

UNIVERSITY OF  
FORT HARE

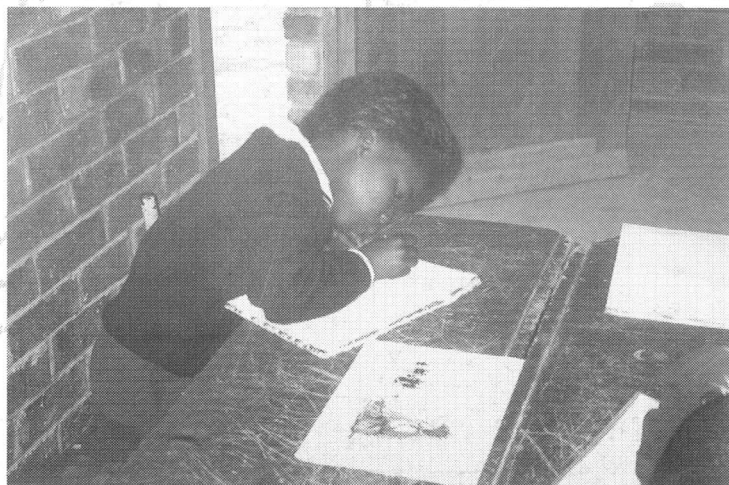
Eastern Cape Education  
Department

***Distance  
Education Project***

*Core Education Studies Course  
Helping Learners Learn  
6th Umthamo*

***Supporting one another in an  
Inclusive Classroom***

Pilot Edition – May 2001



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# Helping Learners Learn

## Umthamo 6

### Supporting one another in an Inclusive Classroom



#### Introduction

This umthamo, the sixth in the Helping Learners Learn strand, offers you the opportunity to look at how 'inclusive' your classroom is, and to try to make it more 'inclusive'.

- Does your classroom welcome all kinds of learners, or does it favour some more than others?
- Does your classroom atmosphere help each learner to feel that he or she 'belongs', and has a part to play in the activities, even if he or she is not academically gifted, physically strong, or socially successful?
- Are the activities in your classroom such that they enable all kinds of learners to learn, in their own unique ways?

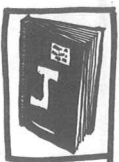
These are the kinds of questions you will be asking yourself in this umthamo. You will find that all the approaches to learning which we have looked at in past Helping Learners Learn imithamo, and imithamo in other strands, will have their part to play in your Inclusive Classroom.

The umthamo is accompanied by quite a substantial supplementary reader, which gives a lot of additional information about policy and strategies for an inclusive classroom, among other things. You will be referred to sections in the supplementary reader as you work through the umthamo. We would like to encourage you to read the other sections of the reader on your own, for the enrichment of your professional practice.

Before you go any further into the umthamo, we will ask you to look carefully at yourself.

#### Looking at yourself

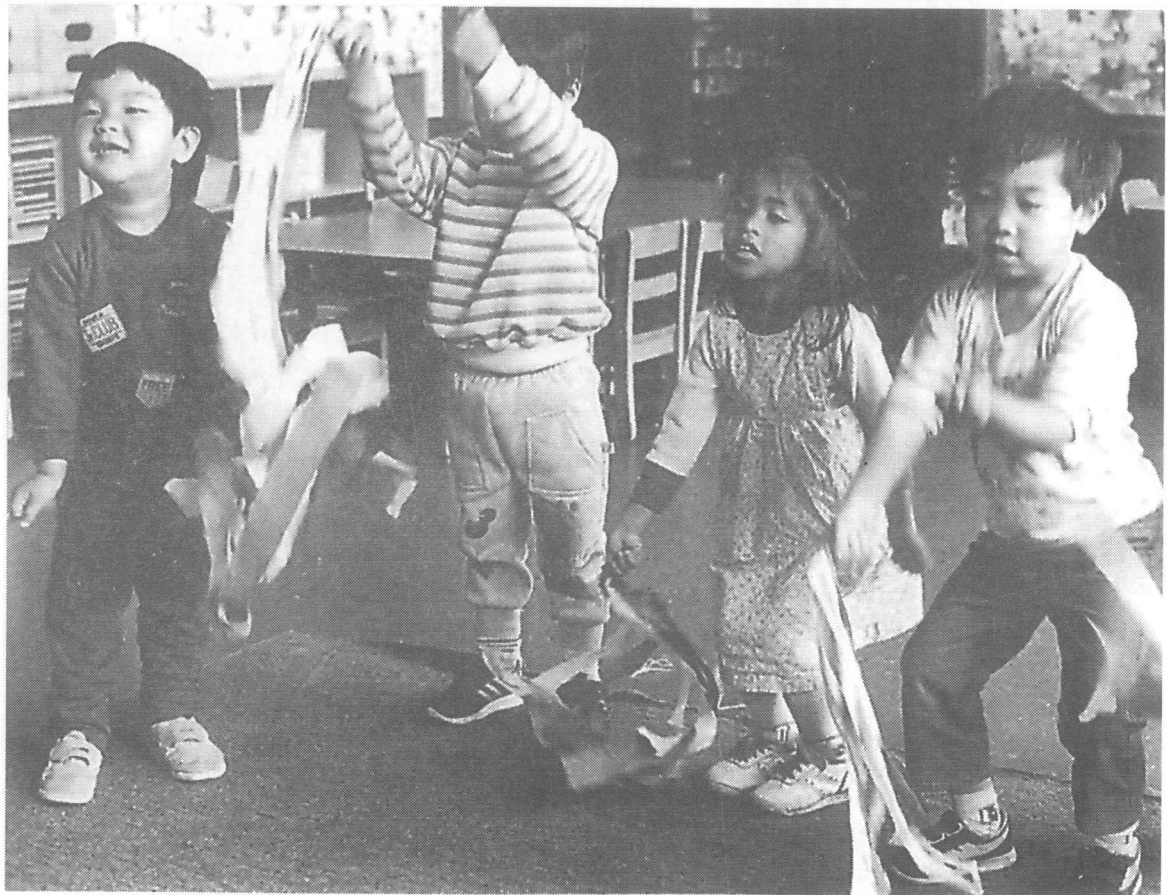
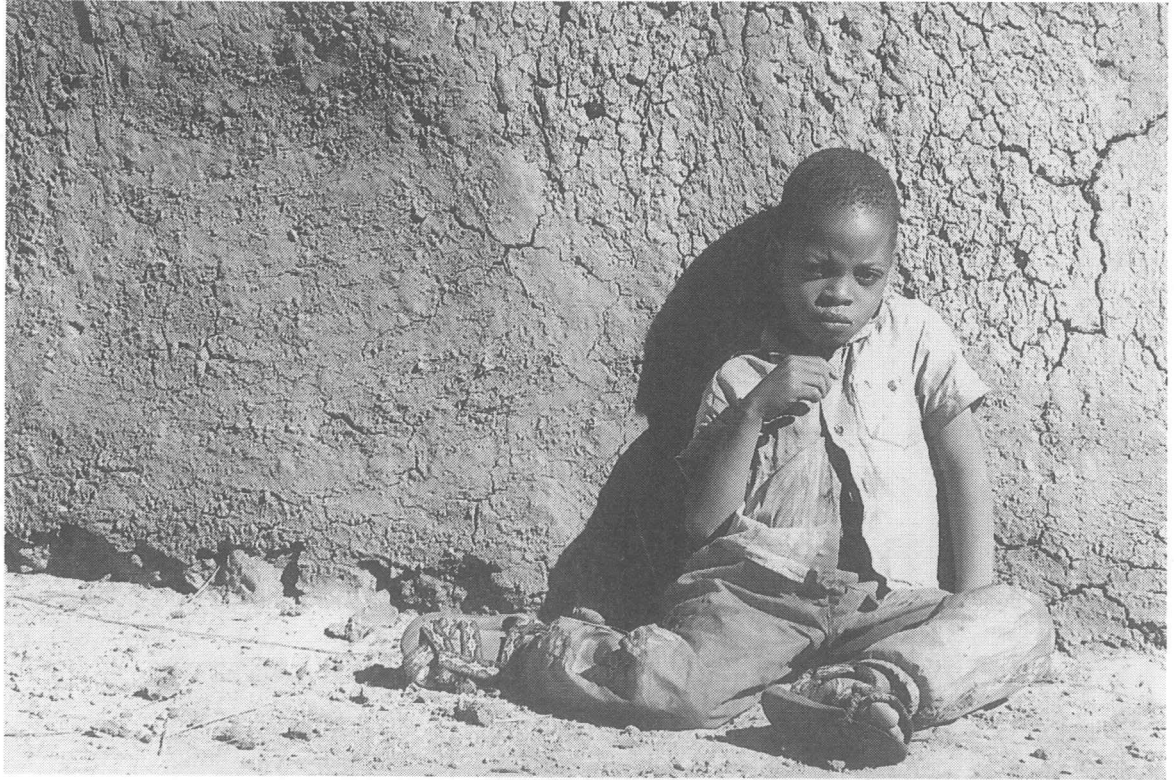
Look carefully at the pictures on the next pages. How do you react to them? What are your feelings as you look at the children depicted in them?

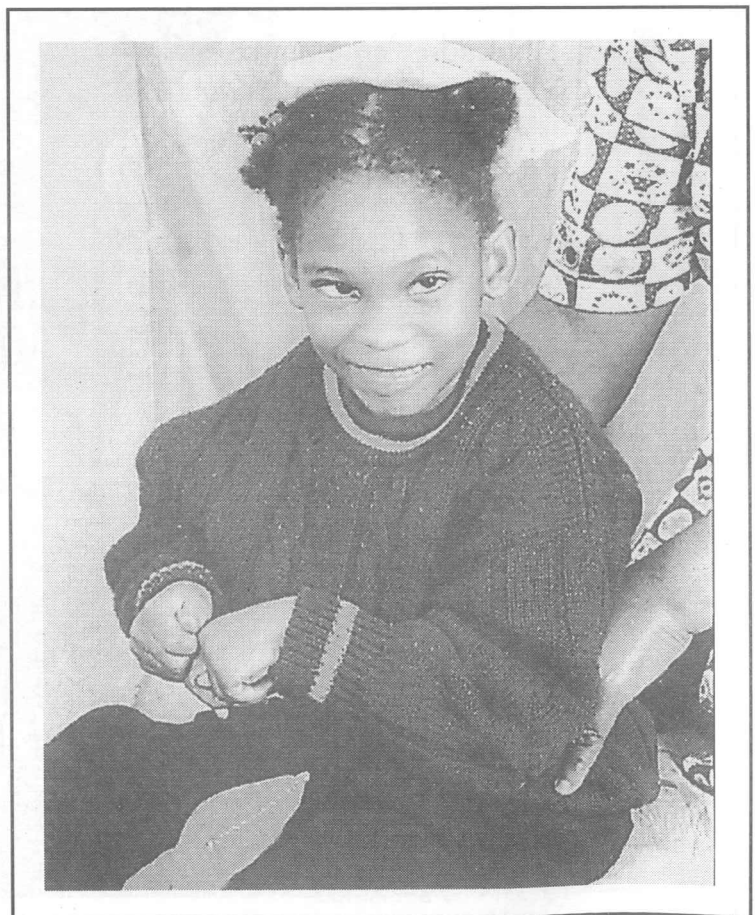
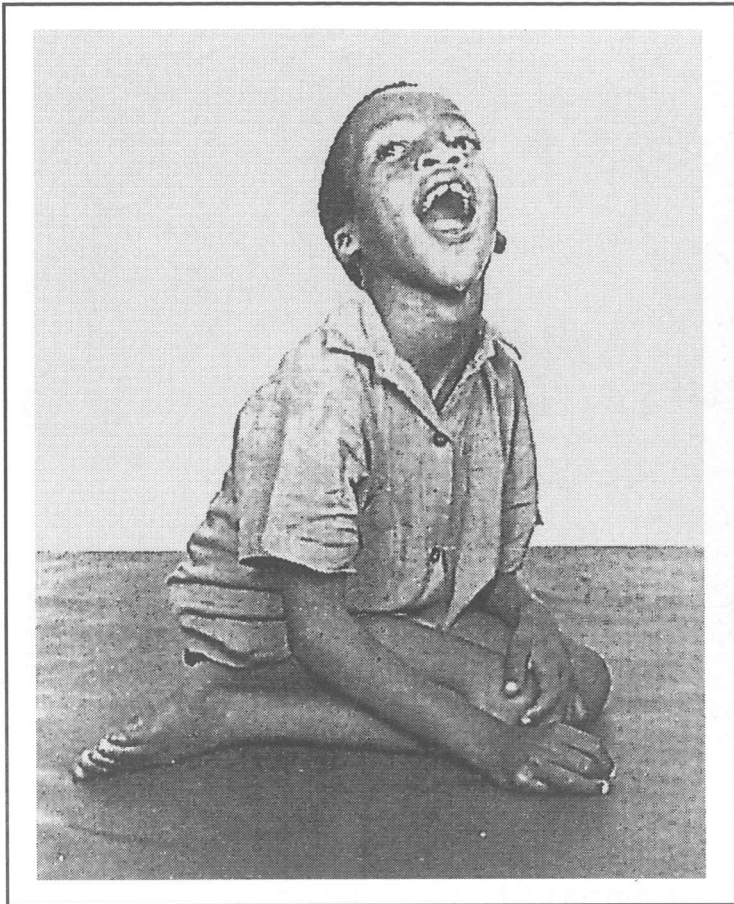


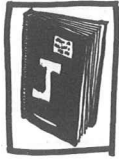
#### Journal write

Write about the feelings you experience as you look at each picture. Be very honest with yourself. How do you feel towards each of the children in the pictures? How do you feel when you see a child like this? Why do you think you have these feelings?

*(Continued on Page 5)*







Are there such children in your school or community? Are they in or out of school? Why?

Are there certain names by which these kinds of people are called in your community? What messages are carried by these names?

Are there any traditional beliefs, stories or practices attached to any of these kinds of people in your community? What messages are carried by these beliefs and practices? How have you been affected by these messages?

Share your journal write with colleagues at the face-to-face session.



Read the following Case Studies of learners who *feel* excluded at school, or who *are* excluded from school. As you read, think of similar situations which you know of, or have experienced.

*When we were planning this umthamo, we had visitors from Sweden at the DEP. They told us that in olden times, in Sweden, there was a person in the community called the 'angel-maker', to whom parents took disabled babies when they were born. His job was to 'make them into angels' (kill them).*

### Case Study 1

An educator is teaching an English lesson on past tense. Children are made to convert sentences from present tense to past tense. They are given this sentence to be changed to past tense: "She is always making mistakes." One child tried to answer, giving the following answer: "She was always making mistooks." The whole class, including the educator, broke into laughter. From that day on, the children treated her differently. They gave her the nickname, "Mistooks". Eventually, she decided to leave the school as she could not live with the embarrassment any more.

### Case Study 2

During our educator training, we went to a local school for practice teaching. After break, during the first period, we heard some shouting. When we went out to look at what was happening, we saw one of the educators at the school shouting at a learner in Grade 4. The child was staring at this educator, not moving at all. Some of the educator's words were: "You have started this thing of yours again. How silly you are! You said you were going to Cape Town to get a cure for this. What happened to that cure? I've been telling you this is no sickness; you are just being silly!" The child kept quiet and just stared at this educator. Other learners kept their distance from this child and they looked worried and shocked.

When the Principal came, she sent for this child's mother, who was also received with the same noise. The mother explained by saying "unamafufunyana lo mntwana". As I looked at the situation, this child was experiencing the non-convulsive type of epilepsy – absence. But the educator did not know this.

### **Case Study 3**

An educator in the neighbourhood saw a child in a wheelchair. The educator was impressed by the drawings done by this child. This child attended a pre-school although he was older than the other children in the pre-school. The educator asked this child to draw some things, which he drew with enthusiasm. She noticed also that this child could even write some words, including his name. The educator then talked to the parent/guardian of the child. They concurred that the child must be taken to a Grade 1 class in the school where she taught. The parent gladly did that because this was what they had been wishing for.

Three months later the educator found that, because it was a season for eating "umbona", the classroom had a bad smell emanating from stomach discomfort. This educator decided to make a 5 litre bottle of Cape Aloe and each morning each child received half a cup of the mixture. Because of its laxative effect, children now and again had to run to the toilet to relieve themselves. The child in the wheelchair could not do that because he needed some help to go there. Unfortunately he soiled himself. He felt so embarrassed; he was crying the whole day. He did not even want to be removed from the wheelchair but he had to be in order to be transported home. Since then, he has refused to go to school.

### **Case Study 4**

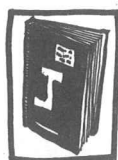
The educators at a certain school are very fond of discipline. They are very serious with their teaching, and want to make sure the learners get the best of teaching time.

Children are 'trained', when they start Grade 1, to discipline themselves not to go to the toilet before break time. The school starts at 7h30, and first break is at 10h00. Learners therefore have to go to the loo before 7h30.

It is still February, two to three weeks after the schools have re-opened. Children want to relieve themselves at around 9h00, and ask for permission from the educator. The educator refuses permission, telling them they should wait until 10h00. Thando's urine breaks loose soon after this, and she is laughed at by her peers. Everything about school turns sour for her, and she does not go to school any more.

### **Case Study 5**

School B has a child who has been registering for the same class for 5 years. He registers at the beginning of the year and vanishes each year when the athletics season ends. Educators are worried because they want to help this boy, but they do not know how. But each time he registers, he is welcome, because he wins and takes the cup for the school. He cannot make it after the athletics season at all. All educators say he cannot cope with the academic work of the school.



## Journal write

Reflect in your journal about a particular learner whom you have taught. This should be a learner who offered a particular challenge to you because s/he was 'different' from others. Maybe s/he found it difficult to learn, or did not participate in activities with 'the crowd'. It may be a learner who, like some described previously, eventually dropped out of school.

Discuss your journal write with a colleague, or with your group at the face-to-face session.

*This journal write probably reminds you of the observation you did in Umthamo 10, where you paid special attention to a child in your class who was experiencing difficulties.*

## Outcomes

### Attitudes Outcomes

When you have worked through this umthamo, you will:

- Have become more aware of your feelings and attitudes towards people who are 'different', or 'excluded';
- You will have helped your learners to do the same;
- You and your learners will have had some experiences which give you insight into what it feels like to be 'different' or 'excluded';

### Skills Outcomes

When you have worked through this umthamo, you will:

- Have worked with your learners to identify those who are excluded from, or within, your own school community;
- Have worked with learners to devise ways of including learners who experience barriers to learning and participation;
- Have developed a problem-solving approach towards including these learners more effectively;
- Have linked these strategies to approaches used in previous imithamo, and to the principles of the new curriculum;
- Have looked at ways in which your school and its policy can support inclusion.

### Knowledge Outcomes

When you have worked through this umthamo, you will:

- Know more about the Inclusive Education Philosophy and National Policy;
- Understand terms such as 'special needs' and 'barriers to learning';
- Have reflected on the benefits of Inclusion, and the challenges of implementing it in your context;
- Know more about disability in South Africa;
- Have extended your understanding of prejudice and stereotyping;
- Know more about resources in the community, locally and nationally, which can inform and assist educators and learners in overcoming specific barriers to learning.

5:00



## Unit 1: The Need to Belong

In the past, it was believed that learners with 'special needs' should receive 'special education' in a 'special class' or 'special school'. This meant that the average learner or educator seldom, if ever, came into contact at school with learners who had physical or intellectual disabilities. Even those with learning difficulties were often 'segregated' into special schools.

There is now a worldwide move in the opposite direction. Firstly, the term 'special needs' now has a much broader meaning than it once had. It includes learners suffering from illness or abuse; learners recovering from trauma; learners like those you have thought about in Umthamo 42 who are living without parents, or going through other kinds of hardship. It also includes learners who are suffering from prejudice and discrimination of one kind or another, who are living in extreme poverty, or who are having to learn through an unfamiliar language. It includes all learners who experience any kind of barrier to learning and participation. This probably includes every learner, at some stage in his or her life.

Secondly, educators recognise now that all people need to feel that they belong in society, and at school. They recognise that it is this sense of belonging that enables them to participate and learn to their full potential. Children who belong:

- Have positive relationships with other people;
- Feel accepted unconditionally;
- Feel that they are part of a 'we' relationship - that they have support, security and togetherness.

This gives children a basis for further exploration, and for learning.

You will have realised by now that this umthamo is closely related to Umthamo 42, where we were looking at Emotional Intelligence – Resilience in the face of hardship. We are talking about ways in which educators and learners together can create an environment which supports the development of Emotional Intelligence. One aspect of this environment is that it is Inclusive: accepting of many different kinds of people; providing them with a place to belong.



Read the following summary of "*The need to belong: rediscovering Maslow's Hierarchy of needs*", by Norman Kunc. As you read, write notes in your journal in answer to the questions which appear in the margin. These questions also refer back to the case studies in the introduction (p5-6).

What provision did the 1975 USA laws make for children with disabilities?

What was the problem with these new laws, according to the writer of this article?

How did the children 'learn to be retarded'?

Why does this writer believe that it is better to place children with 'special needs' straight into the mainstream?

## ***The Need to Belong***

**The Special Education paradigm\* – 'You can only be included if you have the skills'**

In 1975, in the USA, an act was passed by Congress called 'The Education for All Handicapped Children Act'. This act was seen as a meaningful step towards including children with physical, intellectual and emotional needs within regular classrooms. However, this legislation still supports segregated, self-contained classrooms and schools for learners with 'special needs'. This is because its underlying message is that learners with severe or even moderate disabilities need to learn basic life skills in 'special' classrooms, and demonstrate that they have gained them, before they can be allowed to enter regular classrooms.

### **'Learning how to be retarded'**

This means that learners of 5 and 6 years old are placed in self-contained classrooms or programmes in order to learn life skills and age-appropriate behaviour. It is possible for them to remain socially isolated for 15 to 18 years, at great expense to the state, failing to master the required skills and behaviour. This lack of progress has in the past been blamed on the learners. They were seen as having such severe disabilities that they were incapable of learning appropriate behaviour and skills. But this is now being questioned. Research shows that they do learn – they learn inappropriate behaviour from their classmates. Kunc terms these groups "retarded immersion" groups. Learners are immersed in an environment of "retarded" behaviour and learn how to be "retarded".

He suggests that the reason for lack of progress is the lack of motivation. There are very few incentives for the learner to learn in these groups because there really is no exit to general education.

### **Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a paradigm for motivating learning**

We can continue to blame the lack of progress in segregated classrooms on the learners, or we can seriously look for a more effective way to enable learners with disabilities to make a contribution to the community. Do learners need to learn certain skills before being integrated into the mainstream? Many now believe that if we place the child in the regular classroom with appropriate support, the learner's desire to belong and to be one of the kids will provide the motivation to learn new skills.

Maslow (1970) pointed out that belonging is an essential and prerequisite human need. It must be met before we can achieve a sense of self-worth. The five levels of need that Maslow identified were: physiological, safety and security, belonging, self-esteem and finally self-actualisation.

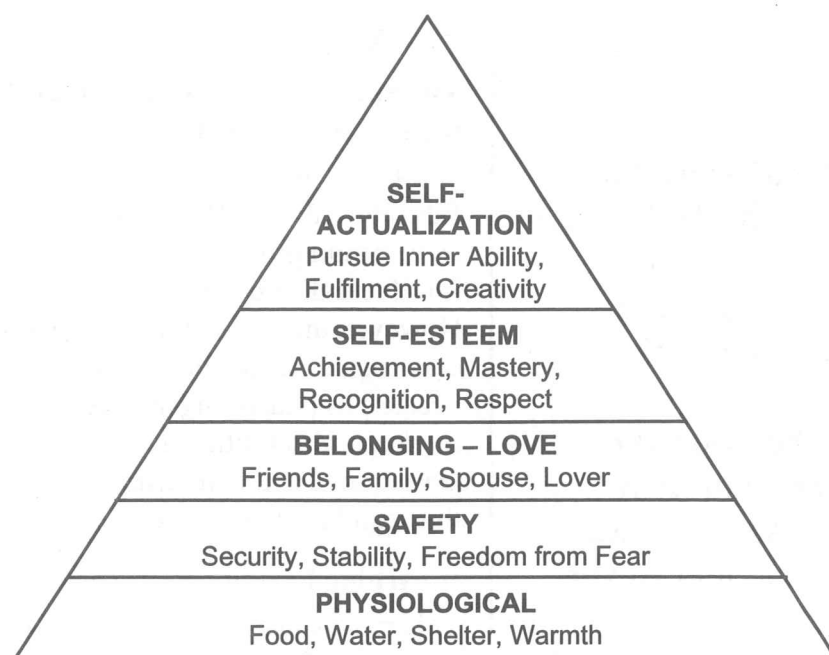
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*\*A paradigm is a way of seeing the world.*

Are there learners in your class who have not yet had basic levels of need fulfilled, e.g. learners who are always hungry, learners who are constantly afraid?

Think of the case studies (p5-6). What did these learners have to do in order to belong? What do your learners have to do in order to belong?

Which of the case studies (p5-6) give examples of what is said here?



**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Maslow says that people do not seek to satisfy a need at a higher level until the more basic levels of need have been met. (For example, a person will only start looking for security and stability once she has enough food and water. She will only feel the need to belong once she has a sense of safety.)

The majority of educators would agree that it is very important to develop a child's sense of self-worth and confidence. However, it has often been assumed that a child's sense of self-worth can be developed through personal achievement. If we go along with Maslow, we see that self-worth can only arise when an individual feels that he belongs. Maslow argues that belonging is one of the central pillars that has been missing from our educational structures for some time. Even though the need to belong is fundamental, schools do not place much emphasis on it.

#### **The inversion\* of the hierarchy: earning the right to belong**

It is common for educators to work on the basis that being able to do things (achievement and mastery) rather than belonging is the main requirement for the development of self-esteem. Belonging has been transformed from an unconditional need and right of all people into something that must be earned. Successful completion of schoolwork is expected to develop the learner's sense of self-worth. Learners gradually discover that they earn the right to belong in the school by doing what the school requires them to do. Only then are they seen as worthwhile individuals. Most schools focus on developing the talents of learners who have exceptional academic, athletic or artistic abilities. Learners with gifts in other areas do not get the same opportunities.

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*\*Inversion: turning upside down*

Study the case studies carefully. Does this statement hold in relation to the learners in these stories? What other things do schools do to "push learners out"?

"Belonging" means there is love and trust between educator and learner. Did this exist in the case studies? Does it work in your class and your school?

The view that personal achievement gives us self-worth pervades all of society. We must earn our right to belong. Belonging is something that is earned through academic or physical achievement, personal appearance or something else valued by society. Belonging is no longer an inherent right of being human. If a school makes belonging and acceptance conditional on performance, it leaves learners with two options:

- They can decide that they are incapable of doing what is required and resign themselves to feelings of inadequacy, or just drop out.
- They can try to gain acceptance by excelling in a particular area.

A glaring example of educational practice that forces learners to earn the right to belong is segregated 'Special' schools. When they become a step to progress into the regular classroom, it is clear that learners must earn the right to belong. They are taught that they are not good enough as they are. The privilege of belonging in the mainstream will be given to them once they have acquired certain skills. However, as soon as we place learners in segregated settings, we take away their sense of belonging. Thus we undermine their ability to learn the skills that are required for them to belong. They can't belong until they learn, but they can't learn because they are prevented from belonging. The segregated learners learn that they are not good enough to belong and *that they will never be good enough to belong because their disability (the reason for their isolation) can never be removed.*

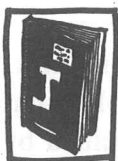
### **Inclusive education: rediscovering belonging as a human right**

Kunc believes that we are witnessing an epidemic of self-hatred in our society. Feelings of personal inadequacy have become so common that we assume they are just part of human nature. He proposes that we need to search together for ways of fostering a sense of belonging in our schools, not only for learners but for staff as well.

*"for when we are able to rely on our peers' individual strengths rather than expecting to attain complete mastery in all areas, then belonging begins to precede achievement, and we may be welcomed into community not because of our perfection, but because of our inherent and natural capabilities." (p38)*

Inclusive education is a concrete step to ensure that all learners begin to learn that belonging is a right, because the community values diversity. We abandon the idea that children have to become "normal" to contribute to the world. We search for and nourish gifts that are inherent in all people. When typical learners see that "those children" belong in their school, they learn that their belonging in the school does not depend on academic or physical capability but rather it is based on a human right to belong.

(in Villa, R. Thousand, J. Stainback, W. and Stainback, S. (eds.) (1992) *Restructuring for Caring and Effective Education*. Paul Brookes).



### Journal write

Now try to sum up the argument of this writer. What is he saying about the need to belong? Write also your own response to what he is saying. Which parts of his argument do you agree with? Which parts do you disagree with?



### Read and journal write

Here is a story told by a member of the team which wrote this umthamo. Write your response to this story in your journal. What does it say about 'Inclusion', and 'the need to belong'?

#### *Thanduxolo's Story*

*I do not know why Thanduxolo chose to frequent our house right from his early age. He was about six years old when he started visiting us. He is from our neighbouring homesteads, just about three hundred metres from our house.*

*Thanduxolo is one of the Down-Syndrome cases, one would conclude from his physical and mental characteristics. He is therefore not included in the minds of a lot of people, because of his condition. He is not included at a normal school for the same reason.*

*We accepted him as one of us from age six, and now he is fifteen. He arrives for breakfast and he won't leave if no-one has reminded him to go home at sunset.*

*My youngest son, Mcebisi, started to invite him to go to church two years ago. He frequently goes to our Methodist church now, and asks for twenty cents to donate in church.*

*In January 2001, my daughter had her 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Party. It turned out to be a big ceremony. As there was music, Thanduxolo was the first one to come up and to dance. He is an excellent dancer, no step missed, and no rhythm missed. He was dancing to every song! He is perfect – very much entertaining. In fact, he was the man of the day!! Everyone was surprised!*

*When one sits down and thinks of Thanduxolo, one wonders why such people could not be included in normal everyday activities. Why can they not be allowed full participation in whatever they can do? More than that, they should be fully accepted by the society.*



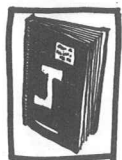
## **Read and reflect in your Journal**

### **Special Needs and Barriers to Learning**

In your supplementary reader, pages 4 – 10, you can read about Inclusion, Special Needs and Barriers to Learning and Participation.

### **New Policy on Inclusion and Barriers to Learning**

Pages 10 – 12 of the same booklet gives a summary of current policy on these things.



Before you read these pages, write down in your journal your own ideas on what Inclusive Education might mean. Then read pages 4 – 12 carefully. Write your thoughts about what you have read.

- What do you like about the new policies?
- What worries you about them?
- What does current policy say about what happened in the case studies (p5-6)?

Once you have written your own ideas down, look at the ideas expressed by the educators quoted on pages 13 – 15 of the same booklet. Compare your ideas with theirs.

### **Disability in South Africa**

Appendix 1 of the supplementary reader contains information on Disability in South Africa. This information is extracted from a government White Paper entitled “Integrated National Disability Strategy” (November 1997). Read these pages and write down your thoughts about what you have read in your journal.





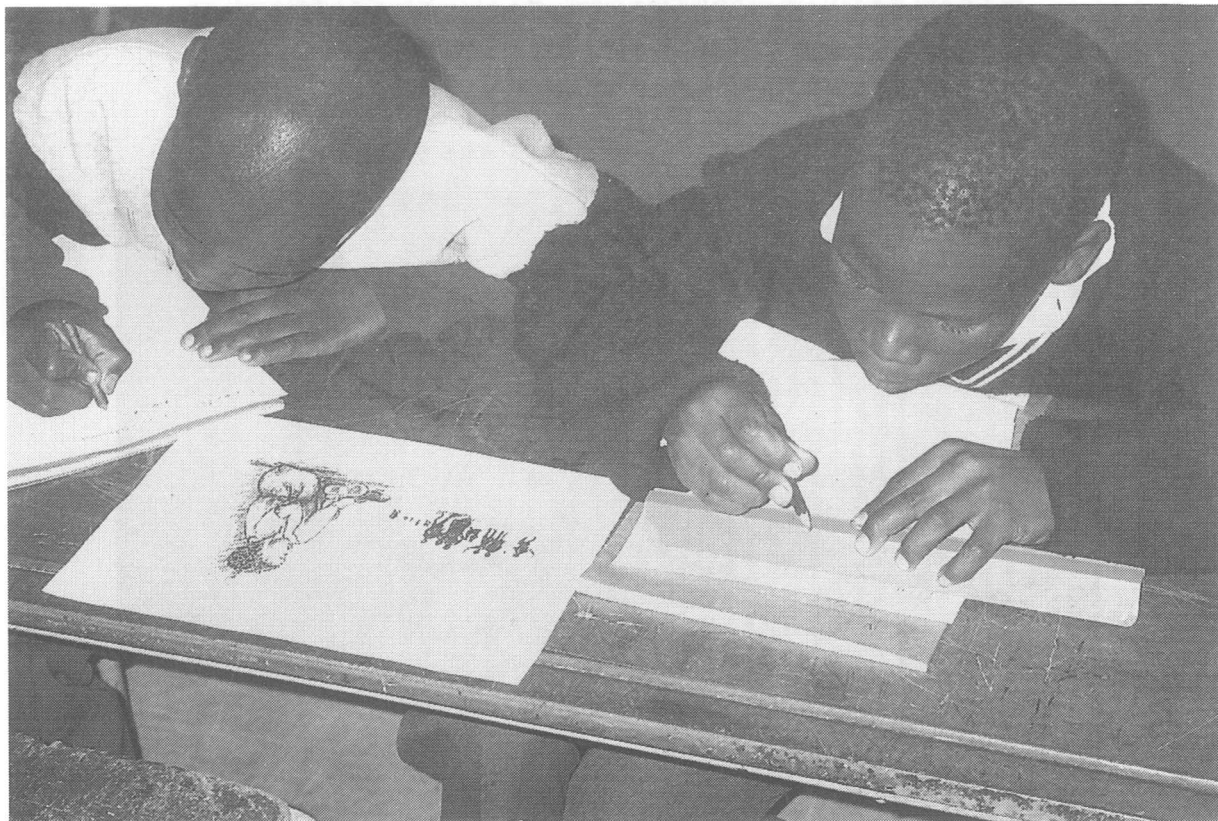
The Key Activity of this Umthamo has a number of sections which you do not need to do before the Umthamo is concluded in a month's time. You can do them later. These sections are in shaded boxes.

Units 2 and 3 contain the first two parts of the Key Activity, which you will do with your learners.

Unit 4 contains the Key Activity, Part 3. It points you towards various different strategies which you can use when trying to make your classroom as 'inclusive' as possible. Implementing one of these strategies is a part of the Key Activity which you will do later. (Also in a shaded box.) You may not be able to do much implementing before the end of the umthamo, but we expect you to continue trying out these strategies as you move towards an ever more inclusive classroom.

You will be asked to report on all three parts of the Key Activity at the third face-to-face session where you deal with this umthamo.

The next unit guides you through the first part of the Key Activity. In it, you and your learners will think the feeling of being 'left out'. You will look at some of the attitudes and actions which make us feel 'left out', and consider what can be done about this.





## Unit 2: Learners who feel 'left out'

In this unit, you and your learners will think about learners in your class. You will look at ways in which they are excluded in certain ways from full involvement in learning and other activities. You will also think about those who have dropped out of school altogether, for one reason or another.

We will reflect on the fact that *prejudice and stereotyping* often lead to the exclusion of certain people.



### Key Activity, Part 1: Feeling left out at school

#### Learners' journal write (1)

Show learners the picture of the child isolated and crying, apart from the crowd. Let the learners talk briefly about what they see in the picture. Then say to them,

*"I'd like you to imagine that this child (the isolated one) is you. Write in your journal about how you feel. Write too about why you feel this way. What happened that made you go away by yourself, and cry?"*



Once they have written in their journals, you could choose from a number of options:

- Let them share their entries with their friends, if they feel like doing this. They may feel free to discuss their experiences in the whole class.
- Have a general class discussion on how the isolated child feels, and what kinds of things might have made her/him feel that way. Ask how the isolated child feels about learning and school work at this point. (In this option, no learners need to talk about their own experiences if they prefer to keep them private.)
- Take the journals in and read them yourself. Compile from the journals a list of "barriers to learning and participation" which come out of the journal entries. Report back to the class, without revealing which contribution came from which child. (You will need to explain to the learners beforehand that this is what you intend to do, and get their agreement.)



### Learners' journal write (2)

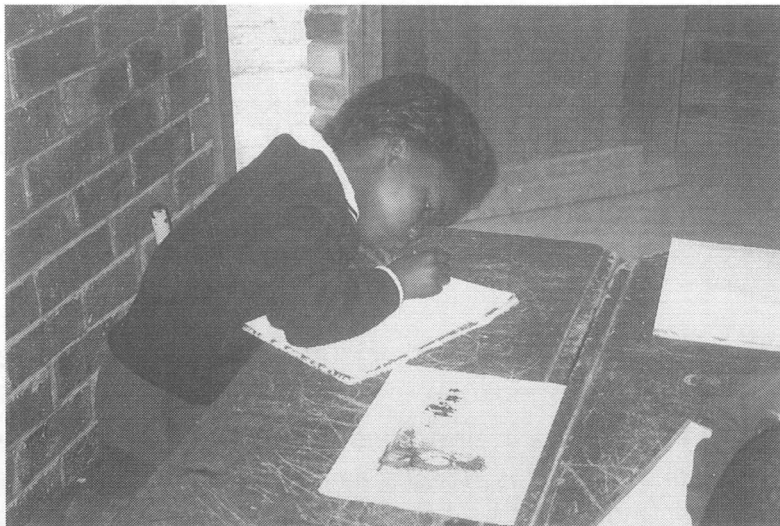
Now let the learners write in their journals again. Ask them:

*"How do you help yourself when you feel lonely and sad, like the child in the picture? What do you say to yourself? What do you do for yourself?"*

*"What kind of support from others would you like when you feel this way? What would you like that friend or family member to do to help you feel better?"*

Once again, you could choose from a number of options:

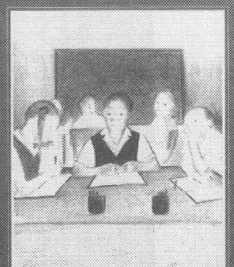
- Let them share their entries with their friends, if they feel like doing this. They may feel free to discuss their ideas in the whole class.
- Have a general class discussion on what a person can do to feel better when s/he is lonely and sad. If someone has done or said something hurtful, what could both people do to heal the hurt? Discuss what kinds of things they would like others to do for them in that kind of situation.



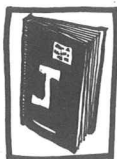
### Read about someone who feels 'out'

A card in your set of additional readings is called "The New Girl". It is a story which comes from the Western Cape. You could read this story, or tell this story, to your class. Use Xhosa to tell the story, if you wish. Let the learners think about the following questions:

- Why was Liesbet so afraid of going to school?
- How did the educators and the learners help to make her feel that she belonged?
- What did she do herself to start becoming one of the members of the class?



**Die nuwe meisie**



### Journal write

Do you have children in your class who struggle because of language? Maybe you have had a Sotho child in a Xhosa class, or a Ghanaian who can't speak Xhosa. And of course, all your learners will have to struggle with English, which will become a LOLT for most of them. Does this story help you with any of these difficulties?

There is a principle in the way this teacher handles the situation that is helpful for dealing with any child who feels 'excluded'. What is this principle?



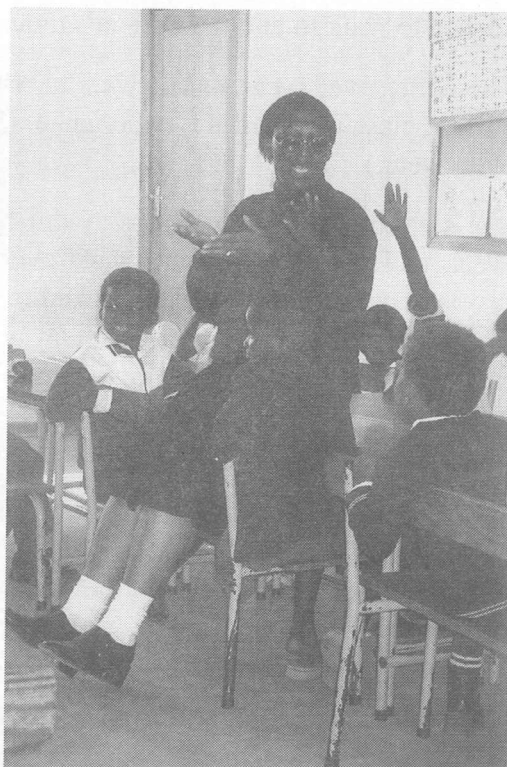
### Talk about learners who are out of school

Ask your learners if they know any children who have felt so 'left out' at school that they have dropped out of school altogether? Do they know children their age who are not at school?

You might like to use a couple of stories to help them get their thinking started, adapting them to the needs and levels of your class. The Case Studies in the introduction could be used – like the one about the boy who only came to school for athletics, or the girl who was mocked after she used the word 'mistooks'. You could also read them one of the newspaper extracts from Umthamo 42, about children who have had to leave school to become the head of the home, because both parents have died.

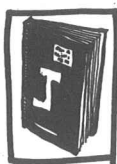
Lead the learners to put themselves in the place of learners such as these, and think about why they don't want to, or can't, come to school. What might make them want to come back to school again? What might enable them to start learning again?

Make a note of the people whom they mention. This information will be useful later.



## Prejudice, Discrimination and Stereotyping

### Journal write



In your journal, write down your own definitions for these three terms. Then think and write about the discrimination you have experienced in your life. Write also about the prejudices you have against certain kinds of people (e.g. men, whites, middle class people, illiterate people...). Write about the kinds of prejudice and discrimination which exist in your classroom, among the children.



Now read about Jane Elliott, an educator in a small town in the United States of America, who gave her all-white Grade 3 class an experience of what prejudice and discrimination are all about. (The writers of Umthamo 10 referred to this experiment.) The learning experience she gave her class has been recorded on film, and used in many other contexts. The film also shows a reunion of her class, 15 years later, where they spoke about the unforgettable lessons they had learnt on those two days. The film is called 'A Class Divided'.

### A Class Divided

The first time Jane Elliott gave her class this experience was a day after the assassination of Martin Luther King, when she became strongly aware of how racist Americans were. She remembered the prayer of the Sioux Indians, "O Great Spirit, keep me from ever judging a man until I have walked in his moccasins\* for a year." She decided to give her third graders a chance to walk in another person's moccasins for a day.

Thereafter, every year, during National Brotherhood Week, her current class repeated the experience. (She taught Grade 3's every year.)

She started the day by talking about National Brotherhood Week, and asked the children what brotherhood was. They said it was about loving one another, and treating people equally. She asked them what white people say about Black people and Indian people, and how they treat them. The children had many answers, and they also knew that it was wrong to treat people badly just because of the colour of their skin.

So the educator suggested that they try out what it feels like to be treated differently because of something about you which you cannot change. She said they would try treating people differently because of the colour of their eyes. They were quite excited about the idea.

Blue-eyed people could be on top, she said, because she was blue-eyed. So she said to the class, "Blue-eyed people are better

moccasins: shoes  
that Native  
Americans wear



than brown-eyed people. Blue-eyed people are smarter than brown-eyed people. Blue-eyed people are more civilised than brown-eyed people." She put collars around the necks of the brown-eyed people, so that everyone could tell the colour of their eyes from a distance. She immediately started picking on something bad about the behaviour of brown-eyed people. For instance, she pointed out how badly one of the brown-eyed boys was sitting, and said that that was typical of brown-eyed people. In a similar way, she praised things done by blue-eyed people and said it was because they were blue-eyed that they did so well.

She then told them that blue-eyed people would have 5 minutes extra for break. Brown-eyed people were not to use any of the playground equipment at break, and they were not to play with the blue-eyed people because blue-eyed people are better. Blue eyes were to go first for lunch, and brown eyes were not allowed second helpings.

At break, the brown-eyed children huddled unhappily on their own. Two boys started a fight. When they came in after break, Jane Elliott asked Russell and John why they were fighting.

"He called me names, and I hit him," John said. "I hit him in the gut."

"What did he call you?" she asked.

"Brown eyes," he said. Other children started saying that they were also being called "brown eyes".

"What's wrong with being called brown eyes?" asked the educator.

"It means that we're stupid, and things..." said one boy.

"Did it make you feel better to call him brown eyes?" the educator asked Russell. He just smiled uneasily.

"Did it help to hit him?" she asked John. "Did it stop him? Did it make you feel better inside?" He shook his head, very close to tears.



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Commenting afterwards on what had happened, Jane Elliott said, "I watched marvellous, co-operative, wonderful, thoughtful children turn into nasty, vicious, discriminating little third graders in fifteen minutes."

The school day continued as usual, except that in everything the brown-eyed children were discriminated against.

The following day, the brown-eyed children had to give the collars to the blue-eyed children. "Yesterday, I told you that blue eyes are better than brown eyes," said Jane Elliott. "I lied. Today brown eyes are better than blue eyes." The whole day the blue eyed children received the same kind of treatment that the brown-eyed children had experienced the day before. At one point during the day, Jane said, "I hate today – because I'm blue-eyed. It's not funny. It's not fun. It's called discrimination. It's not a fair day. It's a horrid day."

At the end of the day, she let them take off their collars, and they discussed how they had felt.

"Like you're in jail and someone has thrown away the key," said one.

"Like a dog on a leash," said another. They all agreed very whole-heartedly that you should not treat people differently because of the colour of their eyes, or because of the colour of their skin, or because they are male or female, or disabled...

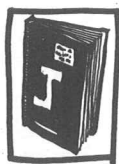
She invited them to come and sit down together, blue eyes and brown eyes, and they put their arms around one another, reunited with friends who had been forbidden because of the colour of their eyes.

Jane Elliott carried out this exercise with her third-graders every year for sixteen years. Every year, she gave the class some little Spelling, Maths and Reading tests two weeks before the exercise, on each of the two days of the exercise, and two weeks after the exercise. She found that the children performed better on the day that they were the privileged group, and worse on the day that they were the inferior group. After the exercise, the whole class maintained a consistently higher level.



### Journal write

Reflect on the information in the last paragraph of the reading. What do you think this means? Does it tell you anything about the learners in your class? Who are those who are looked down upon and discriminated against? How do they perform in class?



Think especially about your behaviour. Do you treat some groups of learners differently from others? For instance, do you treat girls and boys differently? Does your attitude towards boys and girls help boys learn better than girls? – or does it help girls learn better than boys?



Discuss this with colleagues and with other teacher-learners at the face-to-face session.

You could try an exercise like “Blue eyes and brown eyes” with your class, if you are very careful.

You will probably not be able to do it with blue eyes and brown eyes, but you can simply give half of your class some kind of collar or band around their necks, and give the two groups names. You could also do it with girls and boys. It might reveal interesting things about the different ways you do treat them!

Jane Elliott warns that this exercise must be done **“for the right reasons and in the right way”**, because otherwise it is easy for children to be hurt.



### Exclusion and Stereotyping

Much of the exclusion that learners experience in school is because of prejudice and stereotyping of one kind or another.

*Prejudice* – pre judice – means ‘to judge before’. People notice one feature of a person, and judge them on the basis of this, without getting to know them. Thus:

“He is disabled, so he must be stupid.”

“He is Zulu-speaking, so he must hate Xhosas.”

“She doesn’t know English well, so she is not intelligent.”

Jane Elliott set up *stereotypes* in the children’s minds: “Blue eyes are better. They are smarter. They are more civilised. Every blue-eyed person is the same.”

The way adults behave sets up similar stereotypes in our learner’s minds:

“He is from an illiterate family. All illiterates are dirty and slow learners.”

“Her mother has HIV/AIDS. People with HIV/AIDS are filthy and will infect you. They are also immoral.”

“She is a girl. All girls are quiet and helpful, and like doing domestic chores. They are not clever and aggressive, like boys.”

And Jane Elliott’s tests give evidence that children who experience the rejection that goes with prejudice and stereotyping cannot learn well. The discrimination they experience forms a barrier to learning and participation.

If you would like your learners to know more about HIV/AIDS, follow up on the list of contact details of organisations in Appendix 5 of your supplementary reader.



## Dealing with learners' discriminatory behaviours in your classroom

How should you handle a situation in your class where one child is showing prejudice against another, excluding her because of a prejudice?

In the book *Anti-bias Curriculum*, by Louise Derman-Sparks, et al., the writers warn us not to ignore or excuse discriminatory behaviour, or to be immobilized by fear when you see it. Ignoring such behaviour gives learners permission to act in discriminatory ways, and makes the environment unsafe for all learners.

Here is an example of an educator dealing with a situation where children are laughing at an unfamiliar language. (Spanish is spoken by a group of people which often experiences discrimination in the USA.)

As their teacher begins reading a story in Spanish to an English-speaking group, a few children begin to giggle. The teacher stops reading and tells the children, "I am stopping because some children are giggling while I am reading. That is not OK – it is rude. I know Spanish is a new language to some of you. Sometimes we are not comfortable with something we do not know and we laugh to make ourselves feel better, but laughing at how people talk is hurtful and unfair. Laughing is not OK, but it is OK to raise your hand and ask me questions about what I am reading."

The steps this educator is following can be summarised like this:

1. Immediately address a child's negative response to a cultural (or other) difference.
2. Help the child to figure out why he or she is uncomfortable.
3. Explain what responses are hurtful and offer alternative responses.





Below you can read about an educator dealing with a child who rejects another child because of her physical disability. Young children may do this because of fear, impatience, stereotyping, or lack of skills for interacting with a child who is different from them.

Four-year-olds Patty and Selina are playing with the blocks. Kathy (who has burn scars on her face and arms from an accident when she was 2 years old) tries to join in their play. "I hate Kathy, she's ugly," Patty declares loudly to Selina.

Their teacher intervenes: "Patty, that is a hurtful thing to say about Kathy. Why do you say it?" Patty: "Because she has those things on her face. I don't like them. They're scary." Teacher: "I know it looks different and scary to you. Kathy has scars on her face and arms because she was in an accident when she was a baby." The teacher has one arm around Kathy and one around Patty. "Kathy, do you want to tell Patty about how you got your scars?" Kathy says, "You." (Sometimes she chooses to explain herself, and sometimes she designates the task to the teacher.) Teacher: "When Kathy was 2 years old, some very hot fat in a frying pan spilled on her and burned her. It hurt her very badly at first and she had to be in hospital for a long time. Her scars are new skin growing so that the burns won't hurt any more." Patty: "Do they hurt?" Kathy joins in at this point: "No, they used to itch, but not now."

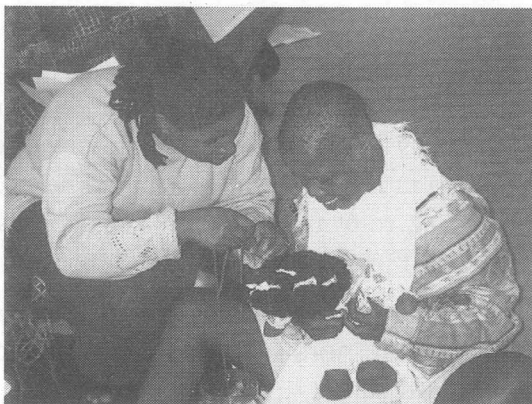
Teacher: "It is OK to want to know about Kathy's scars, but it is not OK to say she is ugly or not let her play with you. Kathy, how did you feel when Patty said you were ugly?" Kathy: "Sad." Teacher: "What do you want to tell her about how you felt?" Kathy: "Don't say ugly." Teacher: "Remember that in our classroom I expect you all to work and play together. Let's you and me and Kathy and Selina play with the blocks together."



### Discuss the approach

These examples are from America. What similar kinds of discriminatory behaviour have you had to deal with in your class. How could you adapt the approach used above to your situation? Discuss this with colleagues, or fellow teacher-learners at the face-to-face session.

*A mother working  
with her  
disabled child.*





The book referred to previously gives the following guidelines for dealing with children's discriminatory behaviours:

### Guidelines

- **Set limits** Make it a firm rule that no aspect of a child's or adult's identity, be it gender, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, socio-economic class, or any other aspect is *ever* an acceptable reason for exclusion, or teasing: "In this class, it is never OK to say you won't play with someone because of the colour of their skin or because she's a girl or because she uses a wheelchair."
- **Intervene immediately**, reminding children of the limits.
- **Comfort/Support the target of the discriminatory behaviour.** "It was unfair of Johnny to say you couldn't play because you are Black." Help the target child to verbalise his feelings to the other child: "I don't want you to say that, I don't like it." Teach children not to accept being victims. Help the excluder understand that discrimination hurts another child just as much as physical hurt.
- **Determine the real reasons for the conflict.** If the excluder does not ordinarily use biased reasons for exclusion, and you find out the real reason for this particular incident of exclusion is a specific action on the part of the child who was excluded, help the children understand that the real reason for the exclusion was not related to the child's identity; and involve the children in problem-solving.
- **If you believe that prejudice does underlie the exclusion** (perhaps because the excluder has previously engaged in similar behaviour) **offer the excluded child further support.** "I am angry that Johnny does not want to play with you. He's missing out on a great friend. I do not like what he is saying, and I am going to help him change his ideas about playing with you. Now, let's find someone else to play with."

Then take the action further with the excluder: Tell the child, "In this classroom it's not OK to refuse to play with another child because he's Black (or speaks another language, etc.)." Try to learn more about the thinking underlying the child's bias.

Work on a long-term plan: Collect more data about Johnny to figure out the dynamics of his exclusionary behaviour, including further observation and talking with other staff and with his family. Develop a plan for work at school and at home. Keep in frequent touch with his home. After an agreed upon period, re-evaluate the child's progress and develop further plans if necessary.

When asked what support they would like from others if they were hurt and angry because of being 'excluded', children at Kuhle Primary School said:

My mother should read stories for me.

My mother should shout the friends in my presence.

Mother/Sister should buy me sweets and chocolates although she is not the cause of loneliness.

The next unit contains Part 2 of the Key Activity. In it, you and your learners will think about children and adults who have disabilities.



### Unit 3: Learners who have disabilities

The Key Activity in this umthamo involves you and your learners in Action Research into people who are excluded *from* our schools, or who feel excluded *within* our classrooms.

In the last unit, you looked at the feeling of being 'left out'. In this unit, we look at learners who are left out because they have disabilities of one kind or another. In our society currently, these children are often out of school.

Learners will do research into who these people are. They will start thinking about how they, and other out-of-school children discussed in the last unit, could be brought closer to the school, and to opportunities for learning. This learner research will be an on-going process. You need to start the research during the next four weeks, and report on how far the learners have gone with it. It will then continue in an on-going cycle.

In this part of the Key Activity, you will first of all take part in a learning experience yourself, to give you a taste of what it is like to have a physical disability. This learning experience will take place at your face-to-face session.

Your learners will then participate in the same learning experience. This will help them put themselves 'in someone else's shoes'. Starting with the experience they have had, learners will talk about how it feels to be disabled. They will then talk about people in their neighbourhood who are disabled. Through these discussions, they will gradually move into doing some Action Research of their own, aimed at drawing more children of school-going age into learning and community activities. (Note that the sections of the Key Activity which are in shaded boxes are optional. You need not do them immediately, but we suggest that you use these ideas as time goes on.)



#### Key Activity, Part 2

##### *An Experience: Eyes and Hands*

This experience gives people a feel of what it is like working together when you have some kind of physical disability.

##### **What you will need:**

- Each pair will need a blindfold (any piece of cloth, or doek, will do) and a piece of strong string, or rope, or even another cloth (to tie one person's hands together).
- They will also need a task, which they will have to perform as a team. We will discuss possible tasks on the following pages.

### What to do:

Carry out the activity in pairs. Each pair could have a group of observers who watch as they work. It is the duty of the observers to look carefully at how the two work together. They should keep quiet, and say nothing. Later, some observers could maybe have a turn.



One child is blindfolded, so that s/he cannot see. The other has his/her hands tied together behind his/her back. They are then given a task to do, which **they must complete together**. You need to make sure that:

- they understand what the task is (what they have to do);
- the items they are working with are within reach of the blind-folded learner;
- that you have told the learners that they need to **work together** to complete the task.

Then do not interfere too much. Let them find their own way of completing the task.

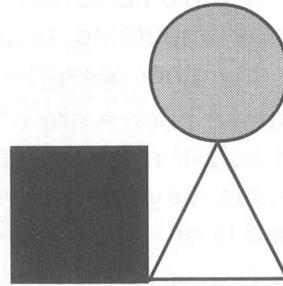
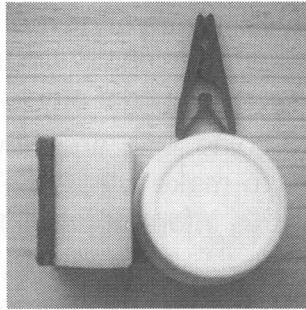
Here are some ideas for tasks which they could do, depending on the age of the learners and resources which are available:

- They could eat bread and peanut butter, which is placed in front of them after their eyes/hands have been tied.
- They could butter two pieces of bread, or prepare some other kind of food.
- They could make a model, e.g. a table, a house, a stand (like those which were made in the Technology umthamo) out of waste from the ZISA box.

*In Foundation Phase classes, we suggest that you have one pair doing the activity at a time. You could have the whole class observing, or half the class observing. The other half of the class could be doing something else, preferably outside.*

*With older learners, you could divide the class into groups, each group having a pair doing the activity. It could be helpful, however, with certain classes, to work with one pair in front of the class before you divide them into groups.*

- They could arrange shapes, or boxes and tins, in a specified pattern, e.g.:



*If you use boxes, tins, etc., you need to have one set arranged in a specified pattern so that the learners can see (and feel) it. Then you need another set of similar objects, so that they can repeat the pattern, using them. You can see this in the picture at the bottom of the page.*

### Talk about the experience

When the pairs have finished the tasks, talk about the experience:

1. Let the two people who were 'disabled' talk about how it felt.
  - How did it feel to be blind? How did it feel to have no hands? Which of you was the 'helper'?
  - How did it feel to be helped by the other person? How did it feel to help the other person? What was the nicest way to be helped? What was the worst part about being helped? Does this teach you anything about how to treat people who seem to need help?
2. Let the observers talk about how the two people worked together
  - What did they observe?
  - What ways of working together worked well? What didn't work so well?
  - What did they see that told them how the two people were feeling?

The learners can also write in their journals about their experiences.



*Grade 1's at Kuhle Primary School said the worst part was "when someone is not explaining properly and you mess things up". What they feared about being blind was, "You'll be left alone and no-one will help you."*

### Talk about people we know who have disabilities

Ask the learners whether they know any people who are blind, or have no hands. Do they know anyone who has had legs amputated, or anyone in a wheelchair? Do they know any other person who has a disability of any kind?

- If these people are of school-going age, are they at school? If not, why not? (Try to make a note of the people they mention, so that this information can be used later.)
- If not, what do they do all day? Who are their companions and friends?
- What kinds of things can these people do? What do you think they would like to do? What kind of help or support would they need to be able to do more for themselves? (Try to lead them towards the realisation that people want to be able to do things for themselves; they do not like being pitied, and feeling helpless.)
- What questions would you like to ask them, about their disabilities, and about their lives?

Children often have anxieties and fears about people with disabilities. You probably also have some anxieties and fears about them, especially if you have never had the chance to get to know someone who has a disability. Encourage the learners to talk about these worries that they have. Encourage them to ask the questions which they have. If you do not have answers, try to arrange for someone who is disabled – or who knows more about disabilities – to come and answer them. (See below.)

### Read stories about people with disabilities

One way of helping children to become familiar with the lives of people with disabilities is to read or tell them stories about them. Reading about disabled people could also be a good preparation for inviting someone who has a disability to the school. Some ideas about what you could read appear on the next page.

As learners listen to the stories, let them think about these 3 questions. After you have read the stories, discuss the answers.

- What is it that this person cannot do, that most people can do?
- What can this person do that most people can do?
- Is there something that this person can do that very few people can do?

*Remember, you do not have to read the story word for word. And you do not have to read it in English. Choose the language and the method of telling the story which will work best for your learners.*

The additional reading for Umthamo 39 is about an environmentalist who has withered legs. This would be a wonderful story to read, or tell, to an Intermediate or Senior Phase class.

**Gardener with a heart of gold**

He seems with his crippled legs, hidden beneath him and to him, about as pliable as a piece of wood, as if he were a statue.

But every day of his busy life, he is a man who is alive, who is full of life, who is full of love. He is a man who is full of life, who is full of love. He is a man who is full of life, who is full of love.

... (text continues) ...



... (text continues) ...

**Some questions to think about before you read the story**

- What is the story about?
- What have been the outcomes of the project?
- In what ways has this project improved the lives of the people?

**Some things to think about, and discuss, after reading the story**

- Make a list of any environmental activities in your local area.
- In what ways do the projects in your community benefit (improve and help) the lives of the people and the environment?
- Try to find out more about Dr. Margareta Ramphela from somebody in your community.

On another card are two stories which appeared in the Sunday Times learning supplement, one about a blind boy and the other about a deaf girl. There are also pictures of braille and sign language.

Add these cards to your class library.

Here is a section from a story which appears in 'Disabled Village Children', by David Werner (1988). This is a made-up story, based on a number of true incidents. It has been adapted slightly.

**Thabo**

A group of Grade 1 and 2 learners from a school in the Transkei were trying to think of a way to get a little disabled girl called Julia to come to school. Her mother thought it was impossible for Julia to go to school, and Julia herself was very scared. The children still thought she wanted to go to school, though, and wanted to help her. They decided to talk to Thabo, who was the only disabled child they knew. He walked in a jerky way, with crutches. He had one hand that sometimes made strange movements. And he had difficulty speaking clearly, especially when he was excited. But Thabo did not seem to need any special help – or at least not anymore. He was already in the fourth grade of school and doing well.

After school, several of these Grade 1's and 2's waited for Thabo and told him about Julia and what had happened when they visited her home.

"How was it when you began school, Thabo?" asked the children. "Were you afraid? Did your parents want you to go? How did the other children treat you?"...

"Sure, I was afraid to go to school at first," said Thabo. "And my mom and dad didn't want to send me. They were afraid that kids would tease me, or that it would be too hard for me. It was grandma who talked us all into it. She said if I couldn't earn my living behind a plough, I'd better learn to earn it using my head. And I intend to."



"What do you want to do when you grow up?" asked one boy.

"Maybe a health worker," said Thabo. "I want to help other people."

"Did other kids tease you when you started school?" asked the children.

Thabo frowned. "No... not much. But they didn't know what to do with me, so usually they didn't do anything. They would stare when they thought I wasn't looking. And they would imitate the way I walk when I wasn't looking. And they would imitate the way I talk when they thought I wasn't listening. But when they thought I was looking and listening, they would pretend I wasn't there. That was the hardest for me. They never asked me what I thought, or what I could do, or if I wanted to play with them. I felt lonelier when I was with the other children than when I was by myself."

"But now you have a lot of friends. You seem like one of the gang. What happened?"

"I don't know," answered Thabo. "The other kids just got used to me, I guess. They began to see that although I walk and talk funny, I'm not really all that different from them. I think it helps that I do well at school. I like to read. I read everything that I can find. Sometimes when kids in my class have trouble reading and understanding something, I help them. I like to do that. At first they gave me the nickname of 'Crabfoot' because of how I walk. But now they call me 'Prof' because I help them with their lessons."

The children told Thabo about Julia, and Thabo offered to visit Julia, along with his parents. When Thabo talked to Julia she gained the courage to go to school. And his parents helped to encourage Julia's parents to allow her to go to school. And that was how the children came to be carrying Julia to school the next day.

During the next six months, Julia learned to read and write almost as well as her classmates, although she started school late. Some of the children got tired of carrying her to school, so they had to think of a new idea. One of the fathers in the village helped to make a simple wheelchair out of a chair and some bicycle wheels. And some of the other fathers helped to smooth a road between Julia's home and the school. This helped Julia come and go to school on her own. She felt very free!

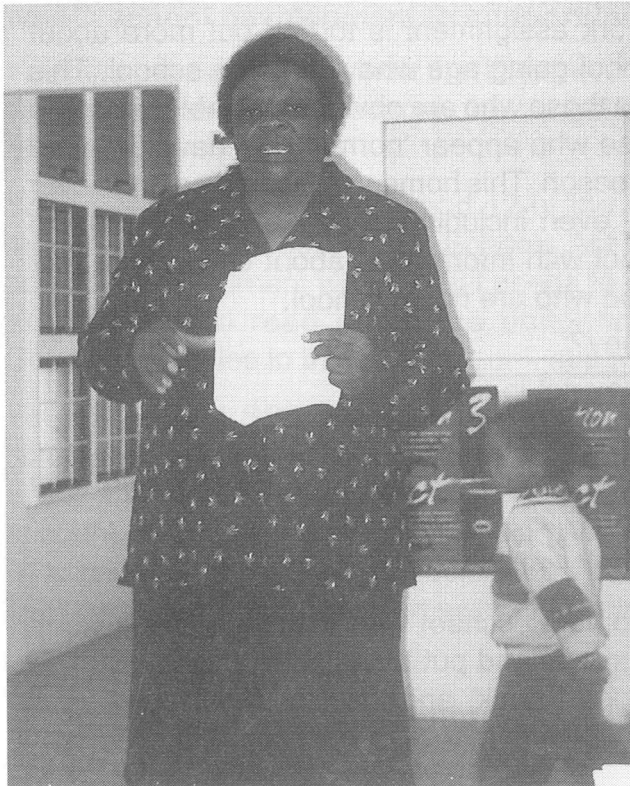


### **Invite a person with a disability to visit your school**

Another thing which can influence attitudes in your school towards people with disabilities is to invite a disabled person, or the parent of a disabled child, to visit your class, or school. Someone from a disabled organisation (see Appendix 5 of the supplementary reader for a list) would be ideal.

The person needs to be comfortable answering the very direct questions that children ask, and talking with the learners about his/her disability in a natural way. Inform your visitor about what you have already been doing, and what you are hoping to achieve from the visit.

It would be good if these people could visit more than once, so that the children can get used to them, and gradually become comfortable with finding out more and more about them as people, as well as about how they experience her disabilities.



**The mother  
of a  
disabled  
child  
speaking at  
a school.**



### **Child-to-child**

In the story about Thanduxolo, one child (Mcebisi) plays an important part in 'including' Thanduxolo. You also read part of a story about Thabo, where children helped a disabled child to come to school.

You may have had a worry about the way children can mock those who are 'different'. But children can also play an important role in including those who are excluded, if they are influenced in that direction. An important new educational trend called 'child-to-child' acknowledges this. The 'hands and eyes' activity, and the discussions your learners have had, will have paved the way for them to feel more empathy for 'excluded' learners.

In this part of the Key Activity, the learners in your class will start doing some 'Action Research'. They will think about and investigate who are the 'excluded ones' in their school, or in their community. They will think of a way to include them more in learning, and in the activities of the community and the school. They will try out their idea and write about it.

### **Group research**

Your learners are going to do some Action Research into exclusion/inclusion. They will start with a *Situation Analysis*.



Their homework assignment is to find out more about people of school-going age who are not in school. This should include those who are obviously disabled in some way, and those who appear 'normal', but have dropped out for some reason. This homework should be done over a few days – even including a weekend. Ask them to come to school with information about children in their neighbourhood who are not in school.

- Who are they?
- Why are they not in school?
- Who are their companions?
- What are the things they can do? What would they like to do?
- What are their limitations?

When they come to school with their homework, they should sit in groups and put their findings together. The groups can report back, and the class can build up a picture of the situation in their school community.

### Brainstorm

Let learners give their ideas on how learners could behave to support these people, helping them to take part in social activities, and in learning activities. Perhaps, to start with, this would just mean making friends with them, spending time with them, and letting them talk about themselves, their disability, what they can do, and what they would like to do. It could include involving them in games, and in learning. It could lead up to helping them to come to school, after a while.

After some general discussion, ask them to think about the **one thing** that they could do which would make **the most difference** to a person (or people) who are out of school. This could be a class focus, or you could ask each group to think of their own **one thing**.

Remember, this is one thing that the **learners** are going to do. Don't get in their way, but make sure you are there to support them. You will probably need to play a supportive role in speaking to the child's parents. Parents, brothers and sisters and other family members will need to get involved in this project, in order to make it work.

Now the learners should do what they have planned to do, supported by you. They should write in their journals about what they are doing and how they feel about what is happening. Encourage them to draw as well, if they wish to.

*A way to continue learning about people with different abilities is to build up a set of dolls which are used regularly in your classroom for story-telling. These could be dolls made of grass or mealie-cobs. They don't need to be expensive or grand. Each doll has a personality and a name, and features in stories and in classroom events. Include in your set a doll who is deaf, or who speaks French (doesn't know Xhosa, or English). Another doll could be wheel-chair bound, and a third might have a difficulty with spelling. As these dolls are included in all classroom activities, children think of ways of making sure that they are included.*



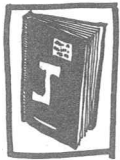


## Whole school development to support inclusion

You may have realised by now that if learners with disabilities are going to enter your school, the school will have to be ready for them.

You have read on pages 11 and 12 of the supplementary reader what the South African Schools Act says about the admission of learners with special needs to public schools. You have also read about the obligations of School Governing Bodies in this regard. Look at it again now.

Your SGB and SDT are probably still busy working on different aspects of school policy. You need to make sure, at this stage, that they are taking the policy of Inclusion into account, and that your Admissions Policy is clear on the admission of learners with Special Educational Needs. We will speak more about support within the school in Unit 4.



## Journal write: My role

In your journal, reflect on your role in supporting what your learners are doing.

You may feel quite alarmed at the prospect of having a learner with a disability in your class. You probably have all the fears and reservations expressed by the educators in your supplementary reader. Don't panic! It is unlikely that you will ever have more than one of two people with obvious disabilities in your class at any one time.

Take everything slowly, and when a new learner who may need special handling comes into your class, discuss the situation very carefully with the parents beforehand. Try to find out as much as you can about ways of including this child in your learning activities. (A list of contact persons and resources can be found in Appendix 5 of the supplementary reader.) Trust your own problem-solving abilities. Think about how you can support all learners, and at the same time, encourage them to be independent. Some strategies will be discussed in Unit 4.



## Reporting on what happened

Write a careful report on what happened in the first two parts of the Key Activity:

- Describe how the Journal writes based on the picture of the isolated child went. Report on the discussions which followed.
- Describe the learners' reactions to the learning experience (Eyes and hands), and what they said during discussions after the games.

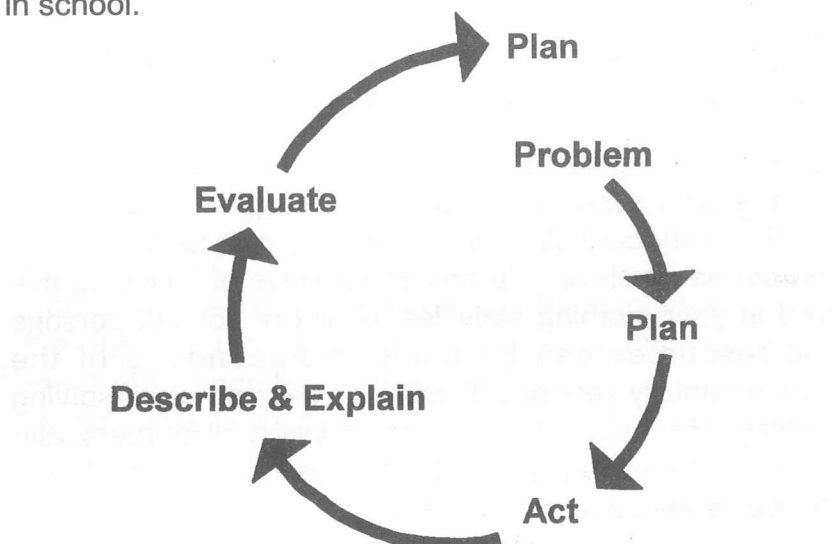
- Describe anything else that you managed to do, such as reading stories, or inviting people with disabilities to the school.
- Describe the work that learners did in identifying those who were excluded from school (disabled and not disabled). Write about the brainstorm and discussions in the classroom, and the field work, or homework, that they did.
- Document\* the discussions they had about what they could do to include some of the 'excluded' more effectively.
- Describe what they have done so far, and how effective it was.
- Include some of the learners' journal writes or pictures.

*You may not have had time to do this yet.*

*\*Write down what happened.*

### Continuing the AR Cycle

As the year goes on, the learners' work on 'inclusion' could continue as an Action Research cycle. In other words, learners should discuss how it went (evaluate), and then maybe try another strategy, or a new focus. This can go on throughout the year, gradually making more and more excluded learners feel more included in the community, and in school.



Pages 33 – 36 of your supplementary reader give guidance on how learners can continue to support one another, when learners with special needs are part of the class. Read this section carefully, and make notes on it in your journal.

The next unit will focus on your role as a teacher, building an inclusive classroom, and building up strategies for including learners more effectively. It will also talk about support structures for inclusivity which need to be built within the school.



## Unit 4: Giving and getting support for Inclusive Learning



So far in this umthamo, your learners have been finding out more about themselves, and about people who are excluded from the school, or in the classroom. They have been thinking about, and trying out, ways of supporting themselves and one another, when they feel 'left out'.

In this unit, you will look at ways in which you can carry out your 'supportive role', as an educator. Being a supportive educator involves creating an environment of trust and respect for each learner. It involves reinforcing good behaviour. (We have seen examples of this on previous pages.) It involves having two ears (i.e. being a very good listener), and it involves developing a range of teaching/learning strategies.

In being supportive, you will also need to be supported. We will discuss ways in which this can happen.

In Umthamo 10, you started building up profiles of the learners in your class. You began to observe them, noting the ways in which they learn. We found that learners do not only learn from educators. They learn in the playground; they learn from one another; they learn from sources outside the school. In that umthamo, you made a detailed observation of a learner who was struggling. Many of you experienced the powerful effect of paying attention to a learner, and his or her specific needs.

In Umthamo 26, we elaborated on the importance of accepting the diversity of learners in your class. You found that different learners have different kinds of intelligence. Each has valuable aptitudes to share with the members of the class.

In this umthamo, we are once again involved with diversity. Your learners, and even those who are not in the school yet, are 'differently abled'. They also experience various barriers which prevent them from participating fully in the activities of the school. In this unit, we will add to the work we have done in past imithamo. You will broaden the range of resources you have to deal with different kinds of learners in your class.



### Key Activity, Part 3: Profiling your learners

Use your "Learner Profile" book for this activity. Your "Learner Profile" book has a page, or a section, for each learner.



Think about each of the learners in your class. Ask yourself, "What can this child do well?" Write as much as you can about each learner.

Then ask yourself, "Does this child experience barriers to learning and participation? What are those barriers?" Write a comment about this for each child. The learners' journal entries (see Unit 2) will help you with this.

You may find that each child does experience barriers of some kind.

- These barriers may be difficulties at home: poverty; an abusive parent; divorce; perhaps s/he is an AIDS orphan, etc.
- The barriers may be to do with where they live: a long walk to school; a squatter camp with over-crowded conditions and no-where to do homework, etc.
- The barriers may have something to do with your school: learning is done through the medium of English, which is not the home language; children share desks; they have no paper or pencils; the room is dark and the child sits far from the board; there is no access for wheelchairs, etc.
- The barriers may have something to do with the child him/herself: poor eyesight or hearing; an intellectual or physical disability; a learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia); or poor health, reading difficulties, difficulties with Maths., etc.
- The barriers may have something to do with the other learners or educators: prejudiced attitudes; unkind behaviour; unhelpful teaching methodologies and approaches, etc.

Continue to add to the profile book as you observe the learners in your class. These entries will form the basis for your inclusive strategies.

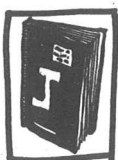
Discuss your Profile Book with other teacher-learners at the last face-to-face session dealing with this umthamo.

*If it seems that one of your learners has a fairly severe disability, and you don't know what is wrong, look at Appendix 3 of your supplementary reader for some initial help. Otherwise, one of the organisations listed in Appendix 5 of the supplementary reader might be able to help you.*

### Using diversity as a resource in the classroom

Reflect continually on ways of using the diversity of learners in your classroom as a resource. Instead of regarding those who are 'different' as a nuisance, or a problem, see how they can become a resource.

- How can different learners learn from one another?
- How can different learners learn individually, in different ways, and at different paces?
- How can different learners learn together, co-operatively?
- How can different learners benefit by contact with one another and by joint activities?



## Journal write

Think back to all the imithamo you have worked through, and also to the OBE training you have undergone. Which of the strategies you tried are useful for accommodating different learners, with different styles, and different abilities? Which of the principles of the B.Prim.Ed., and of the New Curriculum, will support Inclusion?

Here is a list of the more obvious imithamo which contain strategies for using and accommodating diversity:

**Umthamo 4:** Organising learners into groups gives opportunities for all to participate. If you make sure that your groups consist of people with different abilities, they can support and learn from one another.

**Umthamo 12:** Umthamo 12 introduces peer learning as another learner-centred approach. Look at your profile book and see how learners can be paired, so that those with certain strengths can help others who are not so strong in that area. A child who has a disability or a weakness will also have strengths. Let them teach others what they can do.

**Umthamo 20:** In our society, which places so much emphasis on fluency in English, a child who does not have an aptitude for learning languages can feel very 'out'. It is important to encourage him or her to use the mother tongue with pride, and to use it for learning. Code-switching can support learning where English medium learning is difficult.

**Umthamo 28:** Children with differing abilities should be able to learn independently, individually or in groups. This becomes possible in a classroom which contains a variety of learning resources. In an inclusive classroom, learners are often learning at different paces – some progressing fast, and others more slowly. All the strategies for multigrade, or multilevel, learning are useful. Peer tutoring in a multilevel situation allows for the ZPD of Vygotsky – learners learn more with help from someone more mature than they could do on their own. (see additional handout "Schools as homes for learning")

**Umthamo 36:** Where learners have diverse needs and abilities, one needs to negotiate the curriculum with them.

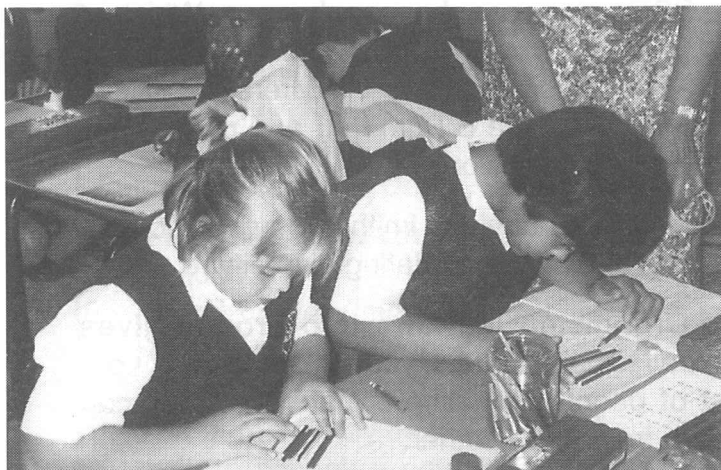
Now think about all the Learning Areas imithamo, and the activities in them, and think which ones could be used effectively in a classroom where learners have different needs and abilities. Make a list of them in your journal.

Finally, read pages 18 – 26 of your supplementary reader, and add to your list of strategies from this reading.

*Think about Liesbet, who was new and felt left out. But she had something she could teach the others – her language, isiXhosa. The teacher made use of her strength, and thereby helped her to feel a part of the class.*

*Here is a description of a classroom where multilevel is being used for peer-tutoring: We also notice a number of older students in the room. These students are each sitting with a younger child and are reading to them or playing reading and language games with them. We find out that this is the cross-age peer-tutoring program where the older kids each have a "little buddy" that they work with on a regular basis. This not only has an academic pay-off for each group, but also, we learn, social benefits as well. There is no more teasing of younger students by older students, and the younger students are no longer afraid to walk in the halls of this big school building alone. Accelerated Schools newsletter, Summer 1991.*

Discuss your list of strategies with a colleague, or at the face-to-face session.



*An inclusive classroom at Southernwood Primary School, East London.*

### **Giving all learners a chance to succeed**

In the past, we expected all learners to progress at a similar pace, perform the same tasks, and pass the same examinations at the end of the year. These examinations were all written examinations, usually in English, disadvantaging those who were not good in writing, or in English.

Our new curriculum is more flexible. While all learners are aiming to attain the same outcomes, learners do not have to proceed towards them at the same pace. In addition, these outcomes can be adapted and added to for learners with special needs. As assessment is done continuously, different dimensions and aspects of the learner's performance can be assessed.

### **Adapting the curriculum**

Pages 27 and 28 of your supplementary reader give some ideas about the adaptation of the curriculum to suit learners with special needs. Appendix 2 of the reader compares the focus on individual difficulties, which we had in the past, to the new focus, on how the curriculum supports the child, or creates barriers for the child. Read this too.

### **Assessment**

The word "assessment" has always had two meanings for those who have worked with 'special needs' in the past. Firstly, it has referred to 'diagnostic assessment', i.e. the process of finding out what the learner's precise problem is. The purpose of this was often to decide whether the learner needed to be placed in a Special class or school. For many educators in rural schools, this kind of assessment is not easily available, and nor are special classes or schools easily

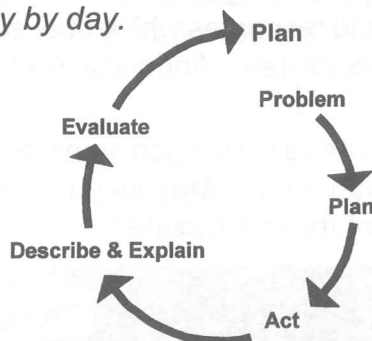
available. However, it may still be necessary for the learner to be assessed in some way. Pages 29 and 30 in your supplementary reader discuss this issue. We will also refer to this again later.

Pages 30 and 31 discuss the kind of assessment we are more familiar with – the kind that applies to all learners in the classroom. Your reader highlights some principles which are very important when assessing learners who have different ‘intelligences’, and different learning styles and abilities. Read this section carefully.



### Key Activity, Part 3 (continued)

*Note that we do not expect you to have completed this part of the Key Activity by the third face-to-face session dealing with this umthamo. This will become an on-going Action Research cycle which you perform in your classroom day by day.*



Look back at your “Profile Book”. Choose a particular learner or group of learners whom you feel have been left out of learning activities in the past. **(Focus on a specific problem)**

Try to think of a way of including them more effectively in a particular learning activity. Think of something which will enable them to participate more, and learn more. Your approach should also enable others to learn from them, or with them, or by helping them. **Plan** your learning activity carefully.

Implement this idea and reflect on it in your journal. **(Act)** Did it work well, or were there parts of your strategy which did not succeed? How can you do better next time? How can you continue the process? **(Evaluate)**

**Plan** for your next activity, still focusing on the same learner or group of learners. Repeat the Action Research cycle.

As you go on with the cycle, you might decide to change your focus after a time, looking at a different ‘problem’, or group of excluded learners.

Each learner/group of learners presents you with a challenge: How can I enable them to be involved as deeply as possible in the learning process? In most cases there are no established answers; you will have to use your own good sense and imagination.

In some cases, your learner may have a recognised difficulty, and special educators may have developed some strategies which have had some success in helping this difficulty. There may also be special assessments which can be done to help pinpoint and help with the difficulty. How can you access this expertise?

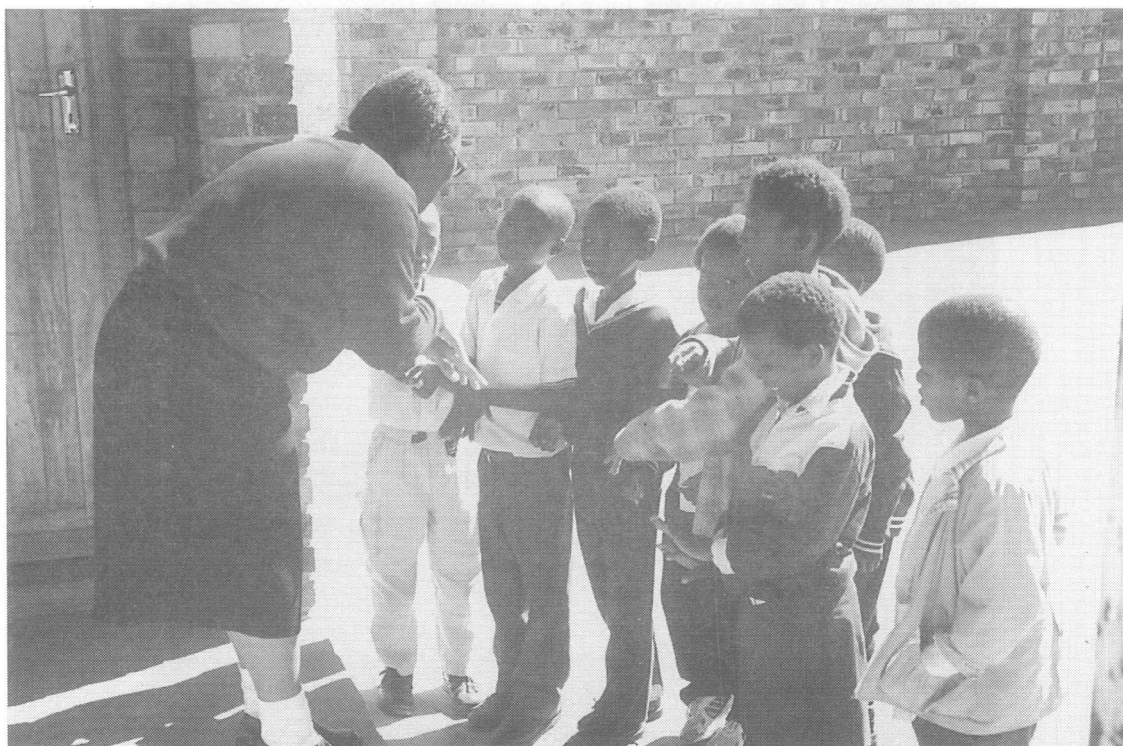
1. Appendix 3 may give you some helpful information.
2. We are building up some articles and worksheets in a box file at your centre, which may be able to answer some of your questions, and provide you with approaches.
3. We have also provided you with a list of information on organisations and resources which offer support to people with specific needs (see Appendix 5 of supplementary reader).
4. Your school will need to develop some support structures for inclusive education. Maybe you can facilitate the establishment of these structures.



## **School-based support structures and resources**

Pages 31 – 33 of your supplementary reader speaks about these. Read these pages carefully. Here is a summary of the support structures which need to be established:

- A person with expertise on special educational needs needs to be appointed to the School Governing Body.
- A committee needs to be established by the SGB which makes sure that the needs of all learners are considered. This committee takes responsibility for the planning, implementation and monitoring of inclusion in the school. They should make sure that all school stakeholders understand the policy of inclusion.
- A learning support team should be established to help educators with everyday teaching decisions. This team can gather information on barriers to learning, organise training sessions, and assist educators in making decisions about specific learners. You will find an additional reading on the learning support team, and on classroom strategies, in Appendix 4 of your reader.
- This team should also help educators to liaise with parents. In dealing with the special needs of learners, the parents should always be consulted and their concerns and wishes taken into account. They should be kept up-to-date on the approaches that the classroom educator takes in providing opportunities for learning for their child. They need to be involved in their child's education on as many levels as possible.



## Conclusion

To conclude this umthamo, we present a case study of a teacher who is trying to make her classroom more inclusive.

### CASE STUDY

Nomqolo is a teacher in a rural area in the old Transkei. She is very passionate about education. She loves all children equally. She allows all children in her class a chance to ask a question. She finds time to watch her learners play even during break time. This is something that she tries to do in such a way that she is not seen watching. In her class there was a boy whose name was Khululekani. Khululekani was 14 years old in grade 4. He plays soccer, a sport that she likes most. He is a striker. When he plays a match at school his family finds time to come and watch and cheer him. He scores a lot when they do. Even at school they like him when their team wins.

One day in the playground Nomqolo finds the learners teasing Khululekani calling him “fat face, pancake” etc. She did not like it. She went straight to the crowd and told them outright that what they did was wrong and unacceptable at the school. She started thinking, because as she came back she found the younger teachers laughing, and praising the silly boys for being observant. She started thinking of a remedy that would help the school and herself. She started reading newspapers and also the Sunday Times supplement – READ RIGHT. She found some information one day about Intellectual disability. She found characteristics described which matched Khululekani’s condition. She discovered that he had a condition called Downs Syndrome. She learnt that for people or learners with Downs Syndrome, what one has to provide visibly is respect, support, acceptance and love. The problem of teasing kept on coming back. She said to herself, “Something must be done about the behaviour of the learners”. She felt she should not be too obvious in what she did. She started thinking, “How about using the curriculum as a vehicle to convey this message of acceptance?”

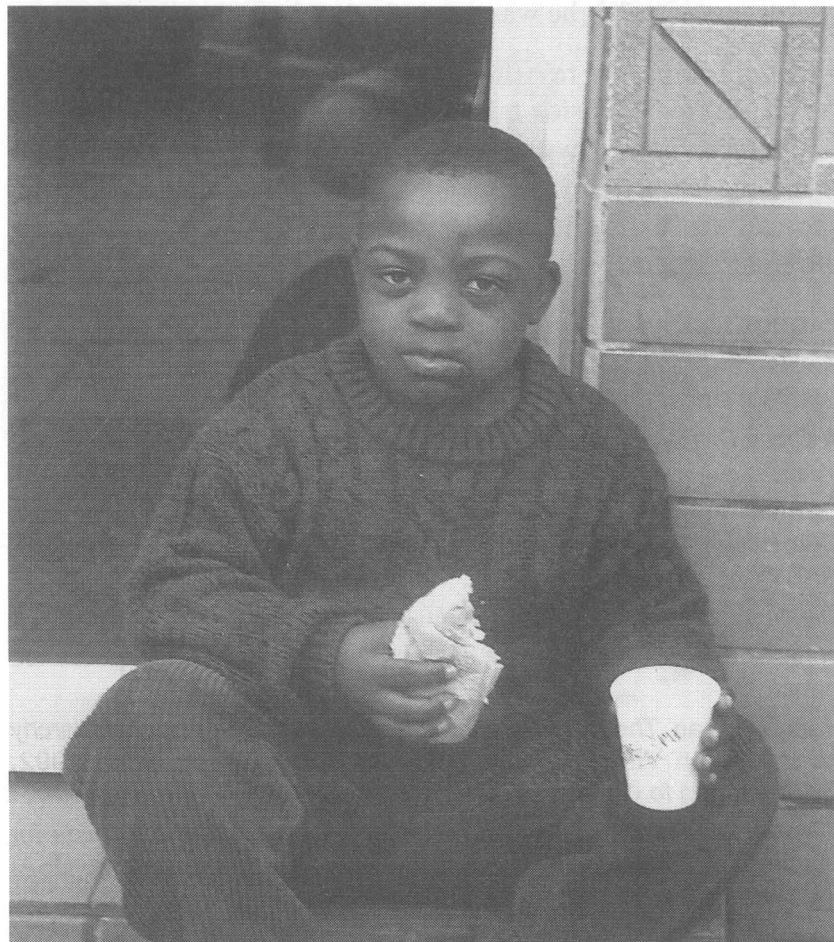
She used the language and communication lessons. She also discovered an address for the Down’s Syndrome Association (South Africa). She wrote to them requesting information about this disability, with a clearly stated objective. She received a lot of information and also learnt about DICAG (Disabled Children Action Group) and other consortia which would help provide more information. She had a reading corner in the classroom where she put all the new material. She also had a writing corner with recycled paper.

She narrated a story similar to the incident she had watched. Some learners started giggling and some were very sorry about the story. She started seriously to ask those who laughed what made them

laugh. She also carefully asked the ones who were sad what made them sad. As they reported back it came to dawn in Nomqolo's mind that what made them laugh was that they were feeling jealous that the boy did so well in the field, yet he performed so badly in class. They started feeling he is a lesser animal than they are when it comes to books. She found out from those who were sad that it was out of pity that they were sad. This also stemmed from the same unbalanced performance.

She started making them think of a day when they did not know something that was asked by the teacher. She requested them to tell of those feelings. Some started crying. They remembered episodes when they were teased, made a joke of, etc. They started telling how bad that was. Some of them expressed feelings of wanting to quit school. There were still those who felt differently, but Nomqolo gave them a chance to listen to the others.

They shared how this made an impact on their later performance. They started thinking and some even vowed not to tease anyone anymore. She started telling them about intelligence. She reminded them about multiple intelligences. She told them about hare brain and tortoise mind. She told them people do not think at the same pace, just like running. She gave question time. Children asked if it was possible that a person could have a tortoise mind from birth.



They wanted to know where the people with the tortoise mind went. Did they ever go to school? They were told some of them are in school but some of them are not. She told them that some of them were laughed at and left school because of feelings that they were not seen as members of the group. The teacher directed them to the leaflets they read about the Downs Syndrome. They shared. They continued their project. The project extended to children writing to different associations, wanting to know more about this particular disability. They wrote poems, composed songs about how these people should be handled. She had actually captured their interest. They discovered that these learners, where possible, are kept in segregated schools. She decided to take up the matter with the Human and Social Sciences and also Life Orientation as to how they could learn to accept people with Downs Syndrome as one of them. This helped reduce the teasing, although not very fast, because this happened for this class only.

She also benefited, because as she was engaged in this teaching she was trying to learn how to support Khululekani in the classroom. She also tried to give Khululekani bits of work that he could manage at a time. She began to think that she had to motivate to the principal for a different assessment for the boy, trying to recognize that the boy had his own pace and that his development was different. Funny - she started noting that actually Khululekani was progressing but he was not at the level of the others.

Nomqolo is now a registered member of SAALED (Southern African Association for Learning and Educational Difficulties). She is receiving a newsletter every three months. She now knows that some learners have problems that are not permanent and that she can deal with them given the support she gets now from different associations.

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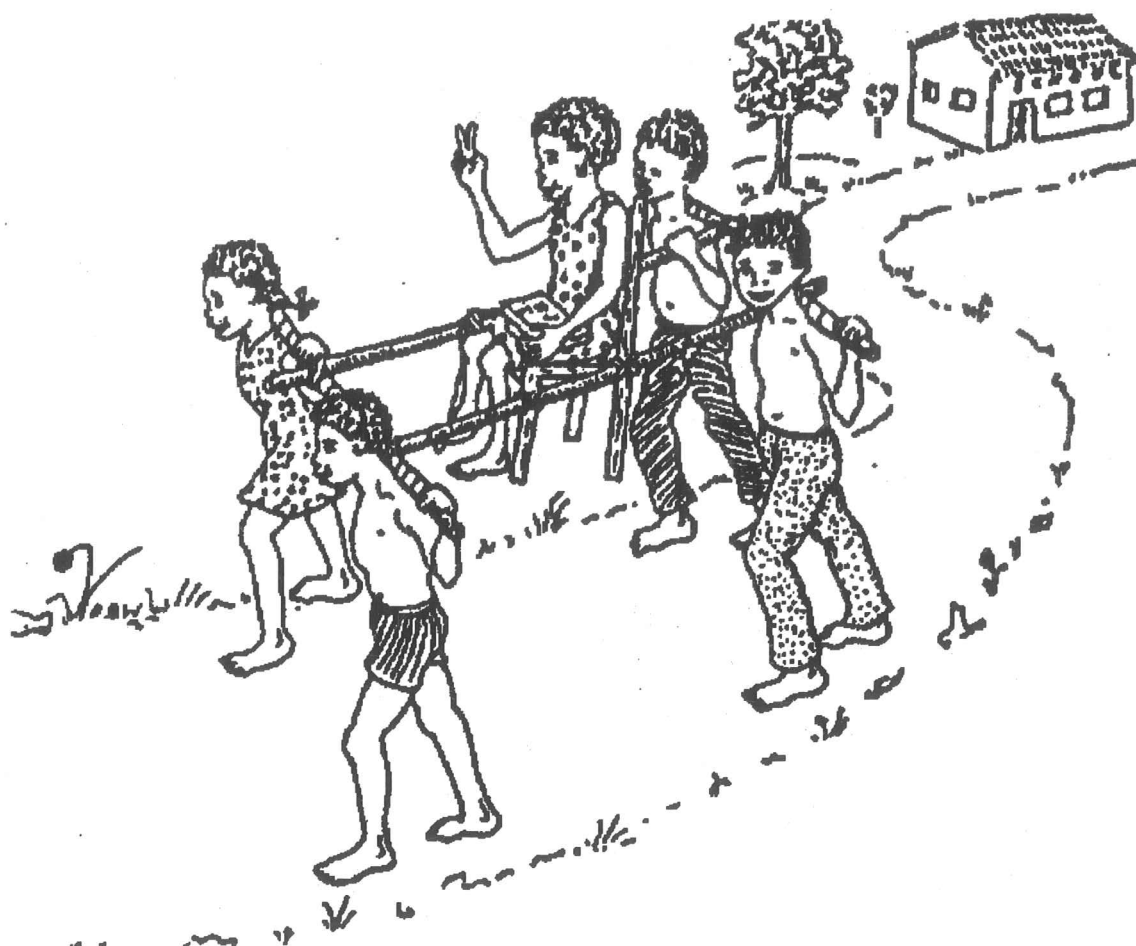
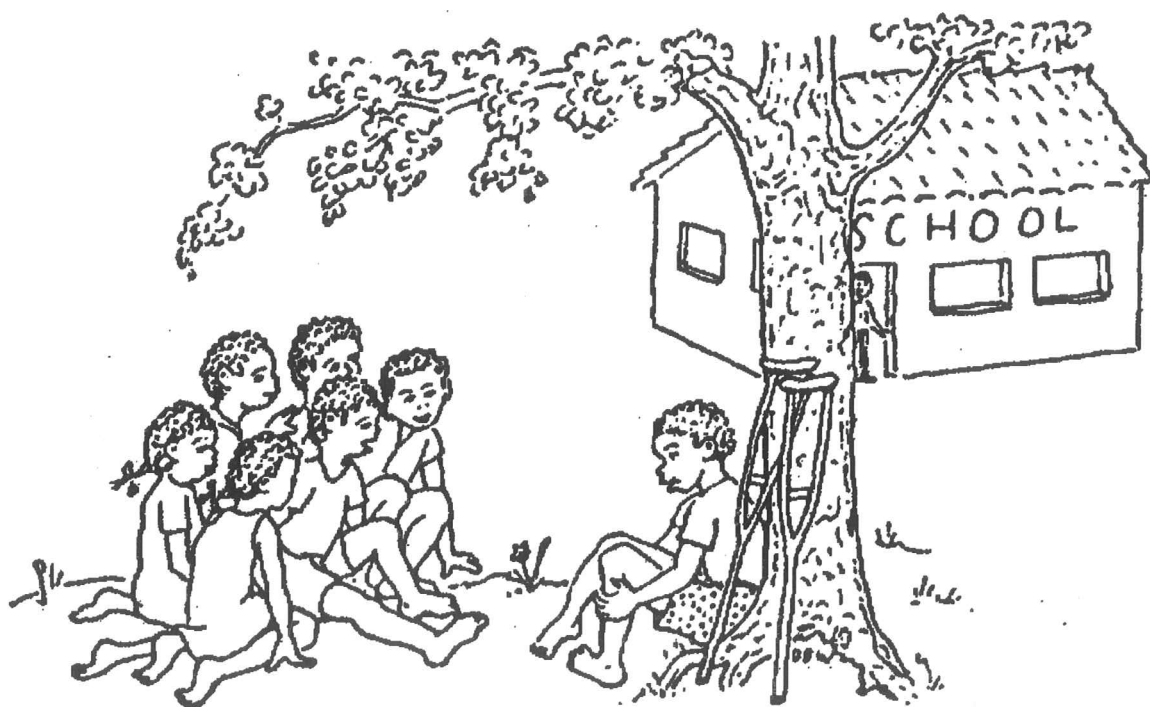
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See also the Bibliography in the supplementary reader.



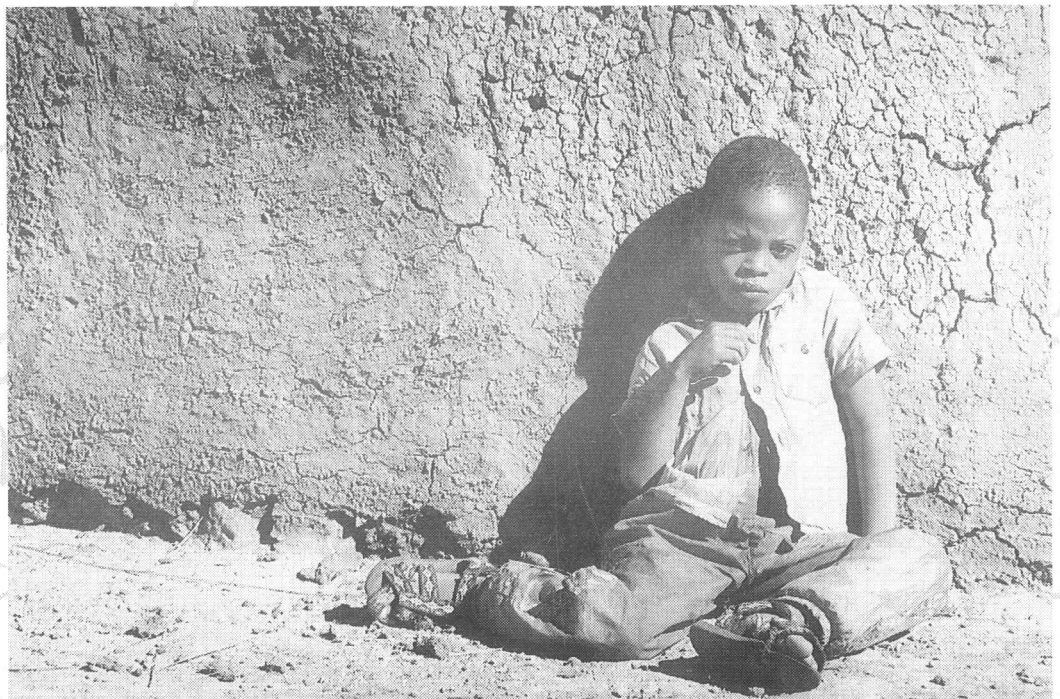


The educational policy referred to as "inclusion" has been widely accepted internationally as a humane and appropriate approach towards learners with "special needs"...

It is based on a specific value system, which maintains that all people are part of "normal" society, and one ability is not better than another. Instead of locating problems within individual learners, it puts the blame on society, which has labelled certain people, demanding that they fit in with particular norms, or face exclusion. The basis of the "inclusion" value system is an unconditional respect for what each person is.

"Inclusion" is not to be confused with "mainstreaming", although in practice most systems find themselves somewhere along the continuum between the two. "Mainstreaming" allows disabled children to learn along with other children, with the aim of helping them to fit with the norm. "Inclusion", on the other hand, is a new way of looking at all learners. It stresses abilities rather than disabilities, and believes that all learners will learn and grow through being exposed to the whole spectrum of normality.

Johanson, E.K. 1998. *A review of children with disabilities*. Unpublished paper.



**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

**DISTANCE EDUCATION PROJECT**

**CORE EDUCATION STUDIES COURSE**

**Helping Learners Learn**

**Umthamo 6 - Supporting one another in an Inclusive Classroom**

First Pilot Edition - 2001

Liz Botha

Judy McKenzie

with Toto Mdleleni, Mark Evans and Xoliswa Njaba.

Co-ordinated and edited by Liz Botha

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