

A Socio-Cultural Approach to Implementing Inclusive Education in South Africa

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Abstract : Since the presentation of South Africa's inclusive education strategy in Education White Paper 6 in 2001, very little has been accomplished in terms of its implementation. The failure to achieve the goals set by this policy document is related to teachers lacking confidence and knowledge about how to enact inclusive education, as well as challenges of inflexible curricula, limited resources in overcrowded classrooms, and so forth. This paper presents a socio-cultural approach to addressing these challenges of implementing inclusive education in the South African context. It takes its departure from the view that inclusive education has been adequately theorized and conceptualized in terms of its philosophical and ethical principles, especially in South African policy and debates. What is missing, however, are carefully theorized, practically implementable research interventions which can address the concerns mentioned above. Drawing on socio-cultural principles of learning and development and on cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) in particular, this paper argues for the use of formative interventions which introduce appropriately constructed mediational artifacts that have the potential to initiate inclusive practices and pedagogies within South African schools and classrooms. It makes use of Vygotsky's concept of double stimulation to show how the proposed artifacts could instigate forms of transformative agency which promote the adoption of inclusive cultures of learning and teaching.

Keywords : cultural-historical activity theory, double stimulation, formative interventions, transformative agency

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