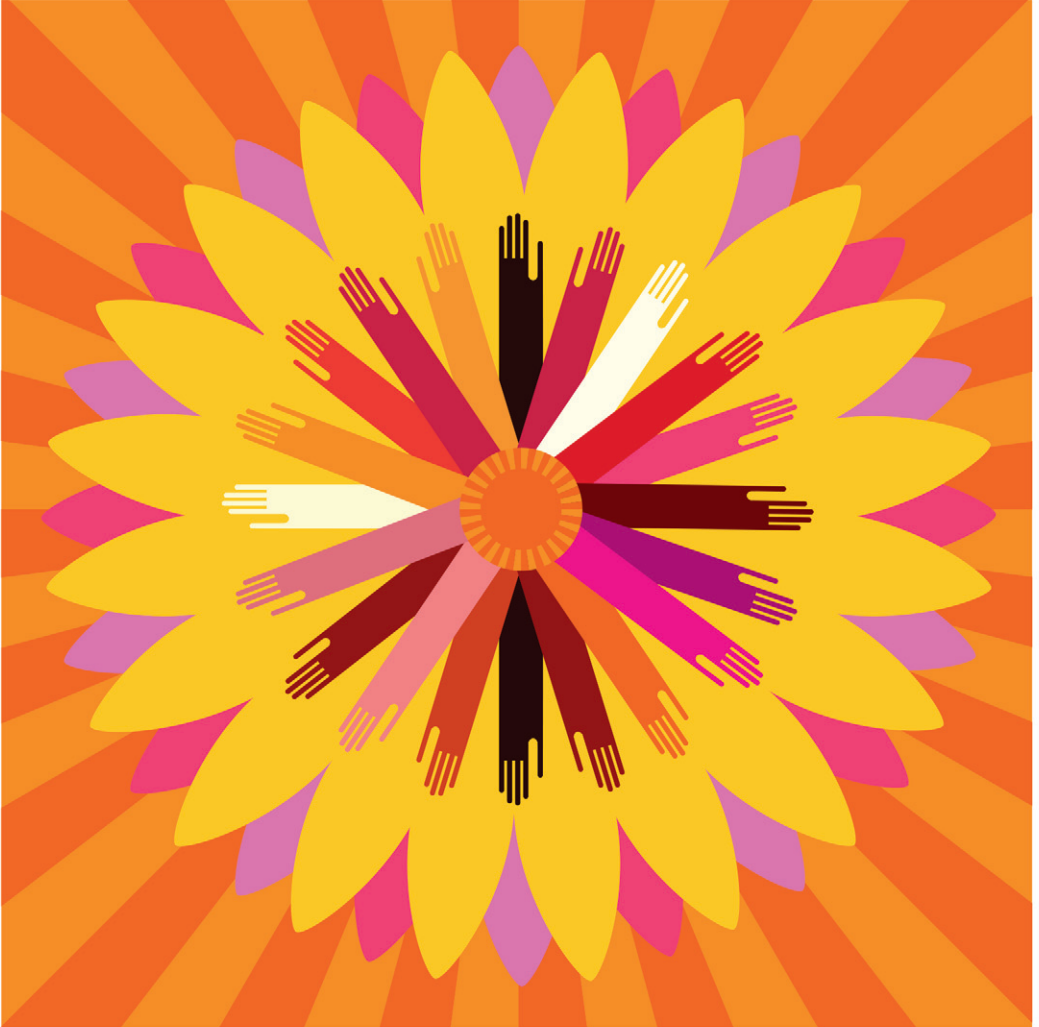


Fostering Global Citizenship

African
Perspectives on
Interculturalism
and Inclusive
Education



Mbulaheni Obert Maguvhe

Fostering Global Citizenship

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Fostering Global Citizenship: African Perspectives on Interculturalism and Inclusive Education

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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About the Author

Professor Mbulaheni Obert Maguvhe, UNESCO/UNISA Chair of inclusive education in higher education is a special educationist who professes in inclusive education. Professor Maguvhe is a researcher with eight edited volumes and one monograph entitled: *Inclusive education: towards social justice, achievement of equality and advancement of human rights* (addressing a wide range of topics including: empowerment, inclusivity, equality and equity, social justice, African epistemologies, sense of belonging and collective action among others as well as many articles published in peer-reviewed journals of standing). He is currently involved in research, programmes development, supervision, training students, mentoring colleagues in supervision of students, editing books, community engagement projects, academic citizenship, leadership and other academic projects and programmes. As highlighted above, professor Maguvhe writes on different topics whose common focus is the empowerment of learners with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairments (including the deaf-blind). In one of his recent edited volumes, he dedicated a full chapter on how ICT could be utilised for full and active inclusion of learners with disabilities. The spectrum of his research interests is broad, yet focused on the empowerment of learners with visual impairments through unhindered access to education and training. These academic and practical initiatives make the subject academic a researcher of note, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where most educated persons with visual impairments are not engaging in research because of the temerity it demands out of one's personality. Professor Maguvhe serves on the ministerial LTSM task team and is also recently co-opted to serve on the South African National Council for the Blind's national executive committee.

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Introduction – Fostering Global Citizenship: African Perspectives on Interculturalism and Inclusive Education

This manuscript is titled as Fostering Global Citizenship: African Perspectives on Intercultural and Inclusive Education. Through this manuscript, the author attempts to show, in different chapters, how intercultural and inclusive education can foster global citizenship from an African perspective. This study has many advantages, such as inculcating into persons mutual respect, acceptance of differences, practising and adhering to social justice principles, inclusivity, equity and equality, treating all people from the rights-based perspective, providing and supporting inclusion as a collective, fostering unity in diversity, discouraging cultural discrimination (so that there is peace, love and brotherhood), isolation, marginalisation, prejudice, stereotyping, intolerance, etc.

Global citizenship is the idea that one's identity and responsibilities extend beyond one's local or national boundaries to encompass the world. It involves recognising that we are all part of a global community and that humanity's actions can have far-reaching impacts. Below are some critical aspects of global citizenship:

Shared Values and Responsibilities: Global citizens believe in fundamental human rights and equality for all, of all, and by all people regardless of nationality. People understand that global dynamics and vice versa highly influence local events.

Interconnectedness: It emphasises the interconnected nature of our world, where decisions and actions in one part of the planet can affect people in another. This interconnectedness is evident in climate change, global trade and international relations.

Advocacy and Action: Global citizens often engage in advocacy and activism to address global challenges, such as poverty, climate change and social justice. People believe in the power of collective action to bring about positive change.

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Diverse Identities: Being a global citizen means embracing diversity and understanding that one's identity transcends geographical and political borders. It involves being open and assertive to different cultures, perspectives, insights, opinions and experiences.

Sustainability and Equity: Global citizenship includes a commitment to sustainable development and ensuring that progress benefits everyone, not just a select few. Global citizenship fosters a sense of shared humanity and works towards a more just, equitable, inclusive and sustainable world.

The world is inundated with crises and conflicts. This makes bridging the intercultural gap through inclusive education more prudent than before. The process becomes daunting in the quest to bridge the intercultural gap within the education system. Within culture and education, there should be shared values. The manuscript attempts to answer questions, such as the role of shared values in education and culture. What are the best ways to integrate shared values into the education system and the work of various educational stakeholders? Another question is: what happens when values conflict with others' values? We should also find valid reasons for what brings humankind together; common ground must be identified.

Globally, people tend to focus on well-being – individually (not just physically and mentally, but also spiritually, emotionally and socially), systemically (what does well-being look like within organisations and systems?), and on a planetary level (what does well-being mean for our planet Earth?). Another focus is on our shared humanity, as well as on solidarity with those who are being impacted by injustices. J. McCain notes that our shared values define us more than our differences. Moreover, acknowledging those shared values can help us overcome our challenges today if we have the wisdom to trust them again. Shared human values could include respect, human rights, compassion, empathy, equity, inclusivity, integrity, equality, justice, etc. These shared values should be integrated into our work, as policymakers and practitioners of education. *In every way possible*, we should include these values in dialogues and various discourses. Our role is to ensure that shared values are connected to more significant global movements, such as climate change, anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

Attributes That a Global Citizen Should Possess

Global citizens embody several key attributes that help them navigate and contribute positively to our interconnected world. Below are some essential qualities:

Worsened Tension and Unnecessary Division: Without a sense of global citizenship, people may become more protective and nationalistic, leading to worsened tension and continuous divisions based on nationality, ethnicity or religion.

Cultural Awareness: Understanding and appreciating diverse cultures, traditions, customs, insights and perspectives.

Empathy: Being able to understand and share the feelings of others, thus fostering compassion and cooperation.

Open-mindedness: Willingness or preparedness to consider new ideas and perspectives and to challenge one's own biases.

Responsibility: Recognising and fully accepting the impact of one's actions on the global community and the environment and acting accordingly.

Communication Skills: Being able to communicate across cultural and linguistic barriers effectively and efficiently.

Adaptability: Flexibility in adjusting to new situations and environments.

Critical Thinking: Analysing information objectively and making reasoned judgements.

Advocacy: Standing up for human rights, equity, equality, inclusivity and justice on a global scale.

Sustainability: Commitment to practices that support environmental health, social equity and full inclusion.

Ignoring Global Citizenship Can Have Several Significant Impacts on Humanity

Environmental Degradation: Global challenges, like climate change, require collective action. Disregarding global citizenship can result in several impacts on humanity such as international cooperation and the addressing of environmental issues effectively.

Economic Inequality: A lack of global citizenship can exacerbate economic disparities. Highly developed nations may put as their top priority, their interest over global equity without a global perspective, thus increasing poverty and inequality.

Human Rights Violations: Ignoring global citizenship can lead to a lack of accountability for human rights abuses. In instances where people do not regard themselves as an important part of the worldwide community, it is possible that they may fail to advocate for their rights and those of others.

Loss of Cultural Exchange: Global citizenship promotes understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. In the absence of global citizenship, the likelihood is that there will be no cultural exchange, resulting into among others misunderstandings and a lack of appreciation for cultural diversity.

The Rationale for Writing This Manuscript

Cultural intolerance, diversity, and the inclusive education gap in Africa and the world over seem to be ever widening, and the continent faces extreme challenges with reference to the issues mentioned above in the work, education, society and corporate worlds. It is believed that schools of different education systems that

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score highly on intercultural matters, diversity and inclusivity are more likely to be sustainable and perform better; receive needed support from various stakeholders; increase learner enrolment; promote inclusion; attain education and learning goals, achieving high pass rates; offer quality teaching and learning; give community and family satisfaction; improve community and learner engagement; attract staff/skills and increase staff retention; lead to increased education system understanding as well as the possibility of being socially responsible and incorporating new national and global ideas.

For example, some published reports maintain that sub-Saharan Africa will take nearly a century to achieve gender parity and inclusivity at the current pace. Reports further suggest that the situation is even worse in the Middle East and North Africa and compares poorly to Europe, which is expected to take around 54 years to manage or correct the status quo. Although disability, gender and race have been the dominant focus areas, especially in the West, institutions of learning from Early Childhood Education (ECE) to post-school education globally, are now implementing inclusive education, as well as other proactive inclusion policies. Teaching and learning cultures are being developed with less restrictive environments that remove barriers and discrimination based on religion, age, sexual orientation, education, language, ethnicity or physical disabilities.

In South Africa, for example, several legislative efforts chiefly driven by, among other things, the country's discrimination legacy have been implemented and have achieved some level of success, albeit a lot still needs to be done. White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education, the South African Schools Act, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Integrated National Disability Strategy, the Equal Opportunities Act, etc., have addressed critical diversity and inclusion concerns. However, there are still disparities in levels of representation, such as African teachers in the previously model C schools, learners with disabilities in full-service schools, diversity at hinterland schools, some township areas and informal settlements, development and promotion of women and persons with disabilities, skills and socio-economic development disparities, etc.

Problem Statement

Ideal

In an ideal situation, cultural intolerance, diversity and the inclusive education gap in Africa and the world over should be reduced, and the continent must start to do away with those extreme challenges at work and in education, society and the corporate world.

Reality

Research shows that schools with different education systems that do relatively well on intercultural matters, diversity, social justice, equity, inclusivity and the advancement of human rights are in an excellent position to be sustainable and to perform better. As a result, they would attract and receive the support needed

from various stakeholders. Support that these schools may receive leads to increased learner enrolment; fosters inclusion; enhances education and learning goals; maintains high pass rates; provides quality teaching and learning; strives to give community and family satisfaction; endeavours to improve community and learner engagement; invests in staff/skills and increases staff retention, leading to an education system of increased understanding, as well as the possibility to be socially responsible and incorporate fresh national and global ideas.

Consequences

Suppose intercultural matters, equity, diversity and inclusivity are not given the space and place they deserve within the education circle. In this case, interculturalism will not be realised; inclusive schools will not be sustainable and, as a result, underperform.

Objectives

Through this manuscript, the author wants to achieve the following:

Suggest measures and processes for nurturing intercultural, diverse and inclusive education in global citizenship;

Highlight and show the importance of strategies for promoting equity and inclusivity;

Advocate and raise awareness that all intercultural, equity, diversity and inclusion strategies and initiatives should be perceived as an investment, rather than as a cost to the government or department/s of education and

Assist people to realise that intercultural, diversity and inclusion strategies have the capacity and capability to positively impact an education system's outlook, as well as society by driving forward a reduction in illiteracy inequality, exclusion and marginalisation, while at the same time achieving education goals, which would result in shared prosperity for all stakeholders.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this research was purely a literature review. This was done through a systematic search of the internet concerning Google Scholar and databases of academic research journals. Online reports, conference papers and a thesis relevant to the phenomenon under study were also considered. The initial search terms included culture; collective responsibility; human rights; inclusive education settings; learners with disabilities; respect for diversity; social justice and global citizenship.

Manuscript Audience

One could not exhaust the audience list that could benefit from this manuscript. However, the audience that comes to mind includes inclusive education advocates

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and activists; human rights advocates and activists; researchers in the field of cultural diversity and inclusive education; special and inclusive education teachers, education administrators, members of the school governing body and school management teams; district-based support teams, circuit managers, district managers and government officials; lecturers; marginalised groups; women; persons with disabilities; members of faith-based organisations; members of community-based organisations, clients of non-governmental organisations and student teachers; parents/guardians of students with disabilities; ECE practitioners; adult education and training practitioners; traditional leaders; politicians; paraprofessionals; therapists, etc.

Some of the manuscript's focus areas and themes include inclusive education as a bastion for change; inclusive education as a life-defining and transformational system; inclusive ODeL ensuring the highest possible standards in disability access and support; engaging in prosocial behaviours for an inclusive classroom and society; the impact of intercultural and inclusive education in global citizenship; the role of intercultural competence and intercultural dialogue in inclusive education and societal integration; 21st-century debates and conversations on inclusive education and intercultural society in global citizenship, including students with diverse needs; an inclusive and intercultural society context; intercultural society in global citizenship from exclusion to inclusion; inclusive education growing a barrier-free, intercultural society and exploring intercultural and prosocial behaviours for fostering inclusivity in classrooms and society.

Chapter 1

Engaging Prosocial Behaviours for an Inclusive Classroom and Society

Abstract

In the quest to write about prosocial behaviours in inclusive classrooms and society, numerous aspects have to be taken into consideration, including what constitutes a society; how society should be engaged to make classrooms inclusive; what constitutes inclusive classrooms; prosocial behaviours that society as a whole should exhibit as part of inclusivity; the advantages of involving/engaging society as far as inclusive classrooms are concerned and the disadvantages of disengaging society from inclusive classrooms. Cognisance must be taken that creating an inclusive classroom involves more than just acknowledging diversity – it requires active and ongoing engagement. Inclusive education will not occur unless serious and intentional social interaction exists between various societal stakeholders. Therefore, members of a society must engage in ongoing interactions, either through communication or collaboration. Inclusive education has many advantages and disadvantages, mainly depending on the school environment and society's engagement. Members of the community, as well as educators, need to understand and use the strategies at their disposal, which will ensure the success of all students. All stakeholders must engage from time to time in the topic of inclusive education so that solid social relationships will be forged and sustained; community building will take place; access to inclusive education will be provided; the unconditional acceptance of students; the creation of goals based on individual ability and students' unique needs identified and met. Motivation through peer connections should be encouraged, with parental involvement and an atmosphere of respect and belonging should be promoted.

Keywords: Disabilities; inclusive classes; inclusive education endeavours; prosocial behaviours; society

1.1 Introduction

Treaties, declarations, charters, conventions, legislation and different countries' policies on, for example, the rights of children, minority groups, women, persons with disabilities, etc., can be crafted, ratified or passed, but if society is not actively and fully engaged in prosocial behaviours, inclusive education endeavours will remain unfulfilled. Society, which comprises a range of communities (business, educational and religious), should be engaged in different platforms, as the roles they play in education, in general, and inclusive education, in particular, differ yet are prodigiously important. For example, business communities could fund education; religious communities could play a meaningful role in the spirituality of school communities (school management teams, teachers, students and parents), while the political community could craft inclusive education-friendly policies.

Several aspects need to be addressed, including what constitutes a society; how society should be engaged to make classrooms inclusive; what constitutes inclusive classrooms; prosocial behaviours that society as a whole should exhibit as part of inclusivity; the advantages of involving/engaging society as far as inclusive classrooms are concerned and the benefits of engaging society in inclusive education.

1.2 Society

Society is any self-sustaining human assemblage that occupies a roughly defined region and rightly has its institutions and culture. Significantly, the entire network of human connections contributes towards the building up of a society (Abdesslem et al., 2024; Solaiman et al., 2023). A society is a group of individuals engaged in persistent social interaction or a large social group that shares the same spatial or social territory (Durkheim, 2023; Hossain et al., 2023; Louie, 2024).

1.3 Characteristics of a Society

A society:

- encompasses people who interact with one another, share common values and form organised communities;
- is a complex network shaped by social institutions, cultural norms and shared practices;
- is characterised by patterns of relationships among individuals who share a distinctive culture and inhabit the same space.

These relationships create a collective entity (i.e., the society itself) (Paley et al., 2024; Prest, 2023; Sanders et al., 2024).