

Inclusive Education South Africa (IESA) Organisational Profile

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IESA is a registered Non Profit Organisation and Public Benefit Organisation:

NPO No: 020669-NPO PBO No: 930004485

Date Established: 1995

**Organisational Focus Areas**:

Education - including Early Childhood Development, Primary and High Schools, capacity building, skills development and sustainability

**Beneficiaries:**

Direct: ECD Practitioners, ECD Assistants, ECD Principals, School Educators, School Governing Bodies, School Management Teams, District and Provincial officials from the Department of Education, Parents, Caregivers and Professionals working with children, other NGO’s (approximately 6,000 per annum)

Indirect: Children in ECD centres and Learners at Primary and High schools (approximately 17,000 per annum)

**Understanding Inclusive Education**

Inclusive Education is a process of addressing and responding to students’ diversity by increasing their participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes related to the attendance, participation and achievement of all young children and learners, especially those who, due to different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized” (UNESCO, 2005).

Inclusive Education recognises the right of ALL children to feel welcomed into a supportive educational environment **in their own community**. It refers to the capacity of ordinary local schools and ECD Centres to respond to the needs of ALL learners, **including those requiring extra support** because of learning or physical disability, social disadvantage, cultural difference or other barriers to learning.

Inclusive Education is the provision of learning opportunities for ALL children irrespective of age, gender,culture, home, language,socio – economic situation, disability, ability and HIV-status. Clear guidelines and effective implementation strategies are required to support effective teaching and learning taking place as well as to develop a general environment for social participation. (Professor J. Volmink, WCED seminar, 2014)

**Organisational Overview**

Inclusive Education South Africa (IESA) is a registered NPO that has, since 1995, been committed to promoting and supporting positive models of Inclusive Education in schools, pre-schools and other centres of learning in South Africa.

To date, we are the only registered NPO in South Africa that has the implementation of Inclusive Education as its primary objective. Our vision is of a fully inclusive society that recognizes, respects and promotes diversity and the right of all people to participate to their fullest potential. We believe that this can best be achieved through **a fully inclusive education system** that strives to meet the needs of all children in regular neighbourhood schools.

Our mission is to challenge and change attitudes towards inclusion in education. We seek to ensure that families, educators and service-providers working with children experiencing barriers to learning have access to information & services and develop the skills necessary to ensure ALL learning needs are met

**Statement of Need**

**Barriers to learning are widespread in South Africa, and are classified as anything that stands in the way of a child being able to learn effectively. These can be broadly categorised as follows:**

* I**ntrinsic barriers**
* **Extrinsic barriers** (societal / environmental) such as children coming from extreme poverty, dysfunctional family units, violence and high unemployment, prevailing socio-economic circumstances that create barriers to learning for children,
* **Systemic barriers** caused by limitations in the education system itself such as overcrowding in classrooms, 2nd language teaching, inadequate facilities

It is a well established fact that intervention as early as possible in a child’s educational development, where a barrier to learning has been identified, significantly increases that child’s potential to overcome these barriers and to achieve their maximum learning potential at a later stage.

Although we celebrated a 75.8% Matric pass rate in 2014, statistics have shown nearly 70% of the leaners that started grade 1 in 2003 did not matriculate in 2014. It is clear that significantly high numbers of learners are experiencing barriers to learning that have not been identified or addressed early on.

Some of our educational challenges are:

* **Inadequate, poor quality early learning programmes**.
* **The inability of ordinary public school educators to support and teach the diverse learners in their classrooms**.
* **Poor parental involvement in education.**

The 2014 Annual National Assessment results show that the learning environment in which learners find themselves is not conducive to optimal learning. Research shows that the majority of learners in South African classrooms experience one or more barriers to learning during the course of their education. **Unless educators are equipped to identify and intervene to address these barriers, especially at an early age, educational outcomes will remain poor.**

There is an urgent need to identify and address barriers to learning in ECD Centres and primary and secondary schools in South Africa and to capacitate educators, principals, school governing bodies and district officials in order to strengthen support for learning in order to improve outcomes for children. The whole school community needs to be enabled to apply inclusion principles to achieve improved learner outcomes e.g.: lower dropout rates, access to FET, tertiary study and ultimately improved levels of employability.

The practice of Inclusive Education is based on the premise that all children should be included in the mainstream schooling system and should be able to access whatever support they might need in order to participate and learn, regardless of their barriers to learning.

This means that ECD facilities and schools should be equipped with the necessary resources and training to enable them to provide the support needed by different learners in the classroom. In reality, most educators lack the skills needed to respond to the diversity of learners in their classrooms. Support processes are largely unknown and not utilised or executed in ordinary public schools.

**IESA's core objectives**

IESA has designed a holistic approach to answering to the need for all children to receive quality education through support systems for learners, teachers, parents and capacitating the whole school to be inclusive of all learners despite their learning needs. We are the only NGO in South Africa that has as its core focus the effective implementation of Inclusive Education in ordinary public schools and ECD Centres.

1. Capacitating local neighbourhood schools and ECD Centres to better support all children to learn through teacher training programmes.

2. Providing information, training and support to parents, educators and others working with children with barriers to learning

3. Advocating for the rights and needs of children with barriers to learning

4. Facilitating better support for children in schools and early education centres

5. To ensure that families, educators and service-providers of children with experiencing barriers to learning have access to information, and are introduced to support networks and services that can facilitate inclusion into ordinary neighbourhood schools.

Inclusive Education recognises the right of all children to feel welcomed into a supportive educational environment in their own community. It refers to the capacity of ordinary local schools to respond to the needs of all learners, including those requiring extra support because of social disadvantage, cultural difference, learning or physical disability or other barriers to learning

Laetitia Brummer – Senior Facilitator, IESA

**Programmes and Services**

IESA often collaborates with government departments and district officials, funders, the whole school community, other NGO’s and services providers to deliver a best practice model of intervention.

Individual programme outcomes are also aligned to The National Development Plan: Improved quality of teaching and learning through development, supply and effective utilisation of teachers and The Department of Education’s Action Plan to 2014 towards the realization of Schooling 2025: Exposure to and support in implementing inclusive education policy.

**Inclusive Education Training & Development Programmes**

IESA’s training team offers skills training to teachers, ECD Centre staff, ECD Practitioners and Education Department support staff to create an environment that is conducive to learning for all children, provide an understanding of inclusive education, provide tools to identify barriers to learning and give practical strategies to manage diversity in classrooms to encourage positive educational outcomes for learners.

**Advocacy and Awareness Programme**

Through this ongoing programme, we strive to encourage discussion and consciousness around the concept of Inclusive Education via newsletters, meetings, exhibitions, print and broadcasting media. We are actively involved in advocating for the effective implementation of Inclusive Education policy at both national and provincial levels. Our awareness- raising goal is to ensure all stakeholders in education have an accurate understanding of inclusive education in SA and their role in its realisation.

**Strengthening the Learning Environment in Schools Programme**

The programme objective is to capacitate a school community to provide quality learning opportunities and a welcoming school environment for all learners. This is done over 15 months through teacher training, school management and governing body training as well as parental empowerment workshops to ensure a holistic whole school approach. This whole school development programme strives to strengthen inclusive practice at primary and high schools. The programme focuses on aligning ethos and culture, policies and practice, with sound inclusive principles, whilst taking into account the unique South African classroom environment.

**Early Childhood Development Programme**

The project aims at building capacity of ECD centres to provide children with stimulating and quality learning and a welcoming environment for all children to learn and grow in order to create a strong foundation for their entry into formal schooling. This is done by identifying and strengthening potentially inclusive ECD Centres through educator and principal training and support, better equipping them to accommodate all young children using the practical strategies and materials to teach all children regardless of their difference.

**Vulnerable Learner Support Services Program**

This core programme (the only one of its kind in South Africa) provides free information, support and advice, as well as training and workshops, to parents, educators and other professionals working with children who are experiencing barriers to learning. Included in this program is our resource centre, which houses a small library, resource materials and an information database of services.

**Ongoing Training and Consultation**

To meet the specific needs of teachers, early childhood development practitioners, district-based support teams of the education department, healthcare professionals, other NGO’s and service providers etc.

**Recent Impact**

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| Training over 2000 educators across on various aspects of Inclusive Education, including Multi-Level Teaching, Positive Behaviour Management, Bullying, Individual Support Plans, Identifying barriers to learning, active referrals, accessing support and community mapping |
| Providing information and support to 1500 parents and professionals working with children experiencing barriers to learning and facing educational exclusion |
| IESA has partnered with The Department of Social Development over the past 3 years to capacitate over 2000 ECD practitioners and 300 ECD assistants to identify children with barriers to learning and promote their development through various intervention strategies. |
| Strengthening support for learning across 19 schools in the Eastern Cape (2015-2017) |
| The expansion of our inclusive schools programme to the Northern Cape where we have partnered with the NCED Namaqua District in the development of a uniquely inclusive school in Kleinsee, as well as the strengthening of 4 of their newly appointed Full Service Schools. This includes upskilling educators to manage diversity and provide support for all learners. |
| Expansion of our Inclusive ECD programme work into KZN and the Eastern Cape |
| IESA has included submissions both orally and in writing to the Parliamentary Committee on Basic Education and to the Western Cape Standing Committee on Education. Submissions have been made to the Department of Social Development regarding inclusion at ECD level and on the amendments to the Children’s Act, the National ECD Policy et al. |
| Supporting Diversity in Education campaign in 20 schools across the Western Cape Province |
| Dept. of Education’s National Education Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) – IESA awarded contract to develop evaluation instruments and a handbook for the evaluation of the quality of schooling in special schools and inclusive schools in South Africa |

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

All our projects are closely monitored throughout their duration as well as post project completion. Evaluation forms a crucial component to our service delivery so that we can track the efficacy and impact of the work that we do and design any necessary interventions. We receive regular feedback on all training, casework, referrals, workshops, meetings and presentations from our project facilitators who collate all feedback. Monitoring of projects after completion date is also costed into projects to ensure their sustainability and smooth running, post implementation and involvement. Evaluations are conducted periodically throughout our projects, these can include:

**“ Inclusive Education is not something which has to happen in addition to education transformation in South Africa. It is the means through which education transformation will be achieved” White Paper 6**

Baseline assessments

Educator and parent questionnaires

Training evaluation forms and requests for feedback from beneficiaries, focus groups and mid project reviews

The feedback forums shape the strategy of project implementation.

**Sustainability**

IESA does not receive any state subsidies. Our resource mobilisation strategy involves accessing donor funding from charitable trusts and foundations, corporate social investment partners and individual donations to support, strengthen and extend the services that we offer. We believe in working collaboratively with partners to achieve goals and sustainable outcomes. IESA aims to ensure its sustainability through diversified income sources to ensure operational and projects costs are covered. IESA’s own fundraising initiatives also play an ongoing part of the organisation’s sustainability through memberships, MySchool Card, public training workshops as well as income generated through our own fundraising campaigns.

In order for NGO interventions to make a sustainable impact it is necessary to seek long-term change and to empower communities to change. IESA’s model of intervention is based on best practice gained from extensive experience and project fieldwork over the years. The organisation’s approach is to develop the skills and capacity of the educators and Practioners so that they are empowered to respond to the support needs of each child and learner going forward. The practical on-site support given to Practioners and teachers by IESA trainers helps to ensure implementation of what was covered during training. Another key to the success of our programmes is its holistic approach that addresses educational challenges not only at a school level but also at community level by engaging parents and the whole school community.

**Current funders**

Nussbaum Foundation, HCI Foundation, Anglo American’s Chairman’s Fund, Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, De Beers, Old Mutual Foundation, Vestas Empowerment Trust, Apex Hi Charitable Trust, Department of Social Development, Momentum Health, Webber Wentzel, NLDTF, Grand Parade Investments