

Article

Education and Care: How Teachers Promote the Inclusion of Children and Youth at Risk in South Africa

Lorna Balie ^{1,*}  and Yusuf Sayed ^{2,3,4}

¹ The Centre for International Teacher Education (CITE), Education Faculty, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), Highbury Road, Mowbray, Cape Town 7700, South Africa

² The International Education and Development Policy, the Centre for International Education (CIE), the University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9QN, UK; sayed.cite@gmail.com or y.sayed@sussex.ac.uk

³ The Department of Education, the School of Education and Social Work, Essex House, the University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9QN, UK

⁴ South African Research Chair in Teacher Education, CITE, CPUT, Highbury Road, Mowbray, Cape Town 7700, South Africa

* Correspondence: lornabalie@gmail.com

Received: 31 August 2020; Accepted: 3 October 2020; Published: 9 October 2020



Abstract: Children and youth at risk, particularly those placed in child and youth care centres (CYCC) in South Africa, have suffered from school disengagement due to multiple barriers to learning such as the exposure to crime and violence at a young age. As children and youth at risk at these centres find it difficult to engage in learning, new approaches need to be found to re-engage their interest to learn. This article discusses how the ‘Curriculum of Care’, an adaptation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), responds to the educational needs of children and youth at risk at a CYCC in the Western Cape. It draws primarily from interviews and a focus group discussion with the centre manager and teachers at the institution. The findings reveal that positive learning outcomes, and the effective integration of children and youth at risk, are shaped by positive teacher–learner relationships; however, the findings raise questions about the extent to which such a curriculum prepares children and youth at risk for life after they leave the institution. The article suggests that the institutions providing education and care for children and youth at risk need to provide a curriculum balancing academic rigour with care to promote a holistic, inclusive education programme that enables youth and children at risk to effectively navigate their entry into society.

Keywords: inclusive education; children and youth at risk; curriculum of care

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is crucial to enable all learners, particularly children and youth at risk, to access an academic curriculum. Children and youth at risk experience various forms of school disengagement such as disengagement from the curriculum and teachers, often resulting in them leaving school early [1] (pp. 4–5). Inclusive education is an approach that could re-engage learners to access education through an appropriate curriculum and teaching and learning processes.

Children and youth at risk in South Africa are learners under the age of 18 who have dropped out of school and are generally referred for placement in a child and youth care centre (CYCC) by the Children’s Court, under the provision of the Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005 [2]. These children and youth are then legally acknowledged as, “in need of care and protection”, which in this study are identified as ‘children and youth at risk’. These facilities (which for the purpose of this article are

referred to as institutions) are intended to address emotional and behavioural problems by providing appropriate education, therapeutic care, and in many instances, even residential care.

The Education White Paper 6: ‘Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training system’ [3] (referred to herein as White Paper 6) outlines the plans for an inclusive education system for children in general, and also children and youth at risk who experience emotional and behavioural barriers to learning or who suffer from emotional and behavioural disorders (EBDs). Babedi [4] (p. 79) suggests that these learners have unmet developmental needs in the “physiological, moral, social, and emotional domains”, which have resulted in behavioural and emotional problems including aggression, a disregard for cooperation, and a lack of respect for authoritative figures.

Alongside these behavioural and emotional problems are concomitant academic difficulties faced by these learners [5] (p. 430): High truancy rates, discipline problems, low academic performance, and grade repetition. These escalate into school dropout and detrimental associations with anti-social peers [5] (p. 430). Studies show [6,7] that learners with EBDs have a 50% greater chance of dropping out of high school than their peers. To counter these problems, it is imperative to understand why these learners drop out of school, what intervening support to offer [8] (p. 383), and how to adapt the curriculum to compensate for their more difficult emotional and behavioural contexts while still maintaining curricular standards. It is the latter which this article focuses on by analysing the curriculum in use and enacted in a particular institution in the Western Cape, South Africa.

While extensive research has been conducted on inclusive education for children with disabilities [9,10] and on curriculum, there is a paucity of knowledge about how the mainstream curriculum is best applied and modified at a specialised institution. Relatively few studies [5] have shown how children and youth at risk are catered for and included within the education system through specialised institutions and adapted curriculum, especially within the South African context. This article aims to answer this question: How does an adapted curriculum promote the educational inclusion of children and youth at risk? This research intends to share approaches for re-engaging children and youth at risk in the learning process by investigating an adapted curriculum called the ‘Curriculum of Care’ and its implementation by the teachers at a CYCC in the Western Cape.

2. The South African Policy Context for Children and Youth at Risk

White Paper 6 [3] makes provision for curriculum differentiation to accommodate learners of varying abilities, including those with learning barriers such as EBD, a lack of qualified and trained teachers and inclusive policies; and a lack of parental involvement and support [11] (p. 9), [12] (p. 54). Many of the children and youth at risk in this study dropped out of their respective schools due to the barriers to learning recognised above. If inclusive education were implemented, it is suggested, these children and youth would have a greater likelihood of staying in school and completing their education.

Curriculum differentiation is core to inclusive education: Teachers adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of individual learners. Different teaching and learning styles and multi-level teaching are encouraged in an institutional environment such as a CYCC. The ‘Curriculum of Care’ offered at the CYCC, as an example of curriculum differentiation, is an adaptation of the South African national curriculum, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The ‘Curriculum of Care’ offers the same subjects as those offered in mainstream and other inclusive schools, with additional technical subjects such as woodwork, welding, arts and crafts, and bricklaying. In this way, it focuses on the holistic development of the child or youth.

Presently, schools in South Africa are categorised according to levels of support and specialisation in relation to the nature and extent of learner needs. Some of these institutions are overseen by the Department of Social Development (DSD). The DBE or Provincial Education Department (PED) and the DSD work in collaboration at some of these institutions, where the DSD oversees these institutions while the DBE or PED provides the educational programme. The DSD is responsible for funding the CYCCs and ensuring an even spread of CYCCs are located throughout the country. An even

distribution of CYCCs throughout the country is critical, as children benefit from institutions in close proximity to their schools and families for reunification. Overall, inter-sectoral collaboration is encouraged to support children and youth in overcoming the array of challenges that prohibit their inclusion in education and society.

Children and youth with specific learning needs and requiring intensive support will find services at special schools and CYCCs that are intended for critical educational support [3] (p. 21). Special schools are “schools equipped to deliver education to learners requiring high-intensive educational and other support, on a full-time or part-time basis” [13] (p. 50). Special schools, according to White Paper 6 [3], are to be resource centres of expertise as part of the district-based support team supporting schools in the area.

Relatively few of these kinds of institutions exist for this purpose in South Africa, including in the Western Cape [14], which is one of the reasons this article examines the unique curriculum offered by this particular institution. This CYCC comprises the management team, teachers, childcare workers, education support service professionals, residential care staff, and volunteers. This particular CYCC provides residential care as well as therapeutic and development programmes to children and youth. Furthermore, learners are exposed to an academic curriculum, an array of technical skill activities, and a plethora of extracurricular activities.

This CYCC, located in Cape Town in the Western Cape, was established in 1948 as a school of industries when the National Party came to power. As a result, the school developed within a racial paradigm. The institution formerly catered for ‘coloured’ boys who were considered indigent and had welfare and social needs [15] (p. 13). Today, this institution serves as a special school: The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) oversees this CYCC and funds the education component. The institution currently admits males between the ages of 8 and 18. In exceptional cases, learners stay beyond the age of 18 if additional support is required or if they would like to complete their education. The institution makes use of the positive youth development model called the Circle of Courage, owing to the institution’s education and developmental model, where care practices are embedded in all its programmes.

This institution plays an important role in providing care and education for children and youth at risk. In order to do so, it carries out a particular admission process and relies on the support of an interconnected departmental arrangement as this institution deviates from mainstream, inclusive, and fully inclusive schools, and in many ways from secure care centres and other childcare centres. But even so, the institution embodies characteristics similar to each of these different types of institutions. A maximum of only 70 children can be admitted to the institution at one time, owing to resource and financial constraints. The institution has several departments that function collaboratively: A school governing body, a senior management team (institutional management and governance), administration, laundry, kitchen, residential care, education support services, an academic department, and the technical department.

Delivery of the ‘Curriculum of Care’ is sensitive to the needs and educational pace of the learners. Drawing from the Circle of Courage, the curriculum assumes a holistic developmental approach to education, focusing on the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development of the youth. This holistic learning comprises academic, technical, and vocational training, and extracurricular activities such as sports and arts as components of the broad curriculum experience. The next section will discuss key debates surrounding an adapted curriculum for children and youth at risk.

3. Teachers and Curriculum—Keys to Educational Inclusion: A Review of Literature

This section develops the inclusive educational environment framework of this paper paying attention to positive teacher–learner relationships to ensure effective curriculum implementation, and discussing an appropriate curriculum for children and youth at risk.

3.1. Positive Teacher–Learner Relationships as a Pre-Requisite for Curriculum Implementation

Teachers are vital in determining whether learners receive the best educational experience and feel included [16] (p. 93), [17] (p. 90). A teacher's primary role is to deliver the curricular content through appropriate teaching methods and with supportive material. Part of their role as teachers, especially for learners struggling with EBD, is to provide psychosocial support by identifying behavioural problems, possible causes, and potential interventions to counteract the problems [4] (pp. 82–83). Babedi [4] (pp. 82–83) found that, “teachers are able to offer psychosocial support by following the eco-systemic approach”. This involves caring teachers who listen to learner. In other words, a holistic, relational, listening approach should be taken to support learners involving community members, care professionals, and parents. It is essential, therefore, that teachers collaborate with all parties and in particular care professionals to provide both psychosocial and academic support for learners, especially those struggling with EBD [4] (pp. 82–83).

According to Downey, educational resilience is strongly connected to the relationship learners have with their teachers: “At-risk students need teachers to (a) build healthy interpersonal relationships with them, (b) focus on their strengths to increase positive self-esteem, and (c) maintain high, realistic expectations for academic performance, as well as have a positive attitude, emphasise the value of effort to reach success and provide adequate support” [18] (pp. 57–58). Teachers are pivotal in influencing academic success. Teachers, for example, need to believe in their students, as learners need at least one adult who supports them and serves as a role model. The argument that mutual bonds of belief by teacher and learner and teacher support lead to academic success is supported by findings in Mampane's [19] study about how inclusive education can facilitate educational resilience.

One study has shown that caregivers at a residential care institution tend to have low expectations of the youth, even lower than the youth have of themselves. Most youth, however, see the value of having higher educational expectations placed on them [20] (p. 1151). Downey [18] (p. 56) listed factors that contribute to positive academic outcomes: “(a) High academic standards, (b) incentives and rewards, (c) appropriate feedback and praise, (d) teachers' modelling of positive behaviour, and (e) offering opportunities for students to experience responsibility, success, and the development of social and problem-solving skills”. Teachers' academic expectations and their manner of relation and support for learners substantially impact student academic performance. The culture of learning provides the opportunity for learners to fulfil both academic needs and emotional needs through caring relationships. It has the potential, then, to address both behavioural problems and academic performance [21] (p. 339).

Downey [18] (p. 60) argues that learners who are at risk could succeed if they are involved in group activities involving cooperative learning and cross-age tutoring, because learners at risk would be able to work with others and build a supportive system within a learning context. In this context, learners who are at risk can develop life, interpersonal, and transferrable skills, including communication skills, stress reduction skills, and conflict management skills. When learners realise that all these skills will eventually benefit their future occupation, it bolsters their confidence and sense of hope for the future [18] (p. 61). All teachers working with learners at risk should be provided with support and training, especially as teachers who are highly effective significantly impact the academic achievement of learners at risk. But teachers must be competent to give support as well [11] (p. 17). Once a healthy teacher–learner relationship is established, the next step is re-engaging the learner in learning through an appropriate curriculum.

3.2. Finding an Appropriate Curriculum for Children and Youth at Risk

Curriculum is defined and designed by educational authorities. The way in which it is presented to learners by teachers influences the learners' experiences of inclusion and exclusion in the learning process and in institutions of learning.

A study by Hallam et al. [22] (p. 61) found that implementing what they saw as an ‘appropriate’ curriculum that meets the needs of learners, and using motivational assessment procedures that

encourage learning, led to learner re-engagement and reduced discipline issues. They found that this ‘adaptive’ curriculum improved attendance and reduced dropout rates. Decisions on the kind of curriculum to offer learners are frequently contested depending on the context and agendas of those involved in curriculum design [23] (p. 153). Burrow and Milburn [23] view curriculum in terms of the totality of children’s experiences at school [23] (p. 154), similar to the ‘Curriculum of Care’ implemented at the CYCC.

The ‘Curriculum of Care’ offered at the CYCC is influenced by the values of the Circle of Courage, a positive youth development philosophy. The Circle of Courage, developed by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern [24] (p. 131) based on a child-rearing philosophy of resilience [25] (p. 22), has formed a large part of the philosophy behind the CYCC and its ‘Curriculum of Care’. It is a resilience model which presents universal and essential human needs that transcend time and place. The human needs and transcendent values underpinning its philosophy—mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging—lend this model suitably into any context as its values are relevant across time and culture [25] (p. 22).

The Circle of Courage was first implemented at a special school in New Zealand, Mt Richmond Special School, where learners faced a plethora of learning needs from serious disabilities to expulsion from mainstream schools owing to bad behaviour. After teachers had been trained in the Response Ability Pathway (RAP), similar to the Circle of Courage, they reported that the school’s atmosphere resonated with more positivity and happiness, positively uplifting student behaviour. One teacher even reversed his view on his children’s ability to solve problems after this RAP training [26] (pp. 21–25).

There is a consilience of evidence with other positive youth development theories such as Self-Worth, Maslow’s Hierarchy, and Positive Peer Cultures, confirming that what is most needed for human beings to flourish coincides with the four values advocated by the Circle of Courage [27] (p. 13). Evidence suggests the following: Secure attachment develops autonomy and eventually altruism towards others; children who have someone who believes in them are more likely to overcome adversity; not meeting the need for belonging has both physical and mental health consequences (prominent among youth of colour); social exclusion disturbs intelligent thought, self-control, and empathy; and excluded groups do not perform well academically, display antisocial behaviours, and suffer further exclusion as a result [27] (p. 13).

The values underpinning the Circle of Courage at the CYCC have a major influence on the ‘Curriculum of Care’ implementation with learners: The void from the absence of these values is filled. In summary, this literature review suggests that to understand educational inclusion for learners experiencing EBD, positive teacher–learner relationship combined with an appropriate curriculum influences the capability and likelihood of children and youth at risk to re-engage in the learning process. This framework may help to understand the educational process needed by children and youth at risk, and thereby contribute towards supporting children and youth at risk’s cognitive and affective development within an educational context.

4. Methodology

This article draws on data collected from a doctoral study undertaken between 2016 and 2019 on the social and educational inclusion of children and youth at risk. Drawing from this data, this article focuses on the approaches to re-engage and include children and youth at risk in the learning process by considering an adapted curriculum called the ‘Curriculum of Care’ and its implementation by the teachers at a CYCC in the Western Cape of South Africa.

This particular child and youth care centre was selected because there are not many like it in the Western Cape and in South Africa. It also has a unique approach to education and uses an adaptive curriculum for children and youth at risk. Desktop research and the research participants confirmed that this particular kind of institution does not exist elsewhere in the country nor are its methods applied at other institutions, as the ‘Curriculum of Care’ was coined at this institution as reported by

the participants. This study used a qualitative case study research design to examine the curriculum offered at a CYCC and its implementation by teachers.

4.1. Participants

A variety of participants, including the centre manager, teachers, the education support services staff members, and an academic participated in this study. A brief overview of the participants is shown in the Table 1 below:

Table 1. Overview of the participants of the study.

Participant	Pseudonym	Sex	Subject Area(s)	Number of Years Teaching/Working at the Institution	Other Relevant Information
Centre Manager	Mark	Male	N/A	30 years	Mark has a background in educational psychology.
Teachers with Whom Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) Were Conducted					
Teacher 1	Melanie	Female	Afrikaans and Tourism	11 months	Melanie has previously taught in mainstream schools.
Teacher 2	Cindy	Female	Mathematics	7 months	Recent graduate/Newly Qualified Teacher.
Teacher 3	Lionel	Male	Motor Mechanics	30 years	Lionel studied Diesel and Motor Mechanics and worked at a motor dealership. He wanted to impart his knowledge to children and decided to study law.
Teacher 4	Adam	Male	Welding	17 years	Adam previously worked at a reformatory school for boys for 13 years.
Teacher 5	Gordon	Male	English and Life Orientation	17 years	Gordon previously worked at a reformatory school for boys.
Teachers Who Participated in the Focus Group					
Teacher 6	Lisa	Female	Afrikaans	27 years	Lisa retired during the study. She was the Head of the Education Department.
Teacher 7	Muhammed	Male	Natural Science and Economic and Management Sciences	22 years	Muhammed previously taught Motor Mechanics and retired during the study.
Teacher 8	Steve	Male	Mathematics and Social Sciences	40 years	Steve retired due to an illness. He previously taught engineering science and technical drawing.
Teacher 9	John	Male	Life Orientation	26 years	John used to be an educational psychologist.
Teacher 10	Rashied	Male	Afrikaans, Mathematics, Tourism	35 years	Rashied retired during the study and was replaced by Melanie.
The Education Support Services (ESS) Staff					
Educational Psychologist	Clinton	Male	N/A	10 years	Clinton is part of the school management team and runs the ESS department at the institution. He previously worked at a similar institution that was, however, closed down.
Occupational Therapist	Faye	Female	N/A	7 years	Faye conducts developmental and scholastic assessments, and grade placements.
Participants External to the Institution					
Academic	Carol	Female	N/A	N/A	Carol specialises in Inclusive Education.

The table above shows the pseudonyms used for the participants in order to protect their identity, the type of participant, their sex, the subject area in which they teach (only relevant to teachers), the number of years they've been teaching or working at the institution (if relevant), and any other

additional and relevant information about the participant. The number of years participants worked at the institution is counted up until 2017; the year when the interviews were conducted. Fourteen people participated in the study.

4.2. Data Collection

This article draws primarily from three semi-structured interviews with the centre manager, a focus group with five teachers, semi-structured interviews with five teachers (different to those in the focus group) from different subject areas (academic and technical), a semi-structured interview with an academic who specialises in inclusive education, a semi-structured interview with an educational psychologist, and a semi-structured interview with an occupational therapist. The interviews with the five teachers were supplemented with semi-structured classroom observations of teachers' (those who were interviewed) classes—one to three times, each depending on teacher availability and suitable times in their schedules. These classes included a Tourism class and an Afrikaans class (three observations in total as both subjects are taught by the same teacher), a Mathematics class (three observations), the Motor Mechanics workshop (three observations), the Welding workshop (two observations), and an English class (one observation). The few observations in some cases were due to fieldwork limitations such as absent or unavailable teachers. The findings will therefore only focus on the Tourism, Afrikaans, and the Mathematics classes as they were observed the most and illustrate how these teachers engage their learners in learning. It is also important to note that there is one teacher appointed per subject area due to the small number of learners at the institution. The scope of this study also does not focus on providing comparisons of teaching methods across subject areas.

4.3. Data Analysis

The interviews lasted between 20 and 120 min and were audio recorded. Most audio files were transcribed verbatim, and all transcripts and some audio files were uploaded onto a qualitative data analysis software called ATLAS.ti. Open coding was used to organise and group data. The concepts, themes, and sub-themes were analysed through an interpretive lens to understand the meanings and teaching approaches within the context of the CYCC [28] (p. 9). Excerpts from interviews illustrate the main points of the findings, with participant names anonymised to protect their privacy. This research is aligned with a critical theory perspective seeking to contribute towards a society, and education within, which is equal, equitable, and socially cohesive [28] (p. 51), especially for vulnerable children and youth at risk.

4.4. Ethical Permission

Ethical permission for this study has been obtained from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (Ethical Certificate Number EFEC 1–9/2016 and 20160810–3094) and was valid between 13 September 2016 and 12 September 2020. The ethical permission secured indicated that all interviewee participation was voluntary; all interviewees gave their informed consent and were free to withdraw or refuse to answer any questions they were not comfortable with. The ethical permission secured indicated that none of the data collected for this study would be made publicly available.

5. Findings

The findings below draw from the various interviews as well as observations of the teachers implementing the 'Curriculum of Care'. It is interpreted within the framework developed earlier, which considers how the institution re-engages children and youth in learning, and how they balance and navigate the imperative of care alongside the need for education. The findings show how the curriculum is implemented by teachers at the institution to re-engage children and youth in the learning process. The challenges of balancing care and education are highlighted, along with the implications of this dual role as teacher and caregiver.

5.1. The Values and Approaches of the ‘Curriculum of Care’ for Children and Youth at Risk

Before the ‘Curriculum of Care’ is described, it is important to understand its origin. The ‘Curriculum of Care’ is arguably a response to the rigid national curriculum that responds inadequately to the educational needs of those children and youth who experience emotional and behavioural barriers to learning. The CYCC does not suggest that the CAPS curriculum is not an important curriculum; CAPS is recognised, however, as not suitable for all learners, as evidenced at the CYCC. By adapting the national curriculum, the CYCC strives to promote educational inclusion. The centre manager notes why they developed their own curriculum at the CYCC:

“So, the Curriculum of Care is one that we coined many moons ago of almost bringing into check the pressures from the provincial education and district departments to say, you need to set targets around that. Kids need to be able to do this and all of that. We’re not saying that’s unimportant. But if mainstream has really failed these kids and we’re duplicating mainstream, then what is our purpose? We need to be seen to be doing more for the kids and their families”. (Mark, Centre Manager)

In Mark’s opinion, the ‘Curriculum of Care’ is an attempt to achieve more than the mainstream schools with children and youth at risk. This curriculum not only relates to children and youth in terms of their learning difficulties, but sees them as whole persons with various needs. In celebrating the learners as ‘whole people’ the curriculum aims to be holistic.

The ‘Curriculum of Care’ is framed around the idea of the holistic development of children and youth. This holistic development comprises academic, technical, and vocational training, extracurricular activities, and sports and arts as components of a broad curriculum experience. Furthermore, the CYCC provides psycho-social support for the children and youth who have experienced trauma or are in need of counselling. Children and youth are certainly not viewed rigidly as young people with knowledge deficiencies and skill gaps. The ‘Curriculum of Care’ responds acceptingly to the whole child. This holistic development is also supported by various other parts of the system: Teacher practices, the professionals at the CYCC, the school policies and culture, the parents and members of the community.

“Your education has to be holistic from the word ‘go’. You cannot look at any kind of purely academic, or technical, vocational, or didactic kind of practices. You’ve actually got to enrol the child into a kind of learning which includes all of that”. (Mark, Centre Manager)

Mark describes how the ‘Curriculum of Care’ is a curriculum of experiences with a combination of plans and experiences, where experiences make room for unplanned events and encompass the totality of learners’ experiences at school [23] (p. 154).

As part of the holistic and broad curriculum experience, the ‘Curriculum of Care’ is underpinned by the values of the Circle of Courage, a youth empowerment approach guided by four critical values: Belonging, generosity, mastery, and independence. These four principles are integral to all the institution’s developmental activities, including its curriculum. This high level of integration encourages holistic development of children and youth, allowing room for both emotional and intellectual development as illustrated in the following quote.

“So, the four ways is belonging; with belonging, the core area that goes with that is mastery. So, in a school, in a workshop—how to engage with the world outside; getting a skill set and then, independence. The idea is to connect to a community outside and then generosity—you need to be able to give. So being able to share—giving of yourself. So, it’s a care approach which is much more developmental than the very punitive and very disconnected way of working with kids. The idea is to work with kids. So, all these different things need to work together. So, your curriculum, your outreach, your intervention when things go wrong... It is very difficult to work in one way as a stand-alone. There’s got to be a greater level of integration”. (Mark, Centre Manager)

Mark makes a few important points about implementing this curriculum. Firstly, its implementers need to be selfless, as inferred by the statement “You need to give of yourself”. This selflessness includes giving time, effort, and energy even when it is, or appears to be, difficult to do so. Secondly, the Circle of Courage uses a non-punitive approach to correct and address difficult behaviour and to connect with the child to bring emotional healing. Alternative discipline approaches are therefore used which will not be discussed in this article. In summary, all the activities and programmes at the CYCC reinforce these four values.

5.2. *How Teachers Implement the ‘Curriculum of Care’*

There are a number of approaches teachers use to include children and youth at risk in the learning process. Some of these approaches, it can be argued, have more merit than others. The learning process is preceded by, and based upon, a positive relationship between the teacher and the learner to promote trust and cooperation during the teaching and learning process, especially necessary for children and youth at risk. Mark suggests that building rapport with children and youth at risk is a key aspect to gaining their trust and teaching them effectively as, in his view, this fosters cooperation and respect: “If there is not a relationship, your teaching role becomes very difficult” (Mark, Centre Manager).

In an education environment such as the CYCC, effective teaching cannot occur without an established attachment between the teacher and learner; otherwise, teaching children who experience emotional and behavioural barriers to learning is virtually impossible. Babedi [4] (p. 79) suggests that failure to address the needs of learners in the “physiological, moral, social and emotional domains” may aggravate emotional and behavioural problems. Other interventions may be necessary before these learners are able to engage in learning. Teachers may not be able to address these needs fully, which is why a holistic approach is beneficial and other professionals outside of, or in addition to, the teaching staff, are helpful, an approach found to be effective by Attar-Swartz [5]. Teachers are likely to address their learners’ affective needs by establishing themselves as caring teachers and by understanding their learners’ learning needs better. In the excerpt below, a teacher insists on the importance of building trust in relationships with their learners, not only for the sake of teaching and learning, but for the emotional healing and personal development which children and youth at risk require:

“As a teacher working here, I think I will describe my role more [than just] a teacher. A teacher is defined, from 8[am] till half past 3[pm]; my role is more than that because, if a learner now comes in and says he wants to talk, “Sir, I want to talk to you”, then I will say Ok, let’s go sit and talk... You see the approach in the role is different, where you must know now where does this learner come from; this learner comes from hardship. Hardship—he never had a father. His father abandoned him when he was you know, or his father is in prison ... And that makes me different than a teacher; that defines my role, completely different as a teacher”. (Philip, Teacher)

This teacher reflects the relational approach taken by many teachers at the CYCC. Philip sees himself as more than just a teacher. He sees himself as a confidant, a friend, and a father figure who is willing and open to talk to the children whenever they need to talk. He tries to make them feel as comfortable as possible by making time available to speak with them. Much of the work of the teacher (and staff working collaboratively) entails convincing the child that the teacher is trustworthy, and that the teacher genuinely wants to help, devoid of ulterior motives. Philip compares himself with mainstream teachers who go home at a certain time of the day: He goes beyond his duty by caring and helping children and youth wherever, and whenever, he can. This relationship is vital for teaching children and youth at risk.

Teaching methods or strategies can be described as those methods used to teach and to implement a curriculum or subject. Teachers at the CYCC do not subscribe to specific teaching methods or pedagogies, but use what they deem appropriate for their subject area and for the children and youths

at the institution. This following section describes the findings of the teaching methods observed in three subject areas.

From observations of the Afrikaans and Tourism classes, I observed that the two children listen attentively to the teacher who talks during most of the lesson. She does revision at the end of her lesson to check if the children have understood the concepts correctly. Only one child responds, while the other remains quiet. The lesson is essentially teacher-centred, as the teacher's voice is heard during most of the lesson; there is little input from the two children. The children's voices are sometimes (although only to a limited extent) included in the learning process by means of one basic pedagogic method: Questions and answers. The teacher asks the children to repeat something after her and to read what is written on the board. The children listen attentively as the teacher poses questions throughout the lesson. The children's interest in the lesson is apparent with the comment, "This is a *kwaai* [cool] story".

The children are generally open to learning, and the effectiveness of learning seems to depend on the ability and attitude of the teacher. It is feasible that the teacher remains at the centre of the classes because of her awareness that the children feel shy and embarrassed, her awareness of their knowledge gaps, and their lack of confidence to fully participate in her lessons. The teacher alleviates the pressure and discomfort the children may experience by speaking more and kindly asking questions she feels they are capable of answering easily, rather than challenging them. It was also apparent from my observations that the children enjoyed these lessons, but needed extensive time to process and understand the new knowledge acquired.

In the Mathematics classes, I observed how the teacher speaks to each child individually to ascertain what each does or does not understand. The teacher then calls two children to her desk where she guides them into a greater understanding of the lesson content. Each of the four children are at different stages in the textbook and work independently, at their individual pace. The teacher assists each one at his level. The teacher uses the board to explain how to round off numbers. One child commented, "Now that you must learn [*sic*] me how to do it. Now I understand!" [That is the way you should teach me how to do it. Now I (finally) understand!] This is a positive response from a child, from one who finds learning a new concept challenging. When the children are at the teacher's desk, they are eager and playful around her. They respect her and listen attentively to her explanations. While she is explaining the lesson to a child, she replies with slight impatience, "Don't think about the answer, but think about how you'll get to the answer". The child eventually finds a solution.

In one lesson, the bell rang indicating the end of the class, but the children decided to stay in her class and complete their work. This response showed an eagerness to learn. It is uplifting to observe children who have been stigmatised for their low academic achievement enjoying a Mathematics lesson. It seems that the learning atmosphere created by the teacher and the attitude of the teacher towards the children are motivating their interest and their learning. The teacher does not assume the children cannot or are not willing to learn; instead, she gently guides them at their pace, helping them at every turn. She also does not lower her expectations of the children, but retains her belief in their ability to learn difficult concepts, despite moments of impatience with their apparent slowness.

The Mathematics teacher confessed during her interview that she does not know exactly what she is doing in the teaching context and does not use a specific pedagogy. She admits she teaches informally so that the children are comfortable speaking to her and asking questions. It seems that this approach has made her a successful teacher even though she doubts whether or not she is teaching 'correctly' as there is no standard, criterion, or guide to measure herself against in terms of teaching children with emotional and behavioural learning barriers. This teacher, who recently graduated, did not feel adequately prepared to teach inclusively and was uncertain she was doing the right thing. This is unfortunately a challenge with teacher training programmes that claim to provide 'inclusive education' training in South Africa, as reported by the British Council [29] (p. 69): Teachers who practise in special schools do not feel as prepared as those who teach in full-service schools. Furthermore, inclusive education teacher training programmes across the country's universities are disparate, the

common teaching approach falls within a silo, and the content is often superficial [29] (pp. 52–55). These issues contextualise the Mathematics teacher's insecurities about her practice. Despite her feelings of inadequacy, she creatively and successfully re-engages her learners in learning Mathematics.

5.3. 'Curriculum of Care': Balancing Affective and Cognitive Development

Despite the 'Curriculum of Care' forming a learning environment for children and youth at risk to thrive, it does, however, face a few challenges. The attempt at implementing a holistic curriculum means a fully-packed schedule at the expense of a deep learning experience. Half the school day is spent by learners in the academic department, and the other half is spent in the technical department. This is in addition to the therapeutic aspects of their care and extracurricular activities. This challenges the structured academic progress of these children and youth. Despite the good intentions of the institution to provide a holistic curriculum through the 'Curriculum of Care', the lack of capacity of the institution to expend intensive efforts on academic acceleration occasionally disadvantages children and youth, especially when leaving the institution. One teacher expresses her view that the 'Curriculum of Care' does not challenge some learners enough:

"But here they don't really focus academically—the school as a whole ... it's not really a main factor in their lives, where I feel it should be, despite their background or whatever, where they come from, their missing part of their lives—the reason why they are here. We assume because they come from [marginalised] communities—we assume their strength is not really [academic], but I feel some of them do extremely well. Some people just underestimate [them]. Like one person said that they [children and youth] couldn't cope there so we shouldn't put the pressure on them—here in this care school, we should be more lenient on them. But I think, it shouldn't be like that, because they can really work. Some of them want that challenge. I often speak to them on a personal level. One learner told me, is the institution preparing us for the world out there? Like here we care for them we want to baby them, we want to give them what they are not getting out there. But then [it] reality strikes [them], are you preparing us for the world out there? You're not letting us be strong. Because some of them want the challenge and some of them want to grow. I think we should teach them to grow, prepare them for the world out there, but at the same time care for them". (Cindy, Teacher)

This excerpt highlights the challenge of not adequately stressing the importance of academic progress and development alongside care. This teacher and others have expressed the view that the emphasis on care (such as building self-esteem and a sense of belonging) deprioritises education, but education is key to the integration of the youth into employment and long-term study opportunities. In fact, some contend that emphasis on care places learners at an even further disadvantage in the future. The potential for joining a mainstream school after disengagement is less likely if learners are not up to speed academically, inadequately prepared, or not on par with peers in mainstream schools. According to this view, the challenge is to carefully balance care and education. Cindy proposed that 'preparing' rather than 'caring' should be emphasised, although she saw both as necessary. Evidence shows that, "higher teacher expectations, more rigorous academic content and engaging pedagogy" benefit learners more than lower expectations and an emphasis on caring [30] (p. 23). Teacher expectations and engaging pedagogy have been linked to academic achievement [9] (p. 23), [31] (p. 1175), [32] (pp. 43–44); thus, according to this research and to these arguments, a positive belief by teachers will help children overcome adversity. Tchombe [33] (pp. 126–129) builds on this argument and posits that social-affective factors will enhance learning, as these affect the process of learning. Thus, affective dimensions such as values, how teachers interact with learners, and how relationships complement the cognitive dimension of learning are valuable for inclusion and to improve learner achievement.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The article highlighted how an institution of care seeks to educationally include children and youth at risk in their teaching practices through an adapted curriculum called the ‘Curriculum of Care’. This article provided an analysis of an adapted curriculum for children and youth at risk by describing its origins, its holistic operations, and the values encompassing the Circle of Courage. The article then described how teachers implement this curriculum by first establishing positive relationships with their learners, and secondly, by sensitivity to learner needs, and thirdly, by adapting their practices accordingly. This article suggests that in order to include children and youth at risk in education, institutions dedicated to the care and education of children and youth at risk must provide an appropriate curriculum, holistic and balanced in its approach, to prepare learners adequately for life after the institution. It also suggests that teachers as implementers need to acknowledge the affective dimension of the curriculum to best address learners’ emotional and behavioural needs alongside the academic. This requires a positive relationship with the learner, which helps the learner form an attachment to the teacher, the subject area, and the process of learning. The implications of this approach are that teachers are caught in a tension of imbalance between care and academic achievement, or adequate preparation of youth for life, or further education, outside the institution. What these findings imply for practice is for teachers to make the time and effort inside and outside of the classroom to develop a positive relationship with their learners, and to partake in training courses such as in the Circle of Courage, that could build up their confidence, and improve their knowledge and skills of working with children and youth at risk. The practical implications of these findings also suggest that practitioners and policymakers may need to rethink the CAPS curriculum for learners with EBD, as the Circle of Courage is limited in its scope to support children and youth at risk in their academic development.

These findings concur with literature that emphasises the key role of teachers in determining how positive an educational experience is, feelings of inclusion, level of engagement with a subject area, the learning process, as well as learner achievement [16] (p. 93), [17] (p. 90). A teacher’s approach and teaching methods should complement the implementation of an appropriate curriculum. This affective approach also supports literature that speaks to educational resilience [18] (pp. 57–58), [21] (p. 339). This article provides insight into a unique institution in South Africa, its approach to curriculum adaption and implementation, and the shortcomings thereof.

This article shines a critical spotlight on how an adapted curriculum promotes the educational inclusion of children and youth at risk. It specifically argues that whilst such a ‘Curriculum of Care’ may promote the educational inclusion of children and youth at risk through its holistic approach, and address the EBD needs of children and youth at risk, it tends to ignore important aspects such as academic rigour and achievement. In critically examining the ‘Curriculum of Care’ used in the CYCC, this article highlights the tension of balancing care and education when educating children and youth at risk. A recommendation for further research is that this study could be followed up by a quantitative study that may complement the qualitative data in this or other similar studies.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, L.B. and Y.S.; methodology, L.B.; software, L.B.; validation, L.B.; formal analysis, L.B.; investigation, L.B.; resources, L.B. and Y.S.; data curation, L.B.; writing—original draft preparation, L.B.; writing—review, additions, and revisions Y.S.; supervision, Y.S.; project administration, L.B.; funding acquisition, Y.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This work was supported by the generous financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) which funds the South African Research Chair in Teacher Education. Opinions expressed in this paper and the conclusions arrived at, are those of the author, and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation. The NRF had no involvement in the production of this paper.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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