

Assessment of learners' needs: the key challenge in inclusive education

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**inclusive
education**

Content

- The South African context
- Policy principles and intentions
- Main implementation strategies
- The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
- Changing practice
- Impact
- Developing funding norms for an inclusive system in line with the UN Convention
- What does the future hold?



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Contextual realities being addressed by the policy

1. Uneven distribution of support services
2. Not every child can exercise his/her right to access his local neighbourhood school
3. Need to put into place a system which would ensure that all children get access to support
4. Need to provide more quality and appropriate education in all schools
5. Turn around drop out rates
6. Achieving Millennium Development Goals
7. Special school admissions still based on old acts, no consistency

Contextual realities

1. Disparities in special provision (90 314)
2. Mainstreamed with minimal support (**116,230**)
3. Out of school – 300,000 still unaccounted for – especially learners with severe and profound disability
4. Continued increase in enrolment in special schools



Deep rural areas – no access to special schools or support services unless in closest local school

Eastern Cape Full-Service School



**Systemic
problems**



**Overcrowding and lack of
resources – many contextual
barriers**

Other end of the spectrum



**Well-resourced urban
special school**

Transformation post-Apartheid: Legal and Constitutional Framework

- Social transformation - South African Constitution
- Education Legislation and Policies
 - ▶ South African Schools Act (Act 79 of 1996)
 - Allows for inclusion and support in mainstream
 - ▶ Education White Paper 6
 - Addresses all systemic measures to introduce inclusive education
 - ▶ All other education legislation and policies have inclusion as core principle, including the **National Curriculum Statement**

Vision of the South African Policy

Inclusive Education Policy

‘supporting **all learners** and the **education system as a whole** so that **a range of learning needs** can be met..... [It] focuses on **overcoming barriers** in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs’ (p.20)

White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System.

Department of Education (2001).

Shifts in thinking and Policy

‘special needs’

(within child deficit; medical deficit model)



**‘barriers to learning and
development’**

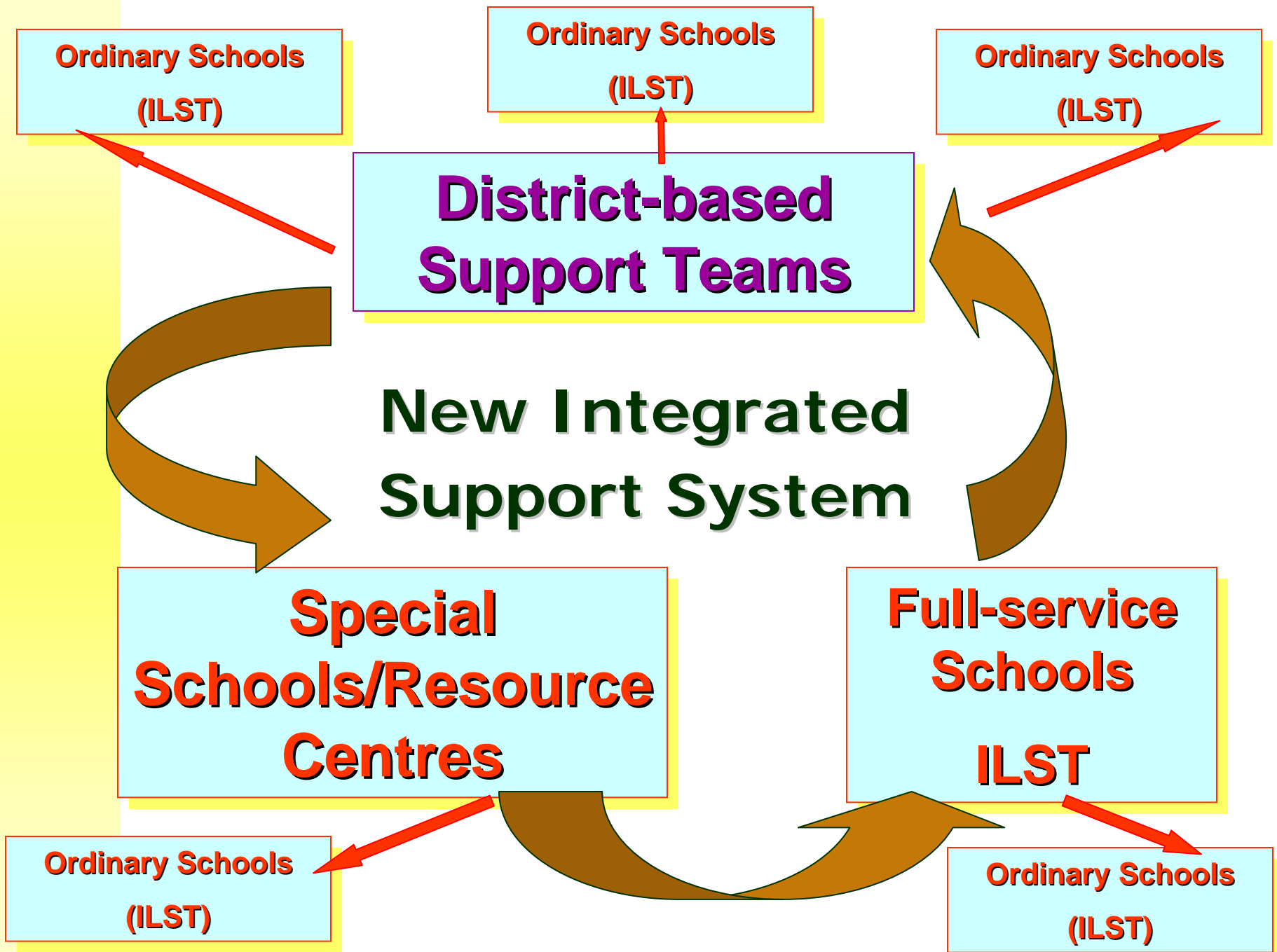
(systems change – social rights model)

What do we want to achieve with the Inclusive Education policy?

- From dual to single system
- Critical areas for the shift:
 - ◆ **Teaching practice** and response to learners
 - ▶ **Schools' development** of inclusive cultures, policies and practices
 - ▶ **Systems** and structures which support educators, managers and institutions

“The presence of a separate education system for exporting problems, reduces need for ordinary system to solve problems on home ground”

Markussen et al.(2003)



Many success stories



**Tsatsimfundo Primary –
Gert Sibande District,
Mpumalanga**

Challenges

- Consistent understanding and implementation of Inclusive Education
- Expanding initial and continued teacher development – both in Inclusive Education and areas of specialisation
- Deepening understanding of teachers and officials on how to differentiate the National Curriculum Statement in a meaningful way so that all learners can attain a real qualification.
- Understanding inclusive education as central to improving quality education for all
- Ensuring that all examples of good practice are shared and supported
- Dispelling myths about disability
- Attaining equality and redress

Two Key Strategies to Implement Inclusive Education

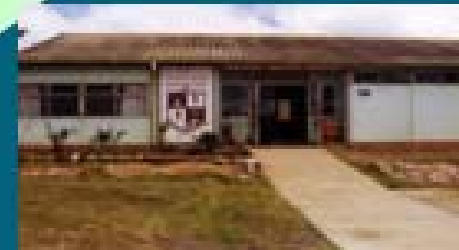
- Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
 - ◆ How do we identify the learners who have additional support needs as well as the barriers that are preventing them to reach their full potential
- Guidelines on Inclusive Learning programmes
 - ◆ How do we address barriers in the classroom and in the curriculum through the way in which we teach

What are the shifts in the system that the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support drives?



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SIAS PROCESS

AT RISK LEARNER IDENTIFIED

Stage 1

Learner needs and aspiration analysis

Learner Profile

SNA 1

Diagnostic Profile

Stage 2

Teacher Reflection and problem solving, parent consultation, identifying contextual barriers, curriculum differentiation

SNA 2

ISP

Stage 3

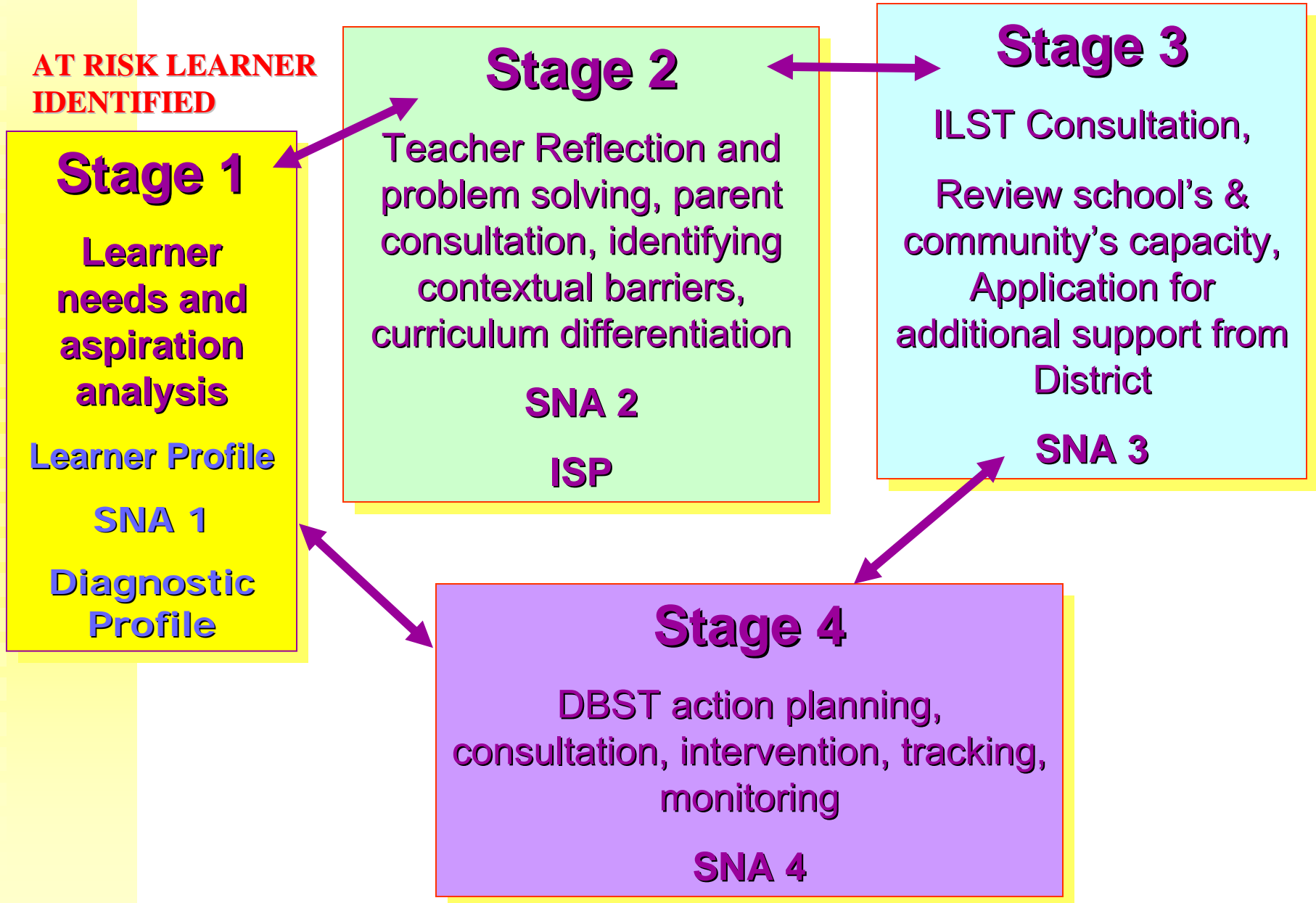
ILST Consultation, Review school's & community's capacity, Application for additional support from District

SNA 3

Stage 4

DBST action planning, consultation, intervention, tracking, monitoring

SNA 4



Main Intentions 1

- Providing guidance for support in the mainstream
- Halt the flow of learners with learning difficulties into special schools
- Mobilise out-of-school youth
- Ensure access to special services, facilities and support for especially learners from poor communities
- Link support to minimising of contextual barriers
- Do not only see category and severity of disability as an organiser for support
- Understand the functional limitations by applying an instrument based on International Classification of Functions (ICF) – aligned to Health tool.

Main Intentions 2

- Involve teachers, parents and learners in the assessment process.
- Introduce assessment practices, which outline the nature and level of support needed so that it can be funded appropriately.
- Not a placement tool but guides the provision of support in the school where the learner is
- Introduce a rigorous assessment and identification system to ensure a consistent process of screening, identification and funded support provision.
- Weight and fund support programmes

Defining Additional Support...

There are 5 specific support provision areas identified to be weighted:

1. Personnel
2. Assistive Technology/ Specialised LTSM
3. Curriculum Differentiation
...(implications for exams/assessment)
4. Training/HRD
5. Environmental Access

Impact of implementation

- Preliminary findings indicate that the strategy is welcomed by rural schools
- Acknowledges human rights and community involvement
- To some extent disconcerting but provocative for health professionals - requires a shift away from pathological-deficit models of “need” and a discourse of “expertism” towards “productive pedagogies” in which issues of social justice and equity are foregrounded
- Sees pedagogical practices as the core of support and encourages reflective professional development which results in sustainable “communities of knowledge” constantly engaging in systemic changes conducive to the needs of *all* pupils

“I am from Mojaho. When something is new, you think it is a monster. But when you start using it, you find that it is useful.”

Developing Funding Norms in line
with principles of Inclusive
Education and the the UN
Convention on the Rights of Persons
with Disabilities



**Assessment and Funding
measures that encourage
access for all children**

UN Convention Article 24:

Access to Education, Skills Development 1

- Equal access to education opportunities, irrespective of the severity of the disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- Specific needs of all learners experiencing barriers to learning are met.
- Facilitate the development of minimum norms and standards for the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Funding Norms to ensure an integrated system

- What works:
 - ◆ Focus on social as well as economic benefits
 - ◆ Allocations which encourage a unified system of education delivery
 - ◆ When discourse encompasses universal rights to education vs needs that are subject to cost availability
 - ◆ When allocations guarantee minimum level of support with adjustments for poverty indices and needed services at the local level
- What impacts negatively:
 - ◆ When allocations to schools are tied to performance standards that are affected by factors over which school has little control
 - ◆ When allocations encourage a dual system and segregation of SNE learners
 - ◆ When economic benefits rest on narrow conceptions of productivity
 - ◆ When learners must be labelled and categorized in order to receive appropriate services (Susan Peters, World Bank, 2004)

What does the future hold?

- The SIAS introduces procedures that promote inclusion
- Care must be taken that it does not become an exclusionary or segregating tool
- Emphasis must remain on arriving at a school, home and community based solution for support
- Systems change has to happen at all levels to ensure that inclusivity is interpreted as the responsibility of all role players and a prerequisite for quality education for all

Although **reasonable accommodation** and support are critical, the system should never use this as an excuse for denying access and the right to participation in society – thus leading to **segregation**.

- “ A child who is denied the opportunity of inclusive elementary schooling in their neighbourhood school is not only deprived as a youngster, but is also disabled throughout life by not being able to do the things that rely on reading, writing, social skills and the curiosity that is learned in school”
- “ It is the very essence of lives as “cared for” people and the contingent dependency that are the most important non-freedoms faced by disabled people. To be a passive recipient of services, income, and care disempowers and depoliticizes an individual. This includes the profoundly personal decisions of everyday life” (Amartya Sen, 1999)

Educators, education managers and education planners must all strive towards realising this goal of freedom, choice and participation.