

One of the main obstacles to the inclusion within educational systems worldwide of learners with disabilities is that learners' needs are not fully understood by teachers, who mostly lack skills in disability practice, thereby preventing equal access and participation. This book seeks to answer the questions, "What are the educational needs of learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments?" and "How can teachers be supported to make changes to meet these needs?" In the study presented and analysed here, Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project researchers draw on the multiple perspectives and challenges of role-players in South African education – learners, teachers, parents, school management teams and district and provincial education officials – to not only identify the difficulties faced by teachers and learners with disabilities in poorly resourced schools, but also what is needed to overcome inadequacies and empower teachers to provide quality education. The researchers conclude that the educational needs of learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments can only be addressed when teacher education supports teachers to do this. They highlight the need for the current system to be receptive to change and the importance of leaders prepared to effect such change.



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Project co-funded by the  
European Union

# Starting where we are:

Situational analysis of the educational needs  
of learners with severe to profound sensory or  
intellectual impairments in South Africa



Edited by Judith McKenzie, Jane Kelly  
and Nozwelo Shanda

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# Acronyms

AAC	Alternative and Augmentative Communication
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CMB	Christoffel-Blindenmission
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District-Based Support Team
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DSD	Department of Social Development
DSE	Disability Studies in Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FM	Frequency Modulation
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SASL	South African Sign Language
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
SPSII	Severe to Profound Sensory or Intellectual Impairments
SSA	Statistics South Africa
TEDI	Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WPRPD	White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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# Foreword

'Education for All' is a striking slogan but, as yet, remains a broken promise. Millions of children, especially in Africa, are denied education; among them boys and girls with severe impairments and developmental disabilities. Often they are shunned, not only by schools but also by the wider community, because of superstition, fear and discrimination. If we are serious about treating all of the world's children equally, then we must take on the challenge of making education inclusive of all children with disabilities. Why? Because it is a human right as agreed to in various United Nations declarations, to which most African countries are proud signatories. According to Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006: 2b): 'In realising this right, States Parties shall ensure that ... persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live'.

Internationally, we have much still to learn about what it means to educate children with severe disabilities. Lack of knowledge, however, is not an excuse for inaction, but rather an incentive to learn. Nobel Prize poet, Seamus Heaney, expressed this sentiment in his poem 'The Cure at Troy' thus: 'Believe that a further shore is reachable from here'. You have to start with a belief and from where you currently are.

Experiences in more affluent countries particularly, have demonstrated that learners with severe disabilities can thrive in school despite the challenges they pose to educational systems. Equally, I have seen similar examples in Uganda, Lesotho and Zanzibar, thanks to the pioneering efforts of people like Lilian Mariga. Our belief is well founded that all children can learn, and these insights confirm that schools can develop capacity to educate all children. But you have to start from where *you* are – and I mean you, the reader. Herein lies the value of this book. Rather uniquely for books on education, the researchers have spoken to learners with severe impairments and to their family carers. Reading about their hopes, disappointments, frustrations and ambitions should remove any

illusion that we are doing our best by these children. Can we really allow the current state of affairs to continue in the modern era?

The researchers have listened to teachers talk about the difficulties they face in poorly resourced schools and how ill-equipped they feel to cope with learners who require more support than they seemingly can give. Your own experiences are likely to be reflected in their words. But the story does not end there. They go on to recount how schools could be different and what is needed to make them better. Rather strikingly, many of the same issues arise in so-called 'special schools' whose remit is to focus on children with disabilities. The Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project, which undertook this study, is well placed to act on these findings as it pursues its aim of empowering teachers to provide quality education. In so doing, they should also discover the answer to this crucial question: How can teachers be supported to make the changes that are proposed?

Inclusive education will never be achieved if we rely only on schools to make it happen. Schools are part of a wider educational system and so we need to know where the system stands. Once again, the views of educational officials, school management and support teams are recorded in some detail. Not surprisingly, they focus on the inadequacies in the current system for teacher education and classroom support in relation to learners with severe disabilities. But a more fundamental question remains: How receptive is the current system to change?

The value of this book is in the multiple perspectives the authors bring to the education of children with severe disabilities, who are still a much-neglected group within educational systems worldwide. Moreover, this is one of few studies with a focus on low- and middle-income countries, so it has relevance beyond the shores of Africa. However, of greater value are the two implicit lessons that stood out for me: the need for leadership and for partnerships. Leadership can come from learners, from concerned parents, from politicians, and all are to be commended and need to be mobilised; but a failure of leadership within educational systems is shameful. Head teachers especially have a key role in promoting education for all. To do this they need the support of well-trained teachers and the encouragement of district and provincial officials and teams. Equally inclusive schools have to be built on partnerships among teachers within a school, between schools and families, and schools with local communities. This ethos needs to infuse all our efforts to bring about education

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for all. If that should seem like another world far removed from where you are now, let me end by quoting another famous poet, W.B. Yeats, who wrote: 'There is another world, but it is in this one'.

**Emeritus Professor Roy McConkey OBE, PhD**

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# Executive summary

In this situational analysis, Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project researchers investigate a much-neglected group within educational systems worldwide: learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments (SPSII). They draw on the multiple perspectives and challenges of role-players in South African education – learners, teachers, parents, school management teams, and district and provincial education officials – to not only identify the difficulties faced by teachers and learners with disabilities in poorly resourced schools, but also what is needed to overcome inadequacies and empower teachers to provide quality education. This book provides answers to the questions: “What are the educational needs of learners with SPSII?” and “How can teachers be supported to make changes to meet these needs?”

One of the main obstacles to the inclusion of learners with disabilities is that learners’ needs are not fully understood by teachers, who mostly lack skills in disability practice, thereby preventing equal access and participation. This points to a lack of academic teacher-training programmes preparing teachers to teach learners with SPSII through specialisation courses on disability and education.

The researchers used an ecosystemic model, which recognises that the individual learner is embedded within systems of interacting relationships. The conceptual framework and methodology of the research is presented in chapters 2 and 3. In these chapters, the nature of disability as a form of diversity is explored through the adoption of a disability studies perspective, and the researchers acknowledge that disability is constructed when an individual with an impairment interacts with the environment. A qualitative description research design was used in this study, which was conducted in eight schools (six special schools and two full service schools) across the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Gauteng in South Africa. The six special schools represented two schools for learners with severe intellectual disabilities, two for learners who are blind or have low vision, and two for learners who are D/deaf. The participants included provincial and district officials, teachers, school management team members,

learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments, and parents of these learners. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The educational and impairment-specific needs of learners with SPSII are discussed in chapters 4 and 5, exploring the perspectives of learners, teachers and parents. Across the participant groups, findings illustrate the need for more effective discipline strategies in the classroom; patient, understanding and committed teachers who are adequately trained to meet the needs of learners with SPSII; and the establishment of family-school partnerships. While the use of technology is seen as essential to accessing information, access to and training in its use appears to be inadequate. Similar challenges are experienced in the accessibility and timely availability of learning and teaching support materials (LTSM). Curriculum content adaptation also proved challenging to teachers as the curriculum is not inclusive of the needs of learners with disabilities and can, in itself, be a barrier to learning. The need for curriculum adaptation in responding to diversity is quite clear.

Ways in which district and provincial support could be utilised to support teachers and meet learners' needs are discussed in Chapter 6. The researchers identify a need for more support personnel at the circuit and district levels who can ensure that teachers in schools for learners with SPSII have the necessary pedagogical support. A need for training on differentiation and support for all learners is also highlighted.

In Chapter 7, the researchers provide a set of recommendations based on their findings:

1. In-depth impairment-specific training (focusing on hearing, visual and intellectual impairments) should be included as specialisations during teacher education at tertiary institutions. This should include:
  - a. Impairment-specific LTSM adaptation training.
  - b. Impairment-specific assistive technology training.
  - c. Braille, South African Sign Language (SASL), and Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) specialisation qualifications offered at teacher training institutions or through NGOs.

2. Ongoing support for teachers in impairment-specific pedagogy should be provided, including:
  - a. Continuous training or workshops at school and district level, as a recap on the use of assistive technology.
  - b. Consistent Braille, SASL and AAC workshops at school and district levels.
3. Teaching practice in special and full-service schools should form part of teacher education, to help student teachers gain experience in teaching learners with SPSII.
4. Inclusive education modules that enable all teachers to respond to learner diversity should be offered in pre-service teacher training. This should include:
  - a. Understanding disability as an issue of diversity and social justice.
  - b. Discipline management training at tertiary level for all student teachers.

Although these recommendations arise out of the situational analysis, it remains to be determined how best the educational needs of teachers can be met through the teacher education system at both pre-service and in-service levels, and what types of qualifications might best suit these needs. Further aspects to be explored include continuing professional development courses, online education, and formal and informal courses offered by non-governmental and disability organisations.

The researchers conclude that the educational needs of learners with SPSII can only be addressed when teacher education supports teachers to do this. Accordingly, a fundamental question remains: How receptive is the current system to change and who will take up the reins of leadership to effect such change?

# Terminology

## **Blindness**

See 'Low vision and blindness'.

## **Curriculum differentiation**

The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) defines curriculum differentiation as a 'key strategy for responding to the needs of learners with diverse learning styles and needs. It involves processes of modifying, changing, adapting, extending and varying teaching methodologies, teaching strategies, assessment strategies and the content of the curriculum.' (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2014: 7)

## **D/deaf and hard of hearing**

Learners with severe hearing loss include those with a hearing loss of 61–80 decibels, while those with profound hearing loss have a loss of more than 81 decibels (PubMed Health, 2017).

Some learners with severe to profound hearing loss use assistive technologies, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, and follow an oral-aural approach to developing spoken language through lip-reading and speech production. Learners using this oral-aural approach prefer the terms 'deaf', 'hearing impaired' or 'hard-of-hearing', and attend oral schools for the D/deaf or other schools that use spoken language as the medium of instruction (Peterson, 2004). Other learners follow a manual approach, where sign language is used as the primary means of communication. A bilingual-bicultural methodology, where sign language is used as the medium of instruction and for all communication other than reading and writing, has been adopted in most schools for D/deaf learners (Knors, et al., 2014; Reagan, 2015). Placement in an educational stream is not determined by the degree of hearing loss, but rather by the linguistic choice (sign language or oralism) selected by the parents.

Those using the bilingual-bicultural approach prefer the term 'Deaf' (with the 'D' capitalised) and do not accept the term 'hearing impaired' as it is seen as medically based, focusing on inabilities rather than social barriers. They do not see themselves as having a disability or an impairment; rather, they are members of a linguistic and cultural minority, namely the Deaf community, where sign language is used and Deaf culture is followed (Groce, 1985; Ladd, 2003; Reagan, 2015).

## **Disability**

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), disability is an evolving concept and disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers. It recognises persons with disabilities as those persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2017: 12)

## **Full-service school**

Education White Paper 6 defines full-service schools as 'schools and colleges that will be equipped and supported to provide for the full range of learning needs among all our learners' (Department of Education (DoE), 2001: 22).

## **Hard of hearing**

See 'D/deaf and hard of hearing'.

## **Impairment**

A *physical impairment* refers to a partial or total loss of a bodily function or part of the body. It includes sensory impairments such as being D/deaf, hearing impaired or visually impaired. A *mental impairment* is a clinically recognised condition or illness that affects a person's thought processes, judgement or emotions. This includes conditions such as intellectual, emotional and learning disabilities (SAHRC, 2017: 12). See also 'Intellectual impairment'.

## **Inclusive education**

Inclusive education recognises the right of ALL children to feel welcomed into a supportive education environment in their own community. It



refers to the capacity of ordinary schools and ECD centres to respond to the needs of ALL learners, including those who need additional support because of learning or physical disabilities, social disadvantage, cultural difference or other barriers to learning.

Brummer (2018: 2)

In the South African context, inclusive education refers to an 'integrated system which ensures the availability of support on a continuum that includes special schools/resource centres, full-service schools, and ordinary public schools coupled with support from district-based support teams (DBSTs)' (DBE, 2018: 7).

### **Intellectual impairment**

Although we refer to 'intellectual impairment' in this study, we draw on the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; DSM-5) definition, which uses the term 'intellectual disability'. See also 'Severe intellectual disability' and 'Profound intellectual disability'.

### **Low vision and blindness**

Total blindness is the inability to tell light from dark, or the total inability to see. Low vision is a severe reduction in vision that cannot be corrected with standard glasses or contact lenses, and reduces a person's ability to function at certain or all tasks. Kruger (1988) differentiates between total blindness, severe visual impairment and partial sightedness. Persons who are totally blind do not have any visual awareness and require assistance with mobility. They often use Braille as a medium of instruction, and can make use of screen-reading programmes to access the written word. Severe visual impairment ranges from only being able to tell the difference between light and dark, to being able to read large print using electronic devices. Those who are partially sighted can read ink print and are largely more independent (Kruger, 1988; Lourens, 2015).

### **Mainstream school**

A mainstream school is described as an 'ordinary school [that is] required to reasonably accommodate children with disabilities' (Section 27, 2017).

### **Profound intellectual disability**

According to DSM-5, the conceptual skills of persons with profound intellectual disability generally involve the physical world rather than symbolic processes. The person may use objects in a goal-directed fashion for self-care, work and

recreation. Certain visuospatial skills, such as matching and sorting based on physical characteristics, may be acquired. However, co-occurring motor and sensory impairments may prevent functional use of objects. On a social level, the person has a very limited understanding of symbolic communication in speech or gesture, although he or she may understand some simple instructions or gestures. Desires and emotions are expressed largely through non-verbal, non-symbolic communication. The person enjoys relationships with well-known loved ones, and initiates and responds to social interactions through gestural and emotional cues. Co-occurring sensory and physical impairments may prevent many social activities. On a practical level, the person is dependent on others for all aspects of daily physical care, health, and safety, although he or she may be able to participate in some of these activities. Simple actions with objects may be the basis of participation in some vocational activities with high levels of ongoing support. Co-occurring physical and sensory impairments are frequent barriers to participation in home, recreational and vocational activities. Maladaptive behaviour is present in a significant minority (American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013).

### **Severe intellectual disability**

According to DSM–5, persons with severe intellectual disability have limited attainment of conceptual skills, and little understanding of written language or concepts involving numbers, quantity, time and money. Caretakers provide extensive problem-solving support throughout life. On a social level, spoken language is quite limited in terms of vocabulary and grammar, and is used for social communication more than for explication. Speech may be single words or phrases and may be supplemented through augmentative means. Individuals understand simple speech and gestural communication. Relationships with family members and familiar others are a source of pleasure and help. Practically, a person with a severe intellectual disability requires support for all activities of daily living, including meals, dressing, bathing and elimination. The person requires supervision at all times and cannot make responsible decisions about well-being of self or others. In adulthood, participation in tasks at home, recreation and work requires ongoing support and assistance. Skill acquisition in all domains involves long-term teaching and ongoing support (APA, 2013).

### **Severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments (SPSII)**

In this situational analysis we adopted a constructivist approach, making a distinction between 'impairment', referring to a biological difference on the body,

and 'disability' as the social status that arises from the interaction of the person with an impairment and their environment (Shakespeare & Watson, 1997).

### **Special education**

While the terms 'special education' and 'special needs' are contested, and often associated with segregated education (and therefore undermining the intent of inclusive education), this is not necessarily the case when specialised programmes can be offered in a range of contexts. In our study we use the term to refer to the specialised programmes of support in the *National Guidelines for Resourcing an Inclusive Education System* (DBE, 2018). Whereas our focus is on the special educational needs associated with impairments of vision, hearing, and learning and cognition, obviously these overlap with other programmes.

### **Special school**

The DBE refers to special schools as 'schools equipped to deliver education to learners requiring high-intensive educational and other support on either a full-time or a part-time basis' (DBE, 2018: 8).

# Chapter

# 1

## CHAPTER 1

# Background and literature review

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Nozwelo Shanda, Jane Kelly and Judith McKenzie

Despite policy commitment, there has been slow progress towards achieving quality education for learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments (SPSII) in South Africa. One of the main obstacles is that there are very few academic teacher-training programmes preparing teachers to teach these learners through specialisation courses on disability and education. In order to address this, the European Commission has entered into a partnership with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), universities and civil society to develop relevant teacher education programmes.

The situational analysis presented in this book forms part of an initiative by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in partnership with Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM) Deutschland e.V. as the lead applicant for Lot 3 of the European Commission, Teaching and Learning and Inclusive Education EuropAid/150345/DD/ACT/ZA: 'Supporting emerging university-based centres focused on developing teachers that can address the specialised educational needs of children with profound visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities'. The Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) initiative aims to empower teachers to provide quality education for learners with severe to profound disabilities through training that is focused on inclusivity, diversity and addressing learners'

impairment-specific needs. This situational analysis seeks to identify the educational needs of learners with SPSII and the teacher education required for teachers to be able to meet these needs.

## Rationale for the study

In South Africa the national prevalence rate of disability among 5 to 9 year olds is 10.8%, while in the 10 to 14 age group it is 4.1%, and 2.6% for 15 to 19 year olds (Statistics South Africa (SSA), 2011). It is therefore to be expected that such proportions would be reflected in the education system. Given that historically learners with disabilities in South Africa have been educated in special schools or excluded from education altogether (Donohue & Bornman, 2014), these children would largely be found amongst the special school population. There are approximately 450 special schools across South Africa, each of which caters for particular impairments; for example, there are schools for learners who are blind and partially sighted, D/deaf and hard of hearing, intellectually and physically impaired (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2015). There are also approximately 700 full-service schools in South Africa, but this does not mean that all children with disabilities are in schooling. In 2012 it was estimated that approximately 600,000 learners with disabilities were not in school (DBE, 2015), which is more than double the 280,000 estimated excluded learners in 2001 (DoE, 2001). In 2014 there were 117,447 learners enrolled in special schools throughout the country (DBE, 2015). In 2017 there were 11,461 learners on the waiting list for special schools (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2017).

The 2011 census also showed that, at all phases of education, school attendance for learners with disabilities was lowest among learners with severe difficulty in walking and communicating. At the early childhood development (ECD) level, learners with severe hearing impairments were also least likely to attend school (SSA, 2011). Indeed, the 2011 census indicates that persons with severe disabilities are the most disadvantaged when it comes to educational outcomes (SSA, 2011). This echoes international findings which illustrate that, on average, persons with disabilities (when compared with persons without disabilities) are less likely to ever attend school, more likely to be out of school, less likely to complete primary or secondary education, and less likely to have basic literacy skills (UNESCO, 2018). This exclusion from education is out of line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), which asserts the right to basic education of all children, and the goals of Education White

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Paper 6 (EWP6), which states that learners who experience barriers to learning should receive appropriate support and education in a range of educational settings (DoE, 2001).

While there are many reasons for exclusion, including poverty and inadequate resourcing for disability, two key reasons for exclusion and marginalisation of learners with disabilities are that the educational needs of learners with severe to profound disabilities are not fully understood in South Africa, and that teachers lack the skills in disability practice, and are consequently challenged by learners, often without any of the necessary support (Engelbrecht, et al., 2003; SSA, 2011). Against this backdrop, this situational analysis begins with the premise that, in order to strengthen teacher education so that teachers are able to provide quality education and support for learners with disabilities, it is imperative that a sound empirical background of the educational needs of learners with SPSII is established with the purpose of determining what teacher education is needed to meet those needs.

## Literature review

In this section we provide a literature review of the educational needs of learners with disabilities and how these are translated into teacher education, with a particular focus on international and South African policy frameworks.

### International policy and experiences

The global impetus for inclusive education is rooted in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which stipulates that, where possible, inclusive education should be the educational norm internationally. This approach has been given added force in Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations (UN), 2006), which recognises the right of all learners with disabilities to be included, where possible, in the general education system, and to receive the disability support they need.

The UNCRPD stipulates that no person should be excluded from any level of education or employment based on disability. All necessary provisions should be made to accommodate learners with various learning needs, including the training of teachers in relevant skills such as Braille and sign language. Staff at all levels of education should receive training in disability awareness

and other areas relevant to disability-related skills. Thus, teacher education should promote in all teachers a willingness to meet the educational needs of learners with disabilities. Included in this should be the development of a group of specialised teachers who are able to meet the impairment-specific needs of learners with disabilities.

Internationally, it has been shown that there is no single approach to improving inclusive education; rather, a number of different strategies at all levels should be used, from policy right down to more localised interventions, depending on the context (UNESCO, 2015). The involvement of community members is 'more likely to provide sustainable, locally relevant solutions and foster a social model of inclusion' (UNESCO, 2015: 103). Thus, teacher education needs to be adapted to the specific context.

The World Health Organization's 'World Report on Disability' (WHO, 2011) states that inclusive education seeks to enable schools to serve all learners in local communities. Although the ultimate goal is full inclusion, the report acknowledges that this may be difficult. It suggests that a flexible approach to placement should be encouraged, where learners are placed in the most integrated setting possible. Educational needs must be assessed from the perspective of what is best for the individual child and the available financial and human resources within the specific context of the learner. The report emphasises that learners who are D/deaf, blind or have severe to profound intellectual disabilities need to receive appropriate support, which may currently only be available in separate special schools (WHO, 2011). However, the view that special education is confined to segregated settings is challenged in the National Guidelines for Resourcing an Inclusive Education System (DBE, 2018), which refers to specialised programmes that can be offered in a range of settings. Thus, in the context of inclusion, where all teachers need to be able to address an ever-increasing range of learning needs and diversity, there remains the need for specialised teacher education to address impairment-specific barriers to learning.

### **South African policy and experiences**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) protects all those living in the country from any form of discrimination, including on the basis of disability (section 9(3)), and states that everyone has the right to basic and further education (section 29(1)). The South African Schools Act (Act No. 84



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of 1996) states that all children should be admitted to ordinary public schools, and that these schools should support children's various educational and other support needs without any discrimination. This includes, as far as possible, children with special educational needs. Parents have the right to decide which type of school they would like their children to attend, including enrolment into a mainstream school instead of a special school.

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001), South Africa's policy on inclusive education, presents policy approaches to accommodating learners' needs, including learners with disabilities. It acknowledges that learners have a broad range of needs which, when they are not met, lead to barriers to learning and development. These barriers can arise as a result of many factors including inaccessible environments, language of teaching and learning, inappropriate communication and unsafe environments. Teacher education must, therefore, take into account the full range of barriers to learning.

In 2014 the South African government took a major step towards improving the situation of learners with disabilities by implementing policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DBE, 2014). SIAS is the mandatory instrument for teachers to identify barriers to learning and determine the levels of support required. SIAS identifies educational placement options for learners – in mainstream, full-service and special schools – through a systematic process of examining support needs. Rather than focusing on disability categories, educational placement options are based on whether the child requires low, medium or high levels of support and how each type of school can meet these needs. As a result of this process, diversity and appropriate specialised support for learners should be features of every classroom.

One of the major strategies enabling teachers to address barriers to learning is curriculum differentiation, which depends on a sound knowledge of the core curriculum combined with the adaptation of teaching and assessment strategies to meet the needs of the learner. The DBE has developed guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom (DBE, 2011) to be used in conjunction with the 'Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement' (CAPS) adopted in 2011. The guidelines are aimed at assisting teachers to develop differentiation strategies in order to accommodate learners who face various barriers to learning in the classroom.

Although there is a sound policy framework in place in South Africa that

supports the education of learners with SPSII, implementation lags far behind. In addition, the quality of education that the majority of learners with disabilities receive is not up to standard, with a large percentage of learners being unable to access the curriculum effectively and many learners in special schools not having access to the same subjects as those in mainstream schools (Human Rights Watch, 2015; The Right to Education for Children with Disabilities Alliance, 2017). Evidence suggests that learners with disabilities have not been provided with sufficient reasonable accommodation or support to ensure that they can access education that is on an equal basis to that of their peers (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Further, one of the biggest challenges in educating learners with disabilities is the entrenched attitude among teachers and within schools that children with disabilities are not able to learn to the same standard as children without disabilities (Human Rights Watch, 2015). In addition, South African research shows that teachers have concerns about the inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools, including being doubtful about the ability of these learners to participate academically and socially in the classroom, and being unsure of the consequences of inclusion (Bornman & Donohue, 2013; Savolainen, et al., 2012).

Evidence also suggests that some South African teachers favour separate learning opportunities over inclusion in their classroom practices, which could reflect training that focuses on a deficit and individualised approach to barriers to learning and development (Engelbrecht, et al., 2015). Indeed a lack of adequate teacher education specifically focused on teaching learners with disabilities has been identified as a cause of poor quality education for these learners (Human Rights Watch, 2015; The Right to Education for Children with Disabilities Alliance, 2017). There is also a dearth of research in low to middle income countries like South Africa that looks specifically at the educational needs of learners with SPSII – in particular research that uses an integrated approach, drawing on multiple perspectives. This study addresses this gap by providing an evidence base for the current needs of learners with SPSII and the teacher education required to meet these needs.

## **Study aim and research questions**

The aim of this study was to develop an understanding of the educational needs of learners with SPSII and the teacher education required to meet these needs. The following research questions were addressed:

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- › What are the educational needs of learners with SPSII?
- › What teacher education is required for teachers to be able to meet these needs?

In order to develop an integrated and comprehensive understanding of the multiple factors that configure the educational needs of learners with SPSII, we focused on gaining multiple perspectives to determine needs and how teachers can meet them. We made use of an ecosystemic model (discussed in Chapter 2) which acknowledges that the individual learner is embedded within systems of relationships, and that what occurs at each level of this system has an impact upon another level. Thus, the study set out to:

- › Understand the perspectives of learners with SPSII with regard to their educational needs
- › Understand the perspectives of parents of learners with SPSII in relation to their children's educational needs
- › Understand teachers' perspectives on what they need to educate learners with SPSII
- › Understand the perspectives of school management teams, and district and provincial officials in relation to the teacher education needed for teachers to be able to educate learners with SPSII.

In presenting this research we outline our conceptual framework and relate this to the research questions in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 we outline our methodology and explain how the research was carried out, including the research methods and ethical processes that were followed. In Chapter 4 we consider the educational needs of learners with SPSII from the differing perspectives of teachers, learners and parents, before focusing on impairment-specific learner needs in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6 we look at the ways in which the district and provincial teams support teachers to meet learners' needs. We draw everything together in Chapter 7 to address the research questions and relate learners' needs to teacher education needs. In so doing, we make the claim that the educational needs of learners with SPSII can only be addressed when teacher education supports teachers to be able to do this.

**Chapter**

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**2**

## CHAPTER 2

# Conceptual underpinnings

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Judith McKenzie and Jane Kelly

In this study we highlight the human rights of persons with disabilities as a marginalised minority group that is now claiming equal access and participation in social activity and specifically in education. The nature of disability as a form of diversity is explored through the adoption of a disability studies perspective that is specifically applied to education. Furthermore, we recognise that disability is constructed when an individual with an impairment interacts with the environment. We conceptualise this environment through an ecosystemic approach where learners with SPSII are located within a nexus of different levels, each of which interacts in multiple ways.

## Human rights approaches

This research is guided by a social justice and human rights framework that, in terms of disability, is most clearly articulated by the UNCRPD (2006). According to Article 24 – Education:

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:
  - a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
  - b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
  - c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.
2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:
  - a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
  - b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
  - c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
  - d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
  - e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

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3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:
  - a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
  - b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
  - c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.
4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.
5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

United Nations (2006)

We quote Article 24 at length as it best describes our understanding of the place of disability within inclusive education. In the context of South African education we argue that addressing disability and diversity as outlined in clauses 1, 2 and 5 has received a great deal of attention within an inclusive education

system. We contend, however, that while these developments are necessary, they are insufficient to ensure disability inclusion – particularly severe to profound disabilities – within the education system. To ensure quality education for learners with SPSII, additional attention needs to be directed to specific strategies as described in clauses 3 and 4. Thus, both the TEDI project and the research that supports our work is focused on impairment-specific strategies within an overarching inclusive education framework.

The UNCRPD is domesticated within South African policy in the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (WPRPD) (Department of Social Development (DSD), 2015), which outlines three approaches that we have adopted in our work:

1. **Human rights approach:** Disability inclusion is not viewed as a health and welfare issue, but rather a cross-cutting issue of human rights grounded in the South African Constitution. This approach needs to take into account the legacy of apartheid and growing inequality.
2. **Mainstreaming approach:** The term 'mainstreaming' can be confusing in an educational context, where it refers to the practice of placing learners with disabilities who are able to adapt to a regular classroom in ordinary schools. It implies that the learner adapts rather than the school (DoE, 2001). In the WPRPD the meaning is closer to that used in international development and refers to the need to ensure disability inclusion within all government and social spaces and that reasonable accommodation is made for persons with disabilities. Given the potential for confusion, we will refer to a 'twin track approach'. This requires 'mainstream education settings and personnel to understand how to eliminate the systemic barriers to access, participation and achievement. They also need to provide for the individual learning requirements of learners with disabilities' (Tesni & Pförtner, 2017: 6).
3. **Life span approach:** This approach advocates for considering the development of individuals over the course of their lives and ensuring that their needs and rights are met at every stage. In terms of disability inclusion in education, this means that linkages between educational sites (e.g. from early childhood development to primary school) and between different life phases (e.g. from school to work) need to be considered. These transition times deserve particular attention as they present specific challenges for systems and for families.



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### TRACK 1

- › Deliver on the right to education by changing policies, practices and attitudes at all levels of the education system.
- › Remove barriers and create enabling conditions to enhance the quality and access to education for all children and achieve positive learning outcomes that will develop their full academic, social and vocational potential.



### TRACK 2

- › Address specific support needs.
- › Empower individuals by providing health, rehabilitation and social support services.
- › Offer learning and participation opportunities via differentiated teaching methods, sign language and translating material into accessible formats.

(adapted from International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), 2016)

Using this framework we ensure that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard, particularly those of learners and their families. We also cover a range of learning environments from the early years to the end of high school.

## Understanding disability in education

Baglieri, et al. (2011) note that, with the advent of the disability rights movement and the recognition of disability as a human rights issue, Disability Studies in Education (DSE) arose as an approach to apply the insights of disability studies to special education discourse. DSE rejects the dominant medical model of disability which purports that people are disabled purely by their impairments (or bodily defects), therefore requiring primarily individual medical intervention to address their disabilities (Connor, et al., 2008; Connor & Gabel, 2013). DSE adopts the social model of disability, arguing that disability should be 'understood as a result of oppressive social arrangements' as it is an interaction between the person with an impairment and his or her environment (Shakespeare & Watson, 1997; Connor, et al., 2008: 442). This model has implications for education:

- ▶ Since DSE locates disability within a social and political context, drawing attention to disability identity, the civil and human rights of those with disabilities, and inclusive participation (Connor, et al., 2008; Gabel & Danforth, 2008), the educational progress of the learner cannot be understood only by reference to his or her impairment, but also needs to take into account the context of teaching and learning.
- ▶ The social model paves the way for the recognition of a political identity for disabled people as a marginalised minority, similar to other minorities based on race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. However, this is not a static or exclusive identity as 'macro-level processes – such as societal attitudes about diversity – intersect with disability issues' and disability itself help us to 'better ... understand the ways that race, class, gender, language, culture, and sexual orientation shape the experience of disability' (Baglieri, et al., 2011: 270).
- ▶ The social model of disability implies that the impairment only becomes disabling where the environment is not adapted for the person with impairment needs. Thus, Baglieri, et al. (2011) advocate for the use of universal design for learning (UDL) in which the planning of teaching and learning takes into account the widest range of learner needs from its inception.

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- ▶ DSE is based on human rights and equal access, and one of its tenets is the right to self-determination. It is therefore imperative that we listen to the views of learners when examining disability inclusion in education. From a DSE perspective, it is not assumed that professionals necessarily know what is best for persons with disabilities; rather, the interests and voices of children and youth with disabilities are privileged and foregrounded. DSE argues that all young people, including those with disabilities, have the right to access meaningful educational opportunities (Connor, et al., 2008; Connor & Gabel, 2013).

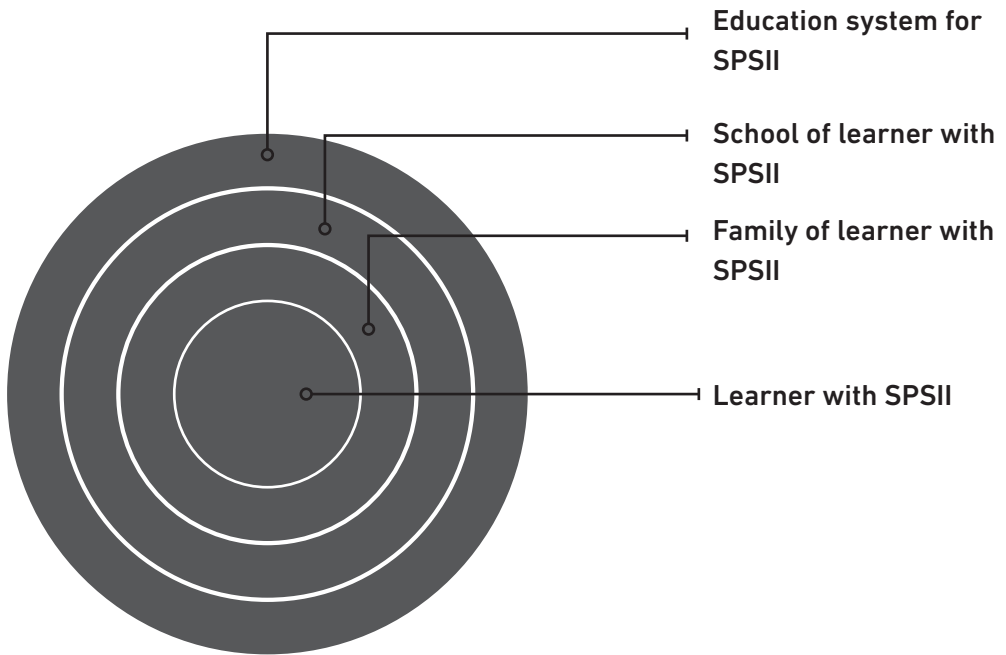
From this conceptualisation, educational needs can be seen as not simply an outcome of a specific impairment, but rather that they arise from a complex interaction of the learner with an impairment and his or her environment. The complexity of this environment can be understood by examining an ecosystemic model of learners' needs.

### **An ecosystemic approach**

In both DSE and the social model of disability there is a shift away from a deficit approach focusing on the disability at the level of the individual, to addressing the societal or systemic barriers within an individual's environment that prevent him or her from participating meaningfully in society (Swart & Pettipher, 2011; Connor & Gabel, 2013). It is for this reason that we adopted an ecological systems lens for our research.

McKenzie, et al. (2017) used this approach in a pragmatic way to examine educational provision for learners with severe to profound intellectual disability.

The learner with SPSII is located at the centre of the system and is the ultimate target of our research. The learner is part of a family and, together, they relate to the school which, in turn, is nested within the broader political and education system. This systems approach allows us to see learners with SPSII in a holistic way and provided the rationale for selecting participants from each level of the system. The provision of quality education for learners with SPSII is an outcome of interaction among the different levels of the system, and barriers or facilitators can be located at any level (McKenzie, et al., 2017).



An ecosystemic model for learners with SPSII

In summary, this situational analysis is grounded in a human rights and social justice approach. This is articulated through the UNCRPD and the WPRPD, and finds expression in educational theory in DSE. The social model understanding of disability and the ecological systems approach were central to the framing of our research questions, the selection of participants and interview schedules. The framework elaborated on here was applied in the analysis of data and ultimately informed our recommendations.



**Chapter**

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**3**

## CHAPTER 3

# Research design and methods

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Nozwelo Shanda, Judith McKenzie and Jane Kelly

This chapter discusses the research design and methods utilised in this study. It describes the recruitment of participants, data collection and analysis procedures, ethical guidelines and study limitations.

### Research design

A qualitative research design was used for this research, drawing on the qualitative description method (Sandelowski, 2000). Qualitative research aims to explore people's subjective experiences of the world (Willig, 2008). Qualitative description focuses on providing a comprehensive summary of the topic, ensuring that there is descriptive validity: an accurate account of events that most people who observe the event would agree is accurate; and interpretive validity: an accurate account of the subjective meanings that participants attribute to those events (Sandelowski, 2000).

The participatory approach was facilitated through qualitative methods, where stakeholders (including teachers) have the opportunity not only to access the outcomes of the study, but also to understand and have input into the research process. This can have a significant effect on teacher education in that teachers

are not only implicated in the outcomes, but their voices and input are valued throughout (Matherson & Windle, 2017). Qualitative data was collected via interviews and focus-group discussions with learners with SPSII, parents, teachers, school management teams, and district and provincial officials.

## Study context

Research was conducted over a three-month period in three provinces: Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Gauteng. These provinces were chosen to represent a range of better resourced (Western Cape and Gauteng) and lesser resourced (Eastern Cape) areas. The research team selected eight schools (six special schools and two full-service schools) ensuring representation of province, impairment category, resourced and under-resourced, rural and urban schools. The six special schools comprised two schools for learners with severe intellectual disabilities, two for learners who are blind or have low vision, and two for learners who are D/deaf.

In order to secure site visits at each school, the research team liaised directly with the DBE. After gaining written permission from the provincial education departments and district offices, the research team made direct contact with the principals of each school to introduce themselves and confirm interview dates to ensure minimal disruption to the school's teaching and learning. The research team made a preparatory visit to each school one week in advance of the interviews, which were conducted over three days.

## Participants

The participants in this study included provincial officials, district officials, school management teams (SMTs), teachers, learners with SPSII and their parents.

A focus-group discussion with five provincial officials was conducted in the Western Cape and an electronic response from the provincial official in Gauteng was received. Regrettably there were no interviews with provincial officials in the Eastern Cape as the researchers were unable to secure an interview date due to the officials' busy schedules.

Interviews took place in five districts: three in the Western Cape, one in Gauteng and one in the Eastern Cape. These were the districts in which the schools are located. In one of the three districts in the Western Cape, a focus-group



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discussion with four officials was held. In the other two districts, one official was interviewed per district. In one of the Gauteng districts a focus-group discussion with four officials was conducted. One district official was interviewed in the Eastern Cape. Eight SMT members were interviewed (one per school). Some 39 teachers, 39 learners with SPSII and 27 parents were interviewed in eight focus groups. A summary of the interviews that took place is presented in the table below.

Participant	Interviews	Number of participants
Provincial officials	2 (1 focus-group discussion and 1 electronic response from 1 official)	Focus-group discussion = 5 Electronic interview = 1
District officials	5 (2 focus-group discussions and 3 individual interviews)	Focus-group discussion 1 = 5 Focus-group discussion 2 = 4 Individual interviews = 4
SMTs	8	8
Teachers	39	39
Learners with SPSII	39	39
Parents	8 Focus group discussions	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>132</b>

## Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Participants were purposefully selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria.

### Inclusion criteria

- ▶ Provincial officials currently employed by the DBE representing the three selected provinces (Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Gauteng).
- ▶ District officials currently employed by the DBE representing the districts in which the schools were located.
- ▶ SMT members and teachers employed in special schools or full-service schools that accommodate learners with SPSII in the three provinces.
- ▶ Learners with SPSII in special schools or full-service schools who are 14 years or older.

- › Parents of learners with SPSII currently enrolled in either a special school or a full-service school.

### **Exclusion criteria**

- › Teachers and SMT members employed in schools that did not meet the inclusion criteria.
- › Learners without severe sensory or intellectual impairments.
- › Learners who were unable to give assent to being interviewed.
- › Learners whose parents did not give consent to being interviewed.

## **Participant recruitment**

The following strategies were used to recruit participants for the study:

### **Provincial and district officials**

- › Provincial officials were selected by virtue of their position. An electronic letter of information and a consent form was sent with a request to interview.
- › District officials were drawn from the districts in which the schools are situated. A request was made to the district manager to refer a member of the district-based support team (DBST) for the interview. An electronic letter of information and a consent form was sent with the request to interview the delegated official.
- › Times and dates were set for the interviews with the district and provincial officials who submitted their signed consent forms.

### **SMTs, teachers, learners and parents**

- › The research team visited each school one week prior to the interviews.
- › At each school the principal was requested to suggest a member of the SMT to be interviewed. A letter of information and a consent form was left for this person.
- › A request was made for a list of teachers at the school and the researchers selected teachers from this list by numbering and choosing every second or third teacher depending on the number of teachers in the school. Letters of information and consent forms were left with these teachers.
- › Another request was made for a list of learners at the school who were 14 years or older. Learners were selected by numbering and choosing learners at suitable intervals based on the number of learners of this age at the school.

- ▶ Learners with SPSII who were under the age of 18 gave assent, and consent was obtained from their parents. Letters of information and consent forms were given to learners over 18.
- ▶ At each school, parents of learners with SPSII were selected with assistance from the school. A general letter of information and invitation was sent out to parents requesting them to participate in the research. Consent forms were completed on the day of the interviews.

## Data collection

Data collection across the participant groups followed a semi-structured approach in that, although a specific set of questions was asked, participants were given the flexibility to include additional information, and interviewers could ask follow-up and probing questions not included in the original questionnaire. When collecting data, sign language interpreters and accessible formats for people with visual impairments were provided where needed. Where interpreters were used, a code of conduct for interpreters was signed. Although interviews were conducted and transcribed into English, the study included participants using other languages (including Afrikaans and isiZulu) which were translated by language translators.

At each school, interviews took place in venues separate from other teachers, learners and disruptions. Interviews were held with learners and teachers during their free time, while parents' interviews were scheduled when they were all available and at weekends to minimise the impact on teaching and learning.

All interviews were digitally audio-recorded to ease the process of transcription and prevent loss of information. An interpreter was present during interviews with participants who were D/deaf. All interviews in Afrikaans and isiZulu were transcribed straight into English. In the case of D/deaf participants, the interpreters were recorded and these recordings transcribed into English.

Given that learners with severe to profound impairments are a heterogeneous group, the researchers ensured that every learner understood the study through simplified language, seeking interpretation from people who understood the communication needs of the participant when necessary (Cameron & Murphy, 2007). In confirming informed consent, participants were asked three questions about their understanding of the project, their knowledge that they can stop

if they feel uncomfortable, and their understanding of confidentiality. These questions appeared on the consent form and the interview only continued if the questions were answered correctly.

Questions in interviews with the provincial and district officials focused on numbers of teachers; teacher education, qualifications and experience; and the nature of full-service and special schools. Interviews with SMTs focused on the number of teachers in schools; teacher and SMT qualifications; and training, monitoring and support received from district officials.

Questions in interviews with teachers explored their personal experiences teaching learners with disabilities; the challenges they face in providing an optimal learning environment for their learners, and support they receive in this regard; training they have received; what support they need in teaching learners with disabilities; and the assets at their schools that support them in teaching learners with disabilities.

The interviews with learners focused on their experiences having a disability; the challenges and difficulties they face in the classroom and schooling environment; the support they receive, and would like to receive, in improving their learning environment; how they feel teachers can best support them; and what training they feel teachers should receive in order to meet their learning needs. Learners who were under the age of 18 or were intellectually impaired could request that a teacher be present during the interview. The researcher explained the study step by step in simple and clear, locally used language. Where the need arose, researchers asked the teachers to help interpret for participants until they fully understood.

Focus-group discussions with parents concentrated on their experiences of having a child with a disability; the challenges they feel their child faces; the support received from teachers, the school and the broader community; how this support improves learning and what further support they feel is needed; and what training and other resources they think teachers need to better the learning environment.

## **Data analysis**

All the data for this study was transcribed and uploaded onto Dedoose for analysis. Dedoose is an online application that is used to analyse qualitative and

mixed methods research. This software provides tools for a thematic analysis, which is a process of methodically classifying, putting together and giving an understanding of the themes in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data was divided into participant groups (learners, parents, teachers, SMTs and district and provincial officials) and impairment types according to the school the participants were sourced from (hearing, visual and intellectual impairment). Initial coding of the research questions was undertaken by the main researchers independently. These codes were presented to the larger team for validation, after which sub-teams were given different participant group and impairment type transcripts to code using the finalised coding frame. Once these codes were established, the sub-teams combined the codes into categories that addressed the research questions as overarching themes.

## **Ethical guidelines**

Ethical approval to conduct this research was granted by the University of Cape Town Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC REF: 151/2017) with ministerial approval to conduct research with learners between the ages of 14 and 18. To conduct research in the three provinces, approval was received from the Department of Education in the Western Cape, Gauteng and Eastern Cape, and a letter of endorsement was received from the DHET.

In order for learners under the age of 18 to participate in the research, their parents signed a consent form allowing them to participate. In turn, these learners signed an assent form formalising their willingness to be part of the research. All participants over the age of 18 also signed a consent form to participate in the research and were informed of what the research was about prior to signing the consent/assent forms. If consent could not be obtained in writing due to illiteracy or impairment, non-written verbally recorded consent was fully documented and witnessed. Participants with diminished or impaired autonomy were offered the option of having a trusted adult present at all times. The participants' right to privacy and confidentiality was protected. Interviews were conducted in a private space with only a trusted adult or interpreter present where requested. The recorded interviews were uploaded onto the Google Drive file-hosting service, which could only be accessed by the research team, and transcriptions were anonymised by using a code for each participant.

## Participant comprehension

The information letter and consent form were explained in full to the participants by the researchers, detailing exactly what was required from participants.

Explicit mention was made of audio recording, and the risks and benefits of the study were explained. The information letter and consent form explicitly stated that participation was voluntary, and that participants could withdraw without giving a reason and without penalty at any time. They detailed confidentiality arrangements and gave participants an opportunity to ask questions and have these answered. They gave an explicit invitation to participate and use language appropriate to the participants' level of understanding. The local contact details of researchers and the research ethics committee were provided.

## Reimbursement

The participants were provided with money to cover transport costs where necessary, and given refreshments when they might have missed out on a snack or meal time due to their participation in the study. Each school received a book about the education of learners with SPSII as a token of appreciation.

## Limitations

No learners with profound intellectual disabilities were interviewed because of communication barriers. Learners with severe intellectual disabilities were included, but they gave limited input also due to communication challenges. All interviews conducted in Afrikaans or isiZulu were transcribed into English, which may have resulted in the loss of some information.

## Participant codes

The participant codes listed below are used in the presentation of data for this study so that readers can identify the participant group and impairments of the person being quoted.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Participant</b>
<b>DOA1</b>	District Official Western Cape District 1
<b>DOA2</b>	District Official Western Cape District 2
<b>DOA3</b>	District Official Western Cape District 3

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<b>DOB1</b>	District Official Gauteng District 1
<b>DOC1</b>	District Official Eastern Cape
<b>LAIID</b>	Learner Western Cape School for Intellectual Disability
<b>LALVB</b>	Learner Western Cape School for Low Vision and Blind
<b>LBDHH</b>	Learner Gauteng School for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>LBFS</b>	Learner Gauteng Full-Service School
<b>LBID</b>	Learner Gauteng School for Intellectual Disability
<b>LCDHH</b>	Learner Eastern Cape School for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>LCLVB</b>	Learner Eastern Cape School for Low Vision and Blind
<b>PFGAFS</b>	Parents Focus Group Western Cape Full-Service School
<b>PFGAID</b>	Parents Focus Group Western Cape School for Intellectual Impairment
<b>PFGALVB</b>	Parents Focus Group Western Cape School for Low Vision and Blind
<b>PFGBDHH</b>	Parents Focus Group Gauteng School for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>PFGBFS</b>	Parents Focus Group Gauteng Full-Service School
<b>PFGBID</b>	Parents Focus Group Gauteng School for Intellectual Disability
<b>PFGCDHH</b>	Parents Focus Group Eastern Cape School for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>PFGCLVB</b>	Parents Focus Group Eastern Cape School for Low Vision and Blind
<b>POA1</b>	Provincial Official Western Cape
<b>POB1</b>	Provincial Official Gauteng
<b>POC1</b>	Provincial Official Eastern Cape
<b>SMTAFS</b>	School Management Team Western Cape Full-Service School

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<b>SMTAID</b>	School Management Team Western Cape School for Intellectual Disability
<b>SMTALVB</b>	School Management Team Western Cape School for Low Vision and Blind
<b>SMTBDHH</b>	School Management Team Gauteng School for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>SMTBFS</b>	School Management Team Gauteng Full-Service School
<b>SMTBID</b>	School Management Team Gauteng School for Intellectual Disability
<b>SMTCDHH</b>	School Management Team Eastern Cape School for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>SMTCLVB</b>	School Management Team Eastern Cape School for Low Vision and Blind
<b>TAFS</b>	Teacher Western Cape Full-Service School
<b>TAID</b>	Teacher Western Cape School for Intellectual Disability
<b>TALVB</b>	Teacher Western Cape School for Low Vision and Blind
<b>TBDHH</b>	Teacher Gauteng School for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>TBFS</b>	Teacher Gauteng Full-Service School
<b>TBID</b>	Teacher Gauteng School for Intellectual Disability
<b>TCDHH</b>	Teacher Eastern Cape School for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>TCLVB</b>	Teacher Eastern Cape School for Low Vision and Blind

Note: Data collection was from June to September 2017.





**Chapter**

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**4**

## CHAPTER 4

# Participant perspectives on the educational needs of learners with SPSII

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In this chapter we focus on the educational needs of learners with SPSII, exploring the perspectives of learners, teachers and parents. The ecosystemic theoretical framework used for this study, which acknowledges the importance of understanding the learner and his or her educational needs holistically, draws on multiple perspectives to give a more complete appreciation of learners' needs. These needs arise not only from specific impairments, but also from the context in which they learn, which is influenced by family, teachers and the broader education system.

## Themes addressed in this chapter

### Learners

- › Social and psychological support
- › Appropriate classroom discipline
- › Understanding disability
- › Appropriate teaching pace
- › Patient and committed teachers
- › Hostel experiences

### Teachers

- › Infrastructure and resources
- › Time constraints
- › Managing discipline
- › Curriculum delivery
- › Support specialists
- › Parental support

### Parents

- › Accessing education
- › Communication difficulties
- › Behavioural issues
- › Progression in school work
- › Feelings about teachers and schools

## Perspectives of learners

This section reflects the views of learners with SPSII and thus focuses on issues which are largely generalised across the groups. Chapter 5 provides impairment-specific details for each group of learners, with data tending towards specific issues in the practice of teaching and learning (e.g. classroom arrangements, adapted learning and teaching support material (LTSM), assistive technology), which are not covered here.

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### **Social and psychological support**

Learners described a lack of, but need for, social and psychological support relating to their experiences of schooling, disability, and community-based problems such as violence. When discussing access to support one learner noted:

Nothing. I do not get support from anyone. (*LCDHH2*)

When discussing the kind of support needed, another learner said:

They must also know how to create that kind of environment where you can express how you feel about certain things and that they should understand exactly what it is that you are trying to say. (*LCLVB2*)

However, there were also some accounts of learners who found teachers approachable and supportive:

There is a teacher who teaches me Economics and Religion. That teacher she became a mother to me at the school. She motivates me with all the things like the personal life or general life of mine. (*LCLVB5*)

Some learners praised specific teachers for 'going the extra mile' (*LALVB7*). As one learner noted:

Support that I receive is teachers ... they can come to the hostel and help me. They are not supposed to come ... but they can come for me if I ask 'I can't see this'. (*LALVB2*)

### **Appropriate classroom discipline**

Learners reported problems with classroom discipline, in particular noisy and chaotic classrooms resulting from, among other things, a lack of adequate control by teachers and a mix of age ranges in hostel study classes.

They can't mix us together in one room all the grades, because it's chaos there. Some of the children make noise, and it's hard for us to study, and they don't want us to study in our rooms. They want us to stay there in the study room and I don't think that's right because children make noise there. (*LALVB2*)

## Understanding disability

Learners also discussed teachers' understanding of disability. In many cases, an overarching attitude of inclusivity based on a clear recognition of the right of all to quality education was absent. The following excerpt highlights confusion or ambivalence about what learners can reasonably expect in terms of appropriate teaching and accessible resources:

It's good because here people understand us you know. It's not like normal school, they understand us. Although sometimes the teachers they don't understand us ... but most of the time they do understand us. For example when they give us notes, they always give us large print notes, and everything we need we get it here. Teachers they supply us with everything, although sometimes they give us small printed notes, sometimes they forget that we have visual impairment and they give us small printed notes and sometimes they complain you know. But I feel like 90% of the time I have good experience here. (LALVB2)

Here, a D/deaf learner describes relating to a teacher with limited awareness of D/deaf lifestyles:

The challenge we are having with some of the teachers is that some of them do not understand what our culture is as a D/deaf nation. Some of them do not understand sign language so I am forced to read whatever it is. (LBDHH6)

Participants raised some concerns about a lack of training in teaching learners with disabilities. One learner noted:

[Teachers need to] know how to handle kids with visual impairment ... If a kid who is blind is running into you, you must have the patience to tell the children not to run, instead of just barking at them like they are dogs. (LALVB4)

Another learner said:

I would have loved the staff to get educated about their attitude amongst the learners, how they should treat us. (LALVB6)

Teachers' lack of awareness in creating an inclusive school environment appeared to extend to physical environments that were not suitable or safe for

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visually impaired learners, even during orientation and mobility training at the school:

There is someone who trains us once a week outside the school. So inside the school there is always obstacles, hanging things around, gates that is open and I mean it is dangerous if a blind person walk into a gate that is standing open. What will happen to that person? Like this school is a blind school but the environment is not blind friendly. (LALVB8)

In schools where accessible LTSM and appropriate classroom facilities for teaching learners with sensory impairments were not readily available, learners with more severe impairments were required to rely on those whose impairments were less severe. This reflected, according to the following learner, a lack of understanding among teachers of the gravity of access concerns:

To be honest we are sometimes neglected in class ... And what the teacher also does sometimes is she tells us to work with sighted learners. I think it is not their responsibility. It is [the teacher's] responsibility to give us the work fully and give it to us so that we can do it on our own. We should not depend on someone to read or to explain to us what is happening. (LALVB8)

### **Appropriate teaching pace**

Several learners shared that some teachers were not able to appropriately pace their lessons or the amount of work to be taught before assessments:

When she explains she is fast so we do not understand her well. Teachers who are fast I cannot understand them. (LBFS4)

Another learner noted:

They not understand sometimes, especially when it comes to the pace of working. I think we have 45 minutes when it is normal school time for one period. I think that is too little, especially when you are working with a sighted and Braille class at once. (LALVB8)

As a result, learners identified feelings of stress and pressure about work being behind schedule and rushed:

They teach you the work, now they tell you study this that we have covered, not really giving you insight ... until a day before you must write ...

and that really causes some panic to some learners ... And some teachers they are so lazy they give you notes a day before ... then you have to study the whole night. (LALVB4)

### **Patient and committed teachers**

Many learners identified problems with teachers' patience and understanding of their needs:

The teacher was screaming [at] me and the teacher didn't respect [me]. I think that's why I couldn't learn. I just went to other people to ask them to help me because the teacher didn't [have] patience. (LBDHH1)

One learner with a visual impairment contrasted this idea of sensitive treatment with his experience of being asked 'What can you see, what can't you see?' (LALVB6). Other learners saw teachers as allowing their own emotional struggles to interfere with their work:

The biggest problem with me ... with most teachers is the ability to have patience and to assist the learners accordingly and they cannot bring their personal issues to school. (LALVB4)

Learners felt that teachers:

... must also know how to create that kind of environment where you can express how you feel about certain things and that they should understand exactly what it is that you are trying to say. (LCLVB2)

It was difficult to get an idea of the experiences of learners with intellectual disabilities due to communication barriers, language issues and insufficient modification of the research instruments to meet their accessibility needs, which can be seen as a limitation of the study. However, it was noted that learners felt that their teachers helped them with their work and that they received support for their ideas and activities:

He help me with sums, and then he give me work, and then I colour it in. (LAID2)

I receive a lot of support. If I can come with idea I need to make something nice at the school, and I want to open some market at school, they support me very lot because sometimes I have a good idea. I make those bracelet



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for the hand and they will support me every teacher and they buy it. At the school I can sell it to the teachers. (LBID3)

Some learners stated that they were happy to ask questions in class when they did not understand:

I don't always understand but then I stand up to ask the teacher to just tell me, or just to explain me something, or just to explain me over then I will understand. (LBID2)

It was also important for some learners to be part of the regular ritual and identity of school life:

Interviewer: What do you like most at the school?

Participant (LBID4): To wear a white shirt and look professional. To wear a tie.

## Hostel experiences

Although the hostel is not strictly a part of teaching and learning, it fits within our ecosystemic approach as learners' hostel experiences have an impact upon their learning needs. For example, they may or may not receive support with homework in the hostel, which will then affect their needs for support in the classroom. Hostel life and living away from home is a pervasive feature of special needs education in South Africa, which makes it important to engage with. Five of the six special schools that were visited had hostel facilities, which meant that many of the learners were in the full-time care of school staff.

Many learners experienced hostel life as boring, lacking entertainment and lacking opportunities to participate in sport and other pursuits.

It is boring here at school. (LCDHH4)

The only thing we do at the hostels is to sit and chat. There are no sports, nothing to keep you going. (LCLVB1)

Several learners noted that their hostels had no televisions and no access to the Internet. Learners also described the problem of theft in hostels:

Some teachers have to have two keys on their cupboards because they are afraid that their stuff will get stolen, because previously kids' shoes disappear, their underwear disappear ... Who steals underwear? (LALVB4)

Some hostel learners problematised the fact that carers had no South African Sign Language (SASL) and/or Braille ability:

The house mothers cannot help us if we have homework because they cannot communicate with us. (*LCDHH6*)

Others felt that the carers had little understanding of their impairments:

In the hostel, the aunties ... those who take care of us, they don't understand us as visually impaired people. (*LALVB6*)

They also described a lack of support from the carers when it came to completing school work:

We need a study time that we can have a teacher ... to monitor us and make sure that we do our homework or assignments ... Sometimes we also need someone to tell us go and study, like at home we would have parents who would tell us go read your books. (*LCLVB1*)

Many learners also described poor living standards in the hostels. For example, when discussing food preparation one learner said:

The bread, peanut butter, they just paste it there ... it's not in the right form. They just grab it and put it there and put the bread and give it to you. And also the coffee in the morning is cold, I think they just open the geyser water and put the coffee and put it on the table. (*LALVB5*)

In talking about the living conditions at a hostel another learner said:

It feels like living like prisoners, the beds are uncomfortably ... it makes your back sore ... the blankets are so thin it looks like hospital blankets, but then they expect you to sleep under those blankets if you don't bring your own. Some kids ... cannot buy or bring their own, so they have to sleep under those blankets even during winter. (*LALVB4*)

## Perspectives of teachers

This section focuses on the views of teachers regarding the educational needs of learners with SPSII.

### Infrastructure and resources

Teachers discussed issues related to classroom size, the school environment and transport. They noted the need for bigger classrooms due to large class sizes:

Firstly, there is the space confinement, we don't have enough space and the large classes. And it becomes difficult to give some learners that individual special attention, because of the curriculum that needs to be delivered and so forth. (TAFS1)

One teacher wanted more special schools to be built, so that class sizes could be reduced, and concerns were raised about the effectiveness of having large classes at special schools:

The classes are not built for that many children and we do not have that much table ... especially the bigger ages, I just feel they cannot be that much in a class. The teachers also crack and it is difficult because the department pressure us for numbers. So in the past it was special needs school where you can pay attention to each child because you have six or seven in a class. So that makes it a bit more difficult. (TBID4)

Teachers also expressed the need for an environment that is safe and conducive to learning:

The environment is not conducive for our learners ... I think we are supposed to have a conducive environment, even for us. Even if you come into this school you can see there is rubbish outside the gate. If the department can get us a school where there is a conducive atmosphere that is good for our learners and that will make us want to be at school. We have got criminals here and even now we do not have electricity. (TCDHH5)

Teachers also reported the unavailability of transport as a barrier to learning. One teacher indicated that, due to a lack of transport, some learners miss two hours of tuition time every day:

The challenge that I face is that there is also a shortage of transport here at the school. First of all we have a bus that is more than 10 years old.

The pedal was not working ... So in three months the pedal from the bus was waiting to be fixed. So the learners came late in the classroom. Whilst school starts at 8 they arrived at 9 – they missed the first period. They go home early because the driver said the time is late, they can't go at 3 home ... so they missed the first period and that last one hour for three months. So we are not teaching well. (TCDHH2)

### **Time constraints**

Teachers claimed that they teach large numbers and diverse groups and, as a result, are unable to reach out to all learners. They attributed this to time constraints. They believe that not all learners learn information in the same way and that there is a need for differentiation and individual attention:

They are different in their abilities so you have to individualise them. So it is not easy if they are full in the class. (TCDHH5)

Many teachers indicated that learners with special needs require extra time to master the curriculum content. They were specifically concerned about learners with reading difficulties. Teachers also felt that they too need more time to cover the expected work:

Our primary school is also full-service school, so they come here with special needs. And as a teacher you know, you have a curriculum to deliver. It becomes a challenge because you don't have that extra time to work with that person that can't really read well. You just expect them to understand, to comprehend certain things. And they don't because they can't read, or their level is not there. That becomes a challenge in the classroom because everybody is not at the same level, so where do you stop and where do you explain to them? (TAFS3)

Limited time is further compounded by a lack of teaching assistants, which poses a challenge to teachers delivering the curriculum to a class of learners with diverse educational needs.

### **Managing discipline**

A common theme among many teachers was unsatisfactory learner discipline, irrespective of the educational needs that learners had:

I don't know if it is maybe today's children, but all of them don't have any discipline. They are not scared of anyone. Obviously they are not supposed

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to be scared of you, but they have to respect you, but most of them don't respect you. For me it is discipline and respect, I don't feel that kids actually respect me as a teacher. (TBID5)

Other teachers felt that learners used their disabilities to shirk responsibility:

Because what I have noticed about the learners is that the learners can take advantage of you, knowing that you feel sorry for them. (TALVB4)

### Curriculum delivery

Teachers identified various needs in delivering the curriculum, including differentiated planning and teaching learners with multiple disabilities. In terms of differentiated planning, teachers reported requiring support in planning for the needs of a diverse group of learners who were at different levels of academic progress, comparable to teaching in a multi-grade classroom:

I have 14 kids and all of them are on different places. Let's say one can only do Grade R work, the other one can do Grade 1 work, the other one can do Grade 2 work. So the planning and everything is difficult because you have to plan for everyone. (TBID5)

Some teachers discussed the need to become more computer literate in order to effectively deliver the curriculum. One teacher said:

We still have teachers who cannot even touch the keyboard; they are afraid. (TBFS1)

Other teachers described feeling ill-equipped to teach learners with special needs, believing learners require instruction by confident and specially trained professionals to help them achieve their highest potential:

The first challenge is that as teacher when I was trained, I was not trained to teach these kind of learners. So when I come to the school which is fully serviced, then I come across these kids who are having difficulty in hearing, then it becomes a challenge for me. (TBFS2)

There was also uncertainty or ambivalence among some teachers about their responsibility for accommodating learners:

There are some learners who are extreme cases and you as a teacher in a normal school like ours ... Yes we do accommodate learners with

barriers but some of them we cannot deal with them. They just need to go to a special school. And some of the processes delay because I mean if a learner is in Grade 5, by now they should have been referred. (TBFS5)

Teachers reported needing support to effectively teach learners with multiple impairments, for example those who are both intellectually impaired and blind or D/deaf:

Yeah, like you can get that although she D/deaf she is also intellectually impaired. So I think those are the problems I encounter with them. (TCDHH5)

### Support specialists

Being able to access support services is crucial for all learners, particularly in the context of community-based issues such as gang violence:

The one child ... he came to me, 'Teacher, when the bus stopped, they were shooting.' And he is partially blind, and he said 'I had to run and sit behind an Eskom [electricity] box.' ... So, he cannot see where the people, the gangsters are, so he must lay behind there until he hears the gunshots stopped ... Then he got up and ran home and he lay under the bed. (TALVB2)

Feedback from teachers on learners' access to support specialists was mixed. Some noted that learners had limited or no access to specialists.

Most of the children are having problems, so if we can have the psychologists, social workers, at least maybe they can help us. (TCLVB5)

In other schools learners had access to support specialists such as psychologists, physiotherapists and social workers. However, the process of accessing support and receiving feedback was regarded as too long. Teachers also claimed that high school learners do not have access to medication and other specialists such as speech and occupational therapists.

We do have access to a psychologist, to a counsellor ... to a social worker and those things. But the process, it takes them so long to get to us, or to get feedback ... that we actually have to, in the meantime, have to deal with it ourselves or refer the parents out ... Support services at the high school doesn't get, we don't have access to speech therapy or OT, those type of things ... the learning support stops here, basically. (TAFS2)

## Parental support

The role of parental involvement in learners' education was regarded as critical by teachers. They understand that parents are partners in education and have a significant role to play in meeting learners' educational needs. Some teachers felt frustrated by the lack of parental involvement.

It is frustrating if parents cannot co-operate, especially with these kids. That was the worst part ... that was frustrating me, whereby you find you will make appointments with the doctor or with someone that will help the child but the parent do not co-operate. (TAFS2)

Others felt that parents were not interested in the progress and development of their child:

From the parents' side, I think it is because we have these intellectually impaired children, there is no support ... none. They seem to think the school as being a dumping ground. (TALVB2)

At the other end of the spectrum, parents are seen by teachers as having unrealistic expectations for their children.

They will also come, and some are in denial also about the condition of their children. They hope their children can still shift over to the mainstream system. (TALVB2)

Teachers are under the impression that parents do not give their children sufficient time or stimulation at home.

Firstly they come to school with parents that are actually not stimulating them at home. So when they come to class this is the first platform where they are experiencing stimulation at that level. At home some parents are stimulating their kiddies, but as far as our programme goes this is where they are going to get the information that they really need. (TAID1)

## Perspectives of parents

In this section we focus on the educational needs of learners with SPSII from the perspective of parents. The themes relate to teacher education, and the parent and professional partnerships that teachers need to develop in order to meet the educational needs of learners with SPSII.

## Accessing education

Parents discussed the challenges of accessing quality education for their children that meets their impairment-specific educational needs. Some felt strongly that their right to send their children to a school of their choice was being denied:

Because in our case, we didn't have that choice, we didn't have that right ... It's just a point that I want to speak up about, is that: Give parents of children with disability the same rights, the same choices of schools and education that the normal children have. (PFGAFS1)

Other challenges in accessing quality education related to financial constraints and transport issues. One parent expressed the struggle she faced in finding the best school placement for her child because of a lack of money:

And I went to another school, but the problem was funding. And there is another school in [name of suburb] ... but it is very expensive, which was the problem. (PFGBFS1)

Some families are forced to make major sacrifices, such as relocating or leaving their jobs to ensure that their children access education:

In our case we were not situated in the city area or near a school for D/ deaf children ... and then we had to move to the city. So that was for us financially a very big drawback. Because my husband ... he must find a job in the city, and everything is more expensive in the city than in the rural areas. (PFGBDHH1)

This shows that having a learner with impairments in the family can drain family resources, especially where parents are not provided with many schooling options. Once parents have managed to secure a place, many face challenges transporting them to and from school.

The first two weeks in June, the walking in the morning, and I take the sister six o'clock in the morning to the crèche and we walk from the house to here and arrive 7:30 here and I come back to the house by 9:30. And 11 o'clock I have to walk again. (PFGBID1)



## Communication difficulties

Parents shared the difficulties they experienced in communicating with their children who are often taught in a different language at school. This is particularly painful for many parents of children who are D/deaf and who learn SASL at school as they (the parents) are not learning at the same pace.

What is she saying to me; so what am I? What will she think of me?  
It's putting me as a parent in a difficult situation and now I have to ask the teacher all the time, what does that mean, what does that mean?  
(PFGBDHH1)

Parents' inability to effectively communicate with their children has direct implications on the children's ability to learn. However, some parents proudly take their lack of knowledge in communicating with their child as an opportunity to learn themselves. Regardless of whether they understand what their child is saying, they enjoy listening and offer encouragement to talk about what he or she has learnt.

Sometimes I feel proud, because she is teaching me something, because when she comes home, she tells me: 'OK mom, this is what I have to do.'  
(PFGALVB1)

Other parents worry that their children are bored at home because they are unable to communicate with them.

If they can be classes for their parents also for sign language because now they get at home, the children can't communicate, they are bored at home because parents can't talk to them. (PFGBDHH1)

## Behavioural issues

Parents raised concern about learners' behaviour which, in some instances, affects the learners' ability to learn. Parents show disappointment in behaviour that has poorly affected their child's school performance.

I am not happy because I just got her report and then I saw that she did very poorly last term. The one teacher told me, 'Ms, it is that phone'. Because they stay on the phones. When she gets home she is on WhatsApp, at night she chats with her friends, so I think it is the phone.  
(PFGALVB1)

Furthermore:

And myself as a parent personally I got a problem with it because why, my child's education must be impacted on. She's coming to school, she's putting in all the effort that is required, she's sitting up to 12 o'clock in the night and whatever the case may be just to get her work done, to learn and things. And here you got children that are disturbing the class throughout the day, throughout the year. (PFGAFS1a)

As a result, parents have sympathy with teachers who have to deal with these problems.

You do get a lot of the teachers that ... like ... coming to school every day just stressed out because there are again behaviour problems. They do not know how what to do, how to handle them, sometimes getting threatened by the pupils even ... you know ... these kind of things. (PFGAFS1)

### **Progression in school work**

Some parents find that their children have made very little progress in school.

She couldn't put a sentence together. She did not understand sentence construct, she couldn't write a full sentence. I was flabbergasted that a child of her age and her grade can't put a sentence together. She doesn't know that you start a sentence with a capital letter and end a sentence with a full stop. And she is in Grade 4. (PFGCDHH1)

Others fail to understand why their children are doing well in their homework and poorly in classwork.

What is the problem? Because at home when he is doing homework I see him alright. He does reading and there is no problem. (PFGBFS1)

Mainly in full-service schools, some learners have to repeat grades because of poor academic performance. This has led some parents to consider taking their children to special schools, where they feel that their strengths in practical skills can be reinforced and their educational needs can be met.

The work at school is a challenge as she has repeated three grades. She is in Grade 7. But whenever it is work related to hand work, she is good at it. So ... I have been doing some research about it and I was thinking that I must register her in a special school because she can't and she just cannot do it. (PFGBFS1)

## Feelings about teachers and schools

Parents discussed feeling disappointed in teachers' attitudes. They found it distressing that school staff often have very low expectations for their learners.

Her education ... first of all the first day when I brought her into the school the principal at the time, said: 'Don't have high expectations. Most of these kids don't do well academically. She probably won't even go to high school or have matric.' For me that was the worst thing that anyone have said to me. (PFGCDHH1)

Parents also discussed a lack of guidance from schools on how to support their children's learning at home.

There is very limited support coming from the school side for our children, to give us guidance how to deal with them at home and also to improving the learning environment. What we are doing at home, we don't know if that is what is needed at school. (PFGAID1)

Some parents felt unhappy about the absence of teachers during school breaks. One parent whose child was hurt while playing said:

One of the children pushed my daughter off from the swing, and if you know that you are working with children with disabilities, who have different disabilities, then I think it is better for someone to be there during intervals ... I came to her teacher to talk to her and she was like ... she didn't know what happened ... she wasn't there. I mean, where were you? You are supposed to be with the children, right? (PFGALVB1)

It appears that parents do not feel adequately supported by teachers or the school system when it comes to meeting the educational needs of their children.

## Key messages

### LEARNERS

Learners with SPSII expressed frustration at their impairments not being understood by their teachers and hostel carers, and the impact this has upon their learning. While they appreciate some of their teachers, particularly those who are approachable and supportive, they expressed a need for more social and psychological support relating to their experiences of schooling, disability and social problems. They also discussed a need for teachers who are patient and committed. They often find the pace of work too fast and, as a result, feel stressed at being behind. In addition, they struggle with noisy classrooms that are not sufficiently adapted for their needs. Learners in hostels highlighted the poor living conditions and lack of support from hostel carers that impacts on their ability to learn.

### TEACHERS

Teachers struggle with large classes and inadequate infrastructure, highlighting the need for a school environment that is conducive to learning. They also feel pressed for time when it comes to teaching learners with SPSII, given that these learners may have varying needs and require additional time to master the curriculum content. Relatedly, teachers feel insufficiently trained to make the necessary adaptations to meet the diverse educational needs of learners with SPSII. In addition, they feel frustrated by a lack of parental involvement in supporting their children's learning. Although they receive some support from specialists such as psychologists and social workers, in general the level of support is inadequate and the process of accessing it takes too long.

### PARENTS

Some parents feel angry with the way their children with SPSII are treated differently from non-disabled children in terms of access to schools and quality education. They are concerned about the pace of learning and classroom discipline, and the low expectations of some teachers regarding their children's potential. In addition, they feel they need more guidance from teachers on how best to support their children's learning.

### ACROSS THE PARTICIPANT GROUPS

Across the participant groups, findings illustrate the need for more effective discipline strategies in the classroom; patient, understanding and committed teachers who are adequately trained to meet the needs of learners with SPSII; and the establishment of family-school partnerships.



**Chapter**

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**5**

## CHAPTER 5

# Impairment-specific needs of learners with SPSII

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Judith McKenzie, Brian Watermeyer, Heidi Lourens, Odette Swift and  
Emma McKinney

In this chapter we focus on the impairment-specific needs of learners with SPSII and the teacher education strategies to address them. Data was drawn from all the participant groups and specific to each type of impairment. Our concern was to explore how impairments within the educational setting either increase or reduce access to the curriculum.

## Themes addressed in this chapter

<p><b>Intellectual impairments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Impairment-specific teaching</li> <li>› Additional barriers to learning</li> <li>› Curriculum adaptation</li> <li>› Behavioural issues</li> <li>› Assistive technology needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Visual impairments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Teaching and learning in Braille</li> <li>› Access to assistive technologies</li> <li>› Appropriate and adapted LTSM</li> <li>› Access to an impairment-specific curriculum</li> </ul>
<p><b>D/deaf or hard of hearing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Accessing education</li> <li>› Communication difficulties</li> <li>› Behavioural issues</li> <li>› Progression in school work</li> <li>› Feelings about teachers and schools</li> </ul>

### Intellectual impairments

In this situational analysis we focused on the education system and collected data from schools that fall under provincial departments of education. Since learners with severe to profound intellectual impairments are not currently included in this system (McKenzie et al., 2017), we visited schools for learners with moderate to severe intellectual impairments. However, data on learners with intellectual impairments has value when dealing with schools into which such learners are potentially going to be included, and because of the overlap among the more severe groups.

### Impairment-specific teaching

The way in which teachers understand impairment has an impact on their teaching practices and sets the parameters for teaching strategies that



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specifically address intellectual impairment. Parents recognise the painful experience of failure that is a hallmark of children with intellectual disability.

They think they are not worthy to know the answer; those words get stuck with her. *(PFGBID1)*

The impairment comes to define them as someone who is not capable. However, parents resist the common notion of intellectual impairment as being a static lack of capacity that cannot be changed.

People say 'that's the way they are', which I have a problem with, 'that's the way they are', we shouldn't see it like that. *(PFGAID1)*

Intellectual impairment is not a static entity; rather, there is recognition of a great deal of diversity among learners with intellectual impairments.

Each child has their own individual needs, so for each child there is a different programme ... where you sort of structure to their specific needs. *(TAID1)*

Teachers also understand that the impact of the impairment cannot really be separated from the effects of stigma, which exacerbates learning difficulties.

When they come to school you have to put more love and everything, just to make sure that you make them feel comfortable, that they are still like other children. They experience stigma from outside, they are not willing to do anything, so you have to unlock everything as a teacher. *(TBID6)*

This vulnerable, stigmatised position means that parents feel that their children need to be treated with special care.

As parents, we need to ensure that we are very gentle to these kids, because these kids they need love, they need protection, they need warmer family, because teachers can do whatever they can at school. *(PFGBID1)*

Some teachers feel that newly trained teachers are not qualified to undertake the task of teaching learners with intellectual impairments as they do not have impairment-specific training.

The students who have come in today, they did not have that interaction with the kids or other teachers. So they come in, they are still a student,

they do not really know how to interact with these kids. And now its kids with special needs. They do not even know the kids with autism or a Down syndrome child – to them it is all the same, and they do not realise that the autistic child and Down syndrome child want to be treated in a totally different way. (TBID2)

Teachers felt that the quality of training for teachers of learners with intellectual impairments has deteriorated as the more general strategies of inclusive education do not meet the learners' specific needs.

My old teachers are qualified teachers and some teachers have gone further. The generation that is leaving now did the special diploma for severely intellectually disabled children through Unisa [University of South Africa] years ago, and now teachers are doing the inclusive model that is offered at Unisa, which touches on mentally handicapped but doesn't explore it in the depth that the old qualification did. And so with all the curriculum changes, I don't think very new teachers are that competent with mentally handicapped. (SMTAID1)

In prior teacher qualifications specific to intellectual impairments, student teachers interacted with learners, did practical work with them and were mentored by experienced teachers while they studied for a specialised diploma.

You had to go to schools, you had to interact with those learners so another elder teacher would have taught you how to do it and what to do it where. (TBID2)

This opportunity to interact enabled teachers to form a realistic idea of what is required of a teacher of learners with intellectual impairments.

The one thing with mentally handicap is, it is either for you or it is not for you. You either get our children or you don't. Because you don't go into a classroom and say 'Good morning boys and girls, sit down and open your books page 5 ... today we are doing this ...'. It's not that prescriptive. So you have to have a feel for the child, for what a child needs. It's not always in the book. You got to go over and above. (SMTAID1)

From these quotes by teachers referring to outdated terminology (i.e. mentally handicap) it appears they have not received updated in-service training on intellectual impairments since they started teaching. Among the specific aspects

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that they need to be made aware of is the fact that teaching learners with intellectual impairments is 'emotionally very draining' (TBID5). They also need to have some knowledge of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) systems such as Makaton.

We have been trained in the Makaton. I have had a few sessions to learn the Makaton language and it helps. The children all over it doesn't matter what impairment they have, all of them want to speak the language that helps a lot. (TBID2)

Younger teachers depend on more experienced teachers for guidance and turn to them when they need support.

You say so and so has done this, what do you think I should do about this? And you sit and brainstorm. So that is all training. It's exchanging ideas and thoughts of how to deal with children. (SMTAID1)

Given the nature of impairments, teachers feel that a foundation phase qualification is important.

I am foundation phase qualified, which immediately makes it easier because that is basically the level that our children function, even in the senior phase. I also did special ed course the time I was teaching here. (TAID5)

As pointed out by one of the parents, this begs the question of how teachers respond to physical and emotional maturation:

The only thing I have picked up here is that when it comes to the senior phases ... starting with referring to the kids now getting into the puberty stage, you understand the periods and those things I would like ... they do give it here and which they do I like but I would like them to create more. (PFGBID1)

Teachers feel that they often need more background and an assessment of their learners.

I think the biggest problem is when we get new children in our class; they do not give you the full story about the child. You do not know really what is wrong with the child, what is their ability, you have to go and ask or evaluate your own child and then that is it. (TBID3)

Many teachers expressed the need for teaching assistants to help them to deal with crises and to support them in the actual classroom teaching as the learners need a lot of individual time.

To have an assistant teacher, that is full time in class ... because these learners, actually they need individualised attention, you have to see that this child is doing well. So if you can have a full-time assistant in each and every class, especially the low-functioning so that you can do your work properly. (TBID6)

Teachers have found various ways to address the barriers to learning encountered by learners with intellectual impairments (e.g. creating a calm and nurturing environment).

That's why I hear when you look at our ground it's very much ... geared, very conducive to make children feel safe, to expose children with living reflex to nature. We've got a lovely garden, we have got animal life, we've got wildlife life. (SMTAID1)

Within the context of a conducive environment and the regular CAPS curriculum, teachers are making learning accessible through music, small group work, building on learners' strengths and scaffolding the teaching of new concepts.

You need to break things down. You need to understand that these children learn in concrete than anything else, and you actually have to present the curriculum in concrete. Everything you do, people like they come in and want to see where are the children's books, but that is abstract. Our children do have books, they do have worksheets, but things happen in concrete. You have got to do it in concrete for the children to understand. (TAID5)

Despite the difficulties teachers face, many of them spoke of a high degree of job satisfaction and placed a high value on their work with learners with intellectual impairments. It is in finding ways to overcome challenges that they find their satisfaction.

I love it, I enjoy it. It is very challenging and you do not every day get a reward or get automatically rewarded, because it is a given that a child would learn when you teach. But you do get the rewards after long times of battling to get information across to a child or to get a child to do

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something physically, just to physically manage to do something for him like gripping his pencil correctly. (TAID5)

Teachers look to support learners out of respect for the struggles that they face.

The satisfaction that I get is from the fact that these children do not achieve things with ease. (TAID5)

### **Additional barriers to learning**

Teachers recognise that learners with intellectual impairments are not immune to experiencing other barriers to learning. Consistent with the ecosystemic framework, barriers can arise at any level of the system and have a direct impact upon learning needs. These might be multiple impairments, emotional or physical abuse, or poverty related.

We are in a rural area so our children are living in poverty most of them. So the challenges that I am facing is not just their mental and physical disability, but emotional disability which is actually more challenging. The biggest challenge I am facing but it is because we are living in a rural area which our school is laid here and most of them are being abused. (TBID3)

Access to health services is problematic, despite the additional needs of these children.

I think sometimes the health department does not help us that much. There is a lot of children that need glasses and hearing aids which is very expensive and the parents cannot afford it. Even if they go to the clinic they wait ages for an appointment. (TBID4)

The medium of instruction can be a barrier when it differs from the child's home language. Lack of access to the language of learning has the dual effect of diminishing access to the curriculum and exaggerating the extent of the intellectual disability.

We are not allowed to speak Sotho. The medium of instruction is English, which is another thing that is a serious problem, because some of them when they are making those classification they are not that very low functioning, but the language is a problem. They are made low functioning because of the communication; the language is quite a challenge. Because they have got that barrier and the language becomes a second barrier

and it just becomes a mess. I have got another boy who is very clever, but if I just turn to Sotho he understands everything, but when I am talking English it's a problem. (TBID6)

## **Behavioural issues**

Teachers noted that behavioural issues need to be dealt with and that these may arise either from the learning difficulty itself, or from the challenges that learners face in their social environment.

Maybe the child will misbehave because they do not understand the task that you would have given them, or something happened prior before they came to school, so you need to do a positive reinforcement with the child. You do not have to be angry with the child. Just find a way to redirect the child. Eventually the child will do what you ask him or her to do. (TAID3)

Unruly behaviour is seen by some teachers as an additional barrier that pushes them to the limit of what they are willing to do for their learners.

I got children who will run around, run out of the classroom and run anywhere, and you have to run after them. And then also you have kids that hit each other, the discipline, that is a challenge. The child is already disabled. I don't mind that. If a child cannot do something I do not mind that, but if a child is hyper and runs around and distracts your classroom, the rest of the children will not be able to sit still. That is a big challenge for me because I just cannot take that. (TAID4)

In one school, there was an element of fear about learners' behaviour, especially that of males who were seen as a threat, resulting in teachers feeling that they needed more support in order to feel safe in the school environment.

The support from the school, I think it is a challenge for them as well, so I am sure you will hear from other teachers we are very stressed, very very stressed because we are dealing with a lot of behavioural problems, (TBID3)

There was a feeling that the type of learner accepted into the school had changed over time, with learners with 'real' intellectual impairments being replaced by learners with behavioural problems.

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Some of them can, because some of them are here for behavioural issues; they are not here for SID [severe intellectual disability] or anything like that. They actually can but they are too lazy, you know what the kids do is they will say: 'Why should I do this? I am not going to matriculate. Why do I need to work, why?' They know that, these kids are not stupid. (TBID5)

### **Assistive technology needs**

At one school, teachers had access to computers and the Internet in the classroom. They also used other forms of educational technology with their learners.

We were trained on the whiteboard. We also used to have special equipment on the computer and we were trained how to use that. I had a child in my class, CP [cerebral palsy] child. Her computer was in the class for her with an adapted mouse so that she could handle. (TAID5)

Another school had a computer lab where learners went for lessons, but neither teachers nor the learners had access to the Internet in the classrooms.

We have got a computer room which has 22 computers, but 12 of them work. They haven't fixed the other computers. We have asked for Internet for the computers and Microsoft. We do not get it. It is not a big thing I think for them. (TBID1)

The importance of technology for learners with intellectual impairments is that it supports them to access information visually, thereby overcoming low language and literacy levels that prevent them from accessing information. Some teachers feel they could do so much more with an Internet connection, as it would provide them with interesting and accessible materials for their learners.

I think a school should have Internet all over ... everyone should have Internet connection, because kids relate to that more than having to work in a book. Most of them will learn through pictures and seeing ... Because lots of them can't read, lots of them can't write, but they can hear and when I talk to them they can understand me. So a video shows them all the pictures, and I think they can relate to it more, because they can see it, rather than having to sit and write something about it. Then I can maybe

ask them afterwards to do skills training, let's make a solar system, then they can use their hands for it, they don't have to write it. (TBID5)

Technology is an important need for learners with intellectual impairments, for AAC, but teachers are often inadequately trained in its use and resources are not always readily available.

Now that I work as an AAC educator, I would love to assist learners that cannot speak. I would love to learn about an eye-gaze device, but we do not have for now at our school. (TAID3)

## Visual impairments

Teachers, parents and learners identified four needs specific to learners with visual impairments. At the heart of these needs is access to learning materials that accommodate learning literacy through Braille, and access to digital materials through digital assistive devices.

### Teaching and learning in Braille

The lack of Braille proficiency of many teachers seems to be one of the biggest challenges in teaching learners with visual impairments. The majority of teachers only receive Braille training once they are employed at a special school.

Here at our school you will be thrown in at the deep end, you need to learn Braille you need to go to your class, you need to teach and you know nothing about visual impairment. (SMTALVB1)

Many learners and teachers identified this lack of Braille proficiency as a pivotal problem. The ripple effect of teachers who do not know Braille, is that learners have insufficient knowledge of Braille.

I would like to see ... foundation phase, there must be a braille instructor making sure the fundamental codes are laid. When the child comes to the intermediate phase, that must still go on. His Braille must still go on. (TALVB3)

One visually impaired teacher noted the worrying trend of regarding Braille as unnecessary in educating blind learners. He was required to do Braille marking for colleagues in subjects other than his own.



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A lot of people and most teachers they don't love Braille anymore ... Everything is now depending on digital things and digital resources. It is a good thing, but it must not be in place of say for example Braille. I think Braille for a visually or totally blind person is of most importance. (TALVB3)

This hiatus between the use of Braille and digital resources means that learners are sometimes left with no reliable feedback on their work.

Other teachers, they came here to mark our papers ... but our Braille papers they do not mark because they do not have an idea with the Braille. So we use the computer to type our exam, so our papers can be marked by those teachers. (LCLVB5)

Teachers reported that Braille training is available to them, but almost always only through employment at a special school. The provision of formal impairment-specific training in Braille is mostly done by the province, often supported by the DBE. However, it appears that there is little ongoing support and the Braille training offered seems to be insufficient.

Up until now then I attend the workshops, Braille workshops, whereby we were taught how to write using Perkins Brailier and how to write the Braille. Even now we are not even 100% because we are attending workshops during holidays and it is a short time just for a week. So we can't even learn everything in a short period. (TCLVB5)

Informal, in-house training also appears insufficient, with some teachers seemingly unaware of departmental training.

Training that I received in as far as Braille is training that I received here at school from one of the teachers. I feel like we need more training as far as Braille is concerned. So formal training in as far as Braille, no. So I think the universities or there must be an institution where Braille is being taught. (TALVB4)

In summary, many teachers do not know how to read or write Braille when they start their employment at a special school, and training that is intended to rectify this seems to be insufficient. Consequently, their ability to teach learners and mark papers in Braille is extremely limited.

## Access to assistive technologies

Learners emphasised the importance of appropriate technologies for obtaining access to information. For some this meant that they could do research on the Internet, while for others it simply, but importantly, meant that they could access learning materials.

And also they provide with laptops you can enlarge, you can print or you can copy the textbook in a laptop, then the laptop is going to be easy for you to enlarge if there is no enough papers to print. So far so I don't have a problem with school because they provide me with everything that I need in terms of getting access. (TALVB5)

One teacher emphasised the importance of accessing reading materials in an electronic format.

The department also got permission from ... the publishing authority of South Africa, that we can download any book in electronic format for our learners. So the learners got books in electronic, so it's not necessary to walk along with all those big Braille books. So they have the text at the top of the fingers now. So that is the advantages of having technology. (SMTALVB1)

Although modern technology such as Apex is very expensive, the DBE has started its large-scale rollout to special schools. However, it appears that the amount provided is often not enough.

This BrailleNote Touch is R57 000. So it is not easy for each learner to have, yet it is very useful. (TCLVB2)

Despite providing expensive assistive technologies and equipment, it appears the department's training of teachers and learners in its use is inadequate. Where training is available, it is often insufficient and not ongoing.

During the end of last year we purchased the assistive devices here at school, but they never gave us the formal training from the people we bought the devices from. But they only took totally blind teachers for the training and they showed us, but as you can know that it's not easy to get second hand information. It will be better if they came and train all teachers. (TCLVB3)

We need more training; it will be a week and the time is very short.  
(TALVB4)

The need for meaningful digital access is closely related to Internet and data access.

Western Cape Education Department also invested a lot of money in WiFi technology. Wherever you are in the school premises you are able to access WiFi ... So wherever a kid is, even when you are in the hostel, you are able to go on Internet and you can do research as you go along, so it's not necessary to go to the computer lab now to do research. You can sit in your hostel room and you can access the Internet if you use your IPad.  
(SMTALVB1)

It appears that the DBE prioritises modern, digital assistive technologies, such as Apex, above the more traditional assistive equipment, such as Perkins Braille machines. This poses a problem for some teachers and they are concerned that the importance of Braille is being disregarded.

Everything is now depending on digital things and digital resources. It is a good thing, but it must not be in place of say, for example, Braille. I think Braille for a visually or totally blind person is of most importance. I was working with my friend last night and I was checking his maths, now he is not Braille literate. I read for him. There is great need because those learners are falling by the wayside. (TALVB3)

In summary, teachers and learners identified technology as essential to access information and, while the DBE seems to be providing special schools with this important digital equipment to a limited degree, teachers do not receive adequate training in its use.

### **Appropriate and adapted LTSM**

Learners and teachers described a host of problems with the provision of accessible learning materials, from delivery and conversion of textbooks to unreliable photocopiers. There is a sense of chaos and unpredictability, which leads to anxiety among learners. Teachers identified the following needs: resources such as large A3 books, support for curriculum adaptation, teaching specialised subjects such as music, and curriculum differentiation where learners have diverse levels of visual impairment.

Textbooks required for the successful completion of courses are sometimes only available after tests and examinations. In instances where no accessible versions of texts were available, some learners described having to rely on teachers and/or partially sighted classmates to read their work to them.

The teacher read it for us so that we can go to write March test with something that we know, because if we wait for the textbook I think that's useless. (LALVB5)

What the teacher also does sometimes is she tells us to work with sighted learners. I think it is not their responsibility. It is her responsibility to give us the work fully and give it to us so that we can do it on our own. We should not depend on someone to read or to explain to us what is happening. It is basically just new teachers that does that. (LALVB8)

Additionally, teachers do not always enlarge text for partially sighted learners.

The teachers do explain the work to me, but the large-print story, like they never like, sometimes they don't take it seriously. If I ask them like for example, I can't see this, can you help me like, sometimes they give me bad comments like I am making excuses, that I am maybe lazy. 'Sometimes you guys are lazy, you guys love to say you can't see this, you can't see that, you know.' I get things like that people telling me that you are lazy you don't want to read things. Because they can see, they think like I can see. (LALVB2)

There were also accounts of inappropriate visual methods being used with visually impaired learners.

The totally blind learners ... as a language teacher you give them a picture and the questions and they need to answer according to the picture. The instructions will say look at the picture and answer the following questions. The blind learner cannot even look at the picture and then you have to explain what is in the picture for the blind learner. (TALVB4)

There is a need for education department resources to be made more appropriate for visually impaired learners to use.

For example, when they design these books or when they design these question papers, they sometimes have pictures that I cannot explain to my learners. How dreadful is that? (TALVB3)

The DBE books ... are so visual and for some kids it's a challenge. All the kids get the same size print, which a normal kid get at normal school. And some of the books are very visual, there is a lot of colour in it, which for some of the little ones it's a daunting task to have a look at the pictures and the stuff. So I really feel that with all the changes, they haven't really thought about the children with visual impairment. (TALVB5)

Teachers reported that their schools do not always have appropriate resources to cater for the needs of visually impaired learners. This includes books, large and Braille prints and other materials, and properly trained human resources.

The resources in the first place ... and then I must still buy stuff for them, especially for the blind ones; they have to cut out square, circles and shapes. I have to cut out shapes, have to make them with borders for them to identify. They must feel the ball is round. They must come to the certain object, they must feel the object. Then feel this is round, so this is a circle, then the square. So we don't get it; we must make everything for the blind children in our class so that they can learn different things. (TALVB2)

The department don't have books available for them and we can make A3 copies for them. Therefore, in our department, there is not a prescribed syllabi. For the rest of the school there is from Grade R to Grade 12. So, we must go and research, look from Grade R to Grade 12 what are you doing. (TALVB2)

LTSM is clearly not always accessible for visually impaired learners. Textbooks are not available on time; learning materials are often not delivered in the correct format; and text is often not enlarged for learners with low vision.

### **Access to an impairment-specific curriculum**

Teachers indicated that the DBE does not tailor the curriculum to the specific needs of visually impaired learners, which then requires them to adapt the curriculum content themselves to make it accessible to learners. At times they feel unsupported in this task, suggesting that education officials are removed from the daily realities they face as teachers.

I think the department, the teaching department should become more involved. You cannot just send us the syllabi and you don't know what the needs of the child is. You can't sit in an office, you should come to the school. (TALVB2)

However, not all teachers have the knowledge or experience to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of visually impaired learners. These teachers would benefit from curriculum-specific training.

If I want to teach them about music, I want to show them those treble clef, staff notations, it is difficult for me. I do not know how to show them those that are blind. (TCLVB5)

What seems unfortunate in this situation is that the value of teachers who are blind is not recognised by the teaching staff or learners, yet they would most likely have the best sense of impairment-specific needs.

Something that was difficult was that as I am teaching Maths, we deal with tables and diagrams, geometry. It was also difficult because I didn't have experience in teaching geometry for blind learners, so I had to make means of how to deal with them. It's better to deal with partially blind learners than totally blind learners, because they cannot see the diagrams. They do have the instruments to draw, but some of them are not capable of using them because they don't see, so it also affects the fingers you see. It's most difficult. (TCLVB3)

Learners indicate that they are frustrated at the lack of adaptation of important teaching materials, which they would like to have access to on the same level as their sighted peers.

They need to train teachers how to work with us and how to show us how to do experiments like they would do in a science lab. Because I believe outside schools do go to labs to go and experiment properly and see the results, so we want to do it physically instead of just talking about it and discussing it. (LALVB8)

It is sometimes expected of learners to complete assignments in a 'sighted' manner, as the tasks are often not properly adapted to fit learners' needs.

And the assignments ... like some assignments I feel like it is difficult to expect it from a blind person to, such as doing assignments like brochures and things like that. I think that teachers can choose which one she wants to give to the class, but I think it is not fair when they give us sometimes stuff to do like that kind of tasks. (LALVB8)

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One strategy that is effective in addressing individual needs is working in smaller classes.

The only thing that our learners are getting advantage are smaller classes. But although our learners are working at a much slower pace we have time for individualisation where we can work with them. (SMTALVB1)

Learners are also allowed extra time to complete assignments and examinations.

When we are in the class they give us extra time to maybe to submit assignments, maybe it is one day more to submit assignments, and when we are writing notes sometimes they understand our situation. (TCLVB2)

## D/deaf or hard of hearing

In this section we focus on the teaching and learning needs of learners who are D/deaf. In our research we only visited two schools that use SASL as the medium of instruction. As such, we do not report to any significant degree on learners who may be hard of hearing, but we did receive information on learners who have cochlear implants and use both spoken language and SASL.

### Teaching and learning using SASL as the medium of instruction

Many learners and teachers identified a lack of teacher proficiency in SASL as a pivotal problem that not only affects their ability to teach, but also has an impact upon how teachers understand what it is to be D/deaf.

I wish that the teachers can be more understanding and ... get workshops for signing. They can understand us as D/deaf people. (LCDHH4)

Learners felt frustrated and disrespected by their teachers' lack of SASL knowledge and have the expectation that they should be taught proficiently in their preferred medium of instruction. Teachers' limited use of SASL is sometimes viewed as laziness because D/deaf learners experience limitations in learning oral language that hearing people do not have in learning SASL.

I prefer to learn everything in sign language because it is good for me; it is better when I learn [through] sign language. If the teachers can improve on their sign language skill, everything will improve on our side. (LCDHH6)

A D/deaf learner shared her frustration at the lack of SASL proficiency among her teachers and how this negatively impacts on her.

I don't understand what they always tell me to do ... They usually tell me if I don't understand it is my problem. I don't feel good. (*LBDHH3*)

One participant noted that the redeployment of teachers had negative consequences for the school as they arrived after the provincial SASL training had taken place.

Because of the redeployment we got people from mainstream late, so they couldn't go through the course. (*SMTCDHH1*)

This teacher also noted that approximately 38% (5 out of the 13 teachers at the school) have specialist qualifications in D/deaf education. The others hold teacher qualifications, but have no specialist training for teaching the D/deaf. This language barrier impacts on education.

The pace at which that learner learns, comparatively speaking ... the pace is very, very slow because of the language barrier. (*TBDHH3*)

The inability to use SASL fluently has a negative impact on the educational process and results in a slower pace in the classroom due to the extended time it takes to convey information to learners. All role players in D/deaf education note that fluency in SASL is essential if education for D/deaf learners is to be effective and accessible.

### **Access to assistive technologies**

While some teachers and principals shared the importance of using visual materials and assistive devices such as computers, others did not know what was available or how to adapt their teaching methods. On being asked about their awareness of assistive technology or devices that could be used in the working environment, a teacher responded:

For me so far none, I haven't received any training. Personally so far I am still using the material like the charts and textbooks, but not assistive technology at all. Not yet. (*TBDHH3*)

However, some teachers recognised the potential for the use of technology to enhance learning.



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Technology, it's a real need, it is very important, technology. Because the future of education lies in technology, especially for the deaf and the blind guy, so its technology. *(TBDHH4)*

In one school it was noted that there has been a decline in access to and use of amplification devices such as hearing aids and frequency modulation (FM) systems. A teacher indicated that the reasons for this are numerous, the first being that the audiology post was taken away. In addition, the location of the school near an informal settlement has resulted in several burglaries, during which FM systems were stolen. The result is that learners, for the most part, no longer have access to these types of assistive devices.

### **Appropriate and adapted LTSM**

Many D/deaf special school learners described not having the opportunity to do subjects such as Math and Physics, which are not offered at their schools, and are regarded as unfeasible for learners with their impairments.

Now you are forced to do other subjects that you do not want to do or your career choice doesn't even take, or doesn't require. *(LCDHH2)*

Teachers described learners who reached intermediate phase without basic literacy and numeracy. This was attributed, at times, to inadequate teaching (especially a lack of SASL- and Braille-proficient teachers in the foundation phase), and at times to low intellect. It also shows how some teachers treat all learners who are D/deaf as the same, with low expectations and bias and prejudice towards disability.

I think the children I am teaching have an IQ of 75. *(TBDHH5)*

In addition to the assumed innate inability of the learners to grasp the concepts and knowledge required in the curriculum, teachers seem to have difficulty with the curriculum and its applicability for the broad D/deaf learner population.

### **Curriculum adaptation**

Teachers discussed the need for specific skills and knowledge on how best to understand and teach learners who are D/deaf.

We could be able to relate better to our children and to impart knowledge better because we understand the degrees of hearing loss. *(SMTCDHH1)*

Teachers felt that increased knowledge in the specific needs of a D/deaf learner, and improved access to technology, would assist them to improve learners' performance.

A well-trained and a more knowledgeable teacher – it's an asset, not only to the school, but to the community; not only to the community, but to the entire country. *(TBDHH3)*

If the teachers of this school can be empowered with whatever they deserve, and the environment to be made to be conducive from all possible aspects that one can think of ... if all those conditions can be improved for the better. *(TBDHH3)*

Despite many years of lobbying from the D/deaf community (DeafSA, 2006), teachers appear to struggle with implementing and following the national curriculum in schools for the D/deaf. The teachers interviewed seemed to find the curriculum a barrier to education for D/deaf learners.

It's our education system that is the problem. We have got to adapt the curriculum according to our disability. *(TCDHH3)*

We don't have time for D/deaf education; we have to stick to the curriculum and that's the whole problem. The Department of Education, that's our problem. I can't ask my children to write anything, comprehension, maybe. I have to teach everything they have to do, everything. *(TBDHH5)*

The teachers acknowledge that there is a need to adapt the curriculum, but admit being unsure about how to proceed with this adaptation. This is partly due to a lack of specific training in D/deaf education and partly due to the fact that the officials who are supposed to support curriculum matters at district level are unfamiliar with D/deaf education and, therefore, unable to provide guidance.

The district office should be supporting us; they don't come to our schools. We do invite them but they are scared to come here because they don't know this curriculum of ours. *(TCDHH4)*

There is thus a need for more support personnel at the circuit and district levels who can assist teachers with specific difficulties they may experience in the classroom or school. Knowledge of impairments was also raised as a need that

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would enable teachers to be more effective in teaching learners with different degrees of hearing loss.

Inclusivity is sort of disadvantaging because we have different kinds of learners. For example, some learners have what is called an acquired deafness, that is maybe they got meningitis or measles so they get sick because of that sickness; some are congenitally deaf, so they differ; and the learners who have acquired deafness may have some speech. So it's difficult for us to arrange those learners in the same group. (TCDHH3)

This also indicates that this teacher does not understand teaching to the diversity of the population of D/deaf learners. It cannot be expected that all learners will be D/deaf in the same way and require the same kind of teaching. As with any other group of learners, there is no one approach that will work for everyone. There is, therefore, a need for training on differentiation and support for all learners in the class, whether they are pre-lingually or post-lingually D/deaf.

## Key messages

### INTELLECTUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Learners with intellectual impairments are significantly affected by stigma, which parents and teachers hope to address through a caring and nurturing educational environment. Impairment-specific curriculum adaptation includes AAC, access to visual and video material, and a foundation phase level curriculum in regard to literacy and numeracy that is expanded to include vocational and life skills to age-appropriate levels. Teachers also expressed the need for access to the Internet and support in managing behavioural issues. While teachers recognised the emotional toll of teaching, they also explicitly expressed a high degree of job satisfaction.

### VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Learners with visual impairments placed a high emphasis on accessible LTSM, whether this be through Braille, large print or assistive technology. They feel disregarded and disrespected when these needs are not met. Over and above this, their additional impairment-specific curriculum adaptation needs include the development of accessible materials in a range of subject areas (for example, Math and Music); smaller class sizes, taking into account the differing learning needs of low-vision and blind learners; and materials thoughtfully adapted to their specific visual impairments. Teachers of learners with visual impairments expressed the need for support in learning Braille, and ongoing assistance with adapting the curriculum and LTSM as they view this as very time consuming. The place of Braille relative to digital technology remains contested and not well understood.

### D/DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

Learners express very strongly the need to be taught by teachers who are proficient in SASL and able to adapt the curriculum to cover the range of subjects offered in CAPS. They feel that teachers do not make an effort to know who their learners are and what their needs may be, demonstrated by the perceived lack of effort on the part of teachers to learn SASL. Teachers need support in learning SASL, not just from once-off workshops, but also through ongoing support that is embedded within the curriculum and supported by the district. In addition, teachers should have specialised training in D/deaf education to better understand teaching methodologies and the specific learning barriers they are likely to experience, and how these may be overcome.

## **ACROSS ALL IMPAIRMENTS**

Learner needs must be acknowledged and supported. While some of these needs arise from their impairments and are quite specific, others relate to broader educational and social issues. This implies that the nature of the learners' impairments and the necessary adaptations to the curriculum need to be implemented in a nurturing and inclusive environment, taking into account the diverse needs of individual learners despite similar impairments. Learners in a special school are not a homogenous group whose needs are automatically met when they are placed within an educational environment that is supposedly adapted to their needs. There is a great deal of evidence of diversity within the special school class, similar to what may be found in mainstream classes. The need for curriculum adaptation in responding to diversity is quite clear.

Relationships between teachers and learners are fraught as learners do not feel that their needs are being met, and that they are not cared for and respected by their teachers. Learners need to have their difficulties acknowledged and feel supported. They are asking for access to the curriculum equal to their non-disabled peers. This raises questions as to why they should be separated into special schools, where these needs are not being met and they suffer varying degrees of social exclusion. Exclusion seems to be particularly damaging as it reduces the opportunities for incidental learning that takes place in a variety of contexts. This implies that learners with SPSII should either be exposed to more situations that allow for incidental learning (such as interaction with their non-disabled peers) or be offered deliberate tuition in place of incidental learning (such as that offered in a specialised facility). However, it appears that in the current special school environment they are getting neither of these.

Increased access to appropriate technology and assistive devices could yield improved outcomes for all learners, provided teachers are familiar with their optimum use for teaching and learning and there is adequate support from other professionals (such as audiologists and speech therapists). It is also clear that various adaptations need to be made to ensure learners have access to the mainstream curriculum. Relatedly, teachers need training in how such adaptation could occur. Finally, circuit and district level support needs to be put in place to ensure that teachers in schools for learners with SPSII have the necessary pedagogical support.

**Chapter**

**6**

## CHAPTER 6

# Systemic support in meeting the educational needs of learners with SPSII

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Jane Kelly and Judith McKenzie

In this chapter we explore support systems at a systemic level that aim to meet the educational needs of learners with SPSII, largely through supporting their teachers. These support systems include teacher education, and district support and responsibilities. Within each support system we consider not only the support available, but also the associated challenges or issues. The data in this chapter comes from teachers, school management support teams, and district and provincial officials.

## Themes addressed in this chapter

### Teacher education

- › Policy implementation
- › Formal qualifications
- › Training at full-service schools
- › In-service training
- › Impairment-specific training

### Support and responsibilities at district level

## Teacher education

Participants discussed various forms of teacher education, including implementing policies such as the policy on Screening, Identification and Assessment and Support (SIAS), formal academic qualifications, in-service training, and impairment-specific training, which includes learning Braille and SASL.

### Policy implementation

It appears that good progress has been made in training teachers at special and full-service schools in implementing SIAS.

We know where we're sitting. There is no single school that will claim that they were not exposed to this training. (DOB1)

We trained 750 educators last year, and we took them through the whole process. (DOA3)

And as one teacher noted:

We have been having a series of SIAS workshops, so workshops are done and are ongoing. (TBFS5)

At the same time, however, the SIAS process has not yet been fully implemented:

I think we are not yet at the level where we can say SIAS has been implemented fully ... because of lack of resources. (DOB1)

In addition, the policy paperwork was described as 'very un-user-friendly' for teachers (DOB1).



## Formal qualifications

Participants discussed formal training implications for the development of theory and practice. With a few notable exceptions (e.g. the Centre for Deaf Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, which offers full qualifications in D/deaf Education) there are limited formal academic training opportunities available to teachers that focus on educating learners with disabilities, at both pre-service and in-service levels. This was echoed in the findings of this study as participants recognised the need for formal teacher education at universities focused specifically on specialised education for learners with SPSII. As one teacher noted:

I think the universities that are preparing students to become teachers need to look into the issue of having to train them in a particular specialisation in terms of learners with disabilities. (*DOB1*)

Talking specifically about educating D/deaf learners, another SMT member noted:

If you want to do teaching, teaching the deaf, there must be a program for four years. And the actual, what we call the teaching methods, they must be deaf-aligned. (*SMTCDHH1*)

## Training at full-service schools

There was considerable evidence that training at full-service schools is not always specific to the educational needs of learners with SPSII. When one teacher was asked what training she had received to teach learners with disabilities, her response was 'nothing' (*TAFS3*). Another participant noted: 'Personally I did not get that' (*TBFS3*). If teachers in full-service schools want to develop disability-specific skills, it seems they need to seek these out for themselves.

We get requests from ... when I say strange requests, I'm saying that because I was never exposed to learners that needed a scribe, and someone that would have to read, a blind learner, and how do we deal with this? Do we chase them away and say no, we don't have the facility, or do we ... you know? What we are saying, we're gonna make it happen for them so we will go out. (*SMTAFS1*)

Within full-service schools, teacher education tends to focus on inclusive education practices and enhancing teaching and learning, rather than special education training.

So we have already started, after we have been trained, we've attended different trainings on inclusive education. (*SMTBFS1*)

There was also a perception that full-service schools are not expected to deal with learners with severe to profound disabilities.

Few are visually impaired and it is not severe because the full-service takes the mild, not the severe. If the child is severe we refer the learner to other schools. (*TBFS3*)

Further, full-service schools feel that they are under-resourced to cope with the task in terms of infrastructure, teacher-learner ratios and teacher education.

So the department, if they are serious about this, there are directorates for inclusive education. It is something, it is big, it is a reality, it is there, so if they are serious, I am asking why is that one of the eight high schools in the province never ever had a meeting, or a workshop, or a conference? (*SMTAFS1*)

The conclusion drawn from this is that full-service schools are not being capacitated to deal with learners with SPSII, despite being seen as an adjunct to special schools since learners with SPSII who are recommended for special schools but cannot enter because of waiting lists, or are deemed not to have a disability that is severe enough to warrant special school placement, are often placed in full-service schools.

### **In-service training**

The DBE and provincial education departments offer in-service short courses, workshops and inductions. This is indicative of a concerted but still inadequate effort to support teachers. As one teacher noted:

The department has come on board, trying to empower us through workshops, through [the] university, or NGOs. At least one feels that being here, it's not like being thrown here without the tools, so they have been helping us. (*TCDHH1*)

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Regardless, teachers often arrive at special or full-service schools with no prior training in specialised education for learners with SPSII.

That is a problem. When a teacher comes here then we need to provide that training for them. (TALVB1)

Another participant noted:

The new teachers always go for an induction. And then they are being trained in, for instance, hard of hearing – teaching a child who is hard of hearing. (DOB1)

It seems that sometimes this training is experiential, in that teachers learn while they work:

So they actually learn through experience more. (SMTBDHH1)

### **Impairment-specific training**

In terms of educating teachers on specific impairments (D/deaf and hard of hearing, low vision and blindness, intellectual disability), some training is offered by the provincial and national departments of education. For instance, one participant said:

The profile of students in the classroom is changing and we need to capacitate as many teachers as we can in how to deal with it. That's the kind of training that is going on now. Intellectual disability, autism, the remedial course, and obviously we have short workshops here and there as well. (DOC1)

Basic training in SASL and Braille is also offered.

I attended two to four workshops that had been arranged by DBE, national workshops whereby all the provinces combine and then we are taught how to teach this language. Because this is a language on its own, it has its own grammar, its own vocabulary and we have got to respect this language. (TCDHH4)

Although training is usually done via workshops and short courses, teachers do not feel that this is sufficient. When talking about training in Braille, one teacher noted:

We are attending workshops during holidays and it is a short time, just for a week. So we can't even learn everything in a short period. *(TCLVB5)*

In addition, teachers do not feel supported by the district after the training has taken place.

The district officials, to be honest, because there is no one at the district level with knowledge of sign language, so they don't really monitor sign language courses that we've done. *(SMTCDHH1)*

Another participant noted:

Well, there is nobody at any local district who can support you with Braille. *(SMTALVB1)*

This indicates that teachers need more ongoing support in building their capacity to address the special educational needs of learners with SPSII. Participants also recognised the need for more in-depth training specific to each impairment. When talking about training in hearing impairments one participant said:

I think through the trainings, if the teachers could understand deafness itself [as a condition] ... we could be able to relate better to our children and to impart knowledge better because we understand the degrees of hearing loss. *(SMTCDHH1)*

Participants felt that training should be offered not only to teachers in special and full-service schools, but also to teachers in mainstream schools. One participant, for example, when talking about being a teacher in a mainstream school, said:

If there is a learner with an intellectual disability or hearing impairment, how does the teacher deal with that particular learner? *(DOB1)*

## Support and responsibilities at district level

District-based support teams (DBSTs) were established in South Africa with the primary function of providing integrated professional support services at a district level. The key function of DBSTs is to help education institutions, within the framework of Education White Paper 6, to identify and address barriers to learning, and foster effective teaching and learning. One element of support that DBSTs provide is monitoring and assessing teachers in schools.

Our district, they are monitoring our educators ... They are going to cluster meetings regularly, they have a sitting in the school to come to the classes to even monitor what the teachers are doing. (*SMTALVB1*)

They also provide ongoing support in training implementation.

DBST is supporting us ... gradually supporting us to put into practice what we have learned using our learners. (*SMTBFS19*)

The DBSTs work with school-based support teams (SBSTs) to provide support.

What happens is that the school-based support team and the district-based support team, they actually work together. (*SMTBDHH1*)

One way in which these teams may offer support is ensuring that learners with SPSII are able to fully participate in all classroom activities. One teacher shared the following example when discussing the DBST in her district:

From the district I know one of our past learners, also vision, she had like a major impairment, her exam papers had to be printed different from the others, and so we could do that. There was also another learner, also past pupil, and he was also writing examinations, he had a problem with writing, and also the district office provided him some assistance, with getting him a scribe. (*TAFS3*)

However, data from this study indicated that teachers in special and full-service schools do not always feel adequately supported by DBSTs, particularly because support staff are often employed by the school and are generally not trained and deployed by the district. Some participants felt that there is a lack of ongoing support from DBSTs. For example, one participant noted:

They [the DBST] came only once this year, to introduce themselves and to tell us what they intend doing this year. Nothing came of it. So, there is nothing that is going on. (*SMTCDHH1*)

Another participant said:

There is a structure at our district, but that is another thing if they are here to support, we get one visit maybe from the curriculum advisor ... But very, very little support, and it is disappointing for us. (*SMTAFS1*)

Although DBSTs are there to provide support to teachers, it appears that this support is not always provided consistently, perhaps as a result of not being adequately resourced.

Data from this study indicated that, in some provinces, there is a growing emphasis on establishing 'specialist teams' within the DBSTs that focus on specific disabilities.

We are changing that now into specialist teams slowly, so that you have a team for the blind, a team for the deaf, and so on and so on. (*POA1*)

This is reflected in the employment and training of itinerant teams to support the implementation of the curriculum for learners with severe to profound intellectual disabilities.

## Key messages

Teachers usually enter special schools with no specific training in the nature of impairments and the associated pedagogy. They are trained via an induction or in-service training programme that is largely experiential. National and provincial training is offered in these areas, but it tends to be in the form of short courses, which many teachers feel is insufficient, and they do not feel supported by their district after the courses have finished. There is, therefore, a need for more in-depth, formal training in the impairment-specific needs of learners with SPSII in special, full-service and mainstream schools.

DBSTs provide support via monitoring and assessing teachers, and implementing training. In some provinces there is a growing emphasis on establishing 'specialist teams' that focus on specific disabilities. These teams may offer support by ensuring that learners can fully participate in learning. However, teachers in special and full-service schools do not always feel adequately supported by their DBSTs as there is a lack of ongoing and consistent support. This indicates that DBSTs may be under-resourced to provide adequate support.

Teachers in mainstream and full-service schools are more likely to receive training at district level, which would imply ongoing support, but their training does not include impairment-specific curriculum adaptation for learners with SPSII. Teachers in special schools receive limited training in specific impairments, but this takes place at a provincial level and not supported by the district. We would argue that teachers in all schools should be trained in inclusive education aimed at responding to diversity. Teachers in all schools, but not necessarily all teachers, should be able to respond to impairment-specific curriculum adaptation needs with varying degrees of support from the province and the district.

**Chapter**

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**7**



## CHAPTER 7

# Summary and recommendations

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Judith McKenzie and Nozwelo Shanda

This chapter summarises the educational needs of learners as informed by the theoretical frameworks mentioned in previous chapters, and addresses the research questions:

- › What are the educational needs of learners with SPSII?
- › What teacher education is required for teachers to be able to meet these needs?

### **Learners' needs within the conceptual framework**

The UNCRPD (2006) stipulates that all learners with disabilities should have access to inclusive, equal and quality education by making sure that teachers have the necessary skills to teach learners with SPSII. However, this study shows that this right is not being fully met as most learners do not have access to the curriculum on an equal basis with non-disabled learners because their teachers were not trained or supported to meet their specific learning needs. A significant element of teachers' inadequate response to meeting learners' needs was their lack of understanding of the nature of impairments, and how this interacts with different environments in ways that are either enabling or

disabling. This implies that teachers need to understand that the educational progress of a child cannot be understood only by reference to their impairment, but needs to take into account the context of teaching and learning (Connor et al., 2008; Gabel & Danforth, 2008). Where this context is not adapted to the impairment needs of the child it becomes disabling. Inasmuch as there are very specific learning needs related to impairments, such as the provision of Braille or communication tools that are comprehensible for learners with intellectual disability, there are also equally important additional barriers to learning, which may be experienced by any learner, whether they have an impairment or not.

Taking into account the ecosystemic approach and the multiple participant perspectives that we explored, we noted that learners need to be supported by their families and the communities in which they live. This enables them to make the most of learning opportunities and minimise stigma and discrimination that impacts negatively upon their education. Although teachers, parents and learners all agreed upon the importance of the partnership between parents and teachers, it appears that this partnership is not being nurtured for the benefit of learners with SPSII.

## **Learner needs**

Through examining the multiple perspectives and the different impairment types, we identified the following needs that should be addressed for quality education of learners with SPSII.

### **Social and psychological support**

Learners felt the need to be understood and for teachers to know some of the difficulties they experience as a result of their impairments, such as accessing information or dealing with stigma. At the same time, they need support similar to that of any young person navigating the educational space. Importantly, they need to be seen holistically as young people who have impairments and need support to be able to participate fully in society.

### **Address additional barriers to learning**

Learners within special schools are not a homogeneous group; they have different support systems, different learning styles, and different family and social support systems. At the same time, they experience barriers to learning similar to those experienced by non-disabled learners. Learners felt that they

needed teachers to be more patient, adapt the pace of learning and exercise appropriate discipline in order to respond to this diversity.

### **Impairment-specific curriculum**

Learners with SPSII have additional support needs that arise from their impairments. They require the curriculum to be adapted to their needs through additional programmes or modifications. Learning opportunities need to be enhanced to overcome the limitations that their impairments might place on learning from the environment or incidental learning. Thus, learners with SPSII may require additional instruction as they do not access many aspects of their environment. Training in orientation and mobility, life skills or appropriate communication skills might all be needed.

### **Access to assistive technology (devices and training)**

The message that emerged from the data was that the potential of assistive technology in addressing the learning needs of learners with SPSII has not been exploited. Learners need assistive devices that will integrate seamlessly into their lives beyond school. Their need, therefore, is to be provided with appropriate devices and to know how to use them to access the curriculum effectively.

### **Appropriate language and media for learning and teaching**

Learners stated unequivocally that they need to learn and be taught in an appropriate language. This applies most significantly to D/deaf learners who require SASL, but also to learners with severe to profound intellectual disabilities who need to be taught in their home language. The medium of Braille was stated as being critical for learners who are blind. This relates very closely to the need for appropriate LTSM, including adapted workbooks and assessment tools.

## Teacher education needs

Having looked at the general trend of needs of learners with SPSII, we identified the teacher education needs required to address these. In order to make these links explicit, we present both learner and teacher education needs below.

Learner needs	Teacher education needs
<p><b>Social and psychological support</b></p>	<p><b>Understand disability as an issue of social justice</b> This entails an awareness of the social identity of persons with disabilities in the South African context, and the difficulties this imposes. At the same time, teachers need to be aware that not all difficulties arise from impairments, but also through interaction with the environment.</p> <p><b>Relationships with learners and families</b> Teachers need support and training in how to develop and maintain empathic and caring relationships with learners and their families.</p>
<p><b>Address additional barriers to learning</b></p>	<p><b>Responding to diversity</b> Teachers need to be trained in inclusive teaching methods that enable them to respond to learner diversity and address additional barriers to learning</p> <p><b>Curriculum differentiation</b> Curriculum differentiation strategies are the same as required by any teacher who needs to be able to teach inclusively to meet diverse learning needs.</p>

Learner needs	Teacher education needs
<p><b>Impairment-specific curriculum</b></p>	<p><b>Impairment-specific knowledge</b> Teachers need to understand the nature of different impairments. What are their causes, their effects and how do SPSIIs impact upon learners' ability to access the curriculum?</p> <p><b>Impairment-specific pedagogy and curriculum, including adaptation of LTSM</b> Teachers need to understand the additional support needs of learners with SPSII, and make appropriate additions and adaptations to the curriculum. Specific, detailed knowledge of what needs to be done to create equitable access to the curriculum and LTSM is required.</p>
<p><b>Access to assistive technology (devices and training)</b></p>	<p><b>Skills in selection and use of assistive devices</b> Teachers need to develop their own technology skills and familiarity with assistive devices, as well as general digital literacy. They need to be able to identify devices specific to different impairments. This implies that they need to know how to maintain the devices and explore their potential uses. Given the potential of hardware and software, and access to the Internet, teachers should be encouraged to develop their own digital literacy so that they can support learners in finding innovative ways to access and express information.</p> <p><b>Ability to teach learners to use assistive devices across the curriculum</b> Teachers need to be able to teach learners using assistive devices in all aspects of the curriculum.</p>
<p><b>Appropriate language and media for learning and teaching</b></p>	<p><b>Skills in SASL, Braille and AAC</b> Teachers need to be familiar with SASL, Braille and AAC in order to use them as languages and media of instruction and assessment.</p> <p><b>Specialist skills in teaching SASL, Braille and AAC</b> Teachers require specialist skills in teaching learners SASL, Braille and AAC as pathways to language and literacy.</p>

The question then remains as to how teachers can be supported to access training and what form ongoing support should take. Our recommendations are presented below.

## Recommendations

1. In-depth impairment-specific training (focusing on hearing, visual and intellectual impairments) should be included as specialisations during teacher education at tertiary institutions. This should include:
  - a. Impairment-specific LTSM adaptation training.
  - b. Impairment-specific assistive technology training.
  - c. Braille, SASL and AAC specialisation qualifications offered at teacher training institutions or through NGOs.
2. Ongoing support for teachers in impairment-specific pedagogy should be provided, including:
  - a. Continuous training or workshops at school and district level, as a recap on the use of assistive technology.
  - b. Consistent Braille, SASL and AAC workshops at school and district levels.
3. Teaching practice in special and full-service schools should form part of teacher education, to help student teachers gain experience in teaching learners with SPSII.
4. Inclusive education modules that enable all teachers to respond to learner diversity should be offered in pre-service teacher training. This should include:
  - a. Understanding disability as an issue of diversity and social justice.
  - b. Discipline management training at tertiary level for all student teachers.

Although these recommendations arise out of the situational analysis, it remains to be determined how best the educational needs of teachers can be met through the teacher education system at both pre-service and in-service levels, and what types of qualifications might best suit these needs. Further aspects to be explored include continuing professional development courses, online education, and formal and informal courses offered by non-governmental and disability organisations.



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