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Towards Social Justice and Inclusion in Education Systems

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Abstract

Inclusion into mainstream education systems to address marginalisation of vulnerable groups has now become a primary focus of educational practice, policy, and research. Yet, as research shows, inclusive education keeps emphasising the provision of access to education for all. While access to education remains a critical concern with millions of children and young people being excluded from formal education, simply including them in the education system does not address structural inequalities, injustices, discrimination, and violence learners from disadvantaged groups face within the systems which leads to their dropping out of school and/or finishing with poor learning outcomes. This chapter proposes a social justice framework that relies on three dimensions – distributive, relational, and epistemic – to support the transformation of education in a way that it becomes inclusive and supportive of students coming from all sorts of backgrounds.

1. Introduction

1990 marked the year when inclusion has become a dominant policy imperative in global and national education agendas when the *World Declaration on Education for All* and *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs* were adopted by the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. It is not to say that inclusion in education to address marginalisation of vulnerable groups was not a focus of educational practice, policy, and research prior to that. Article 26 of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948* proclaimed that "Everyone has the right to education," and that at fundamental stages it should be free and at tertiary level – "equally accessible to all on the basis of merit" (United Nations (UN), 1948). In 1989, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* reaffirmed this right for all children in Article 28, adding a clause on ensuring safe learning environments, while in 1979, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* focused specifically on equal access to education for women and girls in Article 10. However, it was 1990 when the international community committed to a common goal of inclusion and equality in as well as quality of education. It was followed up by the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994) that committed to include the widely overlooked learners with special physical and intellectual needs to regular schools, adapted to meet their needs.

As many countries were behind in reaching the goals established in 1990, the international community met again in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, to reaffirm the commitment to quality of and inclusion in education for all in the *Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All*. The goals were not met by 2015 either which led to the adoption of the *Incheon Declaration* and *Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4* (SDG4) at the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea (2015). The *Incheon Declaration* set out a more ambitious goal of achieving equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030. It also placed inclusion and equity at the heart of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, including achieving

SDG4 (UNESCO, 2020). Unlike earlier reports that treated inclusion as something measured by the presence of particular demographics (e.g., girls, low-income groups, learners with special needs), the *Incheon Declaration,* and the work leading to its adoption, acknowledged that structural and substantive transformations in public provision are required to support inclusive education for all and thus the achievement of SDG4 (Unterhalter, 2019). In particular, it emphasised the need to "design and implement transformative public policies to respond to learners' diversity and needs, and to address the multiple forms of discrimination and of situations […] which impeded the fulfilment of the right to education" (UNESCO, 2016, p. 30). Still, as Unterhalter's (2019) analysis shows, this transformational vision of the *Incheon Declaration* and of SDG4 is not reflected in SDG4 indicators. Instead, indicators use a narrow and measurable meaning of equity and inclusion as distribution, parity, and equivalence, and not as addressing structural inequalities, injustices, discrimination, and violence learners that belong to disadvantaged groups face within the system. Essentially, as we only ensure that everyone has equal access to/included in various forms of education without transforming the education system and processes that take place within it, vulnerable learners continue to be included in the system that disadvantages, marginalises, harms, and discriminates against them.

It is important to emphasise at this point that inability to ensure everyone's access to education is a grave concern; after all, some 258 million children, adolescents, and youth are not in school today (17% of the global total) (UNESCO, 2020), and 25 million of them are projected to never set foot in a classroom (UNESCO, 2017). What is also important is that many children drop out of school and/or finish school with poor learning outcomes, and, in some cases, without acquiring basic skills such as reading, numeracy, and writing (World Bank, 2018). For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, half of the children reach adolescence without basic skills (van Fleet, 2012) which prevents them from engaging in civic, social, economic, and political life of their communities and societies. This chapter thus posits that while building inclusive education requires ensuring 'access', it also requires ensuring retention, completion, meaningful learning, personal development, and academic success. For that, we need to critically analyse, reassess, rethink, and then transform education (including educational inputs, spaces, structures, and processes) to make it accepting and supportive of every group and individual. To support this goal, this chapter showcases and emphasises the need for inclusive education policy and practice to be guided by the principles of social justice to become genuinely inclusive of all children regardless of their backgrounds. The chapter consists of three main parts. It starts by discussing what is meant by disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, providing a few examples of disadvantages in different contexts before moving to define inclusion and inclusive education. After that, it presents a social justice framework that can guide us in building inclusive education that draws on and responds to real concerns of diverse groups across different countries.

2. Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups

The definition of disadvantaged groups that are excluded from and within education systems and spaces or who do not have access to quality education is contextual and differs between and even within countries. Still, the groups that are considered disadvantaged, vulnerable, and marginalised tend to include students in rural/remote areas and in urban slums and neighbourhoods of low-income bracket; students with disability status; refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people; migrants; students living in conflict and post-conflict areas; LGBTQI+; Indigenous peoples and religious, cultural, and linguistic minorities; incarcerated people; girls and women. In schools, these groups do not perform as well as their

peers from more privileged backgrounds due to a myriad of factors. Perhaps the most common example of disadvantage is that of students coming from different income/wealth families and neighbourhoods. Many studies over the past few decades have shown that the higher socioeconomic status a family has, the higher their child(ren)'s educational achievement is (Broer et al., 2019). Neighbourhood economic hardship is another significant predictor of children's lower academic outcome, as shown in the study done by Hanson and colleagues (2011). Overall, UNESCO (2017) points out, the poorest children are four times more likely to be out of school and five times more likely not to complete even primary education.

It becomes even more difficult for students who possess multiple and intersecting markers of difference that lead to multiple forms of exclusion and disadvantage. For example, as Plan International (2013) shows, children with disabilities are ten times more likely not to attend school than their non-disabled peers and, when they do attend school, their level of schooling is below that of their peers. In fact, child disability status is associated with lower achievement on all academic and social variables (Hanson et al., 2011). If they attend school at all, that is, because, as evidence shows, 70% of children and adolescents with disabilities in Latin America do not attend school at all (UNICEF, 2019) and the numbers for many other regions are not better. However, when we add another layer – for example, gender – the situation becomes even worse. Nguyen and Mitchell (2014) show that girls with disabilities have poorer access to education, lower enrolment rates, and higher drop-out rates than even boys with disabilities. Instead of or in addition to gender, other markers of difference (e.g., refugee, low income, Indigenous, rural, etc.) can play a role, intensifying one's exclusion and the resultant disadvantage. Ames's (2013) research in Peru, for example, showcases how Indigenous non-Spanish speaking women who live in rural areas (four markers: Indigeneity, minority language, gender, location) are more disadvantaged than non-Indigenous Spanish-speaking women in urban areas: they have on average only 4.4. years of schooling and 31% of them have no schooling at all (8.4 years and 6% respectively for non-Indigenous in urban areas). In addition, unlike urban areas where 21% of the population live in poverty, 60% of rural residents live in poverty which means Indigenous women who tend to reside in remote rural areas are more affected by poverty than non-Indigenous women in urban centres.

As Banerjee (2016) notes, people with so many markers of difference that lead to disadvantages in our societies are "extremely vulnerable and [are] bound to face challenges all through life starting early-on," including "compromised learning trajectories, reduced employment opportunities and lower income," among others (p. 3). The failure of the system to support disadvantaged groups and individuals can entrench them in poverty, low socio-economic status, and further state of vulnerability, marginalisation, and exclusion. It is important to remember that while it is often explained as *their* academic failure (e.g., dysfunction of a student and/or their family, lack of parental involvement and support, no value placed on education, etc.), it is the structures and systems that societies create that determine who is successful and who is not. As Bešić (2020) explains, these disadvantaged categories carry a meaning that is constructed by the society they live in, that is, it is society that attaches stigma and prejudices to particular categories of people leading to their discrimination and exclusion and, as a result, negatively influencing their educational paths (e.g., placing them in less academically challenging schools). These disadvantages therefore arise from aspects of the education systems themselves; in particular, the way in which education systems are organised but also how responsive and relevant pedagogy, curriculum, the learning environment, and evaluation of students' progress are; what support is offered to students; what infrastructure and resources are available; and what skills, attitudes, and expectations

teachers have (UNESCO, 2017). Ainscow (2020) rightly points out that we should focus not on what is wrong with the student, but *why are we failing some students* and *what barriers do they experience* and then focus on the development of schools that are able to integrate disadvantaged students in ways that work for these students. Inclusion and inclusive education are believed to support these processes.

3. Understanding inclusion and inclusive education

Inclusion is a "concept that allows us to question forms of inclusion, as well as the ideologies underlying these institutional agendas" by asking such questions as who is included and excluded, why, with what implications, and for what purposes (Nguyen & Mitchell, 2014, p. 327). Although it started as a struggle for the rights of people with disabilities (and in some countries still overwhelmingly does so, see Bešić, 2020), inclusion is now grounded in the struggles for equality, rights, and social justice for all, as was reaffirmed by the *2020 Global Education Monitoring Report 'Inclusion and Education: All Means All'* (UNESCO, 2020). Those who experience educational disadvantage are likely to face restricted opportunities, including economic opportunities, later in life (Bešić, 2020). For example, (quality) education promotes better and improved employment opportunities and success in the labour market (economic inclusion), thus delivering greater social inclusion. It has also been linked to increased social participation and better health outcomes (OECD, 2018). However, children who are excluded from or within education, due to varied barriers to their engagement and achievement, do not have necessary credentials and/or knowledge, skills, and competencies to "participate, engage and succeed in various aspects of mainstream life" and their life chances are limited (Muijs et al., 2007, pp. 2, 3; see also Mittler, 2006).

There is no one model of inclusive education as it is nation and context specific. There are, however, two common key principles that inclusive schools have: that "every learner matters and matters equally" and that differences are "not problems to be fixed, but […] opportunities for democratising and enriching learning" (UNESCO, 2017, pp. 12, 13). In schooling, it essentially means learning from the diversity of all children to address and respond to the diversity of their needs (UNESCO, 2005). This includes developing context- and student-specific strategies to increase their presence (where they are educated and consistency of their attendance), participation (quality of experiences), and achievement (learning outcomes) with a particular focus on those at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, and underachievement (Ainscow et al., 2006). As contexts and environments constantly change and are currently becoming even more diverse, the landscape of vulnerability and disadvantage is also changing. Inclusive education should thus be seen as a never-ending process to find ways to respond to, live with, and learn from difference and diversity (Ainscow et al., 2006) and to support all students (Ainscow, 2020). As such, inclusive education pursues three broad objectives: 1/ ensuring the right of all learners to quality mainstream education in national legislation and policy framework; 2/ the identification and removal of barriers to quality education through the provision of appropriate support, adjustments, and resources; and 3/ the development of inclusive environment based on the principles of social justice and human rights (Winter, 2019).

Once legislation and policies are in place, to build a culture of inclusion, schools should be reformed and reconstructed (Mittler, 2006) through 1/ changes in educational content, approaches, structures, and strategies (UNESCO, 2005); 2/ partnerships and relationships between diverse stakeholders (e.g., family members, schools, researchers, education administrators, policymakers, civic groups, and others) (Mujis et al., 2007); and 3/ mobilisation

of human and financial resources by governments to support change (Ainscow, 2020). Partnerships in particular – especially between families, schools, and community organisations – have been shown to be highly effective in improving students' academic outcomes, participation, and wellbeing as they help to achieve the two objectives mentioned above: removal of barriers through targeted support and resources and development of inclusive environment (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; McElvain, 2015). The reason for this is that such partnerships require stakeholders to work together and draw on available capacities and resources to re-orient schools academically, socially, and behaviourally so that they recognise, respect, and incorporate diverse learners' needs, cultures, realities, and expectations (Williams & Baber, 2007).

It has proven to be challenging to build partnerships and relationships among stakeholders and mobilise required resources to transform the system. The lack of a shared vision and understanding of inclusive education and what it entails to build it (e.g., resources, relationships, mindset) among stakeholders is a major concern. For example, policymakers who have no experience of disadvantage and exclusion such as being a person belonging to an Indigenous or other minority group, may not understand the need to develop and implement specific policies that would target to support minority students (Author, forthcoming). Bešić (2020) explains it very well: she points out that those who have privilege (economic, social, and cultural capital) have power that determines how the society is visualised and who is represented and on whose terms. These representations and visualisations become an uncritically accepted reality that has consequences for disadvantaged people as they shape attitudes towards and perceptions of these different groups, rank them, (Bešić, 2020) and determine what support they receive, if any. Ainscow (2020) thus emphasises the need to radically challenge our existing thinking about education and inclusion (and I should add – about the different groups we share the world with) to allow for transformations to take place. In what follows, I outline how social justice approach can support stakeholders in creating a culture of inclusion in education and beyond.

4. Social justice framework for inclusive education

Social justice focuses on *"how everyone should be treated in a society we believe to be good"* (Gewirtz, 2001, p. 49, emphasis in original) and what institutions and institutional conditions are necessary to support the required treatment (Young, 1990). As such, work towards social justice involves identifying and addressing multiple facets and dimensions of society that are considered unjust, unequal, unethical, and unfair and that prevent individuals from functioning effectively in their society and community. These facets include allocation of individual and collective rights, entitlements, and protections; resources; and opportunities to attain material and symbolic goods and privileges; fair institutional and interpersonal treatment and recognition. From the social justice perspective, high quality education that is genuinely inclusive of and equitable for all is considered a key right, resource, good, treatment, and opportunity. In this section, I outline a framework that incorporates three components of social justice – distributive, relational, and epistemic – as a holistic path towards building inclusion in education.

4.1. Distributive justice

Educational structures determine how benefits/advantages and burdens/disadvantages are distributed among different members and groups, thus affecting the course of individual and group lives and development. Distributive paradigm of justice provides a guidance into what a fair model of distribution of goods and resources should be and how laws and institutions need

to be reformed when they are deemed unjust (Rawls, 1999). As such, it serves to reduce inequalities and their unjust consequences and outcomes as they affect persons' chances and motivations (Miller, 2007). For this, key institutions should be critically re-examined and far-reaching institutional changes in distribution should be initiated. Inquiries should be made about what individuals have, and how what they have is compared to others (Young, 1990). Within the distributive justice approach, a helpful way to evaluate how equitable and fair educational structures are is by looking at equality from three perspectives: equality of opportunity, equality of condition, and equality of outcome. Together, they aim to minimise the influence of luck of one's birth to a particular background (especially those that lead to disadvantages) so that society works for everyone's benefit and advantage.

Equality of opportunity emphasises the importance of equal rights, equality of access, and equality of participation (Gewirtz, 2001). In a way, it is a metric system for distribution of material opportunities (i.e., resources, privileges, positions, power) that can be ensured when entrenched in policies, legislation, and practices that address and redress injustices arising from arbitrary factors such as (dis)advantages of being born into a particular class, family, race, ethnicity, gender, and other background beyond an individuals' control. As mentioned earlier, as these arbitrary barriers hinder an individual's chance to access better opportunities, they should be removed to build a society where one's status and prospects are improved based on achievement, initiative, desert, and merit regardless of any arbitrary factors (Rawls, 2001). Equality of opportunity has its limitations as it only *allows* all individuals to participate in a competitive race, so to speak, to obtain better material opportunities. Simply providing educational opportunity through allocation of material resources (e.g., access to free education) will not help achieve wider opportunities and better academic outcomes for disadvantaged students. As education takes place in complex socio-cultural environments that may be rife with prejudices, presumptions, and discriminatory practices and behaviours that remain unchallenged, it is these unjust environments that need be dismantled (Olsen, 2011). For example, free equal access to a high-quality schooling may be of no use if a child faces prejudicial treatment in the classroom/school which may lead to their low academic outcomes and/or dropping out. Equality of condition is thus another critical principle that should be applied simultaneously.

Equality of condition focuses on creating conditions and environments in schools for diverse individuals to enable and nurture their flourishing. This involves, for example, the evaluation of the rules, practices, and structures that govern our actions to determine whether conditions are in place for individuals to have genuine and substantive opportunities within the system. Lynch and Baker (2005) differentiate five dimensions of equality of condition: resources; respect and recognition; love, care, and solidarity; power; and working and learning. Of particular importance with regard to education are

1/ resources: focusing on students' mental health and emotional wellbeing and clean environment;

2/ respect and recognition: accommodating all markers of difference through the expansion of equal rights, privileges, and appreciation and acceptance of difference;

3/ personal and institutionalised relations of love, care, and solidarity: development of empathy, commitment to, and concern for individual development;

4/ reduction of power imbalances by including disadvantaged groups in all levels of decision and policy making and exercise of authority (e.g., creating participatory spaces) and providing support (e.g., strengthening their capacities to lead change);

5/ learning should be satisfying and "develop[…] them as people" (Lynch & Baker, 2005, p. 134).

Equality of outcome considers the influence of a broad spectrum of personal abilities, preferences, entitlements, and satisfactions on an individual's result. It is grounded in understanding that people have marked differences in socio-cultural environments they grow up in, their innate endowments, other arbitrary aspects of their lives (e.g., good or ill luck), their preferences (e.g., what they spend time and energy on), their values, attitudes and ambitions. Despite these differences, everyone should be treated with dignity, valued and protected equally, have a chance to develop as autonomous beings, enjoy satisfying lives, and be free from oppression, exploitation, exclusion, discrimination, marginalisation, and harm (Olsen, 2011). It should be noted that this is not about the uniformity in outcomes as abilities, talents, choices, efforts, and ambitions differ hence outcomes will be different. However, equal prospects and opportunities to succeed regardless of their initial (i.e., birth) position and status should be ensured for all. Equality of outcome, therefore, seeks to prevent disadvantage via need-assessment of the obstacles faced by different groups to then employ affirmative action and positive discrimination, create support system, provide a range of different opportunities, and implement other preferential and wide-ranging policies and practices to aid everyone's development (Gewirtz, 2001; Robeyns, 2006).

4.2. Relational justice

Unlike distributive justice that is concerned with distribution of goods and institutional procedures by which these are distributed, relational justice regards institutions and structures as dependent on individuals who make decisions that affect society and who build relationships between and among each other. In other words, while exclusion *is* structural, it depends on the agency of participants who create, enact, and reproduce the structure through their actions. Relational justice, therefore, deals with the nature of micro- and macro-level relations which govern and influence the distribution of goods, rights, and responsibilities (Gewirtz, 2001). It calls for 1/ a thorough understanding of these manifestations in a particular context, 2/ removal of all aspects of relationships and interactions that reproduce and contribute to marginalisation and exclusion of any group, and 3/ a structurally different possibility of inter-group relations.

A part of this de- and re-construction process is re-learning and acknowledging the uncomfortable and often traumatic truths of the past and its influence on the present-day development and condition of diverse groups. This includes the historical construction of current intergroup relationships and interactions that may contain silencing, microaggression, microinvalidations, hostility, and other discriminatory behaviours towards groups that are different due to their race/ethnicity, religion, gender, ability or another marker. For example, a division between 'superior'/'inferior' races engineered "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power" that helps to oppress people viewed as racially inferior (Marable, 1992, p. 5) by those who are racially 'superior'. Such racial division continues to exclude groups from "participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions" and hinders their learning opportunities, practice of skills, and abilities to "express their feelings and perspectives […] in contexts where others can listen" (Young, 1990, pp. 31, 38).

As mentions earlier, people in charge of decision and policy making as well as implementation may not see the need or urgency in transforming structures and/or changing policies and practices due to their more privileged and advantaged position. Working towards relational justice thus becomes imperative in the work to deconstruct the existing hierarchical and inegalitarian relations that limit the opportunities of disadvantaged groups. Acknowledging and understanding this flawed and hierarchical social arrangement and questioning and rejecting it are the first steps of relational justice. After that, agreeing on a new social arrangement to build and govern a new type of relationship should follow. In this new relationship, everyone relates to others "as persons of equal moral worth and dignity" regardless of their group identity or other characteristics (Brown, 2018, p. 4), helps establish institutions that reinforce non-hierarchical norms and regulations of relationships, commits to maintain respectful and reciprocal relationship of full-fledged agents with rights and responsibilities, and helps others nurture self-respect that may be undermined in inter-group relationships.

Relational justice is essentially an interpersonal and intergroup practice-dependent approach that is achieved through cooperative behaviour, discussion, dialogue, agreement, and negotiation among actors. The thought experiment proposed by Rawls (1999) when people imagine themselves under the 'veil of ignorance' can be of help. Relying on his experiment, we can assume that "reasonable persons" will "desire for its own sake a social world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate with others on terms all can accept" (Rawls, 2005, p. 50). Rawls (2005, p. 50) maintains that persons in post-experiment environment willingly honour and even propose "principles and standards for specifying fair terms of cooperation" and do not violate these terms regardless of circumstances. They also abandon self-interest from relationships with others and realise, Heller (1987) suggests, that what is best for them may not necessarily be best for others. Scheffler (2015) explains that each person should accept that the other person's equally important interests (e.g., their needs, values, and preferences) play an equally significant role in decision and policy making processes. While there can be no general algorithm for the practice of relational justice, it requires creativity and ongoing mutual commitment to resolve clashes of interests by attending with equal determination to the interests of each group (Scheffler, 2015).

4.3. Epistemic justice

Renegotiation and rebuilding of inter-group relationships require a comprehensive understanding of how relationships were engineered by fabricating what we know about and how we see certain groups. This knowledge and perspective shape our relationships, treatment of, and behaviours towards others and frame regulations, laws, rules, and practices that structure institutions (Nesterova, 2019). Privileged groups have established their knowledge, ways of knowing, reality, beliefs, values, standpoints, and experiences as normal, universal, and credible in contrast to those of disadvantaged groups. This 'knowledge' is created not based on accurate and factual information but the *perception* and *interpretation* of disadvantaged groups that invalidates, distorts, and dismisses their own experiences and knowledge that do not align with the dominant truth (Fricker, 2013; Medina, 2017). In education, this manifests in what is taught (e.g., curriculum, textbooks), how (e.g., pedagogy, classroom environment), by whom (e.g., teachers' background and training), where (e.g., spatial arrangements) as well as how individuals are treated and how they are supported. One example of this is a negative (stereotypical) representation of a group in textbooks can lead to their eroded self-esteem and dignity as well as discrimination against them in the form of bullying. Another example is teachers being conditioned to view a certain group as lacking

and not willing to learn, adjust, or value education thus leading to their low expectations for such students and their result treatment of them as deviant and not worthy.

This phenomenon of establishing a knowledge base (i.e., epistemic resource) by a (more) privileged group about a disadvantaged group is called epistemic *in*justice as it creates two distinct classes of 'knowers' based on arbitrary factors such as one's background (Fricker, 2013). One is a credible and intelligible 'knower' – someone who does not possess any disadvantaged markers or possesses few of such markers; the other is a subjugated knower who does not participate equally and does not have equal authority to produce and make impact on knowledge and ways of knowing the society they live in rely upon. The objective of epistemic justice is to remove the condition of domination of one 'universal' and 'impartial' knowledge and way of knowing over all others. It does so by confronting, challenging, de-centering, and reconsidering *what* we know and *how* we know it, what our place in knowledge-production is, how we convey our knowledge and knowing, and what implications (and ramifications) that might have. This includes more privileged groups unlearning what epistemic resources they have as well as disadvantaged groups unlearning what they have internalised about themselves.

One example of this would be families and society viewing investing in education of girls as bringing no value while girls internalising that *they* have no value and are not fit for further education (if any) and/or particular careers. Another example is a constructed stereotypic image of an ethnic minority/Indigenous groups as primitive and deficient that positions them in a significantly lower epistemic hierarchy (Sissons, 2005) where their unique knowledge systems, intellectual traditions, ways of knowing, and ways of expressions are not expected to be understood, learnt from, or make an impact on knowledge. One critical consequence of this may be self-silencing and self-censorship of disadvantaged groups who may start to believe in their own 'ignorance' and 'inferiority' (e.g., Fricker, 2016; Medina, 2017).

This structure is not interpreted or regarded by more privileged groups as exclusionary and even oppressive as the structure itself has cultivated in them close-mindedness and ignorance of other ways of experiencing and knowing the world (Pohlhaus, 2017). They thus have what Fricker (2007) calls "identity prejudice" that operates as implicit, unconscious bias, unknown to the knower but that still keeps them largely oblivious to the fact that they are prejudiced against a particular group. This ignorance has resulted in rare, if any, engagement in self-examination and reflection on their role in the reproduction of continued exclusion of disadvantaged groups (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). For disadvantaged groups this may lead to erosion of self-trust and doubt of own competences and experiences, limited meaningful participation in education decision and policy making, disillusionment with institutions and structures in place, reluctance to engage and participate, and erasure of their voices and contribution (Dotson, 2011; Pohlhaus, 2017).

Epistemic justice requires building reciprocity between groups so that more privileged members recognise and understand the stories and experiences of those who are less privileged (Fricker, 2016). It, however, entails more than virtuous listening. It requires communicative contexts in which dissonant and alternate meanings, interpretations, and expressions disrupt the established epistemic frameworks, expectations, and complicity of agents. Creation of a detailed, collective, multivocal, and inclusive history of injustices disadvantaged groups have experience of is one such approach (Brants & Klep, 2013). This should lead to revisions of curricula and textbooks to include accurate accounts of injustices and activities to develop skills for critical, autonomous, and non-partisan assessments of

historical and current epistemic frameworks and relationships (Karn, 2006). The idea is that once the public have access to a new reassessment of injustices and their consequences, this new knowledge and self-understanding will initiate changes in their identity, relationships, and society as a whole, and will motivate them to act to avert repetition of injustices (Teitel, 2000).

5. Concluding remarks

Inclusion and inclusive education have become a key educational goal in the pursuit of equality and justice for students of all backgrounds. As De Bruin (2020) emphasises, however, the benefits of inclusive education "do not arise from merely being in the same school or classroom, but rather it is the nature of the contact [between groups and individuals] that makes an impact" (p. 65). This chapter proposed a social justice framework that can aid the development of an environment and a support system that transforms education in ways that makes it responsive to and supportive of the needs of all children, regardless of their backgrounds, and that, as Ydo (2020) put it, does not expect students to fit the system but the system to adjust to students. To reiterate, and to move forward, some key points of the social justice approach as regard to its framing of inclusive education are as follows:

1/ Access to quality education for all is only the first, basic step towards inclusion of all. As the concerns disadvantaged groups grapple with are more systemic and structural, so should be the responses.

2/ Once access is ensured, we should evaluate educational institutions to understand the gaps and then cultivate fairness in: the distribution of resources to meet diverse needs, the presence of respect and recognition of diversity in educational, cultural, and developmental needs, care for and solidarity with other groups that are different from ourselves, and the distribution of power to make decisions relating to education and have ownership over education. To achieve these objectives, the analysis of the existing laws, policies, and practices needs to be conducted to determine how fair distribution is and to what extent factors such as socio-economic status, race, location, and other markers of difference interfere with learning and academic progress. Institutions, policies, laws, and practices that are unfair need to be altered or abolished.

3/ The distribution of material and non-material resources depends on the structures and rules in place, and those are defined, maintained, and reinforced by people and relationships they establish with each other. The response to exclusion of particular groups, therefore, should be work towards justice not solely as distributive, but as relational and epistemic.

4/ Relational dimension should focus on analysing the imbalance in inter-group relationships and how they harm certain groups and then unlearning the patterns and transforming such relationships. This involves changing attitudes, fighting prejudice, stigma, and bias, nurturing respect for other people's dignity and humanity, to name but a few. Teaching and learning to identify manifestations of, for example, prejudice (e.g., microaggression) is another important step.

5/ Epistemic dimension should include learning about the experiences of disadvantaged groups to understand their position and perspective on inclusion and education. It should also include learning about why they face disadvantages and how formal institutions and structures have been contributing to shaping those. For this, educational content should meaningfully incorporate disadvantaged groups' knowledge systems, values, beliefs, experiences, intellectual traditions, and histories while simultaneously introducing content that can counter negative and biased attitudes and perceptions of disadvantaged groups.

6/ Along with learning in formal settings (e.g., classroom, curriculum, textbook), these processes can take place in cooperative practice and discussion-based spaces where re-education and re-construction of inter-group relationships takes place to benefit all. They should also rely on whole-community approach to include diverse members of community/society to support the (un)learning processes. As Ainscow (2020) points out, for example, including the views of children and families (and other community members) can help to find more effective ways to promote presence, participation, retention, and achievement of all students.

Overall, building inclusive education systems and classrooms requires a rethinking and reassessment of what education offers to diverse groups in a particular context from three dimensions – how resources and goods are distributed, how structures and relationships work and for whose benefit, and what we know about disadvantaged groups and how that hinders or supports their progress. Needless to say, any evaluation of what education systems already offer or do not, and what they need to offer, should be context-specific and based on rigorous evidence from diverse stakeholders so that ways to move forward lead to inclusivity and do not keep reinforcing the unjust structures and relationships in place.

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