Chapter 2
The Extended Family System as a Model of Africanizing Inclusive Education Through Ubuntu

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ABSTRACT

The chapter explores the African extended family system which is an integral part of the Ubuntu philosophy. The authors explain the concept of inclusive education for persons with disabilities and lastly examine how the extended family system can be used within the framework of the African Ubuntu philosophy to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. They argue that the failure by the current African school curriculum to contextualize, acculturate, and localize the concept of inclusive education emanates from the lost values of the African Ubuntu philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is construed as a concept peculiar to modern or contemporary education, yet perhaps, this concept is long embedded in the African *Ubuntu* Philosophy. This chapter examines the African Extended Family System as a means of Africanizing Inclusive Education. The African Extended Family System is very much related to the African *Ubuntu* philosophy. In this chapter, we explore the African Extended Family System as an *Ubuntu* philosophy. Thereafter, we explain the concept of inclusive

education for persons with disabilities and lastly examine how the extended family system can be used as an African *Ubuntu* philosophy to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. Therefore, in this chapter, we explore the extended family as an *Ubuntu* philosophy to understand how the philosophy kept families together as a unit and took responsibility of members of the family. We then, make an analysis of how the education system in general and the school curriculum in particular can tap from this nature of indigenous knowledge to enhance a contextualized system of beliefs and values about inclusive education. We are convinced that the failure by the current African school curriculum to contextualize, acculturate, and localize the concept of inclusive education emanates from the lost values of the African *Ubuntu* philosophy.

THE CONCEPT OF THE AFRICAN EXTENDED FAMILY WITHIN UBUNTU

The extended family is a way of life for Africans and *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy of how humanity is construed. Mapaure (2011) postulates that *Ubuntu* is used in several African Bantu languages, expressing a philosophy unique to Africans to regard every person as a human being who should engage in all processes of knowledge generation. The practices in Ubuntu demonstrate how communal the African society is, demonstrating how inclusive Africans are (Shanyanana and Waghid 2016). In the extended family system, a child who is a member of a family is everyone's child either by birth, clan or other. In an African Traditional family setup, no one was barren. Thus, my child is my brother's child and vice-versa. We argue that Ubuntu exists in all human societies; however, there are different interpretations and views of what Ubuntu really is. In his paper "Anchoring Ubuntu morality, 2013" Letseka (2013) regards Ubuntu as a normative concept, a humanitarian conception and a potential communal policy. On a similar vein, the notion of "*Ubuntu*" which encourages humanity to others, and extended families can be seen as a vehicle that promotes or support the principles of "*Ubuntu*". Mafumbate (2019) explains the role that the extended family system played in bringing up orphaned children to learn to be hospitable and to be members of a larger community without feeling the loss of their biological parents. To Mafumbate (2019) African's choice of living together and accepting each other as African communities guaranteed social security for the poor, old, widowed, and orphaned. In an extended family, just like the whole community, which is regarded as a body, children that broke taboos or the community's core teachings affected the whole community (Mafumbate, 2019). This understanding may not be the same today, hence, this chapter argues that the lost philosophy is partly, if not greatly the cause of discrimination and neglect for persons with disabilities. It may not be arguable that everything an African did when colonialists came to Africa was either tagged as evil or immoral (Tiberondwa, 1998). Western education is accused of breaking down the African family system to levels where a family is now considered as father, mother and children. Three African scholars plainly write;

One of the tragic consequences of the impact of Western culture and civilization upon African indigenous life has been its corrosive effect. Today, much of what was good and useful in African traditional life has disappeared, and consequently many African people have been thrown into a state of semi-confusion. They live, as it were, in two different worlds at the same time. (Mwanakatwe 2013: 5)

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