on culture, language, social group, gender, or individual differences. These features are absolute human rights and must be respected to ensure all children have access to education (Dyson, Howes, & Roberts, 2004). Engelbrecht (2006) pointed out that the result of inclusive education is not a simple option to promote education in the South African context. Still, it is a strategy that mainly contributes to a democratic and just society.

Dyson et al. (2004) examined three viewpoints on inclusive education.

1. *Inclusive education responds simultaneously to students who all differ from each other, which poses challenges to the school,*
2. *It is not just about maintaining the presence of students in school. It is also about maximising their participation,*
3. *Inclusive education is a process that can be shaped by school-level action* (Dyson et al., 2004).

Regarding the definition of inclusive education, Ainscow and Miles (2009) recommended that it is relevant to consider the local circumstances, cultures, and history of inclusive education. The success of inclusive education involves the participation of all local communities, such as families, political and religious leaders, media, and the district office. Then, four factors were revealed by Ainscow and Miles (2009) as follows:

1. *Inclusive is a process that involves constantly searching for better ways of responding to diversity,*
2. *Inclusive is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers,*
3. *Inclusive is about all students' presence, participation, and achievement. Presence refers to where a child is educated. Participation is seen as a measure of the quality of experience of all learners. Then, achievement is concerned with learning outcomes across the curriculum,*
4. *Inclusive involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, or underachievement* (Ainscow, 2005, p. 119).

According to the South African Department of Education (2001, p. 16), inclusive education is:

1. *Acknowledge that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support,*
2. *Accept and respect the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs, which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience,*
3. *Enable education structures, systems, and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners,*
4. *Acknowledge and respect differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, or HIV status,*
5. *Be broader than formal schooling and acknowledge that learning also occurs in the home and community and within formal and informal modes and structures,*
6. *Be about changing attitudes, behaviours, teaching methodologies, curricula, and the environment to meet the needs of all learners,*
7. *Be about maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and minimising barriers to learning,*
8. *Empower learners by developing their strengths and enabling them to participate critically in learning* (DoE, 2001, p. 16).

Considering the preceding conceptualisations of inclusive education, this study proposes to understand this concept of inclusive education as a system of action that responds to the diverse needs of learners. The conceptual definition must be operationalised to make sense to an educational system that is inclusive of the need for diversity. This definition articulated that the need for support services will include teachers, parents, peers, and community, and dedicated personal posts in the education department.

Philosophy of White Paper 6 policy as an inclusive education

The White Paper 6, an inclusive education philosophy, becomes central to South Africa's education. This study mentions how best to respond to francophone adolescent learners who experience difficulties in peer interactions in inclusive education. As a philosophy, Engelbrecht (2006) notes that inclusive education embraces the democratic values of equality and human rights and the recognition of diversity. UNESCO (2005, p. 12) advocated that rationale and inclusiveness are dynamic approaches to responding positively to pupil diversity and seeing individual differences not as problems but as opportunities for enriching learning. Concerning the relevance of inclusive education, this study shows that education systems evolve in specific contexts as a philosophy. Inclusive education needs to be defined as inclusive principles with practical views to address inclusion in education worldwide. These principles should be articulated in diverse international or national statements and then can be interpreted and reformed to the individual country's context. In addition, Barton and Armstrong (2007) pointed out that inclusive education in a country is not a static phenomenon but dynamic. However, this study needs to consider the correct discourses that have strongly pronounced about the more comprehensive education reforms at both international and national levels.

International discourses on inclusive education

Internationally, many forums and conferences were convened to promote rights discourses. In the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, much emphasis was placed on inclusive education as a human right to education. The declaration was pronounced in the following form:

"Everyone has the right to education…Education shall be directed to develop human personality fully and strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups. It shall further the united nations' activities for maintaining peace" (United Nations. General Assembly, 1949: Art. 26).

At the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, UN agencies, and international and national NGOs addressed the objective of education for all as follows:

"All children and young people of the world, with their strengths and weaknesses, hopes and expectations, have the right to education. It is not our education system that has a right to certain types of children. Therefore, a country's school system must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children" (UNESCO, 1994).

The Salamanca statement reviews inclusive education as a means of building associations among individuals, groups, society, and nations. Therefore, it stipulated that regular schools' inclusive orientation is the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all (UNESCO, 1994: Art.2). UNESCO proclaimed the new insight in five principles from the correct issue.

1. Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be allowed 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 consider 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-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,

5. Regular schools with this 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 most children and improve the efficiency and, ultimately, the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational system (UNESCO, 1994, p. 2).

Further, a resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1994

On the other hand, inclusive education is still an open subject of debate and continues to explore its deeper implications and values among scholars and researchers. Miles and Singal (2010) debated the education issue for all and inclusive as conflict, contradiction, or opportunity. Engelbrecht (2006) stated that no one approach to inclusive education exists within a particular country or school. The meaning of inclusive education is a complex and problematic concept and depends on multi-dimensional perspectives (Barton, 2003; Mitchell, 2005). There is no universally recognised definition of educational inclusive (Mitchell, 2005). This concept can be linked to what is normal and what is abnormal to the group (Kearney & Kane, 2006). It includes marginalised minority learners (Sayed & Soudien, 2003). For Zelaieta (2004, p. 37), inclusive education is the principle of increasing a school's capacity to respond to pupil diversity and promote greater participation for all pupils. Booth et al. (2000) stated that the cultural context of the state should determine inclusive education and should principally depend on the political values and processes for its inaction. Ainscow et al.'s (2006) analysis proposed five ways of thinking on inclusive as follows:

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10.Inclusive as education for all.

National guidelines on inclusive education

In South Africa, national guidelines worked by providing the overall framework for developing policy for inclusive education. These initiatives included White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (DoE, 1995), the South African Schools Act (DoE, 1996), the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (DoE, 1997), the National Commission on Special Educational Needs and Training and the Nation Committee on Education Support Services (DoE, 1997), and WP6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (DoE, 2001).

At a national level, major changes were taking place due to the new democracy in South Africa.

According to the South African Department of Education (2001, p. 16), inclusive education is:

9. Acknowledge that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support,

10. Accept and respect the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs, which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience,

11. Enable education structures, systems, and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners,

12. Acknowledge and respect differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, or HIV status,

13. Be broader than formal schooling and acknowledge that learning also occurs in the home and community and within formal and informal modes and structures,

14. Be about changing attitudes, behaviours, teaching methodologies, curricula, and the environment to meet the needs of all learners,

15. Be about maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and minimising barriers to learning,

16. Empower learners by developing their strengths and enabling them to participate critically in learning (DoE, 2001, p. 16).

Barriers to inclusive dissemination

It is essential to note that numerous barriers arise when adopting inclusive dissemination methods. However, it is possible to overcome them by engaging in new ways of thinking about the content and purpose of inclusive dissemination (Parent-Johnson & Duncan, 2024). This article highlighted two barriers that scholars have experienced in navigating them.

Participating in meaningful inclusion

According to Khayatzadeh-Mahani, Wittevrongel, Petermann, Graham, and Zwicker (2020), intellectual interest and capacity development are insufficient to execute, conduct, and facilitate full and meaningful participation in inclusive research. Individuals with special needs may require space, time, resources, and assistance to develop ways of inclusive dissemination that enhance the research and dissemination process and exceed the costs (Walmsley, Strnadová, & Johnson, 2017). Individuals with special needs must be provided the necessary support to take on responsibilities for tasks that match their skills or be encouraged and allowed to develop new ones, which is vital to inclusive dissemination (Beckwith, Carter & Peters, 2016). For example, those with graphic design skills could be helpful collaborators in overseeing or refining the visual presentation of infographics and one-pagers. They would use their abilities and interests to tailor the content of these items to themselves and others with comparable impairments and interests. Parent-Johnson and Duncan (2024) have shown that they give many avenues for engaging people with lived experience with special needs, including the opportunity to assess strengths, identify interests, and question our current distribution techniques.

Legitimating self-researchers

Scholars indicated that individuals with special needs and those who have not traditionally been seen as "valid" academic researchers or staff, let alone competent employees (Nicolaidis et al., 2019; Walmsley, 2001). Thus, some may not see products disseminated with their voices as legitimate. Although such perspectives are not as widespread as they used to be only a few short years ago, they still exist and should be

considered by research and dissemination teams (Parent-Johnson & Duncan, 2024). Scholars must essentially promote their contributions to individuals with special needs through inclusive research and serve as authors or coauthors of reports or other information on inclusive dissemination in our society. This could benefit and be crucial in incorporating non-academic perspectives and appealing to mainstream audiences, increasing its breadth and reach. The research must acknowledge and recognise inclusive contributions to the scholarly community to elevate expectations for inclusive research and the roles individuals with special needs can assume.

Strategies for sharing inclusive information

Inclusive research teams focused on inclusive dissemination that advances the diversity of outlets where research is disseminated, leveraging a greater understanding of the audiences' issues and needs. Similarly, research can still be shared through journal articles, conference presentations, and grant reports. However, this broader range of mediums could be accessed by communities, which benefit from the work and could enhance research uptake. For example, scholars could include a plain language summary as part of a journal publication or develop an infographic, video, or policy brief to disseminate inclusive research for more accessibility to multiple stakeholders. This information can further be tailored for those with whom it would be shared, adopting language practices such as identity-first practices for audiences in the autism community (Dwyer, 2022) and a focus on those aspects of the valuable information for the community (Andre-Barron, Strydom & Hassitosis, 2008).

Considering intersectionality in inclusive information sharing

For example, using pronouns indicating individual gender preferences, ethnicity references such as Latinx or association with nation of origin, and racial identity should be investigated in collaboration with community members and the inclusive research team. The following sections will explain how plain language and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) essential tools for can be improving inclusive knowledge exchange.

Plain Language

Plain language is related to the UDL principle of giving alternative modes of representation, but the subject is essential enough for inclusive dissemination, which we wanted to emphasize independently. Plain English research summaries have evolved in recent years as a critical method for increasing the accessibility and usability of research information (Andre-Barron et al., 2008; St. John et al., 2022). Non-academics may struggle to understand concepts commonly used in academic or professional publications. Researchers use plain language to eliminate jargon and acronyms, which can be confusing and make research inaccessible (Nygren, 2022). Several recommendations for promoting the use of plain language have been proposed. Scholars, for example, should avoid scholarly linguistic formulations and artistic but confusing sentence patterns. They must specifically use terminology and keywords that are avoided unless they are also used by those with whom the research is conducted and are clearly and accessibly defined. They must mention essential concepts and details early or first in publications and define them using plain language. They should further use topics, concepts, or words that are derogatory or triggering and have no place in inclusive research dissemination. Overall, research meant for public or widespread consumption should use straightforward and plain language and be as unambiguous as possible.

Universal design for learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles make information more accessible to all individuals, including those with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities (Lowrey & Smith, 2018; Persson, Ahman, Yngling, & Gulliksen, 2014). At its core is the assertion that individuals benefit when they are given multiple ways to learn, take in new information, and demonstrate their comprehension and understanding (Burgstahler, 2020). In practice, UDL involves using a set of principles and techniques for creating and providing inclusive instruction and accessible materials that maximise learning. The

application of universal design to inclusive dissemination provides the framework and guidance for sharing information and research findings in ways that make them useable by a large and diverse audience as a standard of practice rather than an add-on or exception (Parent-Johnson, 2018). This section will describe examples of information dissemination strategies that use UDL principles to ensure research information includes multiple means of engagement, representation, and action.

Meaningful engagement

Inclusive dissemination focused on multiple means of engagement seeks to ensure there are various ways to engage with the content being shared. For example, presentation slides can combine closed captioning and American Sign Language interpretation to engage people who process information differently. Translating content to other languages can greatly expand accessibility to those for whom English is not their first language, both in written and live communications. Plain language articles and blogs are another way to engage multiple audiences, and accessible captioning can be used for all images and logos. Online publications can include pictures, icons, visual imagery, graphic illustrations, charts, and diagrams combined with word pairings that use plain language descriptions to describe the graphics. At the Sonoran Center, our inclusive communications team seeks to embed multiple ways to engage with the information in our products and meet accessibility standards. This involves checking the reading level of materials such as newsletters, articles, and webinars and providing multiple means of engagement in this content; a newsletter might also have links to web-based or social media content to offer other ways to engage and interact with the content).

Different means of representation

It is essential to note that various means of representation could present information differently to reach multiple audiences. However, Fialka and Fialka-Feldman (2017) indicated that research articles, presentations, and content for professional and lay audiences could promote the access of your audiences through infographics or one-pager. These succinct and targeted micropublications condense the research into a single easily digestible page using universal design formats that can, in turn, be rendered accessible to those with visual disabilities or who benefit from visual descriptions and clear and concise explanations of graphics (Monroe & Morrison, 2022). Infographics represent information in more engaging and understandable ways to larger audiences. These flexible products can be shared through handouts or online, putting the information in the hands of people with disabilities, family members, and those in the disability community who may not otherwise have opportunities to receive it.

Various means of action and expression

It is critical to recognize that adopting means of action and expression may provide a variety of possibilities for applying study findings. Many of the tactics listed above can help people act on research findings, such as disseminating one-pagers and infographics and communicating research findings to multiple stakeholder groups. Parent-Johnson and Duncan (2024) solicited feedback from people with special needs and their lived experiences to determine how actionable inclusive dissemination activities are for the larger disability community.

II. CONCLUSION

Regarding the South African context, the Department of Education recognised that a broad range of learning needs exist among the teachers and learners' population at any point. Inclusive education needs to have arisen in South Africa for many reasons. This helps to understand negative attitudes and stereotyping of differences, an inflexible curriculum, inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching, improper and unsafe built environments, inappropriate and inadequate support services, inadequate policies and legislation, the non-regulation and non-involvement of parents, inadequately and inappropriate trained education managers and educators (DoE, 2001, p.

17). The one is the value of our diversity in the communities. These diversities generally start at schools, where teachers and learners must live alongside their peers. They learned, cooperated, played, and grew together. The schools must interact and develop social skills. However, those not belonging to the same group or community should learn from each other in inclusive settings. In addition, Inclusive education allows teachers and learners to develop a positive understanding of themselves and their peers. However, at schools, teachers and learners must appreciate diversity because learning from others can reflect the similarities and differences of people in the real world. These principles guided the National Education Policy Investigation. They guided the policy development in South Africa as intended to protect human rights, values, and social justice; the unitary system; non-discrimination, non-racism, and non-sexism; democracy; redress of educational inequalities; and cost-effectiveness.

III. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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