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### **ABSTRACT**

Inclusive education is an approach to teaching and learning that aims to provide equal opportunities and support for all students, regardless of their background, abilities, or disabilities. It recognizes and values the diversity of students and seeks to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where every learner can thrive. This desktop review paper set intended to provide an Afrocentric paradigm of inclusive education, its contribution to the curriculum's decolonization, and how it resonates with South Africa's curriculum's decolonization. This is accomplished by referencing academics who argue that it is consistent with Ubuntu and traditional African culture. A search from scholarly databases for academic literature pertinent to the suggested title was used to perform the review. The data were subjected to sifting and content analysis, and new themes were noted. The paper explores themes that include multicultural education as the cornerstone for recognizing all cultures as equally legitimate, an inclusive education curriculum as a decolonial endeavour to enhance inclusion and Africanizing Inclusive Education Curriculum. This paper suggested that multicultural education should be valued, and curricular changes should advocate for indigenous pedagogy's educational Afrocentric value in inclusive education.

**Keywords:** Afrocentric, Africanizing, Decolonization, Indigenous Pedagogy Inclusive Curriculum, South Africa Education

### **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The Constitution of South Africa guarantees that every child has the right to a good education. The Education White Paper 6, or the Policy on Inclusion, was released by the Minister of Education in 2001. It outlines how to remove obstacles to learning and how to gradually integrate inclusive education across the whole educational system (DoE, 2010).

South Africa joined over 94 other participating countries in 1994 by signing the Salamanca Declaration, which aims to provide education for all children and youth. The Education For All (EFA) objectives were initially introduced in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and the South African government formally endorsed them in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000. Two of the EFA's six objectives are to:

“ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes”; and

“improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure the excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills” (DoE, 2010, p.8)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was signed by South Africa in 2007; the country ratified the Convention in 2008, making it one of the first 20 nations to do so. According to Article 24 of this Convention, it shall be ensured that all students, irrespective of age, have access to inclusive education at all levels, free from prejudice and based on equal opportunity.

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which is supported by social justice, human rights, a healthy environment, and inclusion, was launched by the Department of Education to ensure that education is accessible to everyone. The inclusion principle, in particular, emphasizes the necessity of celebrating student diversity, promotes the development of friendly educational environments, and guarantees that all students participate to give them all a sense of importance and belonging.

The Department of Education has given close attention to how students with learning challenges, such as disabilities, may be tested to identify the levels of support required to optimize prospects for success while field testing the implementation of inclusive education. In conventional classes, with the help of District Based Assistance Teams (DBSTs), the Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) method was created and field tested as a tool for schools to prepare for learner support. Planning for inclusive teaching and learning should occur organically once educators have established the type and degree of help needed by students who

are encountering learning obstacles. The adjustments the Guidelines on Inclusive Teaching and Learning intend to make will be brought about as a result (DoE, 2010).

One-size-fits-all teaching and learning methods are promoted by homogeneous curricula that ignore the idea of inclusive or intercultural education (Moosavi, 2020). This necessitates a new method of teaching and learning that adapts to the various learning demands of students through learner differentiation. The goal of inclusive education is to ensure that all students participate in class and achieve academic achievement by reducing exclusion from and within institutions. According to some critics, inclusive education represents an unwelcome imposition on nations in the Global South and is a neo-colonial endeavour. As opposed to the colonial techniques of direct military control or covert political hegemony, neo-colonialism uses economic imperialism, globalization, cultural imperialism, and conditional aid to influence or dominate a developing country. According to Duncan (2022), this dominance of information from Euro-American nations about inclusive education might be considered a type of colonialism. Additionally, nations are expected to pay an inclusive model created in the resource-rich North, and present-day education still reinforces colonial inequalities.

Inclusionary education was supported in the Salamanca Statement, which mandated that students with special needs have access to conventional schools and should be accommodated within a child-centered pedagogy capable of satisfying their requirements (UNESCO, 1994). Books, articles, websites, and workshops that are mostly from the Global North and that may represent the language of practice for inclusive education, provide an idea of how it may be implemented in the classroom (Collins, 2011). The inclusive education perspective acknowledges and values that everyone, regardless of orientation, has a right to social services. It acknowledges that each person is unique and has the right to grow in their skills and talents (Cameron & Valentine, 2001).

This literature review study aims to offer an Afrocentric model of inclusive education. It does this by quoting academics who claim this approach is in line with traditional African culture and community and resonates with Ubuntu, a claim many other academics dispute. To ensure that African philosophy and culture are included in the curriculum, it attempts to examine the methods of Africanizing education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education institutions have undergone a great deal of change over the years, owing to the relentless counterhegemonic efforts of academics, community activists, and students. However, many have questioned if such decolonization of higher education is conceivable and to what degree these reforms have "decolonized" it (Kuokkanen, 2011; de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015; Battiste, 2017; Stein, 2019). More precisely, during the past 20 years, related trends in academia have sparked discussions about decolonizing the curriculum, particularly on the subject of inclusive education. This literature paper examined under the following headings: Inclusive Education curricula as a decolonial project to intensify inclusion; Africanizing Inclusive Education curricula; Multicultural Education; Educational Afrocentric value of Indigenous pedagogy in Inclusive Education; and responding to the question, "What a decolonized Inclusive Education Curriculum should look like?"

### **Inclusive Education curriculum as a decolonial project to intensify inclusion**

The decolonial endeavor in academia includes a variety of components that aim to reverse the marginalization of academics, scholars, and students because of the colonial legacy that continues to stigmatize and exclude people based on their ethnicity, nationality, and/or language (Moosavi, 2020). Concerns concerning the extent to which inclusive education may be a neocolonial enterprise foisted on the poor world by nations in the Global North and by multinational organizations like the United Nations have been voiced as it has gained popularity (Sorkos & Hajisoteriou, 2021).

The coloniality of knowledge is shown by the dominance of Eurocentric and Western ideas. The decolonization effort can be advanced, and knowledge, power, and colonialism may be resisted via inclusive education. Although inclusive education (IE) has received a lot of attention as a human right, a way to achieve equality, and a way to forward the objective of education for all (EFA), there have been issues and challenges with its implementation. Concerns have also been raised concerning the necessity to decolonize it to expand its applicability to African contexts. Inclusive education eliminates colonial characteristics, especially harmful ones, and centers on minority cultures. It deals with concerns of inclusion related to democratic participation and international alliances. Though democracy should be a component of the ideals that guide our lives, we must move beyond using it as political rhetoric (Booth, 2011).

In the decolonization conversation, one subject that has properly received significant emphasis is education. Higher education institutions have been crucial in establishing systems of knowledge production (disciplines, institutions, and the development of experts in each discipline) and maintaining coloniality (Alvares & Faruqi, 2014; de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015). Curriculum and pedagogy used in inclusive education are very much involved in the grounding, validation, and/or marginalization of systems of knowledge creation. Thus, it is crucial to promote inclusion to ensure that individuals acquire the social skills necessary for daily life. Curriculum, pedagogy, and how knowledge is established, affirmed, or ignored are all closely related.

## 2.2 Africanizing Inclusive Education Curriculum

Africanizing education requires a thorough redesign of education in all areas to make it responsive to Africans' needs and ideals (Kinuthia, 2022). The key tenets of African values, community, and education will return because of scholarly efforts aimed at creating an African-oriented inclusive education, ensuring a more inclusive education. Numerous academics have discovered the necessity of Africanizing/decolonizing education generally and inclusive education specifically (Muzata et al., 2021; Elder, 2020; Walton, 2018; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). Mwinzi (2016) asserts that because Africa has achieved political independence, it is necessary to abandon colonial structures that have no regard for African culture or local knowledge. To avoid being overwhelmed by the task of meeting international standards, Africa must draw on its numerous cultural treasures and recognize its social and economic disparities.

The primary claim of this argument is that indigenous knowledge and culture of African communities have a wealth of knowledge that is compatible with inclusive education and should be emphasized in campaigns to advance inclusive education in the African context. Kinuthia (2022) asserts further that curriculum revision is necessary to include African indigenous knowledge systems into the curriculum. Africanizing inclusive education entails redefining diversity to consider the needs of students in an African context, investigating the state of schools and developing strategies to make them accommodate, creating a curriculum that is community-oriented and learner-centered, utilizing a variety of methodologies such as community-based participatory, preparing teachers and classrooms for diversity, and enlisting the support of all stakeholders.

There must be a direct connection between what is taught in school and societal values and norms. The curriculum must be created in such a way that it accommodates and values all learner groups, considering their diverse histories and identities without marginalizing or excluding any. According to Phasha (2016), who is referenced in Walton (2018), the Ubuntu philosophy is based on collectivism, in line with the goals of inclusive education, and is rooted in humanness, interdependence, and communalism.

Tracking inclusive education's genesis and historical trajectory is easier than settling on its definition and establishing what it is. It is much simpler to trace the origins and development of inclusive education throughout history than to settle on a definition for it and determine what it entails. Meanings have been contested as the discursive community shifts between emphases and nuances (Walton, 2016). The following concerns must be addressed to Africanize the inclusive education curriculum: Does the curriculum adhere to inclusiveness, diversity, and African standards?

According to Slee (2011), cited in Walton (2018), inclusive education may be enlisted as an ally in the decolonization process when presented as a strategy for eliminating exclusion by acknowledging systemic disadvantage and injustice and redistributing resources. The tradition of respecting the contextual variety in its manifestation is the initial emphasis, as was previously mentioned. This improves access to, and the purpose and effectiveness of, education. By addressing systematic injustice and disadvantage and allocating resources, inclusive education may be used as a technique for decreasing exclusion. It can also be mobilized as a partner in the decolonization process. According to Akena (2012), those who want to expose oppression and agitate for liberation should be the ones who design the production of information for emancipator value. Alternative knowledge systems, ideas, and views may now be included in present educational structures thanks to the decolonization process.

### Multicultural Education

All people have the right to self-identify and develop their cultural identities in culturally diverse societies, but these identities are still shaped by the culture of their country of origin, their interactions with people from other ethnic groups and cultures, and how each person interprets origin versus religion. The foundation of multicultural education is the recognition that all cultures have equal value and should be respected in the context of education. Some South African schools use this strategy to promote inclusiveness and respect for the variety of their students (Vandeyar, 2003).

Nevertheless, some claim that intercultural education, which is defined as teaching tolerance for different cultures, ignores the nuanced processes through which people and groups form views toward one another (Banks, 1993.; Sleeter, 1995; Le Roux, 2000; Kirova, 2008). Such opponents argue that an antiracist strategy should be adopted to reflect the African way of life and its cultures given the history and setting of South African education. Teachers that specialize in inclusive education should make sure that all instructions and signals are appropriate for the cultures found on the South African continent, clear, consistent, and brief. As a result, they must build a curriculum that meets student needs and fosters a diverse learning environment in the classroom. The framework of intercultural education should go beyond a cursory comparison of peers from different cultural backgrounds in terms of similarities and differences (Magos et al., 2013).

The ontological and epistemological foundation of our proposed paradigm is built on inclusiveness and interculturalism when viewed from the sustainability perspective (Kinuthia, 2022). This shows that, when evaluated from the standpoint of sustainability, the suggested paradigm's ontological and epistemological underpinning is based on inclusiveness and interculturalism. According to Sorkos and Hajisoteriou (2019), if we

take into account the fact that both inclusive and intercultural education prioritizes an equal and high-quality education for every student, both educational paradigms may effectively help accomplish the objective of sustainable development. Focus is placed on meeting demands in the present generation and subsequent generations in terms of both quantity and, most crucially, quality. The cultural circumstances essential for the sustainability of this right will not be established if the present generations do not secure intergenerational equality. As a result, in the pursuit of sustainability, equal chances for access to and involvement in education and social life shouldn't be seen as an obvious and granted entitlement.

An intentional movement away from an instrumentalism-based stance and a response towards a profound intellectualism of the curriculum are necessary for curriculum reform to be successful (Mbembe, 2016). In light of (Mahabeer, 2018), altering and decolonizing the curriculum entails evaluating the curriculum in terms of relevance to one's context and awareness of oneself and others. Parental participation in inclusive education promotes schools to recognize varied family types and household configurations. It helps them create a diverse range of cultural customs for their family. In multicultural schools, instructors must not only engage with students from various cultural backgrounds; they must also face the problem of interacting with culturally different parent bodies. The South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document in 2012 specifically states that indigenous knowledge must be incorporated into the curriculum (Cronje et al., 2015).

### **Educational Afrocentric Value of Indigenous Pedagogy in Inclusive Education**

One may argue that the predominance of Eurocentric and Western philosophy is an act of intellectual colonization. The challenges to social rights and inequality in the South African educational system during apartheid were ever-worsening. The special schools serving the white communities' impaired children had enough resources, but the schools serving the black communities had terrible resources. This was a continuation of the colonial system, which forced a curriculum on the crippled that did not liberate them. Education should promote freeing skills, as noted by Nyerere in 1971. In addition, he asserts that only education can be deemed legitimately educative and that any instruction that fosters a slave mentality or a sense of helplessness is not instruction at all. Academics and intellectuals from Africa are deeply concerned about the importance of the school curriculum to the sociocultural worldview of the African student, both in terms of direction and substance (Shizha, 2013). The legacy of Nelson Mandela marked a paradigm shift from colonialism to the idea of Ubuntu. In Africa, the idea of Ubuntu is widely accepted.

Kunene (2009) argued that Ubuntu is a way of living, a danger to others, and a method of acting. Gumede (1996) defines Ubuntu as being sincere, tolerant, sharing, preserving life at all costs, and showing respect for both young people and the elderly.

The injustices of the past should be rectified through a decolonized education. It ought to present the Afrocentric tenets that support a respectable strategy for inclusive education. These must be sufficiently thorough to address queries about the organization and application of information by instructors and students (Van Wyk, 2014). Adopting an Afrocentric worldview requires that the discourse prioritize learners and that the curriculum identifies our historical or present realities. This is accomplished through emphasizing indigenous knowledge. According to Akina (2012), the idea is the knowledge and abilities created by indigenous people to further the identity, culture, and history of the following generation. Mahlo (2017) asserted that inclusive education is inextricably linked to the African way of life.

The degree to which inclusive education may be ingrained in African thought and culture has a cap. These restrictions, in turn, hinder any possibility for inclusive education to become more Africanized and so potentially decolonize. First, there is evidence that, despite certain traditional African societies' possible good views toward impaired children and adults, disability is not always fully accepted in these settings. The inclusive education ideals may be undermined by stereotypes and myths, in certain African countries, disabilities are thought to be the product of witchcraft, the wrath of ancestors, or the promiscuity of a pregnant woman. Disability is typically seen as infectious, and having a handicapped kid carries shame (Chataika, 2012; Mpofu et al., 2007). The educational marginalization of children and young people with other identity markers deprived in various contexts has also caught the attention of inclusive education.

### **What a Decolonized Inclusive Education Curriculum should look like**

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1994 and the Republic of South Africa's Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) marked the beginning of the shift to a more inclusive educational philosophy (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). Through the elimination of unjust discrimination and tolerance, the legislation confirmed safeguarding the rights of all students. Following this, the Department of Basic Education (2014) created and approved White Paper 6 and the Natural Strategy on SIAS as the official legislative policies for establishing an inclusive education and training system.

As White Paper 6, of inclusive education has been taken up as a policy prescription for the education system in South Africa, concerns have been expressed about it being a Western ideology, dominated by Western scholars,

and uncritically taken up in South Africa. Concerns have been raised since inclusive education is a Western ideology, that scholars from the West dominate it, and that it has been adopted in South Africa without being critically examined. This is because inclusive education has been adopted as a policy prescription for the education system in South Africa. Support for this claim can be found in the Department of Basic Education's Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom (DoE, 2011), which relied almost exclusively on Western scholarship, including the now discredited ideas of multiple intelligences and learning styles. Inclusive curriculum development should therefore be seen as a continuous process closely intertwined with social inclusion.

According to Shurr&Bouk (2013), a single and shared national education strategy and curricular vision should encourage the diversification of instructional methods and learning resources. The curriculum arguments, which mirror those taking place in other nations, appear to be between academic content, the general curriculum, mainstream and functional skills, distinct curricula, and curricula for special schools. Investigating certain laws, plans, procedures, and practices that can help to guarantee the success of the student. To create a more inclusive university, we think that several changes may be explored in higher education, both at the institutional level and in teaching methods (Moriña, 2017).

Le Grange (2016) proposes a four-pillar humanistic approach central to the emergent indigenous paradigm. These are:

- (i) Relational accountability: This refers to how all curricular components relate to and are held responsible for both human and non-human connections.
- (ii) Respectful representation: This has to do with how indigenous people are acknowledged in the curriculum and how chances for learning about them and their voices are created for them.
- (iii) Reciprocal appropriation refers to the idea that communities and universities profit from information produced and shared.
- (iv) Rights and regulations: This entails adhering to moral guidelines that, when necessary, grant indigenous peoples of the globe the right to reproduce knowledge.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aims of inclusive education may be misunderstood since it has varying historical origins, and differing philosophical foundations, and is seen as a universal societal issue. Academic material, general curriculum, mainstream and functional skills, distinct curriculum, and special school curriculum are all included in the curriculum changes. The paper makes the case for the recognition of multicultural education, the promotion of indigenous pedagogy's educational Afro-centric value in curriculum changes aimed at decolonizing our children's education, and the acceptance of differences to celebrate variety. African nations ought to take a special interest in decolonizing their curricula, which ought to promote an Afrocentric agenda.

Consequently, this paper suggests that all educational stakeholders, including the government and the education community, must work more to make sure that education respects African values and is accessible to all. The discussion of decolonizing the curricula for secondary and primary education should continue to be led by higher education institutions.

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