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## Applying the principals of self-advocacy to enhance the education of Down syndrome learners

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The aim of the article is to provide Down syndrome (DS) learners with better educational opportunities by implementing the principals of self-advocacy, at school level. A literature review was done to obtain background information on the concepts of DS and the self-advocacy program. Qualitative research methods like art-based research combined with a narrative approach was implemented to get information from the participants because they could not always verbalize their feelings. From the findings it can be deduced that some of the principals underlying the self-advocacy movement can be used to enhance the educational opportunities of DS learners. If the principles of self-advocacy could be taught to all DS learners from an early age in schools over a longer period of time, these learners should benefit exponentially. DS learners could then be empowered to make some of their own choices from an early age, taking cognizance of the responsibilities that go with freedom of choice. The contribution this article makes is to apply the ideas of the self-advocacy movement to the education of learners with DS, as a possible way to give these learners a voice. The assumption is that if they can give input regarding their education, it will improve their opportunities to become valued human beings.

### Biography

Susette Brynard is currently a Lecturer in Education Management at the University Free State, South Africa. She was the Head in the Department of Natural Sciences, Bloemfontein College of Education. She has done her graduation from the University Free State. She received BEd and MEd degrees Cum Laude, and her PhD degree from the University Free State, South Africa. She received numerous awards during her studies and published papers on the education and development of Down syndrome learners.

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