

**Opening Schools for All Children in South Africa:
The experience of inclusive education in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape
provinces**

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The South African – Finnish Co-operation Programme in the Education Sector (SCOPE) is a bilateral agreement between the Governments of South Africa and Finland, and implemented with the financial contribution of Finland within the framework of the Finnish development co-operation.

Acknowledgement

This document is based on contributions from Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provincial Department of Education officials and SCOPE advisers who have been working with and in the SCOPE Programme, with the support of the national Department of Education. A process of inclusion is fundamentally a process of learning. A lot of new knowledge has been gained through debates, reflection and action as a result of the work carried out in the SCOPE programme. This document reflects this learning process. Much of the documentation in this book is based on detailed notes of visits and observations in the pilot schools by the SCOPE Senior Adviser in Inclusive Education. The Component 3 /Inclusive Education of the SCOPE Programme also wishes to acknowledge the insightful comments of SCOPE Team Leader, Dr Leo Pekkala, for the revision and finalisation of the document.

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Preface

Current principles of the education sector policies in South Africa reflect great challenges facing a society in transition. Apparently, the task undertaken by two successive democratic governments is moving on to address the inequalities of the past. The education system is seen playing a key role in the process and special attention has been given in the Education White Paper 6 (2001) 'Special Needs Education Building an Inclusive Education and Training System' to various aspects of the education system to promote, enhance and support the inclusion, participation and development of all learners. However, experiences of social policymaking and implementation in developing countries reveal that the withdrawal of long existing practices of discrimination and oppression requires a carefully planned strategy of policy implementation (Baez, 1999). In spite of advances in educational policies in South Africa, the challenges of making policy a reality and effectively achieving equal rights, equity and participation of all, (learners, educators, parents and communities) appear to be wider and of greater complexity.

The question of embracing inclusive education principles becomes relevant for a society in transformation and in so doing, the opportunity to ascertain the strengths and challenges of such task. In this work, I attempt to collect experiences of stakeholders of the implementation of an education development project in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces in South Africa. South African-Finnish Co-operation Programme in the Education Sector (SCOPE) comprises of three components: (i) Higher education (ii) Information and communication technologies for enhanced learning and (iii) Inclusive education. The overall objective of the Programme was to contribute to the capacity and to enhance the quality of the educators in South Africa. The duration of the Programme was four years, Phase I: February 2000 to January 2001; Phase II February 2002 to December 2003.

The focus of this volume is on the Inclusive Education Component of the SCOPE Programme. It aims to support the implementation of Education White Paper 6 in 21 mainstream schools in South Africa. In accordance with White Paper 6, the Component therefore introduces a commitment to the provision of educational

opportunities for learners who currently or in the past have experienced barriers to learning or who have been excluded from schools due to the inability of the education and training system to accommodate their learning needs.

The completion of this volume was achieved in twofold. Firstly, the analysis of documentary evidence kindly provided by Ms Sai Väyrynen, Senior Adviser of the SCOPE Programme with contributions by provincial co-ordinators, Department of Education officials at provincial and national level, local SCOPE advisers and learners and educators in the field. Through their contributions, participants account, discuss and analyse various phases of the process, from planning to implementation, process of change and the organisation of support structures within the system to continue with inclusive practice once the final phase reaches its completion. Secondly, data gathered from fieldwork experiences in schools. I had opportunities to observe classroom practices and to discuss with educators and learners what inclusion means and how it occurs in the current school context in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces. This was undoubtedly a very enlightening and valuable part of the editorial work. Educators expressed how much they have gained with the support and training from the project. They also shared some of their planning and documentation regarding curriculum differentiation with me. I was very impressed by their creativity with large class groups of about 40 to 60 learners and limited resources.

I also engaged in talking to learners. It was so good to hear them say how much the school has changed, especially after learners with disabilities joined their classes. They confided that they used to look at them in a very different way and it has been quite a discovery for them to see how much they can progress in school. Overall, they said it is good that educators are trying new things and lessons are sometimes very interesting.

I also met with provincial education officials who have been directly involved in the development and implementation of the project. I acknowledge their strong commitment to inclusion and to addressing social issues through education. We met in Pretoria for two fruitful working days attending a writing workshop. The working style was very much conducive to analysis and participation, as a reflection of democratic processes taking place in the country nowadays. My aim as the workshop

facilitator was to create a welcoming environment in which all participants felt comfortable to revisit, discuss and analyse the process. The outcome of the workshop was to outline main lessons learnt, together with strategies to consolidate the implementation of inclusive education after the pilot phase. Writing up is not an easy task, though participants of the workshop were very enthusiastic and carried on patiently through my questions.

I am extremely thankful for their accounts which form the main body of this text. I also wish to acknowledge their openness and skills to bring together their knowledge on inclusion developed during the pilot experience, which I hope will be of great value to policy makers - especially in developing contexts - professionals in the field of education, students and stakeholders committed to building a more just and inclusive society. I am also very grateful for the contributions and comments made by Ms Sai Väyrynen, Senior Adviser, with regard to the organisation and contents of this volume. My acknowledgments also go to Ms Donna Jay for her assistance with the typing.

Through our work, I became aware of the need to structure this volume in two distinctive sections. Section one deals with the knowledge developed through the process. Section two collects schools praxis on implementing inclusive education. In so doing, the process becomes alive through voices of educators and learners who share their experiences of adopting principles of inclusion and how they are making it happen in their schools and communities with us.

Warwickshire, August 2003.

INTRODUCTION

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education. Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (July, 2001), ends a post-1994¹ period of educational policy making in South Africa through the articulation of principles of a democratic country that aims to address the needs of groups largely marginalized and or at risk of becoming socially excluded.

The issue of equity is at the centre of all social policies in South Africa, particularly in the education sector (Motala & Singh, 2001). The aim is to empower all stakeholders to take part in the process of democratic transformation of the country through the creation of opportunities, effective use resources and development of skills. Education plays a crucial part in this process. From this point of view, the issue of becoming socially included relates to the concept of citizenship and goes beyond poverty alleviation of individuals and communities. It adopts the view of a process whereby all members of society can engage in social transformation with a degree of fairness and social justice. The task is not simple, especially when the government has inherited a long tradition of practices of exclusion and marginalisation. The task becomes even more complex with the social and economic transformation of the country in which the state has adopted a re-defined role (Hart 2002). The immediate implication is that the provision of services changes dramatically, given a greater ownership to communities and private sectors. The rationale may appear to be logical from the perspective of empowerment and promoting participation. However, issues of a problematic nature arise when determining how individuals who have traditionally been excluded can begin to participate and move from being excluded to become socially included.

This book reflects an attempt to examine the development and a pilot implementation of the inclusive education policy in South Africa as outlined in the Education White

¹ In 1994, the first democratic elections were held after the era of apartheid.

Paper 6. The focus is on transformation of an education system which has previously been divided into ‘special education’ and ‘mainstream education’. The document explores field experiences in two provinces: Mpumalanga and Northern Cape, engaged with the challenges of policy implementation for inclusive education with the support of the Finnish Government through the SCOPE Programme.

White Paper 6 defines ‘inclusive education’ as:

- acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.
- enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.
- acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases.
- broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal settings and structures.
- changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners.
- maximising participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning.

The definition of inclusive education may vary internationally. However, the core principles on which it is based are the acceptance of equal rights for all learners and social justice. Education White Paper 6 declares this intention in its proposals, recommendations and action plan to transform the education system to effectively respond to and support learners, parents and communities by promoting the removal of barriers to learning and participation that exist in the education system in an incremental manner.

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The content of this book aims to add to the discussion of ways in which notions of inclusion and exclusion are interpreted. Schools’ stories that have become alive through voices in the book suggest the need to refocus the debate on educational inclusion to a wider approach.

Lessons learnt in the process of piloting inclusive education may be useful to inform similar initiatives and the wider transformation of the education and training system in South Africa. The knowledge developed throughout the project reveals a unique understanding of the process of inclusion in a range of contexts. The experience will also prove useful to other education systems which are geared towards developing inclusive education. Questions arise as to whether inclusive principles and practice may emerge in such contexts, and if so, which are the challenges for learners, parents, educators and managers? The SCOPE experience may not have all the answers to such questions but it undoubtedly provides a great source of knowledge and understanding of processes and challenges for transforming a dual system of education ('special' / 'mainstream') into a single inclusive education and training system.

Section one deals with the logistics of the project: planning process, organisation and the development of human resources and support to implement inclusive education.

Chapter 1 provides a rationale for implementation of the pilot experience in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces. It discusses in greater detail how the transition was made from a commitment to the transformation of practice in the pilot schools.

Chapter 2 deals with human resource development for inclusive education. The chapter moves the discussion towards models of training and the extent to which they are useful tools in the process. Educators account on how the process of transformation takes place in schools and the extent to which the transfer of new knowledge is passed to the daily practice.

Chapter 3 considers effective support as the key for developing good practice for inclusive education. The chapter describes in detail the various structures of support put in place during the pilot experience, main successes and challenges encountered and the extent to which they may be transformed into opportunities for structural change.

Chapter 4 provides a discussion of the concept of inclusion from the perspective of educators and education officials involved in the process. The chapter examines the challenges and contradictions of the paradigm shift from exclusion to inclusion. Emerging from this chapter are the dilemmas facing schools in moving towards inclusive education.

Section 2 begins with Chapter 5. It comprises practical aspects of the experience in the field. Educators, learners and school communities become alive through their experiences of transformation. Educators account on how they see the curriculum in the light of connections with policy and theory. The issue of making the curriculum accessible to all learners and using the flexibility of outcomes-based education to provide effective responses is at the centre of the discussion. Educators and schools take the reader on a refreshing journey towards inclusion.

Finally, Chapter 6 addresses four levels of the inclusive education discourse: (i) an epistemological level where the discussion aims to increase a particular understanding of what is inclusive education with special reference to South Africa, (ii) a philosophical level which deals with values and change, if any, with regard to inclusiveness, acceptance and tolerance to diversity in a multicultural environment, (iii) an ontological level which analyses the successes and shortcomings of a local model of developing inclusion which is context-based and somewhat different from a more narrow conceptualisation of inclusion as integration of disabled learners into mainstream schools, and (iv) a paradigm level which aims to re-define the divide between the individual and the system to address barriers to learning and development.

Finally, throughout the book there is an overarching intention that the experiences of the SCOPE Inclusive Education project will enhance the discussion and provide insights of a particular educational development process towards inclusive education.

PREPARING FOR THE TRANSFORMATION THROUGH A PILOT INITIATIVE

Introduction

When democratic change was introduced in South Africa in 1994, the newly elected government expressed a strong commitment to address issues of social justice and redress. One area in which the legacy of the past was most apparent was in the education sector. Government officials identified opportunities to introduce educational projects to address the needs of schools and communities in the form of pilot experiences through international cooperation initiatives. The aim was to create and study conditions to change schools and to transform them into flexible learning organisations that are able to respond to the needs of all learners, in line with the new education policies. The SCOPE Programme was set up in this context.

This chapter presents a brief of the planning process for the implementation of the SCOPE Programme as a whole in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces of South Africa, and a more detailed account of SCOPE Component 3 on inclusive education. In this chapter, education managers' and educators' accounts highlight experiences of working in partnership with an international donor and stakeholders to implement a new initiative at a time of profound social transformation in South Africa.

The significance of this initiative was that it aimed to implement inclusive education in mainstream schools at a time when the government expressed a commitment to social inclusion and the educational policy framework was in the process of consultation but not a clearly declared policy yet. The chapter describes decisions made; it also assesses and points out the relevance of the main steps of the planning phase. Finally, a discussion of lessons learned is presented.

An opportunity for change

South Africa and Finland signed an 'Agreement on General Terms and Procedures for Development Co-operation' in May 1997. This was followed by consultations on the nature of development co-operation between the two countries that took place in December 1998. A key input to this process was the report of a fact-finding mission of Finnish Sector experts who visited South Africa in the second half of 1998.

The SCOPE Programme Document (1999) refers to an exchange of visits between the Ministers of Education of the two countries. Finland's Minister of Education visited South Africa in February 1998, and South Africa's Minister of Education visited Finland in January 1999. Further discussions took place during the annual bilateral consultations set up under the Bilateral Agreement. It was through these contacts that areas of co-operation in the education sector were identified:

1. Support for the transfer of teacher education and training into higher education;
2. Support for teacher education and training in technological infrastructure in education; and
3. Small-scale support for the education of learners with special education needs².

These areas formed key components of a programme with an overall objective to increase the capacity and enhance the quality of educators in South Africa. One can expect that participation of representatives of the South African Department of Education in identifying areas of co-operation must have ensured that these areas were identified in response to assessed needs. The Programme Document points out that it is based on "a Fact-Finding Mission in 1998, a Program Refinement Mission, A Program Finalisation Mission and a Program Appraisal, all in 1999." (p. 2) The document also benefited from inputs made by representatives of relevant Directorates in the national Department of Education as well as Departments of Education in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces. The rationale for the choice of the two provinces was to support the development of a higher education institution in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape where no such institutions existed at the beginning of the Programme.

² The programme document uses the term 'learners with special education needs'.

The duration of the Programme was set for four years, and to be implemented in two Phases; Phase I: February 2000 to January 2001; Phase II February 2002 to December 2003. Due to the on-going developments in the policy environment, the areas of concentration of the programme were also reformulated. In the Second Phase of the Programme, the three Components reflected these new developments:

1. Incorporation of teacher education and training into Higher Education
2. ICT for Enhanced Learning
3. Introducing Inclusive Education.

The total Finnish funding for the project was some 6.2 million Euros over the four year period, of which approximately 1.7 million Euros were allocated for inclusive education.

Structure of the SCOPE Programme

The programme structure agreed upon between the South African and Finnish partners was to ensure transparency in the programme implementation and maximum participation of relevant stakeholders at the various levels of the education system:

A Supervisory Board (SVB) was formed by representatives from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and South African Department of Education at the Chief Directorate level. The mandate of the Supervisory Board included policy issues and amendments to the programme, approval of the work plan and budget.

A Steering Committee (SC) was formed by representatives from the Embassy of Finland, national Department of Education, provincial Departments of Education, and the Team Leader. They were responsible to the Supervisory Board for programme management and the achievement of programme purposes. The role of the Committee was to finalise work plans, approve quarterly progress reports and annual monitoring reports and present them to the Supervisory Board.

Provincial Co-ordinators responsible for SCOPE activities were assigned in the Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces. Their responsibilities ranged from

organising provincial meetings to share information, to analysing and preparing provincial reports for the province and the Steering Committee. The Provincial Coordinator served as a link between all the programme information through the unit/division Heads within the line function.

Each Component of the SCOPE Programme had a separate management structure, chaired by the Component Coordinator at national level. The Component teams were responsible for the preparation of annual Work Plans based on the proposals from the provincial Departments of Education, and making proposals to the Steering Committee on all matters concerning Component activities. The consultants and local SCOPE advisers were part of these Component structures. The national Component Coordinators were responsible for ensuring that the programme activities were in line with policy imperatives, monitoring and supporting the implementation and compiling various Component reports for the Steering Committee.

The provincial Component Coordinators were responsible for executing all provincial component decisions and making sure that agreed component plans and reports were finalised for submission to the Steering Committee through the national Component Coordinator.

Selecting the pilot schools

Amongst the initial tasks of the planning phase was the selection of the pilot schools in the two provinces. The process started with visits to schools in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape by provincial Department of Education teams. The aim was to raise awareness and to sensitise schools of the principles of inclusive education. Although schools were aware of the direction of change in education through previously released education policy documents (White Paper 1 (1995), South African Schools Act (1996), National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET)/National Committee on Education Support Services Commission (NCESS) Report (1997), The Green Paper (1999)) there was a general lack of understanding at grassroots level of how the introduction of inclusive education in mainstream schools in the two provinces was to be made.

Criteria for the selection of pilot schools

Due to geographical, linguistic and demographic differences in the two provinces, they each devised their own set of criteria for selecting schools.

In Mpumalanga, primary schools were selected as pilot schools taking into consideration the recommendations of the NCSNET/NCESS report that the introduction of inclusive education would start from the Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3). The assumption was that as learners progressed to higher grades, the principles and practices of inclusive education would extend to these grades. However, the extent to which this assumption was monitored is not clear. Another criterion for selection was the possibility of using existing skills of special educators who were already working in special classes or remedial teaching in mainstream schools. It was assumed that those educators would have an important role in planning and supporting learners in mainstream schools.

Furthermore, selected schools were expected to indicate their willingness to implement inclusive education and to move towards the removal of all barriers so that all learners could enrol in schools partaking in the pilot experience.

For the selection of schools, District Heads of Education and Circuit Education Managers also took into consideration the existing basic infrastructure, schools being serviced with electricity and to ensure that selected schools would make their best endeavours to improve the security of the premises. The final selection of schools represented a cross-cut of South African economical and racial diversity, including ex-model C school (previously a school for 'white' population), ex-'coloured' school and a number of schools in different contexts: urban and rural, as well as township and non-township schools.

In the Northern Cape, pilot schools in the four Districts (in 2003: Francis Baard, Siyanda, Karoo and Namaqua) were selected based on numbers of primary schools

per each district. It was expected that selected schools would represent urban, semi-urban and rural areas, small and large, and farm schools located in advantaged and disadvantaged areas, representing also the demographic diversity of the province. The rationale for such representation was to be able to address all challenges posed by the wide diversity of school communities in South Africa through the pilot experience. Consistent with this intention, in 2001, a school which catered for two San communities was included in the project. A decision to include all regions of the Northern Cape province was made on the basis of recommendations by the Regional Education Directors to not only concentrate the project in the then Kimberley District in order to explore the challenge that the geographical distances in the Northern Cape could pose. Taking into consideration the purpose of linking the three components of the SCOPE Programme, there was also an intention to select schools that would be close to Component 2 – Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Information and Communication Technology initiative. However, this intention never truly materialised in the Programme.

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The selection process

The selection process was conducted in an open manner. The intention was to provide opportunities for schools and the Department of Education officials to actively engage in the selection.

Despite of the fact that schools were not systematically identified and selected to participate in the SCOPE Inclusive Education project, the Mpumalanga selection process was marked by transparency and a willingness to share decision-making among provincial Department of Education officials. In an effort to speed-up the selection process, existing committees and scheduled meetings of the Special Education Needs (SEN) section of the provincial Department of Education were used to discuss and make decisions concerning the selection process of pilot schools according to the criteria discussed above. The District Managers of the then 10 education districts met on a regular basis as part of their regular duties. The selection of the ten schools to take part in the pilot experience was included as a permanent item on the monthly agenda. During the first meeting two suggestions were submitted for consideration with regard to selecting schools. The first suggestion was to select

ten schools located in the Middelburg area, the western area of the Mpumalanga province. It was thought that such arrangement would facilitate monitoring and support instead of a choice of geographically wide-spread schools that might prove to be unmanageable. The second proposition was that in the final selection at least one school in each then educational district was to be represented. The aim was that schools could develop as central schools for the implementation and expansion of inclusive education in the Districts. The goal was also to spread any gains, in terms of skills, experiences and resources to schools evenly throughout the ten Districts.

The participants in the process opted for second option and District Managers were given the task of consulting school principals and other stakeholders about the decision. After two-week consultations principals and educators alongside relevant stakeholders (District Heads, Circuit Managers, School Governing Bodies) identified one school in each District. Selected schools received a letter of invitation to participate in the SCOPE Inclusive Education Project to which a written response was required. Subsequently the School Governing Bodies of the selected schools signed an agreement to ratify their commitment to the project.

The Northern Cape Department of Education, on their side, embarked on a consultative process with education Senior Managers and the SCOPE Inclusive Education team in the province. A questionnaire was sent to approximately 100 schools to ascertain educators' and School Management Teams' interest to partake in the introduction of inclusive education in their schools. The strategy used also aimed at gathering views of the schools. 60 schools returned the questionnaires, and 30 schools responded positively to the invitation. Schools that declined to partake in the SCOPE Inclusive Education project cited other on-going educational projects in schools as a reason for not participating.

Once schools were initially selected, the Finnish adviser and the provincial Component Co-ordinator visited the schools twice to brief the staff about the project and expected outcomes. Briefing sessions served a two-fold purpose: information about the project and advocacy on inclusive education. During the visits, the team was also able to ascertain educators' interests and attitudes towards inclusion. After the

second visit to the schools the final selection was made and it was submitted to the Northern Cape Head of Department for ratification. Selected schools were officially informed of their participation in Component 3 of the SCOPE Programme.

Building up structures to support pilot schools

A four-year project is likely to experience various changes in the course of the implementation both in orientation and structure. Both provinces have undergone changes in provincial administrative structures which have impacted on the project implementation. One restructuring exercise has dealt with Districts/Regions: in Mpumalanga the initial 10 educational Districts in which the pilot schools were located, were merged into three Regions. This resulted in staff removals from previous Districts to new Regional structures. In Northern Cape, the borders of the four Districts at the beginning of the project were changed, and some of the pilot schools found themselves being served and supported by a different District than before. Taking into account these changes, the following is an attempt to draw a picture of how the support for the pilot schools was initially conceived and what changed over the implementation period.

In the Mpumalanga province the District support officials in the Special Education Needs (SEN) section of the Department of Education were to continue with the support already provided at schools. Thus, no substantial changes to their usual roles and tasks of supporting schools were made at the onset. However, there were great differences in terms of availability of support to the pilot schools, depending on the Districts, and even officials, as will be illustrated when schools discuss their experiences later in this document. The basic difference to the usual role of the District support staff was the provision of support to pilot schools.

Tables 1 and 2 represent the pilot schools in each province with their respective Districts and Regions.

Table 1 Mpumalanga: Pilot Schools and Regions (as in 2003)

School	Region
Umsebe Primary School	Eastvaal (name change expected soon)
Laerskool Standerton	
Father Charles Primary School	
Bukhosibetfu Primary School	Ehlanzeni
Lekazi Primary School	
Victory Park Primary School	
Sibisi Primary School	Nkangala
Mnyamana Primary School	
Maloka Primary School	
Tshwenyane Combined School	

Table 2: Northern Cape: Pilot Schools and Districts (as in 2003)

SCHOOL	DISTRICT
Port Nolloth Primary School	Namaqua
Vela Langa Primary School	Siyanda
Keidebees Primary School	Siyanda
Alpha Primary School	Karoo
Plooyburg Primary School	Karoo
Vaal Oranje Primary School	Karoo
Andalusia Primary School	Francis Baard
!Xunkhwesa Combined School	Francis Baard

Barkly West Higher Primary School	Francis Baard
Flamingo Primary School	Francis Baard
Tshwarelela Primary School	Francis Baard

During the first Phase of the Programme (2000 – 2001), an *ad hoc* committee comprising the Head of Special Education Needs Section, the Provincial Component Co-ordinator, Ms Nelly Lekgau (both Department of Education officials), and the Finnish SCOPE Consultant, Ms Marja Matero, was formed in order to monitor and support the introduction of inclusive education in the pilot schools in Mpumalanga. The committee met monthly. It was also the remit of this committee to ascertain additional support required by schools. A task team comprising representatives of the pilot schools and special schools, the Disability Desk and Special Educational Needs advisers in the then Districts assisted the work of the committee.

In the first Phase of implementation the existing support structures in the Northern Cape comprised the special schools and their therapeutic services, the Department of Health, the Kimberley Hospital and regional clinics closest to the schools, The Education Support Services, the Finnish SCOPE Consultant, Ms Tuija Tammi, and the Provincial Component Co-ordinator, Ms Marjorie Bosch. In addition, a provincial task team was established to support the project. The team included representatives from pilot schools, the SCOPE Inclusive Education team in Northern Cape, members from the Disability Desk, staff from the Education Support Services and representatives from Health professionals in education (i.e. therapists working at special schools). The task team undertook an advisory role and met monthly to discuss issues and progress made by schools to implement inclusion, and ultimately to identify strategies to support the implementation.

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At the end of Phase I in 2001, the fixed term assignments of the two Finnish consultants in the provinces came to an end. The two posts were replaced by a Senior Adviser, Ms Sai Väyrynen who was stationed at the national Department of Education. Her role was to support the strategic planning and development of

implementation guidelines of Education White Paper 6. The role of the Senior Adviser at provincial level was to develop and support the capacity building of educators and provincial Departments of Education. She was also part of the support to schools in both provinces. She dedicated most of her time to visiting schools, advising, supporting and training educators in schools, as well as developing monitoring tools, and the systematic documentation of experiences at various levels of implementation.

In Phase II, the provinces appointed local SCOPE advisers to work directly with the pilot schools. The Northern Cape Department of Education established a fixed-term contract for an adviser in order to ensure the sustainability of the inclusive education initiative and to build capacity within the department. Ms Margaret Solomon was appointed to the project in June 2002 as additional human resources within the Department of Education. In Mpumalanga, there were some difficulties in the establishment of such a contract. This resulted in a delay in the recruitment and discontinuation of direct support to pilot schools in 2002. Late in 2002, the Mpumalanga Department of Education decided to recruit a local adviser for a consultant contract, and Mr Gregory McPherson started his assignment in February 2003.

Conclusion

Throughout the selection process in both provinces, attempts were made to involve the relevant stakeholders in decision-making. Circuit Managers and others placed emphasis on the co-operative nature of the implementation of inclusive education in pilot schools and that the success of the initiative depended on the acceptance and support of all stakeholders.

In both provinces there were attempts to use the existing support for schools. Due to the nature of the project, it was possible to target more specialist support for the pilot schools. The pilot schools have generally been satisfied with the support but this poses questions about the sustainability of such targeted support: To what extent will

it be possible to provide extensive support for some schools even after completion of the project, and how does it contribute to the development of inclusive education at systemic level? Another question remains unanswered: To what extent did the kind of support that has been provided through the Department of Education structures helped the Department to reconceptualise and restructure support at District level? It is obvious that this work has only started with the launching of Education White Paper 6, and will continue after the SCOPE Programme.

All schools were supported in the making of their development plans according to a common format provided. However, it is not clear from documentation to what extent their plans informed the overall project planning and how they were monitored despite the development of a systematic monitoring tool in Phase II.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Introduction

An essential aspect of the implementation of inclusive education is the human resources development. In an inclusive system of education there is a need to develop a set of skills to effectively respond to the increasing diversity in the class. This may appear to be complex due to the nature of educational change, and it is particularly challenging in the case of South Africa. The introduction of inclusive education emerged from a dual system of mainstream and special needs education where support has been provided on the basis of category of disability and race. Therefore, many educators in mainstream schools may feel less confident to deal with the increasing learner diversity in often overcrowded classes, whilst the highly specialised educators deal with a small minority of learners in special schools. The long tradition of a dual system has contributed to exacerbate differences, prejudice and fear amongst educators, parents and learners. At a time of transformation such aspects may increase the complexities of change.

Another common assumption is that educators can only be effective in their response to diversity if there are plenty of material resources, including well-adapted physical environment and specialised aids and equipment rather than thinking about their strengths and competences and how they can enhance and transfer their skills into various aspects of managing diversity in the classroom. However, there is a lot of evidence from developing contexts and in particular rural communities that inclusion is not only about resources, and that there are always more needs than resources available. It is more important to look into effective use of what is already available and to identify existing under-utilised resources.

Re-visiting initial assumptions

The initial assumption was to provide training to educators participating in the project as they were seen as playing a pivotal role in the process. On reflection, training is of paramount importance though it is not the only aspect to be borne in mind in developing an inclusive education and training system. Advocacy, self-advocacy, and the advancement of more inclusive attitudes of educators and management teams, parents and various stakeholders are great assets to the change process. In many respects advocacy constitutes a relevant part of the training programme for educators. The rationale is two-fold. On the one hand, educators are made aware of the philosophy and principles of inclusion which entail change in the way in which they see their own practice and the way they deal with diversity in mainstream classes (i.e. paradigm shift). On the other, they become conversant with various policies governing the implementation of an inclusive education and training system in South Africa through the advocacy, which will help them to locate the inclusion agenda into the wider picture of the transformation of the society. This was assumed to give a contextual relevance to the inclusive education initiative.

Taking this aspect into consideration an advocacy campaign on inclusive education was initiated as part of the process of human resource development. The target groups for the advocacy campaign comprised educators, school management teams, principals, parents, school governing bodies and communities, as well as education officials from districts, regions and provinces. The aim of the process was to sensitise people and to raise awareness for the need to transform the education system.

At the inception of the SCOPE Programme, White Paper 6 had not been released and many negative assumptions and speculations were made about adopting inclusive education in South Africa. One was that it could not be enforced in the province in a policy vacuum and that the schools in both provinces did not consider to become inclusive schools. In fact, the concept of inclusive education was somewhat blurred for most stakeholders. It is important to highlight that the overall situation of the system was changing, e.g. the Integrated National Disability Strategy (Department of Social Development, 1997) called for achieving an inclusive society for all. The call was instrumental on educational policy making for inclusion. The philosophy of inclusive education based on human rights and social justice provided a sound

argument for change and it prompted the need to develop a grounded and coherent programme of action for implementing inclusive educational praxis.

The External Evaluation Report (2003) of the SCOPE Component 3 / Inclusive Education found out that although most of the principals, if not all, claimed that they embraced the new paradigm, others clearly had mixed feelings. Some interpreted the situation as “*a replacement of special schools or semi-special schools*”, which according to them would retard the process of teaching in the already overcrowded classrooms. According to these principals, dual education system gave learners who experienced learning barriers the opportunity to learn and develop in special schools where all learners received support. In order to meet the challenges of inclusive education, some of them had already introduced special classes in their schools to assist those learners with learning problems. Some felt that schools were being turned into “*dumping areas*”. The evaluation report further stated that the development of a truly inclusive school was strongly affected by the style of leadership and management in the school.

Although most educators initially saw the implementation of inclusive education as impossible, they generally came to accept the basic principles of inclusion. However, a certain degree of skepticism tended to exist, especially in the schools where principals were not fully committed to inclusion. The evaluation report further indicates that the degree of skepticism that remains amongst educators and principals is tied to the traditional view that specific learners should change (medical-deficit approach) so that they fit into the existing system. This runs counter to the central tenet of building an inclusive education system, which states that educators need to accept diverse learning needs among the learner population and find ways in which the school systems can change to accommodate a greater diversity.

Developing strategies for change towards inclusion

Baseline Study

In 2000 a baseline study (SCOPE, 2001) was carried out in the selected pilot schools and Departments of Education to determine the type of support required by various groups of professionals and parents in order to support the development of inclusive education. The study revealed that generally there was support for inclusive education amongst the different groups, and some efforts were already being made towards inclusion. Most schools already had 'learners with special needs', mainly those with "reading, writing, spelling and numeracy difficulties, and learners with disadvantaged backgrounds".

At the onset of the SCOPE project, the majority of principals of the pilot schools indicated that their educators were not equipped to manage diversity in their classroom because they had not been trained for that. A perception existed that educators would need training in appropriate teaching strategies and methodologies for a better respond to the diverse needs, as well as in "assessing and solving problems of LSEN" ('learners with special education needs'). The principals also highlighted the need to change the attitudes and mindsets of educators towards 'LSEN'. The education officials generally shared the view of the principals, and added that the training around inclusion was still inadequate, mainly because it was rather a new concept. Furthermore, the majority of education officials stated that they were not equipped to provide the "right kind of support" to pilot schools.

Basics for inclusive education

The first phase of training was the implementation of the Remedial Teaching Foundation Teacher Development Course. It comprises of training in differentiated teaching and learning strategies, which educators can transfer into mainstream classes to increase the participation of all learners. It aims to build skills and competencies of educators to become more effective in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the teaching and learning processes. The Remedial Teaching Foundation course helped educators to identify existing barriers to learning in their classrooms without delay. Educators were also helped to analyse barriers and to devise pedagogical strategies to effectively deal with such hurdles in the day-to-day operation of the school.

In order to make the training programme a far-reaching one, a cascading model was implemented in both provinces. The cascading would operate as follows: the training would start with a cohort of 20, named Master Trainers, who subsequently would train another 20 and so on. The initial 20 Master trainers were officials from the then Specialised Education Units and Education Support Services, early childhood development practitioners, curriculum officials and adult basic education and training educators, as well as educators from the pilot schools. Each participant committed to training other educators at either their own or other schools. The Education Support Services in Northern Cape used the Remedial Teaching Foundation training as part of their staff development programme for educators in other schools in the province, after completing their initial share of training.

At the beginning of Phase II, a change in planning was introduced with the intention of having a larger number of educators exposed to a face-to-face training from the initial cascading model. This was due to difficulties that arose with the cascading. In some pilot schools the cascading approach was not successful. The ‘message’ became diluted as it passed down the cascade with the result that in many instances recipients of the message at the lower levels were less enthusiastic and skilled than those who received the initial training. Various factors contributed to this. One was the way in which participants were selected: in some instances those selected had already played a leading learning support role in their schools whilst others were chosen only because *“they could leave their classrooms/families at short notice”*. Secondly, the way in which cascading was organised in schools played a role. Staff members who attended workshops either did not get the opportunity to present the workshop at all or did not have enough time to repeat the entire workshop. These workshops took place, for example, after school, over weekends and during school holidays. The educators either had difficulties in transferring their newly acquired knowledge to colleagues or watered it down. Sometimes their inclusive education coordinating role evoked negative attitudes from colleagues. Thirdly, there was a lack of content knowledge of exactly what successful inclusive teaching and the support strategies required to overcome various barriers to learning are. The advantage of using the cascading model is perhaps the economical point which allows training large numbers of educators with reduced resources, whereas face-to-face training is expensive and time consuming. However, it was realised that due to the diversity of the pilot schools and

their situations, a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach in training was not effective. Training needs to respond to the specific needs and challenges of individual schools, and therefore the change to a more individualised approach in training is justified.

Generally, the outcomes of the training process were apparent when learners who had been denied access to mainstream schools were admitted. These included learners with disabilities as well as learners who had been living on streets, working children and truant children. Coupled with an on-going advocacy campaign, there was some evidence that educators started to look at responses to diversity from an inclusive point of view. However, the external evaluation report pointed out that the development of understanding and skills in responding to the needs of learners who were experiencing barriers to learning was hindered by a tendency to focus on learner disabilities and learning difficulties. In some pilot schools, a medical-deficit approach (‘special education needs’) was apparent with regard to the learners who had “problems”, and hence required some form of specialised intervention in a separate setting to enable them to eventually participate in the mainstream education. These pilot schools claimed that this practice ensured that the school achieved overall high levels of success, and also enabled educators to focus on their “more gifted” learners.

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There were also those pilot schools and educators who regarded special class intervention as discriminating against learners, and believed that it did not promote inclusive education. These educators applied intervention strategies that enabled them to continue to assist the learners within mainstream classrooms as the process of teaching and learning progressed. They applied a variety of techniques to make learning easier for all to progress at their own pace. Some pilot schools combined the two intervention approaches. First the educator helped the learner in the classroom and then members of the Institution-Based Support Team provided afternoon assistance.

Presently, more learners who experience barriers to learning are passing through and being supported by the education system. Learners with disabilities in particular are not only being enrolled at the school but also supported by fellow learners and educators. Many parents are also being trained to support their children so as to consolidate the work done in the pilot schools. There are some indications that, by being involved in their children’s education they are also more supportive towards the

school. The introduction of inclusive education in the two provinces has undoubtedly played a significant role in the general human resource development strategy. In so doing, it has enhanced the capacity building through educators' professional visits to other schools, and education officials working with specific schools, as well as through on-going staff development workshops and inter-provincial and international exchange.

Overcoming barriers and achieving a vision

In order to implement inclusive education, educators and schools have to start by identifying and enhancing existing good practice. In other words, they need to develop as good educators and schools first. As educators progressed in their commitment towards becoming inclusive they realised other existing barriers in their classes beyond that of mere disability, and that they needed to broaden their professional skills.

The workshops following the Remedial Teaching Foundation training particularly intended to be more responsive to the needs of educators. By beginning with an examination of what inclusive education entails, educators had opportunities to analyse philosophy and principles of the inclusive schools movement and to look into their own practice to determine existing strengths and opportunities in their schools and communities for supporting learning, building partnership and developing collaborative working networks.

The training also focused on parental involvement. Educators were made aware of the importance of working in partnership with parents and of involving them in the curriculum by creating more welcoming school communities.

On more practical classroom issues of the day-to-day work with learner diversity, educators examined methods for effective behaviour management and discussed classroom strategies in detail to address and respond to needs for support of learners with sensory impairments (i.e. hearing and visual impairments). Therapists from the special schools which were identified to become resource centres supported educators

on a regular basis, especially in the Northern Cape. They provided training on therapeutic skills to educators and parents in order to ensure better assistance to learners with disabilities.

Educators were equally trained in the use of new technologies to facilitate their administrative tasks, as well as planning and presentation of lessons. It was also anticipated that the four computers that the SCOPE Programme provided to each pilot school would prove useful in accessing information and communication. The SCOPE project covered the Internet connectivity costs during the course of the project. However, the schools were expected to cover the costs and maintenance of the computers after completion of the project.

Finally, one aspect of particular significance to the training was the opportunity for educators to leave their context for a moment and to reflect on their practice, challenges and achievements. Some pilot schools hosted an international exchange visit by Finnish educators. This was a source of learning and professional development. At a national level, educators from the pilot schools of the two provinces took part in a visit to the Resource and Educator Development Project, funded by DANIDA, in Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal. In Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape District officials and some educators familiarised themselves with the processes undertaken in Tshwane South District regarding the development of the District-Based Support Teams. Educators and Department of Education officials also travelled to Finland and Lesotho to learn from their countries' experiences with regard to inclusive education.

The cohort of educators who attended various human resources capacity activities developed a range of skills and competencies. This is reflected in the great diversity of teaching and learning styles used by educators in classroom situations. In general, educators were more positive and confident about their teaching skills and competencies. They were able to identify aspects where improvements were taking place in their classes and the extent to which this was a result of their commitment to support the implementation of inclusive education in schools in the pilot project.

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Subsequently, educators and schools started to develop their vision on moving towards greater inclusion and participation for all learners. Parents were also very positive and supportive regarding the change being introduced in the system and support and partnership flourished. Educators from schools participating in the SCOPE project started to assist colleagues working in neighbouring schools. They took the opportunity to advocate in the community to promote the principles of inclusive education and to lobby for the development of community involvement and support.

Schools and educators get ready to include all learners

The main outcome of the training provided within the SCOPE Programme was that at the end of the process educators would be able to effectively respond and support the learning process of each and every learner in the class. The training contributed to enhance educators' basic teaching skills and competencies so that they could devise appropriate teaching and learning strategies within the framework of Curriculum 2005 and outcomes-based education, and to make the new curriculum statements accessible to all learners. Training modules used in inclusive education workshops built on the principles and approaches used in the curriculum training programmes. In fact, both outcomes-based education and inclusive education share the premise that the structure of lessons should address the diverse learning styles enabling all learners to achieve their highest potential.

A topic at the core of the inclusive school is the development of an inclusive curriculum. In school-based curriculum workshops educators created their awareness of the relevance of making the curriculum accessible to all learners through the differentiation of tasks. Educators also engaged in developing examples of lesson plans by using these new strategies. The training was supported on-site at pilot schools, especially in the Northern Cape, focusing on their particular needs including aspects of collaborative and cooperative teaching, strategies to include learners who require higher needs of support and curriculum adaptations.

Broader workshops on inclusive education were directed for all pilot school principals throughout the project implementation. In Phase I, training was given on how to compile and use developmental plans. The intention was that schools would work on the basis of annually planned activities, so that at the end of each year they could reflect on successes and review their needs for improvement. However, there is no evidence to what extent this intention was followed-up. Workshops on Leadership and Management of Inclusive Schools for principals and School Management Teams, International Computer Drivers License (ICDL), A+ and Computer Networking for advanced learners were also offered.

Because various training activities were undertaken, the expectation was that all participants from the different levels of the education system would be open to implement change for a more inclusive practice. This was often not the case. Some educators did not find the need to change their approaches with regard to teaching and learning. Once they were back in schools, they continued with 'business as usual'. With this in mind, educators and officials were encouraged to identify their own personal development needs and to enhance their qualifications in inclusive education. SCOPE Programme provided bursaries to contribute to professional development through further studies as this was considered to be an appropriate manner to promote the enhancement and consolidation of knowledge and skills required to fully implement inclusive education in the provinces.

Throughout the training participants found training models generally effective and interesting. Training for inclusive education requires educators to use reflection and self-assessment to review practice. In this respect, the process of information sharing with colleagues became very relevant. Evidence collected during classroom observations in the pilot schools suggests that a great number of pilot school educators have an understanding of how they can make inclusion happen in the school. Educators build professional confidence on how to use the knowledge and skills in the class effectively; they plan for the learning outcomes, are able to gauge successes and shortcomings in their daily practice.

Conclusion

The practices, approaches and the application of teaching and learning methods introduced in various workshops can be replicated, however, as suggested earlier, it may not be as effective in similar situations as the circumstances may differ. Each learner and educator has his or her own teaching and learning style, and educators must be able to adapt the methodology to suit the situational needs.

Most educators were able to identify their needs and transfer elements of the training into the classroom whilst others found it difficult to use the training received to suit their needs. A plausible explanation for such difficulty may be the traditional expectation that staff training and development activities provide 'ready-made recipes' for issues arising in the classroom situation. In an inclusive education system educators may find it useful to develop flexible, resourceful, imaginative and innovative skills. One of the main lessons from the training process with regard to professional practice for inclusive education is that there is not just one way for teaching all children and that a strategy that works for one child may not work for another. The way in which educators are prepared to negotiate with this principle will be reflected in the various ways in which they will match the needs of learners to the curriculum rather than fitting all learners into one.

BUILDING SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Introduction

Learning, development and participation do not only occur in formal contexts such as schools, but also at home and within communities. Hence, it is important to consider that in some cases social conditions of a community may pose barriers to learning and participation. In providing inclusive responses to diversity there is a need for educators to look beyond what is available in schools in order to support all learners effectively. It is relevant to point out that support for inclusive education is considered, as all resources are available in schools and communities, which may increase the capacity of the school to assist all learners to participate and develop in a successfully. This understanding of support contains an assumption of working in an integrated way with other colleagues and departments, community members and organisations. It draws on the analysis and opportunities created by strengths of existing community structures to help schools to develop a more inclusive education provision.

In the SCOPE project issues regarding the organisation and building of support structures in and around schools were observed. This chapter deals with ways in which support was provided to the pilot schools by the Department of Education. It addresses issues of building support and creating a culture of networking and collaboration among educators within and around schools, and creating conditions for collaboration and continuous forms of strengthening such conditions.

Building support at various levels

In order to successfully plan and implement the project there was a need for support at various levels of the education system in the provinces.

The support structure formed part of in the Department of Education structures in order to facilitate the smooth integration of the donor-funded project activities into the line functions.

At the national Department of Education, a Component Co-ordinator was nominated to link the provincial activities with the national Department activities. The Co-ordinator was located in the Directorate for Education for Learners with Special Education Needs, which was renamed as Directorate for Inclusive Education in April 2001. In the two provinces, the Department of Education nominated provincial Component Co-ordinators from the then Specialised Education Unit (Northern Cape) and Special Education Needs Unit (Mpumalanga). The changes in the policy and the launching of Education White Paper 6 in 2001 also resulted in the names of the Units in the provinces being changed.

Provincial Component Co-coordinators were responsible for professional and technical support to and monitoring of the pilot schools and educators. In addition to the direct support to the pilot schools, they were responsible for the general implementation of all provincial Component activities as stipulated in the yearly Work Plans. They ensured the flow of information and communication between the project and the Department of Education structures. During the first Phase of implementation, the provincial Component Co-ordinators were supported by Finnish consultants. Together they were responsible for supporting the staff development through training programmes, advice and guidance to principals and educators.

During the course of the project implementation it became obvious that it was difficult for the provincial Component Co-ordinators to provide school-based support in addition to their other responsibilities at the Department of Education. The SCOPE Programme was relatively large, and it was clear that linking the line function tasks and the various, targeted project activities created many pressures. The Programme size would have required more time and human resources from the Department of Education, or else the challenges with regard to the implementation would have become insurmountable. It was also envisaged that the provincial Departments of Education would be required to build extra capacity from within to ensure sustainability of the initiative after completion of the SCOPE Programme, and

therefore, in the second Phase only one international consultant was recruited at the national Department of Education, and two local SCOPE advisers to work in the provinces.

The appointment of a Senior Adviser located at the national Department of Education was intended to support the national Department in the policy and strategic development for the first stage of implementation of White Paper 6, and to have the overall co-ordination of the various aspects of Component 3 to support the entire process. The brief of the Senior Adviser also included the provision of support to educators and schools in the provinces, as well as to the provincial Departments of Education, co-operation with other donors and projects, and ensuring a conceptual clarity in the implementation. On a different aspect of her role, the Senior Adviser has been instrumental on documenting the change process through an ethnographic approach which yielded valuable data on transformation of pilot schools in both provinces.

The Education Support Services (ESS) in the Northern Cape and Special Education Needs (SEN) officials in Mpumalanga as the district support structure did not operate as outlined in White Paper 6. The current policy envisages multi-disciplinary District-Based Support Teams whose main tasks would be institutional support, learning programme support and support to educators, while during the SCOPE Programme implementation, District personnel were still chiefly responsible for the identification of various barriers to learning, provision of one-to-one support to learners, remedial support, training and monitoring of the processes in the schools and classrooms. The way support was conducted is clear, though strategies to monitor the process were incipient.

Many pilot schools have experienced difficulties in practical delivery of the District support. For example, many educational psychologists do not know the language(s) of the community where the school is situated. Whenever the service of a psychologist is needed, s/he cannot work one-on-one with the learner as the presence of an interpreter is required. This does not facilitate openness. However, at another level, it could be argued that educational psychologists should devote more time to classroom observations and authentic assessment, as well as the development of educational

interventions with the educators, rather than one-on-one counselling. This does not change the fact though that occasionally there is a need for individual counselling which is impossible if one is required to use an interpreter.

At school level, special schools formed a different tier of the support to the pilot schools, especially in the Northern Cape. Special schools served the needs of learners with disabilities and the support provided was rather specialised. They provided individual support to educators, learners and parents when required to address higher needs of support. They also provided training workshops for schools to build skills for supporting learners with higher needs of support in mainstream classrooms. Health professionals working in special schools (e.g. physiotherapists) also contributed to the provision of support by training educators and staff of schools participating in the SCOPE project.

Growing from the inside: Developing institutional support

The first strategy to access support was by establishing school-based support, in line with the strategy envisaged in Education White Paper 6. Institution-Based Support Teams (with different names in the different pilot schools) have a leadership role in promoting actions towards inclusion. Generally, the Institution-Based Support Teams (IBST) comprised of senior educators in the school and, where possible and appropriate, parents and other community members. Institution-Based Support Teams' primary function was to support learning by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and participation, and secondly by mobilising and accessing support from the community.

In a school in Mpumalanga, educators gathered weekly to discuss issues affecting particular learners in their class. The IBST discussed the possible strategies and worked out an action plan which was followed-up and revised at the next meeting. Educators kept journals on how they implemented the team's suggestion and observed changes in their own practice to address learners' needs.

Support for educators and indirectly to learners can be effectively implemented if a problem solving approach is applied as exemplified by the Mpumalanga school.

The School Governing Bodies were also a source of support to schools. The South African Schools Act (1996) laid down the principles for the new governance of school creating conditions for active parental participation in the decision making process in schools. Some of their tasks may include the promotion of community involvement (e.g. tacit support for the implementation of inclusive education), the creation of constructive partnerships with educators and senior management teams to make the school more responsive to learner diversity (e.g. support groups for parents with children with disabilities); as well as being involved in daily activities of the school. Most pilot schools reported that the school governing bodies have been crucial in raising funds for improving infrastructure, accessing community resources and creating networks, among other initiatives.

Besides the support given by school governing bodies, Component Co-ordinators and local advisers have reported the establishment of school-community committees or multi-disciplinary teams. These committees invariably comprise the school principal, educators and members of the community such as doctors, school psychologists, police, social workers and occupational therapists, to name a few.

Financial resources to support inclusion

The majority of schools in the SCOPE programme were located in economically poor areas with high unemployment levels. School principals quoted unemployment figures as high as 80 and 90% in their feeder areas. Parents were forced to seek employment in distant areas, which meant that the schools could not count on their active support and expertise, let alone their financial support. Learners sometimes lived alone with their siblings and were deprived of parental support at home. Consequently, the social contexts of schools were affected on the level of resources that pilot schools may have required for the implementation of a more inclusive practice.

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The question of how schools can successfully implement inclusive education in areas where resources are limited is particularly relevant. Throughout the implementation of the SCOPE Programme in the pilot schools educators' experiences are supporting the view that the transformation into an inclusive school is not just a matter of increasing both material and human resources. What is more important and emerging from the pilot schools is the belief that inclusive education is not in contradiction with best teaching practices, positive attitudes and confidence in their own skills as educators.

✓ The SCOPE Programmes has contributed to this confidence by encouraging educators and school communities to believe in their own strengths to include all learners in the school. Educators have also been empowered to work as a team and to build partnerships and overcoming barriers posed by social conditions into opportunities for improving their own professional practice.

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Through the generous SCOPE Programme funding, educators and the Department of Education officials at different levels benefited from the Programme especially in terms of professional development. Pilot schools received on-site support, learning and reference materials, as well as assistive devices. Each school and some special schools were also allocated a yearly amount for purchasing equipment, materials or other support according to their individual needs. The provision of four computers was intended to facilitate educators' access to information and on-line resources.

Sustaining the support to schools

One of the crucial aspects of sustaining change towards more inclusive practice in pilot schools is the provision of on-going support. Throughout the process, schools and education officials at various levels have benefited from support on site and access to sources of support. The intention was that educators would have developed skills and competencies to continue with the process, though it is always important to bear in mind that they need to be able to consolidate support structures within schools and communities that have been developed during the SCOPE Programme. In this respect White Paper 6 is very clear on how support should be provided. The setting up of Institution-Based Support Teams will ensure that educators have their own support base. Within the SCOPE project, most schools managed to establish this structure,

and they were functioning at different levels of efficiency. One of the SCOPE pilot schools in Northern Cape will serve as a Full-Service School as the part of the first stage of implementation of White Paper 6.

It is anticipated that it will be somewhat difficult to sustain the intensive level of support to the pilot schools in both provinces. After the completion of the project the dedicated support of the advisers will no longer be concentrated in the pilot schools, but inclusive education is to be introduced incrementally in a number of schools. This will pose challenges in the SCOPE pilot schools in their endeavours to further develop inclusion. They might also experience more pressures in terms of sharing their expertise with other schools to extend their knowledge and build up support structures to promote inclusive education. In this respect, pilot schools will play a key role in the provision of in-school support to their neighbouring schools working alongside with officials in the two provinces.

The District-Based Support Teams will be a great source of support. They already have some skills available to support educators in the classroom.

The list below comprises roles they could play in supporting schools.

1. Developing a holistic, community-based approach to support services.
2. Building the capacity of Institution-Based Support Teams.
3. Facilitating the assessment and planning for addressing the needs of schools, educators, and learners.
4. Supporting the school-based staff development programmes to make schools more welcoming to all learners.
5. Having a consultative role to support educators in schools, where necessary.
6. Helping schools to identify opportunities to access community support.
7. Promoting the development of schools networks.
8. Liasing between Health, Education, Social Service, Justice and other government agencies.
9. Facilitating the development of staff competencies to support inclusion in the community.
10. Building capacity and awareness of school governing bodies around inclusive education.

11. Assisting with learning programme planning and materials development.

It is also anticipated that, as the first stage of the implementation of White Paper 6 goes ahead, the expertise of Education Support Services in the designated Districts will increase through the national Department of Education Human Resource Development Strategy. Some special schools will be transformed into resource centres to provide specialised professional support in curriculum matters, assessment and identification to other schools, particularly around disability issues. They could also serve a role in providing and supporting early identification and intervention for children with disabilities, provision of home-based support and access to resources such as Braille facilities, Sign Language interpreters and specialised transport. Lastly, they could engage in community outreach activities that target disability awareness and advocacy. However, it is not clear how, after the completion of the SCOPE Programme, this new initiative would benefit the schools that have been involved in piloting inclusive education in South Africa, as the national initiative will be concentrated in the Presidential Nodal Areas that are not necessarily within reach of the SCOPE pilot schools.

There are some indications that skills and knowledge that have been developed through SCOPE support at different levels of the education will be used to benefit more schools, e.g. through redeployment of particularly skilful educators from pilot schools to Districts the Northern Cape. It is also foreseen that the appointment of a local SCOPE adviser in Northern Cape will continue in the provincial Department as a part of the Departmental structure, thereby retaining the developed expertise.

Some considerations for building support

Both provincial Component Co-ordinators and local advisers agree that a variety of challenges may be encountered in endeavouring to build support at schools. They can vary in nature and it may be the case that challenges arise from educators, communities and institutions surrounding the schools. The important point to mention is that challenges can be converted into opportunities for inclusive education. Some of these challenges are:

1. Changing the mindset of educators, learners, parents and the community to see inclusive education as a feasible way of teaching and learning for all.
2. Changing approaches to teaching from an individual educator approach to a collaborative team teaching approach.
3. Changing views about learning from individual to group learning.
4. Changing the roles of remedial educators from working on 'fixing' to a consultative collaborative consultation.
5. Team work and establishing thorough lesson preparation amongst educators.
6. Developing strategies to involve all stakeholders in effective participation at school.

Other challenges of building support are more related to environmental and geographical nature of the two provinces. These are:

1. The great distances between pilot schools which make effective networking difficult, especially in the Northern Cape.
2. Distances also impact on the time the local adviser or any other external support staff personnel may spend at each school
3. Generally, communication between the pilot schools and the Department of Education are not at an optimum level primarily because of the great distances and the lack of effective use of communication equipment due to infrastructural challenges.

Local conditions in and around the school are also determining factors.

1. High learner / classroom ratios, in some instances up to seventy learners in a standard sized classroom originally designed to accommodate thirty five, impact negatively on teaching and learning.
2. A shortage of classrooms at some schools in Mpumalanga, has resulted in two educators sharing a classroom.
3. Strict educator quotas at schools allow educators very little 'free time' for lesson preparation and after-care supervision. This is also due to inefficient organisation of work at school level.

4. The reluctance of principals to supervise classes in the event of an educator being absent means that classes are split-up and accommodated wherever possible, or that no instruction is provided at all.

Conclusion

It is evident from the work done through the SCOPE pilot project that the implementation of inclusive education at schools are far from complete. With regard to the building of support, schools have made a significant effort in building up their institutional capacity. As a result structures are in place in the pilot schools to continue the process of transformation into more inclusive schools. However, during this phase of the process, they can also make a major contribution towards the implementation of inclusive education in the country. The lessons learnt in schools will set the precedent for other provinces that inclusive education, with the support of appropriate structures can successfully take place in a developing context as in the case of South Africa.

EMERGING UNDERSTANDINGS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Introduction

The SCOPE project has worked in an educational environment which attempts to shift from a dual system of education (special education – mainstream education) to an inclusive education and training system. The transformation is an on-going and slow process which is apparent in the development of understanding of ‘inclusive education’ throughout the duration of the SCOPE project. This chapter deals with issues emerging from the dual discourse of special education / inclusive education, and the challenges to implement educational change.

Underpinning understandings at the onset of the project

The Programme Document (1999) for SCOPE was conceptualised after the release of the National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training and National Committee on Education Support Services report (1997) which outlined the challenges and opportunities towards a transformation of a dual education system into a single, inclusive education and training system. The SCOPE Programme Document referred to the Draft Green Paper on Special Needs Education which identified the ‘groups of learners who are the most vulnerable to exclusion’:

- Black disabled learners who live in rural areas
- Children with disabilities in the 0 to 5 age group
- Adults with disabilities
- Learners with emotional and behavioural difficulties
- Learners at risk of dropping out of the system (curriculum unable to accommodate their learning needs)
- Learners with severe social, emotional, psychological and medical problems (p. 15)

Although the Programme Document identified challenges in learning also emanating from wider socio-economical conditions (e.g. poverty, working children, street children) or social disadvantage (e.g. San people), it is apparent that the understanding of 'inclusive education' was located both in the medical/individual-deficit approach and in social approach.

This duality is evident in various sections of the Programme Document: 'Strategic projections and planning, and the retraining of personnel, will have to take the whole spectrum of education for learners with special needs into account' (p. 17).

An individual-deficit approach was also evident in the then Minister's statement:

"It would be incompatible with the notion of 'community' as well as a denial of basic rights if public schools ignored their responsibility to children with special needs, and their parents. Public schools should be, by definition, inclusive, humane and tolerant communities... Schools must be assisted to create an enabling environment for parents whose children have physical disabilities or other special needs, so that early identification can result in appropriate advice and placement. To the greatest extent compatible with the interest of such children, the ordinary public school in the community should welcome them and provide for them." (The Minister for Education; 27/7/1999).

The social perspective of inclusive education was put forward in the problems that the project was to address:

- Recognition of the history of segregation in the past; disparity and low educational support.
- Addressing exclusion which resulted commonly from
- Socio-economic barriers
- Negative attitudes to difference
- Inflexible curricula
- Language and communication
- Lack of access to a purpose-built environment

- Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support
- Inadequate policy and legislation
- Lack of parental recognition of learning challenges, and lack of parental involvement
- Learning challenge, impairment
- Nature and extent of human resource development (p. 35)

The Programme Document emphasized the need to focus on “learners who have been affected by barriers to learning and development, and who experience any form of learning breakdown and exclusion” (p. 35). This, in effect, would have meant the majority of learners if we agree that socio-economic barriers, curriculum and inappropriate language and communication are among the major barriers to learning and development. However, the Programme Document continued the dichotomy: “Inclusive education will bring new categories of learners into mainstream schools - in inclusive education schools educators would have to be prepared to cope with learning needs ranging from physical or mental impairment, behaviourally disturbed learners, to learners who are learning disadvantaged owing to social circumstances”; implying that learners will continue to be pigeon holed into ‘categories’ rather than identifying the factors impeding their learning.

Yet, the Programme Document outlined broad results to be achieved at pilot schools which related to the wider conceptualisation of inclusive education, including

- A supportive environment
- The inculcation of a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity; respect for the rights and dignity of all human beings
- The promotion of an environment that is free of any type of discrimination, segregation or harassment
- A mutual respect of learners with special education needs as equal partners in learning
- The community’s respect for the rights of all learners (p.36)

Baseline Study and conceptualisation of inclusive education

The Baseline Study (2001) was commissioned by the Department of Education and SCOPE to determine the type of support required by various role players to facilitate the effective and efficient implementation of inclusive education in pilot schools. The study used the terms ‘learners with special learning needs’ and ‘learners with special education needs’ interchangeably in the report. These learners were considered being those who have learning difficulties and physical disabilities, learners who come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, such as abused children, street children, and children who have been placed in schools of industries and homes of safety. Through a series of questionnaires the study intended to reveal the perceptions of various stakeholders towards inclusive education. However, the questionnaires used in the study were chiefly informed by the medical-deficit model. For example, the principals were asked to fill in a form indicating the numbers of learners with reading, writing, spelling, numeracy problems; blind, partially sighted, deaf and hard-of-hearing learners; learners with physical disabilities, epilepsy and other neurological conditions, behavioural problems, serious illness, multiple disabilities; learners who come from a disadvantaged background; and learners with other special learning needs. It is obvious that this kind of questionnaire leads the respondents to a narrow focus on learner ‘deficits’ rather than identifying barriers in the learning environment. The same kind of categorisation was used in the questionnaires for educators whereas education officials in districts and provincial Departments of Education were requested to elaborate on questions such as “How do the challenges [of including learners ‘with special needs’ in mainstream education] affect the normal functioning of the schools?” Such questions seemingly implied that ‘inclusion’ is not ‘normal functioning’ of schools.

Despite the initial rather narrow focus on learner ‘deficits’, the Baseline Study identified the following crucial areas for capacity building:

For principals:

- Managerial, administrative and organisational skills
- Leadership skills, including team building, conflict management and problem solving skills

- Skills to identify ‘learners with special learning needs’
- Computer literacy

For educators:

- Skills to identify ‘learners with special education needs and learning disabilities’ and assess their capabilities and competencies, as well as reporting on progress
- Skills in using a variety of teaching strategies and selecting appropriate learning activities
- Skills in classroom management
- Skills in organising and planning to teach ‘learners with special education needs’ and designing individual education programmes

For teacher support teams [Institution-Based Support Teams]:

- Skills in supporting educators teaching ‘learners with special education needs’
- Skills in screening and identification of ‘learners with special education needs’
- Skills in following up learners’ progress
- Skills in counselling and life skills

For educators in special schools:

- Skills to support educators working in mainstream schools

These identified training areas again brought the focus towards the wider understanding of inclusive education whereby inclusion was seen as a part of transformation of the whole school environment, developing welcoming learning sites and building up support networks in and around the school.

A little bit of everything for everybody? Inclusion conceptualisations in the training

Following the findings of the baseline study, a training programme was arranged for two educators from each pilot school and Education Support Services (ESS)

personnel. Remedial Teaching Foundation was contracted to carry out the training of facilitators who were then expected to train their colleagues in their respective schools.

The Remedial Teaching Foundation training was set to assist educators in the pilot schools in accommodating and supporting learners with diverse needs and barriers as well as understanding the relationship between inclusive education and outcomes-based education and to apply this approach. The course materials provided a wide framework for developing inclusive education, ranging from reflecting the relationship between inclusive education and outcomes-based education; and managing change to identifying and addressing barriers to learning through effective teaching strategies. From the Remedial Teaching Foundation training educators were expected to embrace a broad conceptualisation of inclusive education, and the curriculum as the main tool to facilitate inclusion.

From the broad approach to inclusive education after the Remedial Teaching Foundation training, the progress reports from the provinces indicate that there was an identified need to provide disability-specific and therapeutical skills for educators in order to address learners' needs in the classrooms. Therapeutic skills included, among others, strategies for development of eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills, visual discrimination, visual motor skills, auditory sequencing, concentration skills, reading problems, spatial relations and speech development - hearing problems, hyperactivity, stuttering, low muscle tone, etc. Workshops were also organised to provide basic skills in assisting learners with visual impairment and those who are deaf in schools where deaf learners and learners with visual impairments were enrolled. The behaviour modification workshop which was set in behaviouristic theory framework was also offered. It is not clear from the reports to what extent these workshops were set in the philosophy of inclusive education and to what extent they followed the traditional remedial/therapeutical 'learner deficit' philosophy.

A few more general workshops on inclusive education were organised for principals and school governing bodies where different models of and approaches to inclusive education were discussed, and how this could be done in practice. As the project progressed, there was a growing understanding for the need to locate inclusion within

the systemic perspective, and therefore, reinforce the skills in classroom management, collaborative skills, participatory methods, leadership and management skills, etc.

A review of the course materials and observations from the workshops confirm that the dual discourse of ‘special needs’ and ‘inclusive education’ has persisted in parallel. The External Evaluation Report noted that the theoretical framework of the project as such was not clear although the broad framework for the implementation of inclusive education as formulated in White Paper 6 was followed. The report suggested that the absence of a clear theoretical framework raised questions about how service providers for workshops were selected and what the criteria was for selection. Taking the observation a step further, one could conclude that the dual approach in understandings of inclusive education has resulted also in dual approaches in training.

Shifting focus and its implications to the implementation

The Annual and Quarterly Progress Reports indicate a shift from the initial ‘special needs’ approach towards a more ‘inclusive education’ approach although both approaches appear throughout the project.

The Annual Report of 2000 formulated the project goal as “to include LSEN [learners with special education needs] in mainstream schools” where “LSEN will get equal educational opportunities which most of them did not have in the past” and “learners without special needs will learn to accept all the learners irrespective of their disabilities”, locating inclusive education to inclusion of a certain group of learners who were perceived to have ‘special needs’. Interestingly, it also pointed out that “everyone in the community will get the opportunity to be educated and thus resulting in the reduction of poverty, illiteracy and crime. The project will enable educators to deal with diversity, resulting in the reduction of illiteracy, crime, economic dependency and contribution to job creation.” The Annual Report seems to embrace both the narrow ‘special needs’ and the broad inclusive education approaches at one go.

In 2001, the Annual Report continued the dual approach. In justifying the need to include the San community school in the project, their educational needs were located in a social disadvantage perspective: “The San learners have inherited long-term marginalisation of their languages and culture and, therefore also learning disadvantage.” Therefore, a plan to support the education of San learners was drawn up, and “SCOPE will focus on the support of learners with SEN [special education needs].” It is noteworthy to recognise the clear distinction between ‘general disadvantage’ and the support for ‘learners with special education needs’ – by this the report presumably referred to traditional ‘remedial’ support in literacy and numeracy rather than the impact of abject poverty and social deprivation in learning of most learners in that community. Later, the report goes back to the broader concept of inclusive education by noting the call to meet the needs of all learners, which was addressed through a training session to empower educators in adapting teaching methods, materials and classroom management (Remedial Teaching Foundation training).

While the Annual Report of 2002 aligned the goal towards allowing “all learners to have a right to basic education irrespective of race, disability, religion or gender”, and indicated the need to “transform the education system so that it can provide equal opportunities to all learners, by providing assistive devices, training for educators and restructuring the buildings in pilot schools”, quarterly reports recorded both ‘special needs’ and ‘inclusive education’ approaches:

- [We need to work on] a changing attitude that is enabling the school community to be more tolerant and understand[-ing], thus creating a welcoming and warm atmosphere for learners with special needs.
- [The educators need skills on] how to identify and support learners with social problems.
- [The] aim is to make communities aware about inclusive education and to inform parents about the role the school plays in terms of supporting learners with special needs.
- The project ensures that the promotion of equality is being addressed by ensuring that learners with special needs have equal opportunities to

education, therefore making it possible for them to attend school nearest to their homes like their peers who are not disabled; the human rights issues are also being addressed by affording learners the right to basic education and also to be treated with dignity and respect, and informing the school community that learners who experience barriers to learning and development are not different from them.

The observations in the pilot schools suggest that schools tend to continue with the keeping of records of 'learners with special education needs' but they do not really work on barriers in the classrooms, teaching and learning practices and schools. Most pilot schools do not seem to consider what actually happens or does not happen in the classroom as being a possible barrier to learning. For example, the language of instruction is rarely mentioned to be an obstacle whereas the classroom observations indicate that often even half of the learners seem to have considerable difficulties in understanding.

It should be noted, though, that some pilot schools have broadened their approach. They recognise that poverty and social problems hamper educational success, and have networked with the community to address issues such as abuse, HIV/AIDS, disability, malnutrition, etc. They have arranged transport for learners who live too far to get to school, worked with parents in order to better involve them in the education of their children, taken into consideration the language diversity of the community etc. Some educators have developed considerable skills in adapting the curriculum in order to provide meaningful learning opportunities for all the learners in the classroom – regardless of the perceived levels of attainment.

All pilot schools have conducted advocacy campaigns on inclusive education in their communities. These advocacy campaigns have focused on disability, and subsequently the number of learners with disabilities enrolled in the pilot schools has increased– learners who have previously been excluded. However, there has been less emphasis on addressing other discriminatory practices related to race, gender, religion, language or ethnicity.

Schools report that non-disabled learners are generally welcoming and accepting their peers with disabilities and observations in the schools confirm this. Learners with disabilities are usually helped and they seem to have peers. It is recognized that advocacy is not a once-off event but an on-going process whereby learners and educators learn to appreciate and respect diversity. Yet again, it is difficult to say to what extent this welcoming attitude is extended to low-performing learners, learners who come from different cultural backgrounds, who speak different languages or who are of different race. Do the school communities truly celebrate and nurture diversity in cultures or are learners expected to fit into the 'mainstream of culture'?

Evaluating the success

In March 2003 the external evaluation of SCOPE Component 3 / Inclusive Education was conducted to evaluate the progress made by the project and to sign post directions for the implementation of the last months of the project and beyond.

In terms of the developments in understanding inclusive education, the evaluators concluded that there was a tendency to define 'inclusion' as the inclusion of learners with disability among all stakeholders at different levels: from schools and their surrounding communities to the Department of Education (districts/regions, province). The development of understanding and skills in the identification of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning seems to be hindered by a tendency to focus on learner disabilities and learning problems, rather than identifying those aspects of school life that impede the creation of a welcoming school community.

Shifting and balancing between 'special needs' and 'inclusive education'

The shifting and balancing between the two discourses have been clearly shown in the development of the vocabulary: From the initial common use of 'learners with special education needs', 'special needs education', 'LSEN', 'ELSEN', 'handling/coping with the blind', etc. new expressions are coming forth in describing the new paradigm:

- ‘Inclusive Education and Training system will address barriers to learning, recognise and accommodate the diverse range of different learning needs’
- ‘Learners without visible learning barriers also learn to accept those with barriers.’
- ‘SGB members are willing to support and respect people with any barrier in their families and communities.’

The changing vocabulary reflects the new direction towards a wider conceptualisation of inclusive education but still containing the remainders of ‘special needs’ discourse. More difficult seems to be the shift as relates to describing the barriers learners might experience: learners with barriers to learning / learners with diversity / learner with a problem / learners with barriers / learners with learning barriers / inclusive education learners. Although there is a recognition of ‘barriers’ that learners face they seem still to be located ‘with’ or ‘in’ the learner rather than ‘around’ the learner.

Conclusion

The project has worked in changing educational and thinking environments and most people involved in supporting the implementation of the project have the background of ‘special needs education’. Therefore, it is not surprising that a duality in approaches to inclusive education has persisted throughout the project. Whilst there is a genuine recognition of the ‘extrinsic factors’ that may hamper learning, interventions tend to be located in ‘remedying the intrinsic barriers ’ of the learner.

The dual discourse is likely to remain so long as inclusive education is perceived to be something additional to mainstream education, and mainly supported by officials traditionally linked with ‘special needs education’. Inclusive education needs to be the guiding principle of education in general, involving curriculum implementers, learning area advisers, school development officials and so forth so that common understanding of inclusive education can emerge. If schools receive mixed messages from different officials, they are also likely to adopt mixed approaches in addressing barriers to learning.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE PILOT SCHOOLS: We don't know everything, but we can be creative and solve our problems

Inclusion – or any substantial change process – takes time. Change can be frustrating; it can be frightening and sometimes even confusing. Accounts from the SCOPE pilot schools indicate that they have undergone all these phases – from the initial fear of the unknown to the realisation that 'inclusion can work', as mentioned by one of the pilot schools:

As a school we cannot claim that we are just experiencing success, but we became aware that these ideas could be done and achieved.

Alpha Primary School, Northern Cape

Certainly, transformation towards an inclusive school does not happen overnight, and some schools have been frustrated by the slow pace of change. Some schools were not very confident about their ability to cater for a wide range of learning needs whereas some schools were sceptical about the whole process of inclusive education. These experiences are not unique to only SCOPE pilot schools but are shared with any institution that aims to change their usual ways of doing things. It is a part of the learning process.

The purpose of this chapter is to share some of the successes and challenges as experienced by the pilot schools, with a specific emphasis on curriculum issues, community participation, enrolling out-of-school children and cultural changes in the schools.

Curriculum and inclusive education

If I cannot learn in the way you teach, please teach me in a way in which I can learn

So long as learning is understood as the acquisition of bodies of knowledge presented by the educator, schools are likely to be limited by a rigid curriculum and teaching practices. An educator in one of the SCOPE pilot schools expressed this as follows:

‘We only [attached] our ideas about learning barriers to learners not considering how our teaching could be a barrier’.

Many schools and educators discovered that outcomes-based education and inclusive education are interrelated and cannot be divided. Outcomes-based education is a useful tool for implementing inclusive education. One of the most important features of outcomes-based education is that it is concerned with establishing the conditions and opportunities within the system that enable and encourage all learners to achieve those important outcomes. An inclusive curriculum is based on a view that learning takes place when learners are actively involved in making sense of their experiences – they have to find things out and understand things for themselves.

Several schools experienced that inclusive education training helped educators to understand and implement outcomes-based education. Inclusive education gave a practical framework for outcomes-based education as educators were trained “how to” use the outcomes-based education approach in addressing the needs of all learners.

Probably educators also became more aware of the diversity in their classroom through the SCOPE sensitisation. The slogans “All children can learn” and “Education for All” has instilled in educators the belief that all learners are unique and that they can learn successfully. Both outcomes-based education and inclusive education are based on principles of learner-paced and –centred teaching and learning processes, and that learners should be taught according to their level. It is also imperative to develop learners’ knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Inclusive education made these principles clear and helped educators to differentiate and adapt the curriculum to match children’s abilities. These basic principles of outcomes-based education are a vehicle that can be used to promote and transport inclusive education. However, educators still need training and time to experiment to be able to

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differentiate in order to better accommodate learners who experience barriers to learning and how practices can be improved.

Although most schools felt that the training provided through the Remedial Teaching Foundation's Teacher Development Course was useful, many schools felt that it was rather difficult to translate the theories into practice. Teaching is about learning; it is about learning to know the learners; trying out new ways of doing things; and about critically reflecting one's own practice. In the day-to-day life of schools this aspect seems to disappear under other pressures. However, for inclusive practices to develop, reflection, sharing and problem solving are essential. Most schools have discovered that educators' team work is now more important than before, and educators work hand in hand with an Institution-Based Support Team (IBST). The IBST together with the educator helps to overcome teaching barriers in his/her class by means of sharing strategies in order to help learners with different abilities.

What we discovered

Group and teamwork are highly recommended by outcomes-based education, and it is one of the key elements of inclusive education as well. That means that educators have to teach learners how to go about it, and how to interact with each other (including learners who experience barriers to learning). This process still needs intensive and persistent leading by the educator, because all learners do not participate and depend on others to complete tasks. Both outcomes-based education and inclusive education expect children to be creative and independent in coping in the environment and community.

Outcomes-based education also supports inclusive education in the sense that it allows for diversity. For example, one school found that learners with physical disabilities are not necessarily academically different. The impairment within a learner in a certain area seemed to develop other areas which enabled the learner to perform extra-ordinarily.

Most educators try to make social groups / heterogeneous groups to prevent learners from being stigmatised, also for learners to learn from each other. In that way learners

are given responsibilities to monitor their peers by means of each given a chance to play a role. E.g. group leader, time keeper, scribe, etc. They even assist each other where there are backlogs. In practical terms, the curriculum was adapted to suit the learners and to meet the needs of each learner rather than to make the learner fit the curriculum.

Classroom rules and procedure were set in such a way that the rules were functional and concrete. This helped educators to be able to develop and maintain an appropriate classroom conduct as the educator was aware of the learners' different behaviours and dealt with them positively.

Curriculum adaptation

SCOPE pilot school educators claim that because all learners are different and they learn differently, it is the duty of the educator to make use of different teaching and learning styles to accommodate all learners. We believe that there is a range of multiple intelligences among learners and this is a good starting point for the planning of meaningful learning experiences.

What we learned

In the old system, different learning styles were never taken into account. It was a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Now educators are aware of the uniqueness of learners: Each child is unique with certain needs. That is why each child should have the opportunity to work at his/her own pace and in his/her own way. Educators keep this in mind, plan for it, and use different learning styles as a very effective teaching tool.

A useful tool for curriculum adaptation is the Howard Gardner's theory of 'Multiple intelligences' (Gardner, 1983). According to the theory of multiple intelligences, there are at least seven, but probably even eight or nine different types of 'intelligence'. The term 'intelligence' does not refer to IQ but an inclination towards a certain area of culturally valued skills or characteristics. 'Intelligence' as defined by Gardner means

‘the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings’. It recognises that all people, regardless of their academic capability, show intelligence in some area at least and that most people have the ability to develop skills in these areas. What is important about this theory is that it acknowledges that human talent manifests in different ways and all these ways are equally valuable – we are all ‘wired’ differently. It also suggests that we learn in many different ways.

In the following the different dimensions of intelligence have been noted with some ideas of the kinds of activities that stimulate and use these areas:



Every learner, regardless of his/her academic abilities has at least a dominant intelligence, although s/he might have more. It is the duty of educators to establish what their learners can do and develop those skills.

Another factor is that educators should check what learners like in different learning areas and encourage them to work more on those aspects. Learners are more likely to learn when they can be engaged in activities that really motivate and interest them.

Each learner in one class is given different activities from the same lesson according to his/her pace and ability. Multiple intelligences is also a useful tool for including learners who struggle to learn. It is also useful in designing activities for learners who learn quickly. As educators we need to define tasks where learners can show different types of achievement. An example of the use of ‘multiple intelligences’ illustrates how the idea can be easily used in the languages learning area:

- Verbal intelligence: presentation/ the learners recite a poem ‘The Teapot’
- Visual intelligence: drawing/ ask learners to draw a teapot
- Logical intelligence: reasoning/ educators asks questions
- Musical intelligence: sounding/ let them sound the rhyming words
- Interpersonal intelligence: they help each other in rhyming words
- Bodily intelligence: playing roles; doing actions
- Intra-personal intelligence: they do the poem individually

(Vela Langa Primary School)

During a curriculum workshop educators produced the following two examples on the use of ‘multiple intelligences’. They were asked to brainstorm the use of multiple intelligences in learning activities.

Grade 2:

Programme organiser: Myself

Outcome: The learner gets to know her/his body and values its uniqueness.

Learners will understand that each person is unique.

Learning area	Activities	Related intelligence
Mathematics and Mathematical Literature	Counting the body parts individually, counting the total number of body parts in the group / in the whole class	Mathematical/logical intelligence

	Measuring the size of the classroom by using different body parts, short or long steps, jumping, crawling, etc.	Kinesthetic intelligence, mathematical intelligence
Languages Literacy and Culture	Naming the body parts by writing	Linguistic intelligence
	Talking about learners' family in groups (customs, hobbies, parents' jobs, etc.)	Interpersonal intelligence, linguistic intelligence
Life Skills	Drawing a one-to-one size picture of oneself by lying on a big sheet of paper – a peer draws the outline and the learner completes the picture	Visual intelligence, intra-personal intelligence
	Singing and dancing along the 'body parts song'	Musical intelligence

Grade 9 Outcome: Learners are more aware of the importance of recycling; they develop some business thinking and use their creativity.

As an introduction, learners go individually around the school and collect different kinds of waste. They come back to their own class and discuss in groups what they have found and how that particular item could be recycled or reused. Then they proceed to the learning centres:

Learning Area	Activities	Related intelligence
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Technology, languages, arts and culture	Examine the composition of the material of your 'item'. What has it been used for? Write a report.	Mathematical/logical intelligence, linguistic intelligence
	Brainstorm with your peer on new uses for your 'item'. Record all your ideas; select one to be worked on. Motivate why you rejected / accepted the ideas.	Mathematical/logical intelligence, Linguistic intelligence
	Construct / modify / adapt / build your 'item' for its new use. Make a presentation of the process you undertook.	Kinesthetic intelligence, visual intelligence, linguistic intelligence
Mathematics, languages, natural sciences	Find out how much garbage the school is producing over a year / month. What type of garbage is it? What could be recycled?	Linguistic intelligence, mathematical/logical intelligence
	Pair with your peer and design a recycling awareness campaign at school. Prepare an oral presentation for the campaign to be shared with your classmates.	Interpersonal intelligence, linguistic intelligence, Kinesthetic intelligence, Visual intelligence

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Languages, economic and management sciences, arts and culture	Come up with a business idea for recycling or marketing the recycled item you developed in technology centre. Write your business plan using the computer.	Visual intelligence, intra-personal intelligence, Linguistic intelligence, Mathematical/logical intelligence
	Design an imaginary web-site for your business.	Visual intelligence, Linguistic intelligence, Spatial intelligence

The following characterisation of some different **learning styles** gives an indication of the kind of things that could be taken into consideration when planning teaching and learning:

Visual style	Auditory style	Tactile style ('Doer')
Likes to see text, pictures, illustrations, charts, maps	Likes to listen, hear and discuss	Likes hands-on experiences, working with peers and going outside the classroom to investigate
Likes to read notes and write summaries	Learns well when the presenter is interesting and clear	Enjoys physical exercise, handcrafts, gardening, etc.
Enjoys reading	Reviews notes by reading aloud and talking with peers	Likes to 'do' things, scribble and draw
Could be meditative	Enjoys telling stories and jokes	Eager to participate in various activities
Learns and remembers	Plans the work by talking	Likes to study in a group

things by writing them down	it through with somebody	and use models and charts
Benefits from writing formulas and instructions on cards and reviewing them	Memorises formulas and instructions or talk aloud	Likes to draw plans for projects and activities on large sheets of paper
Makes lists and keeps detailed calendar	Recognises faces and places but not names	Enjoys using blocks, marbles, and other three-dimensional models
Has a good visual memory for faces, places, instructions	Repeats instructions	Has a good memory of events, but not for faces or names
Has a good sense of direction	Enjoys rhyming, likes to talk	Likes to try out things, doesn't bother about errors
		Enjoys exploring

A basic example from a pilot school describes how it is possible to take into account different learning styles in any lesson:

- When teaching the sound S, say the sound (children must hear it – auditory learning).
- Write the corresponding letter to sound S on a chart (children must see it – visual learning).
- Ask them to draw it on their tables or on the sand tray (children must feel it – tactile/kinaesthetic learning). They can also follow the movement of S shape with their heads, or making the S shape with their bodies.

Most schools have reported that with the possibility of using different learning styles learners experience success because they are given an opportunity to learn the way they can. They also perform tasks at their own pace and modes.

The learning styles interact with the multiple intelligences, and effective teaching is about learning about the learners and reflecting one's practice:

I had to adapt the curriculum in order to make room for a learner with disability. If one learning style did not work, I made use of others until I achieved what I wanted to. All activities were worked out to suit his needs, and the level at which he was able to perform. As I continue to work with those learners who need more support, I work out activities for the rest of the class so that they are not left behind.

(An educator, Plooyburg Primary School, Northern Cape)

Groups of learners are sometimes mixed or sometimes educators work separately with learners according to their different needs / abilities / paces / levels, especially when basic skills need to be developed. Learners who experience barriers to learning need to be kept busy for most of the day but also to be in contact with other learners.

In a more mixed approach to learning styles and different abilities of learners, the educator builds her lesson around learners' curiosity:

Grade 2, 55 learners

The educator distributed colour powder for each of the eight groups in the class. Learners work in mixed groups with small amounts of red, yellow, green and blue colour powder, and water. The educator asks the learners to see what happens if they mix together two colours at a time. She asks them to make notes in their exercise books by drawing (if they can't write) or writing. While learners are working on this, the educator moves around and observe how they are progressing. When learners have worked out all the possibilities, the outcomes are put together with that of the whole class. Learners 'report back' on their research.

Most educators in nearly all pilot schools experience behaviour as a barrier. Behaviour reflects often what is happening or not happening in the classroom. Many times learners get restless in the class when they do not have learning materials (such as pencils and paper), they cannot properly see the picture or chart that the educator is showing, or they cannot hear. Many learners wait for long periods for slower peers to complete their tasks – learning should be learner-paced, therefore the educator should

prepare different tasks so that faster learners can be engaged in activities rather than sit in idle waiting for others to finish. Sometimes the climate does it: hot, afternoon hours are likely to be exhaustive for 'difficult' work, and learners start to fidget and bubble. A lot of challenging behaviour can be avoided by efficient classroom management and good planning: enough interesting learning activities, providing learning materials (pencils and papers) for learners even if they have forgotten their own equipment at home, adapting school hours to accommodate for the climatic conditions, and so on. Schools that aim to become inclusive need to find positive solutions for behaviour.

Developments in lesson planning

One of the greatest changes indicated in the accounts from the pilot schools were the time and depth used in the curriculum delivery process. Previously, planning was mainly based on the 'one-size-should-fit-all' but with the first steps of inclusive education, lessons had to be planned with all learners in mind.

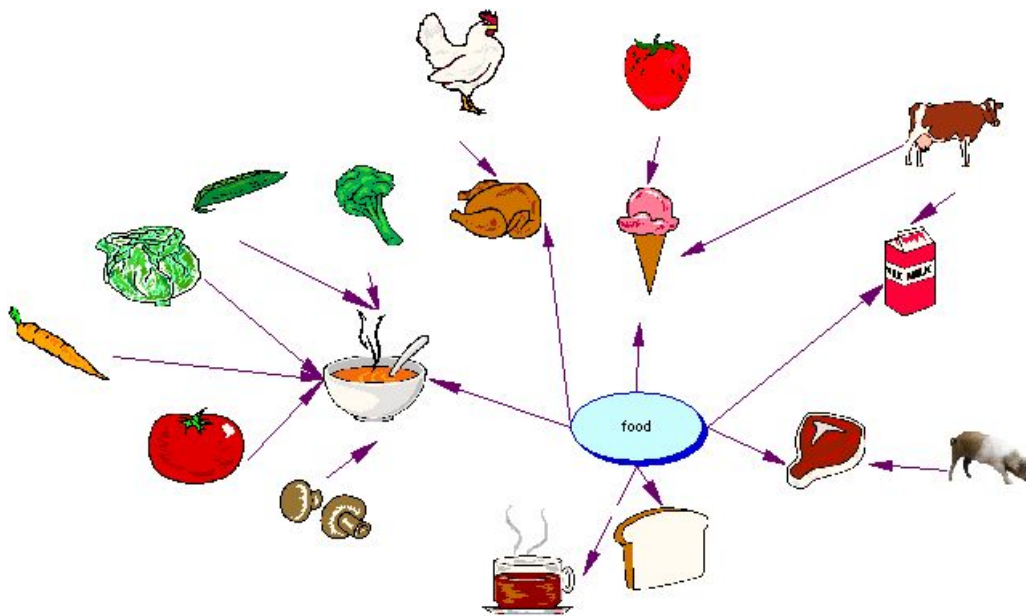
Many schools reported that planning has changed totally. Where teachers used to plan in isolation, they now plan together, sometimes even on a daily basis. Before, planning was very general and did not take the diverse needs of learners into account. Now, planning for the learner diversity is also included. The educator does not only concentrate on learners' weaknesses or various barriers but also takes into account learners' strengths and utilise them in the class. A part of the planning process is that while the educator is assisting learners who experience barriers to learning, the rest of the class should be involved with their own work, according to their different levels.

Planning happens at different levels and schools have found their own ways of doing it. In all schools, macro planning is done jointly with the whole staff, and sometimes involving SGB and even parents. Meso- and micro planning in some schools is done jointly according to Phases, Grades or according to learning areas. In some schools this is done periodically, and in some schools even daily. Most schools have experienced that there is an increase in the workload as planning has to be done that

suits all levels of the learners and planning is done according to the pace of all learners.

Sometimes planning has involved extra tuition for learners who struggle in academic learning areas. Some schools have made efforts to accommodate learners with different needs and to develop their different skills by extending the curriculum by adding opportunities for computer literacy, gardening and needlework.

More detailed and careful planning has resulted in improved teaching practices as well: The teaching practices are more creative and on the whole more positive. Learners could also play their roles in the planning process. The following mind map was put together by a Grade 2 educator and his learners and led to a planned learning experience:



The mind mapping exercise:

1. The educator asked the learners to name different types of food. Learners named milk, meat, bread, tea, soup, chicken and ice cream.
2. Learners named where the food came from or what it was made of.

3. The educator asked the learners to look at the mind map and think what it is that they want to know. The learners wanted to know more about the following:

- What happens between the milk comes from the cow and gets in the milk box?
- Which parts of a pig are being used for food?
- How do they make ice cream made from cream and strawberries?
- How can we make soup?
- What do you need to do to a chicken before you can eat it?
- How do you make bread?
- Where does tea come from?

Based on the mind map and learners' questions, the educator came up with a project that involved a number of community members. As outcomes of the project, learners would be able to find information through observations, record their observations through writing and/or drawing and explain various routes of food. Various learning activities were designed: a local dairy farmer came to the class to tell about the route the milk took from the cow to the milk box, and how ice cream is made. Then the class visited the family of one of the learners where the mother showed how she made bread. The soup was made in a huge pot at school, and all learners were involved in chopping the vegetables which they had brought from home (each learner contributed something). One of the learners had chickens at home, so the whole class observed how the chicken was killed, and what followed then before the chicken was ready to be eaten. For learning about tea, the educator borrowed books from the library and the class learnt together where tea is being grown – these places and countries were then placed on the map.

Learners recorded all the information in an 'extended mind map' in drawings and/or writing, i.e. they continued the mind map which was placed on the classroom wall. After the 'project' was completed, the class reviewed their questions and verified if they had all been answered and whether there were still questions that had not been answered.

At the beginning of the project educators still struggled with the implementation of outcomes-based education, did not make the paradigm shift, felt lost and as if in the middle of nowhere. Educators felt that outcomes-based education does not work. Changes came after being trained in inclusive education: Lesson planning changed when we realised that we need to cater for learners who are more different from their peers in learning – or who experience educational disadvantage - by means of giving them easier and shorter tasks with the same content to experience success. In the following example, the educator prepared her lesson whilst taking into account the different levels of reading skills in her class.

Example of a Multi-level activity – individual work, Grade 3

About 45 learners are seated in mixed ability groups. They are busy with individual reading exercises. Because the learners are at different levels of reading skills the educator has designed the following tasks:

- ✓ Flashcards with words: the learners have to use the words to write sentences where they use the given word. On the other side of the flashcard there is an example of a sentence where the word is being used if the learner has difficulty in creating his/her own sentence.
- ✓ Readers: There are a number of readers available for learners. Learners read the books alone or together with a peer.
- ✓ Word lists: The educator has copied a sheet of paper for learners to practice sound / letter distinguishing (such as hat, bat, sat)
- ✓ Alphabet: Learners name the alphabet.

Some 10 learners work with the flashcards, about 10 learners read the books, 15 learners go through the word lists and 10 learners are working with the alphabet. In each group, learners are working on different tasks. The educator moves between the groups, and ensure that each learner is on task. She stops to listen and observe each learner, and gives some more attention to those learners who are working on the alphabet.

Outcomes-based education is flexible, and inclusive education needs a flexible curriculum if we want to move forward. That means that many resources can be used to get learning support for learners according to their needs. In one of the pilot schools, the principal always stressed the fact that as a pilot school they could try any programme until they found a suitable one that works. Thus the importance of realising that teaching is about learning and practice – educators also need to learn new ways of teaching and practice those new ideas so that the practice can be internalised and become a part of their teaching repertoire.

One school reported on their work in curriculum planning and implementation:

Grade 4 seems to be the most difficult Grade in the Intermediate Phase. We tried subject teaching but it did not work because we found it difficult to attend to or follow programmes for learners who experience barriers to learning. We realised that class teaching is still the best but the workload is a barrier if you have 45 learners of which more than 10 learners experience considerable barriers to learning. At one stage we also tried to work with three groups but realised that we were again busy with small special classes. Now we stick to class teaching.

Support for learners and educators

Education White Paper 6 acknowledges that all learners need support – in one way or another. Educators need support, as well. While the structures for in and around the schools are still evolving, the SCOPE pilot schools tried out several possibilities. Again, change is happening slowly, it requires time and concerted efforts. Some interesting and practical innovations have come out.

The most common form of support is informal co-operation between educators. Educators support each other by providing moral support, and also by assisting each other with problems that they encounter in different classes. Educators also exchange learning programmes, among themselves in order to assist learners.

Some schools have well-functioning teams which help learners and educators where there are academic problems. The name of the team varies from one pilot school to another, but they are all along the lines referred to as 'Institution-Based Support Teams' (IBST) in Education White Paper 6 (July 2001). Commonly they function as follows: The educator who is concerned with the progress of a certain learner reports the matter to the Institution-Based Support Team. There might be a meeting with the educator who presents the challenge s/he is experiencing in the classroom, and shows some sample of the work of the learner. The Institution-Based Support Team, together with the educator, discuss the matter and come up with some proposed actions, such as a learning programme suitable for the learner. The educator then works with the learner using that programme. If there is still no progress, the matter might be referred to Education Support Services (or equivalent), social services, health department or other partners, if necessary.

Some IBSTs hold weekly meetings where they prioritise the needs of educators and learners, discuss specific 'cases' and propose possible solutions for educators. Some IBSTs even take care of the professional development of educators:

The school-based support team involves different educators who study new areas and then pass their knowledge to other educators. The team reports that the biggest change in the school has been in attitudes – from the fear of the unknown they are now busy learning new things and discussing challenges, and sharing their ideas. The school also welcomes educators from neighbouring schools to observe lessons and see what the school is doing. The school-based team indicated that time is a constraining factor in sharing their experiences with other schools, though.

(Mnyamana Primary School, Mpumalanga)

The pilot schools emphasise that assessment is important and must be applied properly. It is not a question about 'testing' academic attainments only, but about assessment of learners in order to gather information about their achievements, to identify their needs, and to get to know their strengths, weaknesses and learning styles. It is only after assessment that the educator can plan different activities for different learners of different levels and different styles of learning. Assessment is therefore a part of the curriculum planning, and fundamentally on-going process.

Support can be provided within the school by educator collaboration to address a specific priority need. At Alpha Primary School in Northern Cape, a learning support programme was compiled by the whole staff after the identification of generalised reading difficulties in Grades 5 – 7 by the inclusive education co-ordinator in co-operation with the other IBST members:

Currently we are busy with a reading programme for Grades 5 to 7. The Junior Primary teachers assist the Senior Primary teachers and they monitor the process. We already experienced success because some of the learners who could not read a single word before the programme are reading almost fluently now. All staff members must develop reading skills when busy with other learning areas. As an Afrikaans medium school, we discovered that a learner who cannot read English should be taught in his/her mother tongue first. A Grade 1 educator compiles another reading programme for early reading – learners who cannot read or that are not interested.

The school, other partners and the community

The transformation process of education brought forward challenges of ensuring that quality education is accessible for all. Amongst those challenges was to ensure that discrimination is totally eradicated and the conversation of the mindset in inclusive education approach is attended. This could only be approached positively by involving all the components of the school community.

Traditional education was the concern of educators only. The different stakeholders were just the on-lookers. Inclusive education demands all stakeholders to be involved

in education in order to be effective. All stakeholders have a vital and important role to play in order to make the process of inclusion successful.

Most of the SCOPE pilot schools were located in areas where abject poverty created obstacles for community participation. For example, many schools reported a great number of child-headed households in their area as parents were working in cities and towns and only returned home once a month or so. In this sense, there was very little support for these learners in general, and very little support for the school in terms of parental involvement. Furthermore, poverty in general resulted in difficulties in paying the school fees and equipping learners with basic learning materials such as pencils and pens. One of the pilot schools did not gather school fees at all because they felt that it does not have any sense when parents and families cannot even pay the smallest amount. Instead, they organised bazaars and other fund raising activities to ensure that the school have the necessary teaching and learning materials. The same school had also given up on insisting the use of school uniforms as they felt that it is an extra cost for families. As an inclusive school, they felt that everybody should feel welcome – the way they are. Although some schools made provision of basic learning materials so as not to hamper learning due to lack of these equipment, some schools insisted that it was the responsibility of parents to equip their children with these materials. Both views have their point but in order to promote inclusion and quality education, learners should not be ‘allowed’ not to study because of the lack of pens or pencils.

Generally, schools have been rather innovative in their approaches to the communities. It is acknowledged that advocacy around education for all, and inclusive education in particular, is an on-going process rather than a once-off event. It was felt that different stakeholders needed to be informed about inclusive education. It will ease the resistance of transforming from known to unknown as well as the fear for new terminology: ‘inclusive education’ and the way in which it will be implemented.

Most schools organised various activities around inclusive education. They organised information sessions where neighbouring schools and different stakeholders were invited. In a meeting with the SGB and parents, educators were given the opportunity

to talk about inclusive education. Some schools informed the community through meetings that were held on a regular basis – and schools where learners mainly came from farms realised that meetings do not really work out because most of the people from the communities live far away from the school and parents have a transport problem.

Communities were also informed about inclusive education through local channels, e.g. churches local organisations, and by word of mouth. Some schools engaged in dialogue with various community forums in order to identify learners who are not attending school and, more importantly, to draw on the resources already available in any community.

The ‘Big Show’ was usually a meeting with speeches, cultural programme and some presentations by persons with disabilities who shared their experiences of being excluded in the community – or their successes despite the disability. Some schools organised a march through the community with colourful banners. The purpose of these meetings was to bring ‘disability’ among the community as a form of diversity and not something to be ashamed of. Some schools had experienced that there was a lot of superstition around disability in their neighbouring communities and by means of ‘exposing’ disability they attempted to tackle this. In most cases, superstitious beliefs have slackened as community members have realised that persons with disabilities can learn and succeed in the school.

Schools also approached families with children not attending schools personally or by writing to these families. Some principals said that they used to go to houses in the community where they knew there were children not attending school and talked to parents about the importance of education. Some parents were not aware that children with disabilities could actually go to school, some parents were reported not to be interested in what their children were doing because of their own socio-economic deprivation and problems. Parents were invited to visit the school in order to be informed about the progress of the learner by looking at the programmes implemented, and also to discuss their roles as primary educators.

‘Open days’ and educator support groups in collaboration with other schools are other means that schools have tried out in their quest for making inclusive education a reality.

Media was also used in disseminating information about inclusive education. A number of pilot schools have featured on local radio stations, newspapers and other media. Consequently, some of the pilot schools have faced a new challenge resulting from the successful advocacy: increasing numbers of learners leading to overcrowding and lack of classroom space. When the message of the open door policies of the pilot schools has spread, many parents who especially kept their children with disabilities at home now send the children to school even from faraway places. One school reported that as the teaching practices and overall results of the school have improved as an outcome of the educators’ training, families move their children to the inclusive school because of its good reputation.

Some schools did not have only positive experiences of becoming an inclusive school.

✓ A pilot school in Mpumalanga reported that educators in the neighbouring schools regard them as a ‘special school’ and sometimes refer learners who experience barriers to learning to them. However, this is not done in a positive spirit. They refer to learners who experience barriers to learning as “X [the name of the school] cases”.

Deleted:

✓ This seems to apply particularly to schools regarding themselves as high achievers – struggling learners do not contribute to these ‘good’ achievements.

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The work with families, the community and other partners

Despite challenges in the communities, often named as illiteracy, poverty, social problems and abuse, the SCOPE pilot schools have made serious efforts in improving interactions with families and communities. Indeed, some pilot schools have been quite open about hardly having had any co-operation with parents and families before the project started. The challenges experienced in the community have been taken into account in the development of partnerships with families.

Parents and families

The schools work usually with families by informing regularly about the progress of learners through books being sent to parents to check and sign. In some communities the majority of parents are regarded as illiterate. Parents are allowed to sign the books or make crosses as a proof that the work was checked with the aid of other family members or their elder children's help. Schools invite parents to discuss their children's progress but generally they encounter various problems because most of parents in these communities work on farms until late. There are even parents that are never met – some schools said that there are only a few parents who are really interested in their children's progress.

In order to support learning at home, the pilot schools have realised that it is not enough just to 'ask' parents to help the child. After designing a programme for a learner, the parent is notified and provided with a workshop on how to help and handle learners' school work when assisting them at home. Parents follow the programme at home with the child to consolidate what he/she was he learnt at school.

One pilot school reported that they had established an educator-parent support group. Parents are informed of every possible meeting or gathering on inclusive education in which they can also participate. The informed parents render voluntary services at the school. In 2003, there were two volunteers attending workshops for educators at that school. This is particularly important in terms of empowering parents and sending a message that education is not only for 'professionals' but a joint effort by parents/families and educators. By attending the workshops, the volunteer parents gain an understanding about where the school wants to go, how it should be implemented and how they could facilitate learning both at school and at home. The school has discovered that parents are eager to assist though, they need to be trained; the school is busy on empowering parents and volunteers to help learners develop basic reading competencies.

Education White Paper 6 (2001) envisages 'full-service schools' as centres of learning for the whole community, and one of the pilot schools had explored this path by starting an art group consisting of parents, community members and learners of different schools. Parents can also take part in various school activities, not just as 'on-lookers' but contributors. Such was a case in one of the schools, where the parents

presented a programme on Freedom Day in which educators only acted as co-ordinators of the programme.

Although a couple of pilot schools admit that there is a slight communication gap between the school and the parents, they are being encouraged to continue building bridges between schools and homes, as most of the pilot schools assure that there has been a real change since parental involvement has improved. They have witnessed a change in attendance and academic progress since the parents are involved in school activities. They have managed to convey the message of parents' vital role as first educators, and that they are their children's educators for life.

Strategies to get parents involved

- Organise fellowship evenings with parents
- Inform them about positive things regarding their children
- Write letters and invite them to information sessions
- Invite them to assist in school activities
- Do home visits – this is very important – it is more effective than calling them to school
- Organise open days at school

(Alpha Primary School, Northern Cape)

One school mentioned that rather than having big meetings for all families the school has noticed that it is easier to get parents involved when the meetings and activities are being organised around the issues concerning a particular classroom. The school has introduced 'cluster families' where a group of more active parents are responsible for contacting a cluster of families of children in the same class. This has proved successful, as more families are participating in the meetings. Parents feel more free to express themselves in a smaller group (classroom meeting) and are offering their skills to the school.

In another school, a meeting was held with grandparents and other members of the community so that they would come up with ideas as to what skills we could teach to learners and who amongst them could volunteer in teaching that kind of skill. Persons

with disabilities are given a chance to give moral talks at the school and to motivate others on inclusive education.

Reaching out for community support

The school is a part of the community. Outcomes-based education encourages the whole community to work together. That is why schools as a community have to select their own programme organisers that suit learners' lives. In order to pursue the road towards inclusive education, schools will have to find ways of effectively collaborating with various stakeholders. It is recognised that collaboration and co-operation do not happen without concerted efforts. It requires time and commitment.

All SCOPE pilot schools attempted to use the support services within the education sector but the experiences varied. Depending on the district / region / area / locality or even personality, co-operation was said to range from satisfactory to not existing at all. Where schools had access to Education Support Service (or equivalent) personnel and they had time to assist schools, experiences were mainly positive. On the other hand, there are schools that said they "never saw the district people". Although this is something that the schools can hardly influence, it should be recognised that all schools need support in their work, and these support structures need to be built up. As schools realised the need for support, most of them reached out and evaluated the resources available in the nearby community.

Facing the challenges in the communities, the pilot schools have created 'grassroots' relationships with local government departments, such as social services and health. Social workers, physiotherapists, nurses, doctors and other such professionals have rendered their services to schools on request. For example, social workers can give the school information on how to assist learners who play truant, on socio-economic factors, grants for needy children, foster care in terms of abuse, counselling of abused children, etc. Vaal-Oranje Primary School in the Northern Cape experienced that most parents had difficulties in getting transport so that they could take their child to assessment in Kimberley. The school made an arrangement with the local hospital to use their bus. This helped them to rule out many of the barriers that they experienced before. Furthermore, several pilot schools have observed that the feeding scheme

helped to combat absenteeism among learners – this is a particularly meaningful form of support for orphans and other poverty-stricken learners.

Where inter-sectorial co-operation might seem to be cumbersome at higher levels of the administration, it seems to work reasonably on the ground where people know each other and their communities. Schools have invited volunteers to render their expertise; at Father Charles Primary School in Mpumalanga, a blind woman in the community taught Braille to a blind learner and a deaf community member helped several deaf learners in the school. Bukhosibetfu Primary School in Mpumalanga has established a community support group to link between the school and the community to address the challenges of the community such as abuse and the custom of keeping children with disabilities hidden at home. The local chief and a traditional healer were prominent members of this support group. Links to local business for financial and material support, as well as for educational purposes such as apprenticeships have been created although most schools that have these links agree that more needs to be done. The schools' reports show clearly that when schools themselves are proactive and reach out to the community, they manage to create meaningful support networks. Collaboration works and it is often found when one seeks it. The following was expressed by one of the pilot schools in Northern Cape:

We have the support of the neighbouring schools, district and one shop, churches and all the other departments. They attend every workshop, information session and from their side, proclaim the gospel of inclusion.

Some schools have worked with grandparents together with identified community members who can render skills to assist in a particular area where help is needed. This help could be related in some skills such as carpentry, arts and crafts or computer literacy. As SCOPE Inclusive Education schools received two computers to facilitate educators' access to information, some schools invited computer literate community members to help educators in acquiring new skills. One of the pilot schools launched a fundraising activity to establish a full-fledged computer lab which is supported by a community volunteer.

Other Department of Education initiatives such as 'Adopt a Cop' were also seen and used in connection with inclusion – after all, school safety is an integral part of

inclusion in that it allows learners to feel safe to come to school and learn at school. The police forum for instance keeps on motivating learners not to be involved in gangsterism. They further explain the need for a violence-free society, the duties and responsibilities of the police towards community members. The LoveLife group encourages learners to have open communication with educators and parents to decrease the rate of abuse and also to protect them.

With the exception of two SCOPE pilot schools, all the rest are primary schools, and they have faced the challenge of transition from primary school to secondary school. Tshwaralela Primary School in Northern Cape took the initiative and engaged in interaction with the local secondary schools in order to smooth the transition. They held information meetings with the secondary schools but also provided support for the secondary schools: Learners who progress to Secondary schools and experience various barriers to learning, get assistance from the Grade 7 language educator.

As a part of the Remedial Teaching Foundation training, schools were expected to work with their neighbouring schools around the issues of inclusive education. In some contexts this worked out well, whereas in some areas it was a failure. There were also great differences in cascading training provided to the neighbouring schools. Questionnaires collected from the 'neighbouring schools' in the two provinces indicated that some schools only had two workshop sessions on inclusive education, whereas some pilot schools had pursued up to 15 workshops sessions with their neighbours. It is obvious that there are discrepancies in the extent to which the message of inclusive education and the strategies presented for classroom practice vary simply because of the time used in training. However, those schools that trained their neighbouring schools found out that 'educator-to-educator' training is more efficient than the training provided by 'experts' because educators have the day-to-day experience and they know what happens in the classroom.

Working with special schools

Education White Paper 6 (2001) envisages the establishment of special schools as resource centres in the presidential nodal areas in the first stage of the implementation. Working with the special schools was not initially planned in the

SCOPE project when the project started before the launch of White Paper 6, but this aspect was taken on at a later stage. Because of the late start not many schools developed these linkages but there were some co-operation with special schools, though.

Usually the co-operation consisted of assistance in terms of human resources, i.e. therapists from the special schools tested learners and helped in coming up with appropriate activities for a particular learner. The therapists also carried out school-based workshops in their field of specialisation. Some schools organised exchange visits for learners from the pilot schools to go the special schools and vice versa to promote respect for diversity and tolerance towards people with disabilities; and the same opportunity was offered for educators from pilot schools to visit special schools.

Some special schools transferred learners to SCOPE pilot schools but there were also cases where pilot schools transferred learners to special schools. However, this was only applicable in places where special schools were available, and generally it was not an option for most of the pilot schools.

Changing cultures of the schools

The South African transformation process embraces the whole society – and at schools the new education policies since 1995 will bring about major changes in ways in which learning, teaching and development are perceived. Inclusive education – in its broader sense – will certainly change the ethos of the schools.

The External Evaluation of the SCOPE Inclusive Education component identified that among all stakeholders at different levels: from schools and their surrounding communities to the Department of Education (districts/regions, province) there was a tendency to define ‘inclusion’ as inclusion of learners with disability. The project has been working in a changing educational environment and thinking, and most people involved in supporting the implementation of the project have the background of ‘special needs education’. Therefore, it is not surprising that inclusive education has

been seen through a ‘disability lens’ throughout the project. While there is genuine recognition of the ‘extrinsic factors’ that may hamper learning, the focus of action has been towards learners with disabilities and their rehabilitation and remedy.

In this context, it is understandable that the pilot schools regard ‘cultural’ factors of schools in very different ways. While some schools indicate that nothing has changed because they have always ‘taken in’ learners from different backgrounds, some schools indicated that there have been major changes in attitudes which have resulted in changing of the ethos, the culture, of the school.

Most schools indicated that they had reviewed their mission and vision statements to accommodate diversity. Some schools had made major changes in planning so as to accommodate the principles of learner-centred and learner-paced teaching and learning. One school specifically mentioned that their main objective is to reach each and every learner.

Ethos of the school

Mnyamana Primary School in Mpumalanga has located inclusive education in the human rights discourse – that it is the right of every child to attend the school with his/her peers. This led to a change in teaching culture: *‘We broke the barrier of not asking help from colleagues and started to network – being dependent on one another.’*

Plooyburg Primary School in Northern Cape engaged in awareness rising in the surrounding farming area about the importance of children with disabilities to attend school. As the school became more skilful in addressing barriers to learning, parents and the community at large showed interest in the school’s work. Involvement in the SCOPE project created a sense of belonging and many families in the area now want to ‘belong’ to the school. This has increased the enrolment.

Umsebe Primary School in Mpumalanga describes their development as a move from a monocultural school to a multicultural school in terms of accepting and respecting different ways of doing and understanding things.

As schools are moving towards inclusive education, it is of utmost importance to take an in-depth look at the school cultures – not only cultures based on ethnicity, language or religion but also as ‘ways of doing things’. The way in which Umsebe School describes their process of change is more likely to accommodate diversity than mere tolerance of the presence of ‘different’ people. Another school described their general change: “The culture of the school has changed for the better. We are more open, and we do not cling to a specific culture or identity that excludes others.” Openness and readiness to move from one culture and identity to another might prove useful in the transformation process.

There is more tolerance towards diversity of learners and their circumstances among the educators. Learners feel that they are a part of a much larger picture and it helps them to rise above their circumstances. In the community, the school is now seen as a mirror image of what society should be like and not simply as an institution of training. The school is generally seen in a much more positive light and has undergone a few role changes.

(Vaal-Oranje Primary School, Northern Cape)

Using diversity as a resource

The majority of pilot schools are multilingual in terms of learners’ linguistic background. Several pilot schools have practiced multilingual instruction for a number of years while others are taking their first steps in introducing African languages in the curriculum.

If inclusion is to be seen in a wider perspective of including all children, it is crucial that schools engage in developing an environment that truly values diversity. The accounts from the pilot schools seem to suggest that ‘diversity’ and more specifically ‘cultural diversity’ is usually seen as special events, information lots in the assembly, ‘theme days’ and so on. Diversity is not yet used as a resource in teaching and

learning – learning about different ways of ‘doing and understanding things’ even in the same ethnic or language group. ‘Culture’ seems to be perceived a monolithic entity rather than a constantly changing variation of the common culture.

Our learners are from different cultures and speak different languages. They are taught different values by and think differently because of their parents and the way they live. Given the fact that they come from different backgrounds they are regarded as a family in the school. Each learner’s culture is taught where we compare our different clothes, bodies, songs, language, heritage, etc. Life orientation is taught from early Grades up to Grade 7.

(Barkly West Higher Primary School, Northern Cape)

Including the excluded

A part of the advocacy strategy of the SCOPE project has been an identification and enrolment of learners who are not attending school for whatever reason. Special efforts were made to identify learners with disabilities.

The principal went to several farms to tell families that the school was open to disabled children who would be most welcome. She also insisted that we spread the news to other parents. No child would be excluded from the programme because of the severity of their disability as long as they could get to school. Most of these learners have intellectual disabilities.

(Plooyburg Primary School, Northern Cape)

Some schools reached out through local radio stations and newspapers, as well as exposing ‘welcoming’ posters in the community. In parent meetings they were encouraged to bring their children with disabilities to school, and learners were encouraged to tell if they knew children who were not attending school. People with disabilities were invited to come to the school and talk to parents about their experiences of education and life as people with disabilities. Schools were also made

accessible for learners who have difficulty in mobility so as to welcome them to the school.

There are many children not attending school in our community. It is important for all children to learn – so we send out letters to the community, to parents to bring those children to school. We also do home visits, sometimes to talk and discuss schooling and learning with those children and their parents. If they still won't attend school, they will not acquire necessary skills, knowledge, values and attitudes for a positive life style. Out-of-school children or learners who do not want to come to school must be motivated by their parents at home and by educators at the school.

(Vela Langa Primary School, Northern Cape)

Despite the emphasis on learners with disabilities, most schools admitted that they were not the only learners who were not attending school. One of the pilot schools realised that there were children at home who were unable to attend school because they were over the usual age of starting school – and parents were embarrassed to enrol them as the children were 'over-aged' - so the school made room for those kind of learners.

'Over-aged' learners, some of them starting the school at the age of 15 or 17 pose a major challenge to the schools. In the spirit of inclusion, the pilot schools have not opted to refuse their admission but have rather tried to find alternatives for their education. In Tshwenyane Combined School in Mpumalanga, the school has started to create ABET/FET activities in the school, such as practical skills, and looked for possibilities for apprenticeships in the nearby small business.

Street children, working children, children who head households, children from homeless families who move constantly from one place to another, children living far away from any school and learners previously labelled as difficult were mentioned as not attending school. Substance abuse and delinquency were also among the reasons that kept learners out of the school. These were learners who experienced disaffection and were generally 'difficult to keep' at school.

I have enrolled two boys and two girls who have been out of school for more than a month in my Grade 7 class. For those learners it was a real challenge to be back at school.

The one girl 'Wora' could not adapt to the routine and discipline which are needed in a school. It was a real problem for her to be punctual, to dress like a schoolgirl, be prepared for lessons, etc. She has a will of her own and was used to doing stuff with persons who are no longer at school. She could not leave her former way of life and did not last long. The second time at school, her grandma who is her guardian could not cope with her either. She does her own thing and do not consider those who love her.

The other girl 'Elsa' was very glad to be back. She tried to do her best. She has difficulties in catching up with the class but is willing to co-operate.

'Dan' was out of school for more than two years. He will be 18 this year. He is very reliable, tries hard but has a big gap in his studies. The teacher works with him in a special way. During the first quarter he attended school regularly. Since the second quarter he has been absent without any reason.

'Robin' was not able to get into the routine of a learner again. He could not submit to discipline and order. He left school after eight days. Without success his parents tried to get him back to school. He has friends that do nasty things outside of school. They allegedly rob people and break into houses.

The major challenge is to get the learners back into routine and discipline. Their absence from school also caused a problem. Most of them had a gap backlog and found it hard to catch up. Their ages also played a role in their inability to adapt to school routine.

(Educator, Alpha Primary School)

One of the challenges related to retaining former school drop-outs and other learners who have developed a 'street identity' is the creation of an education environment

that can cater for these learners. Discipline, structure and routine may feel very distant to those learners who have learned to come from one moment to another on the streets. Going back from 'independence' to a learner's role may prove overwhelming. However, schools that intend to reduce dropouts and retain learners in schools will need to explore what are the factors that could make the school more attractive than the streets to learners.

As non-enrolment is a wider social issue in the community, and requires the full support of families and care-givers, some pilot schools had linked up with community organisations such as PPASA (Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa) to encourage parents to join it for support. PPASA is a NGO dealing with young people and how to live positive life styles.

Motivating, encouraging and retaining learners in the school need to be facilitated. A number of the SCOPE pilot schools acknowledged that this was done on a 'trial and error' basis. For learners with disabilities, there were some physical changes made in the buildings, educators acquired new skills to accommodate diversity, community resources were used to support the work at school, and so on. Schools needed to find out workable solutions for practical issues. Vaal-Oranje School realised that "many learners with disabilities had never been in school before and they tired easily. We talked with the parents and suggested that they only bring their kids for three days a week at first and then we increased it gradually."

Major challenges

All pilot schools complain about large classes which vary from one school to another, from 30 learners to 110 learners in one classroom. In all pilot schools the educator : learner ratio is generally according to the norms set by the Department of Education, however, in some schools the lack of classrooms creates situations where two classes are joined together resulting in classes of over 100 learners.

In terms of effective teaching, much could be done by improving classroom management and teaching/learning. The following examples are from the pilot

schools and from particular classes where the educators have made attempts to manage the classroom situation in such a way that it is conducive to learning despite of the large numbers of learners.

Grade 2 class, Father Charles Primary School, Mpumalanga, 45 learners

There are a couple of broken windows in the classroom but a lot of colourful posters and pictures on the walls. There are plenty of books at the rear of the class. The desks are arranged in such a way that half of the class is an open space. This allows learners to have 'circle time' and gather around the educator for reading and talking, as well as working on different tasks at their desks and on the floor at the same time.

Grade 1, Victory Park Primary School, Mpumalanga, 50 learners

There are about 50 learners seated on the floor. They are learning the pre-reading skills in English. There are sounds/letters written on the chalkboard, as well as words with these sounds. The educator models the sounds and learners repeat. They move on to writing the letters in the air and on the floor with their fingers. Then the educator divides the learners into groups according to colours.

The educator hands out a worksheet and explains what learners are supposed to do in their groups. While some groups are working with the worksheets, the educator invites one group onto the floor, where they build words and sentences from little cards they keep in cigar boxes - each learner seems to have his/her own box with the word cards. After completing their task they go back to the colour group, continue the worksheet and another group comes onto the floor. Every now and then the educator moves between the groups to see how they are progressing.

Another often quoted challenge is to 'make the curriculum work'. Especially learners who have an intellectual disability seem to challenge their educators' teaching skills. It should be noted that educators who are comfortable with their perceived teaching

skills, who believe in inclusive education and who have the willingness to learn do not find such challenges in the curriculum implementation to that extent. Rather, it seems that inclusion can work if there is willingness to make it work.

Many educators still tell that the whole curriculum process is very distant to them, and the five-day training that they received regarding outcomes-based education did not provide them with a lot of confidence for the work.

In trying to understand the challenges in the implementation of inclusive education, the change of attitudes especially among principals seem to be crucial. Committed principals can lead their schools towards inclusion whereas sceptical principals to continue with 'business as usual' where inclusive education is concerned. Educators could also be resistant towards the change. However, this is all a part of the change process, and the change research suggests that conflict and 'differently thinking' people are crucial for the change.

Any school attempting inclusion needs to motivate educators to make a paradigm shift as the most important thing. It will allow them to change their attitudes. We used different strategies to facilitate this (e.g. we used a film about a life story of a successful person with disability). And we gave a practical demonstration on what can be done in the classroom.

(Vaal-Oranje Primary School, Northern Cape)

Successes

Most schools quote 'change of attitudes' as the major breakthrough towards inclusive education. From the initial resistance, educators have become supportive and enthusiastic about inclusive education.

For individual educators the successes are those learners who were included in the curriculum and where the educators made use of learning programmes that were according to their levels and learning styles. Educators also learnt to use different learning strategies taught to them by SCOPE / Inclusive Education, and this has been said to motivate educators who had already 'lost their hope'. Most of the learners

showed improvement in their learning – we realised that, indeed, all learners can learn. It was also gratifying that many learners who had been out of school before because of their disability had managed to link with their peers, and they were accepted by the rest of learners.

To conclude with the words of Alpha Primary School:

Inclusive education is undoubtedly a realistic approach of a democratic education system. It is indeed a realisation of the constitutional right of basic education for all. As a pilot centre we support inclusive education as we believe that amongst others the poorest of the poor do benefit from the approach.

IMPLEMENTING EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6: A REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY

The Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education. Building an Inclusive Education and Training System heralded an era of profound transformation of the education and training system in South Africa. The process started in 1996 by bringing together all stakeholders, especially from special needs education in two working parties: the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS). The joint report from the working parties, *Quality Education for All. Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development* (1997), provided informed insights into the urgent need for transformation of the education system in line with principles of equity and social justice adopted by the democratic government. However, the task was anticipated to be full of complexities due to the great inequalities and unfulfilled needs of the majority of learners in the education system and conditions in society. The task required working towards change in partnership with all sectors of the government to effectively address issues of social justice and reconciliation and this was undoubtedly not an easy enterprise.

Throughout the chapters in this document educational change has been discussed through the voices of education officials in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces and educators in SCOPE Programme pilot schools for inclusive education. This final chapter discusses the practical implications of piloting the implementation of White Paper 6 (2001) and emergent issues to consider in order for consolidating a truly inclusive system of education and training in South Africa.

Setting the context for inclusive education

Inclusive education has evolved internationally in contestation to exclusionary policies and practices. Inclusion has become an approach to respond to learner diversity in mainstream classrooms. The idea that children can learn and be educated together irrespective of their differences is at the core of this movement. This view suggests that the rationale for inclusive education cannot only be found in educational arguments. There are also solid moral and social arguments (Clough & Corbett, 2000).

Since 1994, the democratic governments in South Africa have developed a clear intention of breaking up with the legacy of the past through a succession of key education policies. From this evolution, two key issues arise: Firstly, the apparent process of ideological change in educational policy; that is, the shift from a narrow approach to equality in access to a framework of social justice. Secondly, the current policy regarding learners who have experienced discrimination and exclusion from the education system, and the extent to which their rights to access quality education are presently being secured.

To elucidate the relevance of such principles embedded in current education policies, particular consideration should be given to assertions made in White Paper 6. The policy document stresses the need to adopt inclusive principles based on the strong belief that it is the education system, which poses barriers to learning and development.

The existence of education systems running parallel to educate certain groups of learners separately led to segregation and isolation in South Africa. This was particularly true in terms of apartheid education that separated learners on the basis of their perceived 'race'. Furthermore, specialised services and learning support were only provided to a small minority of learners in special classes on a racial basis with the best material and human resources for the white minority. The immediate consequence was that the great majority of learners had no access to schools and support, had dropped or were pushed out of schools where their needs for learning and support were not met. However, it is at this point where ambiguities and interpretations occur, especially at school level. The idea that schools and educators may pose barriers to learning and the extent to which it causes learning breakdown

and exclusion is a point of contention for many whose practice has never been questioned and indeed considered as being successful.

Questions thus arise as to whether special education has or does not have a role in an inclusive system of education? Paradoxically, one issue, which apparently hinders inclusion, is the highly specialised system of special schools and the type of work done in special school settings. White Paper 6 does not see this as a barrier for implementing inclusion. In an inclusive system of education there is no assumption of less need for specialist knowledge of professionals. However, they have to take up new roles and responsibilities and their work has to be part of the planning and operation of the education system as a whole. This challenge is clearly demonstrated in the SCOPE Programme experiences.

Embracing inclusive education through structural and paradigm change

The White Paper 6 contains several assumptions with regard to access, quality and equity. The premise that inclusive education can offer opportunities to all learners involves a twofold change process: it promotes the inclusion of all learners in the education system and equally prepares schools to fully value, accept and cater for all of them regardless their race, language, social status, HIV/AIDS, gender, disability and age. With regard to the latter process, it would be unrealistic to assume that this will happen overnight or simply because it has been passed by law. It requires, as anticipated in the education White Paper 6 structural and paradigm changes in the system.

In this respect, the main structural change proposed in White Paper 6 is 'that the education and training system should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning' (p.5). However, after entrenched practice of segregation in various forms, schools are not fully clear on matching and valuing differences and to change deeply rooted attitudes, stereotypes and beliefs about diversity. One example is the prevailing perception that learners with disabilities who require high levels of support should be educated in special

schools or other special environments, and that they would not meet the standard for academic achievement in mainstream settings.

Studies on school effectiveness have reported on little or minimal evidence of better results of learners with high needs of support in special schools as opposed to such learners educated in inclusive mainstream setting (Inclusion International, 1998). In other words, learners who need high levels of support including those with intellectual disabilities do not seem to achieve better in special schools than in inclusive educational settings. A second argument is that learners who require high levels of support due to physical disabilities and impairments require special teachers and special teaching techniques has also been challenged by research evidence. Studies suggest that good teaching practices and a child-centred pedagogy together with a stimulating educational environment seem to be far more important than special techniques. Furthermore, studies have shown that special teaching techniques are not exclusive to educators in special schools (Baez, 2000; Dyson & Millward 2000). Research findings together with the changed view of the nature of learning breakdown are conclusive to suggest that instead of the search for a specialised service delivery to reduce individual learners' barriers to learning the focus should rather be on finding ways and conditions that will accommodate, value and celebrate learners' diversity and facilitate the learning of all children (Dyson & Millward 2000).

The idea that all children can learn with appropriate support, as presented in White Paper 6, suggests that educators need to be prepared to identify and tackle what prevents and breaks down learning and to ascertain effective ways to support learners when required. The reality of many schools is that many educators may not find it challenging to practice an inclusive approach. Traditionally, educators have used a directive and frontal approach to teaching and learning. Thus, whatever challenges learners may pose to educators have been regarded as something inherent to the learner, his/her family background or other reasons. Presently, educators are still coming to terms with the idea that the system and indeed, they themselves may pose barriers to learning. Hence, the relevance for schools and educators to work towards a common understanding of inclusion and gaining the skills to effectively implement the policy in the classroom.

The curriculum and the inclusive school

Inclusive schools are concerned with effective and quality teaching and learning for all. It is a school where successful and non-successful stories and achievements and under-achievement of all learners matter. These characteristics are apparent not only in their practice and high expectations for all learners but also in the willingness to provide opportunities to learners who may have experienced learning breakdown at some point of their education. This does not only mean treating all learners equally but also taking into consideration learners' varied backgrounds and diverse needs for teaching and learning.

Educators in South Africa have been introduced to a new school curriculum: the Curriculum 2005 based on the principles of outcomes-based education. In this book we have presented lessons from educators of the ways in which they have learnt alongside learners and communities. By implementing inclusive education they have changed their views about delivering a curriculum for all learners. Educators have been able to make connections and to benefit from the flexibility of the outcomes-based education curriculum for the delivery of effective responses to the diverse learning needs in the classrooms. Making sense of other strategies put in place by the Department of Education has helped them to develop a more accurate view of the dimensions of the system's transformation.

These experiences reflect the view that educators can work through the curriculum towards the structural change needed to transform the education system. Their successful and unsuccessful stories about teaching and learning have made apparent the need for change. Their aim now is, in the short term, to consolidate their enhanced competences and strategies to effectively respond to all learners in their class. It has been encouraging for them to observe how small and creative changes in curriculum practice can make a significant difference on learners.

Promoting and achieving equity and quality outcomes have been at the centre of making the curriculum inclusive. Educators and schools have made efforts to make a difference with limited resources and have been able to support especially those

learners who need most and have less. From experiences in schools it has been made apparent that delivering the curriculum is an active process. Learners need to be fully engaged in and motivated by the learning process and they have to be mentally and sometimes physically active throughout that sequence of educational experiences. In doing so, it is believed that learning breakdown can be minimised. Educators have realised that learners construct learning not simply by listening to and obeying them, but also by working on problem solving with peers and by engaging with educators and peers in interactions and discussions.

Receiving training and support in important issues (e.g. theory of multiple intelligences) has proved beneficial for schools. Educators have been able to understand who their learners are and how they learn. Against this background educators can differentiate methods for delivering the curriculum, improve their teaching styles and make better use of resources available.

Dealing with push and pull strategies

Another principle guiding the implementation of an inclusive education and training system in South Africa is the participation of parents and the community in schools. Although some school communities appear to be quite involved in this respect others, especially those from rural areas might need to seek opportunities to increase participation through on-going community support. Education policies outline strategies for opportunities in participation for the most excluded members of society although such strategies seem to not always consider that structural factors, such as abject poverty and geographical isolation, hinder equal access to opportunities for all.

With regard to schools, the situation is equally similar. The profound inequalities still in existence may produce the effect that schools which have more human and material resources available, will be able to make the most of the available opportunities than those in distant rural areas. The important message from the rural schools in the SCOPE project is that transformation can take place with commitment of the staff and dedicated support to the school. With the improvement of educational delivery, these schools have experienced increased enrolments, as well as increasing human and

material support from the surrounding community. The question is: How to make this opportunity systemic?

Concluding commentary

The main lessons emerging from the SCOPE experience can be discussed at the various levels of the inclusive education discourse: (i) epistemological which deals with rationale and methods for the implementation of inclusive education, (ii) philosophical which deals with values and principles and (iii) ontological which deals with the nature and understanding of inclusion, developed through the pilot experience, and (iv) paradigm levels which deals with change and transformation in the current thinking and view of inclusion.

At the epistemological level, experiences from the SCOPE project on implementing inclusive education are presenting clear lessons: The relevance of policy makers' and implementers' consistent understanding of inclusive education. The gap is apparent at all levels of the education system in conceptualisation of inclusive education, as well as in implementing inclusion in the day-to-day operation in pilot schools.

This is clearly an area in which varied interpretations and ambiguities are emerging. In this respect, the little practical guidance on the implementation of policy at school level, and probably mixed messages from various actors in the implementation process, have forced educators and school communities to work out their own particular understandings of inclusive education and to gauge barriers they encountered against local parameters. As the external evaluation report noted, the understanding of inclusive education was related to what was 'available' in the schools and communities. The emphasis on disability issues may have distracted attention to other significant aspects of the dynamic nature of inclusion/exclusion in promoting/hindering learning and development.

Educators and schools adopted the understanding of structural change through a process of unpacking the meanings and practical implications of inclusive education. In so doing, schools tried out new strategies in the classrooms and hands-on

experiences of building their competences and skills alongside internal and external support and clustering with others. White Paper 6 undoubtedly provides valuable guidance at a general system level with the creation of opportunities for change. However, the challenge of capacity building for effective change towards an inclusive education and training system remains open at different levels of the education system.

In addressing change, the SCOPE inclusive education initiative has provided schools with support and capacity building. Schools in the project have indeed, created adequate support structures internally in order to develop as inclusive schools.

The philosophical level of the inclusive education discourse addresses issues related to the aims of transforming society into a more just and equitable one. Although SCOPE pilot schools have made tremendous efforts to include learners who have been traditionally excluded from school, and educators are working hard to respond to diverse and large groups of learners, the question as to whether an inclusive education project can contribute towards a more just and equitable society remains largely open. A plausible consideration for gaps in the transformation process in schools is the limited support in the development of understandings of inclusive education and the emphasis placed around disability issues. Likewise practical aspects to be achieved through a process of educational change, a critical re-visit and the modification of attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of society towards values of educating diversity are challenging and ongoing tasks. Questions arise as to whether schools can set the benchmark for tolerance and acceptance and moving on to the discussion of multicultural school environments.

Upon dealing with the nature and understanding of inclusion, one has to look at the analysis of the ontological level of such discourse centres in the existence of a dual system of special and mainstream education running in parallel, with their own models of delivery and practice.

The issue is that, having had a long tradition of the learner as ‘the problem’ rather than a systemic focus based on the dynamic nature of inclusion-exclusion, it seems extraordinary complex to couple such competing views to disentangle the nature of

barriers to learning. It is also complex to introduce such change as envisaged in White Paper 6 when vested interest of professionals are compromised and this obviously may hinder the process of understanding inclusion. Added to the complexities is educators' need to deal with increasing demands of new skills in order to address the range of learning needs they encounter in the classrooms, and little practical guidance and support in the form of staff development. This is reflected in the dual presence of competing discourses on the nature and understanding of inclusion in schools which is probably due to the various support services provided ('what is available') with varying understandings of inclusive education.

What is important from the project is that processes of inclusion and exclusion cannot be dissociated from what is going on in the communities and in the society at large. In terms of transformation, many educators and schools have started to see themselves as key players in the process. This incipient change and transformation has been supported with substantial training and is based on the knowledge of how to deal with specific issues in the class. Educators participating in the project initially had the idea that the more they increased their knowledge on the 'causes of disability', the more they would be equipped to deal with learners' diversity, especially those with disabilities. However, experience has demonstrated that they can be more effective and enhance their understanding of the nature of barriers to learning by addressing curriculum issues and addressing the conditions to teaching and learning in a broader framework.

With reference to the paradigm level, the SCOPE experience has made apparent that change does take place when participants have ownership from the starting point with a clear leadership in the process. The paradigm shift, from an individual to a social approach, cannot happen by simply changing the education vocabulary, but it needs to be a part of the overall day-to-day operation and reflected in every aspect of the process of change at all levels in the system. In this respect, the leadership of education officials and school management teams can provide a substantial effect on policy implementation.

In concluding this volume, it seems appropriate to praise the commitment of the Mpumalanga and Northern Cape education officials, pilot schools and their educators,

the national Department of Education and the SCOPE Programme staff. Their valuable experiences and contributions have highlighted the opportunities created in Education White Paper 6 and the practicalities involved in developing inclusion and quality education for all.

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