education

Department of Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

TRUE STORIES WE CAN LEARN FROM

National Department of Education
in collaboration with
Pilot Projects of
the Provincial Departments of Education of:
Eastern Cape
KwaZulu/Natal
North West Province

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INTRODUCTION

This book tells true stories about real people in South Africa who are dedicated to changing the way we educate our children – all children. The stories are about how the South African Department of Education is changing an unfair, unjust education system into a system that gives equal opportunities to everybody. The stories tell about how the Department of Education has changed the policies of education to make sure that all people can go to school and learn. They tell about how national, provincial and district education officials, schools, parents, learners, community organizations, other government departments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and universities have come together to begin the work of making sure that our schools and other education centers are places where all learners feel welcome and happy, and where all learners are taught and cared for.

All of the stories in this book have come from the people involved in the Department of Education's ***"Resource and Training Programme for Educator Development: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System"*** (Inclusive Education Pilot Project). The project was funded by the government of Denmark through Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA) and introduced into three provinces in South Africa during 2001 and 2002. The provinces are the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu/Natal and the North West Province. The stories have come from **all three provinces**, but have been **combined into one story** that tells about putting inclusive education into practice in South Africa.

You will find out in this book, that inclusive education is about changing the whole education system from the national, provincial and district offices of the Department of Education, to individual schools and their communities, and to individual teachers and learners. For this reason, the book is divided into chapters that tell stories about what happened at each level of the education system that was involved in the pilot project. The chapters are:

- What the National Department of Education did to introduce inclusive education
- How teachers, parents, education officials and other role players were prepared and supported to put inclusive education into practice
- What happened in classrooms
- What happened in schools
- How school-community partnerships were developed
- What kind of district support was given to schools
- How district, provincial and national education leaders and managers supported the project
- What we have learnt about putting inclusive education into practice

Each chapter focuses on issues that are important in putting inclusive education into practice successfully at each different level of the education system. Every chapter gives examples of the challenges faced by officials and teachers, how these challenges were addressed successfully, and the challenges we still have to face. In the last chapter of the book, the lessons learnt from the experiences of the pilot project are summarized. It is hoped that these lessons will be useful and inspirational guidelines for others to take on the challenge of building an inclusive education and training system in Southern Africa!

CHAPTER 1

WHAT THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DID TO INTRODUCE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Finding out about the old system

In October 1996, the Ministry of Education decided to find out about how the old Department of Education looked after the needs of learners who experienced learning difficulties and learners with disabilities. It set up two teams to do this work, and to make recommendations about how to improve all aspects of what were called ‘special needs and support services’ in education and training in South Africa. These teams were the **National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training**, and the **National Committee on Education Support Services**.

These two teams did a lot of research and presented a draft report to the Minister of Education in November 1997. The final report was published by the Department of Education in February 1998. The public was invited to read the report and to give feedback and advice to the Department of Education.

What the report told the Department of Education

The report told the Department of Education the following things:

- Under the apartheid education system education for learners who experienced learning difficulties and learners with disabilities was called special education. These learners were called ‘learners with special education needs’.

- Special education and support services had been provided mainly for a small number of ‘learners with special education needs’ in ‘special classes’ in ordinary schools or in ‘special schools’.

- Special education and support services were provided on a racial basis, with the best resources going to the white learners.

- Most learners with disabilities were either not in special schools, or had never been to a school. A few were in ordinary schools that could not properly meet their needs.

- In general, the curriculum and the education system had failed to respond to the many different needs of learners. This caused large numbers of learners to drop out of school, or be pushed-out of school, or to fail at school.

- While some attention had been given to special needs and support in schools, the other levels of education (for example, ECD) had been seriously neglected.

In response to this situation, the report made many recommendations that the Department of Education included in its new policy which is briefly discussed below.

So, what did the Department of Education do?

The Department of Education took this report and its recommendations seriously, and made a new policy in July 2001. The policy is called **Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System.** This policy gave guidelines for the new education system it was going to create in South Africa so that all learners would have equal opportunities to be educated.

In this policy, the Department of Education committed itself to:

> *"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."*

The guiding principles for the new education and training system focus on:

- Protecting the rights of all people and making sure that all learners are treated fairly.

- Making sure that all learners can participate fully and equally in education and society.

- Making sure that all learners have equal access to a single, inclusive education system.

- Making sure that all learners can understand and participate meaningfully with the teaching and learning processes in schools.

- Addressing and correcting inequalities of the past in education.

- Making sure that there is community involvement in changing the education system.

- Making sure that education is as affordable as possible for everyone.

The goal for the new education and training system is to:

Build an inclusive education and training system that provides good quality education for all learners over the next 20 years. To do this, the Department of Education planned to:

- Strengthen the weaknesses in the education system as it is now;
- Include more of the learners that are not receiving education into the education system, and provide more opportunities for learners to be educated;
- Help teachers and other education support services to meet the needs of all learners; and
- Make sure that all of these changes are happening successfully.

By doing this over the next 20 years, the Department of Education will be developing an inclusive education and training system that will identify and address barriers to learning, and recognise and accommodate the different learning needs of all learners.

So, what is an inclusive education and training system?

An inclusive education and training system is one that:

- Recognises and respects the differences among all learners, and builds on their similarities;
- Supports all learners, teachers and the system as a whole so that all learning needs can be met. This means developing ways of teaching that help teachers to meet the different learning needs of all learners.

- Focuses on overcoming and getting rid of the barriers in the system that prevent learners from succeeding.

What are 'barriers to learning'?

Barriers to learning are all of the things that interfere with teaching and learning. These can be at all levels of the system. They include:

- Specific kinds of physical, intellectual or sensory disabilities that may make learning difficult, especially if the right kind of support is not provided.

- The attitudes and teaching approaches of different educators.

- Parts of the school curriculum that make it difficult for learners to learn. This includes: what they learn about; the language they learn through; how classrooms are organised and managed; teaching methods; the pace of teaching; learning materials and equipment; and how learners are assessed.

- The physical, emotional and social conditions affecting learning in schools. This includes the quality of buildings and how schools are managed.

- The conditions in the learners' homes. These include relationships in the family, culture, levels of wealth or poverty and so on.

- Community and social conditions that support or hinder the teaching and learning process.

So, how will the Department of Education do all of this?

To do all of this in the next 20 years, the Department of Education has already begun to:

- Change policies and laws for all levels of education.

- Develop `inclusive' schools and other centres of learning so that all learners, including out-of-school learners, can have equal opportunities to be educated.

- Strengthen education support services, especially at the district level and in schools.

- Conduct national information campaigns to help ordinary schools and other centres of learning to understand inclusive education.

- Develop a new curriculum for schools and new ways of assessing learners.

- Develop and improve schools and other centres of learning.

- Develop new ways to make sure that good quality education is provided in all schools and centres of learning.

- Train and develop the skills of teachers in the 'ordinary' and 'special' schools.

- Develop programmes to identify and address learning problems and disabilities early in the Foundation Phase of schooling.

- Address the challenge of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

- Find ways to make sure that there is enough money to pay for all of these activities.

So what is this book about?

This book tells the story of how the Department of Education has already begun to do all of these things through the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in three provinces in South Africa. It tells about the successes and challenges of putting inclusive education into practice between 2001and 2002. It also shares the lessons learned from the experience of the pilot project, and it gives guidelines for the expansion of inclusive education to other provinces and countries.

CHAPTER 2

HOW TEACHERS, PARENTS, EDUCATION OFFICIALS AND OTHER ROLE PLAYERS WERE PREPARED AND SUPPORTED TO PUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION INTO PRACTICE

When new policies have to be implemented in schools, many people forget about how the educators at the schools feel. We all think that they are qualified teachers, they will be able to do whatever is expected of them! This is not always true, especially if teachers are expected to do new things that they have not been trained to do.

When the inclusive education project was introduced into the pilot project schools, some teachers felt nervous because they did not understand what inclusive education was all about. Some were confused because they did not understand what they were supposed to do. Others were worried because they had not been trained to teach children who were not able to participate in learning activities like the other children in their classes.

Many teachers thought that children with disabilities or learning difficulties had to be taught by teachers with special qualifications. Others did not understand that the learning problems of many children were caused by the way teachers taught them, or the school system, or even problems at home or in their communities.

Some teachers felt that inclusive education was an extra burden because they did not understand that it was an important part of outcomes based education (OBE). Because of all these misunderstandings, some teachers were resistant to inclusive education at first.

These are not unusual reactions to the introduction of a new policy. Experience in other countries around the world has taught us that teachers and all of the role players in the education system need to understand and support a new policy in order to put it into practice successfully. For this

reason, one of the biggest challenges of preparing teachers for inclusive education is to help them to understand what it is, and how to put it into practice in their own classrooms and schools. This is why it was important to train and develop teachers to prepare them properly for the Inclusive Education Pilot Project.

To do the training properly, training courses and learning materials were developed. These were developed by teams of people from universities and NGOs who consulted with teachers, disabled people's organizations (DPOs), other community organizations, education officials and other role players who could advise them about the barriers to learning and how to address them.

The materials were developed through interactive, consultative processes as the training and capacity building programmes progressed. This was to make sure that the teachers, parents, education officials and other role players could also give feedback on the materials. This helped to make sure that the materials really did focus on the real needs in classrooms, schools and school communities.

The rest of this chapter tells about how the teachers were trained and supported in their classrooms, the capacity building workshops, and how the materials were developed.

The capacity building and training

Capacity building workshops

Capacity building workshops were run for parents, education officials and other role players in various different venues in the districts, including schools. These workshops helped them to understand inclusive education. They also helped them to understand what their responsibilities are in supporting teachers and schools to put inclusive education into practice. The evaluators said that:

"The attitudes of parents and members of School Governing Bodies have changed through the capacity building that has occurred. They are now developing inclusive school policies, are aware that they need to make their schools more accessible, and are involved in poverty alleviation projects."

Teacher training and classroom support

All of the teachers involved in the pilot project attended a number of training courses. The teacher training courses were held at the teacher's own schools or at a venue within the district. In addition, members of the training teams also supported teachers in their classrooms between the training courses. This was to help the teachers to put into practice what they had learned on the training courses.

The evaluation of the project shows that the training programme worked well. Here is what one evaluator said:

"All the role players identified the training programmes and workshops as very important and positive aspects of the project. Positive effects that were raised include attitudinal change, new and improved levels of skill among teachers, information about the new policy, and the value of strategies such as collaborative working and 'getting help'."

However, it is important to understand that it was not the workshops alone that helped teachers to develop new knowledge, attitudes and skills. There are three other reasons for the success of the training. These are, the training and classroom support approach, the school-based approach, and the involvement of communities and universities in the training and support. These are explained below.

The training and classroom support approach

Teachers have learned from experience in the past, that training workshops alone do not bring about real change in classrooms and schools. Teachers also need support in their classrooms after they have been trained so that they can practise what they have learned in workshops. For this reason, the pilot project used a combination of training workshops and classroom support activities for teachers.

The classroom support activities involved action research. This is when a researcher works with a teacher in their classroom to see how they are teaching. In this way, the researcher helps the teachers to think about (or reflect on) how they can improve the way they are teaching and doing things. The researcher also helps teachers to develop the skills to reflect on their own teaching so that they become independent reflective teachers. (Action research is explained in more detail in Chapter 3 of this book).

The combination of training at schools, and action research support in the classrooms was one of the main strengths of the project. This is what an evaluator said about this approach to supporting teachers:

> *"The classroom-based support and action research processes provide the basis for an excellent model of participatory, interactive facilitation and learning processes"*

The school-based approach

A school-based approach means that the training and support activities happen at the school as part of the normal staff development programme. In this project, the school-based approach was very successful. This is because it avoided the uncoordinated 'overload' of in-service courses that many teachers complain about. It also promoted staff development programmes in schools. This is what an evaluator said about school-based training and support:

"The school-based approach to training, where the workshops were integrated into the staff development programmes in the school, was successful. When teachers are pulled out of their schools for training, it doesn't seem to be as successful. School-based training has been extremely effective because it allows for issues around inclusive education and developing inclusive practices to be integrated into general initiatives around staff development within schools."

Participation by universities and community organizations

A community partnership approach was also used in the pilot project. This is in line with other developments in South Africa, and in other countries. It involved bringing together universities, community organizations and the Department of Education in groups called consortiums. The consortiums played a very important role in the project. They developed the training and capacity building programmes and materials for teachers, education officials and other role players. They also supported teachers through ongoing action research in the schools and the district as a whole. This is what an evaluator said about this approach:

"All role players said that the consortium (universities and other organizations) played a very positive role in the project. This included the members involved in the training as well as the researchers and the ongoing support that they were able to offer to the teachers and schools."

Weaknesses in the training programme

Although there were many positive comments about the training programme, there were some weaknesses as well. One weakness was that there was too much new information to cover in the time available for the training courses.

Another was that because there was not enough time, it was sometimes difficult to make sure that the teachers understood everything properly. One evaluator said this about the training courses:

> "*There is a tendency to underestimate the amount of time required to ensure adequate engagement with critical concepts and content. This is a potentially serious problem as conceptual understanding forms the basis for changing attitudes and practices. However, if the classroom support and the school-based support programmes are put into practice properly, this weakness could be addressed."*

The Materials

What the materials aimed to do

The consortiums developed a number of sets of materials. One set was for training the teachers, and the other sets were to prepare parents, community members, district education officials and other role players to support teachers. (These are the people in the School Governing Bodies (SGBs), the Institutional-Level Support Teams (ISTs), and the District Support Teams (DSTs). Each of these teams and bodies is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this book).

The materials for the teacher training were aimed at helping teachers to understand what inclusive education is all about. This meant that the materials had to:

- Help teachers to understand the many different reasons why people have learning difficulties;

- Motivate them to want to change their attitudes towards people experiencing barriers to learning; and

- Help them to feel comfortable and confident about putting inclusive education into practice in their classrooms and schools.

The materials for the parents and district education managers and support teams were also aimed at helping them to understand what inclusive education is all about. However, they were also aimed at helping them to understand how they could support schools and teachers to put inclusive education into practice in schools.

The next section in this chapter tells about how the materials developers tried to develop materials to help the teachers, parents, managers and support teams in these ways.

Developing the materials

Because inclusive education was new to the teachers and the district education managers and support teams, it was important to make sure that the learning materials were easy to understand, interesting and meaningful for them. It was also important that the materials represented the real experiences of people who have experienced barriers to learning and discrimination because of their different learning styles and needs. The materials also had to provide information about inclusive education and guidelines for how to put it into practice.

For these reasons, the materials development teams consulted many people to help them to develop the materials. For example, one of the materials development teams involved DPOs and parents' organizations in developing materials about `Welcoming learners with disabilities' and about `Parents as Partners.' The materials development team said that:

> *"The personal experiences, suggestions and guidelines from the disabled people's organization and from the parents were very helpful.*

They helped us to develop materials that were based on real experiences of people that had suffered unkind treatment from others who did not understand their difficulties."

Examples of the suggestions these organizations made are included in Chapter 5 of this book about `Parents as partners' in inclusive education.

In addition, the materials development teams had to make sure that the materials for teachers, education officials and other role players fulfilled the following requirements. That the materials:

- Are in line with the inclusive education policy (White Paper 6)
- Are in line with OBE
- Include a balance of inclusive education theory and practice
- Relate to the real experiences of teachers, schools and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as parents, community members and district management and support teams
- Help to change beliefs about and attitudes towards learners who experience learning problems and disabilities
- Identify barriers to teaching and learning in the classroom, school, education system, and in communities
- Provide practical methods, strategies and approaches to address these barriers
- Provide support to teachers

- Develop the capacity of parents, community members, education officials and other role players to support teachers

- Are easy to read and understand

All of the materials focussed on developing an understanding of what inclusive education is, and how to put it into practice. This means that the materials explained theories about what causes barriers to learning and how to overcome these barriers. They also included practical activities for the teachers to learn how to change their attitudes and beliefs about different kinds of learners, and how to improve the way they teach and treat different kinds of learners.

The materials also explained how inclusive education and OBE support each other. Many teachers, parents and education management and support team members did not, at first, understand that inclusive education is an important part of OBE. They thought that they were two different approaches. For this reason, the materials were developed to show that OBE is an inclusive approach to education that aims to give all learners equal opportunities to succeed.

An outcomes based teacher pays careful attention to including all learners in all activities, understanding their different needs, and facilitating every learner's learning according to their needs. An outcomes based teacher is concerned with the progress of every learner, and does not neglect any learner. This is exactly what an inclusive education teacher does as well.

In an inclusive education system, it is important that the materials are also inclusive. This means that they must be easy to read and understand. Because the materials for the pilot project were written in English, it was important to make sure that they were easy to understand for non-English speakers. This is because the majority of teachers and other role players

(including parents and care-givers) are not English first language speakers. For this reason, one of the aims of the project was to make sure that the materials were written in the kind of English that is easy for everybody to understand.

What the assessors said about the materials

The strengths of the materials

The material assessors for this project found that the materials for the training courses and capacity building programmes were very good in many ways. They met most of the needs of the teachers, parents, education officials and other role players. They also played an important part in helping them to understand inclusive education.

Below are some of the comments the assessors made in their reports about different aspects of the materials.

> *“The teacher training materials include good examples of learning materials. These materials are also good examples to guide further materials development work.”*

Here are some examples of the good materials they identified:

Example One:

> *”Unit 4 stands out as the most coherent, integrated, interactive and accessible Unit in the series. It also adopts a more appropriate approach to developing real understanding in that it incorporates a practical, hands-on, step-by-step approach to engaging with all of the content. It also includes good examples of how icebreakers can be properly integrated with and related to the content in meaningful ways. Similarly, the core concepts are approached more meaningfully than in*

other Units, and are supported by means of a glossary that explains their meanings. The unit also demonstrates an OBE approach and good practice without using OBE jargon unnecessarily."

Example Two:

"All three modules include combinations of a range of engaging higher-order activities that provide opportunities to develop real conceptual understanding. These include, among others: group and individual activities such as responding to controversial statements; reading and discussing information and giving opinions; brainstorming; completing tables; categorizing; reflecting on models and case studies; making comparisons; forming opinions; drawing conclusions; summarizing; consolidating; critical self-reflection and applying new understandings to relevant practical situations."

These examples emphasize that it is important to build good teaching methods into the materials. This is because good teaching methods meet the needs of the teachers. They also take them from what they understand and know already, to new levels of understanding and knowledge.

One assessor made the following comments about the teaching methods in the materials:

"The teacher training materials take the challenge of capacity building seriously. They provide facilitators and educators with essential and ongoing opportunities to grapple with the meaning and implications of new policies for inclusive educational practice. They allow for the development of personal and collective understandings of how to integrate and implement inclusive education into everyday learning site life."

"The materials and associated training and school-based support and action research processes provide the basis for an excellent model of

participatory, interactive facilitation and learning processes that could be applied successfully to the implementation of all other policies impacting on learning sites."

Another assessor made these comments about the materials for parents, education officials and other role players:

"The programmes and materials reveal some creative approaches to facilitating capacity building of the role players concerned."

"There is a strong focus on building the capacity of teachers and District Officials in developing District Support Teams and Institutional-level Support Teams."

"The materials contain very good capacity building techniques that engender a spirit of community cooperation."

The materials do include a balance of theory and practice. This means that the materials explain theories about what causes barriers to learning and how to overcome these barriers. They also include practical activities that help to change people's attitudes and beliefs about different kinds of learners, and how to improve the way we teach and treat different kinds of learners. As one assessor said:

"A central issue in the development of these programmes and materials is the extent to which, and the way in which, theory and practice are linked. In this module, both aspects are taken seriously, creating a 'hybrid approach'."

The materials are generally `in line' with OBE. This is what the assessors said about some sections of the materials:

"Some of the units are well located within an OBE framework and the methods and approaches used make relevant links to inclusive education."

"This programme and material reflects, in fact it models, the OBE approach in various ways. It is learner-centred; it is inclusive in its approach (drawing from the educators' own experiences); it supports an active approach to learning, and provides a variety of activities to keep learners engaged; it does this in an interactive and participatory way, building in reflective practice throughout, and providing opportunities for problem-solving through activities such as case studies."

In general, the materials are easy to read and understand. All of the assessors felt that:

"There are some very good examples of a coherent, integrated, interactive and accessible approach in the teacher training materials."

In terms of the parent and education management and support team materials, the assessor said:

"The language used in the materials is relatively simple and is therefore likely to be accessible to the role players concerned."

All of the assessors agreed that the materials provide important support for teachers, parents, education officials and other role players in the following ways:

"The materials provide vital support for teachers and those who support them, who under normal circumstances, would not have access to the policy documents and implementation guidelines provided in the materials. Similarly, the range of supplementary materials, practical hints, suggestions, illustrative examples, strategies and information

about local support infrastructure and personnel included in the materials, provide educators and schools with invaluable resource materials."

"The materials include important information on the principles and the framework of outlined in the Inclusive Education White Paper 6."

"A very useful step-by-step guide on how to develop inclusive school policies is provided for School Governing Bodies."

All of the assessors also agreed that the materials did relate to the experiences of school communities, teachers and learners in important ways. Here are examples of what they said:

"The content relates to some of the key issues experienced in school communities."

"There is an attempt to shift the attitudes of the teachers and parents about barriers to learning especially with regard to disability."

"There is a strong commitment to building school communities."

"In general, the materials include content that is both relevant for and appropriate to beginning to address the challenges of transforming schools into inclusive organizations."

"The materials are helpful as practical reference points for educators. When they need to know what to do to address a particular barrier to learning in their classroom they can refer to the materials."

"The materials include examples and case studies that are relevant to the realities of the local context. The teaching strategies used in this programme are creative and practical. In particular, the use of drama, demonstrations and questioning are particularly successful."

"The materials are relevant to the needs of the target audience. This is revealed particularly through the approach used in the workshops themselves, where the educators' own background of knowledge and experiences are drawn upon, and through connections directly made with the expressed needs of the educators concerned. The case studies that are used also make these connections."

Here is one example of a case study from the learning materials. All of the assessors agreed that this case study provided helpful practical support for the teachers. It is the story of a teacher who didn't understand what inclusive education was about. At first, she didn't know how to respond to all of the different learning needs of the learners in her class, especially three new learners who were admitted to her class. But after she attended inclusive education training courses, she began to understand their needs better. She began to discover how to meet the needs of all of her learners successfully. She also learned how to get the other teachers, some parents and some other organizations to become involved in supporting her.

This is quite a long story, but it is an important story because it shows how she overcame so many of the challenges that teachers face in inclusive classrooms and schools.

My first experience of inclusive education!

On the first day of the new term I was called to the principal's office after school. I was worried that I had done something wrong. But I was relieved to find out that she wanted to tell me that three new children were coming to my class on Monday. When she told me about the children I began to worry again! One child could not see properly, she was partially sighted. One child could not hear, she was deaf, and the other child was in a wheelchair!

I went home and worried about these children all weekend. My classroom was already overcrowded. Where could I put a child in a wheelchair, and where would I put the other two children? I drew little plans of my classroom. I worked out that if I moved the desks closer together on the one side of the classroom, I could fit the wheelchair behind the cupboard. If I turned the wheelchair at an angle, the `wheelchair child' would be able to see the board. I didn't worry much about the partially sighted child or the deaf child. I thought I would just put them both in front of the classroom so that they could see the board.

As I moved the desks in my class on Monday morning, I told myself over and over again `Just act natural'. I put my lesson preparations down on my desk and smiled to myself. I knew I could do it. I had prepared a wonderful language lesson for English – a sense poem. I had brought a bag of oranges to school and the learners in my class would each get one to see, touch, taste and smell. They would write a poem about it. I had my own poem about an apple ready as an example:

Small, round and red.
Smooth and cool.
Crunchy and sweet.
Fresh!

The bell rang and my class came in and sat down. Where were the three new children?

There was a knock at the door and there stood the principal and five taxi drivers. Two of the drivers were carrying a small boy with withered legs. Two other drivers were carrying a large, ugly wheelchair. The last driver was leading two little girls. One of the girls had a white stick! I had forgotten that my class was on the second floor and the children found it difficult get up the stairs! The boy was placed in his wheelchair and the two girls were gently pushed into the classroom. Then the principal and the taxi drivers left.

There was total silence in the class as I introduced the three newcomers. No one said a word. It seemed to take hours to get the two girls settled in the front of the class and the boy in his corner behind the cupboard. I felt so embarrassed!

Suddenly, one of the other children began to laugh. The next minute, the whole class was laughing and giggling. I screamed and shouted like a mad woman. “What do you think you are doing? How dare you? How do you think these children must feel?”

I was feeling very frustrated, but I decided to start teaching the lesson I had so carefully prepared. I told the class to take out their language books and put them on their desks. While they did this, I started to hand out the oranges. All of a sudden one of the children whispered to me: “Mam, that boy has got no desk and that girl can’t find her book, and the other girl doesn’t know what to do.”

I asked Thabo to finish handing out the oranges. I got Susan to help the blind girl and the deaf girl to find their books while I left the classroom to go and find a piece of wood to put on the wheelchair to make a desk. Finally, I found one and put it on the wheelchair as a desk.

The lesson progressed without much more difficulty, except for three times when the class giggled. The first time was when I asked them to look at the orange and write down what they saw and the class knew the blind girl couldn't see anything! The second time was when the blind girl's orange rolled off her desk onto the floor and everybody just looked at it. The third time was when the deaf girl made a terrible and strange sound and just sat in her chair sucking the orange.

Then it was time for the children to draw pictures for their poems. The blind girl couldn't write a poem or draw a picture. She just sat at her desk. I pretended not to see her. The deaf girl started walking around the classroom, moving her hands and flapping her arms. I pretended not to see her too.

The bell rang for break! Thank Goodness!

I decided it would be best for the crippled boy to stay in class because I didn't know how to get him up and down the stairs. I asked the rest of the class: "Who would like to stay in class with the new boy?" Silence! Nobody wanted to. "Who would like to help the new girls to the play ground"? Silence! Nobody wanted to. So, I decided to keep all three children in the classroom for break. I took their lunch out and gave it to them and went to the staff room.

I didn't know what to do. I thought: "Maybe I could pretend to be sick and go home for the rest of the week!" Just the thought of those three children in my class for the rest of the year made me want to run away!

Three months later - inclusive education in my classroom!

It has been three months since the new children came into my class. I have attended inclusive education training courses and action research facilitators have supported me in my classroom. Things are much better now. The children are working eagerly and there is a happy atmosphere in my

classroom.

Thabo, the child who uses the wheelchair is sitting near the front on the classroom with three other learners. He sits at a table that has been raised on blocks of wood so that his wheelchair fits nicely under it. Even though his desk is a bit higher than the other children's in the group, he is a happy child and participates well during cooperative learning.

Thabo and I have worked out `toilet times.' A physiotherapist came and showed me how to lift him on and off the toilet. I wait for him outside until he has finished doing what has to be done. My class was moved to the ground floor and Thabo has many friends who want to push his wheelchair. Some of the children even fight over whose turn it is to push him! Some parents from the community have even built little ramps so that the wheelchair can come in and out of the classroom easily.

Constance, the little girl who is deaf, has an interpreter now. She is doing well, and our whole class is learning Sign Language. The principal has also made it compulsory for Sign language to be taught to all learners and teachers in all of the grades. We are getting quite good at communicating, and the rewards of being able to communicate with Constance motivate us to carry on.

A few times we have invited deaf adults to visit our classes and we have even watched Signed TV programmes. During a poetry lesson the other day, Constance taught us all a poem about a mouse in Sign Language. I have found that Constance has some difficulty with reading and writing, but I am studying a course that is helping me to understand her difficulties better. Sometimes she gets frustrated, but life improves every week for all of us.

Susan, the girl I asked to help the new learners on their first morning, is spending a lot of time with Constance and they have become good friends. She often tells me about Constance's needs when I do not notice them. I have also started to use a lot of visual aids. These help Constance, but also help

the other learners in their understanding of new subject matter.

Sibongile, the girl who is partially sighted is also coping fairly well. We redecorated our classroom two months ago to make it `blind friendly.' There is tape on the floor that leads her to her desk and Sibongile knows her way around the classroom and the school now. She uses her white stick so well! If you could see her walking around during break, you wouldn't believe that she can't see very well!

Sibongile uses Braille so that she can read and write. This is sometimes a bit hard for me because I have to know what I am teaching a few weeks in advance. The South African Blind Workers Organization has been a great help to me and to Sibongile. They put all written material into Braille. Our class organised a fundraiser in the community and we made enough money to get Sibongile her own Braille machine. I have learned to read Braille with my eyes by studying a book I got from the Blind Workers' Organization. I have also developed a way of using as many multi-sensory teaching aids as possible. These help Sibongile, but have also improved the content and presentation of my lessons. I am happy to say that Sibongile is doing well, especially in Maths!

I still experience problems and sometimes feel that I cannot cope. But I have a good support group at school. Teachers from other grades are eager to help me because they know they are going to have to learn how to cope with my whole class in the years to come.

When I think back to how I felt three months ago, I can't believe I am the same person. It is amazing what you can do if you have the right materials, the right training and knowledge, and good support from your colleagues and other organizations!

Weaknesses in the materials

Although the materials are good in many ways, the assessors also found that some of the materials need to be improved. Here are some of the comments they made about the teacher training materials.

The materials are not always easy to read and understand:

> *"There are a number of things that may make the teacher training materials difficult to read and understand. These are:*
>
> - *The language used in the materials is often very `literate', sophisticated and at times academic.*
>
> - *The materials are jargon-heavy. This includes, for example, complex and abstract policy, OBE and inclusive education terminology; medical terminology relating to HIV/AIDS and to the various forms of disability.*
>
> - *There is often too much information. There is a risk of information overload.*
>
> - *The dominant `voices' in the materials are those of English first language or highly competent additional language, well-educated authors."*
>
> *"There is a need to further develop these materials into 'easy read' language. This is necessary to ensure that they are easy to read and understand for all educators. This is very important because the materials are written in English, but the majority of educators and other role players (including parents and care-givers) are not English first language speakers. Developing `easy read' versions of the materials will mean involving people who know what the needs are in this regard, as well as experts who have materials development skills."*

The materials reveal a serious attempt to provide a theoretical background together with practical guidelines to the challenges of inclusive education.

However, to find a meaningful and easy- to-understand way of dealing with theory and practice at the same time is not easy! Although this approach is a step in the right direction, it can also be unnecessarily complex and confusing. We need to find simpler ways to make sure that the relationship between theory and practice is usefully and meaningfully developed. One of the assessors said the following about this challenge:

> *"The authors do not seem to be sure about whether their materials are intended to be theoretical or practical in their orientation. The result is a `hybrid approach' that incorporates strong emphases on both theory and practice. This is a common feature of texts aimed at too wide an audience. Unfortunately, this makes the materials relatively inaccessible to the primary target audience of educators in disadvantaged contexts. It would be far more useful to significantly reduce the heavy academic/theoretical emphasis in the materials, and focus on a strong practical orientation."*

In addition, not all of the theoretical sections in the materials are satisfactory. Another assessor points out that in one set of materials:

> *"There is a need to improve the section on the theory of teaching and learning,"* and in another set of materials, *" theory underlying learning and teaching could be included."*

Here are comments they made about the parent and education management and support team materials:

> *"Not enough attention is given to building the capacity of the parent component of the SGBs."*

> *"There is not enough evidence of capacity building strategies that will help the role players to overcome intrinsic problems that exist within schools."*

"There is not enough content aimed at developing critical thinking or planning the implementation and management of inclusive education."

"There is a lack of visual content to assist the understanding of various concepts related to barriers of learning."

"There is not enough content that focuses on shifting the attitudes of officials, educators and parents with regards to barriers to learning."

"The terminology used to refer to disabilities and disabled people is often `old style' and potentially insulting to people with disabilities."

"The learner component of the school community has been excluded from the awareness-raising and capacity building strategies."

Challenges we still have to face

Although there are a number of challenges related to training, capacity building and materials, three main challenges need to be addressed. These are:

- There is a need to revise the training programmes so that they do not try to cover too much information in too little time. This will help other teachers in other schools and provinces to understand the most important things about inclusive education better.

- There is a need to address the weaknesses identified in the materials before expanding the training programme to other schools and provinces. In particular, the challenges related to making sure that the materials are easy to read and understand are important. One of the areas needing attention is the need to reflect the `voice' and perspectives of the teachers and the community much more than the voice and perspectives of the well-educated materials writers. Although

sincere attempts have been made to do this, it is important to find a way to reflect the language and the experiences of the teachers and communities more strongly in the materials.

Another challenge in this regard relates to the fact that all of the materials have been developed in English. For the materials to be truly inclusive as well as easy-to-read and understand, translations into the other official languages, or bi-lingual or multi-lingual versions of the materials, should be considered very seriously.

- Much more attention needs to be given to developing programmes and materials that include parents meaningfully in the life of schools.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT HAPPENED IN CLASSROOMS

In Chapter 2, you read about the materials that were developed and the training teachers received to help them to understand inclusive education. You also read about the action research classroom support they received to help them to put inclusive education into practice in their classrooms.

In this chapter, you will read about how the training, the materials and the classroom support actually helped the teachers to put inclusive education into practice in the classrooms in many different ways. The first thing that many teachers put into practice in their classrooms was an action research approach to their teaching.

Putting action research into practice

Through the classroom support that teachers received, they learnt to put into practice what they had learnt about action research on the training courses.

Action research is an approach that teachers can use to improve their own teaching. It means that they do the following things when they teach:

- they plan what they want to teach in a lesson and how they want to do it;

- they teach in the way that they have planned to;

- then they think about or reflect on what they did, how they did it, and how well it worked for the learners;

- from their thinking and reflection, they identify areas of their teaching that need improvement or changes;

- then they set goals to bring about changes in their teaching;

- then they plan to achieve these goals;

- after that, in their next lesson, they try to change what they think needs to be changed to achieve their goals;

- then, while they are teaching in new ways, they observe the effects of their new approach on the learners. This helps them to see if their new approach is successful or not. This observation can be done by the teacher, by other teachers, by the learners, or by an outside facilitator.

That completes the cycle, and begins the next one: first reflection on the last lesson they have taught, then planning to improve the next lesson, then teaching the lesson in a different way, then observation, and then it starts again with reflection. This is what the Norms and Standards for Teacher Education calls becoming a “reflective practitioner”. Being a reflective practitioner means that teachers are committed to ongoing learning by regularly reflecting on the ways that they teach and on their attitudes towards their learners. This is one of the seven roles required of teachers in South African schools.

For inclusive education, this is a very important skill for educators to develop. It is one of the best ways to identify problems that learners may have with learning, and weaknesses in the ways teachers are teaching. It is also an excellent way to encourage teachers to try new teaching methods to help their learners to overcome their learning difficulties.

Many teachers in this evaluation said that:

> *“The action research process has been a useful strategy for helping teachers to implement inclusive education in their classrooms.*

Particularly valuable has been the action/reflection cycle that equips teachers to become more 'reflective practitioners'. This model of operation is now happening in many of the pilot schools."

One teacher said:

"Reflecting on my teaching practice has helped me to shift from just teaching, to teaching to recognize and include all learners' differences."

Another teacher said:

"Reflection on my teaching helped me to see learners' needs. Especially the needs of learners with a background of poverty. It also helped me to find ways to include these learners in lessons without further disadvantaging them because of their background in poverty."

Another teacher said:

"Action research has given me a whole new perspective on teaching. I plan to include all learners in my lessons, and pay special attention to learners who exclude themselves because of trauma in their home and family environments."

The evaluators of the pilot project said:

"In the three pilot projects, educators learned to become `reflective practitioners' successfully. This is important because it was the main method used to help teachers to learn to identify and address barriers to learning in their classrooms and schools."

Understanding and dealing with barriers to learning

Through the action research approach, teachers became aware of some of the difficulties or barriers to learning that their learners were experiencing. They began to understand why some learners did not participate in the lessons, and why other learners could not cope with their work. This helped them to think about and experiment with ways of helping the learners to overcome these barriers. Teachers also began to recognise how they could begin to change their own attitudes towards some of their learners, and how they could change the way they were teaching so that all of the learners were treated equally.

One teacher said:

> *"As a grade 1 educator I used to go home stressed by learners who are slow, but now I enjoy working with them."*

This quote highlights an important point. Teachers are *already* faced with many different learning needs in their classrooms. In the past, teachers did not receive the training and support they needed to know how to respond to these needs. Now, the implementation of the policy on inclusive education provides some answers to questions that teachers have been struggling with for a long time.

Other teachers said:

> *"We were not aware of the barriers and learning disabilities in the classroom. The project has enabled us to identify barriers to learning and we are now in a position to overcome these barriers."*

Another teacher said:

> *"In inclusive education, our focus is not only on learners with disabilities, but also on the barriers to learning that prevent learners from fully participating in learning."*

Teachers also became aware of other barriers to learning. They came to understand that there are many things that happen outside of the classroom and the school that influence learning in the classroom. For example, many learners come from poor homes where there is not enough food to eat. Some learners live in overcrowded homes. Others experience emotional stress and unhappiness at home. Others live in homes or communities where adults and young people abuse alcohol and drugs. Some learners are physically or sexually abused at home. Some learners become pregnant while they are still at school. More and more learners have family members who are suffering from HIV/AIDS. Other learners live in places where there are gangs who intimidate them and even hurt them. All of these problems influence the learners' emotions and their attitudes towards school and learning.

Teachers involved in the pilot project came to understand that these kinds of home, community and social problems (sometimes called psychosocial problems) can become barriers to learning in the classroom. They can all effect learners in different ways. For example, some learners are afraid to come to school. Others are not interested in learning. Others become uncooperative, or develop different kinds of behaviour problems.

One teacher identified the following barriers to learning at her school:

> *" Here are some barriers I have come across.*
>
> *Socio-economic barriers.*
> *These are the most common barriers in our environment. Most of our dropouts have left school because of poverty which is caused by a high rate of unemployment. They left school and became breadwinners for their families. Since we are next to a taxi rank, some became taxi conductors and some became fruit and vegetable hawkers. Some became victims of crime. Last year three learners were arrested for housebreaking.*

Unstable families.

This is also a common barrier in our school. Most learners live with single parents, grandparents, and relatives or divorced parents or separated parents. Their background is not stable. We have two boys who do not know their parents. These boys are not coping well with their schoolwork. Many children come to school with nothing to eat. They also do not cope well with their work.

Attitude barriers.

Some learners leave school because of the attitudes displayed by the teachers. Some teachers with negative attitudes chase learners away from school by telling them they will never pass in their class, they are just wasting their time when they come to school.

Drugs.

Because of the high rate of unemployment, some learners become victims of drugs. At the beginning of this year I caught ten Grade 5 boys smoking dagga during break in a house next to the school. They were warned by the SGB and were charged to work at school after hours under the supervision of their parents for one term. Two of these boys have already left the school."

All teachers face learners with these kinds of psychosocial problems in their classrooms, and these problems *do* interfere with teaching and learning. However, many teachers do not think it is their responsibility to try to address these problems. At the beginning of the pilot project, some teachers felt that it was *not* the role of teachers or the Department of Education to deal with 'welfare issues' like these. They felt that the Department of Welfare should take care of these kinds of problems. However, when the teachers came to understand that these problems are barriers to learning, they changed their attitudes. They realized that if they did not try to do something about these kinds of problems, their learners would continue to have learning problems.

Here are some examples of the things teachers did to try to help learners who were experiencing these kinds of barriers to learning.

> *"We educators have learnt a lot from the workshops. It is now easier for us to identify learners with learning problems. We also now know how to deal with learners who have been abused or are still being abused."*

This is a teacher's story about how she tried to help a learner.

> *"I had a learner in my class who lived with her mother, grandmother and uncle. Her mother lost her job two years ago and the sole breadwinner was the grandmother who is a pensioner. The uncle was unemployed as well. Friction arose between the mother and the grandmother and the girl's mother was arrested and put into prison. The young girl was made to replace her mother and had to do all of the work at home. When she failed to do all of the work, the grandmother chased her out of the house. She had to sleep outside. This girl is physically and emotionally abused by the grandmother and the uncle.*
>
> *The barriers to learning she experienced were: physical and emotional abuse and lack of parental care. At school, she was always drowsy and clumsy and her concentration span was very short. Sometimes she just fell asleep while the other learners were busy working in class. She was also very untidy and she was not coping in class. She always avoided going home immediately after school and would prefer to remain at school and sweep the classroom.*
>
> *How I addressed these barriers.*
> *I introduced a journal where each learner could express their feelings confidentially. I picked up from the journal that her mother was in prison and that she doesn't get food to eat. I also picked up that she wanted to live with a neighbour who usually rescued her when she was chased out of the house.*

I wrote a letter to her grandmother to ask her to come to talk about the girls. But she never turned up. After that, the girl lived with the neighbour and it was then that I found out the full story about the child's abuse.

Because of a report that was made by the neighbour with the support of the community, I also gave my own observations and a full report about the girl from the school's side. The girl was then removed from her home and the neighbours and placed in a children's home where there is also a school."

The evaluators of the project said that:

"Educators became aware of the barriers to learning that result in the exclusion of learners, and were equipped to overcome the discrimination and exclusion experienced by some learners in the past, especially learners with disabilities."

Whether we like it or not, schools in South Africa are faced with having to deal with psychosocial problems. This is because schools are part of a larger society that affects them indirectly or directly. Also, children and youth spend a large part of their lives in schools, and their families are linked to their schools indirectly. For these reasons, schools are important places to try to address these issues. Schools that do address these issues will play an important role in the development of the wider community and the country.

Including learners with disabilities and youth out of school

Because of the history of our country, there are very few learners with disabilities in our ordinary schools. Learners with disabilities have either been sent to special schools where they are educated separately, or they have never been to school. In addition, our teachers have not been trained to teach learners with disabilities. For this reason, the Inclusive Education Pilot Project

taught teachers about the needs of learners with disabilities and trained them to teach learners with different kinds of learning needs.

One of the ‘successes’ of the pilot project has been the change of attitudes that happened when teachers, learners and schools were faced with ‘the reality’ of actually including learners with disabilities in their classes. This helped them to overcome their fears of the unknown, and to learn to respect the rights of learners with disabilities. It also gave teachers and schools the opportunity to learn to respond to different kinds of learners’ needs in the classroom and the school.

Many teachers involved in the pilot project said that:

> *“Teachers were taught to include learners with disabilities in their schools and classrooms.”*

Some teachers said that:

> *“Learners with disabilities have been included in some of the schools and these schools were made physically accessible as a result.”*

Here is one example of how a teacher included a learner with a disability in her classrooms.

> *“Our lesson plans involve a variety of activities for the learners and for learners who have learning problems so that they can participate. We have also admitted a learner with a physical disability to our school this year. This is a child who has a spinal problem and cannot walk. She uses her hands to move around. She is coping fine and everybody has accepted her.”*

Here is another story about how a teacher tried to meet the needs of a learner with a disability in her classes and in the school:

This is the story of a pre-primary learner, a beautiful girl of about 5 years old. She was born with a disability. She can't walk. Instead she can only crawl. Her backbone is not level and that has affected her hips, waist and legs. The lower part of her body is very weak and does not have the strength to carry her body. It is as if she is paralysed. She uses a walking ring with two wheels at the front to move around and she sees a specialist doctor at the hospital for check-ups.

Her mother and father are not married, but they stay together with her. They are very fond of her and have accepted her disability. Her mother carries her on her back when she brings her to school and takes her home.

She is very confident and intelligent. She is intellectually competent, but she is just physically challenged. She does everything by herself without any help. If it is time to play, she climbs and swings on her own. She is very independent.

There are two types of barriers that this learner faces. The first is socio-economic and the second is an inaccessible and unsafe learning environment. The socio-economic barrier is because her parents are poor. They cannot afford to buy a wheelchair so that it can be used to bring her to school. The learning environment is inaccessible and unsafe because the school building does not have ramps to the classrooms, toilets or playground. There are no toilets for learners with disabilities. The pathways are also uneven. When she pushes her walking ring, the ground is uneven and she has to put extra effort for it to move.

How I addressed these barriers:

Since her mother says this learner does not want to use her walking ring at home, I have asked her to bring it to school so that we can also try to persuade her to use it. But she didn't want to use it at school. So, we developed a strategy that other learners should use it so that she could see that she is not the only one who can use it. This strategy has started working a little bit. But she does not want to use it for long periods because she cries and feels pain. I have referred the parents back to the specialist doctor to ask whether she can use a wheelchair at this stage and to a social worker to find a donation for one. I am still waiting for the doctor to give a nod for her to use a wheelchair.

Our school has also applied for funding to build ramps and upgrade the existing pathways.

My plan for overcoming these challenges:
I will approach the doctor myself and convince him that there is a need for the learner to get a wheelchair. If we do not get funds to build ramps and upgrade the pathways, I will approach the parents to raise funds to do this work and ask them to volunteer to do the work themselves.

Another challenge of inclusive education is how to attract young people who are not going to school at all, back to school. The pilot project also tried to address this problem in communities. Here is one example of a success story.

In one of the pilot provinces:

"A health worker helped a Resource Centre to identify 53 out- of-school disabled learners, and has helped to place 12 of them in schools already."

The evaluators of the pilot project said:

“ Many of the people involved in the project also said how important community organisations were, especially Disabled Peoples’ Organisations (DPOs) and organisations of parents of disabled children, in helping to identify children in the community who were not attending school. These organisations also played a very important role in educating parents about the rights of their children.”

Unfortunately there have not been many examples of out-of-school children being included in school yet. This is still an area of great need that will require a lot of time and attention. However, these examples show how important it is to work with other government departments, and other relevant role players, to address this and the many other challenges facing the education system.

Understanding how outcomes based education and inclusive education work together

An important part of the pilot project was to help teachers to understand that OBE and inclusive education are like two sides of one coin. They work together because they are one and the same thing. OBE is a learner-centred approach that is designed to make sure that all learners are treated equally and have the same opportunities to learn and develop. Inclusive education is designed to make sure that teachers understand how to meet the different needs of different learners so that all learners have equal opportunities. Inclusive education is really an extension or expansion of OBE. It helps teachers to understand how to meet the needs of different learners, including those who have not been included in ordinary schools in the past.

One of the main challenges for both inclusive education and OBE, is to develop *respect* for oneself and for all others. This means accepting that, while we are all the same as humans, we are all different too. We come from different backgrounds and have different ways of doing things. The challenge for all of us is to learn to understand and accept that people’s similarities and differences are strengths that make our society richer and better. When

differences about race, gender, language, ability, and sexual preference are not understood or accepted in society, then discrimination happens. The most important challenge of inclusive education is to address every kind of discrimination that affects the opportunities learners have to learn in classrooms and in schools.

The following comments from teachers involved in the pilot project show that they have understood how inclusive education and OBE work together to make sure that all learners' needs are met in their classrooms.

> *"Teachers learnt how to integrate the goals and strategies of inclusion in all aspects of the curriculum – in their classroom practices. This included what to teach, how to teach, how to assess learners, and how to manage the classroom – in order to include all learners."*

> *"Teachers also emphasized … how issues such as teaching styles and pace can be used to facilitate the involvement of all learners."*

Many teachers were helped to understand the importance of *"group learning and peer support in helping all learners to learn."* They were also helped with assessment techniques, including setting specific goals for individual learners, to facilitate inclusion.

> *"In this way their understanding of the child-centred approach has been enhanced because they have learnt to view each child as 'unique'."*

Classroom management was another important area of new learning for many teachers. It is about the way teachers manage their teaching and learning activities to make sure that all learners have equal opportunities to succeed. The findings of this evaluation show that:

> *"Teachers have learnt to manage the classroom with a view to accepting all learners. The teachers' own attitudes and responses to*

learners have changed. They have learnt to respect differences and to provide opportunities for learners to work at different paces to accommodate their different learning needs. Teachers are more aware of the need to provide equal opportunities for learners in their classrooms."

One group of teachers said that:

"We now know how to group learners according to their abilities and it is working well. Learners can also learn from each other. One of the barriers that we have overcome in our school is the lack of appropriate teaching strategies."

Another group of teachers said that they had started to use new teaching strategies and new ways of organizing the learners to make sure that all learners were included. Their classroom management strategies included:

"Question and answer activities where every learner is regularly asked questions and given the opportunity to give an answer; using drama, role play and practical demonstrations to demonstrate what is being taught instead of just lecturing and explaining; organizing the learners and their desks and chairs into groups so that they could be near each other, help each other and work co-operatively; making sure that they spoke clearly so that learners could lip-read as they taught; and adopting a warm, caring approach to the learners. All of these strategies helped to provide opportunities for all learners to be included and to participate actively."

Challenges we still have to face

These stories about what teachers have learned, and how they have begun to put inclusive education into practice in their classrooms and schools are very encouraging. Although many teachers have begun to understand the barriers

to learning for all learners, including learners with disabilities, it is important to understand that the challenges of inclusive education have only just begun. This is because inclusive education is still very new in South Africa. For this reason, some teachers are still resistant to inclusive education. A lot of work still needs to be done to develop positive attitudes towards learners with learning problems and disabilities.

In addition, only a few out-of-school youth and learners with disabilities were brought into the pilot schools as a result of this project. So far, schools have only had to deal with a very limited number of learners with little or no experience of school education, or learners with disabilities. A difficult, but rewarding challenge lies ahead for teachers and schools in this regard.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT HAPPENED IN SCHOOLS

Making schools accessible

In Chapter 2 you read about some of the challenges and successes of making schools more accessible for learners with disabilities. The challenge is that most schools were not built as safe environments for learners with disabilities. For example, they do not have ramps for wheelchairs, level pathways or proper toilet facilities for learners with disabilities.

Photo 14:

Caption:
Many schools like this one need to be upgraded so that they can become safe learning environments for all learners.

Some of the successes in the pilot project are that some teachers and members of the SGBs raised money to upgrade their school buildings and facilities so that learners with disabilities can move about more easily in the classrooms and in the school grounds. In addition, in some schools, the parents have already become involved in building ramps so that learners with disabilities can get in and out of classrooms easily.

As a result of the efforts of some teachers, parents and SGBs the evaluators of the project found that:

> *"Many of the schools have become more accessible to learners with physical disabilities."*

The evaluators also found that in one province, the Department of Education has also become involved in making school buildings more accessible. This is what the evaluators said:

> *"The pilot project helped the person in charge of Physical Planning in the region to become aware of what is needed to promote inclusive education. He has learnt a lot about the needs of learners with disabilities through this process. This has made it possible for his department to make direct contact with the schools which he says is very important because* forms *don't present needs and conditions well! As a result, Physical Planning has been centrally involved in the project, helping schools to become physically more accessible, and they have been involved in various renovation/refurbishment projects in the schools. For example, he saw the need to integrate the toilet facilities so that learners with disabilities don't feel excluded. So he tried to organize for integrated toilet facilities to be built where possible. He has also been able to turn shacks into new buildings with accessible facilities. "*

School principals were `champions' of inclusive education

In Chapter 3 you read stories about what teachers did to put inclusive education into practice in their classrooms. They could only do this with the support of their school principals who helped them by giving them the support they needed. One of the main findings of the evaluation of the pilot project was that principals can 'make or break' the successful implementation of inclusive education in our schools. This is what the evaluators said:

> *"The principal is important in the effective implementation of inclusive education in the schools. In the schools where the principals were supportive, they acted as a 'champions' for inclusive education. This had a very positive effect on the teachers, the parents and other role players."*

A `champion' of inclusive education is a leader who believes in inclusive education and promotes it in everything he or she does. School principals play a very important role as champions of inclusive education.

First, principals are the role models for their schools. If their attitude towards the teachers and learners is positive, then the whole school has a positive attitude. Second, if principals are good organisers and managers, they can help teachers to organise support groups and cooperate with each other, so that they can do many things together that they cannot do on their own. Third, principals have an important role to play in `modelling' respectful and efficient ways of working and completing tasks and activities. If they work efficiently and expect teachers to do the same, the whole school will function efficiently and effectively. Fourth, if principals involve the parents and the community in the life of the school through the SGB, then the teachers will feel supported and motivated to take on new responsibilities.

In the same way, if principals play an active role in communicating with the DSTs and other community, government and NGOs that can help the teachers, the teachers do not feel alone and overburdened. For this reason, it is very important to make sure that all principals understand the policy of inclusive education and what it means for their schools.

What the School Governing Bodies did

An SGB is a committee that includes the principal, teacher representatives, learner representatives (in secondary schools), parents and other community representatives who help the school to make important decisions about what happens in a school. They play an important role in supporting the school principal. They also help schools to develop the policies that guide the activities of the school. For example, an SGB can help the school to decide on how to raise money for important projects like upgrading the school grounds and buildings, how teachers are appointed and what the schools policy is on disciplinary procedures.

In the pilot project, workshops were held to help many of the SGBs to understand how to include the policy of inclusive education into the governance of their schools.

As a result of the workshops, some of the SGBs have played an important role in helping schools to put inclusive education into practice.

One school said that its SGB has:

> *"Started to draft a school policy which is inclusive; formed an admission committee to formulate an admission policy which is inclusive; included in all staff and parents meetings an item on inclusive education; decided that from 2003 inclusive education will appear in the school timetable; and formed an Access Audit Committee to look after the physical features of the school to make sure that they are accessible to learners with disabilities."*

Another school said that its SGB has:

> *"Set up a Poverty Alleviation Project at our school. The workers are employed from our school parents who work in teams so that each and every parent has a chance to have a job to earn some money to buy some food and be able to pay school fees for their children."*

The evaluators said that:

> *"The attitudes of members of the SGB have changed through the capacity building that has occurred, and they are now developing inclusive school policies, are aware that they need to make their schools more accessible, and are involved in poverty alleviation projects."*

What the Institutional-Level Support Teams did

One of the responsibilities of principals on the pilot project was to set up support teams in their schools. These teams are called institutional-level support teams (ISTs). An IST is an `internal' support team at each school or learning centre. It is a team of people from a school that includes teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and anyone else who can support the school. This is what an evaluator said about the role of the principals and the ISTs in supporting the training of teachers:

> *"The school-based training has been most effective where the principal is centrally involved in the process. Also, the involvement of the ISTs in this process was particularly important."*

In the pilot project, the ISTs were responsible for working with the Department of Education's DSTs and other people and organizations in the community that could help them to identify and meet the needs of the teachers and learners at their school. They were also responsible for finding ways to address the needs and barriers they had identified in their schools.

The work of these teams was to:

- Co-ordinate all learner, teacher and school development support in the school;
- Identify the needs and barriers to learning in the school;
- Develop strategies to address these needs and barriers to learning;
- Identify who could help them to address these challenges in the school; and

- Monitor and evaluate the work of the team through ‘action-reflection’.

The evaluators of the project said that:

> *“The establishment of Institutional-Level Support Teams in the schools has been very positive and most are up and running and working well. The training has been a good grounding for them.”*

The following points were also made about how these teams have been successful in providing support to their own schools:

> *“Institution-level support teams have helped to link the school with the district support that is available.”*
>
> *“The ISTs have provided an opportunity for teachers to provide support to one another and to receive training. The ISTs enable the teachers to discuss particular barriers that learners in their classes are experiencing and provide an important structure for peer review to take place.”*
>
> *“The ISTs are helping teachers to set learning goals for all the learners in their classrooms according to their capabilities.”*
>
> *“ISTs also help schools through the dissemination of information or by giving direct help in the classroom.”*

Here are two examples the how the ISTs (also called Learning Support Teams or LSTs) helped their schools.

> School 1:
>
> *“In 2002 we admitted learners with disabilities for the first time. These disabilities included sight, speech, hearing and learners with intellectual*

disabilities. We have established a Learner Support Team that comprises of teachers from different grades, parents, and members of the Health Department, Social and Welfare Services, and the Children's Protection Unit. The LST has been trained on how to support other educators and if they encounter problems they will make referrals to the District Support Team. The training workshops have helped us a lot. We are now able to identify some of the barriers to learning."

School 2:

"We established our LST in April 2002. It comprises of educators and parents. One of the parents is a retired nurse. The educators identify barriers that are experienced by the learners in their classrooms and they forward these to the LST. The LST discovered that there are barriers that are common in some classrooms. The LST therefore decided to use a group approach. Educators with the same barriers in their classrooms are called to an LST meeting where strategies to address these barriers are discussed and selected. Then the teachers implement the strategies in their classrooms and come to a follow-up meeting to review the implementation strategies.

Some of the barriers we have identified among our learners are: physically disabled right hand, speech problems, behavioural problems due to sexual abuse, a negligent parent, lack of concentration, sight problems, eczema from birth, and other learning disabilities.

We are addressing all of these problems with the help of parents, donations of clothes from other parents, by providing poor parents with plots to grow vegetables in the school grounds, and with the help of a psychologist, social workers, counselors, nurses, policemen, SANCA and the department of psychology at a university in our province."

It is clear from these examples and stories that ISTs are helping teachers to address the many barriers to learning in their classrooms and schools. However, the *way* that it has been done in the pilot schools is important:

- In every successful school, the principal was a champion of inclusive education and helped to set up the ISTs and supported them.

- The teachers were motivated to try to *solve the problems collectively among themselves.* They only brought in other support providers from the DST when they could not find a way to solve a problem themselves.

- When the ISTs needed to get help, they did so by linking with other people and organization that could help them when it was necessary.

One of the advantages of the implementation of inclusive education in the schools has been that it "*has helped to develop more collaborative work in the school. The teachers discovered the importance of working together in teams, and have learnt to do this better."*

This is important because it contributes to the development of a 'collegial' approach to teaching and management in schools. Because of the commitment to democracy and 'working together' in this country, this is an important part of implementing inclusive education.

Challenges we still have to face

This chapter tells many important 'success' stories. They show how 'a lot' can be achieved through 'a little'. Even though there is very little funding available for building and renovating school buildings, so much has been achieved in some of these schools because of the combined efforts of teachers, parents, SGBs and government departments! However, a lot of work still needs to be

done to make sure that the resources needed to do this properly throughout the country over the next twenty years are found. In addition to the efforts of schools and their communities, a combination of government budgets, private and donor funding, and community involvement will be necessary to ‘make this work’.

Apart from the very good work that some SGBs are doing, the evaluation has revealed that more attention needs to be given to supporting SGBs. The inclusion of the parents or caregivers has not always received the full attention it deserves and needs. Practical strategies need to be developed to involve parents and caregivers more fully in the governance of schools. This includes developing a genuine respect for parents and caregivers as partners, and making sure that parents can understand all forms of communication between the school and the parents.

In addition, the impact of HIV/AIDS is resulting in more and more that do not have parents or caregivers. In these families, the children are orphans and they have to look after the other children in the family. The implications of this situation for SGBs need to be taken seriously.

CHAPTER 5

HOW SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS WERE DEVELOPED

Parents are Partners

In Chapters 3 and 4, you read about how parents have been involved in helping teachers and schools to put inclusive education into practice in different ways. These include parents helping with the upgrading of school buildings by building ramps to give learners with physical disabilities easy access to classrooms, and parents on SGBs helping schools to develop policies that guide a number of their activities. One school on the project involved the parents in a Poverty Alleviation Programme that benefited the parents and the school. The parents used their skills to grow vegetables and make food and other things to sell, and the school gave them the money so that they could buy food and pay their children's school fees.

Parents also played other important roles in the pilot project. Some of the teams that developed teacher training materials on inclusive education consulted with parent's organizations and DPOs. The parents in these organizations advised them about how to make sure that the materials related to the real experiences of people with disabilities in their communities. They also told the team about real experiences that they had had when they were at school. Their personal experiences, suggestions and guidelines related directly to the real experiences of people that had suffered unkind treatment from others who did not understand their difficulties. Here are three examples of the personal experiences they told the materials development team.

Example 1:

A parent who has had to use crutches to walk all her life, told about how she was teased by other children when she was at school. She was very embarrassed and ashamed of her disability, and when the children teased her, she became angry and tried to chase them away by hitting them with her crutches. Because of this, her educators said she was `aggressive.'

Example 2:

A community worker told about the attitude of the grandfather of a disabled child who she visited at home. The grandfather did not want the child to be helped because he believed that the child would not improve until the mother had satisfied the ancestors by slaughtering an animal.

Example 3:

Another disabled person told about how a pregnant teacher would not teach her when she was a child at school because the teacher believed that her disability would be passed on to her unborn child.

These experiences helped the materials developers to understand some of the barriers to learning experienced by learners with disabilities in school and communities.

Other parents helped the materials developers to understand how the way we speak about people with disabilities can be negative and insulting. For example, they told them that:

> *"Many of the names or terms used to talk about disabled people are insulting. Many of the terms use language that refers to non-human or animal classes."*

The parents also helped the materials developers to understand some of the negative attitudes towards people with disabilities. For example, they explained that:

> *"Many parents do not expect their disabled children to get married, or to have children."*

When the parents looked at the materials that had already been developed for training the teachers, they pointed out that the materials were biased in favour of women and physical disabilities. They said that:

> *"Many of the case studies were about physically disabled women. They suggested that men should also be represented in the materials, and that people with visual disabilities should also be included."*

All of these suggestions made by parents and adults with disabilities helped the materials developers to develop better materials for the teachers.

Other important advice given by parents included the following comments:

> *"There is not much co-operation between teachers and parents, and some teachers have a negative attitude towards disabled children." They gave an example of one parent "who took her disabled child to school, but did not tell the teacher the child was disabled because she was afraid that the teacher would exclude the child from the school."*

> *"There is no relationship between the day care centres that look after disabled children and the nearby schools and teachers. This means that disabled children find it difficult to get access to schools when they are older."*

All of these suggestions and comments from the parents show how important parents can be in helping educators to understand some of the barriers to education and learning. The evaluators of the project said:

> *"The critical role of parents and the importance of strategies to involve parents more in their child's learning was reinforced through the project, and collaboration with parents intensified as a result."*

> *"Successful projects including parents were developed. Parents have been involved in the development of vegetable gardens, in feeding schemes at schools, and in the training/capacity building programmes themselves (e.g. parents of children with disabilities have helped to raise awareness of the 'rights' of these children to quality education)."*

Building other School-Community Relationships

In Chapter 4 you read about how schools set up ISTs. These teams work together with the community and other organizations and professional people to address barriers to learning in their schools. This is an important part of inclusive education because teachers and schools do need help to meet the needs of some of their learners. They cannot always do everything on their own.

For this reason, the pilot project also focused on helping schools to develop relationships with members of the community and organizations that could help them to address barriers to teaching and learning in their communities. Some of the ways they did this are explained below.

Finding more help from the community

The pilot project helped schools to find out about who could help the schools to address barriers to teaching and learning in the school communities. People like researchers, school health nurses and the education support

services in the three pilot districts did a survey to find out about all of the people, groups and organizations in their communities that could help them. They put all of the information about these organizations into a file called a Resource Directory for Inclusive Education, and gave each school a copy of the file.

The Resource Directory includes information about organizations like the following: community leaders, clinics, hospitals, nurses, doctors, physiotherapists, speech therapists, education specialists, learning disability organizations, welfare organizations, social workers, family planning organizations, child protection units, rape and trauma organizations, therapists, psychologists, DPOs, the police and so on. This information has been very useful to the ISTs, because it has made it possible for schools to contact these organizations themselves when they need specialised help.

Some of the people and organizations that have been especially important in helping schools to put inclusive education into practice are community leaders, NGOs, DPOs and community-based health workers. The ways that they have helped schools are explained in the following sections of this chapter.

How community leaders helped

Like parents, community leaders also played an important role in the pilot project. The evaluators and the schools emphasized the importance of involving community leaders in activities to develop inclusive schools. They said that:

> *"The closer involvement of the community in the school through the project was very beneficial, especially the drawing in of natural leaders from the community. This has included chiefs and ward counsellors."*

Here are some examples of how community leaders helped in the pilot project:

"Members of the community have been drawn in to help schools to address many basic needs such as making buildings safe and secure."

" The community fixed the school's windows, putting the panes in. This makes the community 'own' the school and prevent vandalism. It also has had the effect of challenging other communities."

How non-governmental organizations and disabled people's organizations helped

Some of the important roles these organizations played in the pilot project have already been explained in the section about parents as partners at the beginning of this chapter. However, it is important to note what the evaluators said about other ways they helped the pilot project. They said that:

"*NGOs and DPOs played a central role in the training and development of inclusion in the schools*."

"In particular, the involvement of the DPOs and people with disabilities in leadership positions in the project, helped to change attitudes towards people with disabilities. Seeing people with disabilities and parents involved in training and such activities has a major impact on people. They tend to confront their own negative attitudes and fears with very positive outcomes."

" Through the involvement of DPOs, disabled people and parents become 'un-hidden' in the communities."

How health workers helped

In one of the pilot districts, the special school/resource centre managed to raise money to pay the salary of a Community Rehabilitation Facilitator who is

a health worker. She played a very important role in developing positive community-school relationships in the area. This is what the special school/resource centre said she did to help them:

> *"She helped to do the research for the Resource Directory for Inclusive education. She has been working with parents: raising their awareness through drama with the help of an NGO called Drama-Aid. She has worked with learners with disabilities in their homes. She has developed five parent support groups that have formed into day-care centers where the mothers are involved in teaching their children. At the centers, the mothers are trained in basic childcare and education skills. She has also helped to identify 53 out of school disabled learners, and has helped to place 12 of them in schools already. She is also involved in screening and early identification and support of Grade R learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. She works closely with NGOs and DPOs to do all of this."*

This example shows the important role health workers can play in helping to build inclusive schools. It also shows how parents and others directly and indirectly linked to the schools can benefit from these kinds of initiatives.

However, this health worker will not be able to continue her good work in schools unless the school can find more money to pay her salary. Her continued work with this school and in this community depends on the Departments of Education and Health. They will need to find a way of supporting the kind of work she and other health workers are doing in schools by paying their salaries. One way to do this is to support the health promoting schools strategy that has been accepted as an important way of developing health and education through the schools in South Africa. This strategy is explained in the next section.

How the Health Promoting School Strategy has helped

The evaluation of the pilot project shows that the health promoting schools strategy is an important way to bring the Departments of Health and Education (and sometimes other government departments) together in the pilot districts. This strategy focuses on five areas of action that support inclusive education. These are:

- developing school policies that promote the well-being of all members of the school community
- developing a supportive and safe teaching and learning environment
- building strong school-community relationships
- developing personal skills and life skills for learners, teachers and parents
- developing accessible and relevant education support services

In addition to the direct benefits to schools, the health promoting schools strategy has shown that it is very successful in developing strong school-community relationships. It draws on the strengths of the parents and the community to build effective schools that also support the surrounding community.

The evaluators said that in this pilot project:

> *"The Health and Education Departments have collaborated successfully through their joint projects in the 'health promoting schools' strategy, addressing various 'health' barriers to learning (physical, psychological and social aspects)."* Through this strategy *the*

nurses have learnt a lot about the education support system … and primary health care in the schools has improved through, for example, the provision of first-aid kits and training in the pilot schools. Schools are being developed as health promoting schools."

Challenges we still have to face

The general view of those involved in the three pilot projects is that *"very positive community-school partnerships were developed through this process. Inclusive education initiatives have led to improved relationships between the pilot schools and their surrounding communities."*

However, there are still a number of challenges we have to face. Even though there were many positive experiences from the involvement of parents and community leaders in the project, there are still challenges to be faced. The evaluation also showed clearly that not enough is being done about involving parents in the life of schools. The evaluators said that:

"the schools have realized that talking to parents is a really critical issue and that this doesn't get enough attention."

Although parents and members of the community are not involved very much in the day-to-day running of schools yet, they do have important roles to play in the life of all schools. Many schools do not realise how many skills there are among the parents and other members of their communities.

Some parents and members of the community are professional people who can give schools important advice about how to develop policies to guide the management of the schools' money, employment, and admissions, disciplinary and other policy matters. Others have their own businesses. They have management and practical skills that can be helpful. For example, some parents have building skills and gardening skills. They can help with keeping the school buildings and grounds in good condition. Others have management and entrepreneurial skills that can be useful to schools. They can help the school management team to manage the school.

Some parents and members of the community are teachers and artists and singers and counsellors and cooks and knitters, dressmakers and vegetable growers. They can help the teachers to organise employment or learner projects at the school. Some parents are politicians. They might be able to help schools to raise money for projects. Many young men and women have sporting talents. They could help to coach sports activities at schools.

Many parents are unemployed. This does not mean that they do not have skills and talents to offer schools. Some parents do not have skills that can be seen because they are not working. But if they are given the chance to help schools in some way, teachers will find out that everybody has something that they can do.

Unemployed people in the community do have something that many other people do not have. They have a lot of time. People who have time can help teachers and the school to do things that they can't do because they are so busy doing so many other things. For example, unemployed parents can help to support disabled children. They can help with feeding schemes. They can help to keep the school clean.

Another very important thing about the role of parents in helping teachers to put inclusive education into practice, is that many parents have experience of raising children with disabilities. They know their own children and they understand what the children's problems and needs are. Many parents have not had any training about how to understand their children's disabilities, but many parents do love and care about their children. If teachers and parents developed partnerships, many parents could help teachers to understand the needs of disabled children. In the same way, teachers who have had training in inclusive education could help parents to understand how to meet their children's needs at home. In this way, teachers and parents could help each other.

Another challenge is to find ways to support the involvement of NGOs, DPOs and health workers in schools and communities. The ways that the Departments of Education and Health have worked together in this pilot project have been a good example of how ‘health promoting schools’ can support inclusive education. However, there is a lot of work to be done to make sure that this kind of cooperation between the departments benefits all schools in the country.

CHAPTER 6

WHAT KIND OF DISTRICT SUPPORT WAS GIVEN TO SCHOOLS?

Special schools were helped to support other schools and become resource centres

In the old education system when learners with disabilities were separated from other learners, some special schools were built for them. These schools were designed to meet the needs of learners with more serious disabilities such as severe physical, emotional and psychological disabilities. However, because of racial discrimination, not many of these schools were built, and most of the schools were for white learners with disabilities. Because learners with disabilities were not allowed to attend ordinary schools there were also some learners with disabilities in special schools whose disability was not very severe. The teachers who worked in these schools were specially trained, or learnt through experience, to meet the needs of learners with different kinds of disabilities. In most cases, the special schools for white learners with disabilities were provided with many resources to help them meet the learners' needs.

Since 1994, things have begun to change. When the Ministry of Education changed the education policies, including the introduction of inclusive education, it decided to create a whole new education system. Instead of having a few schools to meet the needs of some learners, the Ministry of Education decided to change the whole system so that all schools are able to respond to all of the learning needs of all learners.

The Inclusive Education Pilot Project is one of the first steps in the Department of Education's plan to develop all schools in South Africa to be inclusive schools. Part of this plan is to use special schools as resource

centres to support other schools to put inclusive education into practice. This is because the special schools, now called resource centres, have teachers who are experienced in meeting the needs of learners with different kinds of disabilities. These teachers can share these valuable skills with other teachers in the surrounding area.

In the pilot project, the staff and teachers at the special schools/resource centres learnt to support other schools to put inclusive education into practice. The evaluators of the pilot project said that:

> "*The workshops have helped the special schools to understand their new role as resource centres to support inclusive education in the districts. The staff enjoyed the training that they received and are trying to meet the challenges of developing a new role for themselves. The schools seem to realize that they have a key role to play in giving support to teachers in other schools."*

However, although the pilot projects in the three districts did have some success in assisting the special schools in understanding their new role as resource centres for inclusive education, the special schools were not sure if they could really do this properly. They felt positive about their new role in some ways, but they were also worried and anxious about it in other ways.

These are some of the positive things they said:

> *"Staff here will become part of the District Support team, offering support to mainstream schools. So people will come here for help, and staff from here will go out to support other schools."*

> *"The school will no longer be isolated. It will serve anyone in need in the community."*

> *"The resource centre will network locally and nationally."*

"It involves the development of staff and adults from the community in dealing with different barriers to learning."

"We would like to be able to help anyone who comes here. We want people to get help from us."

"The school's reputation will be raised. It will be recognised that anyone who gets skills here will have something useful."

However, the teachers and staff at the special schools/resource centres involved in the pilot project also expressed concerns about their new role. These are some of the things they are worried about.

As a principal of one of these schools said:

"There is a need for more capacity building. In particular, there is a need for whole school development with this school."

The principals from these schools also highlighted that there is:

"*a shortage of staff. There is not enough time for teaching at our own schools and providing support to other schools.*"

Some of the teachers and staff from these schools were very anxious and uncertain about the changes. They said:

"We are not sure how it will work out. We have no clear picture. How will this really impact on us?"
"If people see us as a resource centre, won't they flock here with all sorts of different projects like learners with a wide range of disabilities?"

"If the school has to take in more severely disabled children, we will need to employ more housemothers and class aides. We will need

more knowledge and skills so that we can help severely disabled children. We will need reference books and materials as resources."

"Will our jobs be secure when we become a Resource Centre?"

"Will we have funding for ourselves as well as for others?"

"Maybe we will need to work in our holidays. We might be involved in running workshops for educators in mainstream schools."

"We have not been trained to train other teachers, how will we know what to do? We feel unarmed. We will need to be trained and equipped with tools, knowledge and skills to do this."

From these comments, it is clear that the staff members at the special schools/resource centres involved in the pilot project are positive about their new role. However, it is also clear that they are uncertain and worried. Because of their concerns, and their need for further training, the special schools/resource centers found it difficult to support other schools during the pilot project. For this reason, developing the special schools into resource centres is an area of challenge that still has a long way to go. These schools do not see how it is possible, with existing staff allocations, to continue to do their own work and provide support to other schools at the same time. These concerns and needs will have to be addressed if inclusive education is to be successfully implemented.

Different directorates in the Department of Education worked together

From all of the chapters so far, it is clear that for inclusive education to be successfully implemented, teachers, schools, parents, communities, NGOs, government organizations, business people and donors need to plan together and work together.

Changing the whole education system from one that excluded people on the grounds of race, gender, class and disability, to one that includes all people, is a national challenge. The role of the Department of Education is critical in this regard. For inclusive education to be implemented successfully, it is necessary that all of the directorates within the Department of Education also work together. Inclusive education is everyone's responsibility in the education sector. It is fundamentally about teaching and learning all of the people in South Africa.

In the pilot project, there was an example of how directorates that work together can make a big difference to the success of inclusive education. The evaluators said:

> *"Intra-departmental collaboration within the Education Department has improved in one of the provinces. One example of this collaboration has been around physical planning. In the pilot project in this province, the inclusion of the key person in charge of physical planning in the province has resulted in the development of physically accessible schools in this district. This also made this section of the Department more aware of the challenges of building inclusive teaching and learning environments."*

While this example does show that there has been a move towards a more integrated and coordinated approach to developing support for schools, the evaluation also revealed that this was not easy and that a lot of work still needs to be done to make this work.

Other government departments worked together with the Department of Education

The challenge of getting different directorates to work together within the Department of Education also applies to other government departments working together with the Department of Education.

In the pilot project, there have been a few examples of how this kind of collaboration has been successful. The evaluators said:

> "*Intersectoral collaboration across government departments, where it has happened, has been successful."*

> *"At district level, there were positive experiences of working together to address various barriers to learning. This has been particularly true for the Departments of Correctional Services, Health and Welfare working together with the Education Department."*

The collaboration between the Departments of Health and Education has already been discussed in this chapter. Another example of how the Department of Education has worked successfully with another government department is outlined below.

> *"The Department of Correctional Services is encouraging the prevention of crime, and so are involved in various outreach programmes to combat crime. Various projects with the Department of Education are supported because the Provincial Commissioner of Correctional Services says that they should be involved in supporting schools. One of the strategies this Department is using at the moment is to analyse where schools are taking in learners who have been in prison, and then they target their support to those schools. They have also tried to address security issues. Another example of where they have intervened is around an 'awaiting-trial' student who was allowed to write exams. This student was so grateful that he thanked the authorities concerned and is intending to further his studies."*

The examples of successful collaboration between the Department of Education and other departments in the pilot project are important to learn from. This includes being aware that working 'across line functions' in and outside of the Department of Education is not easy, but it is very rewarding for all concerned. Some of the 'not easy' parts relate to problems that have been identified in this evaluation. These include the following kinds of problems: *"not all stakeholders attend meetings"; "there is no sharing of responsibility"* and *"a lack of clarity about responsibilities means that projects fall between stools."* These are some of the nationally and internationally recognized challenges to those who wish to, and need to work together to provide integrated and comprehensive support to schools.

Challenges we still have to face

A lot of work needs to be done to make sure that all directorates within the Department of Education work together. First, all directorates need to see how inclusive education is their business because:

> *"inclusive education is still seen as something separate, the responsibility of 'auxiliary' personnel only."*

In addition, all directorates need to understand that planning and interventions need to be integrated. In addition to integrating and co-ordinating the planning and implementation of OBE, inclusive education and health promoting schools, it also involves bringing all of the expertise available in the Department of Education together around the challenges facing schools. This needs to be managed well so that it is coordinated, and provides opportunities for teamwork to address the needs and barriers identified. To do this, human and other resources need to be made available. While this may involve the creation of new posts and portfolios, it also includes better use of existing personnel and other resources in the Department of Education.

The same factors apply to the need for other government departments to work together with the Department of Education.

CHAPTER 7

HOW DISTRICT, PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL LEADERS AND MANAGERS SUPPORTED SCHOOLS

By implementing the new policy on inclusive education and supporting the pilot project in three provinces

In Chapter 1 of this book, you read about what the Department of Education did to change the policies to promote inclusive education in South Africa. When the Department of Education implemented the new policy on inclusive education (White Paper 6), this created the opportunity to implement a pilot project to learn about the challenges of implementing inclusive education on a small scale before implementing it in all schools in all provinces. This involved support from national and provincial education leaders, and practical involvement by the district education leaders and managers in all three pilot areas.

All of the other chapters in this book tell about the implementation, the successes and the challenges involved in implementing the Department of Education's pilot project in the three provinces. The lessons learned from the pilot project will be used to plan the most successful way to implement inclusive education in all schools, and how to support them to do it.

The evaluators of the project made the following comments about the Department of Education's role in supporting inclusive education in the pilot project:

> *"The approach used to implement policy in this project – a combination of 'top-down' policy guidelines and 'bottom-up' action research processes – was very successful."*

> *"In particular, action research is a very effective strategy to support the development of training materials and the implementation of inclusive education. It has a range of benefits, including bringing together a range of important players in the implementation of the policy."*

One of the materials assessors said the following about the Department of Education's role in encouraging the development of training materials for the project:

> "*The materials, and the processes they have resulted in, represent what may be the best example of an inclusive, democratic, participatory approach to bridging the gap between policy and implementation since 1994. They embody a serious attempt to disseminate vital information about new policies and their implications, and to translate policy into classroom practice through raising awareness about inclusive education, challenging beliefs, changing attitudes and developing new values and appropriate skills."*

By encouraging the development of a new inclusive language for inclusive education in South Africa

In the past, when special schools were isolated and separate from ordinary schools, the teachers and specialists in these schools developed their own specialised language and terminology for `special needs' education. This language was unfamiliar to teachers in ordinary schools, and excluded them form understanding `special needs' education. When the Inclusive Education Pilot Project was implemented, the Department of Education encouraged materials developers and teachers to develop a new way of thinking and speaking about what inclusive education is all about, that did not exclude teachers. So instead of using professional terminology developed by 'special needs' specialists, the pilot project has focused on finding the 'teachers' own language' to explain what inclusive education is all about and what is expected of them. Many of the teachers in the pilot project said that inclusive education was about meeting the needs of all learners in their classrooms.

Their role as teachers was to find ways to overcome the barriers that stop some learners from being able to learn effectively.

The evaluators of the project have found that:

> *"A `non-jargoned' language around inclusive education has been developed as most of the people involved had never been exposed to the 'special needs' language. The central involvement of very disadvantaged schools within very poor communities has contributed to the creation of this new language."*

They also said that:

> *"The `non-jargoned' language that has been developed in the three pilot projects refers to a way of thinking and talking about inclusive education that challenges the historical understandings around 'special needs' and the belief that you need specialized knowledge'' to address these challenges."*

> *"The language that the educators use to talk about inclusive education now, shows that they do understand the key challenges of the inclusive education policy. The language they use when talking about the barriers to learning, and finding ways to overcome them so that all learners can learn, is directly linked with their 'core purpose', which is teaching and learning."*

One of the evaluators said that the reason this project has been so successful in the pilot schools and districts is because:

> "*Prior knowledge has not had to be undone. People have been able to understand the connections between what they already know, and the new knowledge they need to understand in order to implement inclusive education."*

By encouraging other schools, districts and sectors to take an interest in the pilot project

Many of the role players participating in this evaluation said that there has been a 'ripple effect' from this pilot project. They explained that the 'good practices' developed in the pilot schools and districts have influenced other schools and districts. How this has happened at different levels in the system is shown in the examples below.

Example 1 – within Schools*:*

> *"This project, and the process of implementing inclusive education, had a generally positive 'spin-off' or ripple effect on the general development of the school. This includes helping to develop a team spirit in the school, and helping many schools to deal with issues such as discipline."*

Example 2 -- in the Districts:

> "*The changes in the pilot schools has a ripple effect on the other schools in the district. This has been optimized by some of the pilot schools that have 'mobilised' for inclusive education in the district."*

Example 3 - in the Department of Education:

> *"The 'ripple effect' of the implementation of inclusive education through this project has also been felt by other 'levels of education' in the Department. In particular, Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) have taken on board issues around the inclusion of learners that were previously excluded, especially disabled learners. For example, traditionally ABET and Special Needs never worked together. Through the involvement of an ABET person in the project, the official has been able to make contact*

with adults with disabilities who have not had access to ABET services in the past. Similarly, their increased awareness has enabled them to start being proactive in bringing adult disabled people from surrounding communities into existing ABET services."

By showing the commitment of top Department of Education officials

The commitment to the pilot project shown by the 'top' national and provincial Department of Education officials was a very important motivating factor in this project. This is what the evaluators said about the commitment of these education officials:

"The visit of members of the National Directorate on Inclusive Education to the provincial office helped a lot to get people outside of the special needs area to recognize that this is an important issue for them as well. Since then, there has been more commitment and involvement from other people in the department."

"Committed and sustained involvement of provincial education officials in this project has had a very positive effect. For example, it has helped the district to have a strong statement from the provincial office that all new buildings or renovations to buildings must be accessible."

By having `champions' to promote inclusive education

In addition to the positive impact of the 'commitment shown from the top', many highlighted the need for 'champions', or dedicated posts and structures to ensure that inclusive education is taken seriously and integrated into central provincial planning and programmes. This is what the evaluators said about this:

"The project has shown the importance of having a 'champion' or dedicated person(s) to drive the process of implementation. In particular, this has been shown through the project coordinator who has been a very positive force in the successful implementation of inclusive education in this district and province. Successful implementation requires a core group of committed people at district and provincial levels … you need a critical mass for sustainability."

By raising money and allocating resources to promote and support inclusive education

The Department of Education was responsible for raising money from the government of Denmark to support the pilot project. However it is clear from the comments from teachers, schools and the evaluators, that a lot more money will be required to support the successful implementation of inclusive education.

"All role players identified existing conditions in the schools as a major challenge for inclusive education. The issues identified include lack of physical resources in the school as well as the overcrowding in the classrooms. The impoverished conditions under which many of the learners live and learn contribute to a range of barriers identified."

This is a reality that must be addressed in implementing inclusive education in South Africa. Some people feel that you cannot implement inclusive education when *"the basics are not there".* However, some of the successes in the pilot project make it clear that it is also possible to *use* inclusive education projects as a *way* of putting some of these basics in place!

A second important point about resources that was raised in this evaluation is the need to use *existing* resources more creatively. One example of how this was done in one district was where:

"existing human resources were optimized through the use of the College of Education lecturers to help with the training of teachers and the action research support in classrooms."

By promoting new attitudes and developing respect for diversity

The Department of Education's inclusive education policy actively promotes new attitudes and respect for diversity or differences between people. For this reason, the pilot project focused on facilitating this attitude change through formal educational events like teacher training and capacity building programmes. In addition, other strategies were also used to facilitate this. For example, by facing teachers and schools with the reality of having to include learners with disabilities in their classes, and then giving them the support to develop positive attitudes to do this. In the same way, at district levels, people with disabilities were included as leaders in project teams, and different officials and professions were given opportunities to work together. This helped them to develop a common understanding and a common language to understand and respond to the challenge of providing support to the schools.

This is what the evaluators said about the Department of Education's efforts to change people's attitudes:

"This project has had a 'life impact' on peoples' attitudes. The attitudes of all the role players were changed positively as a result of the introduction to the new policy."

"These attitude changes have related mainly to the development of an awareness of the rights of children with disabilities to receive education. As a result, attitudes towards 'differences' became more positive, particularly in terms of attitudes towards people with disabilities."

Challenges we still have to face

The various forms of support discussed in this chapter played a major role in the success of the three pilot projects. It is vital that similar, and even greater support is provided to other areas implementing inclusive education in future. This applies both to the expansion of inclusive education to all schools in each of the three provinces, and to its implementation in the other provinces. The lessons learned from the evaluation of the pilot project provide important guidelines with regard to the kinds of support required, and should be taken seriously.

Particularly significant is the fact that there is strong evidence in favour of well-supported, small-scale pilot programmes, rather than large scale, less well supported implementations.

The significant commitment shown by senior education officials at national, provincial and district levels during the pilot project is a vital dimension of this support. Similarly, making sure that there are dedicated inclusive education `champions' at all levels of the system is a critical motivating factor to maintain.

The important role played by the training and capacity building programmes and the materials in translating policy into classroom practice, challenging beliefs, changing attitudes and developing new values and a new, more easily understood language about inclusive education cannot be underestimated.

Dedicated time, human and materials resources, including money, and ongoing effort are clearly required to achieve the required changes successfully.

CHAPTER 8

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT ABOUT PUTTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION INTO PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The aim of this chapter is to summarise what has been learned about implementing inclusive education in the pilot projects in three provinces in South Africa. The lessons that have been learned from the experiences of the pilot project provide important guidelines for the expansion of inclusive education into all school and provinces in South Africa. Similarly, it is also hoped that they may provide useful guidelines for the introduction of inclusive education in other countries with similar histories and educational and scio-economic conditions.

In this chapter, the lessons we have learned have been summarised from each of the chapters in this book, and presented chapter by chapter.

Chapter 1

What we have learnt about what the National Department of Education did to introduce inclusive education in South Africa

- The Department of Education did a full investigation into the education system for learners with `special education needs' that it inherited from the previous government. It then developed its new policy for inclusive education after the investigation had been completed. This was important to make sure that the new policy addressed actual needs in the country.

- The Department's new policy included a clear explanation of why inclusive education was necessary to change the whole education system. It also included clear guiding principles for the implementation

of the policy, and clear goals to aim at. These are all important because they help people to understand why things need to change and what the changes will be. They also help to motivate people to want to be part of the change. Without clear explanations, guiding principles and achievable goals, it is difficult to persuade teachers and other educators to change.

- The Department developed a clear action plan to be implemented over twenty years with short, medium and long-term goals. This is important to give all stakeholders a realistic idea of the size of the challenge, and a sense of how much time and effort will be required to achieve the goals. Without such a framework, it would be easy for educators to become disillusioned and give up trying to make a difference.

- The Department showed its commitment to implementing the policy by raising funds to implement the pilot project. This has had an important motivating effect because it showed that the Department was serious about delivering on its promises.

- The Department commissioned an evaluation of the pilot project to make sure that it can learn from the experiences, successes and challenges of the pilot projects. It did this in order to make sure that it is able to plan the best possible way to expand inclusive education into all schools in the country.

Chapter 2

What we have learnt about supporting implementation through teacher training, capacity building and materials

- Materials played an important role in supporting the pilot project. Teachers, parents, education officials and other role players found it useful to have materials to refer to. These materials do, however,

need to be relevant and accessible to *all* the role players. This means drawing on and responding to local needs and issues; making sure that the materials are in line with inclusive education and OBE; and making sure that they are easy to read and understand.

- Learning theories that focus on experiential and mediating learning need to be built into a strategy for capacity building programmes. This means paying serious attention to taking educators and others 'from where they *really* are, to where they need to be'.

- Training teachers and developing the capacity of SGBs, ISTs, education officials and members of the DSTs are essential. Human and material resources therefore need to be allocated to this important strategy for 'change'.

- 'Training and classroom support' within a school-based approach has been a successful teacher training model. This has taken the form of workshops and classroom action research that are built into the school's staff development programmes. Training and capacity building programmes developed by the Department of Education need to include these ingredients.

- The consortiums (including universities and NGOs) played a very valuable role in the development of the training and capacity building programmes in the pilot project. The Department of Education needs to look at ways of building partnerships with these sectors to address the massive teacher development and capacity building needs in the country.

- *Integrating* inclusive education into the Department' of Education's OBE training and support programmes is critical. This means that at

district and other levels of education management, integrated planning and programmes need to be developed.

- Capacity building programmes were developed for ISTs, SGBs, DSTs, and, in some instances, members of the community. Programmes focused particularly on parents also need to be developed. In addition, programmes for learners need to be developed in order to build their capacity to support and teach one another within a 'peer-support' framework.

- The DSTs have a crucial role to play in supporting schools to address barriers to learning in their own contexts. Most education and other government department officials do not feel equipped to fulfil the roles and functions expected of them. Capacity building programmes need to be developed and delivered for them. In addition, clear guidelines for the roles and functions of these teams need to be developed as a matter of urgency.

Chapter 3

What we have learnt about putting inclusive education into practice in classrooms

- Action research is a very valuable strategy for helping teachers to improve or change the way they teach. It allows them to experiment with putting the principles of inclusive education into practice. This strategy should be built into all ongoing staff development programmes in schools.

- It is important to help teachers to understand the link between inclusive education and OBE, and that OBE *is* based on an inclusive framework. This will help to reduce feelings of 'policy overload', and promote the practical implementation of OBE.

- Understanding the barriers that interfere with successful teaching and learning helps teachers to ‘teach better’. It also helps them to prevent the exclusion of learners. It is important to show teachers how these barriers link directly with the process of teaching and learning so that they understand that addressing these barriers is *central* to being a good teacher.

- Teachers are being forced to address psychosocial barriers to learning such as poverty, substance abuse, sexual abuse, violence, and HIV/AIDS *in their classrooms.* It is important to give teachers guidance on how to address these challenges, and how to get help from the IST and DST when necessary.

- The challenge of addressing the needs of learners with disabilities in ‘ordinary’ schools will be more easily addressed when teachers are faced with having these learners in their classes. This will enable them to confront their fears and discover that they can include them in their classrooms. In other words, we don’t need to wait until ‘the teachers or the schools are ready’ before we include learners with disabilities in their classes. Teachers will be able to respond to the full range of learning needs in their classrooms if they are given the chance, and the necessary support to do so.

- Other government departments and community organizations can help to find and bring the ‘youth out of school’ and the children and youth with disabilities into our schools. For this reason, it is important to find ways to work together with these institutions and organizations to achieve this. It is especially important to work with DPOs and parents of children with disabilities.

- Teachers have a central role in addressing negative attitudes towards those who are ‘different’ in their classrooms. This is

particularly the case with regard to learners experiencing disabilities. They can do this in two main ways: by *modelling* respect for diversity in their own behaviour, and by *facilitating* respect between learners.

Chapter 4

What we have learnt about putting inclusive education into practice in schools

- It is possible to develop schools that are accessible to people with physical disabilities, even with limited resources. To achieve this, it is important that (a) education officials in charge of physical planning understand the challenges of inclusive education, and include this in their central planning and projects; (b) community groups and people are brought in to help to make schools safe and accessible; and (c) funds are allocated to this in the provincial budgets.

- Through training and ongoing support, SGBs should be assisted to (a) understand the key challenges of inclusive education, and then (b) develop their own school policies and governance practices in line with these challenges.

- School principals have an important role to play in developing inclusive schools. It is important to ensure that they are provided with the necessary capacity building to do this task. This will enable them to become meaningfully involved in and committed to developing their schools into places of teaching and learning that include all members of the school community.

- ISTs have a central role to play in providing direct support to teachers. It is important to support schools to set up these teams, and to help them to make them work.

- The collaborative problem-solving approach used in the ISTs has been very successful in finding solutions to problems. It helps teachers to work together as teams to solve common problems. This way of working to address barriers to learning should be supported through training and, where necessary, support from the DST.

Chapter 5

What we have learnt about school-community relationships in inclusive education

- Parents have a very important role to play in helping to build inclusive schools. The challenge is to find ways to involve parents much more, and to learn to work with them as *partners* on practical projects.

- Building good community-school relationships includes the ability to identify community resources that can be used to address barriers to learning. Schools and district teams need to be helped to do this. From this, schools and districts can develop Resource Directories of the names and contact details of organizations that can help them to address the many challenges in their schools.

- NGOs can play a very important role in helping schools to address barriers to learning. Ways need to be found to involve these organizations in helping the ISTs and DSTs to do their work.

- DPOs, people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities to help with the training and support to schools and DSTs is important. It has a major impact on the development of positive attitudes towards diversity and people with disabilities. It is important to make sure that they are involved in leadership positions in schools and at district level.

- It is important to include community leaders in developing inclusive schools and their surrounding communities. Efforts should be made to include them in this way.

- Community health workers can help schools to develop strong school-community relationships. This contributes towards addressing various psychosocial barriers to learning in schools. It is important, that the Departments of Health and Education find concrete, practical ways to make this possible.
- The `health promoting school' is a very successful strategy for providing the common 'space' to do the above. It should be promoted at all levels in the Departments of Health and Education. It has also proved to be one of the most successful strategies for developing strong community-school relationships.

Chapter 6

What we have learnt about district support for inclusive education

- If special schools are to play the important role of acting as a resource centres for other schools, they need support themselves. This support needs to include: (a) training and ongoing support within the 'training and support' model used in the Inclusive Education Pilot Project; (b) enough staff to meet the challenge of doing their own work, and supporting 'ordinary' schools at the same

time; and (c) infra-structural support such as transport to facilitate their 'support' role to 'ordinary' schools.

- Department of Education district education officials and members of the DSTs need to receive capacity building to fulfil their roles in supporting schools.

- In order to provide the kinds of support schools need, education officials and support teams at all levels of the system need to develop (a) relevant structures to facilitate 'working together', and (b) integrated planning processes and programmes.

- The Department of Education *has* to work with other government departments if it is going to successfully address the many infra-structural and psychosocial barriers to learning experienced in schools in South Africa. Concrete, practical strategies to support 'working together' need to be found. Because of the education focus in this case, the Department of Education will need to take the 'lead'. Included in these concrete strategies is the need for the clarification of the roles and functions of all the role players concerned.

Chapter 7

What we have learnt about how district, provincial and national leaders and managers supported inclusive education

- This project has shown that a combination of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' strategies to policy implementation works. This means that the direction and 'push' from the top needs to continue and be further developed at national and provincial levels. It also means that the kind of teacher development model that has been developed in this project needs to be pursued. That is, by

integrating a combination of workshops and ongoing action research support into school-based staff development programmes.

- The school-based training and action research approach has proved to be very successful in implementing inclusive education in the pilot three districts. Every effort should be made to continue and expand this approach throughout the country. This will need creative thinking given the time and human resource demands involved in implementing such a strategy.

- The 'top-down push' means that senior education officials in *all directorates, at national and provincial levels*, are made aware of the importance of the challenges relating to White Paper 6. This should be done in such a way that they become committed to supporting the implementation of this policy throughout their structures and processes.

- A strong finding of the evaluation was that the clear commitment to inclusive education shown by top national, provincial and district officials had a very positive effect on the implementation of the pilot project. Every effort must be made to ensure that such commitment is demonstrated in every phase of the expansion of the implementation process.

- Inclusive education 'champions' and dedicated posts and structures are necessary to ensure that this policy is implemented at all levels of the system.

- Teachers have managed to integrate the principles and challenges of inclusive education in their classroom practices because they have used their *own* language. This language has developed out of their own experiences of expressing and understanding what 'inclusive education' is all about. This has meant that they have

avoided using the ‘special needs’ language and categorization processes and have understood that inclusive education is about the right of all learners to good education. This is a very important learning for *all* concerned, including specialist support personnel who have been trained in traditional ‘special needs’ ways of defining problems and solutions. We need to build on this ‘indigenous’ way of implementing inclusive education in South Africa. This will help all educators and support providers to develop a common ‘classroom’ language that benefits the teaching and learning process for all.

- Many of the role players in this evaluation said that this project has had a ‘ripple’ effect within individual schools, districts, and beyond. The positive experiences in the pilot schools have helped others to understand the challenges of inclusive education and start to respond to them. This means that it is worthwhile to put resources into developing small groups of people at all levels, who can develop ‘good practices’ to share with others around them. The experience of the pilot project suggests that it is better to allocate money and other resources to fewer schools, with more intensive support; than to many schools, but with very little support. This may be a more effective and efficient way to expand implementation over the next 20 years.

- Implementing inclusive education in South Africa needs resources. All possible strategies for getting intensive funding support over the next few years need to be pursued to ensure that there is enough money to implement the policy effectively. Very important is money to pay for essential posts, particularly `champions’ of inclusive education at the different levels, and money for infra-structural support.

- It is also important to find creative ways to use *existing* resources. This includes using the *people* already in the Department of Education in the best possible ways. This is possible if more integrated planning takes place, and if currently under-utilised staff are used to help with implementing this and other education policies. For example, College Lecturers who do not have Colleges anymore.

- A very strong finding from this evaluation is that the attitudes of teachers, district officials, and various support providers changed positively through their exposure to White Paper 6 and the practical challenges of putting it into practice. For this reason, 'communication' strategies need to be developed to raise awareness amongst all role players in the country. Similarly, we need to trust that attitudes will develop positively when people are faced with the practical challenge of having to make inclusive education work, and are given the support to do this.

Conclusion

The Inclusive Education Pilot Project has been the first step taken towards introducing inclusive education into all schools in the country. The evaluation of the pilot project has shown that there is much that can be learnt from the work that has been down in the three pilot districts.

Because of the apartheid history of the country, there were many difficult challenges to be faced. In spite of these challenges, many important successes were achieved. The stories in this book give a clear picture of the kinds of challenges involved in implementing inclusive education on a small scale, and the successes that were achieved in spite of them. The strategy of 'thinking nationally, but acting locally' and intensively in small pilot projects, has worked well. However, the stories from the pilot project also remind us of the many challenges that remain to be faced at every level of the education system connected to the pilot areas.

Expanding the implementation of inclusive education to the rest of the schools in the pilot provinces, and to schools in other provinces, will present all of these challenges on a much larger scale. It is important to remember this, and to plan the expansion process carefully, bearing in mind the lessons learnt from the pilot project. Hopefully, this book will be both an inspiration and a guide to those responsible for planning the next phases of implementation.

It would not be fitting to end this phase of the inclusive education story without acknowledging the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of the many people involved in the pilot project. Like many revolutionary change processes, this project demanded that all role players continued to do their normal work of providing good quality education. At the same time, it demanded that they work hard to gain new knowledge and develop new attitudes and skills. Then it demanded that, in spite of many challenges, they strive to find ways of putting their new knowledge, attitudes and skills into practice in new inclusive ways of working.

The Department of Education would like to thank every person who made a contribution towards the success of the pilot project. Your efforts have prepared the way for the development of an inclusive education system that will give all people equal opportunities to be educated in South Africa.