Chapter 10

Life Has Equal Worth: Inclusion in High Schools

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to advance reasons in support of the establishment of full-service schools. The current government has sought to produce a lifelong learner who is literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with the capacity to live well with others and to think critically. The curriculum had to complement the principles of social transformation, human rights, and valuing indigenous knowledge system, among others. Unfortunately, differently abled learners were excluded from mainstream classes because of race and (dis)ability. Given the circumstances surrounding this exclusion, parents were ashamed to acknowledge and accept their differently abled children, and society compounded the situation by rejecting them as well. The theory that underpins the discourse in this chapter is Social Constructionism. The chapter will introduce the concepts of full-service schools, followed by a discussion of the legislative framework responsible for the establishment of full-service schools. There will also be a critical look at the roles of the different stakeholders in the teaching and learning setup of full-service schools.
INTRODUCTION

Inclusion refers to the system where students with special needs are taught and spend most of their time together with those without special needs. This education model is built on the belief that students with special needs will therefore develop faster and are able to build more successful social interactions, which then lead to a more successful life. This has also been in answer to concerns that students with special needs are often segregated into environments where they do not learn how to develop social interaction tools, leaving them deprived of the opportunity to build healthy social networks (Jindra, 2014). Recently, the right to education for students with special needs has been focused on by governments worldwide, giving such students much-needed opportunity to learn. Full-service schools, which also rely on and interact with the local community, are a solution to the segregation caused by creating separate schools for mainstream and special schools. Not only does this build a firm foundation on how all students are taught with a community-oriented program, but it also brings about an understanding on how to better teach and integrate special needs students into mainstream learning rather than having special schools.

The chapter emphasizes and explains that an environment in which all learners feel valued in spite of their circumstances has to be cultivated because life has equal worth (Republic of South Africa, 2007). This is based on the Freedom Charter as adopted by the African National Congress, in which it is stated:

“The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened! The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life” (Bernstein, 1987). In no way does it imply that there would be separate but equal education.

In acknowledging the inequalities caused by institutionalized segregation in the past, the newly-formed government of national unity in South Africa produced White Paper 1, which was concerned with the transformation of the education and training system (Kanjee, & Nkomo, 2013). A substantial focus was placed on redressing educational inequalities and promoting democratic governance and equity in the distribution of resources, which the disabled learners were scantily supplied with. The inequalities entailed mainly systematic racial segregation, which did not focus on disability or gender. For a long time, learning disability was not given the attention it deserves to ensure that the disabled learners are made to feel they are part of society, without necessarily being pitied. Barnes (2014) argues that disability should be valued and celebrated, rather than pitied and ultimately “cured.”
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