education

Department:
Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Building an Inclusive Education and Training System

A guide for parents, caregivers and communities

Based on the Education White Paper 6 – Special Needs Education

2003

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Objectives of this booklet:

This booklet has been designed and developed as a tool to mobilise parents and communities through:

- Raising awareness among parents, caregivers and communities about White Paper 6
- Informing parents, caregivers and communities about White Paper 6 and how it will be implemented
- Mobilising and encouraging parents and communities to become part of support structures involved in the successful and sustained implementation of White Paper 6
- Providing information about the rights and responsibilities of parents about the education of their children
- Providing information about where parents could go for help.

Section 1: The reasons for a change in Special Needs Education

The ministry of Education investigated the provision of support services for Special Needs Education in South Africa and their main findings were:

- These services were denied to the majority of learners with disabilities who needed them. Very few special schools existed and they only accommodate 20% of all learners with disabilities in the country.
- This resulted in a significant number of learners with special needs not being educated at all. Between 260 000 and 280 000 learners with disabilities or impairments are not catered for in the current special education / are out of school.
- Only learners categorised as having medical disabilities currently have access to support programmes as provided by Specialised Education.
- Many learners experience barriers to learning - which originate from, for example poverty, their experience of emotional trauma such as violence and/or the death of a family member, being over aged.- Such learners currently do not receive proper support to overcome these barriers.
- Under Apartheid Special schools originating from Apartheid were provided according to race and the type of disability. Schools for white disabled learners were extremely well-resourced whilst the few schools for black disabled learners were systematically under-resourced.
- Serious imbalances also exist among the provinces, especially the number of learners catered for per province, the number of special schools per province, the amount of money spent on special education, the accommodation of black and rural children in schools. (e.g. R16 000 spent / learner in Special School and R2 000 spent / learner in ordinary school and still many learners from Special schools did not find work / was not trained for inclusion in open labour market)
- At other levels of Education such as Adult Basic Education and Tertiary Education learners experiencing barriers to learning have alos been neglected.

- The Ministry of Education was also guided by the following values and principles of our national Constitution which entitles all learners to:

    - their human rights, dignity and social justice
    - freedom of choice
    - be part of society and be supported by the community
    - have equal access to a single, inclusive education system
    - have equal opportunities and redress for past imbalances
    - have access to services that government can afford

Section 2a: An Inclusive Framework

In the past learners experiencing barriers to learning were ***mainstreamed - in other words they had to adapt to fit into the mainstream***. This meant that some learners were assessed and diagnosed by specialists who most often recommended that they be enrolled in a special or 'remedial' programme for 'treatment' and 'spesialised' teaching which would enable them to overcome their problems and 'fit' into the regular learning environment. Specialised support was mostly only available in segregated settings. This meant that most of these learners had nowhere to go.

"Peter is a learner with physical disability who uses crutches and calipers and who has been mainstreamed into his local neighbourhood school. He coped well with all the academic work in Grade 1, 2 and 3. But when he went to Grade 4 he started to change classes and some subjects were offered in classes on the upper floor. He ***could not cope with climbing the stairs everyday and came late to many of the classes.*** *The MAINSTREAM principal advised the family to take Peter to a special school which is accessible as* ***Peter does not fit into his school and his school is not geared*** *towards dealing with children with physical disabilities such as Peter!*

Inclusion however implies that the system has to adapt to make it possible for each learner to reach his full potential. The focus is on overcoming the barriers in the system so that the full range of learning and other needs of all learners can be met. This system will be organised in such a way that various levels and kinds of support can be provided in a wider range of learning sites to ALL learners and educators.

When Peter could not cope with climbing up and down the stairs all day the INCLUSION principal realised that his school (the system) was not accommodating this learner and he decided to make a plan. The management team decided to ***move all the senior teachers to the lower ground level, to group Peter's classes together*** *and to move the Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers to the upper level (as these learners do not rotate classes). The teachers had to move classes during the April holidays and* ***senior learners were asked to assist the staff*** *with carrying their materials up and down. People at first were negative about the change but in time it proved to be the best for all learners! Peter also had a team of* ***buddies who took turns in assisting him to carry his school bag*** *from class to class! The school management team also decided to apply to the Department of Education to adapt the school building to be accessible for learners with physical disabilities.*

The framework for Inclusive Education and Training in South Africa will:

- Recognise that ALL children and youth can learn and ALL need support which need not always be provided by specialists
- Accept that ALL learners are different and have different learning needs
- Recognise and accept differences in learning needs which may be linked to: age, language, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases
- Be aware that learning also occurs at home (cooking, cleaning and housekeeping), in the community (how to catch a taxi), within formal structures (school) and informal structures (friendship circle)
- Provide types of education which are suitable to all learners
- Give attention to or trying to remove barriers in order to increase participation of all learners
- Change attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, learning materials and buildings to provide for all learners
- Empower learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate in the process of learning

Section 2b: Barriers to learning

Barriers are anything standing in the way of or that makes it difficult for the learner to learn effectively and participate fully in the curriculum.

If barriers to learning are not addressed by appropriate interventions or strategies it can lead to learning breakdown and result in the exclusion of learners from the curriculum, the education and training system and ultimately community life and the world of work.

*Thabo is a learner with a **speech impairment who usually stutters**. He attends his local neighbourhood school. When he went to buy food from the tuckshop the attendants in the tuckshop got impatient with him and felt akward about waiting such a long time for him to get a word out. They started serving other children, ignoring him which resulted in him not being served for three days in a row. Back in class Thabo became **moody, naughty** and on top of it all, became involved in a **fight over another child's food and sweets**.*
*He was beaten and when Mrs Komape saw him crying after the fight she sat down and gave him **enough time** to speak his mind. She made a plan and said Thabo should **write what he wanted on a piece of paper before second break** and take it to the tuck shop whenever he wanted to buy something. She also **talked to the tuck shop attendants** and made sure they knew about the plan. She did not find this tip / intervention / strategy in a specialised text book, she just had a willing attitude to see all her learners being part of the school.*

Different learners experience different barriers to learning. Barriers to learning can come from within the learner or from within the education and training system. Many of these barriers exist at present and can be:

- Systemic e.g. lack of basic and appropriate learning support materials, assistive devices, inadequate facilities at schools, overcrowded classrooms, language of instruction, lack of communication, etc.
- Societal e.g. severe poverty, late enrolment at school, poverty, difficult home environment (e.g. child-headed families), etc.
- Rooted in inappropriate teaching methods, insufficient support of educators, inappropriate and unfair assessment procedures, etc.
- Could also emerge from disabilities that are located in the learner, e.g. neurological (epilepsy), physical, sensory (blind,deaf), cognitive, developmental (slow learners).

Many of these barriers may not exist at present but may arise at any time during the process of learning such as:

- Emotional trauma related to violence or the death of a family member
- HIV impacts on the learning of children and youth when they are left in so called child-headed families bearing the responsibilities of caring for younger siblings
- Parents losing their income can change economic circumstances at home and result in being a barrier to learning

Itumeleng is the eldest of four children, 15 years old in grade 6 of her local neighbourhood school. All her brothers and sisters are in the same school. Her teacher observed that Itumeleng was getting very thin. When she discussed this in the staff room the teachers of Itumeleng's sisters and brother agreed. They phoned the work number of the father and was told that the dad had lost his job the previous year due to being absent from work for long periods of time. When teachers from the school based support team did a home visit they found a shack with only the children and no food. The father and mother had passed away in the previous six months due to ***HIV related illnesses****. Itumeleng was experiencing barriers to learning, namely her* ***emotional trauma and new adult responsibility****.*

Section 3: The new Inclusive Education and Training System

Six key strategies

1. Improve special schools and convert 30 schools into **resource or support centers** integrated into the district-based support teams (2001 – 2009). Expanding the number of resource centers (2010 - 2021)
2. Conversion of approximately 30 of the 20 000 mainstream primary schools to **full service schools** (2001 – 2009) which will serve as models for 500 such schools in future (2010 – 2021)
3. Establishment of **District–based support teams** starting with 30 school districts (2001 – 2009) and expanding the number of teams (2004 – 2008 – 2021)
4. Reaching out to and mobilising the disabled children and youth outside of the schools system (2001 – 2015)
5. Orientation and introduction of all staff in mainstream education to the inclusion model, early identification as well as intervention in the Foundation Phase (2001 – 2008)
6. Implementing a national advocacy and information program in support of the inclusion model (2001 –2011)

Inclusive Education will take time to develop and dedicated financial and human resources will be needed to make this a success.

Role of District Support Teams

The key to reducing barriers to learning lies in a strengthened education support service. District support teams will

- be started in 30 districts throughout the nine provinces
- provide qualified staff from provincial, district, regional and head offices and from special schools
- provide development staff, curriculum staff, professional support staff, teachers from resource center (old special school)
- revise norms and standards for teacher education to include competencies needed in inclusive education
- re-structure the 80 hours annual in-service education for teachers to provide for training on inclusive education / provide access for educators to appropriate pre-service and in-service training
- review conditions of service and post-provisioning to accommodate inclusive education
- evaluate programmes and their effectiveness and suggest modifications to help all learning needs
- provide illustrative learning programmes, learner support material and equipment, assessment tools, etc
- put the needs of learners most profoundly affected by barriers to learning before thoseof other learners with mild to moderate disabilities
- will assist educators in creating greater flexibility in their teaching methods and assessment
- prepare schools for the arrival of learners experiencing barriers to learning.
- provide secure care, high level support and psycho-social needs of learners
- assist centers to recognise and accommodate a range of learning needs

Role of Special schools

The Special school has a very important role to play. Thirty Special schools will be converted into resource centers in 30 selected districts.

Special schools will

- provide education services to learners with severe and multiple disabilities who require intense / high levels of support
- not accommodate learners who require much less support and should ideally be in mainstream classes
- extend their services beyond the classroom to other schools in the district
- function as part of the district support team to neighbourhood receive staff training for their new roles

Susan and Ansuja are two friends who had previously attendeda special school. Susan is partially sighted and Ansuja is physically disabled (wheelchair–user).
Susan had been in a hostel andAnsuja had to travel by bus every morning to the special school. Now they both live around the corner from the local school and can go there by using public transport, the wheelchair and the assistance of school friends.
The school which they have just joined is one of the full service schools in the area. They are scared about how they will be received but enjoy the idea that they will be going to school with their siblings.

To prepare the school for their arrival a district support team was formed and one of the good and experienced teachers of the nearby special school was appointed as a district support team member. She assisted the school by talking to the teachers about adapting learning material for Susan (e.g. bigger print) and how to organise their classes in such a way that both girls could participate in the group work. She also gave some advice to Susan and her teachers about phoning home or involving her mother if needed. The circuit manager of the school arranged the building of ramps and the widening of some doors. The principal organised that some children / buddies would welcome the two girls on their first day and show them around the school.

Role of Full service schools

Full service schools are so called "ordinary" primary schools identified by the department of Education. A full service school will

- be based in each of 30 selected districts
- be provided with physical, material (equipment / devices) and human resources
- receive training and professional development for staff
- make provision for the full range of learning needs and address all barriers to learning
- receive special attention to develop flexibility in teaching styles and assessment
- be made available to out of school youth and adult learners
- be carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure that their cultures, practices and policies are becoming increasingly inclusive
- receive support to create a school that is barrier-free with regard to its physical facilities, but also the attitudes of everyone.
- be assisted by the district support teamsto establish institution-based support teams

*Kgomotso is a **child with Down Syndrome**. He is a boy with intellectual disability and has **difficulty with speaking**. Although he cannot express himself very well he can understand every word that is said. He is 9 years old and has never attended primary school before. His parents did not want to send him away to a hostel at such a young age and they put him on a waiting list of another school but have not heard from the school for 2 years. His grandmother has been looking after him and he goes with her to church and to the shops.*

*Kgomotso's mother contacted the Down Syndrome Association and asked them to accompany her to the local school and advocate for her child to be integrated. Being a full service school the principal agreed and asked the Association to **sensitise his staff members and the children in the school** about Down syndrome and what to expect He also wanted to know how the association could assist the school.*

*Kgomotso's teacher Mrs Mashiani got **additional information** about how children with Down Syndrome learn, how to adapt the curriculum for the child and how to evaluate / assess his progress at his own level.*

*Today he will be going to the local school with his older brother and his mother and grandmother. They are worried that he will be **teased and called names** but Kgomotso is very excited about going to the big school. He will be included among children of his age, he will learn skills which will enable him to get a job one day. In spite of everything he will for sure learn more (even just from his peers) than being at home with his Grandmother!*

Role of classroom educators

Classroom educators will be our primary resource for reaching the goal of inclusive education. This means that:

- Educators will need to improve their skills and knowledge and develop new ones
- Mainstream educators will need to engage in multi-level classroom instruction, co-operative learning, curriculum enrichment, dealing with behavioural problems
- Special school educators will need to orientate themselves within district support services, develop new approaches that focus on problem solving, developing the learner's strengths and competencies rather that focusing on their shortcomings only.
- Full service school educators will need to focus on all the above mentioned skills
- District support personnel will need to be orientated and trained in providing support to other teachers, emphasising good teaching strategies which will benefit all learners, overcoming barriers, adaptation of curriculum

Section 4: Roles and responsibilities of parents/caregivers

To make inclusive education work well, parents/caregivers need to begin with this inclusive approach from the birth of the child. Integrate your child in the family and community life in order to prepare him and the community for the future.

In addition, parents/caregivers need to focus on developing approriate behaviour in their children at home in order for them to accept discipline at school.
Parents/caregivers should try to develop the communication skills (listening, speaking and signing) of their child as far as possible.

There are some very specific roles that parents can play in support of their child's education. For example:

1. Parents who know their rights within the framework of legislation and policy

As parents we need to understand the White Paper 6 and opportunities it brings to our children. Parents must position themselves in such a way that they can make sure policy is put into practice. This can be done by serving on the school governing body / committees or by being a watchdog, writing to the National Education Department and reporting cases where the policy is not put into practice.

2. Parents as activists / advocates

Sometimes parents would have to challenge outdated approaches and prejudice in the community. Parents need to insist on behalf of their children for better facilities and services and for the rights of their children to be protected such as:

- trying to get a local taxi organisation to provide transport to the nearby school
- investigating how specific support can be obtained for you child to be effectively and fully included
- introduce ways in which educators can cope with different learning needs

- report schools that apply admission policies which exclude certain learners

3. Set up networks

Parents can set up or affiliate to support groups and link to local structures and professionals striving towards inclusive education. Be aware of important contact addresses and how to get help

4. Parents supporting educators

- As the primary care givers families know the learner very well. They know the developmental and medical history of the child, his strengths and weaknesses, joys and dreams as well as disappointments. Information always needs to be shared with educators.
- The special understanding parents have about their children needs to be respected by educators.
- Care givers or family members can go into the class and assist the teacher with minor tasks as volunteers / general helpers.
- Parents can assist in completing class work that could not be finished in class.

Parents keeping regular contact through regular interviews and / or a school-home message book can assist the educator in coping with the diversity in her class.

5. Parents raising awareness

Parents need to be positive about their own children and their potential from the outset. Believe in your child! Start as an individual to do public awareness raising about inclusive education by talking to family, friends and professionals. Also take part in organised initiatives to raise awareness in order to get rid of negative attitudes towards disability. Be an agent for positive change!!

Section 5: Where to go for help?

Parents need to be aware of important contact numbers of key role players who can network with them and assist them to make inclusive education come true for their children.

National Structures that could be contacted

National Department of Education
Inclusive Education Directorate (012) 312 5349 / Fax (012) 312 5029
123 Schoeman street, Pretoria. 0001
Private Bag X895, Pretoria, 0001

Local structures that could be contacted

Provincial Department of Education – Directorates for Inclusive Education

Gauteng Department of Education
Private Bag X7710
Johannesburg
2000
Tel. (011) 011 355 0331
Fax (011) 355 0970

Eastern Cape Department of Education
Private Bag X 0032
Bisho
5605

Tel. (040) 6084214/9
Fax 040- 608 4276

Northern Cape Department of Education
Private Bag X 5029
Kimberley
8300
Tel. (053) 839 6673
Fax (053) 839 6580/1

Western Cape Department of Education
Private Bag X 9114
Cape Town
8000
Tel. (021) 467 2027/8
Fax (021) 425 7465

North West Department of Education
Private Bag X1256
Potchefstroom
8681
Tel. (018) 389 8153
Fax (018) 389 8245/8

Limpopo Department of Education
Private Bag X 9489
Pietersburg
0700
Tel. (015) 290 7662
Fax (015) 297 4877

Mpumalanga Department of Education
P.O.Box 5265
Nelspruit
1200
Tel. (013) 766 5324
Fax (013) 766 5579/85/5593

Kwazulu Natal Department of Education
188 Pieter Maritz Street
Pietermaritzburg
3200
Tel. (033) 341 8522
Fax (033) 341 8600

Free State Department Of Education
Private Bag X 20565
Bloemfontein
9300
Tel. (051) 404 8234
Fax. (051) 404 8233

District Education office

Each Education district in South Africa has officials for Curriculum and Special Needs Education as well as circuit managers who are responsible for institutional development and the implementation of new policy in the district schools.