DISABILITIES IN EDUCATION
AND
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Final Report

27 May 2014
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Executive Summary

South African education faces major obstacles to its effort to ensure that all learners are educated and supported, regardless of their abilities. It is clear that the current system is insufficiently resourced and not well-enough managed to achieve quality education for the disabled. Policies, while insistent on each individual child receiving the support they require, are let down by uneven implementation. Worthy national initiatives are often foiled by poor provincial planning and monitoring or by blockages and lack of capacity at the district level. Insufficient access and support for learners with disabilities results in high ‘dropout’ rates and it is all too often the case that children and young people with diverse learning needs are not supported by the education system, are socially stigmatised and have nowhere to go. All too often, resources are inadequate, school principals are not able to support the inclusion of learners with disabilities, teachers have not been trained to support disability, while standardised testing has placed pressures on schools to perform in ways which often leave weaker and vulnerable learners excluded and even more at risk than they would in any case be.

This area of education in South Africa is not easy terrain to remediate, though, and respondents and partners interviewed in this research process could not reach consensus as to whether learners with disabilities should even be included in mainstream schools, nor indeed whether the system could provide adequately for such inclusion. There was no agreement on whether there is sufficient policy commitment to inclusion as, for example, is evidenced by White Paper 6, which has never been promulgated into an act. Similarly, there was no agreement as to whether there are sufficient resources or funding in the system for this area. It is complex, and made more so in the context of large and intractable systemic blockages and deficiencies, which include the capacity of school principals, teacher absenteeism, shortage and retention, the capacity and staffing of districts, and so on. The ability of the private sector in the context of the scale and current challenges of the public education system to drive significant and enduring change can only ever be limited. It is thus vital that the RMB Fund considers carefully the contribution and investment it makes in the area of disabilities and inclusion in South Africa, one which should strategically align not only with its own purposes but also in a supportive way with the efforts of the main education system to achieve an adequate provision for learners living with disabilities.

What follows is a set of recommendations based on observations made in this research process, as well as building on recommendations made for the RMB Fund’s Maths Leadership Programme (MLP) in the evaluation carried out in 2013 by JET Education Services.

Recommendations

In order to support inclusion in education and the capacity of the system to provide for all learners, the recommended ways forward for the RMB Fund are:

- Commit to collaboration and ensure that private sector initiatives operate collectively in this area of education. The context of the current public education system is of great concern and driving significant and enduring change is difficult in the context of the many unresolved systemic issues. A thoughtful and collaborative approach by the private sector needs to be supported in order to maximise the investment it is making. The RMB Fund could in this regard help to ensure that the private sector is playing a coordinated role in the area of disabilities and inclusion within the National Education Collaborative Trust (NECT). Strategic
information and conversation spaces about disabilities and inclusion could be supported by the Fund.

- Commit to knowledge management and sharing the learnings of this research project with key partners and beyond through a community of practice.
- Invest in building the capacity of the private sector to work in partnership.
- Invest in researching and spreading the learnings from successful approaches to inclusion.
- Invest in an advocacy campaign focused on inclusive education.
- Carry out further investigation into one or more key themes drawn out in the literature survey of this report, namely:
  - Theme 1: Teacher Training and Development (focused research here may be of interest to RMB given the central importance of teacher development in the inclusion effort)
  - Theme 2: Success factors for inclusive schools (this theme would bear further investigation, through both local and international literature reviews and ‘good news’ stories, and of interest could be a programme for arts and culture that could augment this)
  - Theme 3: Curriculum, materials and assistive devices (focused research into the provision of adapted materials and resources relating to the learning area of Mathematics may be of interest to RMB, in order to integrate curriculum differentiation into the RMB Maths Leadership Programme, and collaboration with other e-learning projects could also be explored)
  - Theme 4: Pathways to progression (further research that is required here would include a survey of all SETAs in order to map opportunities for skills development for disabled learners exiting from schooling at different levels)
- Consciously choose areas for learner support interventions, and consider starting earlier than the FET phase, even as early as in ECD, Grade R or the Foundation Phase.
- Identify and support learners with physical impairments or disabilities, but without cognitive impairments, who are suitable for maths and science education and could be aided through learner support interventions to access tertiary studies in gateway subjects.
- Support interventions that focus on developing school principals’ capacity to support disabilities and inclusion in education. International experience and research emphasise that the principal, more than any other role-player in the system, holds the key to school improvement as the leadership, management and administrative structures provided by principals are essential for teachers to discover and exercise their competence. School principals must be capacitated to support the needs of learners with disabilities.
- Support interventions that focus on teacher development (including pre-service interventions). A critical common factor in high-performing education systems is the quality of teachers and teachers are evidently a major impediment to achieving the support of learners with disabilities as well as their screening and identification.
- Enhance the capacity of the programmes supported by the Fund to carry out effective monitoring and evaluation and an evidence-based approach. Providing evidence of the impact of programmes will increase efficiency and impact. Ensure the sharing of evaluations. Evaluations need to be structured to take account of the evidence needed for broader adoption and investment.
Background
During 2013, BRIDGE was commissioned by the RMB Fund to carry out research on disabilities and inclusion in education in South Africa. In keeping with the terms of the brief, this process included a policy review, a literature survey, key informant interviews and other relevant engagements. What follows is a final report on this research process. The report that follows is by no means a comprehensive piece of research but is intended instead to give the RMB Fund insights related to effectively integrating people with disabilities into the education system in order that the fund can consider a way forward in relation to the mainstreaming of disability within its Maths Leadership Programme (MLP). In keeping with the brief, this work has mainly focused on secondary education as well as on the mainstreaming of persons with disabilities.

Methodology and approach
A policy review was carried out into key documents and guidelines that make up the policy landscape for Inclusive Education and Disabilities in Education in South Africa. This is summarised below but written up in full in Annexure A.

A literature survey was carried out of both local and international research on a wide range of aspects relating to Inclusive Education and Disabilities in Education. This is summarised below but is written up in full in Annexure A.

25 interviews with key informants were carried out during the course of this project. These are listed alphabetically by organisation as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation or Category</th>
<th>Name of interviewee</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bellavista School</td>
<td>Kalie Naidoo</td>
<td>Clinical psychologist, head of the school's education and resource arm (SHARE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Basic Education</td>
<td>Marie Schoeman</td>
<td>Chief Education Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities</td>
<td>Lidia Pretorius</td>
<td>Chief Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down Syndrome SA</td>
<td>Vanessa dos Santos</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FirstRand Foundation, Motswako Office Solutions</td>
<td>Sebenzile Matsebula</td>
<td>Executive Director, Motswako Office Solutions; Trustee of FirstRand Foundation Trustee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footprints School</td>
<td>Sharon Rowe</td>
<td>School principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Futura School</td>
<td>Barbara van Vught</td>
<td>Deputy principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng Department of Education</td>
<td>Dr Hester Costa</td>
<td>Director, Inclusion and Special Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng Planning Commission, Office of the Premier</td>
<td>Zain Bulbulia</td>
<td>Head of planning for Disability, Gender and Youth in Gauteng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope School</td>
<td>Gert Viljoen</td>
<td>School principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope School</td>
<td>Michelle Berger</td>
<td>Intern psychologist (masters in inclusive education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezodo Technical School</td>
<td>Mantu Vilana</td>
<td>School principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each interview was written up as a narrative report that covers all of the questions. The complete write-ups of the reports are contained in Annexure B.

A questionnaire was developed for the interviews. The instrument is contained in Annexure C.

**Other engagements**

BRIDGE attended a workshop on “Education for Democracy in an Inclusive Education and Training System”, hosted by the Department of Basic Education and MIET Africa, on 2-3 December 2013. There were two components to the workshop. The first component adopted a broad perspective, aimed at strengthening understanding of what is meant by democracy in an inclusive educational setting. The second component focused on a Teacher Development Research Project, in relation to answering the question: What are the implications of an inclusive and democratic approach to teaching and learning on teacher education and development? This workshop discussed options for both pre- and in-service teacher training, and looked at some models from neighbouring countries.
BRIDGE is currently engaging with MIET Africa (John Volmink and Barbara Dale-Jones have met to discuss the project) re possible synergies and collaborations in this research area.

As a consequence of and in order to amplify this research, BRIDGE profiled the issue of inclusion at a Teachers Upfront dialogue in March 2014. Two of the interviewees of this research project were among the speakers. A report on the dialogue, which was profiled in the Mail & Guardian on 4 April 2014, can be found at [http://mg.co.za/article/2014-04-07-teaching-that-embraces-difference](http://mg.co.za/article/2014-04-07-teaching-that-embraces-difference).

### Policy review: Summary

The policy review, which was first submitted to the RMB Fund (RMB) and Tshikululu Social Investments (TSI) in December 2013, and which is contained in full in Annexure A, describes key documents and guidelines that make up the policy landscape for Inclusive Education and Disabilities in Education. The relevant Act, Policy or Guideline is followed by a brief summary of content related to disabilities in education and to the philosophy of inclusive education. Education White Paper 6 is dealt with in detail, as this is the foundation for subsequent policies and guidelines (although it has never been promulgated into an Act, which weakens its use as a reference in law – see below).

The following are described in the review:

2. Quality Education for All: Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development (Department of Education, 1998)
6. Guidelines for full service/ inclusive schools (Department of Basic Education, 2010)
7. Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning (Department of Basic Education, 2010)
8. Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom through curriculum and assessment policy statements (Department of Basic Education, 2011)

The Draft Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), which provides a policy framework for the standardisation of the procedures to identify, assess and provide programmes for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in school, was during the time of this research project circulated by the Department of Basic Education for public comment. BRIDGE has reviewed the draft policy and discussed it with partner organisations, including the Catholic Institute of Education (who submitted comments on the draft policy through the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference), and considers that the purpose of the draft policy and its links to related legislation and policies are clearly spelt out, and in general the principles of the draft policy are sound, but the ability of the current system to implement the policy adequately is in doubt. This is true for example with regard
to its requirements of teachers as well as of parents and caregivers. Teachers will need to be skilled in order to identify and support learners in the way this draft policy envisages. Proposed assessment forms are long and require dedicated time. Teachers with large classes and limited training will have great difficulty identifying learners with barriers and filling in these comprehensive forms and hence the policy should be coupled with professional support services for teachers. While an objective of the policy is to acknowledge the central role played by parents and caregivers, the draft policy is strongly instructive rather than invitational to parents/caregivers, many of whom have limited knowledge about barriers to learning and are often resistant to suggestions that their children need support. These areas will need to be addressed in the finalising of the policy.

**Literature Review: Summary**

The literature review, which was first submitted to RMB and TSI in December 2013 and which is contained in full in Annexure A, demonstrates that there is extensive literature, both local and international, on a wide range of aspects relating to Inclusive Education and Disabilities in Education. The review provides an initial survey to offer an orientation to key themes in the literature, with a view to the selection of one or more themes for more intensive drilling down.

The purpose of the review is to provide RMB with a map to the field, giving initial indications of issues under each theme and their links to the policy landscape. The focus in the literature review is on ordinary schools and full service schools rather than special schools, in line with RMB’s wish to offer support in terms of mainstreaming. Four themes are drawn out in the review, along with some recommendations for further research, namely:

**Theme 1: Teacher Training and Development**
(focused research here may be of interest to RMB given the central importance of teacher development)

**Theme 2: Success factors for inclusive schools**
(this theme would bear further investigation, through both local and international literature reviews and ‘good news’ stories, and of interest could be a programme for arts and culture that could augment this)

**Theme 3: Curriculum, materials and assistive devices**
(focused research into the provision of adapted materials and resources relating to the learning area of Mathematics may be of interest to RMB, in order to integrate curriculum differentiation into the RMB Maths Leadership Programme, and collaboration with other e-learning projects could also be explored)

**Theme 4: Pathways to progression**
(further research that is required here would include a survey of all 21 SETAs in order to map opportunities for skills development for disabled learners exiting from schooling at different levels)

It may be that RMB wishes to choose one of the themes (like teacher development), then do an in-depth survey of current projects and good practice in that area.

**Key informant interviews: Summary**

The interviews, combined with the literature and policy reviews as well as with other engagements, indicated strong patterns of responses among participants and key informations.
1. The current system and the extent to which it is addressing the needs of learners with disabilities

Respondents feel strongly about the lack of support in the system for learners with disabilities. Vanessa dos Santos of Down Syndrome SA, for example, says that “there is no doubt that the current system in no way provides quality education for learners who have disabilities or special needs, particularly when you look at the curriculum and teacher standards at special schools, which is so clearly insufficient”.

Some specific areas of concern have emerged:

Policy and legislation
• The current system is policy-rich and implementation-poor. Section 27 noted that “those with disabilities are forgotten and sidelined in a number of ways. Even easily implemented measures are not considered; for example, painting different classrooms different colours, and putting coloured trim at the edges of stairs, helps visually impaired children orientate themselves and get around more easily, but this is hardly ever done”.
• There is either a lack of political will in government, or a general lack of capacity in government to drive an inclusive approach. Marie Schoeman of the DBE said “the biggest constraint is the lack of political will to advocate for inclusive education”, while Section 27 cited an example where a lack of focused expertise led to budget remaining unspent and a service not being delivered (vis-à-vis braille textbooks, where unrealistic tenders were issued – unrealistic in terms of time frames, and in terms of penalties – and thus none of the providers was willing to tender).
• There is not enough support from government, which seems to pay lip-service to White Paper 6 and does not prioritise an adequate budget.
• Section 27 talked at length about legislation and made the following points:
  o The first draft of the Norms and Standards for Infrastructure (2013) made no mention of taking disability into account in the building of new schools, in relation to the possibility of designating some of these new schools as potential full service schools (there were no guidelines such as those examples noted above, or placement of doors and door handles for those in wheelchairs). It is hoped that this will be rectified in the final document.
  o White Paper 6 of 2001 is still a White Paper – it has never been promulgated into an Act. This weakens its use as a reference in law.
  o ‘Inclusive education’ seems to cover just about everything: there is little differentiation between the different dynamics and implications that result from different kinds of disabilities.
  o Disability issues for schoolchildren are closely linked to the problems in the health sector. Many parents do not understand what kind of disability their child might have, and cannot get a proper diagnosis or proper care because of dysfunctional
health provision in their district. Health departments need to be brought into partnerships in any initiatives dealing with disability.

Systemic delivery

- The current system is insufficiently resourced and is not sufficiently well-managed to achieve quality education for the disabled.
- While there are pockets of excellence in the system, in the majority of cases, quality education and care are provided in previously advantaged communities. In such communities, there is better parental support and well-resourced facilities and better-trained teachers and management staff.
- National government provides policies and guidelines, but provinces determine priorities and rollout plans, yet provinces generally have not effectively planned for education for children with disabilities, and there is poor management and lack of monitoring.
- DWCPD feels that, if the Departments of Education had got White Paper 6 right and used the policy to transform schools, implementation would be well-progressed by now. The reality is that provinces are now lagging behind and applying their own interpretation – hence implementation is varied and very slow. Enough is not being done on the ground. Lidia Pretorius gave an example of a district-based official in a province who admitted that they had not visited special schools under their jurisdiction in 5 years. This official had no idea what the status of special schools was in the district.
- DWCPD administered a self-assessment on special schools and found 85% delivering very poor quality education. Some had no or very poor school management and no support from the district.
- DWCPD uses mechanisms to monitor provinces and has been able to hand over provinces that are not co-operating to the Human Rights Commission.
- Blockages frequently happen at district level, primarily because inclusive education and disability issues are not seen as a priority by district officials, who tend to focus on dealing with more immediate concerns. Some respondents feel that district-based support is non-existent in certain districts.

Schooling

- The current system focuses on primary-level interventions; one of the reasons for this is that these schools are not under pressure to report and be evaluated on their ‘pass rate’ for the Senior Certificate.
- However, the biggest ‘dropout’ rate for learners with disabilities is at secondary school level; this could be due to lack of special schools, or lack of access to other schools, or lack of support.
- Children and young people with diverse learning needs are not being supported with ordinary/regular/mainstream classes, and it is still very difficult for a child with a disability to get into a mainstream school, even though the law says your child has the right to go to the nearest school.
• Few schools are geared to cope with disability. William Rowland feels that “expecting mainstream schools to cater for a varied range of disabled children with different types of physical and mental problems can put the safety of these children at risk”.

• There are very few educational psychologists to support any school, never mind those that service disabled children.

• In poorer schools, there are no regulated support structures and certainly no extra staff in the classroom to offer support. Two things can happen in this situation; the child can become very passive and will sit in the class failing to achieve anything academically (in this case, the teacher acts as a babysitter and these children are promoted through the Grades as a matter of course because of policy, but in fact are not learning anything) or, these children can become highly disruptive in class and are then are excluded from the mainstream, leading to dropouts after Grade 9, or general poor attendance in any one school year.

• In the rural areas, children are hidden away, as there is a great stigma around disability.

**Assessments and tests**

• Assessments are problematic and tests that are administered by educational psychologists, speech and occupational therapists, etc. are often culturally-biased. For example, one respondent, Lauren Fok, said that her child, from a traditional Chinese home, does not use a knife and fork at mealtimes but uses chopsticks. In standard tests, he would be marked down for this “lack of skill”.

• Dos Santos says that “assessments in the past have mostly been used to demonstrate that a child cannot come to the school. If tests were conducted in a spirit of wanting to gauge how a child can be included – not excluded – then they should be done in a classroom, and over a long period time, which would amount to continuous assessment. In other words, they should not be done to see whether a child should be admitted. Inclusion is about how the school can change to accommodate the child, and not the other way around.”

• Kalie Naidoo noted a systemic issue which goes across ordinary schools, full service schools and special needs schools. This is the fact that many schools of any type do not understand/use the assessment concessions (whether for matric or other assessments) that are available for learners with various kinds of needs. The only schools that appear to access these concessions are the independent schools. The same appears to apply to the SIAS. The SIAS policy and guidelines may illustrate good process, but schools don’t know how to use them properly. It is a government responsibility to ensure that schools understand and know how to access these SIAS and concessions for individual learners; this is a vital part of inclusive education, but this type of support is not being properly used.

• The ANAs and standardised testing have placed pressures on schools to perform which often leaves the weaker and vulnerable learner even more at risk that they would in any case be.

• There are often mixed messages in terms of departmental concerns. For example, all learners were expected to take the ANAs in the same way: i.e., there were no access arrangements made for learners with disabilities. Schools openly acknowledge that they would simply mark any special needs learners ‘absent’ on the day of the ANA. This is
apparently now being addressed and it is clear that the ANAs should consequently be differentiated.

- Naidoo pointed out that the main purpose of the ANAs is to identify individual children who need support (this is stated in DBE reports on ANAs); however, the ANAs appear to be used for monitoring the performance of an individual school, and for benchmarking national progress in subject areas. Hence the exclusion of some children with learning needs from doing the ANAs. Another anomaly with the ANAs is that some special schools say/think they do not have to do the ANAs, and yet there is a policy document on Norms for Special Schools in relation to the ANAs.

Some positive signs

- The full curriculum for sign language for educators and learners has finally been completed.
- All new schools in Gauteng will be built as single storey structures, in order to be able to accommodate physically-disabled learners in the future.
- There is increasing inter-departmental collaboration; for instance the resuscitation of testing of learners for hearing, eyesight, etc. in schools.

2. Types of schools: special schools, ordinary school and full-service schools

Arguments exist both for and against inclusion, and this was evident in the responses of those interviewed.

- Some respondents, for example Lidia Pretorius of the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DWCPD), feel that government should design and implement a universally-inclusive education system for everybody as a human right and not a system for learners with disabilities and a system for other children. Every school should be an inclusive school. In fact, DWCPD is unhappy with the whole concept of special schools/full-service/ordinary schools. In their view, special schools should cater for severe cases of disabilities and the rest of schools should mainstream disabilities. Ms Pretorius feels that the problem with our system is that it assesses the child’s impairment and not the support required for the learner.

- Others feel that inclusion is problematic. For example, William Rowland has some reservations regarding the philosophy of inclusion. He noted the following:
  o Anecdotal evidence of children with disabilities going into mainstream schools and having negative experiences, from both the point of view of teaching quality and social issues with the other children.
  o While he agrees that there is a social price to pay for separate special needs education, this is balanced by the greater possibility of high quality education tailored to suit the specific needs of those disabled. He is not convinced that this quality can be provided in mainstream schools at present in SA.
Regarding the argument that inclusive education is cost effective: he feels that this is not proven, in that the costs for making sure that inclusive education works as it should have not been properly calculated or provided for in the current scenario.

- He would advise parents of disabled children to send them to special schools IF these are available to them, and IF these are well staffed and resourced.
- He feels that the philosophy of inclusive education is unrealistic. The more you go down the scale of resources and income, the worse it gets – making inclusive education work requires a high level of physical, financial and human resources.

- Then there are respondents who, like Tinus du Preez, support the philosophy of inclusiveness, but are not convinced that it is it possible to put the current policy into practice. Inclusive education requires smaller classes, teachers need skills of remedial teaching and specialised pedagogy of teaching learners with autism, deaf learners, blind learners, etc. and not general teaching qualifications. Furthermore, schools need specialist support from district teams and not only general administrative support.

- Dos Santos feel that, primarily, schools are looking for high-functioning children, and that this applies even at special schools. She feels strongly that there are many children at special schools who could cope at mainstream schools, and so make way for children with severe disability. She argues that the government should stop building special schools, and build more mainstream schools to include children with mild to moderate disabilities.

- Naidoo says that South Africa is very quick to refer individual children to a host of different specialists – e.g. occupational therapy, ADHD specialists – rather than treating the child holistically. She adds that a key principle of inclusive education is the focus on equipping teachers as best as possible and dealing with issues ‘in the classroom’ rather than referring out. Her example was the issue of dyslexia – this is not a cognitive incapacity, and the accommodations that can be made in the classroom to help dyslexic children cope have, in fact, spillover benefits to all learners. In the UK schools can get ‘quality credentials’ as ‘dyslexic friendly schools’, which in her opinion could also be viewed as ‘inclusive friendly schools.’

- Others feel that each type of disability requires a different approach and it is quite difficult to have a homogenous approach to educating children in this sector.

Our interviews explored the pros and cons of the various types of schools; ordinary, special and full service.

- Ordinary schools:
  - Teachers at these schools need to understand differentiation in pedagogy and curriculum anyway, because nearly all schools in South Africa have a diverse range of learners (e.g. language challenges and those noted above).
  - There are many unnecessary referrals to special schools, because teachers adopt a ‘one size fits all’ approach and if a child doesn’t fit he or she is seen as someone else’s problem.
  - Because of a lack of knowledge about disability, ordinary schools are often not prepared or even willing to accept slightly-disabled children.
‘Streaming’ in ordinary schools also has unintended consequences; while it is supposed to advantage the weaker learners, often all it means is that the best and most creative teachers get the high performing learners, and the lower streams get the less competent teachers. Poor performance becomes a self-perpetuating cycle.

Many schools (public and private) use strategies such as making poorly-performing schools write as private candidates so that their results are not reflected in a school’s pass rate.

Key barriers are to do with logistical issues such as large classrooms and time constraints, which inhibit teachers from trying to apply strategies for inclusive teaching.

Sometimes learners with special needs can end up feeling even more disempowered and excluded in a mainstream school.

### Special schools:

- Tinus du Preez is of the opinion that “the fact that there are long waiting lists at special schools and many learners are in special schools who are not supposed to be there indicates that there is a problem in ordinary schools; ordinary schools do not have the capacity and readiness to provide proper and quality inclusion”.

- Special schools should serve the needs of high-support children and not any child who is proving difficult to handle in an ordinary school. Proper screening and referrals should be improved and done by specialists. Many of the cases that the department officials refer to special schools are not deserving cases according to some respondents.

- There is an unequal distribution of special schools, even in a well-resourced province like Gauteng. Hester Costa pointed out that “in Gauteng, the majority of special schools are located near Universities and hospitals, while in townships, the establishment of special schools was spearheaded by churches or communities and seldom an initiative of the department of education and, hence, a good number of these schools are not always located in the best location and the design does not meet the minimum standards”.

- Marie Schoeman of the DBE says that “the majority of special schools do not offer quality education; only a few do an excellent job like St Vincent School for the Deaf and others mainly in urban centres like Gauteng and Western Cape, but they are too few in the system to make a big dent”.

- Because learners with moderate disabilities are not accommodated in ordinary schools, they go to special schools and as a result, there are fewer spaces for deserving cases of learners with severe disabilities.

- The ‘one size fits all’ pedagogical is duplicated in special schools: i.e. there are diverse learning needs and abilities in special school classrooms even if a set of learners share similar physical disabilities.

- Special schools have a high rate of absenteeism of teachers; there is a thirty eight percent-absenteeism rate of teachers in special schools.
There are huge differences in quality between different special schools: some are caring and nurturing environments using good pedagogical practices, while others are little more than ‘warehouses’ with little teaching or stimulation happening.

Different grades and different types of disabilities are dealt with together, and the sheer volume of preparation for teachers could be counter-productive for the learning experience.

There can be a problem at special schools where there are young learners together in the same classroom with young adults. They may all have the same mental age, but their physical needs (e.g. developing sexuality) are different, and there is the danger that the older kids may abuse the younger kids. It is therefore worrying that twenty-five percent learners in special schools are over 25 years of age.

• Full service schools:
  o Section 27 feels that “full service schools could meet the ideals of the constitution provided that all the necessary conditions are met; however, the feasibility of this in the near future is questionable. Access has to be meaningful and managed, otherwise it is pointless. In terms of the philosophy that full service schools meet the needs of developing countries as they are less expensive than special schools, there are a number of considerations to take into account – e.g. proximity and transport costs, and the costs of training. Full service schools need to be properly managed and resourced if they are to work as inclusive schools”.
  o Feedback has been that these are not working as they should because teachers are complaining that the support required has not been provided. The perception is that money is spent on physical infrastructure such as ramps, but not enough is spent on on-site human resources that the teachers can get help from. Some of this appears to be to do with the funding model employed.
  o The few studies that have been done have been varied: some show that ‘teacher agency’ has been positive in full service schools, with teachers taking ownership of their roles in inclusive education, while others have shown very negative views from teachers.

3. Learner support

• There are a number of necessary conditions for learner support. Currently (although there are exceptions) learners don’t even get the basic practical support for physical assistance that they require, never mind more sophisticated forms of learning support. Even untrained/unemployed individuals from the community could be on hand, for example to take kids to the bathroom. Currently in many schools (special or other), it is the teacher resource who has to leave the other kids to help a disabled child to use the facilities. Even if another child is delegated with this task, then that child is taken out of the classroom.

• Human Resources in general are a key need for learner support to be effective. A certain amount of mobility and independence in simple matters such as going to the bathroom is a life skill that disabled learners need to learn in any case, and schools are not addressing this.
• Disabled learners often have ‘a package’ of various different needs, and they should be considered holistically: learners do not only have ‘learning’ needs, but may need assistive devices as well. We sometimes neglect a relatively simple focus on making life easier for learners through assistive devices, which should support cognitive or pedagogical support.

• In other countries, families with disabled children are able to get access to free school lunches and grants, plus the government pays extra money into the special school which then has to be accounted for on an annual basis. There is no parallel system here in South Africa, and consequently poor families are marginalised while schools are under-resourced and neglected.

• The development of text books, life skills videos and stories that focus on the diversity issue in braille are all needed and respondents feel that the DBE is struggling to produce these kinds of resources.

• The training of parents and SGBs in inclusive education is essential.

• Hester Costa believes that “learner support rests on two main pillars – management on the one hand and parental support on the other. Management includes managing the pace of curriculum and creating additional time if necessary to fully provide support needed by each learner, management of staff training needs, managing choice of access to differentiated curriculum and alternative assessment as well as provision of remediation. Parental support is an absolute critical piece in supporting a learner with disabilities in all aspects, emotionally, materially and including working closely with teachers and the school.

• Schoeman says that support is multifaceted and has four basic components
  I. Access to specialist services, for testing and physiotherapy. In rural communities where professionals are reluctant to relocate to, itinerant services can be arranged
  II. Curriculum differentiation in order to address the needs of diverse learners
  III. Provision of assistive devices; braille, hearing aids; printing labs; technicians to repair wheelchairs
  IV. Appropriately trained teachers, school leadership and managers
   In low demand schools, a support team from the district can visit a school once a term to advice teachers and provide support. In a school where there are learners with low demand up to moderate disabilities – a team can visit schools once a month. In high demand schools such as special schools, daily support is required and bigger teams in the district would be required. She said there are “dire shortages” of specialist staff in the system.

4. The capacity of teachers for inclusive teaching, teacher development and support

Teachers face challenges in identifying learners with special needs as well as how, and more importantly, where to refer them for assessment. Specialised training for ECD practitioners is important as the earlier identification takes place the better. All foundation phase teachers need expertise in identifying barriers to learning. However, given that current research into literacy in schools has found that in most schools learners never get to read individually to teachers, how can teachers identify barriers to learning?
Teachers currently struggle to cope with the demands of the curriculum and the administration attached thereto. Large class sizes and teacher ability to detect learning barriers are major challenges. Few schools have learner support teams or learner support teachers.

- One of the main barriers to successful implementation of policy remains teacher attitudes.
- Teachers in South Africa have not in the main been trained to support disability. They tend to learn on the job. Specifically, teachers are not trained to cope with cerebral palsy, autism, muscular dystrophy and cognitive challenges.
- All teachers should have some awareness of disability and inclusivity, and in some methodologies dealing with curriculum differentiation, in their initial pre-service training.
- Specifically, teacher education should debunk myths about disabilities and learning barriers.

**Should all teachers be trained for inclusive education?**

- Teaching for diverse needs (including low support disability) should be an integral part of teaching pedagogy, not a separate ‘add-on’ or specialisation. The movement in teacher education and qualifications design is towards this; but how these elements in a qualification translate into practice varies greatly between universities (e.g. of a limited approach is ‘the litany of woes’ approach, where different ‘conditions’ are dealt with on a piecemeal basis).
- However, ‘training for inclusive education’ ranges from basic needs (see above re learner support), to highly complex conceptual issues around differentiation. Teachers need very different skills to deal with visually impaired learners, to those needed to deal with hearing impaired learners; and the range of cognitive difficulties demands yet another set of skills.
- Thus, effective teacher training needs to be focused on specific skills sets, rather than take the form of a generic ‘conscientisation’ exercise that does not give teachers the tools to use or adapt for specific contexts.
- However, this approach could raise other implementation issues: a designated full service school, for example, would not be able to predict what kinds of learners would need access; and of course this would change from year to year.
- If targeted training is the way to go, ways of looking at sharing or deploying resources would need to be found.
- Plus, William Rowland feels that “initial teaching training and in-service teacher training should ensure ongoing exposure to dealing with the practical demands of teaching disabled kids in a mainstream environment. The building up of experience through time should be fostered, including developing strong ‘collegial’ sharing of experience.”

**What are the issues with teachers and their attitudes to inclusive education?**

- Challenges with teachers include: teachers in the system frequently have a ‘ones size fits all’ and ‘not my problem’ approach; even young student teachers make certain cultural assumptions about diverse learning needs, and can hold quite rigid views; teachers seem to have a ‘go ask the expert’ view, and be unwilling to adapt and adopt and extend their own practice.
- Teachers are wary of acknowledging weakness or asking for help. This is partly due to a culture of ‘compliance’ rather than ‘support’ at district level. (This seems, notably, to be shifting in Gauteng.)
- One of the key things teachers need is capacity building in the ability to use their professional judgement for professional decision-making. They need to be able to take whatever resources are available (tips for teachers, handouts, exemplars, strategies, tools etc.) and prioritise, select and adapt these for different learners for different reasons. For example, ‘teacher tips’ on using colours to help struggling readers must be accompanied by teacher skills in knowing how to apply these differently to different learners. ‘Craft knowledge’ needs to be linked ‘professional judgement’.
- Teachers need to be made aware that there are some standardised tests that all children should go through. These include audio and eye checks, and dental checks. This could happen at primary school, where immunisation and support resources can be put in place. Physiotherapy should also be available across schools for children who have problems with walking and sitting upright.
- Teachers do not know how to motivate for or use special resources and equipment.

What improvements and changes are needed in teacher education and development?
- There are limitations to the workshop approach. It is much more desirable to have situated learning and to embed expertise (and coaching and mentoring) on a regular basis within the school. Coming in from the outside then going away again is fruitless.
- The majority of teachers are unable to implement and adapt the methods and tools they are given on an ongoing basis.
- There should be better collaboration among higher education institutions to address teacher development needs and inclusive education.
- Teacher education courses should be less theoretical.
- Mutual collegial support needs to be encouraged. However, there appears to have developed a teaching culture in which asking other colleagues for help or input is seen as a sign of weakness.
- Communities of practice (CoPs) and professional learning communities (PLCs) should be used as part of teacher development.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a useful way of motivating teachers. But one of the problems is that CPD is often coupled with underperforming schools, and has a stigma attached to it. This perception needs to be changed.
- Dos Santos is one of the respondents who are adamant that Teaching Schools or Professional Practice Schools should not be established for the purposes of inclusive teaching, but that this should be available across the board for all teachers, as the target is to get all schools to be inclusive.
- Schoeman says that the DBE is working closely with HEIs to:
  o ensure undergraduate that programmes cover inclusive education and teaching; and
  o explore collaboration regarding in-service training and that the DBE is satisfied with the co-operation of HEIs.
5. Budgetary allocation

Again there was a difference of opinion among respondents:

- Dos Santos said that “there is no question that the financial commitment that has been made to inclusive education is totally insufficient, for whatever reason”.
- Schoeman agreed, saying that “budget allocation is not sufficient to deal with the backlog of rolling out the plan for inclusive education in all categories of schools”.
- Similarly, Costa said that funding is a critical problem for GDE and it is not by will that inclusive education seems to be sidelined. She said that “budgetary needs are many and the GDE is therefore eagerly awaiting guidelines that will determine funding levels”.
- However, Section 27 said “education and health both have huge slices of the budget, and yet both are dysfunctional. The issue is not lack of finance, but poor management, politicisation, and lack of focused expertise. Monies allocated to various projects are frequently not spent.”
- Lidia Pretorius said that only 25% of the budget set aside for inclusion was utilised for inclusion from the treasury allocation in 2007. Marie Schoeman elaborated on this and said that “in 2007, treasury allocated 2.5 billion for Inclusion Education and only 50% of the funds were used by four provinces. The rest of the funds were returned to Treasury. The 50% that provinces use was utilised by Provinces as they saw fit, despite the fact that National had prepared business plans on how Inclusion was to be rolled out. Provinces used the funds on special schools and other priorities”.
- She added that provinces are struggling to budget for inclusion. The models of budgeting for inclusion vary from province to province with the bulk of the funds going to special schools. “Provinces take the funds from national and use them for own priorities”, she said.

6. Development of leadership and management

- A barrier to inclusion is often principals, who abdicate responsibility, yet principals are vital to ensuring inclusivity.
- Rowland, for example, said that “the negative reports regarding teacher implementation of inclusive education often misses a layer – this missing layer is the responsibility (or lack thereof) of school management and school principals in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of inclusive education, and being pro-active about the shortfalls and difficulties”.
- One of the principals interviewed said that nothing has been done to build capacity of principals to be inclusive. “Principals are left to figure out themselves how to implement inclusive education, how to support the teachers and parents”, he said.
- Additionally, standards-based reform is often counter-productive to equitable education. Principals and school management constantly get mixed messages from the education department, e.g. the emphasis on improving the pass rate is often at the expense of a focus
on ‘disabled’ learners. One solution would be to re-work the baseline for criteria in the way the pass rate is presented or reported on for a school.

- The frustration of committed principals in relation to getting support from the Department was noted by many interviewees.
- Lidia Pretorius feels that “School Leadership Programmes should address inclusion as diversity management. Leadership must be trained to manage learners with diverse learning needs.” She added that “it would be interesting to find out from DBE what their measure of change is and impact in schools where there is leadership training” and suggested that “the measurement of impact of leadership training should include diversity and inclusion as indicators of success and not just results, then schools will take diversity and inclusion seriously”.

7. Access, success and alternative qualification pathways to secure access to the labour market

- Lidia Pretorius said that this issue should start at ECD to ensure the progression of learners through the whole system.
- Schoeman agreed that there is “weak inclusive education at ECD level, which means that the foundation for learners with barriers is not sound and there is lack of integration at this level, which has a ripple effect on throughput rates for learners with barriers”.
- Indications point to the need to strengthen ECD and primary and secondary school levels, thus ensuring that learners with disabilities receive foundational skills and education that enable them to progress to tertiary and into the labour market.
- Lidia Pretorius said that monitoring mechanisms that will report on the progression of learners with disabilities are being developed. “At present, we relying on enrolment statistics, however the data from the statistics does tell the whole story.”
- Progression is problematic in the context of the lack of full service high schools. FET colleges have limitations. There are public ‘schools of skills’ in the Western Cape which are post Grade 9 and might be worth looking at further.
- There is not enough vocational training at special schools.
- The Department of Labour has taken on the Sheltered Employment Factories, which were supported by the previous government. The SEF has 12 factories across SA, operating in 7 of the 9 provinces, with only Mpumalanga and Limpopo without a facility. The factories have manufacturing capability and produce furniture, textiles, metal work, leather work, canvass work, book binding and screen printing. This is one of the few that has government backing.
- FET colleges could be a vital resource for disabled learners, but it was noted that this is not a priority for that sector.
- Respondents feel that FET colleges could do much more by enrolling learners and putting them through programmes that are more industry-aligned.
- Little career guidance and support for learners with disabilities happens in any kind of school. Rowland, for example, said “there is very little career guidance for disabled learners even in special schools; and in full service schools such career guidance as there is does not address the needs of the disabled”.

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HEDSA (Higher Education Disability South Africa) is an organisation that concerns itself with support for disabled students at universities, but maybe it should also look at what goes on in feeder routes.

DWCPD is aware that workplaces are struggling to find suitably qualified people to employ and in order to meet legislative requirements. DWCPD is currently building a database of unemployed learners to facilitate linking them to employment opportunities and training and development opportunities.

There are job-seekers on the DWCPD database who have completed schooling and some have achieved tertiary qualifications. On the other hand, employers say they cannot find qualified people. For instance, DWCPD have qualified teachers with disabilities on the database. The system cannot absorb these qualified teachers because schools do not have ramps, and support mechanisms to employ these them.

Another area to look at is RPL. There are many people with disabilities who have done artisan-type work over a long period. An RPL process could benefit such people and workplaces.

Some good models are emerging. For instance, there is a mobile FET college project. Such an initiative has scope to reach marginalised communities and learners with disabilities in deep rural areas.

There is scope for SETAs to extend industry linked internships and learnerships to learners with disability.

It will help provide learners with work preparation skills. Learners without disabilities require work readiness programme and more especially, learners with disabilities.

Employer attitudes must also change in this regard. Employers must support the many learning pathways that exist such as learnerships and skills programmes.

Schoeman said that the DBE is working with the QCTO to develop a qualification for 13/14 year old learners who cannot cope with demands of the new curriculum, a qualification that is vocationally-orientated and skills-based. This will be a 4-year programme in childcare, hairdressing, services etc. About six million will be required for development and piloting of the qualification. The qualification will be ready in June 2014.

8. Multistakeholder collaboration and alignment

Respondents said that there is a lot of duplication; some of this is driven by turf wars, the politics of organisations, and different constituency profiles. There are currently difficulties of collaboration among different organisations, and issues among some, so driving greater collaboration and the sharing of working practice and resources is a good thing. The general feeling was that the establishment of a Community of Practice (CoP) is essential.

Teacher Unions do not seem to get involved in these debates – and yet the issues are key to the experience of teaching in South Africa. Unions should be brought into the discussions.
9. General

Barriers cited tend to include the following:

Systemic and societal barriers

- Societal indifference towards disability and general ignorance towards what disability means. As Dos Santos says, “overwhelmingly, the primary and most persistent systemic impediment is attitude. Teachers simply don’t know enough, the department doesn’t know enough about the issues, and a lot of them feel the children belong in segregated settings, or that they should be at home. While some learners sail through school because of a really good teacher, on the other hand, sometimes a negative attitude can turn it all the other way around, and the child gets kicked out. The role of the principal is also quite critical, as if the principal has a positive attitude, it can make all the difference, and if the attitude is positive from the top, this feeds down to the staff and learners”.

- Some provinces lack vision and strategies for inclusion.

- There are funding constraints and a lack of proper budgeting for inclusive education.

- Untrained staff exist at all levels of the system. A system is as good as the people who make it work.

Legislative barriers

- SA has ratified the United Nations Convention on Inclusive Education, but does not appear to be able to act on its principles. Interviewees felt that it was time for White Paper 6 to be reviewed and translated into legislation.

Other barriers cited

- The pace and time of dealing with the new curriculum.

- Teachers not understanding disability and tending to want to exclude rather than include learners who are disabled.

- Language challenges, especially with disabled learners coming from township and informal settlement areas, showing a discrepancy between home and school language.

- Lack of resources in schools and in homes where disabled learners spend the weekends and holiday time.

- Too much emphasis on academic achievement and not on basic skills training.

- Travel challenges.

A main topic was teacher competencies required to successfully implement inclusive education. The view is that the ability to structure, support and scaffold learning in different ways for diverse learning needs is in any case something all teachers should know as part of good pedagogical skills. Assistive devices and resources need to be used in conjunction with these skills, not as ‘stand alones’ for special needs learners.
Where should efforts be put in future activity and spend? Recommendations by interviewees

Recommendations by respondents were myriad, and are contained in the interview write-ups. Some frequently repeated ones were:

In terms of mainstreaming, there could be a significant target group of individuals who need to progress beyond special schools that end at primary level, and could be mainstreamed into secondary schools with the right kind of support. This would especially apply to physically disabled/visually- or hearing-impaired learners who have the required cognitive skills to progress but need support for learning. It would perhaps be possible to identify such learners and route them through to a maths and science option. Such a project could try and build in a longer-term benefit to other disabled learners, through bringing these learners into an advocacy role. Of relevance here is that the biggest ‘dropout’ rate for learners with disabilities is at secondary school level, which could be due to a lack of special schools, or lack of access to other schools, or lack of support. The Gauteng Planning Commission in the Office of the Premier said that “moving learners from special schools into full service and ordinary schools is currently a priority, as is the need to promote maths and science for special needs learners; there are therefore synergies with the aims of the RMB project”.

There is insufficient involvement of experts in the field of disabilities and inclusion. While consultation might happen at a policy level, those with the specific knowledge sets around disability need to be brought into implementation planning and delivery. The issue of bringing in relevant expertise is something to bear in mind for the RMB project.

Many respondents inclined towards a human resource intervention (but not in the form of workshops). Conditions for success for implementing inclusive education include:

- Reasonable workload
- Sufficient time to implement curriculum differentiation
- Collaboration with other teachers.

These conditions suggest that time is a key requirement; teachers often cite lack of time as a reason why they don’t implement what they may have learned at workshops, or consult with colleagues. Possibly a project involving an on-site learning support advisor could be investigated. Part of this role could include consideration of time management and collaboration.

Several respondents would like a community of practice (CoP) in this area and also to see increased funding of the training of teachers, the provision of physical resources, the development of an advocacy campaign around disability, and providing better transport for learners who are in wheelchairs. Many felt that it would be good to look at several aspects as to how to improve awareness around disability. These are:

- Increase awareness in the community through advocacy campaigns;
- Increase resources in the classroom by placing suitable equipment in ordinary schools;
- Provide the tools, the voice-activated software and so on, that ensure that learners with disabilities are able to use and to operate smart technology, smart phones, etc.;
- Focus on physical rather than cognitive disabilities, and where there are physically disabled/visually- or hearing-impaired learners who have the required cognitive skills to progress but
need support for learning, identify and support such learners and route them through to a maths and science option;
• Develop a research agenda to identify, implement and replicate best practices within Gauteng and SA in general;
• Develop a database of schools that offer education to disabled children, be it through inclusion, special schools or full service schools;
• Focus on learning pathways available to learners with disabilities and ensuring their access to the labour market;
• Set up a community of practice focused on disabilities and inclusion in education; and
• Promote CSI spend in targeted areas to support ordinary schools, which can make a real difference for learners with disabilities.

Respondents felt this should be an on-going initiative of the RMB Fund, and welcomed its interest in this field, and they suggested other stakeholders who should be included in further research, discussions or in a community of practice, and these included:

• Catholic Institute of Education (which has produced a publication on the subject of inclusion entitled “All Children Can Learn”)
• DeafSA
• Disabled Children’s Action Group (DICAG)
• Disabled People South Africa (DPSA)
• Dr Siba Moodley, head of the Disability Desk at UNISA
• Essop Pahad
• Hestel Viljoen, principal of Prinshoff School for the Blind
• John Malherbe, chair of the SA Disability Alliance (SADA)
• Momentum Fund
• Parents’ Associations.
• Rural perspectives
• SA Federation for Mental Health
• Sunshine Centre Association
• UCT Disabilities Studies Unit.
• Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disability