

How Far Have We Really Come? Advancing the notion of an 'ethics of care' in the generation of inclusive quality education in post-apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

This article focuses on the concept of an ethics of care within the South African education context. In considering the context of an evolving South African education system, post 1994, the aim of the article is to conceptualize the relationship between an ethics of care and quality education that is generally represented statistically. The objective is to explain an ethics of care within a feminist paradigm embodying moral good, consideration, sympathy and tolerance in relation to quality education. Thus in order to establish the philosophical problem, the article turns to the works of Noddings to illustrate that education may be seen as the development of democratic citizens via direct caring experiences that encourage productive learning. The argument as Nussbaum (2000, p. 58) so aptly puts it, is that children are 'sources of agency and worth in their own right' and therefore deserve equal opportunities to educational benefits in supportive environments. Ultimately, by being human, 'one bears an internal relation to all other human beings – especially those who do not belong to the same group' (Smeyers, 2012, p 467). These points of view appear in stark contrast to the current reality as there is a noticeable tension between an ethics of care and the South African educational situation from a conceptual position. The article therefore addresses South African post-1994 education to signpost a conceptual argument that develops an understanding of an ethics of caring as part of the dialogue for change so that social, language and cultural barriers may be overcome to achieve quality education.

Keywords: Ethics of care, school, democratic citizens, virtue of being human, HIV, Aids, disability

Introduction

HIV and Aids related educational challenges often result in too little support and care for South African orphans and vulnerable children thus impacting negatively on accomplishing inclusive quality education. Certain psychosocial and educational circumstances generated by HIV and Aids have distressed children with the effect being compounded upon vulnerable individuals with disabilities. In addition, many of the social hardships during the early stages of the democratic advancement in South Africa - including those of the apartheid legacy - appear to persist almost two decades later. Historical, social, economic and geographical factors have stifled the accomplishment of the optimistic goals set by the 1994 democratic government and as a result growth via education for some. Thus this article questions the lack of progress in terms of inclusive quality education in post-apartheid South Africa with emphasis upon the care or lack thereof of orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV and Aids. My concern is that while the inherent values of democracy may be perpetuated in certain settings there is an inexcusably high learner population – made up predominantly of orphans and vulnerable children who are victims of Aids - that has yet to benefit from democratically inclusive quality education and the turn of events post-1994.

In order to achieve the objectives of this article, the first stage briefly examines inclusive quality education through Noddings' ethics of care lens. The political dialogue pertaining to an ethics of care has a niche in the democratic citizenship rhetoric to foster a democratically righteous society (Waghid and Smeyers, 2013). This line of reasoning is therefore extended to support the claim that education can be the setting for the development

of an ethics of care as described by Noddings (2005) to bring out human dignity imperative for successful inclusive quality education. The second stage is to establish whether the concept of an inclusive quality education is characterized in a post-1994 democratic South African education framework. Such reflection upon an evolving South African education system, strives to concurrently conceptualize the relationship between an ethics of care and inclusive quality education as described by Noddings. In the third stage, HIV and Aids is deliberated upon as a major challenge to quality education. The South African Education system has not evolved sufficiently to include current trends and needs that create more flexible learning opportunities catering for the vulnerable child's educational needs. Discrepancies in South Africa's version of inclusive education are located in the arguments at the fourth stage. The basic education system does not appear to be responding to the dire need for practical solutions to existing complexities particularly where there is a common ground between HIV and Aids and disability. In the fifth stage I deliberate upon a re-imagined inclusive quality education that can ensure caring for the well-being of children while the sixth sums up a dialogue for change. The absence of benevolent education is harmful to the development of a child but it is also true that if the child as a cared-for is exposed to a flawed relationship of care where capability to achieve academic goals is stifled by teachers using the relationship to their own advantage, the latter can deny learners their right to be cared for as described by Noddings. The article also provides research evidence that illustrates the challenges that orphans and vulnerable South African children experience in the face of HIV and Aids and disability. The capacity to provide caring, inclusive quality education as a social priority underpins the ability to attentively recognize and accept children regardless of the diversities.

As an offshoot of a democratic citizenship education project this article is directed at exploring the notion of an ethics of care from a human rights outlook in a South African post-1994 context. The following quotation by Waghid (2005, 323) sums up the overall goals of the broader project stating that:

..., a common aim of democratic citizenship education is to achieve intersubjective, mutual interaction through cooperative human practices.... The view that citizenship education is a social process that can engender cooperative human activity grows out of liberal and communitarian understandings of what it means to be a citizen.... to be a citizen is to enjoy rights to personal security, to freedom of speech, to vote, to access to housing, health care, education, and so forth.

Waghid's declaration above speaks directly to the objectives specific to this article in that the ideals of democratic citizenship as well as quality education evolve around "cooperative human practices". However, the basic structure of social relationships does not seem to have evolved sufficiently in many South African communities to allow for the proliferation of democratic citizenship values and education to be evident. Admittedly the modus operandi of South African basic education is constantly changing in focus and objectives to create quality education that culminates in quality outputs. Twenty years on South Africa is a country with an exceptional constitution but children have been failed by inferior pedagogical environments, inadequate service delivery and substandard policy implementation. While the general tendency among analysts and politicians has been to concentrate on statistical outcomes depicting the path of progress in South African education, this article takes an alternate view in considering progress toward inclusive quality education and relational caring within a democratic pluralistic society.

Inclusive quality education through Noddings' ethics of care lens

Education as a social engagement requires the sharing of ideas and a specific way of reasoning in terms of transforming democracy and humanity crucial to the ideals of 'Education for All' (UNESCO, 2012). Inclusive quality education is meant to be learner-centred as stipulated by UNICEF (2007), catering for the needs of all learners regardless of their socio-economic, physical or psychological difficulties. As a result educators in South African mainstream schools are expected to demonstrate moral good, consideration, sympathy and tolerance to resolve the problems standing in the way of inclusive quality education for all children. The school itself is a breeding ground for meaningful partnerships that are meant to be supportive and nurturing in order to develop caring, knowledgeable and skilled democratic citizens. Educators as key role players ought to overcome their personal shortcomings and bias when addressing classroom diversity so as not to stifle the school's capacity to

create inclusive quality education. The former's fundamental function is to promote caring and encourage inclusive values that demonstrate the respect for all – a standard scaffolding democratic citizenship.

While I may be censured for turning to a Western theorist to exploit my African argument, I find Noddings' theoretical framework more supportive of my present contentions. It is not that I refute the claims made by my fellow Africans but find the assertion "we should care more genuinely for our children and teach them to care" (Noddings, 1995) of great consequence to the crucial role of inclusive quality education in the vulnerable child's life. If inclusive quality education is envisaged as supportive and nurturing for all learners, as mentioned in the paragraph before, then Noddings' (2003) ethics of care theory is germane to this discourse in that it allows me to consider the guiding principles of South Africa's interpretation of inclusive quality education in the context of caring within a pluralistic society. Education is central to an individual's well-being hence Noddings' (2003) interpretation of an ethics of care regarding mutually beneficial relationships of trust underpins my claim that orphans and vulnerable children ought to be protected by the close relationships within a school culture if they do not have adult support in their home environment. Apart from being protected such children need to learn to become resilient in the face of the adversities they face thus the basic tenets of quality education can assist them to try to overcome apathy and self destruction if they are inspired by those who do not see them as "the other". Noddings (1992) also proposes that dialogue is fundamental to securing a caring bond especially to establish relationships of care and trust thus reinforcing the roles of the school and educator that can guarantee the success in terms of educational quality and perhaps personal upliftment. Orphans and vulnerable learners require what Noddings (2005) alludes to as educators who are able to acknowledge diversity and individuality and build caring climates of learning that respond positively to the learners' often tacit pleas. This represents quality education that is inclusive in a South African basic education setting where children are compelled to adopt the roles of caregivers and providers to the detriment of their physical and mental health and their educational aspirations. Hence, I see merit in using Noddings' ethics of care theory to emphasize two particularly complicated social issues that challenge South African education in isolation and more so when these two characteristics appear together which are HIV and Aids and disability.

South African Education 2013

In tracing the path from 1994 I acknowledge the South African Constitution (1994), the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of Education 2001) as well as the Bill of Responsibilities, launched by the South African Department of Basic Education in 2008, are guiding principles that communicate good citizenship and probably endorse ethics of caring. As 'a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa' the Bill of Rights is a deliberate attempt to encourage a sense of humanity promoting *moral good, consideration, sympathy and tolerance in order to attain quality education*. Justice, responsibility and recognition in conjunction with acceptance of the other are characteristics of the South African Manifesto on values, education and democracy prescribed by the Department of Education (2001). School partnerships that are supposed to be recognized as ethics of care prompting South Africans via the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) to engage actively to generate democratic citizenship in that it

... provide(s) an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State...(Department of Education, 1996)

The impractical efforts of the state and other parties within school communities are often insufficient to alleviate the tragedy of sub-standard education imposed particularly on learners affected by HIV or Aids. Real life situations that affect education illustrate certain challenges for example: the concept of 'migratory orphans' has introduced highly motivated learners from rural areas who are willing to live alone or with siblings in adult-free homes in the suburbs to satisfy their learning needs; unsafe schools environments; increasing teenage pregnancies; orphans of Aids in child-headed households who have no support within a school culture, are but a

few. As Noddings (2005) contends, caring alone may not realize quality education, but educators' efforts to guide learners to overcome hostile conditions can cultivate learner confidence in their ability to change their social and economic potentials in any democratic society.

While Noddings does not refer directly to 'Education for All' her arguments allude to prerequisites such as human dignity and equality as pillars to the achievement thereof to satisfy the terms of inclusive quality education but which are nonexistent in many South African schools. It is possible that in a haste to remove signs of the colonial heritage early South African policymakers neglected to take into account the rich diverse cultural heritage of the country. Local culture and customs are just as significant as inclusion of the other within the education discourse that prioritizes inclusivity and quality. On the other hand, it is incumbent upon those who create such education narratives to consider that in a country with such a diverse population as South Africa's, each time one group is incorporated, there are others who are excluded. Reaching a consensus - no matter how convincing the rights-based approach may be - presents difficulties that could prove insurmountable for the state in that certain marginalized individuals have no recourse. In contrast, reciprocal acceptance by members of diverse cultures adds rich intercultural knowledge to education.

It is for this reason that I consider South African educators as key to the success of democratic values and human-rights based education demonstrating inclusivity. At the same time one wonders how educators fulfil their mandate to provide quality education exhibiting relational care in settings that are not conducive to teaching and learning. Their efforts may be in vain should the school system not cater for the practical needs of its diverse learner population. The knowledge imparted by educators can ensure that learners are equipped to take care of themselves to avoid becoming infected with HIV but also that learners then contribute to the process of changing attitudes and beliefs about the other who are affected by Aids. As such inclusive quality education is principal to HIV and Aids education in the South African quality education context as it empowers the child in a caring relationship (Noddings, 1992).

HIV/Aids as a challenge to quality education

The South African Department of Education framework suggests that teachers, especially life orientation educators are required to teach their learners about HIV/Aids. White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) dealt with "Special needs education" in South Africa affirms the following regarding HIV/Aids education:

1. The development of inclusive education and training to include HIV/Aids (1.6.1. p23);
2. The Ministry will analyze the impact of HIV/Aids consistently and aim to develop and implement appropriate and timely programmes one of which will be the development of teaching guidelines (2.2.8.1/2.2.8.2. p. 34; 4.3.11.1/4.3.11.2. p. 50).

The reality is that teachers often do not implement Department of Education policies and strategies which may be HIV/Aids Educational Resources: DOE guidelines for learners and teachers; "Develop an HIV and AIDS plan for your school" for school governing bodies, managers, teachers as well as parents (Department of Education 2003a); "What parents need to know" (Department of Education 2003b); "National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12" (Department of Education 2007) – guide for teachers; and The HIV/Aids Emergency: Department of Education Guidelines for teachers (Department of Education 2002). Approved educational support for learners will advance objectives to impede the dissemination of incorrect and false HIV/Aids information. Hartell (2007) asserts that there is an unambiguous connection whereby learners grasp the distinctive values, knowledge, attitudes and skills within their socio-educational environment.

Local research (Mosia, 2009; Prinsloo 2007) confirms that there are South African educators who do not understand and disseminate such knowledge correctly caringly and persistently. This is so especially when they are unable to appreciate the content and aims of the programme as well as the standard of training that was provided to them by the Department of Education. It is generally found that schools from rural areas and those in poor socio-economic areas seem to be more negatively affected than those in the suburbs. These studies (Mosia, 2009; Prinsloo, 2007) also reveal that the extent of community involvement with the school and the

curriculum together with the fact that learners have poor role models – both at school and at home - do not allow for the capacity to produce quality education that demonstrates an ethic of care. Certain school authorities express the view that learners from schools within their control were not affected by the HIV or Aids hence this curriculum is optional. South African schools will do well to create quality HIV/Aids programmes that motivate learners to understand the pandemic to avoid infection. There were regular warnings in the last decade that the South African youth was bewildered by conflicting HIV/Aids knowledge communication even from the educator.

Research (Chabilall, 2004) has also found that children affected by Aids are frequently absent from school and experience more difficulty in trying to pay attention in the classrooms. Giese (2002:65) asserts that orphans, who have limited resources and inadequate adult supervision, “are more likely than their peers to drop out of school.” Even in this decade there are substantial school dropout rates due to deprivation, disease, distress and the lack of adequate educational and social support. Orphans in child-headed households are vulnerable since they carry the burden of stigma and discrimination. The majority of these unfortunate children are forced to abandon their schooling because of financial constraints and in many cases because they have to take care of ailing parents and assume adult responsibilities in their homes. Research (Chabilall 2004) established that there is a lack of parental guidance and support. This means that most of the children fail to continue with schooling, start school late, experience discrimination at school level, are either absent often or drop out completely in order to take care of ailing parents or family members. As a consequence, orphans, especially those in child-headed households, become breadwinners and have added responsibilities such as to provide for their siblings. They are deprived of the benefit of the control and support of some of their teachers and peers because of the secrecy revolving around the pandemic. If, like Noddings (1984) says, caring should be the crux of any education system then the teacher is a central figure in the development of the child. More than ten years on, the numbers of orphans and vulnerable children have snowballed exacerbating the social and educational challenges (KZN Human Settlements). The 2010 South African research (KZN Human Settlements) on child-headed households confirms that the situation persists as there is an increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children.

Discrepancies in South Africa’s version of quality inclusive education

When education is not truly inclusive, learners are exposed to incorrect information regarding people with disabilities within settings that do not exemplify accessible education for those who are labelled the other. School cultures, surroundings and classroom learning that are not inclusive encourage false perceptions mortifying individuals with disabilities or those who are different. The unfortunate reality is that those with disabilities suffer a double jeopardy as they are affected by the education and environment if these promote negative religious, cultural and societal stereotypes placing them at increased risk of prejudice or even of acquiring HIV infection (Groce, 2005). People with disabilities are denied rights due to stigma and injustice as a result of prevailing cultural norms and values. Discrimination emanates predominantly from cultural beliefs and negative societal attitudes that seek to promote the rights of people with disabilities. The school is ideally placed to address such injustices to ensure that limited and incorrect knowledge and experiences do not permeate the lives of people with disabilities.

Thus inclusive education may be a means to address extreme cultural norms that perpetuate false beliefs and attitudes so that caring relationships develop to protect the interests of the child (Noddings, 1992). This may be especially true with problems relating to gender roles where girls feel excluded or when social and cultural norms depict that parents are inclined to be overprotective of their disabled children. The principles of inclusive education can prevent adults from denying learners access to information so that they are accepted as part of the community they are educated and live in. The misconception that disabled people are asexual also implies that they may be free from HIV, which makes them vulnerable in terms of sexual abuse and increases their risk of becoming HIV-infected (Wazakili, Mpofu, and Devlieger, 2009). Groce (2005) claims that the increased vulnerability of disabled adolescent girls, who are more often than not excluded from the social interaction, generally makes them victims of immoral or deviant behaviour. Although girls or women with disabilities may

be considered as being available for sexual pleasure, they are seldom chosen to be partners in stable relationships (Wazakili, Mpofo, and Devlieger, 2009).

Most cultures prohibit parents from discussing matters of sexuality with their children. On the other hand, parents may often be blamed for avoiding the subject of sexuality as it affects disabled young women (Wazakili, Mpofo & Devlieger, 2009). Thus, cultural stereotypes imagine disabled young women to be asexual, unfit to reproduce, overly dependent, not interested in sex and unattractive. Some cultural factors that influence the vulnerability of young women with disabilities include, engaging in multiple sexual relationships, such as polygamy or wife sharing arrangements. Unequal power relations between males and females also increase the vulnerability of disabled women to sexual exploitation. Teachers and parents, who regard sexual education for disabled girls taboo or unnecessary, choose to avoid such discussions. Such a stance increases the helplessness of the children who are inadvertently exposed to sexual abuse, and consequent sexually transmitted diseases (Groce 2005). Disability itself is not a barrier to people with disabilities obtaining appropriate sexuality knowledge and education (Nganwa, Batesaki, Balaba, Serunkuma, & Yousafzai, 2002, p. 188). These authors (Nganwa, Batesaki, Balaba, Serunkuma & Yousafzai, 2002, p. 188) believe existing societal and cultural beliefs contribute significantly to increased risk to sexual abuse within this group.

Re-imagining Inclusive Quality Education

South African education, without becoming overwhelmingly paternalistic, ought to have nurtured its fledglings from 1994 onwards to promote well being in all aspects of personal lives. The initial process of transforming South African education from a colonial-based apartheid creation to one that is both inclusive and of superior quality is a commitment to eradicate the injustices of the past,

... for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation. (South African Schools Act, 1996).

However, it has become evident that many of those born in 1994 and after have suffered the consequences of constantly changing leadership exacerbated by the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation together with the Aids pandemic. I question whether we as a nation have missed our cue in terms of ethical caring or dismissing the cultural notion of *ubuntu*. The priority of a quality education is to change social attitudes toward victims of socio-cultural, racial, economic, ethnic and gender discrimination that appear to suffer the inadequacies of the dysfunctional education system even more so. The valiant attempt to move away from a colonial past is supposed to have ensured academic progress for all children regardless of their physical disabilities or indigent conditions within the context of South African democratic citizenry. However, such modifications to achieve quality education seem to have ignored individual complexities, cultural nuances as well as social structures that had not evolved as readily as the new South African government had stepped in. In addition, both quality and inclusivity – although used freely - are still finding their identities with both being re-imagined at intervals. For the purposes of this discussion it is taken that the term ‘quality education’ refers to just, rights-based, superior teaching and learning that is not limited to the classroom and that which produces positive learning outcomes. Inclusivity is more complex to unravel but I find Dickson’s comment, (2012, p. 1094), significant – ‘Although there is international recognition of the right to an inclusive education, there remains very little clearly developed and articulated theory available to underpin that right.’ The term ‘inclusive’ is situated within the directives espoused by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The criteria are meant to steer South African education, with competent support services, towards non-discrimination of any sort so that everyone is entitled to the opportunity to uplift their social and economic circumstances.

It is significant to note that South African school-based democratic citizenship education was intended via guidelines provided by documents such as the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of

Education, 2001a) and the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001b) to create civic awareness, ethical caring and moral responsibility among learners, educators, parents and the general community albeit from different perspectives. Besides being clear on citizenship education, the second document also foregrounded the position of the Department regarding people with disabilities. The upshot is that such characteristics are meant to produce positive dialogue and action for change, as Noddings (1992) maintains, within the micro- and macro-social context with inclusive quality education as a priority. It is assumed that power relationships are a reality that may often impose unfair advantage to those in power and a sense of passivity to inferior participants such as the child who is much lower down the ladder. Just as learners may feel comfortable in trust-based relationships, there will be democratic learning that creates the space for citizenship education if such trust-based relational caring exists at all levels of implementation of inclusive quality education. This begs the question whether the significance of inculcating an ethics of care militates against the danger of inequity and neglect.

The success of implementing a quality system of education that is also inclusive depends upon citizen buy-in to maintain social order suggesting that citizens recognize that children are ‘sources of agency and worth in their own right’ and therefore deserve equal opportunities to educational benefits in supportive environments that depict sympathy and interaction as Noddings (1992) suggests. While this is so, it is also true that there ought to be respect for authoritative structures and understanding by all participants about what is acceptable. Hence the principles discussed call attention to the possibility of learners’ opportunities being promoted or constrained by teachers if a teacher is not motivated in this task of caring (Noddings 1992). Quality education is intended to equip learners with the knowledge, values and attitudes that enable them to become democratic citizens. The nature of inclusive quality education that ultimately reaches the child is dependent upon those whom the child interacts with as well as those who are higher up in decision making positions. Therefore any upgrading of South African education challenges policymakers and implementers to consider the pluralistic nature of its population while it speaks extensively of human rights. It is important to move beyond the reality of a strife torn nation that South Africa has become where learners, educators and parents freely and without hesitation become brutally vocal about their frustrations. The unfortunate results of such actions are that the disadvantaged learners or educators become the other who cannot seem to enjoy the recognition and acceptance they are entitled to. Ultimately, South African education ought to provide the enabling environment that will allow all learners to achieve success by acquiring knowledge. Such acceptance, tolerance and implementation of rights may be seen to facilitate inclusive quality education. It is true that the execution of South African transformation was a democratically executed process with various stages of public deliberation, claims and calls for contributions. Even so, all regions of the country have not been privileged to enjoy equal service delivery as there are those who have become the disadvantaged other with substandard educational administration and delivery.

Dialogue for Change

It is crucial to the mechanics of quality education that the South African Department of Education develops the competence of the pedagogical environment in addition to all related capabilities to allow for “full participation”. What is unfortunate is that the systemic capability stifles individual access to real freedom and opportunities to fair education as a result of deprived social conditions that lead to personal marginalization. Complexities evident in the gradual attrition of trust in the world of power relations are real despite the nature and promotion of democratic citizenship via policy and education.

Learners deprived of material resources, caring or value- and human-rights based education may be unable to remove themselves or assist their families from the cyclical impact of poverty and deprivation. In order to ensure that South African children benefit from inclusive quality education and democracy centred on honourable human values, adult participants in or beyond the classroom have to overcome their personal stereotypes to be confident in their own ability to teach through a caring process for change as Noddings (1992; 2005) suggests. If the state and related bodies are cognizant of the learners’ needs these influential groups will look to provide for all capabilities ‘making them fully human’ – including the fact that children require suitable role models. Learners are entitled to inclusive quality education representative of justice and equality so that as adults they too may be able to promote a human-rights based citizenship within the evolving South African

society. Ultimately, by being human, ‘one bears an internal relation to all other human beings – especially those who do not belong to the same group’ (Smeyers, 2012, p. 467). Xenophobia has been an unfortunate consequence of an ill-prepared South African society that had previously been interested in their own kind with limited exposure to other Africans. Acts of xenophobic violence played out by adults in overcrowded poor communities set dangerous examples for school-going learners. Negative behaviour defeats the purpose of democratic relationships of caring that school education is supposed to inculcate (Noddings 1992). It is difficult for children who live in deprived conditions that are often exposed to high incidence of HIV to learn tolerance, responsibility or humanity if they have had little or no exposure to these values. In this regard the school culture is crucial to the development of value-laden teaching and learning. These points underscore the stark contrast between the fundamental principles and the current reality as there is a noticeable tension between an ethics of care and the South African educational situation from a conceptual position.

Conclusion

The article has ultimately attempted to address South African post-1994 education to signpost a conceptual argument developing an understanding of ethics of caring as part of the dialogue for change so that social, racial, ethnic, gender, language and cultural barriers may be overcome to achieve quality education. While the state has set the stage for the dissemination of resources and inclusive quality education, there is a stark absence of Departmental collaboration and networks that can ensure the viability of sophisticated schemes designed according to UN human rights policies and the South African constitution. I assert that South African education has to recognize the need for caring, respect for rights, culture and quality education so as to afford more individuals the opportunity to enhance their potential via the system.

Hence, my argument has found reason in situating itself upon a human-rights-based ethics of caring as discussed by Noddings to illustrate the way in which inclusive quality education may be achieved - by engaging with ideal that knowledge is a must for all. In order to establish philosophical solutions to the problems, the article turns to the works of Noddings to illustrate that South African education will benefit from developing citizens via direct caring experiences that encourage productive learning. Ultimately, the attainment of authentic democratic citizenship is dependent upon the individual’s appreciation thereof via open communication with significant others. Thus, democracy is acknowledged as the solid foundation that gives rise to national pride – where South African citizens must be encouraged to achieve inclusive quality education that teaches caring for the environment and others with the same sense of commitment (Noddings 2005). However, it is debatable whether inclusive education in South Africa depends solely upon the capabilities developed by the system to be successful. One may discover that the attributes of relationships the child experiences inside and outside the school may be insipid in that the presumed functions of adult role players will lack effect in terms of furthering the learners’ ability to enjoy significant caring responses representative of moral good, justice and harmony despite diversity. The challenge is whether to laud the successes of a select group of previously disadvantaged South African minority who have excelled while there are substantial pockets of presently disadvantaged learners, schools and educators who have as yet not benefitted from democratic nor inclusive quality schooling.

Notes

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