

Preparing Trainee Teachers with Traumatic Life Experiences for the Inclusive Education Classroom at One South African University

Anthony Brown

North-West University, Department of Educational Studies,
Faculty of Education, Potchefstroom Campus,
South Africa.
25770098@nwu.ac.za

Abstract: *Inclusive Education in South Africa has been perceived as a divisive tool with respect to democracy and social justice. Teachers are deemed central agents towards this transformative educational development. However, negative attitudes, poor teacher training and lack of resources amongst others have been cited as factors contributing to the slow implementation of Inclusive Education. An unexplored area that influences teachers' support for inclusive education in South Africa is teachers who have experienced traumatic events in life and never dealt positively with the trauma. This article explores how teaching in the inclusive education classroom in higher education assisted trainee teachers who had experienced traumatic events in life to deal with such events and how it helped them to be more positive towards inclusive education. It presents findings from a subset of n=12 trainees in the initial teacher training programme in one of the core modules, inclusive education. The qualitative data was collected through a journal kept by the lecturer which initially served as a tool to guide students who sought help after particular topics were discussed. Students expressed that they vicariously re-lived the traumatic events but started to use the tools suggested for the inclusive school to cope with and address their personal experiences. There is a need to explore the extension of the concept Inclusive Education, care and support amongst all staff within higher education institutions. Moreover, psychosocial support should not only be explored for learners but also those who support them, the teachers.*

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, teacher education, traumatic life experiences, support for learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

This article draws on a qualitative approach which reports on the experiences of pre-service teachers who are confronted with their personal traumatic life experiences and their subsequent willingness to support learners with similar experiences in an inclusive education school setting at one of South Africa's higher education institutions. Research on Inclusive education and teacher training has mainly focused on pre-service teachers' attitudes towards disability and inclusion, aspects of efficacy, pedagogies for the inclusive classroom and curriculum adaptation (Tsouloupas, Carson and Matthews, 2014; Ahsan, Deppeler and Sharma, 2013; Forlin and Chambers, 2011; Oswald and Swart, 2011; Pather, 2011; Wilmot, 2004; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). Although much research has been done on Inclusive Education, there is a paucity of literature on how to prepare trainee teachers experiencing deep-seated and unattended traumatic events to support learners with similar experiences. Trauma is perceived to be "an affliction of the powerless in which the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming forces" (Sitler, 2008: 119). Trauma in an educational setting, when left unattended, creates barriers to learning (Swart, 2013) and therefore becomes an important construct for consideration when preparing teachers. These traumatic experiences in turn could inform their professional practice in future (Smit, 2014), more specifically when such teaching victims encounter disturbingly familiar cases in the learners they teach.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Challenges of Inclusive Education and Teacher Training in South Africa

The dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994 coincided with the development of inclusive education globally. Many countries adopted the UNESCO's Salamanca Statement in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), a statement promulgating that schooling should be able to cater for all children regardless of their differences or difficulties (Makoelle, 2014; Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Forbes, 2007). At the same time South Africa had to restructure an entire education system which had been built on the Apartheid policies that separated learners along racial, ethnic, language, and dis/ability lines (Hay and Beyers, 2011; Pather, 2011; Walton, 2011). It was a global as well as a South African development towards educational provision which was free from discrimination and deeply rooted in the concept of social justice, equality and human rights (Mentz and Barrett, 2011; Engelbrecht, 2006; Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996; UNESCO, 1994). Barriers to learning in South Africa are mainly caused by factors such as poverty, language, differences, inflexible curricula, inaccessible environments, inadequate support services, and lack of parental involvement (DoE, 2008). Both the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (UNESCO, 1994) and the South African vehicle for inclusive education, White Paper six: Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001) in South Africa espouse an intensive modification of policy, curriculum, learner support and facilities in order to facilitate the actualization of an inclusive educational practice.

The Inclusive Teacher

Amongst the biggest change for the ratification of inclusive education was the transformation of teacher training to not only guarantee a diverse learner population in the same classroom but provide quality education to all (Oswald and Swart, 2011; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). The inclusive education teacher is required to facilitate the educational programmes for all learners in the classroom, including vulnerable and at risk learners. It is thus important that they should accept their role in a positive manner. Rogers (cited in Carey, 1996) argues that it is the combination of positive attitudes and feelings of competence of the teacher that are important to successful teaching. The views of teachers towards learners and the general positive climate that the teacher establishes in the classroom will have a major impact on the success of all children, particularly those living in disadvantaged and vulnerable conditions (Makoelle, 2014; Varcoe and Boyle, 2014; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006; Engelbrecht, 2006; Ainscow, 1999).

Booth (2000) suggests the following essential roles that education at large and classroom teachers in particular need to perform:

- Respond to current social influences that place learners at risk, such as violence, HIV and AIDS, abuse, teenage pregnancy, poverty;
- Show appreciation and respect for people of different values, beliefs, practices and cultures;
- Value, affirm and support all learners in the classroom irrespective of their diversity;
- Develop school-based support structures for learners in need of counselling and social and learning support;
- Develop a pastoral care programme that is reactive and proactive in nature, to support the personal, social and emotional development of learners and teachers;
- Develop a discipline policy that is based on mutual respect;
- Facilitate a partnership between school and parents, community members and community organisations such Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Teacher preparedness for Inclusive Education in South Africa has faced similar challenges as the rest of the world. Unfavourable teacher attitudes towards inclusive education; conflicting roles and a firm alignment with the medical-pathological model of disability and teacher efficacy confined through the lenses pedagogical skills, experience, school climate and culture were amongst the obstacles (Oswald and Swart, 2011; Oswald, 2007; Muthukrishna and Sader, 2004; Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff and Pettipher, 2002). The slow process of embracing inclusive education resulted in many learners exiting the mainstream school since their specific and idiosyncratic needs were unmet (Oswald, and Swart, 2011).

Theoretical Conception

According to Bandura (1997) self-efficacy is concerned with a person's perceived ability to execute a particular behaviour that produces certain outcomes. The belief that an individual has in his/her skills to perform a particular behaviour will motivate him/her to perform such behaviour (Romi & Leyser, 2006). Not only will it encourage the person to perform the behaviour but this will also motivate him/her to persist in such activity until completion regardless of the complexity of the task. Beliefs consist of an individual's plans, values and ideas about different practices (Stoiber, Gettinger & Goetz, 1998). Trainee teachers too hold beliefs about their work, their subject matter, their role and responsibilities and their learners, as explained by Alexander (1984:14). Alexander mentions that *trainee* teacher attitudes include a "network of beliefs, values and assumptions about pupils, learning, teaching, knowledge and curriculum." Many of these beliefs are formed as early as the individual's school years (Nespor, 1987). Unlike other professions, student teachers begin their training with a high degree of familiarity with the classroom situation. They therefore may have many preconceptions about their field of study and chosen career. Research evidence suggests that the earlier a belief is incorporated into a person's belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter (Nespor, 1987; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Amongst these beliefs can be found numerous inaccuracies in the trainee teacher's knowledge of children, learning and schooling. Those concerned with teacher training should thus regard the construct of beliefs as essential to improving professional preparation and creating appropriate development opportunities for the trainee teacher.

This could be said for trainee teachers who will have to support children with a diversity of additional educational needs including children who experienced trauma. Although trainee teachers might be willing to work with these children, many of them might not have the necessary confidence to do so because they never learnt how to deal with their own traumatic experiences (Shannon, Simmelink, Im, Becher and Crook-Lyon, 2013). Unattended experiences of trauma by trainee teachers could be another factor which affects teacher efficacy to support vulnerable learners in the inclusive classroom. Due to the traumatic experiences they are more likely to be overwhelmed by concerns for safety, experience depression, inability to trust, fear of risk-taking, eroded self-esteem/confidence (Kerka, 2002). This could impede the opportunity to learn new skills during training when confronted with learning material that mirrors their trauma experience (Shannon, Simmelink, Im, Becher and Crook-Lyon, 2013). For example, survivor students from traumatic experiences without the necessary support in a university trauma treatment course were found to be hesitant to actively engage in the support of victims from trauma experiences (Shannon et al, 2013). Many of these students were found to be vicariously traumatized in classroom discussions by their own unresolved traumatic experiences. Traumatic experiences in a trainee teachers's life affect them in multiple ways (Finn, 2010). Finn, in agreement with Kerka (2002) suggests that teacher trainers should desist from blaming the victim for what apparently manifests itself as disengagement. Rather the trainer should seek to elicit a full understanding of the past so that the traumatic experiences could be positively harnessed for the recuperation of a positive self-esteem in the learners.

It is critical that teacher education should not only be concerned with imparting skills and knowledge to work with children in a classroom level but to facilitate transformation on an academic, personal, psychological or social level through a recognition of trauma as a lived and haunting experience.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many trainee and qualified teachers in South Africa, especially those from black disadvantaged communities, enter higher education and the teaching profession with fresh experiences of living with HIV virus, recent deaths of loved ones due to illness, being raped often by close relatives and suffering from abuse amongst multiple traumatic experiences (Wood and Olivier, 2008; Wood and Goba, 2011; Themane and Toale, 2013). They mainly come from backgrounds of abject poverty; inadequate socioeconomic conditions rampaged by the HIV and AIDS epidemic, high levels of crime and violence and disintegrated family structures (Barnfather and Amod, 2012; Swart, 2013). Although some of these students successfully complete their academic pursuits, many of them enter the post-school world with the scars from these debilitating conditions

(McGowan and Kagee, 2013). These prospective teachers are then trained to support learners from the very same challenging circumstances that many of them emerged from. This report was interested to find out the following:

- How do trainee teachers with unresolved traumatic experiences cope while they are trained to support learners with similar experiences?
- How do trainee teachers with unresolved traumatic experiences perceive teaching inclusive education?
- How are trainee teachers with unresolved traumatic experiences supported in higher education to develop strategies to address their situations?

4. RESEARCH METHODS

This article adopted a qualitative research methodology that draws on investigating the experiences of students with traumatic encounters over a period of 12 weeks to prepare them for teaching in inclusive classrooms as part of their undergraduate BEd (General Education) programme. It is worth noting that the conception of this article initially was not research based but it developed through numerous encounters with students who disclosed their traumatic experiences to the author. A reflective journal was used to record discussions in order to do an analysis of the personal reflections of students' traumatic encounters (Moon, 2006). The journal also served as a source to reflect on the proposed interventions for and impact on these students during the period they consulted with the author. Reflections from this experience have a direct impact on the theory and practice of teacher training in relation to Inclusive Education (Conner-Greene, 2000).

Participants

All participants were registered with the Mafikeng campus, one of the three campuses forming the North-West University. This institution was conveniently selected as the author was a staff member at the institution. The Mafikeng campus mainly attracts students from black, poor and disadvantaged communities whose studies are largely state funded (Mabokela and Evans, 2014). The participants were all third year students who attended the compulsory module on Inclusive Education. A number of students requested for consultations on various issues ranging from misunderstanding of content, difficulties with assignments, discussing difficulties of campus life on a more general level and those with serious emotional challenges. They mainly requested for consultation with the author when topics discussed in class reminded them of their own experiences. A series of consultations with the author would follow on a volunteer basis which varied between 6 to 8 sessions during the semester in which the module was taught. For the purposes of this article, the author conveniently selected twelve (12) students who disclosed traumatic encounters and who needed specific interventions. Seven (7) female students were HIV positive and one of them had an HIV positive 10 year old son. One male (1) student had a school aged sibling who contracted HIV after being raped by her father. This incident happened while he was at home and could not help the sibling from the ordeal. Four (4) female students were raped. Two were raped when their residences got burgled, one was raped by her father and the other one was gang raped by known community members in her home village. These participants ranged between 20 and 31 years. Their lecturer made journal recordings based on their consultation; their history and nature of the trauma; support and impact thereof and their readiness to work with learners from similar backgrounds.

The Inclusive Education Module

Inclusive Education is one of the core modules in the professional preparation of trainee teachers and consists of a 36 hours of face-to-face teaching. This module content consists of the following sub-topics:

rationale for inclusive education;
an international and South African perspective;
identification of children experience barriers to learning;
strategies to address barriers to learning in the classroom; and
home-school partnership in the education sector.

The purpose of this module is to orientate trainee teachers about learners with specific needs that could result to barriers. Specific content focused on disability and perceptions; adaptations ideal for an inclusive classroom; abused learners and additional support needed; HIV in the school context and the care of such learners and how to facilitate support with multiple agencies of care for example, social workers, school counselors, and psychologists amongst others. Teaching and learning tools were derived from the direct teaching of theories, class discussions by case studies; videos; vignettes; media reports on human rights abuses of vulnerable learners particularly in the school context. One of the tasks for assessment was to conduct an interview with a student with a disability and explore their educational and social experiences in higher education. The purpose of this summative assessment task was to consolidate the theory with practice and aimed to depict the daily realities of people living with disabilities. The general purpose of this module was to shift the understanding from 'what is wrong' to new approaches of teaching that are inclusive of the whole person.

Analysis

The data in this study included journal entries from consultations with students. Analysis was conducted at the end of the semester. Entries included discussions on disclosure of traumatic events and subsequent experiences of students. It also explains how students were supported and how it influenced their thinking of teaching inclusive education. The steps included creating summaries of core ideas by reviewing transcripts. A series of themes were then identified (Creswell, 2009). These themes included experiences in the inclusive classroom; reason to keep experience private; motivation to speak out; inclinations to support children in similar situations; support in dealing with traumatic experiences; the integration of teaching about inclusive education and personal trauma experiences.

5. RESULTS

Journal entries of 12 trainee teachers were analyzed. Trainee teachers who voluntarily requested for consultation with their inclusive lecturer to discuss traumatic experiences had an average of 8 visits. The total journal entries that were reflected on were 64. The common patterns and themes are discussed.

Experiences in the Inclusive Education classroom

Students revealed that they were influenced by aspects of HIV, rape, disabilities and low self-esteem when it was discussed in class. These topics focused on identification and support strategies for teachers in the classroom. It also became the motivation to disclose their traumatic experiences with their lecturer later in consultation sessions.

"When you talked about victims of rape it felt as if you were talking about my life. I cannot cope anymore. This is getting too much and I feel I want to talk to you"

Rape victim with divorce summons

"I did not feel as if I was in your classroom; it felt like watching a movie of my own life. I don't know what to do."

20 year old student living with HIV

"Telling us that learners with vulnerable circumstances can live a normal life with the right support made me not want to live with this secret any more. I wish I had a teacher who knew this when I was at school. I hope that you can help me, I don't want to live like this"

Rape victim (5 year old undisclosed experience)

Students also expressed their fear of working with children in similar circumstances and that they would not feel comfortable. They did not want to take part in the assignment as they were emotionally not ready. They avoided class discussion as it created the fear that others may identify the *burdens* they carried.

"I pretended that I was going to the bathroom because some of the discussions in the classroom were too difficult to listen to. I was scared the other students would see my reactions as I was close to tears sometimes."

Gang raped victim

“I was only thinking of my sister dying of HIV at such a young age. Knowing how much she suffered made me scared to work with people who are HIV positive. She always asks a lot of questions which I don’t have answers. Will I be able to work with learners one day who are HIV positive without thinking of my sister? Sir am I in the right programme?”

Brother of HIV positive sibling

“Other groups told me that some of the participants cried when they had to interview a student with a disability. They told me the stories were too emotional. I cried enough about my own sad story and will not be ready to do this assignment. Is there another assignment I may do?”

HIV Positive student

Traumatic experiences undisclosed or unreported

Students have been living with these different traumatic experiences for periods between 2 to 5 years. One of the rape victims has been living with this experience since secondary school days. She was afraid of being ostracized by her peers and feared being victimized by the community she lives in. She knew her victims. The shame of the family scandal that his father raped his sister was too overwhelming to search for help. One of the HIV positive students contracted the disease in her first year of higher education studies. There is a huge stigma of people infected with HIV and she was worried about the treatment she could receive from others.

“How do I tell someone that my father raped my sister and infected her with HIV? I was too embarrassed for my family’s sake. I suppressed the thought of it and tried to focus on my studies. It was until she became very sick that I could not take it any longer. When you taught on the subject I realized I needed help.”

Brother of HIV positive sibling

“My marriage was falling apart. It was difficult to tell anyone what caused the break. I had to be strong for my children’s sake. I wanted to do well in my studies but it became harder. The lesson on multi-agency support was difficult to sit in but it made me realize there is help. It gave me courage to make an appointment.”

Rape victim with divorce proceedings

“I did not want to cause more trouble. My mom divorced my father because he raped me and now she is having financial problems as a single parent. Talking about it I thought will cause more issues in my family. I want to finish my studies so that I can help her. I never got help to deal with it. I cannot take it anymore. That is why I came to you.”

Rape victim by father

“I had many male students who were interested in me and I was scared if I tell anyone that it will spread through the campus. I was worried that being single would cause my friends to ask many questions. I was scared to be rejected because of my illness.”

HIV positive student

Motivation to seek help

Students were motivated to make an appointment with the course lecturer to discuss challenges they experienced. Class sessions also created space for student participation. It allowed numerous views of students which may have provoked emotions in those students with trauma experiences. Each session would end with a reflection on what was taught. Student always expressed the appreciation of the lesson and how it empowered them to deal with reality in the classroom and the haunting realities banked in their psyches. This atmosphere has been identified as one of the biggest contributing factors to making students develop the courage to deal with the matter.

“This is the first module that made me to face my life. You openly talked about issues people are uncomfortable to talk about. The way you handled your classes, giving us opportunity to talk gave me the idea that I could trust you and talk to you.”

Rape Victim

“You would listen to students’ comments in class and pick up things that I would never think about. You are a good listener. I felt you would understand my situation.”

Rape Victim

“You know so much about my situation. It felt as if you were talking about my own life. The suggestion made in class made me to cope. I came so that you can help me with my situation.”

20 year old HIV Positive student

“The lesson on how to support male students with emotional problems was very good for me. I had to scrape my entire mood together and talk to you. In our culture men have to deal with such issues on our own. You helped me to look differently at my situation. I need help that is why I came here.”

Male student with HIV Positive sibling

“The way you taught us made it easy to talk to you. You understand a lot of issues”

Rape Victim

Support to deal with traumatic experiences

The Mafikeng campus has a student wellness/health centre. This centre provides medical, psychosocial and academic support and is managed by a qualified psychologist, counselors and nurses. All the cases reported in this study required professionally trained intervention. The author acted as a facilitator between the centre and the students. It required extensive discussions on what the role of these service providers are so that students could feel comfortable to be transferred for more specialist support. From the 12 students 8 requested to still see their lecturer although they were receiving more specialist and professional assistance. Discussions then transitioned to how they coped and how they managed with the academic work.

“Since I started talking with the psychologist and nurse, I decided to take my ARVs (medical treatment for HIV infected people) again.”

HIV Positive candidate

“My children and I are getting counseling for the divorce, I am ready to go to court and finalize this and get my life back together. I learned so much during this process and I am actually much stronger than I thought.”

Rape victim with divorce procedures

“My mom agreed to join me for counseling. It was very emotional but I am proud that I could face the situation. I hope this will get better from here.”

Rape victim by father

“I am now talking to my family and supporting them emotionally. It is a very difficult time for us. I am strong now to support them and myself.”

Brother of HIV Positive sibling

“I can live a normal life. I thought it was a life sentence but I was told life will not change unless I follow certain steps. I am now going to pay attention to my future.”

HIV Positive Student.

“I have a responsibility over my son, the children in his school and myself. Life will be different from now on.”

HIV positive student with HIV positive son

Perceptions of Inclusive Education

The last session focused on their perceptions of inclusive education and working with children with similar experiences or vulnerable conditions. These students expressed that although they got all the information on how to deal with trauma, they would not be ready to support learners in vulnerable conditions. They reported that they first had to deal with their own challenges. Their biggest transformation came through the supportive role of their lecturer. Although they were aware of these services on campus they were never confident to deal with it. Many did not understand the role and qualities of these professionals. Facilitation was a core aspect during this process.

“I thought I was studying towards the wrong profession when I started to attend your class. I know I would never be able to work for children who were raped. I was scared and emotional all the time. Since I attended these sessions with you I now understand what you taught us in class.”

Gang raped victim

“I now look differently at school and children. You will not only deal with issues in school but so many other parties. School has changed since I was a learner. My role as a teacher is bigger than my subject. I now understand I will have many responsibilities. I will try my best.”

Rape victim with divorce proceedings

“As a teacher you never know what children experience. I have learned to attend to the whole child. That is what I learned in your class. My experience and support I got will help me to be a different teacher from the ones I had.”

20 year old HIV Positive student

“Inclusive education helped me to deal with the problem I struggled for three years. This module must be taught from the first year. All teachers must learn about inclusive education. Although I am scared I am excited to help children in difficult situations.”

Raped victim

“We need lecturers who are trained about inclusive education. I could not cope when things were hard for me. They did not want to understand when my assignments were late. We still have problems even though we are at university”

Brother of HIV positive sibling

“You are a role model on how you taught and supported us. The information is making me scared but how you presented it made me feel confident that I can do it too. I just don't understand why you need to go away.”

HIV Positive student

6. DISCUSSIONS

Students enrolling for teacher training programmes enter tertiary institutions with their own life experiences. These experiences may impact on their learning and later development in the teaching profession. Findings from this study depict how unattended trauma events directly influence the way trainee teachers perceive inclusive education and their willingness to engage with vulnerable and at-risk children in future. Coping with feelings of helplessness, shame, embarrassment and stress has become second nature over time and they chose to rather suppress such memories as a defense mechanism. Teaching about inclusive education and the type of learners and role of the teacher resulted in the experience of vicarious trauma for these students. It was a reminder of painful experiences in their life and how such events impacted their being. The recent historic trauma events in their lives also became a reflection of their learner experiences in schools on what theory suggests should happen in the classroom and what the practice of the day was. It raised feelings of neglect and disappointment in what they remembered about schooling.

Course material on inclusive education was one of the major tools that enabled students to recognize the control of suppressed trauma events on their lives. Moreover, the role of the lecturer is central to the teaching of a course like inclusive education. Lecturers will not always be aware that a student may experience trauma and therefore at all times should teach in a supportive way (Sitler, 2008). Findings in this study revealed that students were motivated to confront the hidden trauma experiences due to the supportive approach presented in the inclusive classroom and beyond. They felt confident to use the platform of consultations with their lecturer as a point of departure. This is one of the core qualities required for an inclusive education classroom.

Students were presented with identification tools of barriers to learning, strategies to address it and information on how to work with multi-agency service providers to optimally support all children in need of additional support for learning and development. The examples used in class resonated with their own realities. This experience built the link between theories and the real world of teaching for many of these students. It raised questions about their own abilities to cope with such a demand if they could not deal with their unattended trauma. This was because the initial reactions to the course created an unpleasant journey into their past. It underscores the point that trainee teachers need more than teaching skills and theories about inclusive education. They also need an understanding of the realities of what they will be facing and in so doing assessing their efficacy to such a task. This process is critical for the effective implementation of inclusive education.

Implications for lecturing Inclusive Education in Higher Education

Care and support is one of the critical aspects for inclusive education and it is fundamental that lecturers should reflect such qualities, demonstrating what is expected from teachers. Students with past trauma experiences were drawn by this particular quality. Teacher-pupil relationship is fundamental to support vulnerable and at-risk students (McLaughlin and Clarke, 2008). Apart from all the guidelines provided in the classroom that prompted students to seek support, the platform of consultation has become a critical one. Such sessions created the opportunity not only to deal with specific learning related aspects but also fostered relationships to openly deal with broader aspects that caused barriers to learning. It is important to note that barriers to learning do not end with the completion of secondary schooling but could continue throughout post schooling learning environments.

Lecturers are to be familiar with support services within higher education institutions and consider collaborative efforts with regards teaching and support in an inclusive manner. This could bridge the gap between theory and practice. Teachers and lecturers in Inclusive Education should be cognizant that they have a facilitative role between learners/students and specialist support services. This report revealed that such a practice was a very useful tool to support students with trauma experiences and also demonstrated to them how to deal with situations beyond the teachers' expertise.

Inclusive education lecturers must be aware that their role is similar to that of the teacher in inclusive education. They have the task to train teachers on how to deal with such situations in the classroom and support students who are experiencing any form of barriers to learning. It is more than educating about diversity in the classroom: inclusive education plays an active role in handling diversity in the classroom.

Students in this inclusive classroom:

- learned to deal with their own traumatic experiences;
- obtained training on how to deal with barriers to learning in the real world;
- were exposed to the qualities of an inclusive teacher and
- transformed from a fear for the inclusive classroom to using their experience for practice.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lecturers responsible for inclusive education in teaching training programmes are more than information agents. They should treat the module as an opportunity to build a bridge

between theory and practice. This diminished the fear that teachers have for the implementation for inclusive education.

- Lecturers should portray the qualities of an inclusive teacher. Through this approach students who are in need for support could feel confident to consult with their lecturers.
- Lecturers should familiarize themselves with and establish a network of support services in and around campus. This could enable students to get the necessary support to be successful in their studies. It also could establish trust in those services as the recommendations would come through the lecturer.
- The conception of inclusive education should be revisited as not all students in higher education are exposed to the inclusive education lecturer. Failure to do so could result in the neglect of students who might experience barriers to learning in other training programmes. All lecturers should be sensitized about the founding principles of inclusive education.

8. CONCLUSION

Findings from this study reflect the experiences of trainee teachers with past trauma events and currently enrolled at one university campus. This article reports that trainee students bring along life experiences that could not be ignored during their journey in developing as professional teachers. If it is not handled with care, such experience could impede learning and subsequent practice in future. While the inclusive lecturer prepares trainee teachers with knowledge, skills and values for the real world of work, it is important that this lecturer is a reflection of such qualities. Traumatic experiences are not limited to student teachers but all students could be exposed to such events. Students with suppressed traumatic experiences are at risk to drop out from their studies if not adequately supported (Kerka, 2002). It is thus important to raise awareness amongst all lecturers about the basic principles and strategies of inclusive education amongst all lecturers in higher education.

REFERENCES

- Ainscow, M. (1999) *Understanding the Development of Inclusive Schools*. London: Falmer Press.
- Avramidis, E. & Norwich, B. (2002). Teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion: a review of the literature. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17, 129 -147.
- Ahsan, M.T., Deppeler, J.M. and Sharma, U. (2013). Predicting pre-service teachers' preparedness for inclusive education: Bangladeshi pre-service teachers' attitudes and perceived teaching efficacy for inclusive education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 43 (4), 517 – 535.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Booth, T. (2000) Inclusion and exclusion policy in England: Who controls the agenda? In Armstrong, F., Armstrong D. & Barton L. (Eds.), *Inclusive Education Policy: Context and Comparative Perspectives*. London: David Fulton.
- Connor-Greene, P.A. (2000). Making connections: Evaluating the effectiveness of journal writing in enhancing student learning. *Teaching of Psychology* 27 (1), 44 - 6.
- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed methods Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Department of Education. (2001). *White paper six: Special Needs Education*. Pretoria, South Africa: Author.
- Department of Education. (2008). *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support*. Pretoria, South Africa: Author
- Engelbrecht, P. (2004). The Implementation of inclusive education in South Africa after ten years of democracy. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 21 (3), 253 – 264.
- Fin, H.B. (2010). Overcoming barriers; Adult refugee trauma survivors in a learning community. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44 (3), 586 – 596.
- Forlin, C. & Chambers, D. (2011). Teacher preparation inclusive education: increasing knowledge but raising concerns. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 39, 17 - 32

- Hay, J. & Beyers, C. (2011). An analysis of the South African model of inclusive education with regard to social justice. *Africa Education Review*, 8 (2) 234 – 246.
- Mabokela, R.O. & Evans, M.A. (2014) Institutional mergers and access: the case of North-West University. *Africa Education Review*, 6 (2), 208 – 223.
- Makoelle, T. M. (2014). Changing teacher beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion in South Africa: Lessons from collaborative action research. *Journal of Social Science*, 28 (2), 125 – 134.
- Mentz, K. & Barrett, S. (2011). Leadership and Inclusive Education in South Africa and Jamaica: a comprehensive analysis. *ISEA*, 39 (1), 33 – 48.
- Moon, J.A. (2006). *Learning Journals: A handbook for Reflective Practice and Professional Development*. London: Routledge.
- Muthukrishna, N. & Sader, S. (2004). Social capital and the development of inclusive schools and communities. *Perspectives in Education*, 22 (1), 17 – 26.
- Oswald, M. & Swart, E. (2011). Addressing South African pre-service teachers' sentiments, attitudes and concerns regarding inclusive education. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 58 (4), 389 – 403.
- Oswald, M. (2007). Training teachers to become inclusive professionals. In P. Engelbrecht & L. Green (Eds.), *Responding to the challenges of inclusive education in southern Africa*. Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Pather, S. (2011). Evidence on inclusion and support for learners with disabilities in mainstream schools in South Africa: off the policy radar? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15 (10), 1103 – 1117.
- Sitler, H.C. (2008). Teaching with awareness: The hidden effects of trauma on learning. *Teaching with Awareness*, 82 (3), 199 – 123.
- Smit, J. (2014). The resilient survivor – a student social worker's journey. *Social Work Education*, 33 (1), 3 -14.
- Swart, E., Engelbrecht, P., Eloff, I. & Pettipher, R. (2002). Implementing inclusive education in South Africa: Teachers' attitudes and experiences. *Acta Academica*, 34 (1), 175 – 189.
- Swart, E. & Pettipher, R. (2000) Barriers teachers experiences in implementing inclusive education. *International Journal of Special Education*, 15 (2), 75 – 80.
- Swart, I. (2013). South African music learners and psychological trauma: Educational solutions to a societal dilemma. *The Journal of Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 9 (1), 113 – 138.
- Republic of South Africa.(1996). South African Schools Act, 1996. Act No. 84 of 1996. Government Gazette, 377 (17579)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).(1994). "The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Educational Needs." Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, Salamanca, June 1994. New York.
- Walton, E. (2011). Getting inclusion right in South Africa. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 46 (4), 240 – 245.
- Wilmot, D. (2004). Emerging models of teacher training: the case of South Africa. *International Research in Geography and Environmental Education*, 13 (4), 153 – 158.