

Chapter 1

WHAT IS AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM?

1. Context

Special needs education is a sector where the ravages of apartheid remain most evident. Here, the segregation of learners on the basis of race was extended to incorporate segregation on the basis of disability. Apartheid special schools were thus organised according to two segregating criteria, race and disability. In accordance with apartheid policy, schools that accommodated white disabled learners were extremely well-resourced, whilst the few schools for black disabled learners were systematically underresourced.

Learners with disability experienced great difficulty in gaining access to education. Very few special schools existed and they were limited to admitting learners according to rigidly applied categories. Learners who experienced learning difficulties because of severe poverty did not qualify for educational support. The categorisation system allowed only those learners with organic, medical disabilities access to support programmes.

The impact of this policy was that only 20% of learners with disabilities were accommodated in special schools. The World Health Organisation has calculated that between 2.2 % and 2.6 % of learners in any school system could be identified as disabled or impaired. An application of these percentages to the South African school population would project an upper limit of about 400,000 disabled or impaired learners. Current statistics show that only about 64,200 learners with disabilities or impairments are accommodated in about 380 special schools. This indicates that, potentially, 280,000 learners with disabilities or impairments are unaccounted for.

The results of decades of segregation and systematic underresourcing are apparent in the imbalance between special schools that catered exclusively for white disabled learners and those that catered exclusively for black disabled learners. It is, therefore, imperative that the continuing inequities in the special schools sector are eradicated and that the process through which the learner, educator and professional support services populations become representative of the South African population, is accelerated.

In this White Paper we outline how the policy will:

- Systematically move away from using segregation according to categories of disabilities as an organising principle for institutions.
- Base the provision of education for learners with disabilities on the intensity of support needed to overcome the debilitating impact of those disabilities.
- Place an emphasis on supporting learners through full-service schools that will have a bias towards particular disabilities depending on need and support.
- Direct how the initial facilities will be set up and how the additional resources required will be accessed.
- Indicate how learners with disability will be identified, assessed and incorporated into special, full-service and ordinary schools in an incremental manner.
- Introduce strategies and interventions that will assist educators to cope with a diversity of learning and teaching needs to ensure that transitory learning difficulties are ameliorated.
- Give direction for the Education Support System needed.
- Provide clear signals about how current special schools will serve identified disabled learners on site and also serve as a resource to educators and schools in the area.

The National Disability Strategy condemns the segregation of persons with disabilities from the mainstream of society. It emphasises the need for including persons with disabilities in the workplace, social environment, political sphere and sports arenas. The Ministry supports this direction and sees the establishment of an inclusive education and training system as a cornerstone of an integrated and caring society and an education and training system for the 21st century.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Our Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) founded our democratic state and common citizenship on the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms (Section 1a). These values summon all of us to take up the responsibility and challenge of building a humane and caring society, not for the few, but for all South Africans. In establishing an education and training system for the 21st century, we carry a special responsibility to implement these values and to ensure that all learners, with and without disabilities, pursue their learning potential to the fullest.
- 1.1.2 In building our education and training system, our Constitution provides a special challenge to us by requiring that we give effect to the fundamental right to basic education for all South Africans. In Section 29 (1), it commits us to this fundamental right, viz. 'that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education ...'
- 1.1.3 This fundamental right to basic education is further developed in the Constitution in Section 9 (2), which commits the state to the achievement of equality, and Sections 9 (3), (4) and (5), which commit the state to non-discrimination. These clauses are particularly important for protecting all learners, whether disabled or not.
- 1.1.4 The Government's obligation to provide basic education to all learners and its commitment to the central principles of the Constitution are also guided by the recognition that a new unified education and training system must be based on equity, on redressing past imbalances and on a progressive raising of the quality of education and training.
- 1.1.5 In line with its responsibility to develop policy to guide the transformation programme that is necessary to achieve these goals, the Ministry of Education has prepared this White Paper for the information of all our social partners and the wider public. This policy framework outlines the Ministry's commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in particular for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate the diversity of learning needs, and those learners who continue to be excluded from it.
- 1.1.6 The White Paper outlines how the education and training system must transform itself to contribute to establishing a caring and humane society, how it must change to accommodate the full range of learning needs and the mechanisms that should be put in place.

- 1.1.7 Particular attention shall be paid to achieving these objectives through a realistic and effective implementation process that moves responsibly towards the development of a system that accommodates and respects diversity. This process will require a phasing in of strategies that are directed at departmental, institutional, instructional and curriculum transformation. It will also require the vigorous participation of our social partners and our communities so that social exclusion and negative stereotyping can be eliminated.

1.2 The White Paper Process

- 1.2.1 This White Paper arises out of the need for changes to be made to the provision of education and training so that it is responsive and sensitive to the diverse range of learning needs. Education White Paper 1 on Education and Training (1995) acknowledged the importance of providing an effective response to the unsatisfactory educational experiences of learners with special educational needs, including those within the mainstream whose educational needs were inadequately accommodated.
- 1.2.2 In order to address this concern within its commitment to an integrated and comprehensive approach to all areas of education, the Ministry appointed a National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and a National Committee on Education Support Services in October 1996. A joint report on the findings of these two bodies was presented to the Minister in November 1997, and the final report was published in February 1998. The Ministry released a Consultative Paper (Department of Education. Consultative Paper No. 1 on Special Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. August 30, 1999) based to a large extent on the recommendations made to the Minister in this report.
- 1.2.3 The Consultative Paper advocates inclusion based on the principle that learning disabilities arise from the education system rather than the learner. Notwithstanding this approach, it made use of terms such as 'learners with special education needs' and 'learners with mild to severe learning difficulties' that are part of the language of the approach that sees learning disabilities as arising from within the learner. There should be consistency between the inclusive approach that is embraced, viz. that barriers to learning exist primarily within the learning system, and the language in use in our policy papers. Accordingly, the White Paper adopts the use of the terminology 'barriers to learning and development'. It will retain the internationally acceptable terms of 'disability' and 'impairments' when referring specifically to those learners whose barriers to learning and development are rooted in organic/medical causes.

1.2.4 A detailed report on the Department's response to submissions generated by the Consultative Paper can be found in Annexure A.

1.3 The Current Profile and Distribution of Special Schools and Learner Enrolment

1.3.1 Based on data from our Education Management Information System (EMIS)(Department of Education, Pretoria), the following is the distribution of special schools, learner enrolment and individual learner expenditure across all provincial departments of education.

Provinces	No of Special Schools	No of Learners in Special Schools	% of Learners in Special Schools	% of Total No of Special Schools in Province	Per Learner Expenditure
Eastern Cape	41	6 483	0.28%	10.79%	13 746
Free State	19	3 127	0.40%	5.00%	22 627
Gauteng	96	25 451	1.62%	25.26%	11 049
KwaZulu-Natal	58	7 631	0.28%	15.26%	21 254
Mpumalanga	15	2 692	0.29%	3.95%	17 839
Northern Cape	8	1 392	0.68%	2.11%	15 749
Northern Province	19	4 250	0.23%	5.00%	16 609
North West	42	4 364	0.46%	11.05%	13 015
Western Cape	82	9 213	0.96%	21.58%	28 635
Totals	380	64 603	0.52%	100.00%	17 838

1.3.2 From national census data on disabled persons we can further see the extent of disparities in the provision of education for learners with disabilities.

Census data: Distribution of disabled persons per category per province.

Prov	Sight	Hearing	Physical	Mental	Multiple	Not specified	Total	% per prov	% of population
<i>EC</i>	161898	68531	115717	41432	35997	38604	462179	17.39	1.14
<i>FS</i>	133614	33045	41960	13947	16461	18127	257154	9.68	0.63
<i>Gaut</i>	211769	59868	69936	24033	26030	63906	455542	17.14	1.12
<i>KZN</i>	183758	76034	129894	42646	24895	44863	502090	18.89	1.24
<i>MP</i>	98322	31895	41381	12211	9019	19085	211913	7.97	0.52
<i>NC</i>	18529	6083	9052	3791	2403	7137	46995	1.77	0.12
<i>NP</i>	113088	51416	60078	22578	16019	33690	296869	11.17	0.73
<i>NW</i>	129442	37571	54706	17768	16913	23134	279534	10.52	0.69
<i>WC</i>	40603	18965	35051	14146	6499	30174	145438	5.47	0.36
<i>TOT</i>	1091023	383408	557775	192552	154236	278720	2657714	100.00	6.55
<i>% per disability</i>	41.05	14.43	20.99	7.25	5.80	10.49	100.00		
<i>% per population</i>	2.69	0.94	1.37	0.47	0.38	0.69	6.55		

1.3.3. Analysis of the data reveals the extent of the disparities in provision for learners with disabilities, for example:

- The incidence of disabilities in the Eastern Cape constitutes 17.39% of the disabled population, yet the province has only 10.79% of the total number of special schools.
- Gauteng has 17.14% of the disabled population but has 25.26% of the schools.
- The Western Cape has 5.47% of the disabled population but has 21.58% of the schools.

1.3.4 This mismatch between needs and provision is a direct result of previous apartheid policies that allocated facilities on a racial basis. These policies also centralised provision within the Western Cape and Gauteng so that, today, the vast majority of learners attend residential special schools in a province other than their own since no facilities are available in their province of residence.