

1. In this White Paper we outline what an inclusive education and training system is, and how we intend to build it. It provides the framework for establishing such an education and training system, details a funding strategy, and lists the key steps to be taken in establishing an inclusive education and training system for South Africa.
2. In October 1996, the Ministry of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of 'special needs and support services' in education and training in South Africa.
3. A joint report on the findings of these two bodies was presented to the Minister of Education in November 1997, and the final report was published by the Department of Education in February 1998 for public comment and advice (Report of National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and National Committee on Education Support, Department of Education, 1997).
4. The central findings of the investigations included: (i) specialised education and support have predominantly been provided for a small percentage of learners with disabilities within 'special' schools and classes; (ii) where provided, specialised education and support were provided on a racial basis, with the best human, physical and material resources reserved for whites; (iii) most learners with disability have either fallen outside of the system or been 'mainstreamed by default'; (iv) the curriculum and education system as a whole have generally failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, resulting in massive numbers of drop-outs, push-outs, and failures; and, (v) while some attention has been given to the schooling phase with regard to 'special needs and support', the other levels or bands of education have been seriously neglected.
5. In the light of these findings, the joint report of the two bodies recommended that the education and training system should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society.
6. The principles guiding the broad strategies to achieve this vision included: acceptance of principles and values contained in the Constitution and White Papers on Education and Training; human rights and social justice for all learners; participation and social integration; equal access to a single, inclusive education system; access to the curriculum, equity and redress; community responsiveness; and cost-effectiveness.

7. The report also suggested that the key strategies required to achieve this vision included: (i) transforming all aspects of the education system, (ii) developing an integrated system of education, (iii) infusing 'special needs and support services' throughout the system, (iv) pursuing the holistic development of centres of learning to ensure a barrier-free physical environment and a supportive and inclusive psycho-social learning environment, developing a flexible curriculum to ensure access to all learners, (v) promoting the rights and responsibilities of parents, educators and learners, (vi) providing effective development programmes for educators, support personnel, and other relevant human resources, (vii) fostering holistic and integrated support provision through intersectoral collaboration, (viii) developing a community-based support system which includes a preventative and developmental approach to support, and (ix) developing funding strategies that ensure redress for historically disadvantaged communities and institutions, sustainability, and - ultimately - access to education for all learners.
8. Based on the recommendations in the joint report, 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). The submissions and feedback of social partners and the wider public were collated and have informed the writing of this White Paper.
9. In this White Paper, we outline the Ministry of Education'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 their learning needs. We recognise that our vision of an inclusive education and training system can only be developed over the long term and that the actions we will take in the short to medium term must provide us with models for later system-wide application. Our short-term to medium-term actions will also provide further clarity on the capital, material and human resource development, and consequently the funding requirements, of building an inclusive education and training system.
10. We also define inclusive education and training as:
 - Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.
 - Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.
 - Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases.
 - Broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal settings and structures.

- Changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners.
 - Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning.
11. The Ministry appreciates that a broad range of learning needs exists among the learner population at any point in time, and that where these are not met, learners may fail to learn effectively or be excluded from the learning system. In this regard, different learning needs arise from a range of factors including physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, differences in intellectual ability, particular life experiences or socio-economic deprivation.
12. Different learning needs may also arise because of:
- Negative attitudes to and stereotyping of difference.
 - An inflexible curriculum.
 - Inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching.
 - Inappropriate communication.
 - Inaccessible and unsafe built environments.
 - Inappropriate and inadequate support services.
 - Inadequate policies and legislation.
 - The non-recognition and non-involvement of parents.
 - Inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and educators.
13. In accepting this inclusive approach we acknowledge that the learners who are most vulnerable to barriers to learning and exclusion in South Africa are those who have historically been termed 'learners with special education needs,' i.e. learners with disabilities and impairments. Their increased vulnerability has arisen largely because of the historical nature and extent of the educational support provided.
14. Accordingly, the White Paper outlines the following as key strategies and levers for establishing our inclusive education and training system:
- The qualitative improvement of special schools for the learners that they serve and their phased conversion to resource centres that provide professional support to neighbourhood schools and are integrated into district-based support teams.
 - The overhauling of the process of identifying, assessing and enrolling learners in special schools, and its replacement by one that acknowledges the central role played by educators, lecturers and parents.

- The mobilisation of out-of-school disabled children and youth of school-going age.
 - Within mainstream schooling, the designation and phased conversion of approximately 500 out of 20,000 primary schools to full-service schools, beginning with the 30 school districts that are part of the national district development programme. Similarly, within adult basic, further and higher education, the designation and establishment of full-service educational institutions. These full-service education institutions will enable us to develop models for later system-wide application.
 - Within mainstream education, the general orientation and introduction of management, governing bodies and professional staff to the inclusion model, and the targeting of early identification of the range of diverse learning needs and intervention in the Foundation Phase.
 - The establishment of district-based support teams to provide a co-ordinated professional support service that draws on expertise in further and higher education and local communities, targeting special schools and specialised settings, designated full-service and other primary schools and educational institutions, beginning with the 30 districts that are part of the national district development programme.
 - The launch of a national advocacy and information programme in support of the inclusion model focusing on the roles, responsibilities and rights of all learning institutions, parents and local communities; highlighting the focal programmes; and reporting on their progress.
15. The development of an inclusive education and training system will take into account the incidence and the impact of the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases. For planning purposes the Ministry of Education will ascertain, in particular, the consequences for the curriculum, the expected enrolment and drop-out rates and the funding implications for both the short and long term. The Ministry will gather this information from an internally commissioned study as well as from other research being conducted in this area.