

# QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

## Overcoming barriers to learning and development

REPORT OF THE  
National Commission on Special Needs in  
Education and Training (NCSNET)

National Committee on Education Support  
Services (NCESS)



Department of  
Education  
Pretoria  
28 November 1997

## 1. THE PROCESS

### 1.1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE NCSNET/NCESS

#### 1.1.1 Overall Purpose

The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) were appointed by the Minister and Department of Education to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of 'special needs' and support services in education and training in South Africa. The focus of the investigation is on the development of education to ensure that the system becomes more responsive to the diverse needs of *all* learners.

#### 1.1.2 Scope

##### 1.1.2.1 All Aspects and Levels or Bands of Education

This investigation covers *all levels or bands of education*: early childhood development, general education and training, further education and training, higher education, and adult education.

It should be noted that all issues, findings and recommendations outlined in this Report refer to *all* the bands of education referred to above unless specific reference is made to a specific band. At times this specificity is necessary owing to particular characteristics of that phase of lifelong learning. In an attempt to highlight the implications for all bands of education, Chapter Eight provides a summary of the recommendations of the Report for each of the bands.

The investigation covers *all aspects of education*. This includes matters to do with the organisation, governance and funding of education as well as all components of the curriculum. Curriculum can be defined as everything that influences the learner, including: who teaches and is taught; the content of what is taught; how it is taught; the medium through which it is taught; how learning is assessed; teaching and learning materials and equipment; the way in which learning programmes are organised; and the physical and psychosocial environment within which teaching and learning takes place.

Historically the areas of 'special needs' or specialised education and support services have been considered as an 'add-on' or marginal consideration in the administration of education in South Africa and in other parts of the world. Those working in these areas have also tended to focus primarily on the traditional school-going population rather than on the full lifelong learning span. The NCSNET/NCESS has deliberately adopted a comprehensive approach, considering all aspects and bands of education. This approach is based on the belief that the central challenge facing education is that of recognising and addressing the different or diverse needs of the entire learner population and minimising, removing and preventing barriers to learning and development, thereby promoting effective learning among all learners. Enabling mechanisms need to be developed to ensure that the curriculum becomes responsive to the needs of all learners and that additional support is provided to those who need it.

##### 1.1.2.2 'Special Needs'

Within the context of the terms of reference of the NCSNET and NCESS, *'special needs'* in education refers to needs or priorities which the individual person or the system may have which must be addressed to ensure effective learning.

Acknowledging that 'special needs' often arise as a result of barriers within the curriculum, the centre of learning, the system of education, and the broader social context, it is suggested that instead of referring to 'special needs' we should refer to barriers to learning and development. This is discussed in some detail in Chapter Two.

In order to understand the scope of the NCSNET and NCESS it is important to look at the specifics regarding these barriers to learning and development. It is clear that all learners may either permanently or temporarily encounter or experience barriers to learning and development. In particular, however, this includes those learners

who have historically been neglected in the system, including: learners with disabilities who may need to use specialised equipment or assistive devices to access the curriculum and participate in the learning process; learners who experience some form of learning breakdown as a result of a particular barrier; and learners who are at risk for personal and social reasons.

Barriers to learning and development can occur within all aspects of the system and curriculum, the centre of learning, the education system, and the broader social context. Examples of potential barriers to learning and development are provided in Chapter Two.

The approach of NCSNET/NCESS to 'special needs and support' is located within the broad initiative of current developments in South Africa which focus on the development of quality education for all learners.

### **1.1.2.3 Support Services**

Enabling mechanisms need to be developed to ensure that the system and the curriculum are continuously transformed to address the needs of all learners. This requires the provision of additional support to learners and the system where needed. This brings us to the area of support services.

'Education Support Services' include all human and other resources that provide support to individual learners and to all aspects of the system. While these services attempt to minimise and remove barriers to learning and development, they also focus on the *prevention* of these barriers and on the development of a supportive learning environment for all learners.

Support required by learners or the system could include: teaching and learning support (including particular teaching and learning interventions - e.g. academic development programmes, enrichment programmes); the provision of assistive devices (e.g. Braille facilities, specialised communication devices, appropriate information technology); general and career guidance and counselling; various forms of therapeutic support (medical, psychological, occupational, speech, physiotherapy); nutritional programmes; social interventions; parental support; teacher training and support; organisation development; and curriculum development.

Support has traditionally been provided by specialist education support personnel, including the following service providers: learning support teachers (e.g. listening and language teachers, 'remedial', 'special class', and 'special needs' teachers, classroom assistants, social workers, doctors, nurses, psychologists, therapists, counsellors, nutritionists, child and youth workers and houseparents).

Support can and should also be provided by members of the learning community (e.g. learners, parents, educators) and other community resources (e.g. ), SA Sign Language interpreters, communication facilitators volunteers, peer-counsellors, community workers, traditional healers, community-based rehabilitation workers, organisation development consultants non-governmental organisation, community-based organisations, disabled peoples' organisations, welfare organisations, religious organisations and traditional healers).

### **1.1.2.4 Amalgamation of NCSNET and NCESS**

Historically a division has existed between education support services and 'special needs education'. A further division has existed between these areas of education provision on the one hand and mainstream education. This fragmentation has isolated learners who experience barriers to learning and development. Different services have usually been organised into separate and often rigid bureaucracies which have made working together difficult and have been difficult to access. 'Special need' and support services have tended to focus on the delivery of

highly specialised interventions directed at a limited number of individuals in predominantly urban areas, and problems in the education system itself have seldom been addressed.

In an integrated system, a range of services which work together to meet the needs of all learners and other aspects of the education system should be developed. These services should form an integral part of the education system as a whole.

If we accept that 'special needs' relates primarily to the need of the system to become able to respond to diversity and adequately promote learning and development for all, the role of support services would be to minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development to ensure effective learning and development of all learners. Support services can play a fundamental role in ensuring that all learners have equal access to the education system and are able to participate optimally in the learning process.

In the early stages of the work of the NCSNET and NCESS it became evident that the links between these areas were so close that they required a joint investigation. The first meeting of both bodies was held in mid-November 1996. The NCSNET and NCESS initially commenced their investigations within separate task groups. By the third meeting in January 1997, it was evident that the investigations overlapped in so many ways that it was necessary to amalgamate and conduct both consultative and research work through joint structures and processes. The existing structures (refer end of this chapter) reflect this amalgamation.

## **1.2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The terms of reference of both the NCSNET and NCESS were developed during 1995 by forums of stakeholders in the areas of 'special needs education' and 'education support services' respectively.

The terms of reference, published in government gazettes (refer Appendix A), indicated that the following areas should determine the focus of investigation:

- Obtaining a 'picture' of the current situation in terms of needs and the provision of specialised education and support services
- Identifying needs and priorities that should be addressed
- Developing a conceptual framework for 'special needs' and support services within the context of a 'holistic and integrated' approach. This includes clarifying the relationship between Education Support Services (ESS) and Education for Learners with Special Education Needs (ELSEN), and identifying how the subject 'Guidance' is located within an ESS framework
- Developing a future vision, principles and strategies for education provision in terms of 'special needs' and 'support', with a particular focus on inclusion and the strategy of mainstreaming
- Investigating the implications of the above in terms of the education system as a whole, including curriculum and institutional development
- Investigating the implications for the organisation and governance of schooling and other levels of education
- Investigating the implications for staffing of educators and education support personnel
- Investigating the implications for the pre- and in-service training (human resource development) of educators and education support personnel
- Investigating the implications in terms of finances and funding
- Developing a strategic implementation plan

All of the above were to be located within the framework of the new Constitution of South Africa (1996), the White Papers on Education and Training (1995/6), and other relevant policy documents.

The NCSNET and NCESS were charged to conduct research and consult widely, including all relevant stakeholders in the process. They were given 12 months to complete their investigation and to make recommendations for national policy.

14 members were appointed to the NCSNET, and 10 members to the NCESS. The terms of reference indicated that they would be expected to work 2 days per week for the period concerned. The NCSNET was required to work closely with the National Co-ordinating Committee for ELSEN (NaCoCo for ELSEN), while a Reference Group, comprising representatives of all relevant stakeholders in the area of ESS, was appointed for the NCESS.

One chairperson, Professor Sandy Lazarus, was appointed to chair the NCSNET and the NCESS. Both bodies were provided with Secretariat support: a co-ordinator was provided for the NCSNET and one for the NCESS, and a senior and a junior secretary were provided to serve the two bodies jointly.

Both the NCSNET and NCESS were accountable to the Minister of Education and Director General of the Department of Education, and reported to both the HEDCOM (Heads of Education in the nine provinces) and the CEM (Council of Education Ministers).

### 1.3. THE PROCESS

#### 1.3.1 Principles of Working

The following principles have guided the functioning of the NCSNET/NCESS:

- Amalgamation of the NCSNET and NCESS, to address historical fragmentation in these areas
- A commitment to democratic processes within the NCSNET/NCESS. This has entailed attempting to conduct all the work of the NCSNET/NCESS in a participatory and transparent manner, involving all members in decision-making and in all areas of the work
- A participatory approach to public involvement, attempting to involve relevant stakeholders in the fullest manner possible
- A 'listening' approach forming a basis of both research and consultation work - the aim being to learn as much as possible from all relevant sources before drawing up recommendations. This listening does not, however, exclude a critical engagement with contributions made
- Finding indigenous responses to South Africa's needs. While international opinion and trends are important to consider in the process of developing policy, the thrust has been on radical problem-solving and solution seeking in an attempt to address our local needs.

#### 1.3.2 Overview of the Year's Work

The following Year Plan was developed to guide the work of the NCSNET/NCESS. While minor adjustments were made owing to the slow start of the work of the NCSNET/NCESS, this programme was broadly adhered to.

1996	
November/December:	Initial setting up of NCSNET/NCESS structures and processes
1997	
January-March	NCSNET/NCESS introduced to key stakeholders and the public
January-August	Site visits, covering all bands of education
January-June	Research Task Groups conducted their investigations and made initial recommendations Public submissions received, analysed, and fed into the Task Groups' work
March/April	Appointment of commissioned researchers. Provincial multilateral workshops held in all nine provinces. Specific stakeholder workshops, and workshops with Departments of Education and other government departments. [Focus for workshops: Proposed vision, principles and strategies for the future]

July/August	Development and release of Public Discussion Document, outlining the NCSNET/NCESS's initial findings and recommendations, for public debate.
August-September	Further investigations pursued in areas inadequately covered thus far
August	Workshops with NaCoCo for ELSSEN and ESS Reference Group, and national stakeholders who had been insufficiently consulted thus far
September	Public Hearings in all nine provinces. National Conference including representatives of key stakeholders, government departments, and international consultants
October/November	Analysis of verbal and written submissions on the Public Discussion Document. Development of Final Report Presentation of Report to Minister Bengu

During the period concerned, the NCSNET/NCESS met as a collective for ten brief periods. The NCSNET/NCESS met with their reference groups (NaCoCo for ELSSEN and ESS Reference Group) four times during this period. Further consultation with the reference groups occurred through regular circulation of documents.

### 1.3.3 Public Participation

The principle of involving key stakeholders in the investigation was considered to be important. This is in line with the democratic ethos of public policy development that is emerging in South Africa.

The NaCoCo for ELSSEN and ESS Reference Group - set up to assist the NCSNET/NCESS in its work - played a key role in mediating information flow between the NCSNET/NCESS and key stakeholders. It was important to work through these representatives of key stakeholders to ensure that all relevant groups and persons were kept informed of the process.

In order to further facilitate public participation, members of NCSNET/NCESS formed provincial teams which were responsible for conducting site visits, participating in stakeholder meetings, and facilitating provincial workshops and Hearings in all nine provinces. Appendix E provides the details of participation achieved through these processes.

During March the NCSNET/NCESS's first public discussion document, outlining the NCSNET/NCESS's initial proposals for a future vision, principles and strategies, was released to the public. The document was used as a basis for workshops held in all nine provinces during March and April. Debate and input was facilitated within these forums, enabling the NCSNET/NCESS to gauge the public's response and views. Based on the general support for the vision, principles and broad strategies outlined, the NCSNET/NCESS adopted this framework as a basis for all their further work and recommendations.

On the basis of written submissions, workshop debates, research conducted, and debate within the NCSNET/NCESS itself, a further Public Discussion Document outlining the NCSNET/NCESS's initial findings and recommendations was compiled and released in August for public debate. Members of the public were provided with an opportunity to make submissions in person and to send written submissions on this Public Discussion Document. Public hearings were held in all nine provinces. All who wished to make a submission in person were provided with an opportunity to do so. Representatives from all key stakeholders made submissions through this process.

The NCSNET/NCESS's consultation process culminated in a National Conference which was held at the end of September. The Conference included key stakeholders within South Africa as well as a number of invited international experts. The key purpose of the conference was to facilitate a common understanding of the major thrusts of the NCSNET/NCESS and to discuss and debate key areas of concern. Areas that formed a focus for the conference included: development of an inclusive society; the challenge of redress; the challenge of intersectoral collaboration and co-operative governance; and implementation of policy in the different bands of education.

Wherever possible, the media was used to inform and invite members of the public to participate in the process. This was a limited process due to severe resource constraints, but it did achieve and facilitate some public awareness and involvement of members of the public in the process.

The final recommendations outlined in this Report were developed in the context of an analysis of all submissions made. The outcome, in the form of policy recommendations to the Minister and Department of Education, do not, however, reflect the positions, needs and expectations of everyone. While most of the views were able to be accommodated, some aspects of the recommendations reflect some form of compromise or favour one position more than another. Having said this, however, the NCSNET/NCESS has striven to achieve national consensus wherever possible. The fundamental yardstick for deciding on what position to take was determined by the framework of principles developed by the NCSNET/NCESS in consultation with stakeholders. The Constitution of South Africa underpins these principles.

#### 1.3.4 The Research Process

The research conducted for the NCSNET/NCESS has been structured through joint Task Groups, focusing on the main aspects of the terms of reference of the NCSNET and NCESS:

Task Group One:	The Current Situation * Historical, legislation, and policy analysis * Situation and needs analysis
Task Group Two:	Future Vision, Principles and Strategies
Task Group Three:	Curriculum and Institutional Development
Task Group Four:	Organisation, Governance and Funding (including Staffing and Assessment)
Task Group Five:	Human Resource Development of Educators and Service Providers
Task Group Six:	Strategic Implementation Plan

The Task Groups comprised core members (members of NCSNET/NCESS), commissioned researchers, and additional consultants (refer Appendix C). Unfortunately, owing to time and other constraints, not all additional consultants initially identified for the Task Groups were able to be adequately included in the process. The primary function of the Task Groups was to conduct research in all areas relevant to the Task Group focus, utilising literature from within and outside of South Africa, and, where appropriate and possible, conducting primary research in South Africa. Each Task Group was then responsible for developing research reports and discussion documents. Submissions received from the public as well as reports on site visits and meetings and workshops were incorporated in the development of these documents. These documents were then used as a basis for the development of the Public Discussion Document released in August and for the development of this Report.

Additional research was then conducted in areas insufficiently covered in the early work of the NCSNET/NCESS. Reports on these investigations were used as an additional basis for the development of this Report.

Submissions received by the Secretariat - before and after the development of the Public Discussion Document - were analysed (refer Appendix H for a summary of this analysis) and used as a basis for the development of this Report.

A list of reports and discussion documents developed within the context of the work of the NCSNET/NCESS is provided in Appendix G.

### **1.3.5 Limitations of the Work of the NCSNET/NCESS**

The initial workings of the NCSNET/NCESS were delayed by both the Christmas vacation period and the delayed appointment of the full Secretariat and the commissioned researchers. This placed considerable strain on the NCSNET/NCESS to complete its work within the agreed timeframe (outlined above). Despite these and other barriers, the NCSNET/NCESS managed to complete its work in the allotted 12-month period. While this brief timeframe limited the work and placed serious strain on the consultation process, it was agreed that the country requires urgent direction in the areas of 'special needs' and support services in order to further facilitate the transformation of the education and training system as a whole.

While every attempt was made to involve all key stakeholders in the process, public participation was not without its problems and limitations. Financial, administrative, and time constraints made it impossible to reach and involve all interested parties adequately. In particular, key stakeholders in the 'mainstream' of education - parents, educators, and learners - were minimally involved despite various attempts to facilitate this. This is an aspect that must receive priority in the process of the development of the green and white papers arising from this Report and in the short-term implementation process.

As with the public participation process, the research process has had its strengths and weaknesses. Financial and time constraints have had serious implications for ensuring a sufficiently comprehensive and rigorous research programme. The NCSNET/NCESS, in accepting the 12-month timeframe, has had to accept the limitations of this research, and rely on the consultation process to complement inevitable inadequacies. Further and ongoing research in historically neglected areas of 'special needs' and support services will have to be pursued by others in the future.

It should be noted that the situation and needs analysis has been particularly limited. The lack of an adequate national data base on needs and provision in the areas of 'special needs and support' has been one factor impeding a proper audit. Additionally, the constraints relating to finances and the timeframe have made it impossible for a comprehensive audit to be conducted. Attempts have been made to draw on existing data bases and to conduct limited primary research in order to arrive at some picture of existing needs and provision. A national audit is one priority that should be pursued as a short-term goal of the implementation plan.

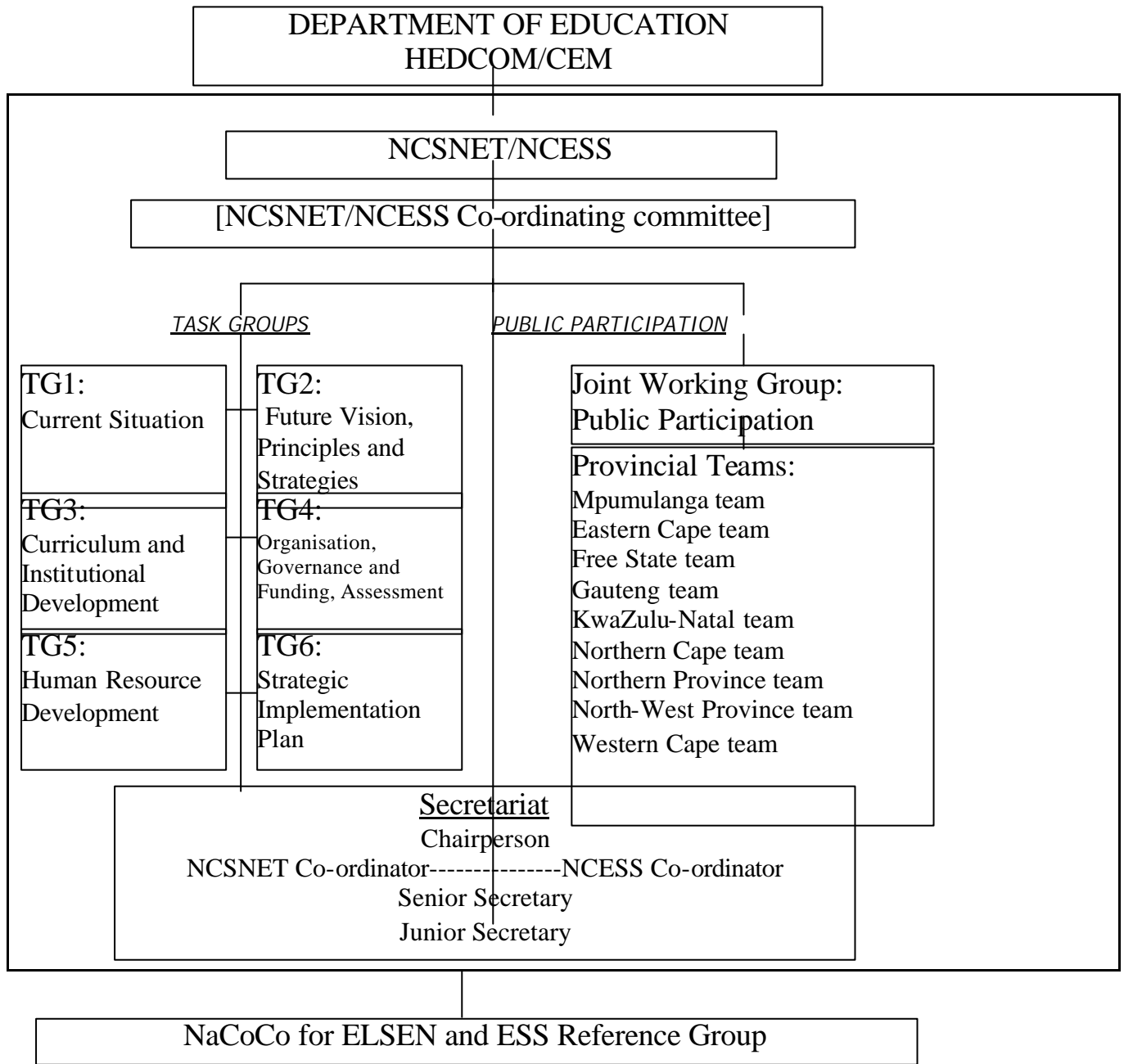
A further reason for the difficulties experienced in the situation and needs analysis relate to the difficulty in defining what 'special needs' and support services encompass. The Task Group attempted to design the research to reflect the vision and principles outlined in this Report, but this proved to be very difficult given the way in which needs and support have been defined historically and, therefore, how data has been collected in the past.

The wide scope of the NCSNET/NCESS's work, which arose as a result of the broad definition of 'special needs' adopted, and the broadening of the definition of support services to include a community-based approach, has resulted in some stakeholder groups feeling that issues of concern to them have not been adequately addressed. This has constituted a major challenge to the NCSNET/NCESS. In this final Report, attempts have been made to address this challenge, but inevitably some disappointment will still remain as a result of the broad nature of the recommendations.

It needs to be recognised, therefore, that this Report does not adequately cover all aspects incorporated in the scope of the NCSNET/NCESS's work. In an attempt to be comprehensive, depth and detail have been sacrificed in some instances. Further specificity and concrete norms and standards will have to be developed within the context of the short-term implementation plan.



1.4. A BIRD'S EYE-VIEW OF THE NCSNET/NCESS



## 2. BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

It is universally recognised that the main objective of any education system in a democratic society is to provide quality education for all learners so that they will be able to reach their full potential and will be able to meaningfully contribute to and participate in that society throughout their lives. The responsibility of the education system to develop and sustain such learning is premised on the recognition that education is a fundamental right which extends equally to all learners. Exercising this responsibility involves ensuring that the education system creates equal opportunities for effective learning by all learners.

It has been explained in Chapter One that the NCSNET/NCESS, in focusing on its terms of reference and defining the scope of its work, has been forced to confront the historical assumption that there are two distinct categories of learners in our country. That is, those learners who form the majority with 'ordinary needs' and a smaller minority of learners with 'special needs' who require support or specialised programmes in order to engage in some form of learning process. This assumption, which is also evident in other parts of the world, defined the nature and organisation of educational provision in South Africa prior to 1994. Within this assumption it is recognised that it is primarily the latter category of learners whose educational needs have not been met: they may have been provided with a separate, sometimes inadequate, system of education, they may have been excluded from the system or they may have experienced learning breakdown. Thus the notion of 'learners with special education needs' has become a catch-all phrase to categorise all those learners who somehow do not 'fit into' the mainstream education system and to describe the complex array of needs which they may have.

This assumption not only serves to divide the learner population, but it also fails to describe the nature of need which is regarded as 'special'. Most importantly, this assumption provides no insight into what has caused the learning breakdown or why such learners have been excluded from the system. In a country where the education system is premised on the notion of a rights culture, it is imperative that the system is able to not only prevent learning breakdown and exclusion, but that it is also able to promote equal opportunities for effective learning by all learners. In order for the system to do this it is imperative that policy aimed at the creation of education and development for all learners recognises a range of different needs among the learner population. Most importantly, such policy needs to be based on an analysis of those factors which ensure that the education system remains inaccessible to a significant majority of learners and which continue to lead to high levels of learning breakdown.

In trying to deal with the many concerns which arise out of these conceptualisations, the NCSNET/NCESS supports the recognition that a range of needs exists among learners and within the education system which must all be met if effective learning and development is to be provided and sustained. In recognising this, it follows that the education system must be structured and function in such a way that it can accommodate a diversity of learner needs and system needs. It is argued that it is when the education system fails to provide for and accommodate such diversity that learning breakdown takes place and learners are excluded. It is also argued that a complex and dynamic relationship exists between the learner, the centre of learning, the broader education system and the social, political and economic context of which they are all part.

All these components play a key role in whether effective learning and development takes place. When a problem exists in one of these areas it impacts on the learning process, causing learning breakdown or exclusion. Thus, if the system fails to meet the different needs of a wide range of learners or if problems arise in any of these components, the learner or the system may be prevented from being able to engage in or sustain an ideal process of learning. Those factors which lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, which lead to learning breakdown or which prevent learners from accessing educational provision, have been conceptualised by the NCSNET/NCESS as barriers to learning and development.

It is only by focusing on the nature of these barriers, what causes them and how they manifest themselves, that we can begin to address problems of learning breakdown and ongoing exclusion. Most importantly, it is only by focusing on them in this way that we can begin to identify components of the education system which

must be present and supported if quality education is to be equally provided, promoted and sustained for learners with different needs in this country. Similarly, such an analysis provides guidance on the nature of the mechanisms and processes which must be set up and sustained in order to enable learner needs and system needs to be met.

## **2.2. THE KEY BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

It has already been asserted that barriers can be located within the learner, within the centre of learning, within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context. These barriers manifest themselves in different ways and only become obvious when learning breakdown occurs, when learners 'drop out' of the system or when the excluded become visible. Sometimes it is possible to identify permanent barriers in the learner or the system which can be addressed through enabling mechanisms and processes. However, barriers may also arise during the learning process and are seen as transitory in nature. These may require different interventions or strategies to prevent them from causing learning breakdown or excluding learners from the system. The key to preventing barriers from occurring is the effective monitoring and meeting of the different needs among the learner population and within the system as a whole.

### **2.2.1 Socio-Economic Barriers**

The relationship between education provision and the socio-economic conditions in any society must be recognised. Effective learning is fundamentally influenced by the availability of educational resources to meet the needs of any society. In many countries, especially our own country, there are inadequate numbers of centres of learning and other facilities to meet the educational needs of the population. In most cases, inadequacies in provision are linked to other inequalities in the society such as urban/rural disparities, as well as inequalities arising from discrimination on grounds such as gender, race and disability. Barriers result not only from the inadequacy of provision, but also from policies and practices which are designed to perpetuate these inequalities.

#### **2.2.1.1 Lack of Access to Basic Services**

One of the most significant barriers to learning remains the inability of learners to access the educational provision that does exist and their inability to access other services which contribute to the learning process. In most instances the inability to access education provision results from inadequate or non-existent services and facilities which are key to participation in the learning process. For example, in many poor communities, particularly in our own country in rural areas, learners are unable to reach centres of learning because there are no transport facilities available to learners or the roads are so poorly developed and maintained that centres cannot be reached. While such barriers affect all learners in poorly serviced communities, it is important to recognise that particular groups of learners are more severely affected by these barriers. In general transport systems which do exist are inaccessible to learners with disabilities, particularly learners who use wheelchairs. So, for example, learners with disabilities who should be attending school or who wish to go to adult education classes are unable to even reach the school or class because the public transport system which is available is either physically inaccessible or unwilling to transport them. At the same time they are unable to walk to school or classes and in this way they are totally excluded from the education system.

While inadequate transport remains a key element preventing access to education, other basic services such as access to clinics also impinge on the learning process. If a child has a chronic illness, for example, regular medical treatment which may be needed may result at best in learners experiencing periods of long absence from the classroom to reach treatment or at worst in learners 'dropping out' of school in order to be hospitalised in a facility where no provision exists for learning support to continue during the period of treatment. Lack of early intervention facilities and services also means that many children, especially those with severe disabilities, are unable to receive the necessary intervention and stimulation which will equip them to participate effectively in the learning process. This barrier not only leads in many cases to increased impairment, but also to decreased capacity to learn, particularly in integrated settings.

Lack of access to other services, such as welfare and communication services, also affects the learning process and leads to learning breakdown or exclusion. The lack of Sign Language interpreters in public services mean that these facilities remain largely inaccessible to Deaf learners.

### **2.2.1.2 Poverty and Underdevelopment**

Closely linked to the lack of access to basic services is the effect which sustained poverty has on learners, the learning process and the education system. For learners, the most obvious result of poverty, often caused by unemployment and other economic inequalities, is the inability of families to meet basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. Learners living under such conditions are subject to increased emotional stress which adversely affects learning and development. Additionally, under-nourishment leads to a lack of concentration and a range of other symptoms which affect the ability of the learner to engage effectively in the learning process.

Poverty-stricken communities are also poorly resourced communities which are frequently characterised by limited educational facilities, large classes with high pupil/teacher ratios, inadequately trained staff and inadequate teaching and learning materials. Such factors raise the likelihood of learning breakdown and the inability of the system to sustain effective teaching and learning. Learners from families where one or more of the breadwinners are unemployed or poorly paid are also more likely to leave school as soon as possible to go out to work to supplement the family income. This perpetuates the cycle of limited skills with fewer work opportunities, increased likelihood of unemployment or poorly paid work and, thus, ongoing poverty and exclusion.

In considering the effects of poverty on the learning process and access to education, it is also important to recognise the link between poverty and disability. People with disabilities are often those most easily excluded from the education system and from the labour market and are therefore the most poverty stricken in any population. Related to these realities is the perception in many families who have a child with disabilities such a child is unlikely to be employed or to be in a position to contribute to the family income. At best, the child is kept back from school until his/her more able-bodied siblings have been accommodated or at worst, is never given the opportunity to go to school or to learn. This has, for example, resulted in an affirmative funding approach in Uganda where families with four children receive free education with the proviso that preference is given to the sibling with disabilities.

### **2.2.1.3 Factors Which Place Learners at Risk**

Effective learning is directly related to and dependent on the social and emotional well-being of the learner. It is important to recognise that particular conditions may arise within the social, economic and political environment in which the learner lives which impact negatively on the learner's social and emotional well-being, thus placing the learner at risk of learning breakdown. Such factors either impact directly on the learner or on his/her family or community. In all cases the learner's emotional and social well-being and development are threatened.

A child who is physically, emotionally or sexually abused is not only emotionally and physically damaged but such abuse may also lead to the learner being forced to miss school and eventually to 'drop out' of the system. Factors such as substance abuse may affect the learner or may affect the learner's family, causing family breakdown and increased stress. Problems in families and abuse may also cause children to leave home and live on the streets. For young girls who fall pregnant while still at school, effective learning breaks down when the economic implications of having a child force the learner to leave to go out and work to earn money. The associated stigmatisation and the lack of a supportive infrastructure for learning and teaching mitigates against being able to continue attending school and thus engage in the learning process.

Sometimes learners are placed at risk by conditions arising in the wider society. In many countries, our own being a case in point, young learners have been subjected to civil war and other forms of political violence which not only disrupt the learning environment but also lead to trauma and emotional distress. High levels of mobility of families resulting from processes such as urbanisation, the establishment of informal settlements, eviction of farm workers and families being forced to seek refugee status in safer environments also lead to disruption of the learning process and, ultimately, to learning breakdown.

The nature of the centre of learning and its ability to provide a conducive teaching and learning environment is undermined when the surrounding environment is made unsafe by high levels of violence and crime. When the safety of educators and learners cannot be guaranteed learners may be prevented from participating in effective teaching and learning or these may be disrupted. In this way lack of safety in the learning

environment becomes a barrier to learning and development. A lack of provision of basic amenities at centres of learning such as electricity and toilets creates an unhealthy environment which undermines learning and teaching and places learners at risk.

In recognising and identifying those factors within the broader environment which place learners at risk, it is important to recognise that problems such as natural disasters or epidemics which arise in any society have a significant impact on learners. For example, over the last decade more and more children and adults have been affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Many learners have not only had to deal with chronic illnesses resulting from the disease, but have also had to deal with the loss of family members, particularly breadwinners.

It is obvious from the above that the impact of socio-economic barriers is more severe for those learners who are already excluded or marginalised in the society. Learners with disabilities, learners living in poor communities, learners discriminated against on the basis of gender, race, culture or other characteristics which are used to marginalise people are often subjected to a range of these barriers, such as the compounded nature of various forms of discrimination, thus rendering them even more vulnerable and likely to be excluded or experience learning breakdown. It is also important to recognise that learning breakdown can perpetuate further breakdown, often manifesting itself in disruptive and self-destructive behaviour by the learner which also negatively affects other learners. In recognising the impact of a variety of barriers on learners and the system it follows that overcoming and preventing these barriers must involve a range of mechanisms which recognise the needs of the learner and the needs in the society which must be met.

### **2.2.2 Attitudes**

Negative and harmful attitudes towards difference in our society remain a critical barrier to learning and development. Discriminatory attitudes resulting from prejudice against people on the basis of race, class, gender, culture, disability, religion, ability, sexual preference and other characteristics manifest themselves as barriers to learning when such attitudes are directed towards learners in the education system.

For the most part, negative attitudes toward different learners manifest themselves in the labelling of learners. Sometimes these labels are just negative associations between the learner and the system such as 'drop outs', 'repeaters' or 'slow learners'. While it is important to recognise the impact which this kind of labelling has on the learner's self-esteem the most serious consequence of such labelling results when it is linked to placement or exclusion. Sometimes learners are placed in a particular learning environment merely because they are labelled as belonging to a category of learners for which a particular kind of educational placement exists. Because the placement has occurred through the attachment of a label rather than through an appropriate assessment of the educational needs of the learner or what is required by the system to meet those needs, the placement may not only be inappropriate to the learner's needs but it may also result in the learner being marginalised. This also perpetuates the failure of the system to change or adapt to meet such needs. Learners with disabilities have often been placed in specialised learning contexts merely because they were labelled as disabled. The particular nature of their disability, the particular educational needs arising from such a disability, such as a necessary assistive device, or other needs within the system, such as physical accessibility, are not properly considered. Labelling goes so far as to sometimes categorise learners, particularly those with severe mental disabilities, as being 'ineducable'. Such a label fails to consider what is needed from the system in order to meet that learner's needs, whatever their capabilities and capacity.

Sometimes negative attitudes and labelling result from fear and a lack of awareness about the particular needs of learners or the potential barriers which they may face. Children who are HIV+ have been excluded from attending school with other children because of the negative assumptions and misconceptions associated with the disease. Because of poor knowledge of the disease and its transmission, these children, by merely attending school with other children, are seen to be placing other children at risk of infection.

Barriers resulting from fear and lack of awareness may arise from the feelings of parents or educators themselves. For example, learners with high ability are often regarded as a threat and therefore face denial of their significant abilities.

For learners with disabilities, fear and lack of awareness about disability among some parents and educators remain a significant barrier to their learning and development. Such barriers may arise when the child is born.

Many parents have difficulty in accepting a child with a disability. In a patriarchal society the mother is often blamed for the disability and fathers deny responsibility for the child. The isolation and marginalisation of the child is exacerbated when and if they are able to enter into the education system. Very often teachers fear the inclusion of a child with a disability in their class and respond negatively to their attendance. Negative attitudes towards disability are picked up by the other children who further alienate the disabled learner. Many of the negative attitudes towards disability result from some traditional and religious beliefs which denigrate disability.

### **2.2.3 Inflexible Curriculum**

One of the most serious barriers to learning and development can be found within the curriculum itself and relates primarily to the inflexible nature of the curriculum which prevents it from meeting diverse needs among learners. When learners are unable to access the curriculum, learning breakdown occurs. The nature of the curriculum at all phases of education involves a number of components which are all critical in facilitating or undermining effective learning. Key components of the curriculum include the style and tempo of teaching and learning, what is taught, the way the classroom is managed and organised, as well as materials and equipment which are used in the learning and teaching process.

Sometimes educators, often through inadequate training, use teaching styles which may not meet the needs of some of the learners. An educator may teach at a pace which only accommodates learners who learn very quickly. Alternatively, the pace and style of teaching may limit the initiative and involvement of learners with high levels of ability. What is taught or the subjects which learners are able to choose may limit the learner's knowledge base or fail to develop the intellectual and emotional capacities of the learner. Such barriers arise when sufficient attention is not given to balancing skills which prepare learners for work (vocational skills) and skills which prepare the learner for coping with life (lifeskills). Some learners are excluded from certain aspects of the curriculum as a result of ignorance or prejudice. For example, learners with physical disabilities are often prevented from playing sport or are not given the opportunity to do so. Similarly, male and female learners are encouraged or pressurised to take certain subjects at school or at tertiary level according to their gender because those subjects will equip them for jobs which stereotypically are undertaken by men or women. What is taught through the curriculum may often be inappropriate to the learner's life situation making learning extremely difficult and ultimately contributing to learning breakdown. For example, adults involved in literacy training may be taught with the use of examples which are unrelated to their particular life experience. Materials used for teaching and learning which constantly reflect only one culture or life experience, may lead to learners from other cultures and life experiences feeling excluded and marginalised.

One of the most serious ways in which learners are prevented from accessing the curriculum is through inadequate provision of materials or equipment they may need for learning to take place. Such barriers often affect learners with disabilities who do not receive the necessary assistive devices which would equip them to participate in the learning process. For example, blind learners are unable to access the curriculum effectively if appropriate Braille facilities and equipment are not available and if teachers are not skilled to teach Braille or use audio equipment. Lack of provision of assistive devices for learners who require them may impair not only the learning process but also their functional independence, preventing them from interacting with other learners and participating independently in the learning environment.

The ability of the curriculum to lead to learning breakdown also occurs through the mechanisms which are used to assess learning outcomes. Assessment processes are often inflexible and designed to only assess particular kinds of knowledge and aspects of learning, such as the amount of information that can be memorised rather than the learner's understanding of the concepts involved. The seriousness of such barriers is most obvious where there are large number of learners who are forced to repeat aspects of the curriculum, even if this means remaining in levels where the age gap between the learner and the other learners is significant.

### **2.2.4 Language and Communication**

A further area of barriers arising from the curriculum, are those which result from the medium of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning for many learners takes place through a language which is not their first language. This not only places these learners at a disadvantage, but it also leads to linguistic difficulties which contribute to learning breakdown. Second language learners are often subjected to low expectations,

discrimination and lack of cultural peers. Educators furthermore often experience difficulties in developing appropriate support mechanisms for second language learners.

Such barriers can be particularly destructive for Deaf learners whose first language is Sign Language. Misperceptions with regards to the morphological, syntactic, discourse, pragmatic, 'phonological' and semantic structures of Sign Language, which are entirely equal in complexity and richness to that which is found in any spoken language, often lead to Deaf learners being forced into learning through the so-called 'oral' method, or having to learn through signed spoken languages (for example, signed English or Tswana or signed exact English or Tswana. Being able to access Sign Language as the medium of teaching and learning enables these learners to develop bi- and multi-linguism through Sign Language as the medium of teaching and learning.

Communication is essential for learning and development in both formal and informal contexts. Learners who are non-speaking due to the severity of their physical, intellectual and/or mental disability experience enormous barriers to learning and development. These barriers arise from the general unavailability of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) strategies to enable them to engage in the learning process, and more often than not find themselves totally excluded from learning and development experiences. AAC systems could consist of alternative communications systems, supplements to vocal communication and communication through facilitators.

### **2.2.5 Inaccessible and Unsafe Built Environment**

In many contexts the vast majority of centres of learning are physically inaccessible to a large number of learners, educators and communities. Inaccessibility is particularly evident where centres are physically inaccessible to learners, educators and members of the community with disabilities who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices. Such inaccessibility often also renders centres unsafe for blind and Deaf learners.

### **2.2.6 Inappropriate and Inadequate Provision of Support Services**

Particular enabling mechanisms and processes are needed to support diversity and enable the education system, including educators and learners, to minimise, remove and prevent barriers which may exist or arise. Where no provision exists for such services, barriers cannot be overcome and needs cannot be met.

In some contexts, however, inappropriate or inadequate support services may contribute to learning breakdown or exclusion. For example, where the nature of the service is focused on problems in the learner rather than in the system where the barrier may exist - such as poor teaching methods - the intervention may exacerbate the learning breakdown. Similarly, the nature of the intervention may lead to a learner being removed from a learning environment rather than addressing the problems which may exist in that environment. Learners who may require individualised intervention to address barriers to learning may also not have access to these.

As was discussed earlier, basic services which may support learners and the system to minimise and remove barriers or prevent them from arising are often lacking or limited in poorer communities. This is especially true in rural areas where access to professional assistance is limited or non-existent. Thus the inadequacy or unequal distribution of services which do exist may further disadvantage learners rather than being services which contribute to effective learning.

One of the key contributing factors to inappropriate and inadequate support provision relates to the nature of human resource development of both educators and personnel who provide services to learners and their families. Lack of awareness, service provision which is fragmented and inappropriate to the context in which it takes place, demoralisation and a fear of dealing with a diverse range of needs all result from inadequate and fragmented development of human resources. Not only does poor provision in this area lead to a dearth of necessary skills and knowledge but it also contributes to a system which is unable to meet a diversity of learner needs and prevent barriers to learning and development.

### **2.2.7 Lack of Enabling and Protective Legislation and Policy**

Many of the barriers to learning and development discussed above do not merely arise from problems occurring in the education system or in the wider society. It is often policy and legislation governing the education system and regulating the society which directly or indirectly facilitate the existence of such barriers. Where such legislation or policy fails to protect learners from discrimination or perpetuates particular inequalities, it directly contributes to the existence or maintenance of such barriers. For example policy which is inflexible regarding issues such as age limits may prevent learners from being able to enter or continue in the education system, thus leading to exclusion. Similarly, legislation which fails to protect learners from discrimination and fails to provide for minimum standards which accommodate diversity allows for individual practices which may inhibit learner development or lead to provision which is inadequate and inappropriate for the needs which exist.

### **2.2.8 Lack of Parental Recognition and Involvement**

The active involvement of parents and the broader community in the teaching and learning process is central to effective learning and development. Such involvement includes recognition for parents as the primary care givers of their children and, as such, that they are a central resource to the education system. More specifically, they are critical components for effective governance of centres of learning and for facilitating community ownership of these facilities.

Where parents are not given this recognition or where their participation is not facilitated and encouraged effective learning is threatened and hindered. Negative attitudes towards parental involvement, lack of resources to facilitate such involvement, lack of parent empowerment and support for parent organisations, particularly in poorer communities, all contribute to a lack of parental involvement in centres of learning.

### **2.2.9 Disability**

For most learners with disabilities, learning breakdown and exclusion occurs when their particular learning needs are not met as a result of barriers in the learning environment or broader society which handicap the learner and prevent effective learning from taking place. Having said this, however, particular impairments may prevent the learner from engaging continuously in structured learning and development. Such impairments may render the learner unable to participate in an ideal process of learning. For example, disabilities such as schizophrenia, severe autism, severe intellectual disabilities or multi-disabilities may prevent the learner from being able to continuously engage in programmes aimed at facilitating learning and development. Some learners also experience learning breakdown due to intrinsic cognitive or learning difficulties in areas such as in acquiring skills in literacy or numeracy or in the organisation or management of their own learning.

### **2.2.10 Lack of Human Resource Development Strategies**

The development of educators, service providers and other human resources is often fragmented and unsustainable. The absence of on-going in-service training of educators, in particular, often leads to insecurity, uncertainty, low self-esteem and lack of innovative practices in the classroom. This may result in resistance and harmful attitudes towards those learners who experience learning breakdown or towards particular enabling mechanisms.

## **2.3. Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development**

If the education system is to promote effective learning and prevent learning breakdown, it is imperative that mechanisms are structured into the system to break down existing barriers. Such mechanisms must develop the capacity of the system to overcome barriers which may arise, prevent barriers from occurring, and promote the development of an effective learning and teaching environment.

Central to the development of such capacity is the ability to identify and understand the nature of the barriers which cause learning breakdown and lead to exclusion. Over and above this, however, such capacity requires a commitment to using and learning from practices and processes which exist within the system itself and which have been used or can be used to break down barriers and meet the range of needs which are present.

With these considerations in mind the NCSNET/NCESS has seen its responsibility as being to not only identify and analyse the barriers to learning in the South African education system, but also to identify those



mechanisms already in the system and those which need to be developed which will enable diversity to be accommodated in an integrated system of education.

Such mechanisms will include: initiatives aimed at providing for learners who have been excluded from the system by both the state and non-governmental organisations; innovative practices for recognising and accommodating diversity; activities that advocate against discrimination and challenge attitudes; processes towards the involvement of learners, parents, educators and community members in the governance of centres of learning; training programmes which equip educators to deal with diverse needs; curriculum restructuring; organisation and development of teaching and learning environments; as well as economic and political transformation supported by enabling and protective legislation and policy.

### **3. THE CURRENT SITUATION**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) were employed to carry out limited research aimed at developing a picture of the extent of the needs and the existing provision of education among learners traditionally identified as having 'special needs'. Further research was carried out to supplement the information gathered with the intention of gaining insight into innovative practices which aim to overcome barriers to learning and development and to accommodate a diversity of needs in a range of educational settings. This chapter has also been informed by policy analysis undertaken by the NCSNET/NCESS as well as by submissions made by various stakeholders throughout the public participation process.

There have been clear limitations in the process of developing the 'picture' presented in this chapter. Among these limitations were a lack of clarity in the definitions used in the research processes and a limited availability of time and limited capacity to do justice to such an important and extensive area. Historically, there has been a general lack of awareness, commitment and allocation of resources by the State and the broader society towards the particular learners and aspects of the education system outlined in the NCSNET/NCESS's terms of reference. This has resulted in a dearth of information and research in this area. Because of the limited time and the financial constraints, the original research undertaken for the NCSNET/NCESS was not able to do full justice to the subject. Despite this, a substantial body of information has been accumulated.

#### **3.2. NATURE AND EXTENT OF PROVISION FOR 'LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS' AND EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES PRIOR TO 1994**

The history of education for learners with 'special needs' and education support services in South Africa, like much of the history of our country, reflects massive deprivation and lack of provision for the majority of people. The inequities evident in the areas of concern addressed by the NCSNET/NCESS can be directly attributed to those social, economic and political factors which characterised the history of South African society during the years of apartheid.

These factors have resulted in limited educational opportunities for many learners; in inequalities between provision for white and black learners; in a highly inefficient and fragmented educational bureaucracy which has separated and marginalised these learners from the mainstream; as well as the provision of highly specialised services to a limited number of learners. This system has been supported by legislation and policy which entrenched these inequalities by institutionalising racial segregation, labelling learners with 'special needs' and separating them from their peers.

The history of education provision for learners with 'special needs' and support services was also characterised by the involvement of non-governmental structures including churches. The absence of provision and the nature of much of the limited provision that existed led to the development of advocacy groups, alternative practice methods and innovative responses to the limitations of the system.

##### **3.2.1. Inequity, Separate Development and Fragmentation**

Prior to the second half of the nineteenth century no provision existed for any type of 'special need' among learners in South Africa. As in Europe and other parts of the world the response to a diversity of need in South Africa was shaped by what has been termed a type of 'divine displeasure' which led to differences being regarded with superstition. This is particularly true in the case of disabilities. Such intolerance often led to the extermination, chaining and imprisonment of people with disabilities and to the removal and isolation of children who were somehow different from the norm.

In South Africa, the first schools for learners with disabilities were church schools set up for Deaf and blind learners. In 1863 six Irish Dominican Sisters founded the Grimley Institute for the Deaf-and-Dumb(sic) in Cape Town. The institute was funded entirely by the church. There was no State funding. The institute was divided along racial lines. Dominican Grimley School for the Deaf in Cape Town serviced white learners and the Dominican School for the Deaf at Wittebome, 'non-white' learners. Two more church-sponsored schools for learners with disabilities were opened before the turn of the century. The racial divisions which characterised this

early provision of facilities for learners with disabilities reflects a trend in educational provision for learners with 'special needs' which continued until recently.

The State's involvement in what was termed 'specialised education' effectively began in 1900 when the Cape Education Department recognised the existence of white church-run schools. Later, legislation which enabled the State to set up 'vocational' and 'special' schools for white learners, was passed by the central Government. The State's racist policy with respect to the provision of education for learners with 'special needs' contributed to growing deprivation among black learners. In the context of this growing inequality the churches and missionaries became more involved in 'special needs' provision for a small number of black learners.

While churches and other private institutions continued to provide support for black learners, the State became increasingly involved in provision for white learners. This support included the allocation of funding for the setting up of 'special schools', for the building of hostels in these schools, and for the training of those who would teach in them.

The inequities in the racially determined provision of education for learners with 'special needs' and education support services became more stark with the implementation in 1948 of the National Party's policy of separate development. The institutionalisation of apartheid in every facet of South African life had a significant impact on the area of 'special needs' and support in education. The setting up of the homelands system, the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act (1953), the Indian Education Act (1965) and the Coloured Persons Education Act (1963) all entrenched racial disparities and contributed to the massive inequalities in educational provision which were highlighted in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) report of 1992.

The divisions in the education system were reinforced under the apartheid system by separate education departments being governed by different legislation. The area of 'special needs' was doubly fragmented - on the one hand by legislation and policy which enforced separation along racial lines and on the other by a separation between 'ordinary' learners in the mainstream and learners with 'special needs' in a secondary system.

An overview of the development of education support services in South Africa reflects similar inequities. The precursor to these services was the introduction in the mid-sixties of psychological services for white schools by the apartheid government. Although the nature of the services provided will be discussed later it is important to realise that the services provided for white children were fairly extensive and included specialised interventions and assistance on a number of levels. Although some support services were set up by the other racially segregated departments, these were generally inadequate in meeting the needs which existed and often relied on insufficient resources and provisioning. The separation between systems of education for 'ordinary' learners and learners with 'special needs' perpetuated a narrow vision of a highly specialised, individually-focused service provision.

### **3.2.2. Nature of Services Provided**

An analysis of the development of what we now regard as education support services reflects three important trends. Firstly, those support services which did exist operated along racial lines with huge inequalities evident in provision to white and black learners, particularly African learners.

Secondly, the development and administration of intelligence tests contributed to the institutionalisation of 'special' education through their use for assessing intelligence and learning potential in learners. Based on the outcome of these tests, learners were categorised and labelled for placement in 'special' education programmes, classes and schools. Tests used to identify learners for placement in 'special' education were first developed in the 1920's. They have continued to be used in various ways to place learners in specialised education facilities.

The third trend which defines the nature of the development of support services in South Africa is the large scale adherence, particularly after 1948, to a medical model for diagnosis and treatment of learners with 'special needs'. This model often contributed to particularly negative stereotyping and marginalisation of learners with disabilities as it saw them as helpless and in need of assistance. The Green Paper on a National Disability Strategy for South Africa argues that this model has resulted in an attitude in all sectors, including education, that people with disabilities need to be cared for and thus undermines their status as productive and equal citizens in the

society. The medical model has shaped and contributed to exclusionary practices towards learners with 'special needs' in the field of education.

Despite some significant moves away from a medical model of service delivery - especially of late - the dominance of this model in defining the nature of education support services in South Africa has resulted in a lack of attention being paid to how the education system is failing to provide for the needs of different learners. The medical model focused attention on what were seen as deficits in the learner rather than on their educational needs and abilities.

### **3.3. ANALYSING BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

It was stated in Chapter Two that inequalities in a society, lack of access to basic services, poverty, and factors which place children at risk, all contribute to learning breakdown and exclusion. This brief historical analysis has described how inequalities resulting from apartheid and economic deprivation have had a significant impact on the education system and on the provision of education for learners traditionally seen as having 'special needs'. The high levels of political and economic instability which have arisen from such inequalities have increased pressures on families and individuals. This has rendered a large number of children and adults extremely vulnerable to sustained exclusion or to ongoing learning breakdown.

#### **3.3.1. Problems in the Provision and Organisation of Education**

In attempting to identify the extent to which the barriers outlined above continue to characterise the system of education in South Africa, it is necessary to try to develop a picture of the nature and extent of education provision which exists for learners traditionally categorised as having 'special needs'.

##### ***3.3.1.1. Inadequate Provision of Facilities for Early Childhood Development***

Education at the early childhood development phase has been sadly neglected in South Africa, yet it remains critical to early identification of learner needs, and to intervention to enable learners to sustain effective learning. Despite the fact that such identification of 'at risk' learners is critical to the development of children with disabilities, they remain the most vulnerable and excluded from the educational system. Other inequalities such as those resulting from discrimination based on race and gender, as well as urban/rural disparities, are starkly evident in this sector.

It is estimated that about 10% of children in South Africa between the ages of 0-6 years are receiving educare services. No reliable data which outlines the extent and diversity of needs which exist among learners in this age group is available. A recent study conducted by the Community Child Development Centre, an NGO operating in the Eastern Cape, revealed that ECD centres that admitted children with disabilities each have an average of 1.5 disabled children. This constitutes less than 1% of the total number of children admitted to the educare centres included in the survey.

A small number of young children with severe disabilities, especially young children who are Deaf, blind or who have Cerebral Palsy, are accommodated from the age of 3 years at ECD centres attached to existing specialised schools. In the past a small number of young children with severe intellectual disabilities have also been admitted to large health and welfare institutions where they are 'cared for', often with little stimulation or access to developmental programmes.

The ECD sector has traditionally been excluded from co-ordinated education support services offered by the various departments of education. Young children who have had access to education support services have usually done so through the Department of Health and Welfare. Access has, however, been uncoordinated and fragmented.

While lack of early intervention services and facilities constitute the most severe barrier to learning and development in this band of the education system, other poverty-related socio-economic problems, such as poor nutrition, undermine effective development and may also contribute to an increased likelihood of impairment.

### **3.3.1.2. Inadequacies in the Provision and Organisation of the Schooling System**

It is difficult to form an accurate picture of the number of learners excluded from the school system. Such learners would include both those who have never attended school and those who have 'dropped out' along the way. Despite the introduction of compulsory education there are indications that many children still remain outside the formal education system. Many of these are learners with disabilities who, in the past, have been discriminated against or prevented from entering ordinary schools. For them nothing has really changed.

Although it may be assumed that some learners with severe disabilities are accommodated in ordinary schools, all the research carried out for the NCSNET/NCESS and the site visits conducted showed a very low level of enrolment of these learners in ordinary schools and the existence of only a few community projects offering limited provision.

It is clear that of the learners categorised in the past as having 'special needs', only a small percentage of learners with disabilities have received appropriate education in either ordinary or specialised contexts. At the same time, although national and provincial legislation has made provision for 'special needs education' at the respective levels, the reality is that such education has only been taking place at primary school level.

Specialised education at present is organised in various ways and within a variety of settings which include both ordinary and specialised schools:

- Specialised education pre-school programmes
- Specialised schools for learners who are blind and partially sighted, autistic, etc.
- Residential institutions for severe and profound types of 'special needs'
- Schools of Industry, Reform Schools, and Places of Safety for learners who have found themselves in trouble with the law or are in need of protection.

Some specialised programmes and facilities also presently exist in ordinary schools. These include;

- Adaptation/special education classes attached to ordinary schools
- Learners enrolled in ordinary classes but who are withdrawn from time to time for specialised assistance.

The present system of specialised education has both strengths and weaknesses. The development of specialised learning contexts (classes and schools) arose out of the failure of the ordinary school system to address the diverse needs of all learners and to provide enabling mechanisms to minimise and remove learning breakdown. Good specialised schools and classes have offered enriching learning programmes: adaptations that allow the learner to access the curriculum (including the provision of assistive devices and adapted technology, adapted sport and physical education programmes, and accessible cultural programmes); specialised educator competence; dedicated teachers and support from external 'sponsoring' bodies which have been willing to support learners with 'special needs'.

While the past contribution of specialised education provision has been recognised, criticisms have been levelled at the separation of education into ordinary and specialised contexts. It is argued that the segregation of some learners through placement in specialised learning contexts leads to social isolation from their peers and other members of their community. Concerns have also been raised that the separation from their parents of very young children (in order to attend specialised centres of learning which are far away from the learner's home) undermines family cohesion and the learner's sense of belonging in his/her community. The long distances between home and school have contributed to the limited involvement of parents in the life of specialised centres of learning. Other criticisms of segregated specialised learning contexts include:

- the negative effects of large institutions in contrast to smaller, localised units of learning;
- the scaling down of the general curriculum leading to restricted career choices;
- the over-emphasis on a medical-deficit approach in the support provided;
- over-spending on specialist intervention;
- lack of facilities in rural and disadvantaged areas; and
- the fact that these centres only provide for a very small percentage of learners with 'special needs' to the detriment of thousands of learners who are totally excluded.

In recognising the severe limitations which exist around such provision it is important to realise that, particularly in poor communities, learners traditionally categorised as having 'special needs', such as learners with disabilities,

have often been enrolled in 'ordinary' schools by default. In many cases, the ordinary schools are ill-equipped and under-resourced to provide the support required. Where, for example, necessary assistive devices such as Braille were not provided, learning breakdown often occurred leading to further marginalisation and exclusion of the learners. The experience of these learners perpetuates stereotypes, often articulated by educators and parents, that children with disabilities have limited abilities and are unable to cope in a mainstream environment. In such a situation, few attempts are made to address the causes of the learning breakdown or to meet the needs of the learner.

It is not only those within the system who have not received the kind of education required to meet their unique learning needs. There are many *learners outside the system* who have had no access to the education and support required to engage the learning process.

Street children make up a large sector of the learner population which is currently not catered for in the formal education system. It is conservatively estimated that there are some 10 000 street children in South Africa. Although some attempts are being made to facilitate the integration of these children into the education system, many remain out of school. Although it is difficult to obtain accurate figures, it is also believed that many children on farms do not go to school.

Some children remain out of the school system completely, but inequalities in our society also influence the kind of learners who 'drop out'. A study conducted for the Reconstruction and Development Programme in 1995 found, for example, that young women tend to drop out of school earlier than young men. Learners in rural areas were also found to drop out earlier than those in urban areas.

#### **3.3.1.3. Further Education and Training (FET)**

According to the report of the National Committee on Further Education and Training (1997), existing provision for further education and training in South Africa is inadequate to meet existing needs. As with other bands of education, education provision and the distribution of resources reflect the inequalities of our apartheid past.

The report further recognises that the learners historically categorised as having 'special needs', particularly learners with disabilities, have had little access to further education and training facilities. One of the reasons for this is that FET provision has catered largely for learners at secondary schools from which many learners with disabilities have been excluded.

The lack of capacity to respond to diversity in this band of education is also evident from a recent study by Ferreira (1997). Of the sixty colleges which responded to the relevant questionnaire, none had any formal support structure in place to address barriers to learning and development and accommodate diverse needs. In addition, none of the colleges provided for learners with disabilities and none had a formal policy in place to address barriers to learning and development.

#### **3.3.1.4. Higher Education**

Although existing higher education institutions have provided for a range of learners with different needs, learners who have historically experienced barriers to learning and development have had few opportunities for further education at tertiary level. Such opportunities have been limited by the lack of educational provision at general education and training level as well as by the lack of a supportive learning environment at existing tertiary institutions.

Enabling mechanisms which have been set up at some higher education institutions include student health and counselling services, disability units and academic development centres or programmes.

Some of the academic development programmes have moved away from separate programmes for learners experiencing difficulty to an 'infused' approach focusing on the transformation of the curriculum and institution so as to facilitate a more appropriate response to the diverse needs of learners. This has generally not included a focus on disability and has thus resulted in minimal access for learners with disabilities.

While many higher institutions have student counselling services, many of these are currently under threat for financial reasons. Many of them have therefore tended to be externally funded and not perceived as an integral part of the institution.

### **3.3.1.5. Adult Basic Education and Training**

According to figures produced by the Ministry of Education's Four Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training, it was estimated in 1995 that some 11 145 084 adults need basic education and training. During the same year, enrolment figures for adults engaged in ABET programmes were 258 967. The mismatch between need and provision suggested by these figures reflects significant inadequacies in educational provision at this level of education.

The lack of adequate provision is most acutely felt by those learners who have historically experienced barriers to learning and development. Many adults with disabilities have had little or no access to basic education and training. This concern has been articulated by a number of disabled people's organisations and organisations providing services to people with disabilities. They argue that the continued inaccessibility of many adult education and training programmes and initiatives for adults with disabilities contributes significantly to their continued marginalisation in society and their exclusion from the open labour market.

### **3.3.2. Socio-Economic Factors which Place Learners at Risk**

In South Africa there are a number of factors which contribute to a large percentage of learners being regarded as 'at risk'. Despite the large numbers of such learners, services and facilities to support them are limited and in some cases inappropriate and ineffective.

Inadequacies and inequalities in the education system and resultant problems which lead to learning breakdown are most evident in those areas of the country which have the lowest level of basic service provision, the highest levels of unemployment and sustained poverty. A study completed for the Reconstruction and Development Programme in 1994 found that approximately 4 million children under the age of 18 live in very poor households in rural areas. The study concluded that the low household incomes and generally poor education of the adults placed these children are at a developmental disadvantage.

Particularly in those rural areas which were part of the previous homeland system, most schools are poorly resourced despite the large numbers of learners using them. Data collected in the HSRC research process showed that more than half of the 72 magisterial areas in the Eastern Cape reported severe classroom shortages. Learner:educator ratios of more than 90:1 were not uncommon. In one school it rose to 165:1. Some 73,5% of all schools in the Eastern Cape Province do not have electricity, and 33,7% do not have access to running water within walking distance from school. Research conducted into innovative practices identified that the priorities expressed by educators and parents in rural disadvantaged contexts typically concerned the meeting of basic needs before effective learning could take place.

The impact of political violence on learners in South Africa was a key area of concern in a report entitled *Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances* published by UNICEF in 1995. According to the report, 75 000 children were displaced by political violence between 1990 and 1993, mostly in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

Criminal violence and abuse have also impacted on significant numbers of learners. The RDP report cited above states that according to the South African Police, 23 000 children under 18 years were victims of reported crimes. These included 213 attempted murders, 906 kidnappings and 7 559 cases of rape. The report states further that during the early 1990s between 2 100 and 2 500 convictions were recorded annually for crimes against children. A survey of 49 child welfare organisations yielded a median estimate that 20-30 % of the children dealt with had been victims of violence, mostly domestic. The Child Protection Unit of the SA Police Service reported that they had dealt with 9 376 cases of child abuse between January and March 1997. While these are only reported cases, and thus likely to reflect only a small percentage of the problem, the unit estimates that about a quarter of these cases occurred in the presence of other children such as siblings and friends. The associated trauma of being subjected to such abuse or witnessing it, is therefore likely to affect a large number of learners of school-going age.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has also placed and will continue to place a large number of learners at risk. The effects of the epidemic on learners includes not only those learners who are HIV+ or AIDS ill, but also those whose parents have died or who are chronically ill from the disease. In 1996 it was estimated that the number of HIV infected babies in South Africa was 57 077.

It has been argued in Chapter Two that lack of access to transport, particularly for learners with disabilities, may present a massive barrier to learning and development. Disability advocacy groups argue that many children with disabilities are prevented by this from attending school. It is also noted that adults with disabilities are prevented from attending adult education classes as a result of a significant lack of transport facilities. In rural areas public transport services are extremely poor and roads are poorly maintained or non-existent. In urban areas where public transport facilities do exist, many of these services are either inaccessible or the providers refuse to transport disabled children and disabled adults. The transport problems experienced by learners have been clearly articulated by stakeholders in public submissions. The CASE study conducted for the NCSNET/NCESS showed that in both rural and urban disadvantaged contexts, transport provision is limited or non-existent. Parents complained particularly that they could not afford to pay for transport to take their children to areas where services such as clinics were situated. Thus transport may not only prevent learners from reaching centres of learning, but it may also prevent them from accessing basic services.

### **3.3.3. Attitudes**

It was asserted in Chapter Two that negative attitudes towards differences and the resulting discrimination and prejudice in our society manifests itself as a serious barrier to learning and development. It was argued that this not only leads to exclusion from the education system on the basis of non-educational criteria, but also to labelling and unnecessary divisions in the education system. It was also asserted that negative attitudes, lack of awareness and labelling result in a range of learner and system needs being ignored and therefore not met.

Case-study research undertaken for the NCSNET/NCESS showed that negative attitudes towards disability are rife among both parents and educators. Discussions with parents showed that the birth of a disabled child often means ostracism from the community and for many women this means ostracism from their immediate family as well. Such problems are reinforced by negative attitudes towards disability which are articulated in some religious teachings and traditional beliefs. In the school setting teachers often respond negatively to the inclusion in their class of a child with a disability. Such attitudes are exacerbated by a lack of awareness and inadequate training of teachers to deal with the potential needs of a disabled learner. In general, learners with disabilities are undervalued in the learning environment. Within programmes designed for adult learners, negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities are also rife. Many educators express the fear that they do not know how to teach learners with disabilities and would therefore prefer not to have them in their classes.

Another important attitudinal barrier affecting adult learners relates to adults living in institutions who have been classified as intellectually disabled. Few opportunities exist for them to have access to ABET as they are perceived as being unable to learn, read or write. Moreover, a view exists that since they are being cared for in institutions such skills are unnecessary.

### **3.3.4. Inadequate and Inappropriate Assessment of Need**

In the past mechanisms and processes of assessment have not always resulted in indicators of educational need, but rather to categorisation by disability or learning difficulty. Where placement of a learner occurs according to the attachment of a label rather than by an assessment of learner and system need, the learner may experience barriers to learning and development which ultimately result in learning breakdown or exclusion. Although some attempts have been made to try to change a number of these practices and to facilitate more effective needs identification, it is important to recognise the inequalities and barriers to learning and development which many of the previous assessment practices have created.

In the past, most of the racially segregated departments of education insisted on large-scale administration of various standardised group tests, often without questioning the real benefits that would derive from them. Problems associated with intelligence tests, which were and continue to be routinely administered by some departments, are areas of extreme concern to many parents and educators. One of the key concerns, which is recognised internationally, is that such tests disadvantage some learners and reinforce existing inequalities in the



education system. Although investigations in South Africa and in other countries into the area of testing are presently taking place, concerns remain around the use and misuse of testing, particularly for educational placement.

Historically, the degree of sophistication of assessment procedures and services in this country has been determined by the nature and availability of facilities. Where facilities were supported by highly qualified, multi-disciplinary specialist teams, assessment of and provision for 'special needs' was generally based on complex, individualised and expensive delivery models. The majority of learners 'at risk' to barriers to learning and development were denied access to even basic services. This has not only resulted in the failure of the system to meet a range of learner needs and prevent barriers from manifesting themselves, but it has also led to a dearth of personnel who are appropriately trained and equipped to effectively assess learner and system needs. Problems in early identification of risk factors and potential barriers to learning and development have been exacerbated by a lack of intersectoral collaboration between government departments providing other basic services. These include the departments of health and welfare and education. Effective collaboration is also undermined by insufficient resources being directed towards such processes.

### **3.3.5. Curriculum and Institutional Development**

#### ***3.3.5.1. Inflexibility in Accommodating Diversity***

There are many indicators which demonstrate barriers to learning resulting from the inability of the curriculum to meet the needs of a wide range of different learners. The starkest are those which relate to 'learner failure'. In 1996, Mpumalanga province estimated that 18,2% of the learners enrolled in schools were repeating grades 1 to 3. The study completed for the RDP indicates that 23% of African learners aged between 15 and 19 have not passed standard 4. The equivalent figure for white learners was 1%.

In 1996 in the Northern Province, 17,4% of learners were 'over age' (i.e. 3 years older than the expected age for a class). In the Eastern Cape and North West Province the equivalent figure was approximately 20%. Research completed for the NCSNET/NCESS by CASE indicated that as many as 23% of learners in rural disadvantaged areas are overage. The RDP study points out that the majority of African learners in standard 10 are 20 years or over. The implications of these figures are self-evident.

#### ***3.3.5.2. Inaccessible and Unhealthy Learning Environments***

It has become extremely clear to members of the NCSNET/NCESS through the process of site visits and stakeholder submissions, that the vast majority of centres of learning remain physically inaccessible to many learners - most specifically for learners with physical disabilities. In this way, a large number of learners are excluded from these centres and prevented from engaging in the learning process.

In poorer, particularly rural areas, the built environment of centres of learning, is often inaccessible largely because buildings are rundown or poorly maintained. Such environments are not only inaccessible to children with physical disabilities but are also recognised as being unhealthy and unsafe for all learners. In the urban advantaged areas where basic facilities do exist, most centres of learning are housed in buildings which have no ramps, have poorly constructed walkways and have poor facilities for blind and Deaf learners.

#### ***3.3.5.3. Provision of Assistive Devices***

The provision and maintenance of assistive devices within learning contexts has varied considerably in the past. Race has been a major determining factor, with distorted provision among the racially segregated education departments. The provision of assistive devices has also been characterised by prohibitive costs, lack of knowledge regarding the services and facilities which are available, centralised service delivery and the absence of an integrated strategy for the provision of effective devices and skills.

The Green Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1995) identifies as particularly problematic the uncoordinated and inappropriate production, supply and maintenance of assistive devices, as well as the high cost of imported devices. The need for easier access to imported equipment and the development of more affordable local devices has been identified by many.

While available assistive devices have made a considerable impact on the ability of learners to access the curriculum, many problems relating to the current use of these devices in some contexts have been identified. A study on assistive devices by Disabled People South Africa, the Disability Action Research Team and the Health Systems Trust (1996) indicated that learners in some specialised schools lacked understanding and knowledge as to choice, availability, cost and maintenance of assistive devices. Learners also indicated that the devices were often not suitable for their learning contexts, hampering rather than enabling them. Another major problem area identified by some learners was the fact that they were often not allowed to keep their assistive devices, as these remained the property of the school. The abilities they acquired through the use of the devices were therefore of little use once they left school.

It is important to note that assistive devices, however necessary, should not be emphasised in such a way that the necessary accompanying human skills are not developed. These include particular technical, teaching and support skills. The availability and training of personnel with such skills is presently problematic.

### **3.3.6. Language and Communication**

The inherited language-in-education policy in South Africa has been fraught with tensions, contradictions and sensitivities, and underpinned by racial and linguistic discrimination. Teaching and learning for many South African learners takes place through a language which is not their first language. This not only places these learners at a disadvantage, but it also often leads to significant linguistic difficulties which contribute to learning breakdown. Second language learners in South Africa are particularly subject to low expectations, discrimination, and lack of role models and cultural peers. A number of discriminatory policies have in particular affected access of a number of learners to the education system, as well as their success within the system. Learners using SA Sign Language as their first language or non-speaking learners have been particularly discriminated against in the provision of education in their first language.

Our Constitution, however, recognises cultural diversity as a valuable national asset, and tasks the Government, amongst other things, to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages and respect for all languages used in the country.

Learners who are non-speaking due to the severity of their physical, intellectual and/or mental disabilities, and particularly those living in rural and disadvantaged areas, have in the past also had virtually no access to education due to the lack of skills in alternative and augmentative communication (AAC). Through this they have experienced tremendous barriers to learning and development which frequently resulted in their total exclusion from formal learning.

### **3.3.7. Organisation and Governance of the Education System**

The way in which an education system is structured, managed and organised impacts directly on the process of learning and teaching. Education governance during the apartheid years was a complex mixture of centralised and decentralised forms of administration and control. The basic centralisation of this system has left a legacy of restrictive centralised control which inhibits change and initiative. Legal responsibility for decisions tends to be located at the highest level and the focus of management remains orientated towards employees complying with rules rather than on ensuring quality service delivery. A major factor inhibiting effective human resource development of educators and other personnel has been the absence of effective monitoring of performance or inappropriate processes for assessing merit. Central to such styles of management and governance has been the limited or total lack of attempts to include key stakeholders in the governance of education at all levels. One of the more severe consequences of this has been divisions between centres of learning and surrounding communities, with few opportunities for parents and other community members to participate in decision making and planning. Governance of those areas which relate to 'special needs' and support services has reflected all of these characteristics.

At present the management of the education system in South Africa operates at four levels: central or national level, regional or provincial level, district level, and local or centre-of-learning level.

Structures relating to the management of 'special needs' and support services currently exist at national and provincial levels, and, in many cases, at district and local levels as well. Specific structures to ensure that adequate support is provided at district and centre-of-learning level have been provided in a very limited way in historically disadvantaged areas.

At national Department of Education level the area of 'special needs' is accommodated under specific directorates within the 'co-ordination' and 'programmes' sections. At provincial level, most provincial departments of education have either one or two directorates or sections dedicated to addressing 'special needs' and providing support services to learners. At present all persons and posts dedicated to this area are located in these sections rather than being infused into the other directorates or major sections of the department. The areas of 'special needs' and support services are either located together within *one* section, or in separate sections (e.g. separate sub-directorates). In some cases this separateness does not prevent collaboration in addressing 'special needs', while in others the separation forces a fragmentation between these two areas. The exception to the structure described above is Gauteng Province which has opted for an infused organisation model whereby dedicated 'special needs' and support services posts have been infused into all relevant directorates.

### **3.3.8. Inadequate and Fragmented Funding for Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development**

The present funding system in South Africa for provision for 'special needs' and support has many weaknesses and disparities. Many learners, particularly those who experience barriers to learning and development, are not in schools. Until very recently, very little has been done to redress past inequalities.

Funding for education for learners who experience barriers to learning and development has largely been directed towards the specialised schools which cater mainly for learners with specific disabilities. There is also significant disparity or inequity between provinces and between the historically white and black schools in the provision of support services in the education system. Where services and facilities do exist, these are usually highly specialised and concentrated on addressing needs of the learner with very little funding being directed at addressing system needs and facilitating system change.

Despite the fact that most funding has been directed towards specialist services and facilities, some existing specialised schools argue that available state funding has not been adequate to fully meet identified needs. They have therefore also relied on financial assistance from external sources - usually from external sponsoring bodies. Similarly, many mainstream schools, particularly in rural areas and previously disadvantaged sectors, argue that they do not have the resources to provide for learner diversity.

### **3.3.9. Nature and Provision of Support Services**

The NEPI Support Services report (1992), provides the most recent survey of education support services in this country. At the time of the survey, the different support services were still being managed by racially segregated departments: specialised education, and guidance and counselling under the auxiliary or psychological services departments; school health under the various health departments; and school social work either directly under education or under the welfare departments. Some school social workers were employed by the education departments, while others were employed by the Department of Social Services, but worked in schools.

The survey found glaring inequalities and inconsistencies amongst the different racially segregated departments, lack of co-ordination and fragmentation, lack of national focus and clarity on the nature of the service, centralised and non-participatory decision making and a marginalisation of the services which resulted in a lack of status and resource allocation. Those education support personnel who were employed by departments other than education, or by different departments within education, had an unsatisfactory 'dual control' system. For example, a social worker employed by the Social Services Department working at a school was under the control of the principal in terms of daily working arrangements and under the control of the Social Services supervisor in terms of professional issues of service delivery.

Education support personnel drawn from the various departments of education, health and social welfare, have included psychologists, social workers, remedial or learning support teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, speech and hearing/language and listening teachers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, nurses and doctors. Minimal, if any, use has been made of community-based resources or parents. NGOs have been used on an ad hoc basis, if at all.

Racial disparities have also characterised the provision of support services with more privileged white schools having received the most comprehensive services. Support services have been only minimally provided by the departments serving African learners, with rural areas being the most neglected. Stakeholders at public hearings held by the NCSNET/NCESS reported that in some rural areas support services are almost non-existent.

Although guidance and counselling teachers have been employed at secondary school level, guidance and counselling has generally been a marginalised service in schools, often being given low priority by the school administration. The service, although having the potential to provide school-based support to learners who experience barriers to learning and development, has seldom been able to do this. This is primarily due to the fragmented conceptualisation of education support, the lack of a clear policy framework, the low status of 'guidance' as well as the marginalisation and inadequate provision of resources in many centres of learning.

Such inequalities were highlighted in the findings of the CASE study undertaken for the NCSNET/NCESS. In an urban advantaged area in Gauteng, 88% of households categorised as having 'special education needs' had received support services assistance, whereas only 32% of those in disadvantaged areas of Gauteng reported to have 'special education needs' had access to any support services.

In the CASE study, rural and urban disadvantaged ordinary schools reported that very limited support services were available within the school or within the broader community. Guidance teachers who were available often lacked the necessary expertise to deal with diverse needs in the learner population. Social workers and nurses visited some of the schools, but only about once a year. They were usually based far from the schools and were thus difficult to access.

The advantaged schools surveyed reported that although they had access to educational aid centres, many of these centres had scaled down, were under-staffed and were unable to deliver an effective service. The schools do, however, have access to private practitioners and assessment centres to whom learners can be referred, if parents can afford this.

Very few formal support services have focused on prevention and addressing social problems such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, crime, vandalism, gangsterism, teenage pregnancy and child abuse in mainstream education contexts. One of the reasons cited for this lack of focus has been that much of the available time of education support personnel has been taken up on time-consuming assessments for placements of learners in specialised learning contexts.

Education support services are largely unavailable in education contexts outside of the formal education and training system e.g. education facilities for streetchildren provided by NGOs do not have access to education support services. Similarly, day care centres started by parents for children with disabilities receive little or no support in this regard.

### **3.3.10. Inadequate and Fragmented Human Resource Development**

The training needs of educators and personnel traditionally regarded as education support personnel at all levels of education are presently not being adequately met. Similarly, little or no training and capacity building opportunities exist for community resource persons, particularly parents. Training tends to be fragmented, uncoordinated, inadequate, unequal and often inappropriate to the needs of a developing country. It is also characterised by a long history of discriminatory provision with respect to race, geographic location, funding, content (subject matter), gender and disability. It is also marred by a lack of collaboration between sectors including between government departments, between Government and the NGO sector, as well as between the NGO sector and community-based organisations.

Once again approaches in training have reflected the general trend of conceptualising 'special needs' with a predominant focus on learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. Within this conceptualisation, education and training has been separated into general and specialised education, with the provision of a second system for learners with 'special needs'. The content of training has tended to be informed by a model which focuses on learner deficits rather than on the causes of learning breakdown and the meeting of a diversity of needs. Teachers working at all levels within the general system have not been adequately trained to respond to the learning needs of learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. Also, teacher education does not equip teachers to respond to other dynamics of diversity within the learner population, even within specialised learning contexts. Issues that teachers are inadequately prepared to deal with include learners with HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, learners with long-term physical health problems, learners abusing substances, street children and learners traumatised by violence. In South Africa the poor training of educators is acutely obvious in the large number of educators who have little or no knowledge of second language teaching, despite the fact that there are so many learners who continue to experience learning breakdown as a result of language barriers. The absence of training to equip teachers to deal with diversity not only affects learners it also leaves teachers feeling inadequate and demoralised.

Training that relates to 'special needs' in education and training provided by both the formal and informal sectors also tends to be inconsistent and dependent on particular institutions, organisations and individuals. This inconsistency and the fragmentation across institutions makes it difficult to determine the quality and continuity of training programmes across the country and within different levels of education. Informal training programmes focusing on 'special needs' in education and training tend to be one-off pilot projects that have not been sustainable.

Despite all of the above, recent years have seen the emergence of training programmes which have focused on innovative practices in equipping educators with the skills to deal with diversity and address barriers to learning and development.

### **3.3.10.1. Educators**

#### **3.3.10.1.1. ECD Practitioners**

Despite the fact that a growing awareness exists of the need to incorporate modules on 'special needs' in education and training in existing ECD training courses, very few initiatives have been taken in either the formal or the informal sector to include such training. In the formal sector, ECD practitioners either receive no training in 'special needs' or receive limited training which tends to be too theoretical and based on outdated approaches. Although some initiatives are being undertaken to include some 'special needs' components, training remains weak within the formal sector.

In the informal sector few of the 80 general training programmes run by NGOs include components to equip practitioners with knowledge and skills to enable them to create an inclusive learning environment which meets diverse needs. Where training courses have attempted to incorporate diversity components, they have tended to be unsustainable as they rely heavily on the availability of individuals with a particular understanding of the needs and rights of children who experience barriers to learning and development. It has also been recognised that one of the main reasons for weaknesses in the initiatives which have been started has been their failure to incorporate the active participation of parents and their organisations.

#### **3.3.10.1.2. Teachers (General and Further Education)**

The National Teacher Education Audit of 1995 revealed that there were approximately 281 institutions providing pre-service and in-service education and training to approximately 480 000 students, making teacher education the largest single sector of higher education in the country. In 1995 pre-service training providers included 20 universities, 5 technikons, 104 colleges of education, a few NGOs and private institutions with approximately 117 000 students enrolled in pre-service courses in South Africa. In-service teacher education is provided through colleges of education and contact universities, NGOs and, more recently, private colleges. It must also be noted that distance education has begun to play a large role in teacher education in South Africa. Serious concerns, however, exist around the quality of many of these courses and a recent study argued that a need exists for transformation in this area.

In general, the capacity of existing pre- and in-service education courses to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to accommodate diversity in their classes is very weak. There is no consistency with regard to either compulsory modules on 'special needs' in education or the content of courses. Similarly, there is very little monitoring of the conceptual framework or models which inform course content. Traditionally, training of 'special education' teachers has been structured with a focus on single disabilities so that teachers are qualified to teach learners with particular disabilities in particular working contexts. South Africa lags far behind in teacher education programmes insofar as raising awareness and responding to a diversity of learner needs in ordinary classrooms is concerned. Although a number of in-service programmes which relate specifically to 'special needs' have begun to be developed, many take the form of one-off workshops or lectures run by NGOs which have limited resources. More intensive and sustained programmes do exist on a very limited basis at some institutions of further and higher education.

Among existing teachers there appears to be a disturbing lack of awareness and skills for dealing with diversity among learners, for identifying needs in learners and within the system, for providing curriculum flexibility and for evaluating support effectiveness. In general it can be said that teachers have unfortunately been made to believe that they are only equipped to teach certain learners, and that specialists must take over if a learner is identified with learning breakdown. Unfortunately, this has contributed to labelling and to the association of 'special need' with learner inadequacies.

#### **3.3.10.1.3. Teachers with Specialised Competencies**

The focus to date has fallen on the training of specialised education teachers for single disabilities. Owing to the separate systems that existed, these teachers were often excluded from on-going general in-service training programmes that existed for mainstream teachers. While some attempts have been made to overcome these problems, some teachers from specialised contexts have indicated that few training opportunities for Curriculum 2005 have taken place.

#### **3.3.10.1.4. Teachers with Disabilities**

Despite the fact that people with disabilities in South Africa have a critical role to play in challenging attitudes regarding diversity and learner needs, few people with disabilities have been able to enter higher education institutions to train as teachers. Where they have overcome enormous barriers to enter institutions and complete their training, they have been prevented from working as teachers by discriminatory attitudes towards the employment of people with disabilities. A particularly acute example is the problem faced by Deaf people in accessing teacher development programmes, as well as the discrimination in finding permanent employment faced by female teachers with visual disabilities.

Although the SA Schools Act (1996) provides for Sign Language as an option for the language of teaching and learning, there are at present only two qualified Deaf teachers in South Africa. As has been recognised internationally, Deaf teachers are not only in a position to share a common first language with Deaf learners, but they also play an extremely important role as change agents for changing attitudes and as role models for young Deaf learners. The massive inequity which has existed in educational provision for Deaf learners in the past has also meant that Deaf adults wishing to train as teachers have been excluded from higher educational institutions as they do not comply with the current admission criteria for teacher education.

#### **3.3.10.1.5. Adult Education Practitioners**

At present ABET courses are offered by both institutions of higher education such as the universities and technikons, and NGOs. The courses range from post-graduate degrees to short ad-hoc workshops. Recently the National Training Board developed the ETDP (Education, Training and Development Practitioner) model which attempts, in line with the NQF guidelines, to develop the concept of trainer as educator. Several institutions of higher education and organisations providing ABET courses have already altered their courses to conform with this model. Despite these important developments it would appear that very little content is included in existing adult education practitioner courses on diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development.

#### **3.3.10.1.6. Personnel in Institutions of Higher Education**

In learning to deal with diversity and meeting different needs among learners it is important to recognise that lecturers at institutions for higher education seldom receive any orientation or training in instruction or knowledge transfer. The nature of the teaching and therefore the capacity to meet different learning needs depends on the individual skills of the lecturers, rather than on knowledge-based skills acquired formally. There is, however, growing realisation of the need to equip lecturers with skills to facilitate learning more effectively and a number of institutions have initiated in-service courses for their teacher personnel. Academic development programmes have played an important role in this regard.

### **3.3.10.2. Training of Education Support Personnel**

#### **3.3.10.2.1. Health and Social Welfare Workers**

Medical practitioners, school health nurses, therapists, community-based rehabilitation workers, orthotists and prosthetists, social workers, community development workers, and other disciplines working within the education system are presently not required to have specialised knowledge and skills with regard to providing a specific service to learners who experience barriers to learning and development, including troubled young people, within a systems perspective.

Their present training is usually based on the medical/deficit approach to 'special needs' and support and therefore equips them to work on a one-to-one basis with the learner experiencing learning breakdown. Recent developments have however revealed a move towards a preventative and health promotive approach and a development rather than welfare approach.

Training for social workers is provided at 19 universities and one college. The White Paper on Social Welfare (1996) recognises that the present courses do not sufficiently equip graduates to respond appropriately to the most important social development needs in South African communities (including the education system). Some of the academic institutions are currently involved in reorienting their programmes in these directions.

#### **3.3.10.2.2 Psychologists Working in the Education Sector**

There is a tremendous shortage of psychologists trained to work in the education sector to provide support to centres of learning, particularly, in rural areas. Psychologists have also tended to be focused at the primary school level, with little attention to other levels of education. It is also important to note that there are a number of psychologists who are not necessarily trained as educational psychologists who are presently working in education.

Much of the training of psychologists has historically been based on a medical model, which has been further entrenched by the requirement for registration with the Interim South African Medical and Dental Council, and on the competencies expected by the departments of education.

Some universities responsible for the professional development of psychologists have started to make the shift towards preventative and systems interventions within the context of a move towards the development of community psychology. This shift, however, has had a limited impact on the role of psychologists in education to date.

#### **3.3.10.2.3. Guidance and Counselling Teachers**

Training of guidance teachers and counsellors is currently provided in some universities and colleges. While most of the courses have focused on traditional guidance areas and counselling skills, a broadening of this work to encompass the fuller range of lifeskills education has been evident in more recent times. Although this is still a popular area of study in education facilities and colleges, ongoing marginalisation of this area in education has had a decidedly demoralising effect.

### **3.3.10.3. Training and Capacity Building of Parents**

In general parents have been given little recognition within the education and training system as the primary care-givers of their children. They have been allowed little participation in decision making regarding their children's participation in learning programmes and regarding governance of centres of learning.

Despite this marginalisation and disempowerment, a number of parents, particularly of children with disabilities, have established informal day care centres and specialised centres of learning. They have also, largely through the establishment of organisations, become involved in the development of appropriate learning materials and initiatives to lobby for changes to the existing education system. Parents have been among the most vociferous advocates in the world-wide campaign for inclusive education.

Parent empowerment and training programmes which do exist have been started by organisations of parents. They tend to be unsustainable however due to the lack of institutional and Government support.

It is important to note that acknowledgement of the critical role which parents need to play in the education and development of learners is now being given official recognition through new legislation and policies such as the SA Schools Act (1996) and the National Plan of Action for Children (1996). However, these policies however have yet to be transformed into structured parent development and empowerment strategies and programmes.

#### **3.3.10.4. Child and Youth Care Workers**

Investigations conducted by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk (1996) indicated that there are approximately 1 700 child and youth care workers working in Places of Safety, Schools of Industry and Reform Schools. The study also found that 89% of child and youth workers in Schools of Industry and Reform Schools hold no qualification in child and youth care work and a further 46% of senior and 50% of junior child and youth care workers in Places of Safety have no qualification in child and youth care work. Similarly, most probation officers have received little or no training in early intervention strategies or work with troubled youth.

The South African Youth Club estimates that there are approximately 5 000 youth workers in South Africa. Although youth workers are not registered, it is estimated that most are found working in a broad range of areas including NGO settings, religious bodies, service agencies, community-based organisations (CBOs), local and provincial government, the private sector and research institutions.

Training for child and youth care workers has largely been inadequate and fragmented, with limited training opportunities presently available. Those opportunities which have been available have largely been run by NGOs which have received very little Government support.

#### **3.3.10.5. House Parents and Teacher Aides/Support Teachers**

Most training of house parents and teacher aides takes place at centre level in the form of informal 'hands-on' training. Staff development takes place on an ad hoc basis, with no recognition through certification or career pathing. There seems to be no formal course framework consistent across institutions and organisations and no 'special needs' focus. The dearth of training and recognition for such work has also resulted in the use of cleaners and housekeepers as teacher aides. Despite the role which they have played, in most cases they have not received the necessary remuneration or recognition for this work.

#### **3.3.10.6. Sign Language Interpreters**

There are presently only two fully-qualified overseas-trained Sign Language interpreters in South Africa. Sign Language interpreters used in South Africa are mainly children of Deaf adults (CODAS), teachers or friends of Deaf adults that have been taught by the Deaf adults.

Very few teachers educating Deaf learners are presently equipped to teach through the medium of Sign Language. (It has to be noted that Signed Exact English or Signed English is not the same as Sign Language). Similarly, very few house-parents in hostels with Deaf learners can communicate through Sign Language. There are also very few Sign Language interpreters at tertiary level.

#### **3.3.10.7. Education Management Personnel**



The ultimate aim of management at all levels of education is the creation and support of conditions under which teachers and learners are able to achieve learning. Despite the crucial role which management personnel need to play, they have in the past received little or no training on the dynamics of responding to diversity within the learner population and developing supportive centres of learning.

Recent research has shown that the successful inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning and development depends to a large extent on the ethos and values fostered by school management and thus the training of this sector of education personnel remains central to the achievement of the vision of education for all.

### **3.3.10.8. Other Community Resources**

#### **3.3.10.8.1. Peer Counsellors**

Despite the fact that many learners involved in peer-counselling are activists who have faced discrimination and marginalisation on the basis of disability, language, gender, illness, sexual preference etc., virtually no recognition has been given to them or to the skills which they have developed in dealing with these problems and the role which they can play in assisting others in similar situations. Because they tend to lack formal counselling skills and often have relatively low levels of education, they are often disregarded by professionals and undervalued by managements who tend to actively underplay their potential roles. This has led to an almost total lack of peer counsellor development programmes. At present, some informal courses are available through NGOs. These however tend to be uncoordinated and are not usually in line with the guidelines of the NQF.

#### **3.3.10.8.2. Community Leaders**

Community leaders often lead in change processes in communities. Their influence in contributing towards a culture of learning, teaching and service for all can therefore not be under-estimated. Their attitudes and their understanding of underdevelopment, human rights and inclusivity can bring about direct change in the way communities respond to diversity within the community and in centres of learning. Yet they have almost no access to short courses where they can gain understanding and skills for the management of community issues such as conflict resolution and mediation, human rights as it relates to disability, HIV/AIDS, barrier-free development, changing attitudes and so on.

#### **3.3.10.8.3. Traditional Healers**

Traditional healers play an important role in shaping beliefs and providing support in communities. It is estimated that at least 80% of the South African population visit traditional healers for both medical, psychological and spiritual healing. There are presently moves underway to bring them into the formal health sector delivery system. At present they play little role in providing support within the education system despite the fact that their contribution to overcoming barriers to learning and development and facilitating community support for centres of learning remains important.

## **3.4. OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

This chapter provides a bleak picture of an education system not only beset by extensive and deep rooted barriers to learning and development which have caused exclusion and learning breakdown, but also with a limited capacity, particularly with regard to human and financial resources, to minimise, overcome and prevent these barriers and meet a diversity of learner and system needs. While it is important to recognise the nature and extent of the problems which exist, it is equally important to recognise the strengths of the system. Such strengths which are visible throughout the system need to be harnessed and supported in order to facilitate the transformation and restructuring which is needed. The strengths must be critically analysed so that we can begin to engage in a constant process of evaluation and ongoing transformation towards a system of education for all.

Many of the strengths inherent in the system have developed historically in response to the lack of provision and discrimination experienced by so many learners. They have come about through long processes of struggle by learners, parents, educators, policy makers and advocates to minimise, overcome and prevent barriers to learning and to provide quality education for all. Probably the most significant outcome of these struggles has been the

implementation of democracy in our country and the commitments and changes emanating from this. The change process has included significant restructuring in the education system. The initiatives arising from the process have implications for the areas of concern addressed in this Report.

### **3.4.1. The Development of a Policy and Legislative Framework For Accommodating Diversity**

It was argued earlier that the fragmented and inadequate nature of legislation governing the education system in the past has led to exclusion of large sectors of the learner population and the perpetuation of inequalities in provision and quality of education. It has sanctioned ongoing discrimination and undermined the involvement of parents and the community in the governance and organisation of education.

The recent adoption of a new Constitution of South Africa together with the introduction of new education legislation and policy based on the principles on which this document is based are important in providing a framework for recognising diversity and providing quality education for all learners, including those learners excluded by the previous system. A clear commitment to the principles of redressing past inequalities and creating equal opportunities for all learners has been made through the new legislation and policy on education. These principles have been developed into particular strategies aimed at specifically alleviating poverty, creating access to basic services and achieving a more equitable distribution of existing and future resources. New initiatives in this area have also brought South African legislation and education policy in line with international trends and standards, particularly towards overcoming barriers to learning and development.

#### **3.4.1.1. The Constitution**

##### **3.4.1.1.1. Equity**

Through a number of key provisions the Constitution recognises basic human rights for all citizens, including key socio-economic rights. One of these basic rights is the right to education. The Constitution states:

*“Everyone has the right -*

*a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and*

*b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible”.*

The fundamental right to basic education is further developed in the Constitution through a number of other provisions, most particularly the equality clause or Section 9. Understanding the right to education within the context of the equality clause provides guidance on the nature of the educational provision which should be available to all learners as well as the practices which should inform the organisation and running of all centres of learning.

In Section 9 (2) the Constitution says that:

*“Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken”.*

The Constitution therefore provides not only for the provision of basic education, but more importantly for the right to equal educational provision for all learners. This means that all learners, whatever their needs or differences are, have a right to equal educational provision. The Constitution, in noting previous disadvantage, also recognises that in order to create equal opportunities for all citizens to enjoy these rights, particular mechanisms or measures may need to be in place to redress past inequalities.

Both these imperatives are extremely important to the majority of learners who experience barriers to learning and development, to those who have had little or no access to educational provision in the past and to those who will continue to be excluded unless positive measures are taken around redress.

##### **3.4.1.1.2. Non-discrimination**

The Constitution further states in Section 9 (3) (4) & (5):

*“3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.*

*4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3)*

*5) Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair”.*

The non-discrimination provision in the Constitution is especially important in protecting learners who experience barriers to learning and development from being discriminated against on the basis of characteristics which bear no relation to their right to education or their capacity to participate in the learning process. The nature of the discrimination may take on a number of forms, including structural barriers, inappropriate attitudes, inaccessible learning environments and exclusionary practices. The protection of learners from discrimination is extremely important for learners with disabilities who have been by and large excluded from educational provision in the past, purely on the basis of their disability. Where limited educational facilities have existed they have been segregated from mainstream educational processes.

Provisions in the Constitution also ensure that all citizens, including learners who experience barriers to learning and development, have access to all other fundamental rights such as the right to human dignity, the right to equality before the law, the right to just administrative action, the right to access of information, the right to language and culture and other rights. It is imperative that in building a new system of education which will meet the needs of all learners and accommodate diversity, respect for all these fundamental rights should form the basis of all policy and legislation.

#### **3.4.1.1.3. Language of Choice**

The right to receive education in an official language of choice is also provided for in the Constitution. Section 29 (2) states:

*“Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable”.*

It is important to recognise that the Constitution has laid the basis for the recognition of Sign Language as the first language of choice for Deaf learners.

#### **3.4.1.2. White Paper on Education and Training**

The White Paper provides a comprehensive framework for the transformation process which is needed to change the education system into one which will meet the needs of all learners. It also clearly integrates the notions of education and training and argues that both are key to human resource development in a country and essential to the development of skills to sustain effective economic development. The White Paper not only argues that an integrated approach breaks down divisions such as that between *“knowledge and skills”* which falsely stratified society, but also brings education policy in South Africa in line with international trends.

In isolating those values and principles which should inform education and training policy in South Africa, the White Paper notes four key areas of concern which have informed the vision and principles of the NCSNET/NCESS. These are : that the goal of an education and training policy should be to ensure that all learners, adults and children, have access to a lifelong learning process; to recognise that in South Africa massive inequalities have existed in the past in the provision of education and that central to policy development and planning is the need to redress these inequalities; that all state resources must be provided according to the principle of equity so that all learners have access to equal educational opportunities; and to ensure that the provision of education is of good quality.

The White Paper addresses a number of areas of concern in which transformation is needed and provides the background to present initiatives which are taking place in our country. These are described as 'developmental initiatives' and thus are regarded as key development processes in transforming the education system. It is argued in the White Paper that education support services and provision for learners with 'special needs' has not been comprehensive enough in any part of the former education and training system and for African learners has been *"meagre in the extreme"*. What provision has existed has reflected racial disparities and has been weakest in the poorest areas where the need is at its greatest. The policy document also recognises the separate functioning between the general education system and the areas of education support services and services for learners with 'special needs'.

It is on the basis of the Ministry's commitment to exploring a 'holistic and integrated' approach to these areas of concern that the idea of a National Commission on 'special needs' in Education and Training is mooted in the document. Similarly, it is further proposed that such a commission should be run in conjunction with investigations into new imperatives for education support services. Thus, it is on the basis of the commitments made in the White Paper that the NCSNET/NCESS were set up. Similarly, the White Paper clearly locates these two initiatives as an integral part of overall educational transformation in the country.

### **3.4.1.3. The SA Schools Act**

The South African Schools Act (1996), has ushered in a new era in the field of general education in South Africa and embodies the principles in the Constitution and the white papers on education and training. It is recognised that the Act provides important mechanisms to realise the vision and principles of the NCSNET/NCESS. However, it also contains gaps and weaknesses which may restrict the rights of learners who experience barriers to learning and understanding and undermining the development of an integrated education system. Below is an overview of some of the key strengths and weaknesses of the Act as it relates to the rights of all learners and to the development of an integrated education system. Specific issues dealt with in the Act are also addressed in other chapters of the document.

One of the key features of the new Act is the assertion of the right of equal access to basic and quality education for all learners without discrimination of any sort. No learner may therefore be denied admission to an ordinary school on any grounds, including grounds of disability, language, learning difficulty or pregnancy. This is the first step towards a single inclusive education system for South Africa.

The fact that the provision of education for learners with 'special needs' is no longer contained in separate statutes is already an indication that education for learners who experience barriers to learning is no longer seen as part of a second or separate system in our law.

The Act makes the provision of support services mandatory and stipulates that the rights and wishes of parents must overrule the admission policy of any governing body of a school, thus giving parents choice in the placement of their children.

The Act embodies the constitutional right to equal access, the right to claim learning support so as to access the curriculum, and the right of parents to choose. This implies that compulsory exclusion of any learner has effectively been abolished.

A further bold and mandatory aspect of the Act is the provision that recognises Sign Language as an official language for the purposes of learning at a public school. The fact that the State is liable to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the physical facilities at public schools are accessible to persons with disabilities also marks a very important step forward in removing barriers which prevented learners with disabilities from attending school.

While these provisions are significant in addressing previous barriers to learning and development and in providing for the realisation of basic rights, it is important to recognise that the manner in which 'special education need' is defined and dealt with in the Act remains premised on limited historical understandings of what constitutes 'special needs'. By specifically referring to 'schools for LSEN' the Act implies that only learners presently catered for in specialised schools are considered to be included in the definition of learners with 'special

needs'. Such an understanding, by relying on historical categorisations of 'special need' does not sufficiently reflect the conceptualisation of the NCSNET/NCESS in this regard.

If Section 5 (1) of the Act , which reads:

*"A public School must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way."*

is read with Section 9(5) of the Constitution, which provides for the limitation of certain rights, the Act may in effect limit the rights of certain learners if it can be proved that it is fair to discriminate against them. Although this may seem unlikely in a new culture of tolerance and respect for diversity, particularly for the needs of learners who experience barriers to learning and development, the legislation should include more safeguards for the learner. It should place the onus on the system to prove that it cannot provide the necessary support which would facilitate the integration of such a learner in a particular educational context.

This issue also arises in Section 12 (4) of the Act, which states:

*"the Member of the Executive Council must, where reasonably practicable, provide education for learners with special education needs at ordinary schools and provide relevant educational support services for such learners."*

The clause "*where reasonably practicable*" undermines the mandatory power of the Act. The emphasis seems to be more on safeguarding the system than on protecting the rights of the learner. This issue has already been widely debated in other countries faced with the same issues. An exact limitation measure must be decided upon. Some countries have addressed this issue by using the wording "*unless it cannot be made practicable*". Various Commonwealth countries as well as American anti-discrimination legislation have preferred using the wording: "*unless this would constitute an unjustifiable hardship*". This would place the onus on the school or the State to prove that it has done everything in its power to accommodate the learner.

Section 4 (1) states that a Head of Department may exempt a learner entirely, partially or conditionally from compulsory school attendance if it is in the best interests of the learner. There is particular concern regarding the words "if it is in the best interests of the learner". When can it ever be in the best interests of a learner to be excluded from a learning environment? International precedent suggests that systems need to be adapted to ensure that the rights of all learners are met rather than exclusion being an option for consideration.

Although the Act is the first act which voices the idea of integration of learners with 'special needs' into our school system, it is not prescriptive enough in providing for the development of an inclusive, integrated education system. While it signals a change of direction envisaged for education policy, there is as yet nothing in the Act which indicates how the education system can contribute to overcoming barriers which have led to social exclusion and sustained marginalisation of significant sectors of the population.

#### **3.4.1.4. Other Government Policy Initiatives**

The notion of a civil society with a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity is firmly entrenched in the rights model articulated throughout other key policy documents of the new Government. Similarly, most of the policy documents thus far in the transformation period in South Africa reflect a strong emphasis on the need for a significant paradigm shift. They all argue that the history of apartheid and its oppressive ideologies and practices have no space in a democratic South Africa. The policy documents both nationally and internationally are premised on respect for the rights and dignity of all human beings.

##### **3.4.1.4.1. Economic Restructuring, Growth and Development**

The Government's programme for reconstruction and development (RDP), which was articulated in a White Paper published in November 1994, clearly recognised the need for an education system which is linked to human resource development for employment creation and economic growth. Similarly, the RDP highlights an integrated approach to education and training, committing the Government to the implementation of measures "*to facilitate equal access of men and women to training and education at all levels*". In recognising past inequalities the RDP

also recognises the specific inequalities, including access to education, experienced by youth, rural people and people with disabilities.

The Government's more recent policy on Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) also recognises the link between education and training. The policy notes specifically the present education initiatives underway which it argues are aimed at qualitative improvements in the education system. It argues that public resources should be primarily concentrated *"on enhancing the educational opportunities of historically disadvantaged communities."*

It is also important to recognise that key policy documents developed by the Government in the area of employment and skills development articulate very clearly the need to recognise that particular groups in our society have been severely marginalised in the past in accessing opportunities for training and employment. It is recognised that such marginalisation has taken place as a result of internal and external factors affecting the labour market including unfair discrimination on the basis of unrelated criteria, e.g. disability, race, gender etc. The recently published Green Paper on a Skills Development Strategy argues the following:

*"stereotypic and prejudiced attitudes towards people with disabilities and women have hindered these groups from accessing training opportunities. It goes on to say that "these legacies and the huge challenges facing South Africa in terms of employment, growth and development demand a new conceptual approach to skills development"*.

A new conceptual approach to overcoming previous prejudice and discrimination and recognising diversity among people entering the labour market is also clearly spelled out in the Government's Green Paper on Employment Equity (1996). It is argued that the work place, like centres of learning, should be changed to *"accommodate diversity and reduce barriers to historically disadvantaged groups"*. Thus recognition is given to the fact that there will always be differences between people in any society, and that our society, by not supporting diversity, has created unfair barriers for particular groups which has resulted in unequal access to fundamental rights.

#### **3.4.1.4.2. Green Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy for South Africa**

The Green Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy for South Africa (1995) reflects clearly how people with disabilities in our country have been severely marginalised in the past and have been denied fundamental rights such as education and employment.

Drawing on international precedent the disability strategy document emphasises the need for a shift from a 'welfare' model of disability to a developmental model premised on fundamental human rights. It argues that people with disabilities are entitled to an environment in which they should have equal access to all facets of society available to the rest of the population. In this regard much attention needs to be paid to breaking down those barriers which have marginalised people with disabilities and resulted in massive inequalities.

The strong commitment expressed in this document to a human rights and developmental model of disability which sees people with disabilities as equal members of a society which recognises and accommodates diversity has very important implications for the recommendations of the NCSNET/NCESS. The document also recognises the right of Deaf learners to engage in teaching and learning through Sign Language as their first medium of instruction.

#### **3.4.2. International Policies and Practices for the Accommodation of Diversity**

##### **3.4.2.1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The international standards set by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provide for education as a basic right for all persons.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the South African Government on 16 June 1995, provides a firm basis for education to be seen as a basic right, but also recognises that it is a right which should

be achieved progressively on the basis of equal opportunity for all learners. In this regard, primary education must be made compulsory and available free to all learners.

It is also important to recognise that the Convention links basic rights to a child's right to development. In recognising the rights of children with disabilities the Convention states that:

*“ a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life in conditions which:*

- I. ensure dignity*
- II. promote self-reliance, and*
- III. facilitate the child's active participation in the community.”*

#### **3.4.2.2. Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities**

It is recognised throughout this document that children with disabilities have faced enormous barriers to educational provision in the past. Such barriers have resulted for many such children in learning breakdown or no access to education at all. A number of international instruments which impact on people with disabilities as well as an increasing number of government policies recognise the need for government planning and policy development in all areas of society to be guided by the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

These rules, which have their origin in the United Nation's World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, provide guidelines for minimum standards which must be met for equal opportunities to be created for all people with disabilities in the society. Rule 6 states:

*“States should recognise the principal of equal, primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the education system.”*

It states further that;

*“General educational authorities are responsible for the education of persons with disabilities in integrated settings. Education for persons with disabilities should form an integral part of the national educational planning, curriculum development and school organisation.”*

The rules are also very clear on the need for adequate and appropriate support services to facilitate the provision of an integrated education system. In Rule 4 a number of key support services are listed as critical to the creation of equal opportunities in education for persons with disabilities.

The rules also refer specifically to the right of Deaf learners to engage in the process of learning and teaching through Sign Language.

#### **3.4.2.3. International Conferences and Meetings which Reflect a Paradigm Shift to Inclusive Education**

International trends towards a society that respects diversity emerged strongly in 1990 through the World Conference on Education For All. It was at this conference in Thailand that “Education for all by the year 2000” was adopted. This was followed by the Salamanca Statement in 1994, the product of a conference held in the city of Salamanca, Spain, which shaped the agenda for an inclusive society. Its major emphasis was the restructuring of the school system and it calls for nothing less than the inclusion of all the world's children in schools and the reform of the school system to make this possible. The statement refers to a number of important concerns in the provision of education, including the importance of recognising Sign Language as the medium of communication for Deaf learners.

#### **3.4.3. Campaign on the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (COLTS)**

It has been suggested earlier in this Chapter that the environment in which the majority of learners find themselves has been characterised by large-scale political upheaval, economic deprivation and social disintegration. In recognising the devastating effect which these factors have had on learning and teaching in our society, the Government has committed itself to a campaign to focus on developing a culture of learning, teaching and service in schools and other centres of learning which will lead to quality education throughout the country.

Although the campaign and recommendations in this regard will be discussed later in the Report, it is important to note that its objectives and the programmes to which it is committed have the potential to enhance the development of a culture of learning and teaching which respects diversity. The campaign's objective of improving conditions in schools is directly aimed at removing many of the barriers which have been identified as leading to learning breakdown. Through its objectives the COLTS campaign remains fundamental to facilitating the implementation of the vision articulated by the NCSNET/NCESS.

#### **3.4.4. Outcomes Based Education**

A new approach to education and training in South Africa has been adopted in national education policy. Its overarching goal is for all learners at all levels of education to have access to, to value and to succeed in lifelong education and training of good quality. This central objective is premised on a recognition that traditional methods of teaching and learning adopted in the past did not sufficiently equip learners with the skills and knowledge they would require to be able to make a productive contribution to the economic development of the country.

The approach which has been introduced in education and training to achieve this objective is referred to as Outcomes Based Education and Training. The emphasis in this approach is on what learners know and can do at the end of a course of learning and teaching, rather than just on their completing specific components. The emphasis is on the achievement of outcomes and on the application of learning. OBE involves basing curriculum design, content and delivery on the assessment of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed by both the learners and society.

An outcomes based approach to education and training provides a framework for learning and teaching which can respond effectively to a diverse range of learner needs. Each learners' needs can be accommodated through multiple teaching and learning strategies and assessment tools. Learning is characterised by its appropriateness for each learner's needs, interests and developmental levels. Each learner is provided with time and assistance to realise their own potential and work at their own learning pace. Through these strategies learners work to become more responsible for their own learning. They should be able to make appropriate learning decisions and be independent in their learning and thinking.

#### **3.4.5. Curriculum 2005**

The outcomes based approach to education and training has been developed into a new curriculum framework for learning at school level. This framework is referred to as Curriculum 2005 and was launched by the National Department of Education in April this year.

One of the most important objectives of this initiative is the creation of learning environments that reflect and celebrate diversity, and create experiences that acknowledge learning rates, levels and styles. The following principles, consistent with an approach to accommodating a range of needs in an integrated education system, are embedded within Curriculum 2005:

- Curriculum and outcomes are defined in broad, balanced areas of knowledge and skill rather than on narrow subject areas, such as life orientation and human and social sciences.
- Every learner is able to succeed. They are able to develop at their own pace and they are supported to succeed.
- Every learner is seen as unique. It is acknowledged that there are great differences between learners in the same grade. Teachers are expected to recognise and attempt to understand different abilities.
- Learners are expected to demonstrate success in their own way.
- The aim of the curriculum is to explore outcomes, attitudes, dispositions and skills teachers would like learners to possess by the time they leave school.



- A number of core practices built in Curriculum 2005 also have the potential to facilitate the accommodation of diversity and the overcoming of barriers to learning and development. These include: age referenced progression and learner paced assessment, peer mediated instruction, staff collaboration and process orientated assessment.

### **3.4.6. A New Language Policy for General Education and Training**

The new language policy in General and Further Education and Training provides learners with choice as to their language of learning and teaching upon application for admission to a particular school. Where a school uses the language of learning and teaching chosen by the learner, and where there is a place available in the relevant grade, the school must admit the learner. It furthermore makes provision for steps the Head of Department should take where no school offers the desired language. This could, for example, include exploring other ways and means of providing alternative language maintenance programmes in schools or school districts which cannot provide learning and teaching in the home language(s) of learners. The policy recognises school governing bodies as the key partner in so far as the practical pursuit of multilingualism is concerned. The policy requires each school governing body to determine the school's language policy, and to state how it will promote multilingualism through a variety of measures such as offering more than one language of learning and teaching, offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, the use of special immersion or language-maintenance programmes, or any other means approved by the head of a provincial department of education.

### **3.4.7. Provision and Innovative Practices for Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development**

Although it has been noted earlier in the Report that the segregation of learners into 'specialised' and ordinary centres of learning has led to unnecessary labelling and marginalisation of many learners, it is important to recognise that for many of these children education in specialised centres of learning remains the only realistic option at present. The lack of choice for these learners relates primarily to the inaccessibility of mainstream schools and their inability to meet a diverse range of learner needs. Few schools have access to enabling mechanisms and human resources which are equipped to deal with learner diversity such as, for example, learners who use Braille, learners who have behavioural problems or those who have high levels of ability and learn much faster than the other learners.

In recognising the lack of resources in many schools for meeting the needs of learners, particularly those with disabilities, a number of specialised schools have initiated programmes which are aimed at providing mainstream schools with the support which they require to meet such needs and overcome barriers which exist.

Through site visits undertaken by the members of the NCSNET/NCESS, submissions received from a range of stakeholders and primary research undertaken, a number of innovative practices started by such schools were examined. Although it is not possible to reflect in detail the range of initiatives which are taking place, it is important to recognise that practices range from providing advice and in-service training for teachers in ordinary schools to providing specialist services by personnel attached to these schools.

While a number of positive initiatives were highlighted it is disappointing to note that the research process also showed that there are still a number of schools where little attempt is being made to link with other schools. At these schools staff found it difficult to envisage extending their role to one of support to mainstream schools. Concern regarding resources and the ability to extend existing resources for the provision of support to other schools was also expressed.

Despite severe limitations on resources and inequalities between urban and rural facilities, innovative practices aimed at establishing an integrated system of education are evident in disadvantaged and advantaged contexts. However, it would appear from the research conducted that innovative practices and projects in rural areas have largely been initiated and implemented by non-governmental organisations who rely heavily on external funding. Most schools in rural areas appear to be struggling with to meet the diverse needs of the learner population and continue to be faced with widespread learning breakdown. Thus the availability of resources and an infrastructure where basic needs are met is fundamental to practically implementing the vision of the NCSNET/NCESS.

Research projects undertaken for the NCSNET/NCESS looked at some of the practices used by some provincial education departments and ordinary centres of learning to meet learner diversity and to include learners

previously excluded. The following were identified through the research process as key components of an integrated approach to teaching and learning:

- Flexibility in teaching and learning styles is encouraged with peer support being recognised as a major resource in the classroom. In some centres of learning learners are actively involved in, for example, designing learning programmes and participating in both the teaching and learning process. It is argued that the active participation of the learners also ensures that they are able to move at their own pace and make use of their own capacities. Peer support increases awareness among learners of differences and ultimately leads to greater community awareness thus challenging attitudes and stereotypes.
- Making use of teacher aides under the guidance of the class teacher. Such provision appears to take place mostly in situations where there is a learner with a severe disability who requires some specialised assistance or support.
- Optimal and creative use of existing resources .
- Team work, sharing of skills and intersectoral collaboration remain key mechanisms for accommodating diversity, overcoming barriers and preventing learning breakdown.
- The establishment of mechanisms to enable early identification and intervention for learners with disabilities.
- A recognition of and active support for community involvement in centres of learning.
- Capacity building for parents to enable them to play a meaningful role in the education of their children.
- An acknowledgement of environmental factors on influencing learner development and the process of teaching and learning.

A significant contribution to overcoming barriers to learning and development and the fulfilment of needs in the system which have not been provided for has been made by NGOs. Programmes currently being run by NGOs range from the provision of basic education for learners excluded from the system to services which provide support to learners, educators and other components of the system. NGO programmes which reflect 'best practice' initiatives are evident in all bands of education. Most NGOs working in this area and the programmes which have been initiated have arisen from needs expressed by communities or through linking with consumers and their organisations. The following are recognised as critical roles which NGOs are presently playing in overcoming barriers to learning and development, accommodating learner diversity and in building centres of learning which facilitate development:

- NGO programmes continue to contribute to a change in the philosophy of education, particularly to one which is inclusive and respects diversity and responds to the needs of communities. Community awareness on the rights of learners previously marginalised has been enhanced through this change in philosophy.
- NGO Initiatives help to identify gaps in existing provision which require short and long term intervention.
- Through programmes started by NGOs, learners most 'at risk' have been identified and given priority attention.
- Early detection, intervention and referral of learners is enhanced through NGO involvement in communities.
- NGOs often assist with the provision of necessary assistive devices which are fundamental to participation in the learning and teaching process and in ensuring functional independence for some learners.
- NGO programmes facilitate effective links between families and centres of learning.
- Training programmes run by NGOs are orientated towards 'training trainers', thus increasing capacity for further training and support.
- Beneficial relations between ordinary and specialised centres of learning are strengthened through participation in NGO initiated programmes. Skills and knowledge are transferred and shared through these interactions.
- NGO programmes also offer some provision for learners who for various reasons have missed a substantial portion of formal education and are now considered 'over age'.
- In these programmes some provision has also been made for learners who have 'dropped out' of formal education or who have been excluded in the past.
- Cross-department collaboration is enhanced through programmes co-ordinated by NGOs.

Despite the many problems which continue to beset initiatives towards innovative practices, particularly those relating to the lack of sustained resources, it is imperative that this rich potential is harnessed and supported. It is only by learning from such practices and understanding their impact that we can begin to address barriers to learning and development and prevent learning breakdown.



## 4. A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

The central task of the NCSNET/NCESS is to make proposals regarding a vision, principles, and strategies for the future. This chapter outlines this vision and principles, and provides an overview of the strategies envisaged to achieve that vision within the framework of the principles espoused.

It should be noted that the focus will be on providing an *overview* of the provision of education and support envisaged. Details regarding curriculum development and institutional development, utilisation and development of human resources, and governance and funding, will be provided in the succeeding chapters.

The Constitution and the principles underpinning the White Papers on Education and Training provided a basis for all the work of the NCSNET/NCESS. They were used as a basis for the development of the initial formulation of the vision, principles and strategies relating to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development in education and training - confirmed through initial public consultation - and then as a basis for exploring implications for all aspects of education and training.

### 4.2. FUTURE VISION AND PRINCIPLES

#### 4.2.1 The Vision

The NCSNET/NCESS envisage an education and training system that promotes education for all and fosters the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they can develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society.

#### 4.2.2 Principles

- *Principles and values contained in the Constitution and in the White Papers on Education and Training:*  
These include among others: the right to equality, protection from discrimination, respect for human diversity, the right to equal benefit and protection from the law, redress of past inequalities faced by previously disadvantaged groups in order to create equal opportunities for all people, and an education system that is accessible and responsive to all learners
- *Human rights and social justice for all learners:*  
All learners should enjoy equal rights and protection of human dignity. This means that each learner has the right to quality education, and to be treated with dignity and respect.
- *Participation and social integration:*  
All learners must be given the opportunity to participate in their communities, being provided with the widest possible educational and social opportunities. Centres of learning must support and promote social integration in these communities so that mutual respect is fostered.
- *Equal access to a single, inclusive education system:*  
Appropriate and effective education must be organised in such a way that *all* learners have access to a single education system that is responsive to diversity. No learners should be prevented from participating in this system, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, language, or other differences.
- *Access to the curriculum:*  
All learners are entitled to participate in the common education curriculum. All aspects of the curriculum (including what is taught and how it is taught and assessed, teaching and learning materials, and the learning environment) should therefore be accessible to all learners. Where necessary, learners must be provided with the necessary support to enable them to access the curriculum effectively.

- *Equity and redress:*

Educational change must focus on removing past inequalities in education provision and must ensure that all learners have equal opportunity to benefit from the education system and society as a whole. Barriers which previously isolated particular learners from education and the general community should be overcome, and processes developed to facilitate their integration into education and society as a whole. Particular attention must be paid to improving access to lifelong learning for learners with disabilities in disadvantaged and rural areas, in particular to those excluded from education provisioning in the past and present.

- *Community responsiveness:*

Education must be relevant and meaningful to the lives of all learners. This means that their education should prepare them for both work and life. This includes ensuring the successful integration of all learners into society. A community-responsive education system is also one which facilitates optimal and effective involvement of the community in the education of learners at all levels. The development of strong links between the centre of learning and the community is therefore a fundamental prerequisite to ensure that all needs are addressed and appropriate support provided. The strengths of community support already present in most parts of South Africa should be drawn on to achieve this.

- *Cost effectiveness:*

There is a need to create a system of education provision and support for all learners that is appropriate, effective, affordable, implementable and sustainable.

### **4.3. STRATEGIES**

#### **4.3.1 Transforming the System**

*Strategy:*

All aspects of the education system would need to be changed if it is to respond to the needs of *all* learners. Strategies and programmes traditionally aimed at meeting 'special needs' must move away from an isolated focus on 'changing the person' to a systems-change approach. This means that we should not see the system as fixed and unchanging, where individual learners need to fit in. Rather, we should see the system as being able to be transformed so that it can accommodate individual differences among learners.

*Practical Implications:*

- The shift away from a predominantly 'individualistic' approach to a 'systemic' approach to understanding and responding to learner difficulties and disabilities would result in the *assessment* of learning and other problems, including an analysis of factors in the context of the learner which contribute to the problems experienced by her/him. This would include factors relating to the learner her/himself, family life, classroom and school dynamics and conditions, education-related factors, community processes, and social factors. Furthermore, responses or *interventions* emerging from this assessment would include responses appropriate to the levels at which the problems are situated. For example, it could include particular interventions with the learner her/himself, support relating to the teaching and learning process, changes to the curriculum, organisation development, or social action within the local community or society.
- Barriers to learning and development, and enabling mechanisms would be placed within the context of *general education transformation initiatives*, influencing all aspects and bands of education. This means that all divisions or branches within the national and provincial Departments would 'infuse' the proposals outlined in this Report into their transformation programmes. This includes initiatives such as Curriculum 2005, the Culture of Learning and Teaching and Services (COLTS) programme, ECD pilot projects, the Adult Education four-year plan, and initiatives emerging from the FET and higher education bands.
- Ongoing campaigns to raise public awareness and challenge discriminatory *attitudes* within and outside the education system would be pursued within an intersectoral framework.

#### **4.3.2 Development of an Integrated System of Education**

*Strategy:*

The separate systems of education which presently exist ('special' and 'ordinary') need to be integrated to provide one system which is able to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of the learner population. Within this integrated system, a range of options for education provision and support services should be provided. Learners should have the ability to move from one learning context to another (e.g. from ECD to GET, from a specialised centre of learning to an ordinary centre of learning, or from a formal to a nonformal programme). The system of education should be structured in such a way that, irrespective of the learning context, opportunities for facilitating integration and inclusion of the learner in all aspects of life should be provided.

*Practical Implications:*

Most of the points highlighted below relate to the *organisation of schooling and other bands of education*.

- *All centres of learning would reflect an ethos of inclusiveness*, a supportive environment, a culture of teaching and learning, and good community relations and ownership. All learners, staff and parents would experience a sense of worth and belonging in the learning community.
- *All centres of learning would have the capacity to respond to diversity* in the learner population by providing education that is appropriate to the particular needs of each learner. This means that irrespective of disability or differences in learning style or pace, or social difficulties experienced, learning programmes would accommodate the particular needs of the learner concerned.
- *Enabling mechanisms* would be in place to facilitate curriculum and institutional transformation to ensure responsiveness to diversity, and to ensure that additional support is available to those learners and educators who require it.
- In the *transition phase* the emphasis would be on developing the capacity of all centres of learning to address diverse needs, drawing on existing expertise in and outside of specialised learning contexts and district support facilities; and facilitating the access of learners with disabilities and other specific needs to the most enabling setting. This would include facilitating access for learners who are currently outside of the education system, and facilitating mobility. As the capacity of all centres of learning develops, it is expected that most learners who have currently not been able to access the general system would be able to participate fully in ordinary rather than specialised learning contexts.
- *A range of learning contexts* offering diversity in terms of curriculum and mechanisms to address barriers to learning and development would be available. This includes ordinary learning contexts which would be transformed to respond to the diverse needs of learners, as well as learning contexts that provide specialised 'high need' support to those learners who require it.
- Examples of *specialised learning contexts* would include specialised learning centres (formerly referred to as 'special schools'); classes or units and resource centres providing specialised programmes within ordinary centres of learning (e.g. school resource centres, disability units at universities); and specialised programmes for particular needs (e.g. enrichment programmes, programmes orientating learners to particular aspects of the curriculum, bridging courses, etc.).

All specialised learning contexts would reflect an inclusive ethos in line with the principles of this Report.

It is expected (given international and national estimates) that only a small percentage of learners would require to be accommodated in specialised learning contexts. Decisions about the most enabling learning contexts would be based on a learner profile encompassing indicators of need, access to curriculum and levels of support. These include the following indicators of need:

- \* mobility
- \* fine motor skills
- \* expressive communication
- \* receptive communication
- \* safety
- \* challenging behaviour
- \* frequency of need

- \* hearing
- \* vision
- \* medical needs
- \* cognitive skills

Specialised learning contexts would not be defined by category of disability but by the curriculum and support offered. Emphasis should be on functioning as a resource base providing consultative support to educators and withdrawal for small group learning opportunities.

- It should be noted that *schools providing teaching and learning through the medium of SA Sign Language* are not considered to be a specialised learning context but rather a school identified by the medium of teaching and learning provided. Schools for learners who wish to learn through SA Sign Language would, therefore, be provided.
- Everyone has a constitutional right to basic education although the constitution does not prescribe the content and nature of that right. Each learner has the right to attend the centre of learning of his/her *choice* preferably in his/her neighbourhood centre of learning. This right to choice can be exercised by the parent/primary care-giver and/or learner (where applicable) in consultation with the relevant education and support personnel. Within the parameters of the Constitution of South Africa and the broader education policy and legislation, a range of support and opportunities must be made available. The support should be made available irrespective of where a learner chooses to receive his/her education, whether it be in a specialised learning centre or in an ordinary centre of learning. Financial constraints is one of the factors which could result in the limitation of the right to adequate support and provision of basic education.

If the choice involves attending a centre of learning far from the learner's home community, costs relating to this decision would be borne by the family concerned - unless there is evidence that appropriate support could not be provided in the local community concerned. Transportation would be the responsibility of the relevant government department if there is no facility close by.

- To facilitate the accommodation of a learner in the most enabling environment, *assessment* and consultation procedures could be pursued. This would occur primarily at the centre of learning level, within the context of the centre-of-learning-based team, and would involve parents, educators and other relevant people. This assessment would include an analysis of the learner and centre of learning needs in order to develop a plan of action to facilitate successful inclusion of the learner and provide access to the curriculum.
- *Specialised centres of learning* would during the transition phase play a central *role* in enabling other centres of learning to develop their capacity to provide a welcoming and educationally appropriate learning environment. Central aspects of this role would be:
  - \* Providing specialised education programmes for certain learners requiring 'high need' support
  - \* Preparing learners for inclusion in ordinary learning contexts
  - \* Providing extra-curricula activities and specialised programmes (e.g. literacy for adults, vocational programmes, enrichment programmes, etc.)
  - \* Providing and supporting ECD programmes
  - \* Providing home-based support where required
  - \* Providing access to particular resources (e.g. Brailling facilities, Sign Language interpreters, specialised transport, etc.)
  - \* Educators sharing their expertise with other personnel at centres of learning in the surrounding area (and beyond in some instances) to build their capacity to respond to particular learning needs and provide adequate support. This would include offering training programmes and ongoing consultation to educators, parents and others in ordinary centres of learning within the context of co-ordinated district support strategies
  - \* Engaging in community events that foster inclusion of learners from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. This would include sport, cultural and other recreational activities.

- A moratorium would be placed on the *building of new specialised centres of learning*. Funds would be spent on resourcing and building the capacity of all schools and other centres of learning (particularly in rural contexts) to accommodate diversity.
- *Boarding facilities* or residential care would be available where required (e.g. learners in custodial care, homeless children, learners who are far from home). Community homes close or adjacent to the education institution would be a priority development in this regard.
- '*Reform schools and Schools of Industry, and Places of Safety*': Residential centres providing a range of programmes would be available. All learners in custody or protective environments would receive education. The Department of Education would provide a range of education services and education-related support. This Department would work closely with other relevant departments (Justice, Correctional Services, Police, Health, Welfare) to provide a holistic service. Where possible, learners would attend neighbourhood centres of learning, with appropriate support being provided through the centre-of-learning-based teams.
- *Skills Training Centres* would function within the NQF. They would be classified in terms of the courses they present and not according to category of learners, and would be a general community resource. These centres would provide wider career training and opportunities and not be restricted by either gender or disability. Links between these centres and other institutions within the *Further Education and Training* band would be developed. This would include links with the Department of Labour's employment services and learnership programmes.
- *Further and higher education* institutions would have the capacity to offer programmes to learners with disabilities and others who have been excluded or neglected, providing appropriate teaching and learning opportunities and additional support where required.
- *Adult education* programmes aimed at vocational, literacy, lifeskills and other basic competencies would be available. This would include adult education programmes aimed at equipping learners with basic communication skills and mobility training for learners with disabilities who require it.

#### 4.3.3 Infusing 'Special Needs' and Support

##### *Strategy:*

Support services should move away from only supporting individual learners to supporting educators and the system so that they can recognise and respond appropriately to the needs of all learners and thereby promote effective learning. In order for this to happen, the ability to address diversity and minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development must be structured into the system and be integral to its development.

##### *Practical Implications:*

- The emphasis should be on *developing the capacity of relevant sections* of the education system to respond to diversity and provide a supportive learning environment for all learners. This means that strategies and mechanisms would be developed to ensure this capacity building.
- '*Special needs*' and *support services* would therefore be *infused in* the system of education. In the National Department of Education and in all nine Provincial Departments of Education, *each section* (e.g. ECD, Adult Education, Curriculum, Finance) would develop the competency to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population: addressing barriers to learning and development for the purpose of facilitating effective learning for all.
- *Competencies required* in each section would include:
  - \* Knowledge of the full range of needs likely to be found in any learning context. This would include understanding what barriers to learning and development involve, and broadly speaking, how they should be addressed.
  - \* Knowledge of teaching and learning relating to particular needs of learners with disabilities. This could be a generic competency, but would require knowledge of how to acquire specific advice and



direction relating to specific disabilities.

- \* Knowledge of how to develop the capacity of the system at all levels (national, provincial, district, and centre of learning) to address diversity and barriers to learning and development to ensure effective learning of all.
  - \* Knowledge of the full range of support services that could be accessed to provide support to learners and the system.
  - \* The ability to work with a range of sectors (intersectoral collaboration) in the process of planning and executing a holistic and integrated process of support.
  - \* Vigilance to ensure that learners are not marginalised or neglected because of disability, sexual preference, race, gender, religion, difference in learning pace or style, or particular social circumstances.
- These *competencies would be developed and reflected in a variety of ways*, depending on the particular circumstances of the province concerned. Every section of the department would have to ensure that within their ranks they have the competencies required to ensure the inclusion of issues pertaining to diversity and barriers to learning and development. This would be through ensuring that in every section a part of a post, a full post, or more than one post is '*dedicated*' to these concerns. People with disabilities or who have experienced barriers to learning and development for other reasons should be considered for employment in this context.
  - A *co-ordinating structure* dedicated to addressing diversity and minimising, removing and preventing barriers to learning and development would be established in each department of education. Representatives from each of the sections of the department (the '*dedicated*' posts) would form the core of this structure. Representation from relevant stakeholder organisations would be ensured. The role of the structure would be to co-ordinate, ensuring cohesion and alignment of services. The '*dedicated*' posts and the structure as a whole would aim to ensure that the needs of learners are not marginalised, underplayed, or overlooked, and that barriers to learning and development are addressed. This co-ordinating structure would be accountable directly to the Head of Department, ensuring that marginalisation of these historically neglected issues does not occur.
  - In the *transition phase* existing structures for 'special needs and support' would be retained to facilitate the development of the infusion described above. Once the suggested infusion has been successfully achieved, the existing structure would be restructured to become the co-ordinating structure referred to above.

#### 4.3.4 Developing Barrier-free Access to the Built Environ in All Centres of Learning

##### *Strategy:*

Barrier-free access tends to focus predominantly on physical access for learners with physical disabilities. It is important to note, however, that the NCSNET/NCESS considers barrier-free access to refer to an environment that is free of all the barriers to learning and development outlined in Chapter Two.

Barrier-free access to the built environ is central to improving educational access to and integration of disabled learners of all ages. The National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act (Act 103 of 1977 - amended in 1986) includes regulations setting out national requirements for an accessibly built environment and other barriers.

##### *Practical Implications:*

- All centres of learning must become *accessible in terms of building requirements* to learners, educators and community members with physical disabilities. This includes introducing suitable ground levels, facilities to enable Deaf learners to 'hear' (e.g. flashing lights linked to bells and phones), raised numbers on doors, colour contrast and lighting, low echo levels in classrooms, ventilation, ramps, rails on walls, wider entrances and corridors, and accessible toilets. This would also include appropriate town planning with regard to, for example, allocation of land for education purposes, and road access.
- In the *transition phase* the building of all new centres of learning must incorporate the building standards required to ensure accessibility. Existing centres of learning would have to be progressively altered to ensure accessibility so that the choice of learners with disabilities would be progressively widened. This would be

phased in, ensuring that initially at least one centre of learning in each band of education in each district or equivalent relevant geographical area is accessible.

#### 4.3.5 A Holistic Approach to Institutional Development

##### *Strategy:*

This involves developing all aspects of the centre of learning as an environment where learning and therefore development can take place. Aspects to be developed include strategic planning and evaluation, organisational leadership and management, structures and procedures, the values and norms of the organisation, staff development, technical support, and other mechanisms to facilitate a positive culture of teaching, learning and services.

##### *Practical Implications:*

- *Ongoing organisation development* (called 'whole-school development' in many circles) would occur within every centre of learning. This would entail ongoing self-evaluation and development of the institution as a teaching and learning environment - for the purposes of ensuring that quality education is provided for all learners. Issues relating to diversity and barriers to learning and development would form a central part of this process. All aspects of organisational life would be examined in terms of its ability to provide a quality education.
- *All centres of learning would have:*
  - \* a barrier-free built environ, accessible roads to and from the centre, and be centrally placed in the community
  - \* a safe and supportive environment where educators are motivated and supported in their work, where learners feel a sense of belonging and are able to engage in the learning process, and where parents are valued and involved in the life of the learning community
  - \* an empowered, representative governing body that has been equipped to facilitate the development of a culture of learning, teaching and service
  - \* a policy of inclusion, accommodation, and respect for humanity
  - \* ongoing anti-discrimination and democracy and human rights programmes
  - \* educators that have been equipped to be innovative in the classroom, in particular, to be able to respond to and build respect for diversity within the classroom and centre of learning
  - \* effective collaborative working relationships between educators and various support personnel that enhance the development of the teaching and learning context.
  - \* a centre-of-learning-based team that identifies needs, minimising, removing and preventing barriers to learning and development

#### 4.3.6 Developing a Flexible Curriculum to ensure Access

##### *Strategy:*

The education system must provide a flexible curriculum which is able to respond to differences among learners and ensure that all learners engage effectively in the learning process. A flexible curriculum includes flexible teaching approaches, the use of appropriate technology, assistive devices, and other mechanisms to facilitate access to all learners. Curriculum 2005 is already addressing some of these aspects at school level, but this needs to be expanded to all levels of education.

##### *Practical Implications:*

- The physical and psychosocial learning *environment* would be conducive to teaching and learning and development (refer 3.5 above)
- The *content* of learning programmes would incorporate a strong link with life and work, and would reflect the history and culture of the learners concerned. Vocational and career education would be very evident in the programme. Lifeskills education would include the full range of competencies for daily living required by

learners, including a thrust aimed at changing negative attitudes relating to difference (e.g. race, gender, ability). Lifeskills programmes for learners with disabilities would also include mobility, communication and other essential skills for daily living often taken for granted by others. Democracy and human rights education would be available through the Human and Social Sciences learning area. Literacy and language development would include Braille for blind and partially sighted learners, SA Sign Language for Deaf learners, Alternative and Augmented Communication (AAC) for non-speaking learners, and language programmes for learners who have to learn through their second language.

- *SA Sign Language* would be available as a *medium of teaching and learning* for Deaf and other learners who wish to learn through this medium. Hard-of-Hearing and Deaf learners would have a choice regarding medium of teaching and learning. Educators and parents of Deaf learners would be equipped to use SA Sign Language, and SA Sign Language interpretation would be available where appropriate.
- *Braille and appropriate print* would be available to those who require it for reading and writing communication purposes.
- With regard to the *management of the system and teaching practices*: time-tabling would be flexible, allowing for diverse needs to be met within a variety of programmes across the day; classroom management would include a major focus on facilitating integration within the class community and facilitating mutual respect among learners; and teaching approaches would be flexible in response to the diverse needs of learners, fostering peer-education and co-operative learning wherever appropriate. Distance education would be used as a mode of teaching and learning where appropriate.
- Teaching and learning *materials* would accommodate the diverse needs of the learner population in terms of the medium (Braille, tapes, videos, different languages) and in terms of understandability and relevance. *Assistive devices* (e.g. mobility equipment, Braille equipment, voice synthesisers, auditory discrimination devices, adaptive access to information technology) would be available to learners who require them in order to engage in the learning process.
- *Assessment* of learning and teaching would occur in an ongoing way. This process would occur within the context of ongoing teaching and learning, and, where necessary, within the centre-of-learning-based team. The primary aim of assessment would be to monitor the effectiveness of teaching in terms of learning outcomes, and to evaluate the ability of the system to support and facilitate the teaching and learning process.
- *Parents, educators, learners and various community bodies* would be involved in the process of assessment and other aspects of curriculum development. Relevant NGOs, volunteers and others would be directly and indirectly involved in providing education and support to learners and centres of learning.
- *Transition to work* would be facilitated both within formal learning programmes and through creative mechanisms that ease and enrich the transition to work. Learners with disabilities would be a priority in this regard.
- In the *transition period* the above mentioned outcomes must form part of current national initiatives focusing on curriculum and institutional development, in particular, Curriculum 2005, the COLTS project, and other initiatives in the different bands of education.

#### **4.3.7 Promotion of the Rights and Responsibilities of Parents**

##### *Strategy:*

Partnerships between parents and other educators should be developed. These partnerships should include recognition of the critical role played by parents and their involvement in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of education and support, and should be facilitated through processes such as training to empower parents to develop their capacity to participate in their children's education.

##### *Practical Implications:*

- The critical *role* of parents in the education and development of learners would be *recognised*.
- Parents would be *aware* of their rights and responsibilities regarding the education of their children, and would be *equipped* to assert their rights and fulfil their responsibilities.
- Parents of all learners would be centrally involved in the school *governing* bodies. Where parents are not able to play an active role in the education of their children (e.g. learners with disabilities who have to attend a school in another province, or learners placed in custody in a 'school of reform/industry'), alternative representation would be organised.
- Parents would be involved in *assessment* processes aimed at identifying particular needs and programmes for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. This would occur within the context of a centre-of-learning-based team. They would play a central role in deciding on the most appropriate education and support required by their children, and would assist in the development and execution of programmes aimed at addressing the barriers to learning and development.
- Parents would be involved in the *teaching* and support process where appropriate and possible. One way in which parents would assist is through providing teaching assistance in large classes - particularly where learners with disabilities are integrated.

#### **4.3.8 Promotion of the Rights and Responsibilities of Educators and Learners**

##### *Strategy:*

Educators and learners should be directly involved in the development of a learning process that is sensitive to the needs of all learners, and should be provided with the structures and support to develop capacity in this regard.

##### *Practical Implications:*

- Educators and learners (where applicable) would be represented in the *governance* of their centres of learning, thereby ensuring that their rights and responsibilities are pursued within the learning community. Where learners are not able to represent themselves (e.g. learners with severe intellectual disabilities), advocates would be identified to represent their interests.
- Educators would play a central role in the development of the *curriculum* at local level. The needs of learners would be a pivotal point for the development of the curriculum. Educators would also play a key role in the development of in-service *training* programmes.
- Educators would constitute the main components of the *centre-of-learning-based team* which would be responsible for assessing the need for and providing support to learners and the institution itself. Mechanisms for utilising community resources, including specialist services, would be in place.
- The *key role of educators* would be managing the learning programmes of the learners for which they are responsible. This would include assessing the needs of the learners as a collective and as individuals, and providing a flexible programme that accommodates a variety of needs, drawing on the resources of the learners themselves. A key role would be facilitating a learning environment that fosters respect among learners, and among the learning community as a whole. The latter aspect would involve the educators being centrally involved in the development of their institution as a learning place.
- Learners would play an active role in the teaching and learning process. *Peer-education* or 'child-to-child' approaches would be adopted to optimise the resources of the learners themselves in pursuing educational goals and providing support to one another.
- Educators and learners would have access to appropriate *training and support* to pursue all of the above.

#### **4.3.9 Development Programmes for Educators and other Human Resources**

#### *Strategy:*

Effective development programmes need to be developed and implemented for educators and support providers to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge and to promote appropriate attitudes to enable them to respond to the needs of all learners. There would need to be a focus on orientation and pre- and in-service professional development, within a team approach.

#### *Practical Implications:*

- *Utilisation of personnel* at all levels and in a variety of roles would reflect diversity. For example, persons with disabilities would be employed as educators and within the support team.
- *Educators of educators and other professionals* (e.g. university lecturers, professionals providing continuing education) would be equipped, through their own professional development, to prepare all educators and support providers for their role in the provision of education and support.
- Programmes aimed at *education management* would incorporate issues relating to diversity and barriers to learning and development. This would include capacity building within governing bodies.
- All *educators* (including classroom assistants) would be equipped and accredited - through various forms of pre- and in-service programmes - to respond to diversity in the learning place, and address barriers to learning and development within their own contexts.
- Some *educators* would have additional, *specialised* training to equip them with *competencies* to provide leadership at local, district, and provincial/national levels. This includes lifeskills (guidance) educators, and learning support educators. They would play a central role in the development of centre-of-learning-based teams, in district support centres, and in 'dedicated' posts within the departments.
- A variety of *parent* capacity building or empowerment programmes would be available to equip parents to assert their rights and responsibilities.
- *Education support personnel* would be provided with appropriate pre-service and continuing professional education to equip and support them in their roles.
- Programmes aimed at developing capacity for support within *communities* would be available. These would be aimed at equipping them to participate fully in the life of the learning community, providing support wherever appropriate.

### **4.3.10 Development of Holistic and Integrated Support Services**

#### *Strategy:*

Different government departments and other sectors would need to work together to provide comprehensive support to learners. Partnerships between relevant stakeholders should therefore be promoted.

#### *Practical Implications:*

- *Structures* would be developed at all levels of education governance (national, provincial, district, and centre-of-learning) to facilitate co-operative governance between relevant government departments where needed, and to bring relevant professionals and stakeholders together for the purposes of policy planning and, at local level, practice. This would include inter-ministerial and inter-departmental committees, and stakeholder forums.
- Clear lines of *accountability and responsibility* - in terms of planning, execution and funding - would be developed. For example, with inter-departmental collaboration, the department with the major responsibility would become the 'lead' department in the team, employing core personnel and establishing and co-ordinating the partnership with other sectors. Funding would be organised according to the proportional involvement of the partners concerned.
- Clear *procedures and processes* would be developed to facilitate optimal team work at all levels.

- *Relevant NGO's* would be involved in a co-ordinated partnership with centres of learning, and other levels of the education system.

#### 4.3.11 Community-based Support

##### *Strategy:*

All resources in the community should be utilised to develop and support education provision through a structured community participation approach. The strengths of existing community support systems in South Africa should be drawn on and developed in this regard.

##### *Practical Implications:*

What follows below is a description of the model of support services proposed:

- In keeping with the belief that support should be available as close as possible to the point of need, a core component of enabling mechanisms would be situated within each centre of learning. A *centre-of-learning-based team* (CLBT) would therefore be the structure around which support for each centre would be developed. A variety of models of such teams would develop according to the needs of the particular context concerned. Educators with specialised competencies in lifeskills and counselling, and in learning support would play a central role in these teams. Educators within centres of learning would make up the bulk of this team, and parents and learners would be represented. Where appropriate and available, the CLBT would be strengthened by the inclusion of expertise from local and district communities. Its primary function would be to support the learning process by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development.
- The centre-of-learning-based team (CLBT) is distinct from the school governing body (SGB) *sub-committee* focusing on addressing barriers to learning and development. The CLBT would focus on service provision while the SGB sub-committee would fulfil specified governance functions. This would include the facilitation of community involvement and the creation of constructive partnerships in all centres of learning.
- The *twinning or clustering of centres of learning* - within and across community boundaries - to share expertise and material and human resources, and plan joint programmes in a particular area is an important aspect. Specialised centres of learning and units would have an important responsibility in this respect. This twinning or clustering would be particularly pertinent in areas where resource inequalities still exist. Rural contexts would be a particular target in this regard.
- *Local community resources* would be identified and accessed by the CLBT. This would include local government structures, relevant NGOs and other community organisations, and support personnel in primary health care and other relevant structures. CLBT members would be equipped with skills and knowledge needed to access community support, while communities would be willing and able to participate in the development of the learning community. This would reflect a growing symbiotic relationship between centres of learning and local communities in South Africa.
- Because of the need for training and support of CLBTs, *specialist education support personnel* attached to every *district* or regional office would be available. They would be involved in training and co-ordination of services in the area concerned. Education support personnel would have central roles to play in training and supporting centre-based educators to understand and intervene directly in cases that would previously have been referred to them. They would also play a consultative role in providing support to the CLBTs in their attempt to prevent barriers to learning and development, and develop a teaching and learning environment that accommodates diversity and provides support to all learners. This would include developing skills in how to access community support and facilitating the development of competencies within the community itself.
- *Provincial and national departments* would be familiar with and would be involved in addressing issues pertaining to diversity and barriers to learning as a result of the 'infusion' through dedicated posts in all sections of the department.

- *Boundaries between 'lay' and specialist support* would be blurred, as would boundaries across different professions. Support would be focused around competencies needed to address particular barriers to learning and development. Except in cases where particular specialist interventions are required, a variety of human resources would be able to respond to the needs concerned. This would include specialists and other community resources. Training programmes and experience provided for all relevant role-players would ensure the development of the competencies needed in any given area. Trained professionals would be freed to explore new and creative possibilities beyond more traditional role expectations.
- Community homes would be provided in sparsely populated areas where *hostel* facilities are required but not available.
- Community-based *transportation* would be provided to address specific needs of learners with disabilities.
- In the *transition period*, redress would have to be a focus to ensure that enabling mechanisms are in place for all centres of learning, including historically disadvantaged and rural areas. This would include: large-scale reorientation and training of professional and community resources around the competencies required; developing further and more extensively the innovative practices that are already being developed in the country, particularly where community-based support has been successfully harnessed; and integrating existing support services in district offices and specialised centres of learning to service a particular catchment area, using the 'twinning' and 'clustering' approach identified above.

#### **4.3.12 A Preventative and Developmental Approach to Support**

##### *Strategy:*

Centres of learning should be developed in such a way as to prevent social and learning problems from arising. This includes reducing environmental risks, developing resilience of learners and others, and promoting the development of a supportive and safe environment for learners and other members of the learning community.

##### *Practical Implications:*

- *Early identification and intervention* would occur in all bands of education, but particularly at ECD level where much potential damage can be prevented. In the 0-3 and 3-6 age groups a major focus would be on identifying and addressing medical, psychological, and social problems. Learning difficulties experienced within ECD programmes (particularly 3-9 years) would also be identified and addressed. A major focus for learners with disabilities at this age would be to provide communication skills, and lifeskills education would form a major focus of all programmes. Programmes to address needs would be available as soon as possible after identification has occurred.
- Education support personnel would focus a great deal of their work on the development of *preventative programmes* aimed at reducing or overcoming barriers to learning and development, and developing people and contexts that support individuals in their efforts to teach and learn. These programmes would focus on priority 'at risk' areas such as violence, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS.
- The concept of a 'health promoting' school/institution reflects a move towards *development* rather than only solving problems. The lessons and models developed out of this approach would be evidenced in the commitment of all centres of learning to develop healthy policies, provide a safe and supportive learning environment, encourage community action and support, provide lifeskills education for educators, learners and parents, and provide enabling mechanisms to support learners, educators, parents, and the institution as a whole - to the benefit of the entire learning community.

#### **4.3.13 Funding**

##### *Strategy:*

A funding strategy that ensures redress, sustainability, and facilitates access to education for *all* learners, should be pursued within an integrated funding system. Financial resources should cover both education provision and enabling mechanisms required to ensure that appropriate education is provided and that additional support provided where necessary.

*Practical implications:*

- The education and training budget in general, in all bands of education, would ensure that needs pertaining to diversity and minimising, removing and preventing barriers to learning and development are addressed. This would occur primarily through the allocation of a 'top-up' percentage of the overall budget to these areas - at all levels of the system (national, provincial, district or equivalent, and centre-of-learning levels) and other funding strategies.

#### **4.4. AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION PROVISION AND SUPPORT IN THE FUTURE**

The following are some of the key characteristics of the education system envisaged:

- All learners would have access to lifelong learning. In particular all learners of compulsory school-going age would have admission to centres of learning *and* access to the curriculum.
- The education process would prepare learners for work and life.
- All centres of learning would have the capacity to respond to diversity through a flexible curriculum, and would reflect an ethos of inclusiveness, support, a culture of teaching and learning, and effective community relations and ownership. Centres of learning would be provided with the support they need to develop in the ways described above.
- A range of learning contexts offering diversity in terms of curriculum and mechanisms to address barriers to learning and development would be available. This includes ordinary learning contexts which would be transformed to respond to the diverse needs of learners, including learners with disabilities, as well as learning contexts that provide specialised 'high need' support to the small percentage of learners who require it. Learners would be accommodated in a way that best suits their needs, keeping in mind the need to facilitate full participation and inclusion in the education process and in society at large. Maximum opportunities would therefore be provided for all learners to engage with one another in inclusive environments.
- Every centre of learning at ECD, GET, FET, higher education, and adult education levels would have centre-of-learning-based support structures which would predominantly comprise of educators, but which would draw on community resources and specialist services. Support would therefore be primarily community-based in nature.
- Every district or equivalent geographical area would have some form of district support centre or facility where specialist and other support services can be accessed by centres of learning in that area. These services would provide indirect support to learners through the process of training and supporting the educators within the teams based at the centres. In exceptional cases, when centre-based teams have exhausted intervention possibilities, support for individual learners would be provided by these specialists.
- The competency to provide direction for developing a system of education that can respond to diversity and address barriers to learning and development would be *infused* in the departments of education. This means that relevant 'dedicated' posts would exist in all major sections of each department, with a co-ordinating structure to ensure the goals of addressing barriers to learning and development are pursued coherently. The status of this structure would be commensurate with the functions that it would perform.
- Intersectoral collaboration would be ensured through appropriate structures, procedures and processes. This would occur at national, provincial, district, and centre-of-learning levels.
- Parents, educationists, and learners (or their advocates) would be optimally involved in the governance of all centres of learning, in the planning of curricula and support programmes, and in the teaching and learning process. They would be equipped, through various forms of training and support, to assert their rights and responsibilities in this regard. Community resources (e.g. NGOs, DPOs) would also be drawn into the above mentioned processes where appropriate.
- Education support personnel, and others involved in the development of an appropriate and supportive learning environment, would receive appropriate preparation through pre-service and continuing education programmes.
- The system would be sustainable in terms of financial resourcing and in terms of leadership and management capacity.





## 5. CURRICULUM, INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Curriculum may be defined as everything that influences learning, from the educators and the learning programmes to the learning environment. Institutional development refers to the transformation of the whole environment that surrounds and contains the centre of learning, including the physical environment, the psychological and social climate or ethos, as well as the learners, educators, parents, management personnel and all others involved in learning and development of the centre.

In an inclusive education and training system, the curriculum needs to be responsive to the needs of all learners. It needs to be flexible and accessible to do this. Accessibility includes providing the opportunity for all learners to gain entry into the education system (schools and other centres of learning) and to participate fully in the learning process.

The general curriculum at schools, and also at other levels of education, has in the past not promoted accessibility for all learners. The existence of diverse learning needs and the need for diverse educational strategies has been minimally acknowledged and addressed in mainstream education. When learners have experienced difficulties, reasons have usually been sought within the learner. The context within which these difficulties have been experienced, the curriculum, has not usually considered. This has encouraged a *learner deficit* model of learning breakdown.

To enable all centres of learning to accommodate the diversity in the learner population, overall curriculum transformation is required which includes review and/or development of all the various aspects. This includes: the learning environment; the learning programmes; the teaching practices; how learning outcomes are assessed; assessment of the system; the materials, facilities and equipment available; the medium of teaching and learning; the capacity of educators; the nature of support provided to enable access to the learning programmes and the nature of support provided to educators.

Major policies and initiatives emerging within education in South Africa are supporting the development of a system that is more responsive to the needs of all. Within the context of curriculum, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the outcomes-based-education (OBE) approach, and Curriculum 2005, are examples. Health promoting schools initiatives and whole-school/organisation development projects are amongst the strategies being used to engender institutional development and system change.

The focus in this chapter will be on curriculum and institutional development, and the role of assessment in the context of curriculum, but many of the issues are also discussed or expanded upon in other related chapters in the document. A range of recommendations categorised under various aspects of curriculum and institutional development and assessment are presented.

### 5.2 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

#### 5.2.1 Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service

The culture and ethos at many of our schools and other centres of learning is not one which is conducive to the delivery of quality education.

The Education Ministry has acknowledged this and launched a Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (COLTS) campaign, with the aim of improving the efficiency and productivity of the entire education and training system. There are two aspects to the COLTS campaign - promotional (creating an awareness of the campaign amongst the wider public), and programmatic.

Programmes within COLTS are of two main kinds. The first kind of programme aims at building a positive perception of education by focusing on finding, recognising and publicising examples of best practice. The second category of programme aims at improving conditions in schools, focusing on: having all teachers teaching, all learners learning; the elimination of crime in schools; the provision of basic resources to all schools; the

involvement of communities in schools and schools in communities, one of the ways being through the establishment and training of school governing bodies.

The COLTS programmes lend themselves to overcoming many of the barriers to learning and development identified in this document. Similarly, the enabling mechanisms and support structures which the NCSNET/NCESS is proposing should contribute to the development of quality education for all learners and a culture of learning and teaching.

***Recommendation 5.1: Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service***

- **COLTS promotion and programmes must specifically acknowledge and be responsive to diversity in the learner population, and ensure that barriers to learning and development are addressed.**
- **Development of COLTS programmes should be done in consultation with all stakeholders, including support structures at district/regional, community and centre-of-learning level.**
- **Examples of innovative practice in overcoming barriers to learning and development must be included in the COLTS best practice publications.**
- **The COLTS programmes should be implemented in all bands of education.**

**5.2.2 Holistic Development of Centres of Learning**

There are various approaches to holistic development of schools and other centres of learning but the common thread is a focus on development of all aspects of these centres. This includes: the physical environment; the psychosocial ethos of the centre of learning; the development of a vision and strategies to achieve that vision; structures and procedures; support provision; development of learners, staff, parents and governing bodies; and the development of management and leadership. All these aspects are interrelated and interdependent. Within the context of addressing barriers to learning and development and provision of enabling mechanisms, the holistic development strategy is fundamental to achieving the provision of a curriculum and environment that is inclusive and supportive of all.

Holistic development may thus be considered to be primarily about creating enabling environments in centres of learning. The goal of holistic development would be the transformation of the culture of the centre of learning. All centres of learning should become welcoming to all learners and other members of the teaching and learning community.

***Recommendation 5.2: Holistic Development of Centres of Learning***

**Holistic institutional development approaches should be adopted to ensure that an inclusive and supportive learning environment is developed in all centres of learning across all levels of education. The change must involve the organisational structure and overall culture and ethos of centres of learning.**

**5.2.3 Basic Provision in Centres of Learning**

A major challenge facing the education system in South Africa as it strives to develop a more responsive system relates to the lack of *basic provision*. This refers to the provision of sufficient centres of learning, as well as adequate buildings and classrooms, equipment, teaching and learning materials, water, electricity, toilets, and staff. The present severe classroom backlog at both primary and secondary schools severely impact on these centres' capacity to even *accommodate* the learners of compulsory school-going age living in the community. This is a need, already identified as a COLTS priority, that must urgently be addressed.

In many provinces there is a lack of provision for those who have a need for specialised learning contexts and support.

**Recommendation 5.3 : Basic provision**

All education departments must:

- accelerate centre of learning building programmes to provide access for *all* those requiring education and training
- improve physical conditions of all centres of learning (e.g. properly sized classrooms, water supplies, toilets, barrier free access to the buildings)
- ensure adequate provisioning of equipment and learning materials.

**5.2.4 Barrier-Free Access to the Built Environment**

The way in which the environment is developed and organised contributes to the level of independence and equality that people with disabilities enjoy. The Integrated National Disability Strategy identifies a number of *barriers in the environment* which prevent people with disabilities from enjoying equal opportunities with able-bodied learners, for example: structural barriers in the built environment (e.g. flights of stairs, inaccessible toilets and bathrooms); inaccessible service points (e.g. public telephones); inaccessible entrances due to security systems (e.g. turnstiles); poor town planning (e.g. schools are often geographically placed at the highest points in rural areas) and interior design (e.g. fixed seats in laboratories).

National Buildings Regulations promulgated in 1986 included regulations that set out national requirements for an accessible built environment. These regulations marked an important development in the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities. Implementation has, however, been problematic.

Learners, educators, parents and community members with physical and sensory disabilities are to a large extent presently excluded from participating in the education process at all levels of education due to the lack of barrier-free access to centres of learning.

The cost of accessibility is often cited as the reason for the lack of a barrier-free environment, yet the National Environmental Accessibility Programme (NEAP) has calculated that it generally does not add more than 0,2% to the overall cost of development, if accessibility is incorporated into the original town and building design.

Thus one aspect of the development of centres of learning that needs focus relates to the challenge of creating barrier-free learning environments. The learning environment should be able to accommodate the diverse needs of the learning population and enable all learners to move around the environment freely and unhindered. The Guidelines for National Norms and Standards to Barrier Free Access refers. Of particular note is the floor space regarded as sufficient for schools for learners with disabilities.

The Integrated National Disability Strategy already contains recommendations about barrier-free learning environments which are supported and re-iterated here:

**Recommendation 5. 4: Barrier Free Access to the Built Environment**

- The Department of Education, in consultation with the National Environmental Accessibility Programme (NEAP) and other stakeholders, must facilitate a process to develop national norms and minimum standards for the design and construction of accessible new education centres, as well as for the renovation of existing centres of learning. The recommendations of NEAP concerning barriers in the environment and the requirements of the National Building Regulations of 1986 need to be addressed.
- A representative from NEAP should be included in the standing committee on space and cost norms for education buildings, a sub-committee of the Education Heads of Departments Committee.

### 5.2.5 Health Promoting Centres of Learning

Within the context of the 'health promoting centre of learning', health is conceptualised in broad terms as physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and environmental health. A health promoting centre of learning may be defined as:

*'... A place where all members of the learning centre community work together to provide learners with integrated and positive experiences and structures which promote and protect their well-being. This includes both the formal and informal curricula in health (including physical, social and emotional health), the development of health-promoting policies, the creation of a safe and healthy environment, the provision of appropriate support services, and the involvement of the family and wider community in efforts to promote well-being. A health promoting centre of learning is a centre that is constantly strengthening its own capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working ...'* (Adapted from WHO, 1996)

A 'health promoting school' approach is currently being developed in South Africa. This has included national and, in some cases, provincial, commitment on the part of the relevant ministries and departments; various forms of 'health promoting school network' initiatives (where a cluster of schools or districts work together to promote the development of health promoting schools); and individual school development. These initiatives have revealed the value of such an approach for 'whole-school'/institutional development, and the provision of support services within a centre-based, and community-based approach. It is also a tool for the development of successful intersectoral collaboration. A fundamental principle of this approach is the bringing together of the various sectors to address problems and promote development collaboratively - a major goal of the transformation of education support services.

The role of *learners* in providing support to one another and in disseminating knowledge, attitudes and skills is a key factor in many health-promoting initiatives in various parts of the world. A child-to-child, youth-to-youth, or peer-support approach has been found to be an invaluable component in health promotion.

While the health promoting approach has emerged from education support services, and in particular school health services initiatives in South Africa, it has relevance to the broader understanding of 'special needs' as barriers to learning and development.

Schools have the potential to serve as means to health as well as education. The World Health Organisation (WHO) Expert Committee on Comprehensive School Health Education and Promotion have made recommendations on policy and action steps that should be taken at local, regional and national levels in all countries to help schools to become health promoting centres. The committee's proposals are summarised as follows:

- Educational opportunities for girls should be improved and expanded. This is considered to be one of the best health and social investments a country can make in terms of benefits to maternal and child health when young women receive schooling.
- Every school must provide a safe learning environment for learners and a safe workplace for staff.
- Every school must enable learners at all levels to learn critical health and life skills.
- Every school must more effectively serve as an entry point for health promotion and a location for health intervention.
- Policies, legislation and guidelines must be developed to ensure the mobilisation, allocation and co-ordination of resources at all levels to support the development of health promoting schools. This includes fostering active collaboration between health and education ministries; developing intersectoral committees and networks; establishing clear lines of responsibility and accountability for health promoting schools initiatives.
- Teachers and other staff must be valued and provided with the support and training necessary to enable them to develop a supportive environment for learning and development.
- The community and school must work together.
- Health promoting school programmes must be well designed, monitored and evaluated to ensure their successful implementation and outcomes.
- International support must be further developed, to enhance the ability of communities and schools in developing countries to become health promoting.

While the initiative internationally and in South Africa has been primarily limited to 'schools', it is an approach that has been and can be used in any institutional context.

**Recommendation 5.5: Health Promoting Centres of Learning**

**All aspects of the 'health promoting school concept' strategy should be adopted at all centres of learning to ensure the development of health promoting policy, a safe and supportive learning environment, strong community links, personal skills development, and appropriate support services.**

### 5.3. LEARNING PROGRAMMES

#### 5.3.1 Outcomes-Based Education: Curriculum 2005

Curriculum transformation is taking place in South Africa. The new national education curriculum for General Education and Training, Curriculum 2005, will be phased in as from January 1998. As the new curriculum is implemented, there should be increasing access to the curriculum for all learners. There are, however, areas where more clarity or specificity will be needed so that curricular barriers to learning and developed are not inadvertently created.

Curriculum 2005 reflects a paradigmatic shift in the South African education system, from the previous emphasis on content to a focus on outcomes. Outcomes-based education (OBE) is learner-centred with the emphasis on what the learner should be able to know, to understand, to do and to become.

To ensure an integrated and national approach to education and training, nationally accepted outcomes have to be determined. For this purpose a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has been developed. The NQF specifies the levels, bands and types of qualifications and certificates in education and training.

The principles enshrined in the NQF and in the National Curriculum Framework focus on the need for equality, open access, democratic participation and accountability for learning. It places learners at the centre of education. This includes learners who for diverse reasons experience difficulty in accessing the curriculum.

Throughout the General Education and Training band, the aim of the learning programmes will be the preparation of *all* the learners, including learners who experience barriers to learning and development, for life after school. The intention of the essential outcomes that underpin the eight areas of learning is to afford all learners the opportunity of being assimilated into the world at large. Learners will be able to move through the different levels at their own pace and time. Credits can be attained through prior knowledge acquired informally through life or work experience. These aspects are particularly important for the many learners who experience barriers to learning and development.

Learners will be allowed to demonstrate their learning achievements and competence in whatever manner most appropriate to their abilities. For example, the NQF provides the example of the learner who is blind who can use oral work or tape recordings. Assessment methods are to be designed so as not to disadvantage learners by hindering them or limiting them in ways unrelated to the evidence of attainment of outcomes being sought.

One of the advantages for learners that arise out of the outcomes-based approach being used as a basis for Curriculum 2005 is that their progress will be measured against their previous achievements and not against those of other learners. All learners are expected to experience success, with learning time being flexible. This is an advantage to a learner who may be slower owing to a sensory or intellectual disability, or even to a fast learner who requires extra stimulation (learners who are 'highly able' or 'gifted'). Specific attention still needs to be given to developing appropriate outcomes for learners who experience barriers to learning and development caused by severe intellectual disability.

The OBE approach also emphasises that learner success is based on the creation of welcoming teaching and learning environments and on ensuring that all learners have access to support services they require to develop their potential. This is clearly congruent with the recommendations in this document.

Prevailing conditions in many schools, such as high learner:educator ratios, lack of facilities and resources and lack of barrier-free access could, however, mitigate against creating the desired learning and teaching environment.

Curriculum development, it is intended, will be free from prescription, allowing for centres of learning to address specific needs or interests of their learners and community. The philosophy of OBE provides for an environment in which diversity can flourish, where understanding of and sensitivity to difference in terms of race, language, religious beliefs and appearance can be developed. Forms of delivery also incorporate community resources to ensure greater participation and ownership.

The benefits which the OBE approach can potentially provide for learners with diverse needs at school-going levels of education should be extended to the other levels of education as well.

#### **Recommendation 5.6: Outcomes-Based Education**

- **It must be acknowledged that there is one national curriculum framework for all learners located in the NQF.**
- **Participation by all stakeholders in the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) developments in the various structures at national, provincial, district, and institutional levels for all bands of education is imperative.**
- **There must be an acceptance of common outcomes for all learners, but with learning programmes and materials which are customised to accommodate differences in sensory modalities, learning styles and rates of learners as well as appropriate teaching and support services to cater for diverse needs. Outcomes should be seen in the widest sense, including functional outcomes - particularly for learners with intellectual disabilities.**
- **Refinement of range statements of outcomes for those learners who cannot perform all the necessary outcomes to reach the first level of certification (grade 9) should be made.**
- **Assessment practices must be adapted to accommodate barriers experienced by learners.**
- **Further investigations focusing on specific curriculum development within Curriculum 2005 should be pursued to ensure that barriers to learning and development are addressed.**

#### **5.3.2 Life Orientation: Lifeskills Education**

The World Health Organisation's definition of lifeskills includes abilities for adaptive, positive behaviour that enables us to deal effectively with the challenges and demands of everyday life. This encompasses: decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, ability to empathise, coping with emotions, coping with stresses, skills of developing self, adapting to unchangeable circumstances, skills of respecting and relating to others as well as to the environment, and skills of learning.

The subject area of *guidance* in the previous South African curriculum, covered some aspects of lifeskills relating particularly to personal, interpersonal, vocational, and educational development. Where guidance has been provided, guidance teachers have been primarily responsible for these programmes, but have drawn in a number of other resources (e.g. social workers, nurses, NGOs, and other community resources) in an attempt to provide learners with an adequate programme. The new learning area of Life Orientation will subsume the subject 'guidance'.

Most of the areas listed in the WHO definition of Lifeskills, are amongst the outcomes of this *Life Orientation* area of Curriculum 2005, as may be seen below. The specific outcomes to be demonstrated by learners in the learning area, Life Orientation, are:

- An understanding and acceptance of themselves as unique and worthwhile human beings
- An ability to use skills and display attitudes and values that improve relationships in family, group and community
- Respect for the rights of people to hold personal beliefs and values
- Value and respect for human rights as reflected in Ubuntu and other similar philosophies

- Ability to practise life and decision making skills
- Assessment of career and other opportunities and setting of goals that would enable them to make the best use of their potential and talents
- Demonstration of the values and attitudes necessary for a healthy and balanced lifestyle
- Evaluation and participation in activities that demonstrate effective human movement and development.

To promote respect for diversity, the first outcome should be amended to read: *“An understanding and acceptance of themselves and others as unique and worthwhile human beings”*. Education about disabilities and other barriers to learning and development could be included in this focus area.

International and local experience suggests that lifeskills education needs to be a ‘dedicated’ learning area, as reflected in the newly developed area of Life Orientation. Lifeskills education also needs to be ‘infused’ across the curriculum. All teachers have to address the fundamental aspects of lifeskills as essential outcomes of all other learning areas. Besides the seven critical outcomes which are common to all Learning Areas, there are also five additional outcomes which contribute to the personal development of all learners. The vital area of attitude change towards learners who experience barriers to learning’ may be seen as an important part of lifeskills, which has to be specifically dealt with, as well as being dealt with across the curriculum whenever appropriate. This dual ‘separate/infused’ approach to lifeskills education is considered to be a necessity because of the danger of it not being adequately addressed in the face of many other pressures and challenges. ‘Dedicated’ time and personnel can facilitate the championing of this important aspect of education.

It is believed that this area should be facilitated by trained personnel. Use can be made of expertise outside of the centre of learning, but the long term goal must be to train all educators to teach lifeskills education. This would serve the goal of infusion of these areas in the curriculum as a whole. A multi-disciplinary and intersectoral approach should be adopted in the development and provision of lifeskills education. All specialist and other support providers should work together to plan and provide input into this area. NGOs have and should continue to play a central role in this regard. They could be contracted to train and facilitate while departmental capacity is being developed. Disabled people and their organisations (DPOs) have a large role to play in lifeskills education, particularly in centres where learners with disabilities have been included and also in specialised education contexts.

Career education and vocational guidance should also be provided to all learners within the context of lifeskills education, and to some learners as additional career counselling or guidance where needed. This should be provided at GET level, but also very importantly, in Further Education, Higher Education and Adult Education.

Lifeskills education is a necessity, not a luxury. It should be an aspect of the curriculum at all levels of education. It should commence at ECD level, and continue through to higher education and adult education, focusing on issues pertinent to the particular developmental phases.

As far as the outcome with regard to human movement (formerly the subject Physical Education) in the learning area of Life Orientation is concerned, cognisance must be taken of the rights of learners with disabilities in ordinary schools, and appropriate provision must be made for their needs. Learners with disabilities must be given the opportunity to participate in sport and also in leisure activities, not only for pleasure, social or competitive reasons but also for their therapeutic value. For learners attending ordinary schools, provision may involve arrangements with sports associations for the disabled or specialised centres of learning.

### ***Recommendation 5.7: Life Orientation***

#### ***Lifeskills Education***

- Lifeskills education must be a dedicated focus in Life Orientation, *and* infused in all other learning areas.
- Educators who have been trained in the area of ‘guidance’ should be utilised in the lifeskills education area. Appropriate reorientation should be provided to these educators.
- Lifeskills should be part of the training courses for all educators.
- All available expertise, including NGOs, DPOs, various specialist services, other community resources, should be used to provide lifeskills education training for educators.



- Lifeskills education should be provided at all bands of education. The focus at the different levels should be determined by the developmental needs and tasks at that level.

#### ***Human Movement***

- The needs of learners with disabilities with regard to the learning area of human movement should be acknowledged and addressed.

### **5.3.3 Transition to Work**

The education system in South Africa has often been criticised for its weakness in preparing learners for life and the world of work.

This challenge has to be addressed within the curriculum, to ensure that what is taught is relevant to life and the world of work. The new curriculum has as one of its aims to equip all learners with knowledge, competencies, and orientations needed to be successful after completing their studies.

This challenge must also be addressed in the way in which the centre of learning-community relationship is developed. Members of the business community and general community should be far more involved in the various aspects of institution and curriculum development, to ensure that relevance to the world of work is ensured.

The link between education and work becomes even more important with learners who experience barriers to learning and development. They need to be prepared for and accepted within the working community. Providing work placements for learners while they are still in school or in higher institutions is one important role that can be played by the business sector.

Mechanisms and programmes that facilitate the transition of learners from the centre of learning to work need to be provided in centres of learning. This should be one of the roles of the lifeskills teacher. This is particularly important for learners who experience barriers to learning and development who are generally marginalised from society as a result of negative stereotyping. Tracking the transition of these learners into society has been identified as a crucial aspect of ensuring equality of opportunity in other out-of- school contexts.

While the OBE approach of Curriculum 2005 is geared towards managing transition to work, other strategies will have to be developed where exclusion is likely to occur. The Department of Labour's Skills Development Strategy suggests some specific services for learners which are aimed at transition from school to work. These should be developed within an intersectoral framework.

#### ***Recommendation 5.8: Transition to Work***

- Strategies should be pursued to ensure successful transition of learners who have experienced barriers to learning and development, to an active working life.
- Partnerships should be formed between education departments, health departments, the Department of Labour, unions, business and community resources to facilitate curriculum development, the implementation of training programmes and the development of transitional programmes.
- On-going career education should be provided to all learners at all bands of education.

### **5.4. MEDIUM OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

With the announcement of the New Language Policy (July 1997) by the Minister of Education, the right to choose the language of learning and teaching is now vested in the individual. Though this right has to be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation on the education system to promote multilingualism, the adoption of this policy by the Department of Education is a major victory for all those who have been affected by the inherited language-in-education policy which was discriminatory, affecting the educational access and success of many learners, including the Deaf community.

### 5.4.1 South African Sign Language

The organised Deaf community in South Africa promotes an approach of bilingualism/bi-culturalism which is congruent with both international trends in Deaf education, and with present developments in Deaf education in South Africa. This means that Deaf children are taught South African Sign Language (SASL) as a first language and only when the child knows SASL well, a second spoken or written language is introduced using SASL as the medium of teaching and learning.

In other countries where this approach has been followed, it has been found, generally, that learners who are in secondary school have developed the same ability in reading and writing as other hearing learners, although some grammatical errors are made. If Deaf learners learn according to this method, they can also acquire a third and fourth language.

Consultation with the Deaf community in South Africa has revealed that the majority of them do not gain access to knowledge at school through their first language, although they are at schools for the Deaf. This is mainly because teachers are not equipped to teach through the medium of Sign Language. Some of them are able to use Signed Exact English, but this is not Sign Language.

Because language and language learning empowers people to access learning and to respond to others, members of the Deaf community are demanding that Sign Language be offered as a subject *and* as a medium through which to learn.

Official recognition of Sign Language first-medium schools (similar to Zulu, or Afrikaans first medium schools) would facilitate the implementation of Sign Language provision contained in the S.A. Schools Act (1996), as well as the development of multilingualism in the Deaf community.

While Sign Language is a first language to the Deaf, it could also be a second or additional language to the hearing and become part of the language repertoire in our multilingual country.

It needs to be noted that there are hard of hearing learners who may themselves or their parents, choose to be instructed through aural-oral methods. This would necessitate adaptations to teaching and learning methods. Aural-oral interpreters, and note-takers may be needed in certain circumstances.

#### ***Recommendation 5. 9: South African Sign Language (SASL)***

- **SASL should be available as a *medium* of teaching and learning .**
- **The choice of SASL as a medium of teaching and learning must be located in the National Language Policy in Education framework.**
- **Availability of interpreters and the development of SASL competence at all bands of education must be addressed.**
- **Within the Language, Literacy and Communication Learning Area, SASL should be an area of focus.**
- **All educators and service providers, including houseparents providing service at SASL bilingual centres of learning, should receive training which will enable them to become proficient in SASL.**
- **Parents should also have access to SASL training**

### 5.4.2 Second language

Many learners, out of choice or lack of viable alternatives, have opted to be educated via a medium of teaching and learning and development which is not one of the their home languages. This often creates barriers to learning which are rooted in the curriculum and culture of the institution. They may not be seen as system related, but as being intrinsic to the learner. These learners have often been labelled as 'slow' and referred to specialised learning contexts, despite there not being any inherent cognitive difficulties. Support has often not been available to enable them to gain proficiency in the medium of instruction of the centre of learning. Often too, insufficient or no attention has been given to cultural issues which impede curriculum access.

#### ***Recommendation 5.10: Second Language***

**Enabling mechanisms should be available at all centres of learning for learners who experience barriers to learning and development through learning via a language which is not their home language.**

#### **5.4.3 Braille**

Braille is the basic means for a learner who is blind, or with very low vision, to acquire literacy skills. It is the means by which they can read their own work as well as access literature in general. It is therefore the basic means of access to the curriculum for learners who are blind or who have very low vision. It enhances the understanding of the use of punctuation, spelling and the construction of sentences. Many learners with low vision also benefit from using Braille although they may be able to use some form of print as well.

#### ***Recommendation 5.11: Braille***

**The teaching of literacy through Braille, teaching of Braille, Braille equipment and Braille learning materials must be available to all blind learners and to those with low vision who can benefit from it.**

#### **5.4.4 Augmentative and alternative methods of communication**

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) strategies are those which enhance the communication abilities of persons who have limited or no functional speech. Strategies include aided systems, such as electronic speech output devices and symbol systems, as well as unaided systems, such as the use of gestural systems. It should be noted that Deafblind learners also need very specialised alternative communication and educational methods, e.g. finger spelling or vibration methods.

Through the implementation of AAC strategies, opportunities for social participation and induction into literacy are created. Access to persons who have special knowledge of the area of AAC is vital to support learners in the classroom and facilitate curriculum access.

#### ***Recommendation 5.12: Augmentative and Alternative Methods of Communication***

**Learners requiring alternative and augmentative methods of communication, should have access to facilitators skilled in the appropriate method/s required.**

### **5.5. TEACHING PRACTICES**

#### **5.5.1 Classroom Management and Teaching Practices**

A key characteristic of an effective educator is good classroom management. This includes teaching and learning strategies and the management or facilitation of group processes. Both of these aspects are central to the development of an education that is responsive to diverse needs, and provides support for all.

The *diversity* in the classrooms of today is great and presents the educator with a variety of management challenges. The different needs of learners in terms of learning style and pace of learning need to be acknowledged, respected, and utilised in the teaching and learning process. There needs to be flexibility in terms of approaches to ensure that all needs are addressed.

There is a variety of teaching and learning strategies that can utilise diversity as a strength. This includes: large group instruction; teacher-directed small group instruction; small group learning; one-to-one teacher-learner instruction; independent seatwork; partner learning; and co-operative learning groups. Teacher-directed groups and small group learning allow for more opportunities for contact between teacher-and-learner, and learner-learner.

**Recommendation 5.13: Classroom Management and Teaching Practices**

- **A variety of teaching and learning and classroom management strategies should be pursued to facilitate inclusion and a sense of belonging of all learners.**
- **Departments should implement on-going educator development programmes which will equip educators with the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to enable them to increase their repertoire of teaching practices and develop a supportive classroom environment.**
- **Management at all centres of learning must adapt organisational arrangements to promote and support innovative teaching and learning practices.**

### 5.5.2 Time-Tabling

The new curriculum provides flexibility and thereby provides the basis for addressing the diverse needs of the learner population. Flexible *time-tabling* is one aspect of this flexibility.

Taking into account the difficult circumstances under which many teachers are already working, particularly in disadvantaged contexts, various ways will have to be explored in which the school day can be organised to give maximum learning opportunity for learners with diverse learning styles and tempos, and for educators to have time for preparation of materials and to attend staff development programmes.

The school day extended across the working day could be one strategy of achieving this. This is a strategy followed in many other developed and developing countries. An extended day could include a variety of activities, allowing for maximum flexibility in terms of teaching and learning, and could include 'homework' done by both learners and teachers.

**Recommendation 5.14: Time-Tabling**

**Time-tabling at all centres of learning should be organised in such a way as to give maximum opportunity for learners with diverse learning needs to be accommodated.**

## 5.6. MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

### 5.6.1 Teaching and learning materials

Materials should enhance the avenues for expression and opportunities to capture evidence of learner knowledge. Materials should therefore be evaluated and developed to ensure that they are appropriate to the needs of all learners.

Learning materials may have to be modified to cater for different disabilities, e.g. the pictorial nature of learning materials may be unsuitable for use with visually impaired learners.

Consideration should be given to the establishment of structures at national and possibly provincial levels to ensure that materials are bias free, reflect the diversity of the learner population and that specific materials for learners who experience barriers to learning and development, are developed.

International experiences have indicated that this kind of materials development can occur in separate institutions for learners who experience barriers to learning and development (usually defined in 'disability' terms), or within existing curriculum and materials development institutions.

***Recommendation 5.15: Teaching and Learning Materials***

- **Learning materials (e.g. textbooks, study guides, and worksheets) developed and used must be customised to address and reflect the diverse needs of the learner population across all bands of education.**
- **Departments need to develop mechanisms to ensure that materials are bias-free and do not discriminate.**
- **Departments which do not have the capacity to develop, customise and produce specific learning and teaching materials, for example Braille and enlarged print, should investigate out-sourcing via normal tendering procedures**

**5.6.2 Assistive Devices**

Assistive devices and appropriate technology refer to equipment or adaptations that facilitate learning. Examples include: mobility devices, hearing aids, Braille writers, adapted access computers, magnifying glasses, and voice synthesisers. Some of these devices relate to functional independence, while others are directly learning-related.

Assistive devices and appropriate technology form an integral part of independent living for some people with disabilities. The Integrated National Disability Strategy has stressed that access to appropriate and affordable assistive devices is essential for people with disabilities to access their rights and responsibilities and participate as equal citizens. Without access to these services, people with disabilities will continue to experience great difficulties in securing rights to education, employment, and other aspects of life.

It is important to note that assistive devices, however necessary, should not be emphasised in such a way that the necessary accompanying human skills are not developed. These include particular technical, teaching and support skills.

The Department of Health has developed national norms and standards for assistive devices relating to functional independence to be provided at primary health level. This Department has committed itself to wipe out the backlog that has developed over the past 50 years, and substantial Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) funding has already been allocated to assist in this purpose.

Specific research must still be conducted to ensure that specific needs regarding assistive devices are identified. This will have to be done with both the 'ideal' and 'basics' in mind, given the current financial constraints facing the country as a whole, and education in particular. The principles and recommendations outlined below are an initial attempt at clarifying the needs and ways in which these could be addressed.

There should be a list of essential learning activities to which access is guaranteed, for example, reading, writing and numeracy. Assistive devices should then be provided to facilitate access to these activities.

Assistive devices related to curriculum access should be divided into two categories, namely, those to be given to learners as personal devices, and devices that remain the property of centres of learning, only to be used in the classroom context.

Learning-related assistive devices should be included on an essential learning materials list. Examples of devices that could appear on an essential learning-related assistive device list include: hand magnifiers, talking calculators, photocopier with magnifying facilities, Perkins Brailleurs, typewriters.

The Department of Education should develop a basic item list for learning-related assistive devices that would go out on tender. This would be similar to the Department of Health's process.

The role that information technology can play in facilitating curriculum access needs further investigation.

***Recommendation 5.16: Assistive Devices***

- It is recommended that the Department of Health be responsible for the provision and maintenance of assistive devices that contribute to independent living (e.g. mobility devices, hearing aids).
- It is recommended that the Department of Education be responsible for the provision and maintenance of assistive devices that enable learners to access the curriculum, that is, those devices that have direct relevance for learning (e.g. Braille writers, computers with adaptive technology for access, magnifying glasses, appropriate seating, etc.).
- The Department of Education should develop an essential list of assistive devices which should be allocated to learners, taking into consideration provision of access to lifelong learning and learners' right to choice of learning contexts.
- Information and other forms of technology should be utilised as a means of overcoming barriers to access experienced by learners at all levels of education and training.
- The Department of Education should develop a basic item list for learning-related assistive devices.

## 5.7 ASSESSMENT

Many of the characteristics of past assessment policy and practice in South Africa arose from the focus of assessment on classification for placement purposes. From the earliest attempts to provide specialised education to learners with 'special needs' there has been a close linkage between assessment and placement.

Historically, where education support services were staffed by highly qualified, multi-disciplinary specialist teams, assessment of and provision for those experiencing barriers to learning and development, were generally based on complex, individualised and expensive delivery models. The majority of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development in disadvantaged contexts had no or limited access to this assessment service.

### 5.7.1 Early Identification, Assessment and Intervention

The benefits of early identification, assessment and intervention of 'at risk' learners are well-documented in the literature. During the pre-formal schooling years barriers to learning and development, such as severe disabilities, are most likely to be identified by services within the Health sector. Facilities currently in place, such as community-based clinics are likely to be in the best position to do an initial assessment. Parents, with personnel from various sectors, including education, should together develop appropriate early intervention strategies for those learners identified as experiencing barriers to learning and development.

In order to ensure continuity of service delivery at all stages of a learner's development, it is essential that links be established as early as possible between community-based agencies and service providers within the formal education sector. Once learners enter the formal education system, CLBTs will need to be centrally involved in identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development.

#### ***Recommendation 5.17: Early Identification, Assessment and Intervention***

- **The early identification and assessment of learners who are likely to experience barriers to learning and development, as well as early intervention should be a national priority.**

### 5.7.2 Continuous Centre-based Assessment

As in other parts of the world, a strong movement is developing in this country in support of the view that the main purpose of assessment should be to inform effective teaching and learning, and to identify types of support needed.

Assessment as part of Curriculum 2005 is conceptualised as a continuous and flexible process, with a variety of assessment strategies needing to be employed. It will be used to determine the progress of learners and the attainment of learning outcomes.

Assessment will also involve identifying barriers to learning and development which are not directly related to the continuous assessment of the learning programme. The CLBT will have a central role in this process.

***Recommendation 5.18: Continuous Centre-of-Learning-based Assessment***

- **Continuous assessment must be part of the teaching and learning process. Its primary aim should be to maximise learners' access to the broad curriculum.**
- **Assessment of barriers to learning and development will be the primary responsibility of centre-based educators assisted by the CLBT.**
- **The outcomes of both forms of assessment should be a description of learner and system needs which should form the basis of interventions.**

**5.7.3 Role of Education Support Personnel in Assessment**

Any assumption that education support personnel will in future be able to continue a primary focus on individual assessments of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development is unrealistic. Rather than perpetuating an expectation that assessment of barriers to learning and development is a referral-driven process that is the responsibility of education support personnel, assessment needs to be reconceptualised as a centre-of-learning-based team process in which school-based educators play a central role. This view does not ignore the need for assessment by specialist education support personnel in cases where educators do not have the necessary expertise. It simply recognises that it will be members of the CLBT and not itinerant education support personnel who will be most accessible for providing assistance to these learners. In this process education support personnel will be freed to focus on other roles and functions which have become part of the new inclusive paradigm.

Reducing traditional involvement in time-consuming 'testing' or specialist assessment functions will free education support personnel in general, and psychologists employed by education departments in particular, to use their expertise to address other needs, such as those relating to social and emotional issues, in ways which will potentially impact positively on the learning experiences of many more learners. This will include a focus on service delivery to educators, parents and other caregivers and the development of preventative and developmental programmes.

***Recommendation 5.19: Role of Education Support Personnel in Assessment***

- **Education support personnel should focus increasingly on involving and supporting educators and parents in assessment, building their capacity and, where appropriate, should participate in developing appropriate interventions as well as preventative and promotive programmes**

**5.7.4 Educator Support**

Identifying the central role that educators will play in different forms of assessment does not imply that all of them will be immediately comfortable with such a role or that they will be expected to be assessors without support. It assumes that on-going training will be essential and that one of the primary functions of education support personnel will in future be to support educators and to assist with educator development programmes.

All programmes must include components which attempt to address anxieties and attitudes which will stem from the role changes of both educators and education support personnel.

***Recommendation 5.20: Educator Support***

**The implementation of a system of educator-driven assessment must be supported by a focused programme for training and re-orientating educators and education support personnel to fulfil new roles and perform new functions.**

### 5.7.5 Parent and Learner Involvement in Assessment

Parents and learners should be an integral part of all assessment processes and have access to all assessment reports. The onus will be on those involved in assessment to ensure that the contents of reports, as well as any implications of assessment findings, are shared with and explained to parents. Where appropriate, this should include explanation to the learners themselves. It is not acceptable that parents be denied access to reports on the grounds that the reports are intended only for other professionals.

Ensuring that parents understand their rights in respect of any assessment process and preparing them to play a more active role in the process of assessment of their children will need to be part of capacity-building programmes for parents.

#### ***Recommendation 5.21: Parent and Learner Involvement in Assessment***

**The assessment of learners must be transparent; must acknowledge the rights of learners and their parents to be an integral part of any assessment process; and must ensure their understanding of and right to access to all assessment results and reports.**

### 5.7.6 Systems Assessment

An inclusive system of education is based on a philosophy which accepts that centres of learning will attempt to accommodate the needs of all learners. Within this philosophy is an understanding that many of the barriers learners experience in accessing the curriculum are system-related rather than learner-related. System assessment therefore becomes an integral part of a broader assessment process.

System assessment aims to explore the extent to which the system (e.g. the centre of learning and other aspects of the curriculum) is able to accommodate diversity in the learner population and to address barriers to learning and development. It is about the ability of educators to meet individual learner needs, and also about the transformation of the system as a whole to meet the needs of all learners. System analysis would include an evaluation of the ethos of a school, its management systems, its educator development strategies, the attitudes of its staff, parent involvement, networking with service providers, teaching practices, and so on. System assessment relies on the participation by all stakeholders who bring different perspectives to the process of identifying barriers to learning and developing enabling interventions.

#### ***Recommendation 5.22: Systems Assessment***

**Assessment of the system should play an integral part in ensuring that all learners derive maximum benefit from the curriculum. Assessment of the system includes the evaluation of all aspects of the centre of learning and learning programmes.**

### 5.7.7 Standardised Tests

Departmental policies requiring the routine administration of standardised tests to a diverse learner population can be justified only if there is a reasonable guarantee that no learners subjected to the assessment will be disadvantaged in any way and if the results will contribute to a better understanding of the learner and/or the manner in which the learner accesses the general curriculum. Because of the changing character of learner enrolments in South African schools a number of standardised tests, including group tests of intelligence, do not currently fall into such a category.

Internationally and nationally, the validity of many tests used for placement is being seriously questioned.



***Recommendation 5.23: Use of Standardised Tests***

- **Urgent attention should be given to the re-evaluation of all standardised tests prescribed by education departments. Only tests which have proven usefulness in identifying barriers to learning and development should be used as part of the assessment process.**
- **The routine use of standardised tests for placement of learners in specialised learning contexts should be discontinued.**
- **The routine administration of group tests of intelligence should be discontinued.**

**5.7.8 Assessment of learners with high needs for support**

In South Africa, as elsewhere, the assessment policies of support services have often been heavily influenced by the need to classify learners. The nature of procedures have generally been determined by the kind of services offered. In contexts where education support service personnel have been highly qualified and/or where there has been access to the services of multi-disciplinary teams of specialists this has often been reflected in highly individualised and expensive assessment procedures. For the majority of learners there has been little or no access to such assessment procedures.

A new focus on the centre-of-learning-based team (CLBT) as the primary vehicle for assessment of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development necessitates a review of assessment procedures to be used for that small number of learners for whom access to specialised learning contexts or specialised support will be needed.

This has far-reaching implications for the role that many itinerant education support personnel - especially psychologists - have traditionally played in respect of 'testing' for placement in specialised learning contexts.

***Recommendation 5.24: Assessment of learners with high needs for support***

- **Current procedures used for the assessment of learners requiring high levels of support in specialised learning contexts should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.**
- **New procedures for assessment should focus on determining the optimum support learners require, and how or where it can be accessed.**

## **6. UTILISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The vision of the NCSNET/NCESS of a unified education and training system that provides education for all will require all centres of learning to build their human resource capacity so that they are able to accommodate the diversity of learners in their communities.

Educators in the mainstream education system have in the past not been trained to respond to 'special needs', such as disabilities. Neither have most of them been equipped to understand and respond to other aspects of diversity within the learner population, for example, those with exceptional ability, with HIV/AIDS, who abuse substances, who have been traumatised by violence, who are living on the streets or who demonstrate challenging behaviour. The lack of training to equip educators to deal with diversity has not only disadvantaged many learners but has often also left educators feeling inadequate.

Historically, in advantaged communities, in both mainstream and specialised education, specialist personnel were available, to whom educators were able to refer for assistance. These education support personnel tended to focus on individual specialised interventions rather than on any systemic intervention. The services were either minimally available or not available at all to the majority of learners and educators in this country. Social and political imperatives dictate that existing disparities in the provision of education and support services be removed as quickly as possible. Redress and transformation are imperatives, not choices. While maximum use must be made of specialist education support services which are available, the previous model of operation is not appropriate in the new educational paradigm.

Inclusive education is built on the premise that the vast majority of learners can be integrated into ordinary centres of learning. Learners and educators in an inclusive setting must, however, be provided with adequate training and support. The focus is, however, on maximising self-sufficiency by building capacity at the site where teaching and learning occur. The notion of centre-of-learning or community-based support is an acknowledgement that the skills and expertise to be found within a community must be discovered, nurtured and developed since it is unrealistic and inappropriate, especially given South African constraints, that all the necessary support can be brought in from elsewhere.

The model of service provision has to acknowledge that barriers to learning and development encompass the needs of learners, educators and other aspects of the system. Centre-of-learning-based teams (CLBTs), including community-based resources and support services, will have to work together to overcome barriers and to provide support to ensure that all learners have equal access to the education system and are able to participate optimally in the learning process.

This chapter describes the competencies and roles needed at the different levels of education, as well as guidelines and recommendations of the NCESS/NCSNET for the various roleplayers to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to respond to diversity in the learner population.

### **6.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **6.2.1 National and Provincial level**

It will be the responsibility of education management at the national and provincial education departments to make a concerted joint effort to communicate the implications, challenges and opportunities of an inclusive system of education and training to all role players. At national level, guidelines for staff provisioning in provinces will have to be developed that enable the support of this inclusive education system.

All sections of the national and provincial education departments will need to become aware of the diverse needs which have to be catered for in their plans and programmes. An understanding of what constitutes barriers to learning and development and how these may be overcome or addressed will need to be developed by all.

#### **6.2.2 District / Regional level**

There is an urgent need for the establishment, development and support of centre-of-learning-based teams (CLBTs). Support personnel at district and regional levels across all departments and including NGOs and community resources will need to be intensively involved in training, monitoring, support and co-ordination of CLBTs. Appointments at district/regional level of itinerant support personnel will have to be increased where there is insufficient capacity. It is important that redress be applied in the provisioning of support personnel, e.g. the most needy districts/regions to receive priority in provision of personnel.

Roles and functions at district level would include service co-ordination, systems assessment and support, learner support and educator support and training. The mode of service delivery would largely be indirect and consultative, with the focus on the system rather than only on the learner. Individual direct service delivery by these education support personnel to learners is likely to be the exception rather than the rule, only occurring when other centre-based interventions have not proved effective. *Exceptions* may be assessment and intervention for learners who require specialised intervention in order to overcome barriers to learning and development, whether these be of a permanent or transitory nature.

### **6.2.3 Community level**

Skills and expertise which can be accessed at centre of learning level will vary considerably among communities. The paradigm shift to inclusive, community-based education requires a re-evaluation of skills at the local community level and an identification of resources which can be accessed by CLBTs and which may previously have been under-utilised or ignored - especially by the formal education sector. Accessing community resources is itself a skill which will need to be developed by CLBT members. Communities themselves will have to be encouraged to become more directly involved in the affairs of centres of learning that serve them. In particular there is a need for communities to become involved in efforts to promote a culture of learning where this is lacking and to draw those children who are out of school, for example, disaffected youth and children with disabilities, into the education system. Other roles of community-based resources could include provision of specialist skills, learner support, educator support and capacity building.

### **6.2.4 Centre of Learning level**

Educators will need to develop awareness of barriers to learning and development, and be equipped with skills and knowledge to accommodate diversity in the learner population. Recognition will have to be given to the need for support for educators who will be expected to take on broader roles. This support should be easily accessible.

The key component of an overall support structure should be a centre-of-learning-based team. Many different models already exist for centre-based teams. Each centre will have to choose a model which responds to its unique circumstances, the level of its need and the availability of expertise. Educators within centres will make up the bulk of these teams. Teams should, however, be flexible to cater for different needs at different times. The primary functions of the teams will be to support the learning and development process by addressing both individual learner and system needs. System needs could include educator development and support, learning programme assessment, and capacity building at local community level. Where appropriate and available, the CLBT could be strengthened by expertise from the community and district level services.

Although there will be a role for external facilitators and consultants, there is an expectation that educators, learners and parents will be instrumental in identifying their own needs and resources.

## **6.3 HUMAN RESOURCES REQUIRED**

### **6.3.1 Challenging the concept of a 'Core' of Service Providers**

The adoption by the NCSNET/NCESS of an inclusive community-based system of education and an infused model of education support has major implications for both the manner in which education support services will be conceptualised and the nature of service provision and service providers.

The demands of the new system, and the fact that system needs will differ from province to province, within regions or districts of provinces and at centre of learning level, dictates that education support services should be conceptualised as a flexible network of service providers. In such a system, networking and co-ordination of available services rather than reliance on a pre-determined core of specialist service providers, is what becomes important.

In this new system Education Support Co-ordinators become key personnel at national, provincial, regional/district and centre of learning level, assisted in their task by education support co-ordinating committees. Their task will be to facilitate policy development, and manage and monitor implementation. A conceptualisation of education support as a flexible network of service providers means that there will henceforth be a focus on identifying a pool of accessible service providers and a fostering of service delivery partnerships at all levels. The concepts of community responsibility, teamwork and intersectoral collaboration will be developed among all service providers including those which have hitherto been ignored or under-utilised by the system.

In practice this will mean that at any point in time the composition of a support team will vary according to both the availability of service providers, the capacity of community resources and the specific barriers to learning and development that need to be overcome. Such flexibility will enable Co-ordinators at all levels to utilise and develop expertise rather than be hamstrung by current shortages of specialist personnel in the more traditional disciplines.

Given the dire need for capacity building in rural and other disadvantaged communities, district and regional staff will have a major role in redressing support needs there. Where capacity or competency is not yet available in the district or region, assistance in the form of training or specialist provision will have to be made available from centres outside the district or region in the interim.

In their efforts to meet these needs Co-ordinators at centre of learning level, regional/district level, as well as provincial and national level, will be expected to identify skills/skilled persons from a broad spectrum of potential service providers. The pool of potential service providers will include persons from the following open-ended list:

- educationists (generalists and specialists)
- learning support educators
- psychologists
- orthopedagogues
- subject advisors
- community based rehabilitation (CBR) workers
- therapists (speech, occupational and physio)
- language and listening teachers
- social workers
- health workers (including doctors, nurses, paramedics)
- circuit managers
- mobility and orientation instructors
- Sign Language interpreters
- nutritionists
- traditional healers
- peer counsellors (including Deaf and disabled activists, HIV/AIDS counsellors etc.)
- youth workers
- child and youth care workers
- university/college of education lecturers and researchers
- representatives from parents organisations
- members of the legal fraternity, etc.

### **6.3.2 National and Provincial level**

In every section of the education department at national and provincial level, there should be persons who have the competency to deal with issues relating to addressing barriers to learning and development. They could be occupying full posts or combining this function with others, depending on the size of the staff complement. Eventually the competency to deal with diversity in the learner population should become 'infused' throughout departments, with everyone possessing an awareness of the issues.

A co-ordinating structure - directly accountable to the Head of Department - made up of those in 'dedicated' posts or with 'dedicated' responsibilities, together with representatives from other stakeholder departments or organisations will be tasked with ensuring that barriers to learning and development are addressed and that enabling mechanisms are developed through appropriate support. The co-ordinators at national and provincial level should have a post level and status commensurate with the required roles and responsibilities.

### **6.3.3 District/Regional level**

At the district or regional level of provinces, the focus will be on providing support to centre-of-learning and community-based teams. The persons providing this service would need to have the ability to co-ordinate, manage and facilitate and should be selected on the basis of these and other relevant competencies, rather than solely on the basis of profession. Responsibility for the co-ordination and management of the regional/district teams would rest with the education department.

District/regional support teams should be available in all districts/regions in all provinces. These services should be available to all in the general and further education and training system, including those who should be at school but are not, for whatever reason. Support services should also be available to ABET programmes. The higher education and training band which is not a competence of the provincial education departments, should ensure that similar enabling mechanisms are in place to overcome barriers to learning and development at this level and that there is co-ordination with support providers at other levels.

At the ECD level, in addressing the needs of children with high needs for specialised support who are not yet in the formal education system, there will need to be working arrangements amongst the departments of Education, Health and Welfare. The Education Department should assume responsibility for all education-related activities and programmes - wherever the learners are located (including home-based programmes) - within a co-operative approach. District support services should be available to these children and their care-givers .

### **6.3.4 Community level**

The human resources available at this level will vary depending on the community concerned. They may include parents, grandparents, volunteers, community-based rehabilitation workers, community organisations, welfare organisations, religious organisations, traditional healers, people with disabilities and their organisations, municipal health clinic personnel, private practitioners, higher education institutions, the business sector and various State departments. This is a long but not exhaustive list, and serves merely to illustrate the range of possibilities of community support. These are resources which have remained largely untapped by the education sector. Their use will have to be carefully evaluated and co-ordinated by the centre-of-learning-based teams, with assistance from the regional/district-based teams if required.

### **6.3.5 Centre of Learning level**

Human resources at centre of learning level to address barriers to learning and development and provide enabling mechanisms, will predominantly include the educators and the learners (peer support), and could include human resources from a wide spectrum of other support providers. On-site education support personnel should be deployed from district level to specialised centres of learning or units, on a full-time or part-time basis, to respond to the barriers to learning and development that learners in these centres experience.

The CLBTs will be the key component in the education support system. Co-ordinating committees at all levels above that of the CLBT will focus their collective energies on building capacity in CLBTs throughout the country.

#### **6.3.5.1 Lifeskills/ Learning Support Co-ordinators**

Chapter Five (Curriculum and Institutional Development) recommends that *lifeskills* be a focus at all bands of education. Capacity to address barriers to learning and development also needs to be built within all centres of learning.

Posts for specialist learning support educators (e.g. 'remedial', 'special class' and 'special needs' teachers) have been until now usually only provided at primary schools and those for guidance/lifeskills only at secondary school level.

It is proposed that the functions of these posts be transformed and fused into those of centre-based Lifeskills and Learning Support Co-ordinators. These lifeskills and learning support educators could play a central role in the CLBTs.

It is further proposed that the Co-ordinator at centre level be appointed at least at head-of-department level, and that those with learning support (usually at primary school level) or lifeskills/guidance (usually at secondary school level) experience *and* the necessary competencies be considered for these posts.

#### **Recommendation 6.1 : CLBT Co-ordinators**

- **Dedicated posts for Lifeskills and Learning Support Co-ordinators at management level at all centres of learning should be created.**
- **Lifeskills and Learning Support Co-ordinators need to be equipped with diverse competencies, for example facilitation skills, anti-bias training, co-ordinating and networking skills, knowledge of barriers to learning and development, and strategies to overcome these.**

#### **6.3.5.2 Classroom Assistants**

Within centres of learning where learners who experience barriers to learning and development are accommodated, extra adult help may be needed to enable learners to follow the curriculum. A class assistant could work under the direction of the teacher or education support personnel to provide additional assistance. Although some specialised centres of learning have been employing class assistants, ('nurse aides'/teacher aides') there has been a lack of clear role definition, service conditions and accreditation. Provision has not been made in mainstream schools for this category of staff. Class assistants could increase the flexibility of teaching for all learners.

The shift from 'special education' to addressing barriers to learning and development in all educational contexts, will most probably result in the need for classroom assistants in many more centres of learning. This should be seen within the context of fostering learning environments responsive to diversity in all classrooms. Aspects which might impact on the utilisation of classroom assistants include peer-teaching, teacher workload, new classroom management practices as they relate to OBE, fiscal constraints, the use of volunteers and learner and system needs.

#### **Recommendation 6.2 :**

**An investigation into the utilisation of classroom assistants must be part of the terms of reference of the proposed Interim Implementation Committee**

### 6.3.5.3 Hostel Staff

Learners who experience barriers to learning and development often need lifeskills acquired during formal learning in the classroom to be reinforced after hours. Some learners will also require personal assistance with activities of daily living (dressing, feeding, taking medication etc.).

It is important to note that residential contexts could vary from hostels attached to specialised and ordinary centres of learning to small community homes attached to ordinary centres of learning. Hostel staff could form part of the CLBT where appropriate.

#### **Recommendation 6.3 :**

**Hostel staff should be employed by the departments of education and existing and additional staff should be equipped with skills which will enable them to facilitate continuous learning and development.**

## 6.4 ORGANISATION AND PROVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

### 6.4.1 Provincial Models for Support Service Delivery

The proposal of the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service is that heads of departments should have the authority to create posts determined by provincial needs and priorities. This allows for provinces to promote lean top structures and distribute services and posts where they are needed. Minimal national norms would, however, be necessary to ensure uniformity. In the past, there were rigid formulae for determining posts at different levels. This often resulted in top-heavy management structures, with too few posts at lower levels where the staffing need was greatest.

An appropriate model for the delivery of support services at all levels of education should be decided upon at provincial level in order to accommodate local needs. Education support teams should include service providers who have the range of competencies which are required.

#### **Recommendation 6.4: Provincial models for service delivery**

- **Heads of Departments need to be committed to the provision of comprehensive services which will contribute to addressing barriers to learning and development, based on provincial needs.**
- **Provincial criteria based on national guidelines need to be in place to determine minimum staffing requirements for effective service delivery.**

### 6.4.2 Inter-Departmental/Sectoral Partnerships

A multi-disciplinary and multi-skilled approach should be developed within the education and training system, at all levels and such an approach should include intersectoral and interdepartmental structures, agreements and services. There needs to be a recognition of the value of this approach to intervention and support.

Amongst the potential benefits of an intersectoral collaborative approach are that it can: maintain a holistic approach to service planning and delivery; prevent duplication; prevent unnecessary competition; encourage efficient use of human and material resources; strengthen service delivery; enable the community to readily gain access to all the resources available; maximise resources; bring together people from different backgrounds; help in cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences; keep the community informed and involved; and commit each department to play its role.

Where more than one department is involved in collaborative service delivery, one department needs to be identified and take responsibility as the 'lead' department. This may need to be flexible or a fixed arrangement, depending on the circumstances. Statutory provision (e.g. organograms, material/financial resources, lines of

communication, secondment arrangements) will need to be put in place by provincial departments/sectors in order to secure intersectoral collaboration.

Education support services organised within a district or regional structure should play a pivotal role in identifying, organising and facilitating partnerships involving all the human resources available to the community whether from other government departments, the private sector, community organisations or individuals who are able to provide support to learners or centres of learning.

**Recommendation 6.5 : Interdepartmental/Intersectoral partnerships**

- **Provincial working agreements need to be entered into amongst government departments to promote optimal use of personnel.**
- **Multi-disciplinary/intersectoral teams should be established in all districts/regions of provinces and be accessible to all centres of learning.**
- **A 'lead' department needs to take responsibility for co-ordination of service delivery where intersectoral partnerships occur. Budgets should follow the sharing of responsibilities between 'lead' and 'supporting' departments**

**6.4.3 Weighting of learners and Grading of Centres of Learning**

**6.4.3.1 Weighting of learners**

There is widespread dissatisfaction with the present Education Labour Relations Council resolutions on weighting of learners with 'special needs'. The actual weightings given to the different categories are considered to lack validity, and to result in discrepancies and unfairness. Also, at present, weighting only applies to learners in specialised centres of learning and not those who experience barriers to learning and development in ordinary schools. The posts of staff such as psychologists and 'remedial' teachers at specialised centres of learning have to be filled out of the number of educator posts determined by the weighting factors, which increases actual classroom ratios in these schools.

Weighting should apply to all centres of learning. Weighted numbers should be added to the total learner enrolment of the centre of learning, however, rather than individual class enrolments.

Therapist:learner ratios decided by the ELRC are also considered to be unsatisfactory - based on existing numbers of therapists in special schools and not according to needs. Provision was not made for allocation of therapists in ordinary schools, which has led to learners who are experiencing particular barriers to learning and development in ordinary schools having no or insufficient support.

Variables that should affect class size should be determined and a factor analysis done to cluster high, medium or low needs, with weights allocated accordingly. There is a need, however, to move towards looking at teacher workloads rather than educator:learner ratios. Class assistants could be another way of reducing the load on teachers.

**Recommendation 6. 6 : Weighting of Learners**

- **Weighting should become applicable to learners in all centres of learning, and not only to those in 'special schools', with immediate effect.**
- **The Interim Implementation Committee should establish a Sub Committee on Staffing to investigate weighting of learners within the broader context and to eradicate discrepancies and unfairness. Some of the factors which should be taken into consideration might include teacher workload (weight the teaching situation rather than the learner), multi-grade/multi-lingual classes, the extent of barriers to learning and development in the classroom (learner and system/environment), the necessity of reducing classroom sizes in the Foundation Phase, as well as the link between classroom assistants and teacher workload.**



### **6.4.3.2 Grading of Centres of Learning**

The present Education Labour Relations Council Resolution 10 of 1995 which regulates grading of centres, is based on certain incorrect assumptions and does not take into account all relevant factors. The present grading of centres of learning for example does not take into account the weighted numbers of learners, nor many other important variables which affect the complexity of management of centres of learning.

#### **Recommendation 6.7 : Grading of Centres of Learning**

- **The proposed Interim Implementation Committee Sub Committee on Staffing should, in addition to the weighting of learners, also investigate a more equitable and fair grading system, taking into account variables which affect the management tasks of centres of learning. Variables may include weighted learner enrolment, number of non-teaching staff, hostel responsibilities etc.**

### **6.4.4 Service conditions**

#### **6.4.4.1 Education Support Personnel**

Where appropriate, professional councils and bodies, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, will need to restructure their requirements in terms of training, ratios, minimum loads, approaches and skills in order to ensure that the services of education support personnel are relevant to the needs of the education system.

As education support personnel are in extremely short supply they will need to be utilised as effectively as possible. This may require more flexible working hours to accommodate more effective service delivery.

Promotion structures need to be developed for all education support personnel to ensure appropriate career pathing. At present there is a lack of promotional opportunities and inappropriate evaluation within certain categories of service providers.

Where various specialist staff are employed by the Department of Education, these categories of staff need to be managed appropriately by persons knowledgeable and experienced in that field to promote optimum utilisation of their expertise.

The present system which allows for education support personnel employed by education departments to be appointed at both regional/district and centre of learning level must be reviewed, since it creates potential barriers for the provision of equitable services to the broader community, and allows a situation to exist where education support personnel appointed at centre of learning level have different conditions of service from those appointed at regional/district level.

#### **Recommendation 6.8 : Education Support Personnel Employed at Centre and District level**

- **All education support personnel appointed by education departments should in future be employed at district/regional level. This implies a change with respect to policy for the establishment of posts for such personnel.**
- **Where there is a need for the on-site services of education support personnel within centres of learning, such personnel should be deployed to such centres by the district/regional education support Co-ordinator in consultation with the principal of the centre concerned with regard to maximum utilisation of deployed personnel. Education support personnel will fall under the jurisdiction of and be accountable to the principal of the centre-of-learning when on site. At all other times the personnel will fall under the jurisdiction of the district/regional education support co-ordinator.**
- **All education support personnel employed by provincial education departments should be appointed under the same conditions of service with regard to hours/time of work, leave etc. Immediate attention should be given to creating mechanisms for the standardisation of**

conditions of service of all education support personnel currently in the service who have been appointed by the education departments.

- Accreditation and formulation of minimum qualifications for all education support personnel should be developed.
- There should be appropriate career path development for all education support personnel.

***Recommendation 6.9 : Departmental representatives at the ELRC***

- National and provincial departmental officials representing the education departments in the ELRC should be equipped with competencies to enable them to promote conditions of service for all personnel which will contribute to the overcoming of barriers to development and learning. Representatives should have a thorough understanding of the context, competencies and roles required of education support personnel and the recommendations contained within this Report.

***6.4.4.2 Persons with disabilities***

Historically, people with disabilities have had difficulty obtaining employment in the public service on the basis that they did not meet the necessary 'health requirements' stipulated by the Public Service Act (1994) and its associated regulations and employment codes. This has meant that many teachers and support personnel with disabilities have been prevented from being employed or have been employed only in a temporary capacity in the State education system.

While the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service makes a commitment to removing discriminatory employment practices, these practices are still continuing. Existing staff policies and practices are not only creating barriers to employment for people with disabilities, but also reinforce negative attitudes about the capabilities of those with disabilities.

***Recommendation 6.10: Service conditions: Persons with disabilities***

- Discriminatory employment practices for staff with disabilities must be addressed.

***6.4.4.3 Allowances for educators***

A contentious issue over the past few years has been the payment of allowances to teachers at specialised centres of learning. As all centres of learning and thus all educators will be expected to cater for the full diversity of needs in the learner population, there will be no justification for the continuation of this practice.

***Recommendation 6.11 : Special Allowances***

- Within the context of inclusive learning environments all special allowances should be discontinued, and educators remunerated separately for certain specified duties done after hours as per negotiations in the ELRC.

***6.4.5 New Roles for Education Support Personnel***

Education support personnel will in future not be primarily working with the learner as was the norm previously, but also with parents, with educators, with other staff or with the centre of learning as a whole. Their activities may involve teaching, consulting, advising, assessing, evaluating, monitoring, guiding, organising support, supplying services, developing accessible curricula, training and empowering parents and adopting key roles of leadership and co-ordination.

Education support personnel will need to be skilled in the systems approach and be able to develop partnerships with other agencies in order to take centres of learning through a process of organisational development.

***Recommendation 6.12 : New roles for Education Support Personnel***

- **The roles and functions of education support personnel should be transformed in line with the principles in this document. This would include providing support to all centres of learning (facilitating institutional and curriculum development), supporting educators and parents in assessment and developing appropriate interventions, developing preventative and promotive programmes (e.g. health promoting strategies) and addressing barriers to learning and development through appropriate interventions where the centre-of-learning-based teams have not been able to provide solutions.**
- **Education support personnel should be provided with the necessary reorientation, pre- and in-service training to facilitate the shift in roles and functions outlined above.**

## **6.5 DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF PERSONNEL**

It has been pointed out in various parts of this Report that the primary demands of an inclusive system will necessitate a major focus, at least initially, on the training, re-training and re-orientation of all personnel. It is anticipated that personnel currently attached to the education support services of provincial education departments, together with other personnel with relevant competencies, will play an important part in this training.

In their efforts to meet these needs education support co-ordinators at centre of learning level, regional/district level, as well as provincial and national level, will be expected to identify skilled persons from a broad spectrum of potential service providers. The pool of potential service providers who could be drawn into personnel development will include persons from the open-ended list in Section 6.3.1 and any other persons with the relevant competencies.

### **6.5.1 General Guidelines for development of all personnel**

- Personnel development programmes must be set in the context of improvement of centres of learning in order to achieve the goal of quality education for all learners. The programmes should aim to develop skills in personnel so that they will be able to facilitate the process of making the system responsive to diversity in education, whether this results from racial, cultural, social, ethnic differences, gender, poverty, or disability.
- Training institutions, centre-of-learning clusters, individual centres of learning, non-governmental agencies working with teachers and district departments will need to network to maximise resources.
- Personnel education programmes must ultimately facilitate and lead to cost-effective service delivery and must move the centre of learning system towards being inclusive centres of learning for all.
- Affirmative action must be reflected in personnel development to redress imbalances with respect to race, gender, geographical context and ability (including teachers with disabilities).
- Training of personnel should ensure portability of qualifications, multi-skilling, sustainability, addressing of functional barriers and optimum use of human resources.
- Education and training programmes focusing on overcoming barriers to learning and development in education, should be undertaken within current initiatives at national and provincial levels so that 'barriers' issues are an integral part of general education programmes.

With these guidelines in mind, the following is recommended:

***Recommendation 6.13 : Personnel Development***

- **Aspiring and practising teachers, managers and education support personnel at all levels of education should be equipped to reflect critically on their practice methods and roles in terms of developing an inclusive education system.**

- **An integrated and comprehensive reorientation and retraining plan for all personnel at all levels should be developed to facilitate effective and non-discriminatory teaching and support practices that accommodate learners with diverse needs in all centres of learning. Particular focus should fall on human rights and anti-bias training.**
- **Training institutions should establish appropriate structures for ongoing staff development with a specific focus on equipping personnel with skills and knowledge on how to create an inclusive learning environment, establish inter- and intra-institutional linkages to facilitate access for all learners and address the diverse needs of the learner population.**
- **There should be a review of all current training courses for educators in the light of the NCSNET/NCESS recommendations.**
- **Further investigation into the specific roles and skills required by educators and support providers should be pursued.**

## 6.5.2 Education and Training (all levels)

### 6.5.2.1 Curriculum Development and 'Barriers' Content in Education and Training of Educators at all Levels

Curricula for educators must be relevant and responsive to the economic, social, political and cultural needs in South Africa. They should be learner-orientated and geared towards the development of teachers who are anti-bias and inclusive in their teaching methods. Such an approach requires a critical and informed understanding of the nature of diversity in society and its links to power and privilege and thus the need to remove barriers and create equal opportunities. Educators need to be skilled to accommodate different learning styles and rates of learning.

In developing specific recommendations on how the above can be achieved, it is important to note experiences from other countries which have proved useful, e.g. UNESCO pilot projects which have shown that educators need to be equipped with skills which plan for the class as a whole; to make use of existing resources, for example, the learners themselves; and to make effective use of innovative strategies.

It is also imperative that recognition is given to the need for support to educators involved in learning new practices and implementing changes. In this regard support for teachers must be systematic, ongoing and focused on the institutional context where they work. Training and re-training of educators must be done in such a way that it does not alienate or threaten educators but draws on their strengths.

'Special needs' components within training programmes have historically been dealt with separately, often out of context and generally not viewed as an integral part of the general teacher education curriculum. These components need to be integrated by using existing courses outlined in the COTEP document as plugpoints. For example, Curriculum and Teaching Courses should include components on assistive devices and equipment for learners with disabilities, and Social Theory and Philosophy Courses could have issues such as understanding issues of oppression, marginalisation, labelling and assessment of discriminatory practices within the profession.

Core components which will contribute to the addressing of barriers to learning and development that should be integrated into all pre- and in-service programmes include components on learners who experience barriers to learning and development as this relates to a social rights model, including equality of opportunity, curriculum accessibility, building effective support systems in centres of learning, diversity in education, conflict resolution and mediation, networking for change, self awareness, time and stress management and building health-promotive and inclusive learning environments. Provision should, however, be made for crediting of specific courses which are disability specific and which may be presented by NGOs. This should be done in accordance with NQF prescriptions.

With these guidelines in mind the following are recommended for the training of educators at all levels:

#### **Recommendation 6.14 : Education and Training**

- All pre- and in-service curricula for educators should be organised around a curriculum that confronts issues of inclusive teaching and accommodation of diversity in education and lifeskills education. This should be pursued within the context of COTEP, Teacher Development Units at national and provincial levels, and the National Council for Teacher Policy of the Higher Education Council.
- COTEP should revise the admission criteria for applicants who have disabilities.
- The Department of Education, in consultation with all stakeholders, needs to commission research for firstly, effective infusion of core components in all educator development courses and secondly, the development of appropriate courses and learning materials.

### 6.5.2.2 Teachers with specialised competencies

It is recognised that there is a need for teachers with specialised competencies in general lifeskills education and learning support to address the area of barriers to learning and development in education and training, as well as for resource teachers e.g. teachers who have specialised in specific disabilities who could become mentors and trainers of the former.

Specialised competencies could include:

- Using Braille as a medium of reading and writing
- Using SA Sign Language as a medium of teaching and learning
- Using FM systems in the classroom to accommodate learners who are hard of hearing
- Using augmentative and alternative communication methods with learners who have no or very little speech
- Adapting teaching methods to allow for different paces of learning
- Providing lifeskills and independence training for learners with severe disabilities
- Accommodating learners with severe behavioural difficulties within a learning environment
- Assistive devices (what, how and for whom and maintenance thereof)
- Counselling learners with life-threatening or terminal illnesses
- Addressing learning breakdown that occurs as a result of social problems such as sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse etc.
- Responding to the challenges of learners with high ability
- General lifeskills education

In order to provide for the training of teachers with the above competencies, the following is recommended:

#### **Recommendation 6.15 : Teachers with specialised competencies**

- Teachers wishing to specialise in the area of learning support should preferably have had ordinary teaching experience. Specialised competencies should include the acquisition of skills which will enhance their effectiveness as teachers, facilitate the accommodation of diversity in inclusive learning contexts, and develop capacity to adapt the curriculum to facilitate maximum learning in learners with diverse needs.
- Existing teachers who have specialised competencies (including those currently working in specialised centres of learning) should be given the opportunity to receive further training to equip them to become mentors and trainers of teachers working in all centres of learning. Such training should be undertaken according to norms and standards developed for the provision of resource teachers as part of the education support personnel team.
- Teachers wishing to specialise in the area of Lifeskills Education should be equipped to provide focused learning programmes covering all relevant aspects of lifeskills, and to support other teachers to integrate lifeskills into their learning programmes.
- All specialised competency training programmes provided for by universities, technikons, technical colleges, colleges of education, NGOs, etc. should be recognised provided that such courses are accredited through SAQA in terms of the NQF.

### 6.5.3 Education Support Personnel

There is clear evidence from many parts of the world, from developed and developing contexts, that inclusive education, can only succeed if adequate support is provided to the learner and system as a whole. Any education system requires support to ensure that quality education is provided.

In many countries, including South Africa, support services have been very problem-orientated, and learner focused. There has been a change over the past few years, internationally and locally, however, towards a more preventative and developmental approach, and towards supporting and developing the system. This has resulted in moves towards a more indirect, consultative approach to service delivery focusing on educator and parent training, institutional development strategies and greater involvement of centre-of-learning and community-based support.

In recognising the many challenges facing education support personnel the following is recommended to provide more appropriate support services and increase the pool of skills which could be utilised in the support team:

***Recommendation 6.16 : Education Support Personnel***

- **All education support personnel-related pre-service and in-service training courses should be revised to accommodate the role and function changes resulting from the recommendations emerging from the NCSNET/NCESS.**
- **Personnel must be trained to provide services within a systems perspective which involves 'whole school' and community-based approaches. Training programmes must reflect a shift away from a 'deficit', problem-orientated notion of intervention towards developing support services which aim to foster enabling learning environments through focusing on strengths, competencies and development.**
- **Training courses should integrate components on: intersectoral work, empowerment, capacity building, diversity, human rights, community development and centre-of-learning-based team building and support.**
- **In-service courses should be developed by Education Faculties at training institutions in collaboration with faculties training other personnel who may form part of the education support personnel team (e.g. therapists, social workers, nurses, psychologists). Such courses should be focused towards the development of appropriate education support services rather than profession-specific development. Similarly, there should be a focus on the transference of essential skills and knowledge amongst team members, including community resources such as parents.**
- **Ongoing in-service training of child- and youth-care workers, house-parents and classroom assistants should be brought in line with the NQF and accredited.**
- **SA Sign Language interpreter training should be provided. In this regard existing Sign Language interpreter initiatives should be officially recognised within the NQF framework and earmarked funding allocated for the extension and support of existing training programmes.**

#### **6.5.4 Education management**

Education management development is seen by many as the key to transformation in education. Effective management of the system as well as learning-centre effectiveness, efficiency and relevance is central to the provision of quality education for all.

It is essential that all training and development programmes for governing bodies and education management in general incorporate skills development for accommodating and responding to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development. Specific attention needs to be given to redressing racial, gender and other inequalities in education management development programmes.

The development of leadership in the area of addressing barriers to learning and development is one further important priority in the area of education management development. This is particularly important in the light of

the challenges facing us in the future as we try to build inclusive and supportive learning environments at all levels of education.

With these considerations in mind, the following is proposed:

***Recommendation 6.17 : Education Management Development***

- **The proposed National Institute for Education Management Development should commission research to develop guidelines for the integration of components that address provision for learner diversity and education support as it relates to addressing barriers into all management and development programmes.**
- **Education management at all tiers of governance should attend orientation workshops on the need to accommodate diversity and provide support for all learners, and the management skills needed to facilitate this.**
- **There should be a focus on building the capacity of management at institutions of higher education to raise awareness of issues relating to learner diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development.**

### **6.5.5 Parents**

Parent involvement and family support is essential in the education of children, especially for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. Parents are a valuable resource, which is not always fully acknowledged or utilised. There are parents who play a central role in centres of learning, but often parents are minimally involved. The latter situation appears to occur particularly where parents are disempowered and unsure of their rights and ability. Lack of involvement of parents of learners with disabilities is also often compounded by negative societal attitudes towards disability.

Parent disempowerment in the education of their children is a major issue in South Africa, and needs to be addressed. Most parents have been historically marginalised in the education system. In addition to their own feelings of inadequacy, parent involvement has also been stifled because of the patronising way in which they have often been approached by school and education support personnel. A shift in the attitudes of parents and of school and education support personnel is necessary and needs to be pursued through various educational strategies.

In addition to the above, the rights of parents should be clarified. This includes: due process rights; rights of notification and consent; access to records; and participation in the development of the child's educational programme.

Parents and school personnel should bring the strength of their differences to the joint task of the learner's education. Parents should be involved in planning and local policy making (e.g. through school governing bodies), in the teaching and learning process itself, and in the development of a supportive learning environment for all learners.

Effective parental involvement in the education of their children is a necessity. Parents should be empowered and equipped with the necessary skills to enable them to:

- facilitate learning at home from a very young age
- make informed decisions e.g. about early intervention programmes
- participate actively in the learning of their children by participating in school governance and supporting the child after school
- set goals for their children despite gender or limitations due to disabilities or chronic illness
- become change agents and effective advocates in the struggle for the rights of all children
- participate in development of programmes for educators
- manage and facilitate learning within safe environments in informal day care centres

- access resources (especially in rural areas)
- become peer counsellors to other parents with children who experience barriers to learning
- participate in policy development, assessment and monitoring of equity in education.

**Recommendation 6.18 : Parent empowerment and development**

- **Empowerment and development of parents of learners who experience barriers to learning and development should receive priority attention through support for the development and strengthening of parent organisations as stipulated in the National Programme of Action for Children.**
- **The Department of Education - in consultation with parent organisations - should facilitate a programme for the development of parent empowerment programmes. Emphasis should be on rural contexts and single parents of children who experience barriers to learning and development.**
- **COTEP should include national guidelines for teacher education at all levels that will ensure that all teacher education programmes involve parents of children who experience barriers to learning and development, and activists who have experienced barriers, on all courses to ensure change of attitudes, appropriateness of content and sustainability.**
- **A national parent charter campaign should be launched during 1998/99 to inform parents of their rights and to increase capacity of parents organisations.**

#### 6.5.6 Community resources and NGOs

A *community-based approach* to support service provision emphasises the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the provision of support to learners and the centre of learning. This includes specialists but is focused primarily on resources within the learning community itself (educators, learners, parents and other family members) and resources in the wider community (NGOs, traditional healers, religious organisations, the business sector and volunteers). Support from the wider community is crucial to ensure their ownership of the centres of learning and a sense of responsibility towards learners who come out of these centres.

It was asserted earlier in this chapter that existing resources in the communities are not given sufficient recognition or appropriately used in the provision of support. Community-based resources should also have access to courses which can assist in developing their capacity.

**Recommendation 6.19 : Community Resources**

- **Further research is needed into training courses which can be developed to facilitate the development of community resources. Such research should also focus on how such resources can be used most effectively.**

NGOs have played a central and invaluable role in providing support to centres of learning in South Africa. The areas of 'special needs' and support services have been a major focus and have received major benefit in this regard. This involvement should be supported.

**Recommendation 6.20: NGO Involvement**

- **NGOs with the relevant experience and expertise should be contracted to assist in the development of educators, education support personnel, management and parents in all aspects of curriculum development for pre- and in-service training, course development and presentation as well as for the development of public awareness campaigns.**





## **7. GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING**

### **7.1. INTRODUCTION**

The building of a single, inclusive education system which will redress past inequalities and provide for the needs of all learners, will require committed and sustained resources, both financial and human. The manner in which such resources are organised and managed will have a significant impact on the system's ability to overcome existing barriers to learning and development, enable a broad range of needs to be met and prevent further barriers from causing learning breakdown and exclusion. In order for the vision of the NCSNET/NCESS to be achieved governance structures must facilitate the active participation and commitment of all stakeholders, particularly those at centre of learning level such as parents, learners and educators. The allocation of resources, especially educational funding, must be allocated in such a way that a diversity of needs can be effectively and equitably met and that mechanisms for overcoming and preventing barriers to learning and development can be built up and sustained as a fundamental component of an inclusive education system.

To do this, it is necessary to recognise present inequalities in education, particularly those relating to 'special needs' and support and provide guidelines which are in line with existing Government and Constitutional imperatives. In this regard it is particularly important that cognisance is taken of the following: governance provisions in the S.A. Schools Act; proposals made by the relevant commissions for governance structures and funding priorities in the bands of higher and further education; the proposed changes emanating from the restructuring and transformation of the public sector; and the funding norms and standards recently developed for schools in South Africa. We should also draw on the experience of other countries in this area and note innovative practices in our own country which may provide insights into effective processes for change. In so doing we can begin to provide recommendations on future funding priorities and governance mechanisms to achieve the implementation of an integrated and effective system of education where learning breakdown can be prevented.

### **7.2. GOVERNANCE**

#### **7.2.1 General Principles for Governance at all Levels of Education**

Recognising the barriers and problems which resulted from the manner in which the education system was structured in the past, the following are proposed as broad guidelines to inform the functioning of governance structures for all levels of education and training. These guidelines are premised on imperatives expressed in the Constitution of South Africa, particularly those relating to national/provincial competencies and responsibilities of government, as well as the principles relating to collaborative governance. These guidelines are also drawn from principles informing transformation of the public service and those reflected in the White Papers on Education and Training. The NCSNET/NCESS proposes that the following principles apply:

- All structures responsible for the governance of all aspects of the education system should facilitate the delivery of educational services which put learners and the community first. In so doing governance should enhance community ownership of centres of learning and ensure that all service providers, at all levels of educational management and delivery, remain accountable to their consumers. Such accountability involves transparency in the running and management of the system as well as in the provision of timely, accessible and accurate information. The public, particularly local communities at centre of learning level, must be encouraged and supported to participate in policy making, particularly in the area of needs assessment and planning to overcome barriers to learning and development.
- All governance structures, particularly those at centre of learning level must facilitate the development of constructive partnerships amongst such governance structures, the centre of learning and the wider community. Such partnerships should aim to enhance the quality of education and training available to learners. Such partnerships should facilitate the active and equal participation of all members of the partnership. A range of partnerships, including financial and service delivery partnerships, should be explored.
- Good human resource management and career development practices should be supported to maximise human potential with the aim of effective governance. Employment and personnel management practices must be based on ability, non-discrimination and the need to redress the imbalances of the past and achieve broad representation. With regard to human resources, governance structures should play an enabling rather

than a controlling function. In this way governance practices should be goal-orientated rather than rule bound within a framework where necessary control mechanisms are in place to ensure effective organisational management and accountability.

- Within the framework of a rights-based discourse on education and respect for diversity, decision making regarding the needs and priorities of learners must be as close to centre of learning level as possible. Minimum norms and standards for all aspects of educational governance must guide all structures and processes of decision making.
- Governance structures and processes of decision making should be flexible to enhance easy and rapid interaction, collaboration and communication between the various components of the system.
- The addressing of a diversity of learner and system needs and the development of mechanisms and processes to enable learners and the system to overcome barriers must be infused into all processes of decision making and areas of responsibility for effective governance.

### **Learner Representative Councils**

The S.A. Schools Act (1996) stipulates that learners from grade 8 and higher should form representative councils and should be represented on school governing bodies. This Act states that public schools for 'learners with special needs' may be exempted from establishing a representative council of learners, and learners of eighth grade and higher should be included on governing bodies only "*if reasonably practicable*".

Within the context of the framework adopted in this Report, as well as the policy guidelines provided in the Green Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy for South Africa, this is problematic. While exceptions may have to be considered in some circumstances, a general regulation that allows some schools to opt out of their responsibility to ensure learner representivity constitutes discrimination, which in this case is on the basis of disability. It is imperative that *all* centres of learning develop representative structures of learners and provide learner representation on school governing bodies, unless the school makes a special application to regulate otherwise.

With these considerations in mind the following is recommended;

#### ***Recommendation 7.1: Learner Representative Councils***

**Representative councils of learners must be developed at all centres of learning. In line with the provisions of the S.A. Schools Act (1996) as defined in Section 11 (1) all schools must provide for learner councils and learner representation on school governing bodies. Should a school wish to seek exemption from these provisions, a special application must be made to the provincial MEC. Such an application will only be considered if it has the support of both learners and parents in the school. The option of learners with severe cognitive disabilities being represented through advocates should be accommodated**

### **7.2.3 The Composition, Functions, Roles and Capacity of School Governing Bodies**

The S.A. Schools Act (1996) currently stipulates different membership requirements for 'ordinary' and 'special' schools.

The major differences between the membership of governing bodies in 'ordinary' or 'special' schools relates to: (a) membership of parents, (b) membership of learners, and (c) inclusion of 'sponsoring body' representation, people with disabilities or organisational representation, and 'special needs' expertise in 'ordinary' schools that provide education for 'learners with special needs'.

If the principles for effective and appropriate governance are considered, particularly those which will enhance the meeting of a diverse range of learner and system needs, as well as addressing barriers to learning, there can be no justification for the exclusion of any categories of learners or parents from any governance structure. Enhancement of constructive partnerships through collaborative governance and community ownership of all centres of learning should be encouraged.

It has been suggested that one of the reasons why the proviso of *"if reasonably practicable"* with regard to the representation of parents on governing bodies was included relates to the experiences of some specialised schools that have found it difficult to involve parents in the life of the school because so many of them live very far from the centre of learning. While this problem is acknowledged, it is also argued, particularly on the part of parents, that if education and support for children is provided in a local context, this would not be a problem, and that past non-involvement of parents has been directly related to their disempowerment in the education system as a whole and the inadequate provision of educational facilities. If the issues of local accessibility and empowerment are addressed, parents of learners who experience barriers to learning and development would be treated as any other parent in the system, and provided with full representation on governing bodies. Most importantly, the legislation should aim to provide minimum standards for appropriate governance in any context. All attempts should be made to strive to meet such standards and any situation where this was impossible would be regarded as the exception rather than the norm and dealt with as a specific case for careful consideration.

Other differences in the membership lists relate primarily to the inclusion of representatives of the historically defined 'sponsoring bodies' at specialised schools and expertise in the area of 'special needs' at governance level. However, organisations and bodies providing assistance to centres of learning, including, for example, churches and private businesses should be involved in the development of *all* centres of learning. Such development may involve the allocation of financial resources to the centre, but could also include a range of other assistance, such as training of educators, the running of educational programmes and other curriculum support. It is argued that the most effective manner for such involvement to take place is through the forming of constructive partnerships between the centre of learning and the outside body. Similarly, expertise in different learner needs, for example the needs of blind learners, should be available on *all* governing bodies to ensure that all centres of learning develop their capacity to address all needs and provide mechanisms to support such needs and overcome barriers.

With these important considerations in mind the following recommendations with regard to governance structures at schools is proposed:

***Recommendation 7.2: Membership of Governing Bodies***

- **The governing body of any public school (including both ordinary and specialised centres of learning) should comprise the membership of a governing body as outlined by section 23 of the S.A. Schools Act (1996) This means that governing bodies at all schools should be made up of representatives from parents, educators, learners in the eighth grade or higher, members of staff at the school who are not educators as well as the principal. Where external bodies or organisations are involved through constructive partnerships in the development of the school, the school should have the option to include representation from these bodies on the governing body as co-opted or voting members. The nature and extent of this representation should be decided by the governing body, with the non-negotiable proviso that parents must remain in the majority on all governing bodies. Such representation will be specifically aimed at enhancing and developing an enabling environment for effective learning and teaching.**
- **In order to ensure that all governing bodies have the capacity to prevent learning breakdown and accommodate a diversity of needs within the centre of learning, it is recommended that all governing bodies appoint a sub-committee to focus on overcoming barriers to learning and development. The main competencies of such a committee would be to monitor barriers to learning and development which arise, to facilitate the development of enabling mechanisms to overcome these barriers, prevent learning breakdown and develop capacity for meeting diverse needs. This committee would ensure community participation in addressing barriers to learning and development by ensuring representation of consumer organisations on the committee. The chairperson of this committee would be a permanent member of the governing body and would ensure that regular reports from the committee are submitted to the governing body.**

**7.2.4. Governance Structures at National and Provincial Level**

The principles which apply to the governance of education at centre of learning level should also apply to governance structures at national and provincial level. It is critical that all structures involved in governance and management of all components of the education system have the capacity to respond to diversity, provide a supportive learning environment for all learners, as well as to minimise, remove and prevent learning breakdown. It is recognised that such capacity will need to be developed within all sectors and levels of the existing systems of governance at national and provincial level. With these considerations in mind, the following is recommended:

***Recommendation 7.3 Infused Capacity to Respond to Diversity***

Each section (for example, ECD, Curriculum, Finance) of the National Department of Education and all nine provincial departments of education must develop the capacity to meet a diverse range of learner and system needs. Such capacity will involve the development of policy and mechanisms to facilitate addressing barriers to learning development and the prevention of learning breakdown. The following are regarded as the key competencies required by each section to meet the above imperatives:

- Knowledge of the full range of needs likely to be found in any learning context as well as the nature and extent of the barriers which presently exist or may arise which would lead to learning breakdown.
- Knowledge and expertise on how to facilitate the development of effective teaching and learning for learners with specific disabilities, including the provision of appropriate assistive devices and the allocation of additional resources according to the key indicators of need.
- Knowledge on how to develop the capacity of the system at all levels, from national to centre of learning level, to address diversity and overcome barriers to learning and development.
- Knowledge of the full range of support services and enabling mechanisms that could be accessed to provide support to learners and the system.
- The ability to facilitate intersectoral collaboration with other government departments and the establishment of constructive partnerships and working relationships with other stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations and consumer organisations. This should lead to the facilitation of community ownership of centres of learning and the provision of community-based support.
- Vigilance to monitor and ensure that learners are not marginalised or excluded because of disability, sexual preference, race, gender, religion, culture, difference in learning style or pace, language or particular social or economic circumstances.

The competencies described above may be developed and reflected in a number of ways according to the particular circumstances and structure of the provincial or national department concerned. While the need for such flexibility is recognised it is imperative that every section of the departments ensures that within their ranks they have the capacity to fulfil these competencies. The following is recommended as a practical guideline for developing and maintaining this capacity

***Recommendation 7.4 Dedicated Posts***

Each section of the national and provincial departments should make provision for a full post, part of a post or more than one post which is dedicated to addressing barriers to learning and ensuring the accommodation of diversity. The responsibilities associated with these posts should relate to the development of the section's capacity to fulfil the competencies described above. People with disabilities or other learners who have experienced barriers to learning and development in the past should be considered for employment in these posts.

***Recommendation 7.5 Co-ordinating Structure***

It is further recommended that a co-ordinating structure dedicated to addressing diversity, preventing learning breakdown and removing barriers to learning and development should be established in each department of education. Representatives from each of the sections of the

department (the 'dedicated' posts) would form the core of this structure. Representation from relevant stakeholder organisations should be ensured. The role of the structure would be to co-ordinate, ensuring the cohesion and alignment of services. The 'dedicated' posts and the structure as a whole would aim to ensure that the needs of all learners are not marginalised, underplayed or overlooked and that barriers to learning and development are addressed at all bands of education. This co-ordinating structure should be accountable directly to the Head of Department with its status at a level in the department which is in keeping with its responsibilities, for example, at senior management level.

#### ***Recommendation 7.6 National and Provincial Education and Training Forums***

In order to ensure that accommodating diversity and overcoming barriers to learning is regarded as a priority within the process of educational transformation, it is recommended that all provincial and national education and training forums set up to monitor and facilitate effective education provision develop the capacity to address these concerns. Such capacity will be created through the representation of appropriate consumer organisations, such as disabled peoples organisations, on these forums and identifying the monitoring of barriers to learning and development as a key competency.

## **7.3 FUNDING**

### **7.3.1 Guidelines for a Future Funding Model**

#### ***7.3.1.1 Policy Imperatives***

It was noted in Chapter Three that the Constitution clearly makes provision for basic education as a fundamental right for all citizens. Additionally, the equality clause in the Constitution provides that all learners have a right to the provision of equal education and that in exercising this right they should be free from all forms of discrimination. Most importantly, this clause in the Constitution further recognises the need for redress towards overcoming past inequities and addressing previous disadvantage.

Such imperatives are further developed in the S.A. Schools Act (1996). It has as one of its objectives, a uniform system of funding for schools which integrates the commitment to redress and creating equity. In this respect, recognition is given to addressing redress and equity in a framework of efficiency and achieving quality. The Act states: *"The State must fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and the redress of past inequalities in education provision"*.

The Act also makes provision for the funding of schools to be supplemented by moneys collected for the school by the governing body. The Act therefore makes provision for external funding and funding partnerships. The Act states:

*"A governing body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school."*

The provision for funding of schools has been further defined and regulated through the Government's recently published discussion document entitled 'Draft National Norms and Standards for School Funding in Terms of the South African Schools Act, no 84 of 1996'. This document sets out guidelines and minimum standards for State funding of schools in accordance with imperatives noted in the S.A. Schools Act, such as ensuring compulsory education for learners between the ages of seven and fifteen and ensuring the allocation of resources according to the principles of equity and redress. The document organises the funding of public schools according to categories of costs which are associated with the running and maintenance of centres of learning and explains

how allocations to meet these costs will be applied in line with the imperatives referred to above. The document also provides for fee exemptions in public schools as well as subsidies to independent schools.

Recognition of the principles of equal rights and equal opportunity being directly related to the manner in which resources are organised and distributed is to be found in a number of international policies and instruments which have guided the work of the NCSNET/NCESS. UNESCO isolates resources and funding as a key area for investigation in monitoring the meeting of 'special needs' throughout the world. The need for countries to reprioritise resources for education for 'learners with special education needs' was addressed by the Salamanca Conference. Such prioritisation is also highlighted as key to the creation of equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for persons with disabilities. Rule 25 states: *"The principle of equal rights implies that the needs of each and every individual are of equal importance, that those needs must be made the basis for the planning of societies and that all resources must be employed in such a way as to ensure that every individual has equal opportunity for participation"*.

### **7.3.2.1 General Funding for All Levels of Education**

The NCSNET/NCESS's terms of reference specify that attention must be paid to all levels of education. Recognising that a need exists for all these levels to be addressed, it is imperative that financing to address barriers to learning and development, as well as preventing learning breakdown, must be fully integrated into general financial planning and allocation directed at the following levels of the education system:

- Early Childhood Development
- General Education and Training
- Further Education and Training
- Higher Education
- Adult Education

### **7.3.2.2 Flexibility**

The NCSNET/NCESS has recognised that 'special needs' refers to the need for strategies to minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning. Resources must be organised and provided in such a way that transformation of all levels and components of the system takes place. This includes provision of resources for the diverse needs among the learner population and the provision of necessary mechanisms to prevent and overcome barriers to learning and development.

If a diversity of needs is to be met through appropriate organisation of funding, then the model must be flexible enough to provide for differentiated programmes and access options as well as to respond to needs which may arise over time. The vision clearly places responsibility for meeting the diverse needs of learners on the general education system and views the education system as an agency of development, change and transformation. The funding model must therefore contribute to the transformation of the education system as a whole and contribute to the creation of quality education for all learners.

### **7.3.2.3 Redress and Equity**

It has been argued throughout this Report that the issue of redress and creating equal opportunities are priorities if the needs of all learners in the country are to be adequately met and their right to education realised. Government policy, particularly in the Draft document on National Norms and Standards for School Funding (1997), makes it clear that funding and the allocation of resources remains a key mechanism for addressing previous disadvantage and achieving equity. The funding model must therefore be designed to facilitate redress, particularly to overcome urban/rural disparities and to facilitate the equal integration of learners previously excluded from or marginalised in the system. Moreover, the funding model should lead to the transformation of the education system into one which accommodates the needs of all learners and ensures barrier-free access for all learners in all centres of learning.

### **7.3.2.4 Holistic Development through Constructive Partnerships**

The NCSNET/NCESS recognises the importance of holistic development of learners and support services and a holistic approach to institutional transformation. In explaining this principle it is argued that all aspects of the learner and the system need to be addressed through partnerships between different government departments and partnerships between all stakeholders including parents, external funding sources such as sponsoring bodies or private businesses, as well as a range of community resources. In this regard, a funding model needs to facilitate community involvement in centres of learning and effective intersectoral collaboration needs to be properly resourced and sustained. It is also imperative that resources are allocated for the empowerment of parents in order to ensure their active participation in the education and training of their children.

### **7.3.3 Proposed Model for Funding to Address Barriers to Learning and Accommodate Diversity**

#### ***Recommendation 7.7: Model for Funding to Address Barriers to Learning and Accommodate Diversity***

##### **PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE FUNDING MODEL**

Funding for overcoming barriers to learning and development, preventing learning breakdown and meeting a diversity of learner and system needs, must form part of the funding model developed for the education system as a whole in South Africa. Thus, integration, alignment and coherence with the funding of ECD, GET, FET, Adult Education and Higher Education must be ensured.

The allocation of funds should mirror the approach outlined in the Draft document on National Norms and Standards for School Funding (1997). This approach distributes 70% of resources to 40% of the most needy.

The model will reflect percentages and not amounts. This will ensure that, whatever the size of the national and provincial budgets, proportional allocations for overcoming barriers to learning and development, preventing learning breakdown and meeting a diversity of learner and system needs will be a permanent feature of all budgets.

Conditional grants should be the mechanism to ensure that policy priorities are dealt with and that the funds are spent on the activity in question. The implementation of conditional grants should avoid perverse effects e.g. wealthier provinces should not be the only beneficiaries.

1% of learners in any system will require cost-intensive additional resources engendered by a range of organic disabilities and impairments. The level of additional resources required will be related to the impact these disabilities and impairments have on the learner's access to the curriculum and support. This impact will be ascertained via Learner Profiles based on Key Indicators of Need for Additional Resources. A guaranteed percentage allocation needs to be set aside to access additional resources to provide support for these learners.

All current "specialised schools" will be transferred to Programme 2 of the Education Budget so that a unified, integrated provisioning of schools can occur. This will entail the dis-establishment of Programme 4 of the Education Budget.

Decisions relating to the allocation of funds to centres of learning should be made by the office directly responsible for the supervision and monitoring of such centres of learning. This is likely to be at District level.

##### **OPERATIONAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL**

- A Conditional Grant of between 2.5% and 10% of the total budget of Education Departments needs to be set aside for overcoming barriers to learning and development, preventing learning breakdown and meeting a diversity of learner and system needs. Each Department will decide upon the percentage, bearing in mind its particular context, priorities and policy thrusts, however, the chosen percentage should not be below 4%



- From the Conditional grant, an allocation amounting to at least 2.5% of the total budget of the Education Department should be reserved for the provision of cost intensive additional resources and support for the 1% of learners with organic disabilities and impairments.
- Education Departments would distribute the Conditional Grant amongst their Districts using the number of learners per district (spanning all bands) as the basis for a per capita allocation per district.
- Centres of learning will be provided with the agreed minimum allocation appropriate for the particular band. e.g. the application of ELRC post provisioning scales, distribution of basic allocations to schools as per the School Funding Norms.
- The provisioning of support to learners who may require cost-intensive additional resources engendered by a range of organic disabilities and impairments will be made on the basis of the Learner Profiles based on Key Indicators of Need for Additional Resources

***Recommendation 7.8: Infused system of funding***

There must be an infused system of funding which ensures the meeting of needs and the provision of appropriate support to all learners and across all levels and components of the education system.

***Recommendation 7.9: Conditional Grant for Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development.***

A Conditional Grant for overcoming barriers to learning and development, preventing learning breakdown and meeting diverse needs must be located in the overall education and training budget allocated each year to Education Departments at national and provincial spheres. This will ensure that moneys for these specific responsibilities will be included in the education budget. It is assumed that the overall allocation to Education Departments will be based on the number of learners in the province and appropriate resolutions in the ELRC. The allocation of such a Conditional Grant to centres of Higher Education should be ensured by the Department of Education (National)

Each Department of Education (National and Provincial) must introduce a Conditional Grant as a percentage of their education and training budgets for the purpose of overcoming barriers to learning and development. The percentage allocated to this Conditional Grant will be determined by each Education Department but must amount to between 4% and 10% of their budget for education and training. Thus the Conditional Grant for Department A may be 6% of the budget for education and training, whereas in Department B the allocation may be 10%.

The Conditional Grant allocation must provide for the funding of a range of levels of need for additional resources across all bands of Education.

This model of percentage allocations should be applied to the distribution of the Conditional Grant from provinces to districts, down to centre of learning level.

Districts should devolve the Conditional Grant to centres of learning, based on the funding norms and standards which are based on imperatives such as redress, promoting equity and facilitating the development of district and community resources. For "schools", the distribution of the Conditional Grant to centre of learning level would take place according to the process proposed in the Draft National Norms and Standards for School Funding in terms of the S.A. Schools Act (1996)

The key indicators of need which will be used to access the additional resources will include the following: mobility, fine motor skills, expressive communication, receptive communication, safety, challenging behaviour, frequency of need, hearing, vision, medical needs and cognitive skills. The process of developing the profile of need according to these indicators will be a simple process and

will ensure the active involvement of parents, educators and support providers. It will be reviewed on a yearly basis. It is recommended that where such a profile indicates that a learner will thrive in a specialised learning context, such a decision should rest with the Department of Education concerned and should be made in consultation with the parents as well as the relevant educators and service providers.

Each province must develop a framework which will guide regional / district offices and centres of learning in developing programmes for optimal use of the Conditional Grant. The framework should guide the region / district in developing a strategic plan for the distribution of the Conditional Grant. The framework should include effective monitoring mechanisms

With regard to schools, it is recommended that the Conditional Grant allocation be primarily used for the following purposes:

- the development of a support team based at the centre of learning (CLBT) which develops the capacity of the centre of learning to respond to the identified diverse needs of learners within the centre of learning.
- to ensure consultation with educators and parents in designing possible programmes for effective utilisation of the Conditional Grant e.g. enlisting the services of teacher aides and Sign Language interpreters
- the provision of other enabling mechanisms such as assistive devices, specialised equipment and learning materials
- in-service training of educators and support personnel
- other needs identified

It is further recommended that a portion of the Conditional Grant be used for the development of district resources, such as district support centres, which can be accessed by all centres of learning where necessary.

***Recommendation 7.10: Infusion of Provincial Education Budgets***

It is recommended that the integration of funding at provincial level will facilitate the introduction of the Conditional Grant by incorporating Programme 4 into Programme 2 of Vote 6. Thus all schools will receive the basic allocation in terms of the Norms and Standards for School Funding which is drawn from Programme 2. The Conditional Grant allocation for addressing barriers to learning and supporting learners who have been identified via the Key Indicators of need for additional resources will be allocated across all programmes on a pro-rata basis.

***Recommendation 7.11: Conditional Grant for Higher Education***

In order to ensure that all levels/bands of education are equipped to overcome barriers to learning and development and to provide additional resources according to Indicators of Need, it is recommended that the funding model used for the provision of Higher Education Centres of Learning be underpinned by the same principles, operational procedures and processes that apply to the other bands of education. Thus a replication of the Conditional Grant process to the one recommended for the other bands of education should apply to Higher Education.

***Recommendation 7.12: Earmarked Funding***

It is recommended that over and above the Conditional Grant described above, both national and provincial governments should set aside an Earmarked Fund for the provision of specific

programmes designed to facilitate the promotion of effective *enabling mechanisms* to prevent learning breakdown, overcome barriers and meet the needs of diverse learners.

Such funding should be used for well-designed and structured programmes which have clear objectives and time-frames, e.g. a programme to provide in-service training to assist educators to deal with diversity among learners or a parent empowerment programme. These funds should not be used to pay salaries of additional personnel.

It is recommended that this level of funding could facilitate the appropriate and effective use of international aid through donor funding as well as partnerships between the government and the private sector. Such funding should also be used to redress past inequalities and achieve equity.

It is proposed that immediate priorities for seeking and using donor funding should include the following: increasing access to educational opportunities within local communities for out-of-school children and youth; increasing educational opportunities within the present system for all learners; providing assistive devices and developing appropriate learning materials; increasing employment and social opportunities through more appropriate vocational and lifeskills training; ensuring that all centres of learning are made physically accessible to all learners and that demonstration projects indicating the use of 'best practice' should be supported and strengthened.

#### ***Recommendation 7.13: Funding Accountability***

An accountable system of monitoring must be put in place to ensure that funding allocated to address barriers to learning and development and creating enabling mechanisms is appropriately used. A system of regular reporting and auditing of funds should be built into the monitoring system. This monitoring should ensure that no learners are neglected owing to barriers such as negative attitudes, misuse or non-allocation of funds.

#### ***Recommendation 7.14: Funding Partnerships***

An effective and accountable system of partnership funding between the state and external funding sources must be developed in consultation with all stakeholders. The nature of the partnership should be guided by the S.A. Schools Act and other relevant legislation regulating other bands of education.

Where provision of support (e.g. assistive devices) is related directly to the teaching and learning process, this should be funded by the departments of education from the Conditional Grant. Where the support falls outside of this, this should be the responsibility of the Departments of Health and/or Welfare.

## **8. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS FOR: THE DIFFERENT BANDS OF EDUCATION GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT (1996)**

### **8.1. INTRODUCTION**

The key purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of recommendations of this Report in terms of their implications for each of the *bands of education*. It is hoped that this will facilitate a focused understanding and response for stakeholders in each of these bands. The main text of the Report tends to focus on all bands unless indicated otherwise, but often overemphasises the schooling phases at the expense of others. In order to ensure that all phases of lifelong learning address diverse needs and barriers to learning and development, all bands need to consider these recommendations in their future development.

This chapter also provides a summary of the implications of the recommendations for *national and provincial departments of education*. It is hoped that this summary will facilitate understanding and implementation of the recommendations concerned.

In the final section of this chapter, a summary of implications for the existing *S.A.Schools Act (1996)* is outlined in the form of recommendations for specific amendments. It should be noted, however, that these recommendations do not encompass the full set of amendments that will emerge from the proposals in this Report. Once the Department of Education has examined and accepted the proposals, policy and legislative procedures will be pursued accordingly. It is hoped that this will include the development of a separate Act as well as amendments to the S.A.Schools Act (1996) and other relevant legislation.

The summaries presented below will be presented under the categories developed in Chapter Four (The Framework for the Future) and used also in Chapter Nine (Strategic Implementation Plan). This means that the broad strategies linked to the framework principles will form the basis for highlighting key points.

### **8.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

It should be noted that Early Childhood Development (ECD) comprises 0-9 years. In Education planning the 0-5-year age group is often not adequately addressed, and the link between the 6-9 phase and the previous years is often not adequately noted and addressed. The focus on overcoming and preventing barriers to learning and development - in particular, on early identification and intervention - is pertinent to the full ECD age range.

It is also important to stress that education and various forms of support during this phase of development is a crucial element in achieving an integrated and inclusive environment where all learners can participate to their maximum potential.

#### **8.2.1 Transformation: Developing an Integrated System**

ECD initiatives at national, provincial and local levels that are spearheading transformation in this sector should include issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development. In particular the ECD pilot project should be enriched and expanded to include ECD centres and informal day centres which are already responding to diversity through developing an inclusive environment, and ECD training centres that have already developed inclusive practices should provide capacity to the initiative. Second, the National Interim ECD Accreditation Committee should co-opt members, including representatives from the national parents' movement, to facilitate the inclusion of young children who experience barriers to learning and development more effectively in the development of interim guidelines, standards, assessment, certification and recognition of prior learning.

The foundation for inclusive education should be formed in the ECD band. Particular attention therefore needs to be given to integrated settings where all young children can learn together and where anti-bias training can start.

Closer links need to be formed between the formal and informal sectors. Informal day care centres for young children with disabilities in particular need to be supported to develop capacity in these centres which will enable

them to integrate other young children from the community, to develop sound educational programmes and to provide early intervention to learners who experience barriers to learning and development.

It is furthermore important to note that the reception and foundation years of formal schooling is incorporated in the concept of ECD. It is therefore of particular importance that centres of learning in the GET band form links with ECD centres in the community to foster collaboration, in particular in terms of the development of educational programmes and continuous assessment practices.

Integration also means *infusing 'special needs' and support* throughout the system. This means that ECD sections of departments of education should include the 'dedicated' competencies that enable the section to address diverse needs and barriers to learning and development.

### **8.2.2 Barrier-free Physical and Psychosocial Environment**

Safe environments in which young children can explore and develop are particularly important, especially in the light of the fact that a large number of ECD centres are found in backyards.

Local government authorities play a particularly important role in monitoring child care facilities, as well as ensuring that the Building Regulations are adhered to in terms of buildings on stands allocated for educational purposes.

### **8.2.3 Flexible Curriculum**

The central principles of Curriculum 2005, particularly insofar as they address diverse needs and barriers to learning and development, are relevant at this level. In particular, the following issues should be considered.

All learners (3-9) should be provided with lifeskills education relevant to their particular developmental phase, and communications skills should form a major part of this. Some learners with disabilities require particular lifeskills orientation (e.g. mobility training), and basic communication skills (e.g. Sign Language and AAC). The medium of teaching and learning must be suitable for the learner concerned (e.g. home-language, Sign Language). Classroom management should include a major focus on facilitating integration and mutual respect. A great deal of negative stereotyping relating to personal differences can be prevented at this age if the appropriate atmosphere and socialisation is provided. Assistive devices must be available to those learners who require them.

Strategies to facilitate transition from ECD programmes to school should be pursued. This is particularly important for learners who experience barriers to learning and development.

*Parents* should continue to play a major role in the development, governance, and operation of ECD programmes. *ECD educators* should work closely with the parents to provide a co-caring process that facilitates a 'home-school' congruence. Both central partners in this should be equipped to address the diverse needs of the learners in the programme, and address barriers to learning and development. *Learners* themselves should be encouraged in peer-education or child-to-child approaches to teaching and learning, and should have advocates to represent their needs at governance level if necessary (e.g. representation from a relevant DPO).

### **8.2.4 Human Resource Development**

Educator:learner ratios should be lowered in the reception and foundation years to allow for more flexibility in responding to diversity in the classroom and enable the educators to develop strategies and mechanisms in overcoming barriers to learning and development.

Development programmes for parents, educators and other care-givers in ECD programmes should be provided to ensure that they are equipped to manage the system and teaching so that diversity as well as barriers to learning and development are addressed. This should be provided through non-formal community-based programmes as well as through further and higher education institutions and departments of education, within

the NOF framework. Modules on how to address diversity and barriers to learning and development, and in particular, anti-bias, democracy, and human rights education, should be included in existing ECD training courses. Education support personnel should also be provided with knowledge and skills to address needs at ECD level.

### **8.2.5 Intersectoral Collaboration**

The ECD band constitutes a particular challenge to *intersectoral collaboration*. It is clear that the Departments of Education, Health and Welfare need to work co-operatively around this area. It is imperative that clarity about accountability and responsibility, and therefore decisions about which department should be the 'lead' department in terms of programmes and funding should be reached as soon as possible. It is assumed that the Health and Welfare Departments would take responsibility for 0-3 year olds. While Education, Health and Welfare would need to collaborate to provide services for the 3-6 year phase, it is recommended that Education be the 'lead' department for this phase. The Education Department should assume responsibility for all education-related activities and programmes at ECD level - wherever they occur (including home-based programmes for learners with disabilities) - within such a co-operative approach. Provinces should include decisions around 'lead' departments and 'supporting' departments, responsibilities and accountability in the Provincial Plans of Action for Children and should allocate budgets accordingly.

In addition to interdepartmental co-operation, intersectoral collaboration at this level should include a high level of community involvement. This includes volunteers, parents and other guardians, community organisations, community workers, traditional healers, specialist services (through district support centres or other available channels), business, religious organisations, and so on.

### **8.2.6 A Community-Based Support System**

ECD programmes have developed within and out of community support systems. A *community-based support system* therefore already exists within many ECD programmes. These strengths should be supported and learnings shared to shape local and national policy and practice. Further development of such support systems should be progressively developed, drawing on all existing resources. Various district support facilities should be expected to provide support to ECD programmes so that their capacity to provide centre-of-learning-based support is developed. ECD programmes in disadvantaged and rural areas should form a particular focus in initial developments. ECD sections in the national and provincial departments of education should give direction, provide support, and monitor these developments.

### **8.2.7 Prevention and Development: Early Identification and Intervention**

Early identification and intervention and other forms of *prevention* are particularly important at this phase of lifelong learning where much potential damage can be prevented. A major focus should be on identifying and addressing medical, psychological, and social problems. Learning difficulties experienced within ECD programmes should also be identified and addressed. A major focus for certain learners with disabilities at this age would be to provide communication and other lifeskills education. This would include both receptive and expressive communication skills (e.g. for Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and non-speaking learners), mobility skills (e.g. for learners with physical disabilities), as well as general personal and social skills. The concept of '*health promotion*' is also important for this phase. In this regard, the 'health promoting school' concept could be very usefully pursued within the ECD sector. This would facilitate the development of a safe and supportive caring and learning environment for the learners, educators, parents, and other care-givers.

### **8.2.8 Funding**

The *funding* model outlined in Chapter Seven would include ensuring that funding is available to address diverse needs and barriers to learning and development at this level. A percentage of the ECD budget should therefore be allocated to addressing diversity and minimising, removing and, particularly, preventing barriers to learning and development.

## **8.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **8.3.1 Transformation: Developing an Integrated System**

Two major national initiatives which should 'infuse' the recommendations of this investigation are Curriculum 2005 and the COLTS programme. Other national, provincial and local initiatives that aim to transform any aspect of this level of education should also take cognisance of the proposals in this Report.

All schools should develop their capacity to provide education within an inclusive and supportive learning environment where mutual respect is developed - minimising, removing and preventing barriers to learning and development where possible. Various enabling mechanisms should be in place to facilitate curriculum and institutional transformation and provide additional support to learners who need it, irrespective of whether they are in specialised or ordinary centres of learning.

All schools should form part of an inclusive system of education that facilitates mobility between learning contexts and programmes that structure opportunities for diverse learners to learn, work and play together. Existing specialised centres of learning have a central role in this process, enabling other centres of learning to develop their capacity to provide a welcoming and educationally appropriate learning environment.

A range of centres of learning offering diversity in terms of curriculum and mechanisms to address barriers to learning and development should be available. The right to choice of where to attend school should be exercised by the parent and/or learner (where appropriate) in consultation with the relevant education and support personnel. Within the parameters of the Constitution and broader education policy and legislation, a range of support and education opportunities should be available - irrespective of where the learner chooses to receive her/his education, whether it be in a specialised or ordinary learning context. It is expected that only a small percentage would require to be accommodated in specialised centres of learning. It is, however, important that these contexts develop capacity to accommodate diversity and build partnerships with surrounding schools and community.

In the transition phase learners who are currently outside the system should be accommodated in ordinary centres of learning wherever possible. These centres should be developed to accommodate diverse needs and address barriers to learning and development as they are confronted with these. Enabling mechanisms must be provided to centres of learning to facilitate this process. While most learners with disabilities and other needs would be able to be accommodated in ordinary centres of learning, the small percentage who require high levels of support should be accommodated in existing specialised learning contexts. Where learners cannot be accommodated within a school, home- and community-based programmes should be provided. Learners who are currently in specialised centres of learning should not be moved if this would interrupt their learning negatively. This would have to be evaluated through transformed assessment processes. Lastly, while provincial capacity is being built, interprovincial arrangements should facilitate access of learners who require specialised programmes if the education and support required cannot be accommodated locally. All provinces should eventually build sufficient capacity to cater for all learners.

With regard to departmental structures, integration implies that all sections of the departments of education that focus on general education and training should develop their capacity to address diversity in the learner population and minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development. This means that 'dedicated' posts should be developed in each of these sections, co-ordinated by a formal structure accountable to the Head of Department.

### **8.3.2 Barrier-free Physical and Psychosocial Environment**

All new centres of learning should be built according to *building* regulations that ensure accessibility to all learners. This means that where new schools are being built, or where classrooms are added, regulations relating to barrier-free access should be enforced. Existing schools should be renovated as this becomes financially viable. Sufficient schools in each district or equivalent geographical area should be renovated within the building regulations referred to above to ensure that learners with physical disabilities have access to schooling in their local context. This should progressively include all schools so that the widest choice of school is available to all learners.

In order to do the above and develop an appropriate psychosocial environment of learning, existing initiatives aimed at facilitating 'whole-school' *organisational development* aimed at the development of quality education should be compelled to include issues relating to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development.

### **8.3.3 Flexible Curriculum**

All aspects of the curriculum should be reviewed and developed to ensure that issues pertaining to diversity and barriers to learning and development are addressed. This means that the Curriculum 2005 process needs to urgently address the broad recommendations in this Report, ensuring that all aspects of this new curriculum are developed in such a way as to ensure that that diverse needs are addressed. This includes careful examination of outcomes for learners with severe intellectual disabilities and other particular learner needs.

There should be a strong emphasis on lifeskills education (including democracy and human rights education), vocational orientation, and literacy and language development within learning programmes; provision of an appropriate medium of teaching and learning, including second-language support; flexibility in the management and teaching process, and facilitation of a sense of belonging and worth of all learners; ensuring that the need for and provision of assistive devices is addressed; and ensuring flexibility of assessment of outcomes.

Transition from school to work and further education should be a focus for this band of education and training, particularly in the latter grades. Existing and new strategies to facilitate this transition - particularly for learners with disabilities - should be pursued.

*Parents* should play a major role in the development, governance, and provision of education during this phase of lifelong learning. *Educators* should be centrally involved in the development and running of an educator-driven school-based team to provide support to learners and the school as needed. Their role in the classroom needs to focus on managing the learning programmes of the learners for which they are responsible. This includes assessing the needs of learners and providing a flexible programme to accommodate all needs, drawing on the resources of the learners themselves. Facilitating an inclusive, welcoming classroom environment should be a central task to enable mutual respect among learners to develop. Peer-education or 'child-to-child' approaches should be adopted in the school and classroom to optimise the resources of the *learners* themselves in pursuing educational goals and providing support to one another.

### **8.3.4 Human Resource Development**

All personnel involved in education provision and addressing barriers to learning and development within the schooling system should be provided with appropriate training and support. This includes: education management so that those in leadership positions can direct and facilitate the institutional and curriculum development processes required; all teachers being adequately equipped and supported through pre- and in-service teacher education programmes (with a main focus on democracy and human rights education, and anti-bias training); some teachers receiving additional training to provide them with specialised competencies to provide leadership in the areas concerned (this includes lifeskills (guidance) teachers and learning support teachers); and parent programmes aimed at developing their capacity to participate optimally in the school system should be supported and further developed.

### **8.3.5 Intersectoral Collaboration**

The Department of Education must identify exactly where and around what there is a need for interdepartmental co-operation within the GET phase.

It is expected, however that collaboration between Education, Health and Welfare is required around a number of specific issues, many of which could be addressed through the 'health promoting school' projects being developed in the country. Collaboration around Schools of Industry, Reform Schools, and Places of Safety also constitute an urgent area which would include other departments as well (e.g. Justice, Correctional Services).

Collaboration between the Departments of Education and Labour needs to be pursued to facilitate an effective vocational orientation in the general curriculum, to provide career information and guidance where necessary, to



facilitate effective partnerships between schools and the private sector, and to develop strategies for facilitating programmes aimed at addressing needs relating to the transition from school to work.

The Department of Education needs to work with numerous other departments to ensure the development of accessible education for all learners. This would include the Departments of Police, Transport, Sport, and Public Works.

Partnerships between schools and 'the community' (e.g. parents, community organisations, business, specialist services - including traditional healers) form a crucial aspect of intersectoral collaboration that requires attention and development. School-NGO partnerships in particular need clarity and co-ordination.

### **8.3.6 A Community-Based Support System**

Every centre of learning should have a school-based team around which support for the school would be developed. Its primary function would be to support the learning process by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development.

These teams would be strengthened by the inclusion of expertise from local and district communities. This would include: the sharing of human and other resources with other schools and centres of learning in the vicinity; drawing on community organisations and other community resources; and drawing on the competencies required from the education support personnel at district level through district support centres or other district channels available.

Programmes aimed at prevention of barriers to learning and development, and the promotion or development of schools as safe and supportive learning environments should be pursued through school-based teams and district programmes. The health promoting school initiative should be supported in this regard. 'At risk' issues pertinent to the developmental phase of those within the GET band should form the focus of these programmes, for example, HIV/AIDS, early pregnancy, substance abuse, and violence.

### **8.3.7 Funding**

The funding model outlined in Chapter Seven should ensure that *all* learners gain access - in all senses of the word - to general education and training. A percentage of the general budget allocated to GET should be targeted at programmes and particular needs to ensure that barriers to learning and development are addressed.

## **8.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

This band consists of learning programmes between 2-4 of the NQF, involving a range of service providers such as secondary schools, technical schools, colleges (including community colleges), industry, adult education centres, NGOs, universities, technicons, training trusts, training centres, and private providers. There are some specialised centres of learning and adult centres that provide FET for learners with disabilities.

### **8.4.1 Transformation: Developing an Integrated System**

The importance of this phase of lifelong learning should not be underestimated. This phase, which focuses on specialisation and the development of context-based skills to facilitate transition to higher education and work, is particularly important for learners with disabilities or who are 'at risk' in some way and who require a more structured transition to the world of work and life.

The vision of a flexible, diverse, accessible and quality education and training that is responsive to needs - as outlined by the National Committee for Further Education and Training - fulfils the major principles outlined in the NCSNET/NCESS proposals. The development of strategies to reach this vision should include issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development as outlined in this Report. The first priority is to

ensure that the White Paper, which will presumably emerge from the NCFET's work, incorporates issues raised by the NCSNET/NCESS investigation. Thereafter, all curriculum and institutional development initiatives should include relevant expertise to ensure that developments at this level address the needs of *all* learners.

In line with the NOF, the NCFET recommends an integrated FET system which contributes to articulation with other levels of education. This 'integrated' concept should be expanded to include access of *all* learners - including learners with disabilities and others who have been historically neglected - in this phase. This requires that in addition to all schools, all other centres offering further education and training should eventually be developed to accommodate diverse needs, providing appropriate education and support required. This includes both specialised and comprehensive forms of education provision. Comprehensive community colleges are particularly important in this regard as their open access policy and provision for diversity offers a model of inclusion that would benefit all learners. The capacity of all FET centres to address barriers to learning and development should be developed as and when the demand requires it. Existing specialised centres of learning and district support structures can provide direct support in this process.

Skills Training Centres currently developed for some learners with disabilities should function within this band. They should be classified in terms of the courses they present and not according to category of learners, and should be a general community resource. These centres should provide wider career training and opportunities and not be restricted by either gender or disability. Links between these centres and other institutions within the further education band should be developed.

Integration for departments of education means that sections of departments of education which focus on further education and training should include the 'dedicated' competencies required to facilitate responsiveness to diverse needs of learners in this phase of lifelong development, and address barriers to learning and development.

#### **8.4.2 Barrier-free Physical and Psychosocial Environment**

All schools, colleges and private programmes providing further education and training should be built (if new) or progressively renovated within the context of accepted building regulations to ensure access to learning for learners with physical disabilities. Other aspects of organisation development should be pursued at FET level, ensuring the development of all aspects of organisational life to address diverse needs and to minimise, remove, and prevent barriers to learning and development. District support structures should play a central role in ensure that, over time, this support is extended to all FET programmes.

#### **8.4.3 Flexible Curriculum**

The diverse programmes provided at this phase of lifelong learning should be organised in such a way that they cater for the diversity of learners within the programmes themselves. All components of the curriculum should therefore accommodate these differences and should reflect an attempt to overcome barriers to learning and development. This includes lifeskills education with a particular focus on vocational skills, career education and guidance, and academic development orientation; ensuring access for non-speaking, Deaf, and blind learners, learners with multiple disabilities, and those learning in their second language; focusing on facilitating integration and mutual respect in the learning environment; ensuring appropriateness of materials to all learners, and availability of assistive devices to learners who require them; providing flexible assessment of outcomes, and identification of needs for the purposes of providing support if required; and strategies to facilitate transition from these centres of learning to higher education or work - in particular, the utilisation of learnerships which combine practical work and training.

As the transition from school to work and life constitutes a major aim of further education and training, it is crucial that the challenge to learners with disabilities and other learners who experience barriers to learning and development be addressed to ensure that they eventually find a meaningful place in the community. Programmes aimed at facilitating this transition should form a priority for education provision for these learners.

Although many *parents* may not be as involved in the learning of their children in this phase (although some parents of some learners with disabilities would be an exception here), they should be included in the governance and other aspects of life of the school, centre or programme where appropriate. As with other levels of education, *educators* in centres providing further education and training should be centrally involved in the development and

implementation of the curriculum, and the development of a learning environment that addresses diverse needs and is supportive of all learners. *Learners* at this level should participate in the governance structures of the school, college or private programme. If a learner is not able to represent her/himself due to severe disabilities, measures should be taken to facilitate communication (e.g. use of AAC strategies and interpreters). Peer-education or 'youth-to-youth' programmes should be fostered to promote co-operative learning and maximise the resources in the learning community to provide additional support where needed.

#### **8.4.4 Human Resource Development**

Programmes aimed at developing the capacity of parents, educators and learners should be pursued to ensure that they can assert their rights and responsibilities. The training of educators to teach at this level, provided by a range of higher education institutions, should include issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development in their general teacher education programmes, and educators with specialised competencies (e.g. lifeskills education, general and career counselling, learning support) should be prepared to work at this level of education and training. Education support personnel should also be provided with knowledge and skills to address needs at this level.

#### **8.4.5 Intersectoral Collaboration**

Sectors required to work together around education and support provision at other levels would be equally relevant here. There should be an emphasis, however, on close co-operation between the Departments of Education and Labour, particularly regarding provision of career information, vocational orientation and education, and transition from school to work (e.g. learnerships and employment services).

Major community role-players in the provision of both education and support at this level are the private commercial and industrial sectors. Their involvement in the provision of learnerships is a central aspect of their contribution.

The proposed national co-ordinating committee for FET, constituting representatives from departments and stakeholders, should include representation that will ensure that diverse needs of all learners are addressed and that barriers to learning and development are addressed.

#### **8.4.6 A Community-Based Support System**

As outlined in the report of the NCFET, a comprehensive range of support services should be provided to address barriers to learning and development at this level. This includes information, financial assistance, career and lifeskills education, medical, social, and psychological services.

Centre-of-learning-based teams at FET programmes should form the primary vehicle for identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development. These teams should be comprised primarily of educators in these centres or programmes, but should draw on local community resources (including community organisations, private specialists, and parents).

Education support personnel at district support centres or other channels should be utilised to provide capacity building and support to the centre-of-learning-based teams.

Prevention and development programmes should constitute a focus for centre-of-learning-based teams and the district support structures. Particular issues which should constitute a focus for such programmes should include: HIV/AIDS, sexual and other forms of physical abuse, and substance abuse. On the more developmental side, preparation for adult life, higher education, and work should form an important thrust at this level. Career education and guidance is an important aspect of this.

#### **8.4.7 Funding**

The funding model outlined in Chapter Seven should ensure that diverse needs and barriers to learning and development are addressed at this level. The broad principles of funding outlined in this Report would have to be articulated with the macro education funding formula adopted at FET level. FTEs (full-time equivalents), cost-

based tariffs for programmes, student funding, and funding relating to redress and priorities could all be accommodated within the context of these principles.

## **8.5. IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **8.5.1 Transformation: Developing an Integrated System**

Higher education transformation initiatives, already well under way, should be compelled to consider and infuse the recommendations emerging from this investigation. All aspects of higher education should therefore be considered for further development in this regard.

Higher education institutions - universities, professional colleges, technicons - are currently potentially integrated in nature. No specialised learning contexts are available for learners with severe disabilities, particular communication needs (e.g. Sign Language), or learners who experience other barriers to learning and development. Higher education institutions have thus either mainstreamed these learners by default (providing varying degrees of support required) or have not admitted these learners - particularly learners with disabilities.

The primary challenge to higher education institutions at present is to actively seek to admit learners with disabilities who have historically been marginalised at this level, providing them with opportunities to receive the education and training required to enter a variety of job markets. Alongside this is the challenge to develop the institution's capacity to address diverse needs and address barriers to learning and development. This includes not only learners with disabilities, but *all* learners. This requires that adequate enabling mechanisms be put in place to ensure that appropriate curriculum and institutional transformation occurs, and that additional support is provided where needed.

The Higher Education branch of the National Department of Education must develop its competency to address diversity and barriers to learning and development. 'Dedicated' competencies need to be developed to ensure that these issues are addressed during the transformation process.

### **8.5.2 Barrier-free Physical and Psychosocial Environment**

The physical environment of universities, technicons and professional colleges should be renovated to accommodate learners with physical disabilities. In the short and medium term, sufficient higher education institutions should be made barrier-free to allow some, if somewhat limited, access to higher education institutions. In time, full choice of institution should be provided.

Institutional plans at universities, technicons and professional colleges should include holistic organisation development plans that focus on preparing the centre of learning to address diverse needs and provide a supportive learning environment for all learners. This includes a focus on the psychosocial environment as well as the physical environment. The development of an inclusive environment where mutual respect is fostered should be at the core of such initiatives.

### **8.5.3 Flexible Curriculum**

All aspects of the higher education curriculum should be reviewed in terms of diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development so that all learners can engage in the learning process. In particular: Sign Language interpretation and Braille support should be available to accommodate needs of Deaf and blind learners; management of the system and teaching practices should ensure flexibility that accommodates a range of needs, and facilitates integration and mutual respect among learners; distance education and open learning should be pursued as a mode of delivery but must provide the necessary support and adequate materials; all teaching and learning materials should be developed in such a way that they accommodate different learning needs, and assistive devices must be available to learners with disabilities who require them; and assessment options should accommodate a range of needs (e.g. oral exams, Braille of exam and test papers).

A continuous assessment process which focuses on identifying teaching and learning needs should be supported by academic development programmes when and where required. A centre-of-learning-based team, located within a university or college unit (e.g. disability unit) or centre (student centre), should also be involved in providing additional support and developing preventative and developmental programmes.

Education facilities in higher education institutions should develop and offer programmes that develop the competencies required by educators for all bands of education, educators with specialised competencies, and education support personnel - in line with the principles and strategic framework emerging from this investigation.

Within national, provincial and institutional parameters, higher education *educators* (academic staff) play a central role in developing curricula and therefore have a crucial role to play in developing a curriculum that addresses diversity and overcomes and prevents barriers to learning and development. *Learners* should be involved in various ways in this process. A variety of *community resources*, including DPOs, NGOs, business, education support personnel and other relevant human resources should be involved in curriculum and institutional development as well as support provision where appropriate.

#### **8.5.4 Human Resource Development**

A priority in the higher education sector is to provide pre-service and contribute to in-service and continuing education programmes that focus on the development of general educators, educators with specialised competencies (e.g. lifeskills, counselling, learning support) and education support personnel, including in these programmes issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development.

In order to do this, existing and future academic staff at higher education institutions need to undergo their own orientation and professional development programmes to equip them to develop and provide relevant programmes to the above mentioned learners. This should be pursued in consultation and co-operation with professional boards and associations responsible for the development of the professionals concerned. Continuing education programmes focusing on diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development should be a priority in this regard.

Education Faculties should form partnerships with other education support service-related Faculties in universities for the purposes of developing core and specialised programmes that would ensure a holistic and integrated approach to the development of mechanisms to address barriers to learning and development.

#### **8.5.5 Intersectoral Collaboration**

The National Department of Education needs to pursue co-operative programmes with other relevant government departments (e.g. Health, Welfare, Labour) around common issues of concern. These would include: 'manpower' needs and outcomes of higher education; transition between education and work (the role of the private sector in providing 'learnerships' is particularly important in this regard); programmes aimed at prevention including HIV/AIDS, various forms of physical abuse, and substance abuse; and various programmes aimed at preparing learners for life and work.

Support provided within centre-of-learning-based teams should draw on a variety of community resources, including community organisations, private sector specialists, the business sector, and district education support structures.

#### **8.5.6 A Community-Based Support System**

The main pivot of support to higher education institutions and their learners and educators should be the centre-of-learning-based team comprising representatives from the academic staff, learners (particularly as peer-counsellors), specialist support personnel (e.g. medical and psychological support) and external community resources. This would include current disability units, centres for student support and centres for academic development. Efforts should be made to ensure that these units or centres work in a cohesive way to identify barriers to learning and development, and to ensure that enabling mechanisms are pursued to address these barriers.

These centre-of-learning-based support structures could draw on the expertise of support personnel at education district support centres and specialised schools. The latter connection is particularly important to ensure that specific disability needs are addressed.

A major focus of the support structures referred to above should be to provide programmes that focus on prevention of problems such as HIV/AIDS, violence, and substance abuse, as well as on prevention of learning breakdown. The latter aspect includes various forms of academic development programmes aimed at both direct learner support and institutional and curriculum development. This reflects current trends in academic development circles.

Development work should also include a major focus on developing learning environments that are inclusive, providing a safe and supportive environment where mutual respect among learners is fostered.

### **8.5.7 Funding**

The funding model outlined in Chapter Seven should include ensuring that all learners in the higher education band have access to the teaching and learning process. Details of how this should operate should be explored within the context of the funding policy for this sector. In the short term, it is important that some of the earmarked funding be directed to addressing barriers to learning and development, particularly insofar as they affect learners who have historically been denied the right to higher education because of lack of access - e.g. learners with disabilities. This could include affirmative action for these learners within bursary schemes. The principle of a percentage of the higher education budget being allocated to addressing barriers to learning and development should be pursued.

## **8.6. IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION**

### **8.6.1 Transformation: Developing an Integrated System**

Efforts to transform the adult education sector to ensure that diverse needs and barriers to learning and development are addressed should occur within existing adult education transformation initiatives at national, provincial and local level.

The substantial need for adult education for learners with disabilities, learners living on farms, and other learners who have had no or minimal access to education should be addressed as a matter of urgency to facilitate optimal involvement of adults and youth-out-of-school in community and work life.

Adults and others out of school who access the NQF through this band should be accommodated in integrated settings wherever possible. Existing and new programmes providing adult education should be provided with capacity building to facilitate access to all learners.

Adult education programmes aimed at vocational, literacy, lifeskills and other basic competencies should be available. This should include adult education programmes aimed at providing communication skills and mobility training for learners with disabilities who require it.

Adult Education sections of departments of education should develop the competencies required to ensure that diverse needs are addressed, and that barriers to learning and development are minimised, removed or prevented. This entails ensuring that relevant competencies are developed in these sections to champion and direct transformation in these respects.

### **8.6.2 Barrier-free Physical and Psychosocial Environment**

Developing an adult learning environment that can address diverse needs and provide support to all its learners and staff includes the development of barrier-free physical environments. As many adult learning programmes occur in buildings already developed for other purposes (e.g. community centres, schools, universities) those that are already barrier-free should be used, and other programmes should move progressively towards a situation

where all are offered in barrier-free physical environments, enabling learners with physical disabilities to participate freely in adult education initiatives.

In addition to the physical environment, the psychosocial environment of learning provided by adult education programmes should be developed - with the aid of formal and nonformal programmes aimed at providing institutional support and development - to ensure the development of an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

### **8.6.3 Flexible Curriculum**

A key principle of adult education is to include learners in the development of the curriculum. Although a variety of areas (content) - determined by the needs of learners - should be covered within this band of education, there is a need for an emphasis on lifeskills education and literacy and numeracy for many learners who have not had access to education, or who face crises in life. As mentioned above, these areas should be a particular focus for learners with disabilities. The development of Braille skills and Sign Language are particularly important for blind and partially sighted learners, and Deaf learners.

Other aspects of the curriculum should also consider the diverse needs of the adult learner population, and address barriers to learning and development. This includes: recognition of prior learning (rpl) as a tool for admission and a basis for teaching; utilising the media to provide for more learners, ensuring that adequate interpretation (e.g. Sign Language or other languages) is available; ensuring that the medium of all teaching and learning is accessible (including Sign Language, AAC, and second-language support); providing access to Braille; ensuring that teaching and learning materials are relevant to daily life, are provided in a variety of formats, and accommodate different levels and styles of learning; providing assistive devices to those who need it; and providing strategies for transition from this band to other bands of education and to work. This includes preparation for work, work experience and on-the-job training.

ETDPs (education, training and development practitioners) who are trained to provide adult education programmes should work together with the adult learners, community resources (including community organisations), and other education institutions (e.g. universities, colleges, schools) to develop and provide the curriculum.

### **8.6.4 Human Resource Development**

Programmes for ETDPs, who should include people with disabilities, provided at higher education and other education institutions, and within community programmes, should include issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development. Education support personnel should also be provided with knowledge and skills to address needs at the adult education level. Parent empowerment through adult education programmes is also an important priority.

### **8.6.5 Intersectoral Collaboration**

As many education, labour, health and social programmes target adults in their drives to provide basic competencies (e.g. vocational and lifeskills, and literacy and numeracy) these departments should work collaboratively. Intersectoral collaboration around other practical issues such as transport should also be pursued.

Broader intersectoral collaboration, including a variety of community resources, specialist services, commercial and industrial sectors, should continue to work together to provide appropriate adult education and support.

### **8.6.6 A Community-Based Support System**

The capacity of adult education programmes to provide support within the context of programmes offered should be developed. ETDPs should be equipped to identify and address barriers to learning and development within their training. Where additional support is required - either for learners or the programme as a whole - this should be drawn from local community resources, including the district education support structures.

Many adult education programmes are preventative and developmental in nature. They often focus on development such as vocational skills or lifeskills development, or issues such as HIV/AIDS, violence, or substance abuse. These initiatives should be supported and further developed.

Within the programmes themselves, however, prevention and development can also be pursued through addressing barriers to learning and development, thereby providing a learning environment that addresses diverse needs and is supportive of all learners.

### **8.6.7 Funding**

The funding model outlined in Chapter Seven should include ensuring that adults who require the development of basic competencies such as vocational skills, lifeskills and literacy should receive adequate support to pursue this. This would have to be pursued within the context of the macro education funding policy on adult education. The principle of a percentage of the adult education budget being allocated to addressing barriers to learning and development should be pursued.

## **8.7. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION**

This section deals with both national and provincial departments as the implications are in most cases the same. It should be noted however that the national and provincial competencies as defined by the Constitution will determine the way in which the following implications would be pursued at national and provincial level.

### **8.7.1 Transformation: Developing an Integrated System**

A major implication of the recommendations emerging from this investigation is that national and provincial initiatives aimed at transformation of all aspects of education and training need to include issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development. This includes general education and training policy (e.g. physical planning), ECD policy development and pilot project, Curriculum 2005, COLTS, policy development emerging out of the National Committee for Further Education and Training (NCFET), transformation of higher education, and policy development and implementation in the area of adult education. All bands and aspects of education need to consider these proposals and incorporate relevant aspects in the transformation process.

A major role of the national and provincial departments is to provide direction and monitor the introduction and implementation of the development of an integrated system as outlined in Chapter Four and other parts of this Report. This includes: being centrally involved in a communication campaign aimed at raising awareness about issues pertaining to diversity and the need to address barriers to learning and development; providing leadership in the implementation of moves towards a more integrated and inclusive system where the emphasis must be on the development of the capacity of all centres of learning to address diversity and provide a supportive environment to all learners; facilitating a phased-in process of transformation that minimally disrupts the learning process of all learners concerned; supporting and drawing out learnings from the first phase of implementation in all nine provinces; ensuring that enabling mechanisms are pursued to facilitate curriculum and institutional transformation and provide additional support to those who require it - wherever they are placed in the system; and monitoring the implementation process in such a way that both policy and practice can be responsive to the realistic demands of the unfolding plan of action.

At national and provincial level the competency of all major sections of the department would need to be developed to ensure that issues pertaining to diversity and barriers to learning and development are addressed in all aspects and bands of education. This means that 'dedicated' competencies would need to be developed in major sections of the department, with persons with the necessary competencies being deployed to ensure that the transformation process includes these issues. This would mean building the capacity of employees already employed in these sections, or placing members in existing 'special needs' and support structures into 'mainstream' sections of the department, or developing new posts. Where new personnel are brought into this process, qualified persons with disabilities should be considered for employment. In the short and medium term it is recommended that where there are existing directorates or sub-directorates, these should remain, with their major task being that of progressively facilitating the infusion envisaged. Once infusion has been achieved, a co-ordinating structure would be developed to ensure that barriers to learning and development are addressed. This



structure would be accountable to the Head of Department. The status of this structure would be commensurate with the functions that it performs (e.g. at senior management level).

An example of how infusion could be pursued within the National Department of Education is provided in Chapter Seven.

### **8.7.2 Barrier-free Physical and Psychosocial Environment**

The first priority at national level is to ensure that building policy includes all necessary regulations to ensure barrier-free access to learners with physical disabilities. This includes changing existing 'blue-prints' for schools to enable them to accommodate diversity. The implementation of this policy is then the task of provincial departments, with the national department playing a leadership and monitoring role within national competencies. Implementation requires *ensuring* (because this is not currently being followed through properly) that new buildings follow these regulations, and developing a plan to ensure that existing centres of learning (in all bands) are progressively renovated to facilitate access. As outlined in the proposals in this Report, this should be pursued in such a way that at least one centre of learning per band per district should be made accessible initially and then as demand arises (as centres of learning admit learners with physical disabilities).

National initiatives such as COLTS and the proposed Institute for Education Management Development need to include issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development in their current plans. At provincial level these and other programmes focusing on 'whole-school' and other forms of education institutional development should include these issues in their attempts to develop quality education.

A major role for national and provincial departments is to direct and support the development of centres of learning so that they become able to provide a psychosocial environment that is conducive to promoting respect for differences, and providing a supportive learning environment for all learners.

### **8.7.3 Flexible Curriculum**

At GET level Curriculum 2005 provides a basis for addressing diverse needs and addressing barriers to learning and development. This initiative needs to take cognisance of further strategies required to ensure these goals, and include this in the curriculum transformation process. All components of the curriculum need to be examined and pursued in this regard. This needs to be pursued at both national and provincial levels.

Curriculum transformation in the other bands of education also needs to consider issues of diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development. This needs to be pursued at national level for higher education, and at national and provincial levels for ECD, further education, and adult education.

The current drive to implement the S.A. Schools Act's requirements for school governing bodies in all nine provinces should include the implementation - even prior to legislation - of recommendations regarding the involvement of *parents, learners, and community resources*. This is particularly important for the role of parents, learners and community resources in specialised learning contexts, and the need for expertise relating to addressing diversity and barriers to learning and development on SGBs of ordinary schools. Representation of parents, learners and relevant community resources also needs to be ensured on governing bodies in the other bands of education, and at broader governance level - through the development of national and provincial forums that include all relevant stakeholders.

Programmes aimed at building the capacity of parents and learners to participate meaningfully on governing bodies and at national and provincial level should be considered a matter of priority. Involvement of parents and learners in other ways outlined in this Report should also be supported by provincial departments. The involvement of community organisations (e.g. NGOs/DPOs) in curriculum and institutional development, and in providing direct support where needed, should be actively supported at national, provincial, district and local levels. This requires a clear working relationship between the department and NGOs.

### **8.7.4 Human Resource Development**

National policy emerging from this investigation will facilitate the transformation of pre- and in-service courses for educators and support personnel at higher education institutions. Higher education monitoring processes need to ensure that this is being pursued so that adequate human resources are developed.

The current national initiative to develop education management should include issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development - at national, provincial and district levels. Provincial departments need to ensure that this is being pursued at provincial level. They also have responsibility for the teacher education colleges which need to consider the recommendations emerging from this investigation. It is also imperative that provincial departments develop partnerships with universities, technicons and colleges around the area of in-service training. Co-ordinated efforts could address the massive need in this regard.

Departments need to provide direct support to parent empowerment programmes to facilitate the optimal involvement of parents in various spheres of the education of their children.

### **8.7.5 Intersectoral Collaboration**

As a matter of priority the national and provincial departments of education should seek clarity about the issues or programmes that require 'co-operative governance' with other departments, and pursue clarity about responsibilities and accountability for each of these (including clarity about who should be the 'lead' department for each of these areas). It is recommended that each province reaches agreement regarding these responsibilities at provincial level before budget allocations are made, and that allocations then accompany responsibility.

Some of the more obvious and urgent areas for collaboration are: ECD responsibilities (e.g. Health, Welfare, Education); Schools of Industry, Reform Schools, and Places of Safety and community-based diversion programmes (e.g. Education, Health, Welfare, Justice, Correctional Services, Police); transport (e.g. Education and Transport); hostels (e.g. Education, Health, Welfare); integrated cultural and sport activities (e.g. Sports and Culture, Education); building and renovation of education institutions (e.g. Public Works, Education); provision of career information, guidance, and work opportunities (e.g. Education, Labour); lifeskills education (e.g. Education, Health, Welfare, Labour); and development of health promoting institutions and provision of additional support (e.g. Education, Health, Welfare).

As mentioned earlier, the national and provincial departments should develop mechanisms such as national stakeholder forums to facilitate involvement of various stakeholders in the development of the system as it attempts to address diversity and minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development. Intersectoral collaboration at other levels (e.g. district, centre of learning) should also be supported in terms of governance and provision of education and support.

### **8.7.6 A Community-Based Support System**

Strategic direction needs to be given at national and provincial level - through policy and legislation - to ensure that support is provided to learners and centres of learning.

A major role of provincial departments should then be to facilitate the development of centre-of-learning-based teams and district support structures to ensure that all learners and centres of learning have access to the support required. The leadership of the departments in providing direction and monitoring developments is crucial in this regard.

In the transition period the provision of support services would need to be pursued within budgetary constraints. Creative ways of distributing resources, and drawing in community-support mechanisms would need to be developed. Particular local conditions would determine the way in which this could be pursued.

National and provincial departments can play a central role in facilitating prevention and development programmes through policy and legislative imperatives, and through providing funding and other incentives to support such programmes. At provincial level, a major role of the department would be to provide direction and support to local initiatives. As comprehensive, co-ordinated programmes are usually more successful, the role of the department in this process is crucial. A further important role at provincial level is to provide the necessary

human resource development programmes to equip educators and support personnel to plan, implement, and evaluate preventative and development programmes. Existing national and provincial programmes aimed at various risk factors (e.g. HIV/AIDS, violence, substance abuse) and general health promotion (e.g. health promoting schools network) should be supported.

### **8.7.7 Funding**

The funding model recommended in this Report should be further developed, implemented, and monitored by the departments of education. The role of the government departments at national, provincial and district level is important in ensuring that general education and training budgets address issues of diversity and barriers to learning and development. The percentage allocated to these issues should be controlled through these levels of government. Monitoring the spending of this percentage on the correct resources - guided by criteria developed - is a major part of this management process.

## **8.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR EXISTING LEGISLATION**

### ***Recommendation 8.1***

**Legislative processes emerging from the Department of Education's response to this Report should include the development of both new legislation to ensure that the wide range of issues outlined in this Report are addressed in all bands of education, and amendments to existing legislation (S.A. School Act. 1996, other Education Acts, and other relevant Acts from other Departments).**

### **8.8.1 South African Schools Act (1996)**

The South African Schools Act, (1996) was developed prior to the establishment of the NCSNET/NCESS and so does not adequately reflect the principles proposed in this Report, in particular, the principle of equal access to a single inclusive education system. Further, the Act does not clearly reflect a move away from the limited conceptualisation of 'learners with special needs' to a broader view of 'learners who experience barriers to learning and development' as proposed by the NCSNET/NCESS. For these and other reasons, the Act must be intensively examined and amended in line with the principles and proposals of the NCSNET/NCESS.

The following provisional recommendations should be considered in this process:

### ***Recommendation 8.2***

**The term 'learners with special education needs' used in the act should be substituted by the term 'learners who experience barriers to learning and development'. The term could be defined to mean all learners who need additional support in order to access the curriculum and to develop optimally. (Chapter 1: Definitions and Applications of Act).**

### ***Recommendation 8.3***

**Section 12(3) reflects and entrenches the idea of a dual system of education, that is, 'ordinary' and 'special'. All sections of the Act that reflect such a dual system need to be investigated in order to establish coherence between the Act and the philosophy of an integrated, unified and single education system. This investigation must also address the composition of governing bodies of all public schools.**

### ***Recommendation 8.4***

**The Preamble of the SA Schools act should be revised to promote the fact that schools reflect the principle of a single, inclusive education system that ensures access to education in the widest sense for learners with disabilities and other learners who experience barriers to learning and development.**

#### ***Recommendation 8.5***

Section 3(2) be amended as follows: the Minister must, by notice in the Government Gazette, determine the ages of compulsory school attendance for 'learners experiencing barriers to learning and development'.

#### ***Recommendation 8.6***

There is a need to ensure that learners who experience barriers to learning and development have access to early education and early intervention programmes. It is recommended therefore that an additional provision be included in Section 3(2)(b) which could read as follows: 'The Member of the Executive Council must ensure that "learners experiencing barriers to learning and development" have access to early education from the age of three.

#### ***Recommendation 8.7***

With regard to exit age the MEC can give permission for certain learners who experience barriers to learning to be eligible for school attendance until the age 21. This is provided that it is shown that the learner is likely to benefit from the school programme and that she/he will receive the necessary functional and vocational training to facilitate her/his transition to the world of work. Links with the Department of Labour and the private sector in the creation of learnerships and employment services should be considered in the drafting of legislation and regulations pertaining to this matter.

#### ***Recommendations 8.8***

There is concern about the words: "if it is in the best interests of the learners" in Section 4(1). Can it ever be in the best interests of a learner to be excluded from the learning environment ? As it stands, it can in fact be a limitation of the Constitutional right to basic education and open to abuse. Parents will not always be able to stand up to schools who refuse admission to learners on these grounds. Moreover, the Act makes provision for home schooling in Section 51. This provision is adequate for learners who cannot attend school on grounds of serious illness or other factors. It is therefore recommended that Section 4(1) and 4(2) be deleted.

#### ***Recommendations 8.9***

Section 5(1) may be interpreted in such a way that it may limit the rights of certain learners if it can be proved that it is fair to discriminate against them. The legislation should include more safeguards for the learners, placing the onus on the system to prove that it cannot provide the necessary support which would facilitate the inclusion of such a learner in a particular education context. This clause should therefore read: "A public school must admit all learners and serve their educational requirements without discriminating against them in any way."

#### ***Recommendation 8.10***

The following amendment to Section 5(6) is suggested: "In determining access to education for a "learner experiencing barriers to learning and development" the Head of Department and the Principal must take into account the rights and wishes of the parent of such a learner."

Legislation should enhance the right of every learner to attend the centre of learning of his/her choice, preferably in his/her neighbourhood. This right to choice could be exercised by the parent and/or learner (where applicable) in consultation with the relevant education department. This should ensure that within the parameters of the Constitution of South Africa and broader education policy and legislation a range of support and opportunities for education must be available. This

support should be available irrespective of where a learner chooses to receive his/her education whether it be in a specialised learning context or in an ordinary centre of learning.

*Recommendation 8.11*

The following amendment is suggested to Section 11(3): "Learners experiencing barriers to learning and development may experience difficulty in participating in the democratic processes of a school. The Member of the Executive Council should take measures to ensure their participation".

*Recommendation 8.12*

Despite the fact that the provision "where reasonably practicable" in Section 12(4), is used in the Constitution it may here be construed as undermining the mandatory power of the Act and can be seen as putting it more in the category of permissive or discretionary. Some other countries have preferred using the wording: "unless it cannot be made practicable" The exact limitation measure must be decided upon. It is recommended that the clause read: "The Member of the Executive Council must, unless this cannot be made practicable (or: unless this would constitute an unjustifiable hardship), provide education for all learners at public schools, and provide relevant support services for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development."

*Recommendation 8.13*

The following amendment to Section 12(5) is recommended: "the Member of the Executive Council must take all possible measures to ensure that the physical facilities at public schools are accessible to persons with disabilities."

*Recommendation 8.14*

The following additional clause is recommended as a complement to Section 20(1)(a): "The Member of the Executive must ensure that adequate support is provided at public schools, both through school level and district level structures, for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development."

*Recommendation 8.15*

In view of the above, it is suggested that Section 23(2)(e) be added: "the following categories of representatives, if applicable: representatives of sponsoring bodies, representatives of organisations of persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities, individuals with expertise in addressing barriers to leaning and development".

*Recommendation 8.16*

The following amendment to Section 23(5) is recommended: "The governing body of a public school must co-opt the chairperson of the sub-committee (Section 30(2)) that is responsible for addressing barriers to learning and development".

*Recommendation 8.17*

Section 30(2) should be amended as follows: "A governing body of a public school must establish a sub-committee to address barriers to learning and development, and to facilitate partnerships with consumer organisation"

*Recommendation 8.18*

The following clause should be added to Section 36 : "This will include financial costs involved in overcoming barriers to learning and development."



## 9. STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### 9.1. INTRODUCTION

#### 9.1.1 Process

The NCSNET/NCESS were asked to develop a strategic implementation plan to facilitate implementation of national policy arising out of the recommendations of the NCSNET/NCESS. This was interpreted by the NCSNET/NCESS to mean that short-, medium-, and long-term goals and tasks should be identified, that responsibilities for executing and funding these tasks should be identified, and that mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating implementation over this period should be developed. The NCSNET/NCESS further interpreted the task to include an in-depth analysis of the processes of policy formulation and implementation, and the process of change to ensure that solid principles are used for the basis of recommendations.

Based on the above, the NCSNET/NCESS undertook to plan how the proposed changes to national policy which are aimed at minimising, removing and preventing barriers to learning and development through enabling mechanisms and appropriate support, should be implemented.

Short-term (1998/99), medium-term (2005) and long-term goals were identified. Specific objectives and tasks relating to each of these goals were then identified. Identification of resources (in particular funding sources) that would be required to execute the plan was undertaken. Finally, mechanisms for ensuring adequate monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process were identified. Before finalising the plan, potential barriers to and supports for implementation of the plan were identified and discussed, and the goals revisited in the light of that.

In the light of consultation, the strategic implementation plan was developed to include concrete proposals for transitional arrangements that need to be put in place to facilitate the move towards the future vision, and detailed business plans for the short-term (1998/99) and medium- to long-term were developed. It is hoped that the details pertaining to the transitional arrangements will enable stakeholders to envisage the phasing in of the new arrangements being recommended, and that the business plans will facilitate practical implementation of the proposals developed by the NCSNET/NCESS.

#### 9.1.2 Principles for Planning

The following principles emerged out of an investigation of the factors that influence policy formulation and implementation, and those that influence the process of change. These principles have been used as a basis for planning short-, medium-, and long-term goals and strategies.

- The principles underpinning the *Constitution* of South Africa (in particular the issues of equity and redress) and the White Papers on Education and Training form a 'bottom-line' for how implementation of the recommendations of the Report is pursued.
- *Legislation*, reflecting the principles of the policy recommendations, must be in place to enable the implementation of policy.
- Successful implementation is contingent on both material and human *resources* being available. Various strategies therefore need to be pursued to ensure adequate financial support. This should be pursued within the context of the principles of cost-effectiveness and sustainability, and should draw on the rich indigenous human resources available in the country.

- A process of incremental change or *phasing in* of change needs to be developed. This means that transitional arrangements in the short and medium term need to be developed; a step-by-step approach to achieving ultimate goals needs to be pursued; and pilot and demonstration projects need to be supported and brought to scale where appropriate.
- A system of *monitoring and evaluating* progress of the implementation plan must be developed. A 'reflective practice' approach which focuses on drawing out learnings from practice for the purposes of future planning should be adopted.
- The paradigm shifts that are embodied in these proposals that new ways of seeing problems, needs, competencies, and solutions are facilitated. This should occur through educational and other relevant strategies. *Educational* strategies include:
  - \* Public education, raising awareness and challenging attitudes
  - \* Re-orientation of existing leadership in education, educators, and education support personnel
  - \* Education and training of new leaders, educators, and support service personnel

People's fears relating to change processes (particularly in terms of perceived losses relating to roles or even jobs) should be understood and addressed in this process.

- All relevant *stakeholders* should be optimally *involved* in the process of policy initiation, formulation, implementation, and evaluation. This should occur at all levels of the system: at national, provincial, district, and centre of learning levels. In particular, successful implementation is dependent on co-operation between national and provincial levels of governance. Provincial and local bodies should be provided with sufficient autonomy and initiative in the implementation process to ensure 'ownership' at ground level.
- *Existing resources* and competencies should be utilised optimally and creatively to move towards equity and redress. Transformation of the entire system to facilitate optimal use of existing facilities, material and human resources in new ways and in under-developed areas of education provision should be undertaken. Existing personnel will need to redefine their roles where necessary and facilities and materials will have to be developed accordingly. Where there are gaps in capacity to address needs, new facilities, materials and human resources will need to be developed and deployed. Creative utilisation and development of the minimum resources available need to be pursued.
- Potential barriers and supports to the implementation of the policy need to be analysed and addressed on an ongoing basis. Goals need to be adjusted according to realistic parameters - but not at the expense of the fundamental principles that have been agreed.

## **9.2. ACTION PLAN (1998 - 2005)**

### **9.2.1 Introduction**

The Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) is concerned with creating a single education system. The legislative process, which includes the development of a separate Act and amendments to the S.A. Schools Act and other relevant legislation, will continue until the end of 1999. Thereafter, it is envisaged that the NCSNET/NCESS recommendations will be implemented. While the legislative process evolves, it is important to establish mechanisms during the transitional stage that will create the conditions for the development of a single system of education.

It is against this background that the Strategic Implementation Plan suggests two phases: Phase One which is an interim phase from January 1998 to December 1999; and Phase Two (2000-2005) which involves implementation of the NCSNET/NCESS recommendations in the medium term.

The setting up of structures to ensure and facilitate the implementation process is considered to be crucial to the successful implementation of policy emerging out of these proposals. Furthermore, budgetary support for the tasks pursued in the short and medium term will make or break any attempts to pursue the goals identified.



### 9.2.2 Action Plan (1998 - 2005)

Phase One of the Action Plan can be defined as a transitional stage that will be concerned with certain priorities which must be addressed to ensure that a solid platform is created for the implementation of the NCSNET/NCESS recommendations in Phase Two. While Phase Three (2006 onwards) is not included in this strategic implementation plan, it should be noted that at the end of 2005 extensive evaluation should be conducted for the purposes of assessing developments and informing future plans.

The implementation of Phase One and Phase Two is contingent on: (i) the acceptance of the recommendations by the National Ministry of Education by January 1998, (ii) the establishment of an Interim Implementation Committee (IIC) and a National Council for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Development (NCABLD) by February 1998, and (iii) the creation of a Centre for Research around Barriers to Learning and Development by December 1999.

### 9.3. PHASE ONE (1998 - 1999)

**Table 1: Priorities, Objectives, Actions and Responsibilities during Phase One (1998-1999)**

PRIORITIES	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Legislation	To provide strategic direction	1. Develop a White Paper 2. Develop a separate Act and amend relevant Acts	1. NDoE 2. NDoE/PDoE's
2. Structures	To enable the implementation of recommendations	1. Establish and operationalize IIC 2. Establish National Council (NCABLD) 3. Prepare for establishment of National Research Centre 4. Provinces set up enabling mechanisms and establish Provincial Councils for addressing Barriers to Learning and Development	*1. NDoE *2. NDoE 3.NDoE/IIC 4.PDoE's
3. Funding	To elicit funds for the transitional phase and establish sound funding strategies for the future	1. Activate the process with international donor agencies 2. Establish team to develop funding strategies based on NCSNET/ NCESS recommendations	1.NDoE 2.NDoE
4. Public Awareness	To create a national consciousness and understanding around barriers to learning and development	1. Implement a co-ordinated comprehensive national and provincial media and public awareness campaigns	1. IIC and NCABLD in consultation with Disability Desk

5. Accommodate learners outside the system	To ensure that all learners are included in a single education system	1. Situation Analyses/Audit 2. Phased-in Action plan pursued by prov. dept.'s	1. IIC/EMIS 2. PDoE's/Councils
6. Review of assessment practices	To develop appropriate assessment practices for addressing barriers to learning and development	1. Develop early identification procedures and intervention methods 2. Review current placement procedures for learners in specialised learning contexts, and develop new procedures	1. Inter-Departmental committee  2. IIC Assessment sub-committee / DoE quality assurance
7. Curriculum and institutional development	To assess the potential of OBE to address diversity, and to develop and implement service delivery guidelines in relation to OBE and institutional development	1. Develop links with reps from Curriculum 2005, Colts, ECD, FET, HE, COTEP, ABET, Centre for Curriculum Development, Centre for Appropriate Technology Development, Proposed National Institute for Education Management Development 2. Develop joint Action Plan to develop service guidelines 3. Address issues related to assistive devices 4. Develop mechanisms to provide barrier-free buildings and other basic provision 5. Pursue development of Sign Language and other languages through national policy process	1-6. IIC Curriculum sub-committee - in conjunction with relevant committees, councils, institutions
8. Human Resource Development	To provide training at a pre-set and in-set level around inclusive practices - in all bands	1. Reorientation of all educators and support personnel 2. Link with teacher education initiatives such as COTEP, teacher development units, national council for teacher policy of	1. IIC/NCBALD

		the Higher Education Council 3. Provide pre-service and in-service educator development 4. Provide pre-service and continuing ed programmes for ed support personnel 5. Provide programmes for parents/NGOs/DPOs	2-4. COTEP/Prov. Depts./Higher Education Institutions/relevant NGOs
9. Optimal utilisation of resources	To redefine existing conceptualisation and operations of resource provision with a view to serving as many learners as possible	1. Redefine staffing roles 2. Make optimum use of specialised school resources 3. Utilise community resources creatively 4. Establish co-ordinated district support	1. IIC sub-committee on staffing 2. PDoE's  3. All levels of governance and service delivery  4. PDoE's/District Support
10. Intersectoral collaboration	To develop holistic and integrated service provision	1. Identify areas requiring interdepartmental co-operation 2. Set up and utilise appropriate structures to pursue this collaboration	1. NDoE/PDoE's in conjunction with other relevant government departments

\* These matters are viewed as urgent. The Ministry of Education must have these structures in place by February 1998.

#### Discussion of Table I:

Table 1 reflects a number of priorities that have been identified and which require urgent attention. The legislative process and changes to the Schools Act will take a considerable period of time during which strategic direction may be lacking - particularly in the form of a national coordinating structure. These priorities have to be addressed in order to create a sound foundation for the implementation of Phase Two which encompasses the bulk of the NCSNET/NCESS's recommendations.

Since the recommendations in this report are in line with (i) the transformation that is occurring all over the country, (ii) constitutional imperatives, and (iii) the voices of the majority of stakeholders who have been consulted in drawing up the recommendations, the NCSNET/NCESS is confident that they will be implemented by the Ministry of Education. In the light of these factors it is imperative that the priorities outlined in the table above be taken seriously and the necessary steps be put into place in order for Phase Two to materialise.

#### 9.3.1 The Legislative Process

A *White Paper* on Education and Training outlining national guidelines and norms regarding issues of diversity and overcoming and preventing barriers to learning and development should be developed. This should be followed immediately by the development of *provincial policy*.

*Legislation* should be developed and promulgated as soon as possible. This should occur through the development of a *separate Act* as well as *amendments* to existing Acts.

Both of the above processes will be pursued by the National Department of Education and thereafter or concurrently, by Provincial Departments of Education.

### **9.3.2 Structures**

In terms of structures, Table I identifies the creation of (i) an Interim Implementation Committee (IIC), (ii) a National Council to Address Barriers to Learning and Development (NCABLD), and (iii) a National Centre of Research around barriers to learning and development.

The rationale behind these recommendations is that there needs to be structures that will take responsibility for the transitional arrangements that relate mainly to the priorities in Phase One. It is proposed that the IIC - which should be a sub-committee of HEDCOM - and the National Council would play a central role in driving the goals and tasks in this phase.

#### **9.3.2.1 Interim Implementation Committee (IIC)**

The IIC should be established for a period of two years (1998-1999) by the NDoE. It is proposed that it should comprise one full-time member and nine part-time members comprising provincial representatives. While the Ministry of Education is responsible for the appointment of this committee, it is suggested that the secretariat of NCSNET/NCESS play a role in this process.

The primary functions of the IIC should include the following:

- establishing the necessary sub-committees to address the priority areas in Table 1
- initiating, monitoring and evaluating the public awareness programme
- initiating, monitoring, supporting and publicising good practices concerned with inclusive education
- identifying, participating and engaging with all relevant departmental transformation processes, for example, Curriculum 2005
- establishing a National Centre for Research around Barriers to learning and Development that is concerned with research around barriers to learning and development by December 1999
- working closely with the National Council which will be a broader forum comprising all stakeholders
- identifying and pursuing gaps in the recommendations of NCSNET/NCESS
- maintaining links and working closely with the provinces
- facilitating infusion in National and Provincial Departments of Education
- facilitating agreements around interprovincial arrangements.

The IIC will cease to exist after December 1999 and will be replaced by the National Centre for Research around Barriers to Learning and Development that will be concerned with support and research around barriers to learning and development.

#### **9.3.2.2 National Council to Address Barriers to Learning and Development (NCABLD)**

The NCABLD will act as a watchdog to oversee the transformation process. It should include representatives from the ten departments of education, other relevant government departments, relevant NGOs and DPOs, professional bodies, educator/parent/learner bodies, and representatives from various levels of education. The full range of sectors concerned with addressing barriers to learning and development should be represented on this body. The Council should be set up by the Ministry of Education by February 1998. The tasks of the council will include:

- engaging with professional associations

- monitoring development around all priorities as identified in Table 1
- monitoring and evaluating the implementation process of Phase One
- working collaboratively with the IIC, provincial departments and the disability desk around public awareness issues
- monitoring all education transformation processes on all levels to ensure that the NCSNET/NCESS recommendations are on track.

It is proposed that similar *Councils* be formed at *provincial* level, providing specific support to provinces during the implementation process. Links between the Provincial Councils and the National Council should be through representation of the provinces on the National Council.

The proposed National Council will replace NaCoCo for ELSSEN.

### **9.3.2.3 National Centre for Research around Barriers to Learning and Development**

A mechanism for directing, monitoring and evaluating the implementation process over the medium and long term should be developed. It is suggested that this be spearheaded by a National Centre within the Institute for Lifelong Learning Development in the National Department of Education.

Functions of this Centre would include:

- supporting, monitoring and evaluating the development of pilot and demonstration projects linked to the phasing in process
- participating in ongoing policy research and facilitating, coordinating and supporting relevant research
- providing an international, regional, national and provincial networking process for people and organisations involved in this area
- providing relevant literature resources
- providing support to pre- and in-service teacher education and other relevant professional continuing education programmes

The roles and functions of this Centre should be finalised during a consultative process during Phase One.

### **9.3.3 Funding**

In the light of the fact that budgets have already been allocated for 1998, Phase One of the Action Plan will have to be supported through donor funding. All priorities identified in Table 1 must receive urgent attention in this regard.

A task team should, as a matter of priority, be constituted to work out *funding strategies* in line with the proposals outlined in this Report. This should include the *costing* related to ensuring that the system is able to address diversity and address barriers to learning and development. Funding strategies and therefore budgets should include addressing the educational needs of learners who are currently outside the system.

### **9.3.4 Public Awareness**

Public awareness and advocacy on education and development for all, with particular emphasis on human rights in education, barriers to learning and development, diversity in the learner population, and discriminatory attitudes relating to disability should be pursued as matter of priority through a co-ordinated, comprehensive communication campaign. The IIC, NCABLD, OSDP, provincial disability desks, the SAHRC and provincial departments should drive this campaign ensuring that mainstream educators, parents and learners are targeted for awareness raising, advocacy and consultation.

### **9.3.5 Accommodating Learners Outside the System**

Learners of compulsory school-going age who are currently outside the system should be accommodated in appropriate education settings. This would include programmes aimed at orientation to and inclusion in the system (e.g. for street children), and programmes for over-age learners within the ECD, GET, and FET and adult

education bands.

It is important to note that learners do not have to wait until the system is 'ready' for them as readiness will occur in the process of confronting barriers and developing the enabling mechanisms and support capacity needed. In the short term this could be focused on a few centres of learning in each district or equivalent area. The development of enabling mechanisms and adequate support capacity is crucial if 'mainstream dumping' is to be avoided.

During the phasing in process, learners of compulsory school-going age should receive preference for inclusion in the education system.

### **9.3.6 Review of Assessment Practices**

As part of the process of reviewing current assessment practices the following priorities have been identified: (i) the need for early identification, assessment and intervention of 'at risk' learners (as an urgent national priority); and (ii) the need to review placement procedures for learners in specialised learning contexts.

Because current placement procedures have proved to be problematic, it is recommended, as a short-term priority, that:

- the use of standardised tests for the placement of learners in specialised learning contexts be discontinued
- current procedures used for the placement of learners requiring high levels of support in specialised learning contexts be reviewed as a matter of urgency
- new procedures should be based on the principle that assessment should focus on determining the optimum support learners require, and how and where to access it.

This process needs to be taken forward by the IIC sub-committee on assessment. The IIC sub-committee should, together with provincial education departments, ensure that this is done as soon as possible.

### **9.3.7 Curriculum and Institutional Development**

The IIC should appoint a sub-committee to assist all current and new committees and teams involved in planning and developing Curriculum 2005 and other curriculum initiatives to ensure that diversity and barriers to learning and development are addressed.

Matters pertaining to *assistive devices* (in particular, the development of a list of education-related assistive devices) should be a particular focus for further development.

The development of *SA Sign Language* as a learning focus and medium of teaching and learning for Deaf learners should be supported and promoted. Equipping teachers currently teaching at Schools for the Deaf with SA Sign Language skills; developing community-based SA Sign Language programmes for parents and siblings of Deaf learners; and developing and financing Sign Language Interpreter Development at Higher Education level should receive immediate attention. The development of a pool of interpreters in every province should be developed during this period.

### **9.3.8 Human Resource Development**

The IIC in conjunction with other relevant committees and institutions, should ensure that:

- existing education management programmes offered in formal and nonformal programmes are required to include issues relating to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development in their learning programmes
- institutions providing teacher education and support personnel development programmes are encouraged to admit staff and learners with disabilities into their programmes and make the necessary adjustments and provide support as required

- teacher education initiatives such as COTEP, Teacher Development Units, National Council for Teacher Policy of the Higher Education Council develop sufficient capacity to address all aspects relating to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development as a matter of priority. National guidelines for the professional development of educators and other support personnel should be developed.
- all institutions providing pre-service and in-service educator development include issues pertaining to democracy and human rights education, diversity, barriers to learning and development, and enabling mechanisms and teaching strategies in all programmes as a matter of priority
- programmes aimed at developing *specialised competencies* in the areas of lifeskills education, school counselling, and learning support are developed within the framework of functions and roles emerging from these proposals. Existing programmes focusing on specialised competencies should be supported and developed within the co-ordinated framework referred to above. Training programmes for teachers of the Deaf and Sign Language interpreters should be provided through DPO/University partnership initiatives.
- strategies are pursued to ensure that relevant *professional bodies* and associations and the SAMDC professional boards (e.g. for doctors, nurses, therapists, psychologists, social workers, guidance teachers etc.) identify the detailed implications of the proposals for the functions and roles of their members within education, and support the development of these competencies within higher education institutions and in continuing education programmes.
- existing programmes aimed at developing the capacity of *parents* are supported, and the need for additional programmes identified. The development of a *National Parent Charter Campaign* should be supported.
- In all of the above, programmes should be encouraged to include *community resources* (including parents, NGOs, DPOs) in the planning, development, and teaching of programmes.

### 9.3.9 Optimal Utilisation of Resources

Initiation of rationalisation of *existing education support services* should occur within districts, regions, and where necessary, between provinces. This should occur through the integration of existing support services into district 'pools', with deployment to centres of learning where most required. 'Twinning' and 'clustering' of centres of learning to facilitate sharing of material and human resources should also be pursued.

Creative *utilisation of human resources* should be pursued in an attempt to ensure that enabling mechanisms are in place to address barriers to learning and development. This should include the use of existing guidance teachers, learning support teachers (e.g. remedial and special/adaptation class teachers), therapists, psychologists, social workers, doctors and nurses and other specialist personnel, *and* educators, learners, parents, and community resources.

*Interim arrangements relating to specialised centres of learning* should be developed to ensure that minimal interruption in the learning process occurs. Learners experiencing significant barriers to learning and development which cannot immediately be addressed in ordinary learning contexts or learners who require to learn through SA Sign Language who are currently outside of the system should be accommodated in existing specialised learning contexts, even if this results in slight over-crowding. Home-based and community-based programmes should be pursued in consultation with NGOs where formal accommodation cannot be made available in the short term, but only with written permission from the relevant MEC.

In the transition phase the emphasis should be on developing the capacity of centres of learning to address diverse needs, drawing on existing expertise in and outside of specialised learning contexts and district support facilities, and facilitating the access of learners with disabilities and other specific needs to the most enabling setting. This will include facilitating access for learners who are currently outside of the education system, and facilitating mobility between various learning contexts.

### 9.3.10 Intersectoral Collaboration and Co-operative Governance

The Department of Education must identify where formal inter-departmental co-operation needs to be developed to ensure that diverse needs and barriers to learning and development are addressed. Where government departments are required to share responsibility, clear lines of accountability and responsibility for planning, execution and funding should be identified.

Existing intersectoral committees and forums should be utilised and further developed to facilitate intersectoral.

### **9.3.11 Conclusion of Phase One**

Phase One should be evaluated in terms of its objectives at the end of 1999. At this time the IIC will have completed its work and will cease to exist. Recommendations for further goals and tasks should be made to the National Centre for research around addressing barriers to learning and development which should be established by the Ministry of Education by the year 2000. The Centre should drive Phase Two of the Action Plan together with the National Council for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Development (NCABLD), the National Education Department and the nine Provincial Education Departments.

## **9.4. ACTION PLAN FOR PHASE TWO (2000-2005)**

### **9.4.1 Introduction**

The goals and tasks for Phase Two will be based on the recommendations of the NCSNET/NCESS, IIC and the National Council (NCABLD). The National Centre for research which will be established during Phase One will have to interpret the findings of the IIC and support the national and provincial departments in realising the recommendations of the NCSNET/NCESS and IIC.

### **9.4.2 Policy, Legislation, Advocacy and Monitoring**

- Learnings from phase one projects and developments within provinces should be fed into ongoing policy and legislative processes. The National Centre for research around barriers to learning and development should play a central role in coordinating this.
- Given the history of discrimination in South Africa, continued public awareness and advocacy aimed at challenging attitudes relating to diversity and building an inclusive society will need to be pursued in a variety of forms.
- The implementation plan will require consistent monitoring to ensure success. The National Department and the National Centre for research referred to above should provide this role apart from organs of civil society. The Office on the Status of Disabled People, the provincial Disability Desks (presently being set up), the S.A. Human Rights Commission and the National Council for Educators are additional monitoring mechanisms.
- Research covering various areas relating to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development (e.g. inclusive education in various contexts; development of community-based support in financially under-resourced contexts; assessment processes; applicability of lifeskills across cultures; Sign Language research; Braille and other forms of materials development, etc.) should be pursued through various institutes, centres, universities, research councils, as well as departments, district support centres, centres of learning, NGOs, and other relevant organisations and institutions. Action research within community and education settings should be included in this.

### **9.4.3 Developing an Integrated System of Education**

- Involvement of expertise in addressing diversity and barriers to learning and development should continue within the Curriculum 2005, COLTS, and other national and provincial initiatives aimed at transforming the curriculum and institutions at ECD, FET, higher education, and adult education levels.
- Evaluation of *phase one projects* in the phasing in process should feed into the development of guidelines to provide direction to provinces, centres of learning, and programmes aimed at addressing diversity and barriers to learning and development.



- *Specialised learning contexts* should progressively cater only for learners in need of extremely specialised support and enabling mechanisms to minimise barriers to learning and development; learners who need to learn through the medium of SA Sign Language; and learners placed in segregated settings by 'judicial order'. Historically disadvantaged provinces should develop their capacity to address the needs of a variety of learners, including learners with 'high needs'. Where 'high support' is required, units at ordinary schools should be built if there are no existing specialised centres of learning to cater for a particular 'high need'.
- As *Curriculum 2005* moves progressively through the different phases of general education and training, most learners who have historically not been adequately catered for in the curriculum (e.g. learners with disability, homeless children) will be able to be accommodated within ordinary learning settings.
- Having clarified *assessment* procedures during the previous phase, this phase should focus on setting up adequate assessment procedures at every centre of learning, with support from district resources.
- All sections within departments of education should develop the capacity to address diverse needs and barriers to learning and development. The '*infusion*' approach should therefore be implemented during this period. This should be co-ordinated through a coordinating committee located directly under the Head of Department concerned.

#### 9.4.4 Developing Barrier-Free Physical and Psychosocial Learning Environments

- Departments must ensure that the building of all *new* centres of learning incorporate the building standards required to ensure that barrier-free access is promoted.
- Departments should identify centres of learning - in all bands of education - that should be targeted for *renovation* to ensure barrier-free access to the built environment. Initially one centre of learning in each band per district or equivalent area should be targeted. It is suggested that centres of learning that reveal a wish to become more inclusive, or are already attempting to do so, should be considered first. Appropriate support and incentives should be linked to this.
- National guidelines should be developed for *existing* national, provincial, and local *school development initiatives* to assist them in including issues pertaining to diversity and the minimising, removal and prevention of barriers to learning and development through the development of enabling mechanisms in their programmes. This includes 'whole-school' development programmes aimed at providing quality education within an organisation development framework; the ECD pilot project (including ECD centres which are attempting to develop an inclusive and supportive learning environment); other existing pilot programmes attempting to develop an inclusive learning environment; and the 'health promoting schools' project being developed in South Africa in partnership with other parts of Africa.
- *Institutional business' plans* at all centres of learning should be required to indicate how they will address diversity and address barriers to learning and development.

#### 9.4.5 Developing a Flexible Curriculum

- Continued involvement of experts in issues pertaining to addressing diversity and barriers to learning and development in the evolving *Curriculum 2005* process should be ensured.
- Practical strategies should be pursued to facilitate the *transition from school/further/higher education to work*. Existing programmes should be supported and expanded - particularly to ensure that the needs of learners with disabilities are being addressed. Rural redress should receive particular attention. It is proposed that an intersectoral task team be established with representation by Education, Labour, Health, Welfare, Trade and Industry, and relevant NGOs.
- *Peer-education* or child-to-child approaches to teaching and learning and providing support should be highlighted effective enabling mechanisms to minimise barriers to learning and development and to

accommodate diversity in the classroom. This should be pursued within the context of Curriculum 2005 programmes, and health promoting schools projects.

- Once clarification of basic assistive devices required by some learners with disabilities has been achieved (in Phase One), the backlog of *assistive devices* to learners who require them should be completed during this period. Also during this period, Departments of Health and Education need to ensure that all basic functional and education-related assistive devices are made available to new learners who require them.
- Programmes to ensure the development of *Sign Language*, and Sign Language interpreters and trainers, should be in place and be progressively become available to all learners, educators and parents who require or wish to learn Sign Language. Expansion of the pool of interpreters to a nationally acceptable level should occur during this period.

#### **9.4.6 Promoting the Rights and Responsibilities of Parents, Educators and Learners**

- Programmes aimed at *parent empowerment* or capacity building should be supported - particularly within the context of supporting and strengthening parent organisations. Specific attention must be given to parent empowerment at specialised centres of learning where their involvement has historically been problematic.
- Procedures for ensuring adequate representation of or *advocacy for learners* with severe communication disabilities who cannot necessarily represent themselves on school governing bodies should be identified and pursued within the context of the development of SGBs in the country.
- *Educators* should be provided with ongoing support through the establishment of centre-of-learning-based support teams, peer support, support from the district support facilities, and ongoing professional development. This should include programmes that challenge educators' own prejudice towards learners experiencing barriers to learning and development and, in particular, towards learners with disabilities.
- *Structures* at all levels of the system should include adequate parent, educator and learner representation.

#### **9.4.7 Providing Effective Development Programmes for Educators and other Human Resources**

- All relevant *pre-service and in-service* training programmes should include issues pertaining to addressing diversity and barriers to learning and development.
- *Higher education* institutions should ensure that learners with *disabilities* are admitted into teacher education and relevant professional programmes, and the curriculum and support structures should accommodate these students. This includes ensuring that Braille services and Sign Language interpretation and note-taking are available.
- Sufficient programmes aimed at developing educators with *specialised competencies* in lifeskills education, counselling and learning support should be available nationally to ensure adequate provision of this expertise at centres of learning and at district level.
- *Professional boards and associations* of professions providing support to the education system should facilitate the development of transformed functions and roles of specialist support personnel.

#### **9.4.8 Intersectoral Collaboration**

- The proposed *coordinating structures within the departments of education* which focus on addressing diversity and overcoming and preventing barriers to learning and development should be constituted in such a way that they bring together the appropriate ministries and departments, professional interests and community resources around the common concern of addressing barriers to learning and development.
- Once clarity has been reached about *interministerial and interdepartmental structures* needed to ensure a co-ordinated effort to address diversity and barriers to learning and development (during Phase One), setting up

and activating these structures should occur. Ongoing appraisal of team work should focus on improvement of intersectoral collaboration.

- *Team work* should be supported and rewarded at all levels of the system.

#### **9.4.9 Developing Community-Based Support**

- During this phase *redress* of historically disadvantaged areas should to a large extent be addressed. Rationalisation of staff should occur in ways described in Phase One to achieve redress. An audit of existing services and support mechanisms should provide a basis for this process. This should include clarification of staffing requirements.
- Adequate *support* should be provided within a *variety of models*.
- *Guidelines* for providing support at centre-of-learning and district levels should be co-ordinated and made available to all concerned.
- Each centre of learning should develop a *centre-of-learning-based team* to ensure that diversity and barriers to learning and development are addressed. This should be facilitated through district support centres or equivalent structures.
- *Pre- and in-service programmes for the various education support personnel* in higher education and other institutions and programmes should incorporate issues pertaining to addressing diversity and barriers to learning and development. Some form of national audit and co-ordination should occur during this period.
- National and provincial departments of education need to support and monitor the move towards a more preventative and developmental approach to the *functions and roles* of support personnel.

#### **9.4.10 Developing Funding Strategies**

- The *funding plan* developed during Phase One should be *operationalised and reviewed* for adjustments during this period.

### **9.5. RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE PLAN OF ACTION**

#### **9.5.1 Government Funding Support**

##### **9.5.1.1 Earmarked Funding**

In the short and medium term, earmarked government funding should be provided. This should be used for, amongst others, the following purposes:

- Embarking on an extensive classroom building programme, in rural and disadvantaged areas in particular, that will substantially increase the capacity of centres of learning to accommodate all learners from surrounding communities. All new classrooms should be built according to building regulations to ensure barrier-free access.
- Making existing physical facilities accessible for learners with physical disabilities.
- Addressing the backlog of learning-related assistive devices needed by some learners with disabilities.
- Developing Braille materials and other learning materials required to ensure access for all learners.
- Funding whole-school/centre development programmes that include a focus on developing an inclusive and supportive environment.
- Developing 'master' trainers to spearhead the massive education and training drive for educators and support providers, and funding ongoing comprehensive reorientation and training programmes.
- Supporting parent empowerment programmes, including the National Parent Charter Campaign.
- A Public Education and Media Campaign
- Sign Language Development Programmes for teachers, parents and interpreters.

- Adult education programmes for Deaf adult learners and adults with visual disabilities previously excluded from the formal education system.

### **9.5.1.2 Ongoing Government Funding Support**

The education budget must provide facilities and human resources to ensure that sustainable implementation can occur. This includes:

- Funding of 'dedicated' posts to ensure that issues pertaining to diversity and addressing barriers to learning and development are infused within departments of education.
- Funding of all necessary posts at district level.
- Funding of all necessary posts for educators and class assistants at centre of learning level.
- Funding of all running costs relating to basics needed to ensure that barriers to learning and development are addressed.
- Supporting community and parent involvement.
- Funding of assistive devices and materials development required by some learners with disabilities (ie. those devices that relate directly to teaching and learning processes).

### **9.5.2 International Donor Support**

International donors can play an invaluable role in assisting the restructuring of education and training to provide support to ensure that all needs are addressed. This support should be elicited and encouraged, as long as built-in checks and balances are in place to ensure sustainability in the long-term. A clear strategy for international funding support should be developed.

International donor support should be targeted for these areas:

*Government-to-government funding:*

- Topping up government earmarked funding where necessary
- Provision of assistive devices and specialised materials development (e.g. Braille) - in particular, addressing the backlog
- Educator and education support personnel development programmes
- Media campaigns and public awareness
- Classroom building
- Support of the monitoring and evaluation process
- Support of further investigations required to address gaps in these proposals

*NGO-to-NGO funding:*

- Parent empowerment programmes
- Adult education programme for Deaf and blind adults previously excluded
- ECD early intervention programmes
- Attitude-changing programmes

### **9.5.3 The Private Sector**

Partnerships with various international and local bodies (including international donors, private enterprise, religious bodies, etc.) should be developed by all centres of learning to ensure quality education for all learners. This includes partnerships with the current sponsoring bodies of specialised centres of learning, as well as other forms of partnerships currently being developed in general education (e.g. programmes that aim to bring schools, business, NGOs, and government departments into a partnership that focuses on the development of quality education).

## **9.6 IN CONCLUSION**

Successful implementation of any policy is dependent on a number of factors, many of which have been highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. It is hoped that the resources and leadership required to make this work will be forthcoming, and that all learners will benefit accordingly. A fundamental premise of the NCSNET/NCESS is that developing a system of education that is responsive to diversity and addresses barriers to

learning and development will make a substantial contribution to the development of quality education for all in South Africa.

**SUMMARISED REPORT  
OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED FOLLOWING  
THE PUBLIC DISCUSSION DOCUMENT "EDUCATION FOR ALL"**

**BRIEF BACKGROUND**

The NCSNET/NCESS released two public discussion documents during 1997.

The first document was released by the NCSNET/NCESS in April 1997 and focused on the *Vision, Principles and Strategies* that would provide a framework for its work. A series of 18 workshops were held in all nine provinces to gather comments on the proposed vision and principals. All submissions received prior to the release of this document, as well as all submissions received which commented on the first public discussion document has been summarised and analysed separately, and were used in developing the second public discussion public document.

The second document "*Education for All - From 'Special Needs and Support' to Developing Quality Education for All Learners*" was released in August 1997. Once again, this was followed by a series of ten public hearings in all nine provinces, as well as a number of workshops with stakeholders from formerly disadvantaged communities who requested such workshops to enable them to participate in the public hearing process. The process culminated in the National Conference held from 25-27 September 1997 in Cape Town.

The workshops and public hearings held across the country, as well as the National Conference proved to be invaluable in facilitating public participation. The majority of submissions were submitted during the public hearings. It was interesting to note that a number of stakeholders objected to too little participation from the disability sector, whilst others complained about the process being dominated by the disability sector.

*This analysis covers written submissions received during and after the public hearings in response to the public discussion document "Education for All". It does not attempt to incorporate all comments, but rather to provide an overview of main thrusts or specific contestations contained in submissions.*

**ANALYSIS PROCESS**

All written submissions received were recorded (refer to Appendix F), and thereafter summarised.

The summary provides a record of aspects supported, aspects contested, areas of concern indicated, gaps identified and suggested improvements or specific recommendations according to the various chapters in the discussion document. The summary is therefore not an interpretation or analysis of submissions as such, but rather a reflection of actual comments provided.

All NCSNET/NCESS members were provided with the summary of all submissions, and were tasked with familiarising themselves with the specific comments relating to relevant chapters.

These comments were analysed against the agreed upon vision, principles and strategies (which received overwhelming support from stakeholders) and incorporated into the first draft of the final report to Minister Bengu which was circulated to members prior to the final meeting with NaCoCo for ELSEN and the ESS Reference Group on 11 November 1997.

The NCSNET/NCESS can assure stakeholders that all concerns, comments and suggested improvements were considered for inclusion in the final report to Minister Bengu.

**WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED**

A total of 219 written submissions were received in time for this analysis. The majority of these (55) came from special schools or schools with special classes, as well as from the disability NGO sector (40), which includes

both disability service organisations (19) and disabled people and parent organisations (18). Participation by individual parents (38) of predominantly learners with disabilities was good, and a few learners with disabilities (3) also sent in individual submissions.

Participation by education, health and welfare departments (33) was in the main from the divisions dealing traditionally with special needs education, education support services, people with disabilities and youth at risk.

A large number of teacher organisations (19) participated during the process. The majority of associations representing traditional categories of professional ESS Personnel (8) made submissions.

A number of Institutions for Higher Education (8), as well as ECD NGO's (5) participated.

Some submissions were received from schools governed under the Child Care Act (4), i.e. reform schools, places of safety and schools of industry, as well as from NGO's (7) focusing on youth at risk, overage learners, gay and lesbian learners and learners with high ability.

Five submissions were received from mainstream schools or teachers.

By far the majority of submissions were positive and focused on suggested improvements and additional recommendations which should be included in the final report.

A few submissions raised more questions than providing suggested improvements, making these contributions difficult to translate into actual recommendations.

The majority of submissions called for a more co-ordinated and intensive media campaign to raise awareness about education support and change attitudes in particular to discrimination learners with disabilities experience.

### **GAPS IDENTIFIED**

A number of stakeholders felt that insufficient attention was given to the diversity in the learner population, and that the recommendations did not sufficiently accommodate the barriers to learning that overage, and high ability learners, gay and lesbian learners, learners with learning difficulties, and learners with severe psychiatric, behavioural, intellectual or multiple disabilities have to contend with.

It was furthermore noted that critical issues such as transport, hostels, medication, alternative and augmentative communication and extracurricular activities such as sport participation and development were not covered in the public discussion document.

Early childhood development was also insufficiently covered, in particular the first (0-3 years) and last years (6-9 years). Access to lifelong learning after compulsory schooling for learners with severe intellectual or multiple disabilities was also insufficiently covered.

Learning contexts such as home schooling, hospital schools and the movement between these and formal contexts, as well as the particular barriers to lifelong learning experienced by learners living in remote farming areas were also not covered sufficiently.

A number of stakeholders noted poor participation from so-called mainstream centres of learning as well as mainstream teachers and learners during the public hearings as a particular concern.

Concern was also expressed at the lack of access to the document in all South Africa's official languages, and that having two documents created some confusion among stakeholders.

### **VISION, PRINCIPLES, STRATEGIES AND TERMINOLOGY**

Overwhelming support was expressed for the vision, principles and strategies, with only a few dissenting voices who felt that it was unachievable and unrealistic. One stakeholder also called for specific acknowledgement that support for inclusion is on a socio-political belief system and not on established facts.

The majority of stakeholders also appeared to relate well to approaching 'special needs' from a barrier rather than needs perspective. Those opposing this approach felt that some barriers were intrinsic and were therefore needs rather than barriers, as these could never be removed. Concern was also expressed at the apparent lack of recognition for diversity within the principles and strategies.

The majority of stakeholders felt that there was a definite need for a range of learning contexts to be available, and that learner and parental choice be given preference in deciding which context would be most suitable.

### **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

A number of stakeholders provided valuable information with regards to some of the gaps identified by the NCSNET/NCESS by providing statistics, a description of services offered as well as examples of innovative practice based on the vision and principles in the discussion document.

A few submissions expressed concern at the lack of scientific research conducted due to time and financial constraints, and recommended that this be pursued after the work of the NCSNET/NCESS has been completed.

A number of stakeholders furthermore felt that more attention should have been given to the real experiences of learners and their families who experience barriers to learning (case studies), and that resources within the NGO sector are insufficiently recognised. It was also felt that a more comprehensive analysis of the education system's present ability to respond to barriers within the system is needed (including an assessment of the School Register of Needs) to enable us to understand the magnitude of the change process needed.

### **POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

There was general consensus that the policy and legislative framework was comprehensive and provided a valuable context for the proposed paradigm shift in how we approach the traditional fields of special education and education support services.

There was one request to specifically recognise the compounded nature of discrimination learners with 'special needs' have experienced in the past on the basis of race, gender and disability, as it was felt that these learners are in need of more protection, guidance and redress in the future.

### **CURRICULUM & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT**

The majority of recommendations in the chapters on curriculum and institutional development and assessment were supported, and stakeholders recommended that these two chapters be dealt with as one in the final report. This indicated a definite shift towards and support for approaching assessment from a curriculum rather than a placement perspective.

Comments focused on suggestions for more detailed information under each recommendation.

Particular attention was given to the need to follow up early identification with early intervention through structured educational programmes as soon as a disability has been identified, the need to have access to lifelong support services such as therapy, in particular after formal schooling, the need for Braille, enlarged print and audio-material as part of learning and teaching materials and the inclusion of Alternative and Augmentative Communication Strategies as part of essential assistive devices.



A few stakeholders - mainly from psychologists and organisations representing 'gifted' or learners with high ability - contested the discontinuation of routine administration of group tests of intelligence. This should however be seen against the background of overwhelming support for the discontinuation of these tests from the majority of stakeholders.

Another contested area was the area of Sign Language as medium of instruction for Deaf learners, with the Deaf community coming out very strongly in support of the recommendation. Learners who are hard of hearing requested that choice be allowed.

A number of stakeholders also called for provision for education support services to be provided on an individual and specialised basis for those in need thereof.

There were also strong calls for more specificity with regards to recommendations on Curriculum 2005, as it was felt that outcomes currently poses a number of barriers for learners with sensory and/or severe intellectual disabilities.

Concern was also expressed at the apparent exclusion of schools for learners with special educational needs from Curriculum 2005 training in some provinces.

A major gap identified was barriers to learning experienced due to second language learning and teaching, including low expectations from educators, discrimination, lack of cultural peers and role models, and confusion with regards to appropriate support for second language learners .

The need for intensive democracy, human rights and anti-bias education to reduce bullying in centres of learning - whether on the basis of disability, high ability, sexual orientation, age, race or gender - was stressed in many submissions. There was also overwhelming support for more life skills, vocational and skills training throughout compulsory education for all.

Another major concern expressed throughout submissions was the additional stress and pressure the recommendations would place on educators, who are already over-stretched and demoralised due to multi-cultural, multi-lingual classes, changes in disciplinary measures allowed and the redeployment process. It was felt that more specific attention with regards to support for teachers were needed.

Parent organisations in particular felt that the recognition of parents be paramount to the development of health promoting and whole centres of learning, as recognition of the role parents and parent organisations should play will automatically lead to increased participation by parents.

## **ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE**

Strong support was expressed for the availability of a range of centres of learning or options for placement for all learners.

The development of inclusive centres of learning enjoyed strong support, and a number of stakeholders felt that implementation should be started at early childhood development level, including crèches, pre-school, the reception year and the foundation phase. A contested area was the need for 'ordinary' centres of learning to develop capacity to accommodate diversity before integration of especially learners with disabilities could take place on the one hand, and learners with disabilities who are currently excluded demanding access with immediate effect.

There were a small percentage of submissions that advocated strongly for total segregation of learners with disabilities. This related to the fear that they will be laughed at, that mainstream teachers may choose not to teach them, and that they will disrupt classes, etc.

A definite need for the continuation of specialised and segregated contexts for learners who require individualised and specialised assistance due to the particular nature of the barriers to learning they experience, was expressed. There was strong objection against the use of segregated contexts as "a last option".

Some confusion existed with regards to education provision for Deaf learners among stakeholders who had access to only the summarised version of the Public Discussion Document. The full discussion document clarified the fact that the majority of Deaf learners can learn within specialised contexts, as they require Sign Language as medium of teaching and learning.

There was very strong support for young children with developmental delay and disabilities to have access to formal education programmes from at least 3 years of age if not younger. Whereas parents and learners felt quite strongly that these programmes should be community-based to facilitate family involvement and empowerment, schools for learners with special education needs felt that these learners need to access boarding facilities at these schools.

It was also felt that insufficient attention was given to learners who were excluded from formal schooling in the past, and who would find it virtually impossible to access lifelong learning without targeted intervention strategies due to particular communication (Sign Language and Alternative and Augmentative Communication) and learning material (Braille and large print) needs.

A number of submissions from organisations focusing on learners with various degrees of intellectual disabilities expressed concern that insufficient attention was given to the particular needs of these learners.

Recommendations pertaining to governance were in the main supported, but sponsoring bodies and schools of industry and reform schools in particular felt that additional recommendations are needed to reflect their participation and composition respectively.

Strong support was expressed for the proposed infusion of 'special needs and support' at national and provincial level. Concern was however expressed at the need for an effective co-ordinating mechanism which could facilitate and monitor the process. Strong calls were also made by some schools for learners with special education needs to be governed from a national rather than provincial level. Others however felt that these schools need to be integrated into the delivery system within district contexts.

The establishment of centre-based support teams received overwhelming support, with a number of suggestions for improvement as to how these teams could be constituted.

The recommendations on inter-sectoral collaboration were in general identified as lacking sufficient detail to make it meaningful - it was however identified as a critical enabling mechanism in removing barriers to learning.

A number of stakeholders pointed out that all forms of discrimination as it relates to language and disability be outlawed in admission processes.

### **STAFFING AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

A large number of stakeholders recommended that these two chapters be dealt with as a whole.

Motivations both for and against the present ELRC ratings in terms of weighting and grading of learners were received, with some calling for more factors to be considered in the weighting and grading criteria, whilst others calling for its eventual discontinuation.

No consensus existed as to which department(s) should employ education support staff, and calls were made for provinces and districts to determine this themselves. The lack of universal district boundaries between departments (e.g. Health and Education) was identified as a major barrier to inter-sectoral collaboration by a number of stakeholders.

There was very strong support for service conditions of education support personnel in particular to be standardised and equalised.

Very strong motivations were received for the employment of education support personnel within centres of learning on the one hand, as well as for all education support personnel to be employed by district offices and then deployed to specific centres of learning where the need for specialised individual service delivery existed.

There was general support for the transformation of the role education support personnel should play. Valuable suggestions for improvement to 'flesh out' the recommendations were received, and calls were made that all new roles be negotiated in the ELRC before becoming policy. Concern was also expressed that 'too much' is expected of teachers.

Little consensus around the use of classroom assistants existed, with calls for both the extension of this category as well as for its discontinuation.

A number of submissions objected to the deployment of urban-based education support personnel to support rural contexts both on grounds of labour issues and the fact that it will not necessarily be appropriate for rural areas. Strong calls were made for the development of indigenous support systems in rural areas, and that redress take place through funding allocations for the development of effective capacity building programmes in rural areas.

There was a strong call from parents, NGO's and practising teachers to be included in all Curriculum 2005 and school governance training teams, and for the ECD pilot project to be extended to the 3-6 years and 6-9 years age groups.

The recommendations relating to the development, support and training of teachers, education support personnel, education management and parents received strong support, with a number of suggested improvements provided. Main concerns centred around lack of funding commitment by authorities which usually results in wonderful plans on paper with little implementation taking place. Specific recommendations were made with regards to the reorientation and training of existing specialised teachers to become mentors, as well as for the continuing need for these teachers to facilitate learning in the classroom.

## **FUNDING**

Stakeholders in general agreed with the framework for the new funding model. Concern was however expressed at the lack of specific information, in particular the lack of guidelines and norms and standards to ensure that funding allocated to 'special needs and support' are spent appropriately by districts; lack of clear norms and standards for funding of schools for learners with special educational needs; lack of specified minimum levels of service delivery; lack of norms and standards as to specific allocations for capacity building and training; as well as lack of funding models for early childhood development, adult basic education and training and higher education.

Gaps and other concerns included the lack of costing of the recommendations; funding difficulties related to inter-provincial placements; and that specific allocations should be made towards removing barriers for learners with disabilities.

Existing schools for learners with special education needs motivated strongly for their funding basis not to be eroded as it would lead to eventual closure, whilst NGO's and parent organisations presently providing learning opportunities within the informal sector demanded to receive financial support from the Department of Education. Concern was also expressed that less funding for schools for learners with special education needs not result in less funding for learners with disabilities.

## **STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Stakeholders expressed general support for the principles and key characteristics of the strategic implementation plan.

It was, however, on the whole felt that the strategic implementation plan was too vague and needed much more attention in terms of prioritisation, time frames, transitional arrangements, and the role of NGO's and financing.

Implementation through pilot projects in all districts received considerable support, and clusters of centres of learning at all levels of education in both the formal and informal sector were identified as an important strategy.

Support existed for international exchange during the initial phases of implementation through teacher exchange programmes, education management exchange programmes, NGO exchange programmes, etc .

Again, tension existed between those advocating for implementation of inclusion only once all support is in place, and those advocating for immediate accommodation in the education system, as it was felt that visibility of learners with disabilities in particular will force change.

There were strong calls not to disturb learners presently accommodated in segregated centres of learning by forcing them into 'ordinary' centres of learning, but to rather start at the early childhood development phase.

Consensus existed around the need to prioritise reorientation and capacity building and training of existing staff, and the use of existing service development vehicles e.g. the COLTS programme and Curriculum 2005.

## **CONCLUSION**

Considerable resources, time and effort went into the public participation process throughout the work of the NCSNET/NCESS.

The significant amount of submissions (including the .... received between January and August), and the general quality of submissions received was a clear indication that the majority of stakeholders who are directly associated or involved with education and support provision for learners who experience barriers to learning were reached.

Less success was achieved in actively engaging the so-called 'mainstream'. This was not due to lack of effort, but is rather a clear indication of the isolation in which 'special needs and support' was responded to in the past. The NCSNET/NCESS does acknowledge this as a shortcoming, and specific recommendations will be made with regards to involve the so-called 'mainstream'.

The NCSNET/NCESS wish to express our sincerest appreciation to all stakeholders for the significant effort, cost and dedication that went into the participation process. We also wish to apologise for tight time-frames and possible oversights during the consultation process. However, we did our best within the limited time and resources available.

We can assure you that your voices had been heard, and that each and every submission was considered in the compilation of the final report.

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING/NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES**

**EDUCATION FOR ALL**

**FROM SPECIAL NEEDS AND SUPPORT TO DEVELOPING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL LEARNERS**

**IMPRESSIONS OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**25-27 SEPTEMBER 1997  
Cape Town - South Africa**

## SHARING A VISION

The conference was held as part of the consultation process, following the regional hearings into the draft report of the Commission. It emerged from speaker after speaker, that while there were gaps in the report, a need for clarification in some areas and disagreements about some policy details, the delegates to this conference both from the floor and the platform, agreed with the vision of the Commission of a more inclusive education system that would contribute to building a more inclusive society in South Africa.

Delegates heard about how the report had started with terms of reference to examine the areas of 'education of learners with special educational needs' and 'education support services' and to make recommendations about how these areas might be changed. The enquiries into these overlapping areas had been amalgamated at an early stage in order to create a single set of recommendations on creating and supporting an education system that would be responsive to all its learners. 'Special needs' were to be interpreted broadly: the commission was concerned with identifying and minimising all barriers to learning. There would be an emphasis on minimising and removing barriers to learning within the system rather than identifying 'defects' and remedying them in learners. Support for the system would be through teacher education, curriculum development and local support networks utilising all available local resources in the district, centres of learning and communities. The means for reducing the difficulties of learners was seen to be the transformation of centres of education through the development of inclusive education. The idea was to develop national policies that could minimise learning difficulties and find ways to overcome the barriers to learning within the education system, that are distinctively South African, rooted in the full range of realities of present day South Africa.

Sandy Lazarus, Chair of the Commission, argued that the policy changes that the Commission was recommending required clear leadership from Central and Provincial governments, and implementation of these policies would need to be closely monitored and enforced. However they would not work without the involvement and commitment of local communities, teachers and other professionals. It was important to bring everyone on board.

Learners who experience barriers to learning were seen to include; learners with disabilities, both those within education and the thousands currently excluded from education because they are regarded as ineducable or because of a lack of goodwill or provision; those who do not receive a curriculum matched to their abilities, knowledge and interests, (this group also encompasses many learners whose first language is not the same as the language of instruction in their centre of learning); learners excluded from the system because of a lack of resources; students in hospital or with chronic health problems including those learners with HIV who develop AIDS; learners orphaned by parental illness or violence; victims of child abuse; street children; and school-age mothers. As one participant said:

*"Two years ago, I visited a secondary school in an urban area. It was July of that year. The principal informed us that there were 52 cases of teenage pregnancy since January. There was no support in place for these children. Most drop out of school."*

This broad view of the learner population that the Commission was trying to address was necessitated by circumstances of South Africa as well as being in tune with the global trends on inclusion identified by Anver Saloojee from Canada. However it implied a radical restructuring of professional training and a restructuring of funding policies presently geared to responding to a narrower view of learners with special educational needs. Despite the fact that many of the conference participants focused on issues around disability, the broader concern with all barriers to learning was generally welcomed.

Speakers acknowledged that the idea of inclusion was not new. Centres of learning had always contained a wide diversity of learners. What was new was the attempt to develop a nation-wide policy to revitalise education by supporting centres of learning to work more effectively with learner diversity and to enable excluded and marginalised learners to participate as fully as possible in the mainstream.

The main disagreement with the detail of the Commission's vision was voiced by representatives of the Deaf, but also to an extent by representatives of the blind, who felt that separate specialised provision should be retained for some students.

Shuaib Chalklen, Director of the Disability Programme, Office of the Deputy President, stressed that a policy of inclusion in education was required by the Constitution. The principles of upholding human dignity, and equalising opportunity could not be compromised. He argued that *"inclusion is part of building a human rights culture in our country.....education is the key to granting equalisation of opportunity.....we need to provide an education that enhances the dignity of everyone"*. The conference participants were committed to an education system that would uphold human rights and restore human dignity to those learners who were excluded from the education system. Many delegates underlined the need for the Commission to be bold and decisive in its recommendations. As one delegate put it "let us not mince words, there are to be no outcasts from education in South Africa".

Trevor Coombe, Deputy Director General, Department of Education stressed that the stringent national fiscal policy would make the implementation of education transformation, considerably more difficult, but he argued too that the vision should not be diminished. The absence of resources could not be used as a reason to perpetuate the exclusion of South Africans from opportunities in education. The view was expressed that the economic realities of the country should be faced and there should be a recognition that the development of effective policies required the careful matching of strategies to local circumstances. The development of inclusive policies was as much about a change in mindset as to do with the redeployment of resources.

Plans needed to be precise and practical. Policies needed to work for all South Africans and would inevitably involve redress from areas of high resource to places where there is little. It was suggested that the discipline of developing policy for all South Africans might lead some to reflect on whether their particular concerns could be translated into a truly national policy. Such a policy could be seen to be as much about nation building as about education. Communities and centres of learning could be seen to create and sustain each other. While there was a cost in the development of quality community-based education for all, there was also a substantial cost in not building up community-based education in terms of the destruction of a social fabric that is already all too fragile in some areas.

There was a great need for people to put themselves in the position of others from different communities. Learning from the experience of others was a central theme of the conference. There were people present from the economically richer countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, England and Canada, as well as poorer countries of Antigua, Zambia, Uganda, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, and Lesotho. South Africa had features of richer nations in the level of general and specialised provisions which has been disproportionately available to the white population and areas where provision had to be started from scratch. Conference participants were ready to learn from everybody's experience whether from countries in the North or the South, though experience in countries with economic conditions more similar to the poorer areas of South Africa could be of particular value.

Participants suggested that the experience of others could help to define the direction in which they wanted to go and they could then draw on both positive and negative examples to help shape practice locally. However it was important that models taken from other countries should not be used to diminish the resources in local communities by failing to build on local knowledge and cultures. For example, people welcomed the idea of developing problem solving communities within centres of learning taken from Canada, where one teacher's concerns about a learner or curriculum issue, would be examined collaboratively with colleagues, but they also recognised that this collective way of supporting others and resolving problems was a part of African cultures, and there was considerable expertise that could be mobilised locally.

There was a clear wish to keep all stakeholders involved in the process of policy development. Everyone had a contribution to make, but everyone would have to change their way of working and no-one was above training. It was pointed out that no adult had been through a 'normal' educational experience given the way education had been disrupted by the years of apartheid. It was also apparent that many people were trying to keep pace with their knowledge of the current changes. While some people felt that there was too much change, it was suggested that change in South Africa was inevitable, but that the vision and strategies emerging from the commission could help to ease the process of change by giving stakeholders a sense of shared commitment and a degree of control over the changes in their lives.

## **DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING CENTRES OF LEARNING THAT RESPOND TO DIVERSITY**

Centres of learning should be developed to be able to respond to the diversity of learners that they contain and to draw in those learners within their communities who are currently excluded. Developing training and support

for the inclusion of *disabled learners*, while important in itself, can also play a significant role in drawing attention to other aspects of the diversity of the learner population.

Many examples were offered for assisting centres of learning to better respond to the diversity they contained, using peer tutoring, collaborative group work, collaborative teaching and problem solving, experience based learning which applied at any phase of education. Above all there was a concern to maximise the use of local resources within communities, including parents and adults with disabilities, learners, and the scarce and valuable resources of specialist professionals both inside and outside special schools. Therapists and psychologists had an important contribution to make to the development of inclusive practice, fostering 'partnerships', supporting teachers, contributing to curriculum development and finding ways to pass their skills to others, rather than operating in an enclosed 'expert-client' relationship. They needed to become creative partners in the policy process.

But in creating support structures for all centres of learning it was recognised that in the main these would have to draw on their own resources and those in the surrounding community supported by district support teams. Abigail Tukulu spoke of the realities of her province in the Eastern Cape, which had 2.1 million learners, 80% of which spoke neither English or Afrikaans. Not a single psychologist in the province spoke the language of this vast majority of learners. Yet they had their own structures of support which could be recognised and fostered. Other delegates expressed a need for research on the informal learning arrangements within communities as a basis for uncovering community expertise.

In addition to the maximising of local resources, teacher education and curriculum development could be seen as the primary support structures to enable centres of learning to better respond to diversity. District support teams, drawing on the experience of other countries such as Uganda and Lesotho, would be necessary to identify and provide training for the development of more local supporting teams and cultures and practices within individual centres of learning. In this process all resources had to be utilised. This was not an option of last resort but good practice in any setting.

There would be a wide variety of practices within district support teams which would reflect the very different histories, cultures and economic and social conditions of different districts as well as the commitment and creativity of communities. There would never be a 'model' of practice that could be generalised to all contexts. As Lilian Mariga of Lesotho argued: *"I find it strange that you are sitting here trying to debate what to include in the [teacher education] programmes. We need to ask them what they need"*.

The experience of educators in Lesotho, Uganda and Kenya was of critical significance for the conference for it showed how education could be transformed within limited budgets. Delegates learned how moves were made towards an education system for all, and that this did not depend on highly specialised, high cost support. From the Ugandan experience, it emerged that keeping everyone informed is critical to the success of policy change. There is a need for massive education of the public and for information dissemination at all levels from the Ministry of Education, to district centres, parents, NGOs, Disabled Peoples Organisations, and the community.

In Lesotho, an important part of the process of change was setting up a "Parent Mobilisation Resource Group". Parents were encouraged to develop skills and knowledge about legislation, policies and rights. Awareness training is carried out by organisations of people with disabilities. They provide training for all teachers.

Both in Uganda and Lesotho variations on a cascade model were used. At present in Lesotho the 10 pilot schools are each running courses for 10 neighbouring schools with the assistance of personnel in the district education department. Delegates pointed out that such a model in which the trained become the trainers, could not work if teachers or other professionals were trained in isolation so that they did not have the power to effect change in their own institutions. Training should focus on all staff or at least a substantial number of staff within any centre of learning, or district office or provincial department.

Parents of learners with disabilities at the conference were seen as an immense resource for supporting the development of education and delegates supported their right to have their voice heard. A parent argued:

*" We want our children to be in our community. We want education for them in our community. We want to play a part in their education. We want to change attitudes in our community through our children."*



*Our children belong in this community like everybody else. We do not want our children to be taken away from home to live in a school far away from the community."*

A message about what empowered parents might achieve was forcibly expressed by Washeida Sait of the Disabled Children Action Group:

*"Empowered parents are effective tools for development transformation. Our collective expertise.....is worth more than years of professional tutoring at an academy.....development transformation is about giving the power to the powerless and giving voice to the voiceless. However it is the fear of losing power, that cripples the minds of otherwise intelligent human beings."*

### **Curriculum 2005 and outcomes based assessment**

Curriculum 2005 and the use of outcome based learning were seen as an integral part of the process of educational transformation at general education and further education phases. But it was essential to move quickly to integrate the Commission's vision into pre-service and in-service teacher education in order to contribute to the development of education cultures which value diversity. One delegate expressed concern that individuals involved in training teachers for implementation of Curriculum 2005 do not understand that Curriculum 2005 and OBE are inclusive in nature. The idea that Curriculum 2005 is ONE curriculum for all learners and that all learners must have access to this common curriculum has to be understood by those involved in training. For example, once teachers understood why learners with limited academic attainments should be part of the group they could adapt curriculum outcomes to what is important for them to learn. For a particular student social and communication skills might be of greater importance than traditional academic outcomes. It was important, however, to keep expectations high for all students.

One person suggested that the Commission was anticipating that all learners should achieve the same outcomes. Others pointed out that this was a misunderstanding: inclusion required respect for diversity, including diversity of outcomes. It was suggested that an expectation of uniformity, for example that the vast majority of learners would pass a single grade examination, kept standards artificially low. Curriculum 2005 and the move to outcomes based education should free teachers to allow different students within the same group to achieve at their personally highest level, whether currently they are regarded as 'slow' or 'gifted'.

### **Models of assessment**

Several delegates argued that curriculum based assessment, would largely replace psychometric assessment which at present leads to individual special programmes or is a precursor to decisions about placement. It was argued that using tests as a precursor to either placement or grade promotion was an infringement of an individual's constitutional rights. Certainly there seemed to be some confusion amongst delegates about the rejection of grade retention as a feature of schooling in South Africa.

The delegate from Kenya argued that the had to be simplified because of limited resources: *'In depth assessment .....is unrealistic in my country. If that had to happen learners in rural areas would have to wait a life-time before being assessed'*.

Changes in the approach to assessment did not mean that the skills of psychologists, for example, were redundant but they might have to look to psychological models outside of the psychometric tradition for generating their more of their work in the future. The idea of diagnostic testing might be transformed to include the assessment of the curriculum, the organisation and delivery of teaching as well as the analysis of the possibilities for supporting the next stages of learning of the learner.

Screening for hearing and visual difficulties would be essential and linked to primary health care teams, though if the Ugandan model were adapted it might involve procedures using readily available inexpensive equipment that were easy to administer. One delegate reported on a group of students who failed their grade test, many of whom were found to have easily rectifiable hearing difficulties.

The discussions of the phases of education tended to emphasise disability rather than other barriers to learning though there were a range of concerns and a wish to build learning centres responsive to all. In this inclusive spirit most delegates rejected the idea of a separate National Institute which might be seen as being about a special system, wishing rather to see the concerns of the Commission integrated into the Institute for Lifelong Learning.

### **Early Child Development (ECD).**

Delegates agreed that ECD centres could be involved with children and their families from the birth of a child and that a focus had to be placed on the prevention of disability and disease as well as on early identification and intervention. In the Educational Assessment and Resource Services Programme in Uganda, these three emphases are linked to a fourth of 'integration', involving the development of inclusive community-based services. In a survey undertaken in Cape Town additional areas identified for teacher development at ECD level were attitude change, parental involvement, classroom management, specific information about disability and an understanding of Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes Based Education.

There was concern about the lack of co-ordination of pre-school provision, which might be run by welfare departments, health, education, NGOs or through a number of informal community projects. In Uganda the district committee is responsible for such co-ordination, though Ugandan districts are much larger than districts in South Africa. There was general agreement that a data base of services should be held at district and provincial levels. Co-ordinating structures would facilitate the development of parent groups and networks of providers and the sharing of expertise. There was a suggestion that the Education Department might take greater responsibility for provision for 3-5 year old learners, with earlier provision being linked to health centres who would have responsibilities towards expectant mothers and new-born babies, though some felt that all provision should at least be registered with the education service. However all centres, however controlled and financed, should connect with health clinics. It was suggested that an 'at risk' register should be established and help and support for parents of children on such a register should be available at local centres.

In moving to a more co-ordinated system of ECD centres, particular care had to be taken to value the contribution, including the expertise, of caregivers in informal centres. Where education departments were taking over services there was sometimes a tendency to initiate changes which disempowered staff at these centres.

### **General education**

As in other phases of education the stark contrasts between 1st and 3rd world conditions existing in the same country, even in the same districts needed to be addressed.

Thousands of learners who should have a place in a school are not attending school. But delegates emphasised that many learners who experience barriers to learning were already in the system, although their needs might not be being met. It was essential to convey to schools through legislation that every school has learners with special educational needs or learners who experience barriers to learning to which schools had to respond appropriately. At present guidance was ambiguous in the South Africa School Act, implying that schools need to respond to learners with 'special needs' *if* they had them.

There was a massive amount of work to be done in implementing National and Provincial language policies, developing effective approaches to supporting learners being taught through an additional language within schools and using the diversity of languages as a major national resource. Sign Language should become an optional subject for all students and a familiarity with Braille should be part of the general curriculum in understanding communication. In the case of learners with disabilities, the teachers and other professionals in 'special schools' had a considerable role in supporting mainstream centres as did adults with disabilities and parents.

A large-scale public awareness and teacher in-service programme was required alongside changes to initial training of teachers, though it was emphasised that the precise elements of a development programme would depend on the particular conditions in a district.

The programme for introducing Curriculum 2005 as well as the training offered to governors, were seen to be golden opportunities for creating a new awareness of learners excluded by the curriculum or excluded from centres of learning. There had to be a common terminology for people working on the implementation of different aspects of educational policy so that people could easily make links between aspects of their practice.

### **Further education**

The Report of the Commission on Further Education and Training had been released just before the conference and there was an urgent need for the Commission to articulate its recommendations in the light of those in the

Report. One delegate had just completed a survey of 60 technical colleges. There was no support system for responding to learner diversity, including learners with disabilities, in any of the colleges.

While technical colleges were likely to transform into community colleges there would still be a need for support to enable learners to access the curriculum. The Deaf community felt that the need for Deaf interpreters to support Deaf learners in Further Education and Training, is critical.

It was stressed that further education overlapped with high school level, that is, grades 10,11,12. and that there were opportunities for the twinning of mainstream schools, special schools and technical colleges, whereby courses in schools might be created as satellite college courses. Equally, further education had to link up with Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).

The vision for further education must make redress the priority. There was a need to explore how further education could redress lost opportunities in earlier years and use this optimally in the short term. Vocational Training centres needed to be part of the way to develop the resources of community.

Further Education and Training was an area where links with commerce and industry were particularly important so that their needs could inform the development of courses. They should also be represented on centre and district support teams.

Training after the compulsory phase (Grade 9) has to be given attention. There are a number of training institutions that do not provide access to learners with disabilities or who experience difficulties in learning. These would include the department of labour vocational training centres, and other private institutions. It was suggested that these institutions need to link with the NQF.

It was pointed out that the Skills Development Strategy of the Department of Labour supports learnerships which combine practical work and training. Access for learners with disabilities and others with special needs has to be explored.

There is a need for an Institute to monitor developments, disseminate information, recommend training courses and keep a data base of facilities.

### **Adult education**

There was a concern that centres of learning for adult education were marginalised in the Draft Report and there are no norms for funding these centres. The Commission needed to study the Funding recommendations in the Report of the Commission on Further Education and Training. There was an urgent need for an audit of adults, including adults with disabilities, who have had no access to education. Current informal initiatives have to be supported and brought into the education system. In the transitional phase, these must ensure that the issue of adult learners with diverse needs be given priority by the National Adult Education Council and by similar provincial structures. There was considerable stress on the necessity for research which yields basic knowledge about needs and provision, monitors programmes and materials, and evaluates the outcomes of support programmes.

A parent who runs a day care centre pointed out that there are many older learners who attend day care centres who have had no access to schools and there are no facilities for them in further education and training. Most of these learners are illiterate, and need access to Adult Basic Education (ABET) programmes.

### **Higher education**

There was a feeling that Institutions of Higher Education could make rapid progress in facilitating the inclusion of learners with disabilities, if they had to conform to clear non-discriminatory standards and were required to carry out an audit of the problems of access for learners with disabilities created by the courses offered, the teaching arrangements, and the extent of the need for human support and 'assistive devices'. Training needed to be provided across these institutions. However it was recognised that such learners would continue to be severely under-represented in higher education until discriminatory practices throughout the education system were rectified. DEAFSA stressed the need for a close relationship between themselves and Higher Education Institutions so that appropriate support was in place. Such involvement might be echoed by other disability groups.

For all learners who had had restricted educational opportunities the development of access and foundation courses, effectively allowing open access to higher education, were necessary to provide adequate redress for past inequalities of opportunity. Institutions of Higher Education need to accept a role in supporting and becoming a more accessible resource to communities.

## **DISABILITY AND THE PLACE OF EDUCATION**

Concern was expressed that the South African Schools Act needed to be tightened if inclusion of students with disabilities was to be implemented in all communities. The view was still widespread, including within central and provincial government, that some students could not be part of education: a government administrator was said to have used the term 'cabbages' to describe such learners. The Schools Act still allows provincial governments to exclude some students with disabilities from the education system altogether and this was in breach of their constitutional rights. The presumption in favour of mainstream attendance for students with disabilities was felt, by some, to be weak and required strengthening. People should not be able to argue that it was impractical in one area if it was already happening in another comparable area, either nationally or internationally. Others argued for choice for parents and learners, though it was recognised that choices were restricted where resources were tied up in segregated provision and were not made available for the support of students in centres of learning near their homes. Learners should not be subject to such economic compulsion. Choice would only be present where parents could select from a range of options. Also one individual's right to choice should not negatively affect the access to education for other individuals. Economic constraints meant that a range of expensive options could not be available in all areas and this had to be a consideration in developing a national strategy. The available choices had to be about opportunities for all South Africans.

The imbalance in the present use of resources to support learners with disabilities was highlighted by a tale of two centres from Nithi Muthukrishna:

*"I visited a day care centre in Durban about 20 km from the city centre. The centre was started by a group of mothers. Eighteen children with severe physical disabilities were lying on the floor on foam mats. The centre was a room in a small council house belonging to one of the mothers who volunteered the use of her home. I was told that there are usually 25 children between the ages of 3 and 9 years in the room and that there are 52 children on the waiting list for a place. There was no evidence of any materials or toys to stimulate the children. The children do not receive any form of therapy, yet it they are in urgent need of speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Many are developing contractions of the limbs. Observing feeding, it became obvious that mothers needed assistance in correct feeding procedures for the children."*

*Each mother pays R150.00 per month, of which R70.00 goes towards transport and R80.00 is used for meals. The state spends not a cent on these children.*

*Yet only 15km away, there are extremely well-resourced 'special schools'. A visitor from the U.K. after visiting one of these schools recently, commented: 'The resources locked into this school would be used to serve a whole school district in England'."*

It was anticipated that the role of special schools would change. There was full agreement that Deaf learners needed to acquire Sign Language within a community of Sign Language users and that Sign Language support should be available to families with Deaf children from as early an age as possible. Deaf adults as well as adults with disabilities more generally had a very significant role to play in developing education for students with disabilities and all other learners. There was agreement about the need for community-based Sign Language support for young Deaf learners coupled with centralised specialised provision for older learners. Deaf adults present felt that this centralised provision should be in separate special schools at the post 'infant' stage, though at precisely what age Deaf children might go to residential school was not clear. It was also suggested that such centralised provision might be based within mainstream centres of learning in which Sign Language was accepted as one of the languages of instruction and the first language of Deaf learners, after a model used in some other countries and currently being introduced in one district in Mpumalunga.

There was less consensus about the education of blind students. Blind students were included in the mainstream in Kenya, Lesotho and Uganda, as well as in Sweden, and parts of Canada and England, though this was often in

centralised provision attached to particular mainstream schools. A spokesperson for the blind in South Africa argued that it was a matter of severity of sight loss. Partially sighted students might be in the mainstream but blind students should be in special schools. In Sweden blind students in special schools had demonstrated against their 'captivity' and policies had changed so that they were now in mainstream schools near their homes. While they were successful academically, they missed the support of fellow blind students. However they were adamant that they did not wish to return to special schools. Instead, friendships with fellow blind students were fostered by arranging regional meetings on a regular basis.

Two adults with physical disabilities commented on the support that was willingly given by peers in the mainstream, though this was reduced when they achieved higher grades than their 'temporarily' able-bodied friends. One teacher, from Durban, described the effects of supporting five students from her school for students with physical disabilities in a neighbouring mainstream school. The students were all accepted, and thrived academically and socially. The beneficial effect on some able-bodied students who had previously been disaffected and unmotivated was particularly striking.

Teachers described their vision for 'special schools'. One school, for students categorised as 'learning disabled' had been developing an outreach programme for learners in schools in the surrounding community. The school included students from a very wide area but they were intending to focus their outreach involvement on their more immediately surrounding area. The teacher from that school felt that the use of the resources of the school to support the surrounding communities was probably the right way to develop. Predicting where the school would actually be in ten years time, she thought it would either be closed with the resources completely dispersed, or would provide an entirely private education. The spectre of 'special schools' going private and serving only a narrow section of the community, which had already been disproportionately served by the special school sector in the past, raised the importance of attempting to retain expertise for the benefit of all learners.

The head teacher of a special school for 400 (85 residential) students with physical disabilities and 'serious specific learning difficulties' thought that his school would concentrate on students with 'high need' supporting students with 'learning disability' in their local schools. He thought the population of the school would change but that the numbers of students at the school might remain unchanged. Alternatively spare capacity at the school might be used for in-service training, the running of residential workshops and as a materials bank. Therapists from his school had to be reassured that outreach work would not count against them in seeking promotion. He did not see inclusion as a threat but as an opportunity for new developments reaching out to community centres of learning and their staff.

## **CO-ORDINATING POLICY AND FUNDING**

A major theme of the conference was the recognition that the State education service could not implement a development programme on its own and there was a need for national co-ordination through the National Co-ordination Committee, and an implementation strategy linking government departments at National and Provincial levels, NGOs, business and industry, parent organisations and organisations of disabled people, professional associations and unions. A major function of such co-ordination would be to see that contradictory policies were not in place, as in some countries where the perception of centres of learning as competing in a market for learners was fuelling the exclusion of students not seen as bringing money, or cultural or intellectual capital.

It was to be hoped that policies recommended by the Commission, as well as being introduced in conjunction with Curriculum 2005 and governor training, would also benefit from a substantial public disability awareness campaign led by the Office of the Deputy President. Co-ordinating the timing of such interventions was of critical importance in maximising the benefit of implementation funding.

It was argued that there was a need to build a corporate model to develop partnership funding. The National Economic Labour Affairs Council (NEDLAC) provides an example - bringing labour and government together in a single forum for policy formulation. Business must be genuinely seen as able to be consulted on policy issues rather than just as cash donors. An example is the EQIP (Education Quality Improvement) Programme, of the National Business Initiative which works with schools on school improvement and currently runs programmes in Kwazulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape. It assists schools to develop strategic plans for school governance and management, to mobilise governing bodies, and it helps them to set goals for themselves. There is an emphasis on mobilising community resources. NBI maintains that business is 'a corporate citizen' and wants to be

involved in decision making and does not want to be seen just for providing money. NBI has also been involved in a housing project, auditing the need for teacher training, and managing a R3 million grant from DANIDA, a Danish NGO.

The issue of sponsoring bodies was raised. Are sponsoring bodies adequately represented in the Education Acts of the different provinces? It was urged that sponsoring bodies must be assisted by government in their fund-raising by means of substantial tax deductions to donors. The role of sponsoring bodies should be clearly outlined. They are no longer the owners of public schools. Parents play the major role in governing bodies of schools. A close relationship between governing bodies and sponsoring bodies must be developed.

Macro Government economic policy determines the total funds potentially available for education, and sets parameters for provincial budgets but the provinces have some latitude in allocating funds between health, welfare, education etc. Staff salaries currently take up the vast bulk of the budget. National educational policy requires that 80% of funding must go to 40% of the most needy schools, as determined by a School Register of Needs. At present, this applies only to ordinary schools and does not tackle issues of redress in relation to special schools. It is open to any school to raise additional funds to support the education of learners but it is anticipated that this will be routine in schools that fall outside the favoured 40%.

The Commission had proposed a mechanism for funding the development of education for learners who experience barriers to learning through top up funds available to centres of learning and funds devolved to the district level for particular development programmes. It was suggested that the guidelines for earmarking funds for particular students with 'special needs' would be supported. However, it was pointed out that this raised questions about how students would be assigned to categories, and who would have responsibility for making these decisions. Any system that depended on procedures that were not universally available to learners across the country or the provinces would have the effect of advantaging learners in those areas which had the resources to complete the paperwork. This could be the case in particular if the categories of specific learning difficulty or learning disability were retained for funding purposes. International experience shows that such groups expand to match the total of any ear-marked funds that are available to support their education and are disproportionately identified in already advantaged areas.

If earmarked funds were retained, they would also have to avoid the pitfalls of the English Statementing system or the system of identification in the US where the formal assessment system is geared to funding and it is therefore in the short-term interests of schools to refer as many learners as feasible for such assessment. There may also be the hope that assessment will be linked to placement outside of the particular centre. However such a process delays decisions about developing an effective curriculum for learners and has the long-term effect of taking funds out of the centres of learning into the assessment process.

It was pointed out that the Department of Health is in the process of compiling a list of essential assistive devices needed by individuals with disabilities. These are classified according to those that are required for medical purposes and those required for daily life-skills. It was suggested that the Commission and Committee study the research of the Department of Health and also their system of allocation of funding.

Concern was expressed about safeguarding funding for the small group of very high need students for example the deaf-blind. Guidance was needed to ensure that these learners were included and provided with quality education. The funding policy had also to be in keeping with the broad conception of vulnerable and excluded learners with which the Commission is concerned, for example those experiencing difficulties in addition to learners with disabilities, because of language issues, HIV/AIDS, school-age pregnancy and substance abuse. The funding system would need to be tied to models of how the funds were to be used, within provinces, districts and centres of learning, so that it was concerned with overcoming barriers to learning for all these learners.

## **THE FUTURE**

It is difficult to convey in a report the warm and immensely constructive atmosphere of the conference, the carefully focused and intense debate and the wish on the part of all delegates to work out policies that would make a difference to the lives of learners and all others involved in education across South Africa. There was a strong wish for the Commission's report to be linked to a research and development programme, drawing together instructive practice within South Africa and building on the experience of others, particularly within

Africa. This might be through its own Institute but more probably, in keeping with the philosophy of inclusion, in a section of the Institute of Lifelong Learning. Such a programme that would ease the process of making a practical reality of the Commission's recommendations on policy and practice.





## ACRONYMS

ACC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
CASE	Community Agency for Social Enquiry
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
CLBT	Centre-of-Learning Based Team
COLTS	Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service
COTEP	Committee on Teacher Education Policy
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DPO	Disabled Peoples Organisation
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ESS	Education Support Services
ETDPs	Education and Training Development Practitioners
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HEDCOM	Heads of Education Committee
HRD	Human Resource Development
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IIC	Interim Implementation Committee
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
NACOCO for ELSEN	National Co-ordination Committee for Education For Learners with Special Education Needs
NCABLD	National Council for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Development
NCESS	National Committee for Education Support Services
NCFE	National Committee on Further Education
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NCSNET	National Commission for Special Needs in Education and Training
NDoE	National Department of Education
NILLD	National Institute for Lifelong Learning and Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PDoe	Provincial Department of Education
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SIP	Strategic Implementation Plan
UNESCO	United Nations Organisation for Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Development