

Chapter 4

Human Dignity is Central to Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on the importance of human dignity in inclusive education. The chapter focuses on taking all stakeholders on board regarding as far as human dignity and human rights. Aspects discussed are the following: the importance of human dignity, inclusive education (IE) as human right, the principles of inclusion, IE under international law, aspects of Ubuntu, Afrocentric IE, IE and inclusive schools, and diversity in South African education. This chapter is intended for stakeholders in education system, the community, and the entire African countries. It is also intended for the international countries in order to inform them that Africa takes inclusive education very seriously. The said factors will assist the intended community to avoid discrimination in its entirety and support learners with barrier and acknowledge that every person is unique and respect his/her rights and dignity.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1994, South Africa adopted inclusive education in compliance with global and African human rights instruments among others in alignment with its attainment of democracy along with several other countries. South Africa reconstituted and reconstructed the education system to address and readdress the imbalances of the apartheid era (Sayed, Kanjee & Nkomo, (2013) and passed several policies, legislation, and guidelines on inclusive education (Uchem & Ngwa, 2014). In 1994, a paradigm shift occurred in several countries from exclusive to inclusive education in compliance with the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994). The Statement reiterated the fundamental right to education of every person as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and recommenced the pledge made by the World Conference (Jomtein, 1990) to guarantee this right for all irrespective of individual differences (UNESCO, 1994). Apart from the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994)

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and the World Declaration on Education For All (UNESCO, 1990), the pursuit of inclusive education internationally is in accord with the civil rights movements as articulated in other global and African region human rights instruments inclusive of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1993), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Organization of African Union, 1999) and the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015).

These include the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996a) Chapter 2 Section 29, which stipulates that every individual has the right to quality education and no learners shall be segregated or excluded in schools on the basis of their race, and the South African Schools Act No. 84 (RSA, 1996) Chapter 2 Section 5 which intended to correct the educational imbalances practised prior to 1994 by mandating an education system which furnish for the provision of inclusive, accessible and quality teaching and learning for all South African learners regardless of their status. The Education White Paper 6 of 2001 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, is also a Department of Education framework policy document on inclusive education that is grounded in redressing social injustices of the apartheid regime with respect to inequalities and inequities in the delivery of special education and support services to Black, Indian and Coloured learners with disabilities (DoE, 2001). The National Policy for an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment (DBE, 2010) promulgates the regulation and improvement of all school buildings and environments to cater to all learners irrespective of their physical status. There are also various guidelines underpinning inclusive education, such as the Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education (DoE, 2005). These guidelines provide practice models for advocating, campaigning, and mobilising improved implementation of inclusive education in South Africa as well as outreach to learners who do not attend school due to their exceptionalities.

4.2 THE CONCEPT HUMAN DIGNITY AND ITS COMPLICATIONS

Human dignity as a concept comprising the expression ‘human dignity’ is the word, human, which is related to the Latin word *humus* (earthly) referring to out nature (Lindner, Hartling & Spalthoff, 2011). We are ‘earthly’ which means the proper kind or human being deserves to be treated as such. This predicate ‘human’ implies that we, as social beings, have the highest degree of rationality compared to the other species of rational animals (Dayton & Dupre, 2009). The word dignity derives from the Latin word ‘*decus*’ which can be explained as honour or glory (Tapola, 2011). Combining ‘human’ and ‘dignity’, we have the expression that qualifies and entitles the status of a personal being that deserves respect and honour.

Human dignity is therefore considered as the highest value that most Constitutions of the world do and must uphold. Freeman (2010) asserts that the word ‘dignity’ comes from the Latin word, ‘*dignitas*’ which denotes both status of an individual and the bearing that is associated with status. The right to human dignity affects the deepest level of human nature (Barrett, Casey, Visser & Headley, 2012). Human dignity is seen as the most important tool, which can be used to solve the practical and theoretical problems in human rights law. An imperative implication of human dignity is that every human being should be regarded as a very invaluable member of the community with a uniquely free expression of their right to life, integrated bodily attributes and their spiritual nature (Chapman, Audrey, 2010). Human dignity is a sense of self-worth. Single human rights are practical implications of human dignity.

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