

# Teacher education:

An analysis of the availability of teacher education addressing the educational needs of learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments



Jane Kelly and Judith McKenzie



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# Executive summary

The Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project aims to empower teachers to provide quality education for learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments (SPSII) through training that is focused on inclusivity, diversity and addressing learners' impairment-specific needs. In order to provide an evidence base for this training this study addresses the following research question: *What teacher education addressing the educational needs of learners with SPSII is available in South Africa?*

The analysis seeks to gain an overview of the currently available teacher education resources relevant to the education of learners with SPSII and to locate this provision within the South African inclusive education policy landscape.

While South Africa has a strong policy commitment to achieve high quality education for learners with SPSII, implementation is slow. A key hindrance is that very few teacher education programmes focus on disability and education.

To strengthen teacher education, an understanding of the current status of teacher education offerings that address the impairment-specific needs of learners with SPSII is necessary. This can serve as a basis for the planning of new courses and modules that will improve the quality of education and teacher skills in addressing the needs of learners with disabilities.

South Africa's policy on inclusive education outlines approaches to accommodating the diverse needs of learners, including learners with disabilities. The government recently took a major step towards improving the situation of learners with disabilities by implementing policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS). SIAS is the mandatory instrument for teachers to identify barriers to learning and determine the levels of support required. It identifies educational support needs through a systematic process of screening, identification and assessment.

However, despite this sound policy framework, evidence suggests that learners with disabilities have not been provided with sufficient reasonable accommodation or support to ensure that they can access education on an equal basis to that of their peers.

To gain an overview of the currently available teacher education resources specifically focused on teaching learners with SPSII, this study examines the provision for such teachers in formal, accredited teacher education in existing programmes; informal teacher education run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and disabled people organisations (DPOs); and the centres of excellence at the University of Pretoria, University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Johannesburg.

A severe lack of teacher education at universities and universities of technology that could equip teachers with the skills needed for inclusive education is among the key findings. Also, there is minimal provision of teacher education to equip teachers to offer specialised support within the domains of vision, hearing, learning and cognition and so forth. It appears that this provision has been reduced with adoption of an inclusive education system, perhaps on the understanding that barriers to learning arising from disability can be fully addressed through a generic approach to learner diversity.

While there is impairment-specific training available for teachers at NGOs and DPOs, provision is currently on a minimal scale. However, the contribution of these organisations both in terms of impairment-specific teaching skills and the valuable participation of parents and disabled people cannot be overlooked. Recommendations therefore include the need for partnerships with higher education and the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training.

South Africa has several means by which teacher education can be offered, including university qualifications, short courses and training offered by NGOs and DPOs. Unfortunately these mechanisms are not being used to good effect when it comes to equipping teachers with the skills needed to teach learners with disabilities, particularly learners with SPSII.

Children with SPSII may find themselves in special, full service or ordinary schools where they are entitled to receive a quality education that meets their individual needs. Furthermore, children with SPSII may attend regular schools



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as a result of having sufficient support such that they can be classified as having moderate to low support needs. This is clearly a shifting terrain where the level of support needed in any school depends on what is already provided within that school system. As schools strive to increase their inclusivity, this support can be expected to grow.

Thus, while all teachers need knowledge of inclusive education, curriculum differentiation and meeting individual learner needs, some teachers need in-depth knowledge about learning needs within the specialised domains identified within South African policy. A further need exists for just-in-time teacher education where regular school educators can access relevant additional information on strategies for teaching SPSII when the need arises.

To address teacher education for SPSII, a landscape of teacher education needs to be developed to meet the needs of learners with SPSII in specialised programmes in a range of sites. In setting this up, questions that need addressing include: What initial teacher education in inclusive education is required to ensure that inclusivity is practised by all teachers in all schools? (Among other considerations within this question, is how disability and SPSII is presented as an issue of diversity and social justice on a par with other barriers to learning); What are the prospects for initial teacher education in specific specialised programmes of support such as visual impairment if teachers are to be qualified when they enter special schools?; and How can teachers be expected to navigate this landscape and what is the role of teacher empowerment and professional learning communities in helping them to do this?

**Section**

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# SECTION 1

# Background and literature review

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Although there is a strong policy commitment in South Africa to achieve quality education for learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments (SPSII), progress towards achieving this commitment has been slow. A key hindrance is that there are very few teacher education programmes focused 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 University of Cape Town (UCT) and Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM) developed a partnership to address this call and formulated their work within the Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project. TEDI aims to empower teachers to provide quality education for learners with SPSII through training that is focused on inclusivity, diversity and addressing learners' impairment-specific needs.

This analysis seeks to gain an overview of the currently available teacher education resources relevant to the education of learners with SPSII and to locate this provision within the South African inclusive education policy landscape.

## 1.1 Rationale for the study

The lack of provision of quality education for learners with SPSII in South Africa is well-documented (McKenzie, Kelly, & Shanda, 2018; Statistics South Africa, 2011). Access to and participation in the education system remains a huge challenge. It was estimated that approximately 600,000 learners with disabilities were not in school in 2012 (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2015) - more than double the 280,000 estimated excluded learners in 2001 (Department of Education [DoE], 2001). Furthermore, even for those learners who are in school, their learning and participation is not at all satisfactory. A recent study conducted by McKenzie et al. (2018) notes that teachers feel that they are under-prepared to teach learners with SPSII as they seldom have any prior training before being employed at special and full service schools. Most training is done through induction programmes that receive varying degrees of attention at different schools. Learners and their families indicated that the potential of learners with SPSII is not being realised within the current system.

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 Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (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, a key reason is that teachers lack the skills in disability practice, and are consequently challenged by learners with disabilities, often without any of the necessary support (Dalton, McKenzie, & Kahonde, 2012; Engelbrecht, et al., 2003; Statistics South Africa, 2011). Against this backdrop, this analysis begins with the premise that, in order to strengthen teacher education, it is imperative that we establish a better understanding of the current status of teacher education offerings that address the impairment-specific needs of learners with SPSII. This can serve as a basis for the planning of new courses and modules that will improve the quality of education and teacher skills in addressing the needs of learners with disabilities.

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## 1.2 South African policy and experiences

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) states that everyone has the right to basic and further education (section 29(1)). Similarly, the South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996) notes that all children – including, as far as possible, those with “special educational needs” – should be admitted to ordinary public schools, and that these schools should support children’s various educational and other support needs without any discrimination. The implications of this is that teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills in order for them to be able to support school children.

South Africa’s policy on inclusive education, EWP6 (DoE, 2001), outlines policy approaches to accommodating learners’ diverse 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 or unsafe environments, language of teaching and learning, and inappropriate communication. Therefore, teacher education needs to take into account the full range of barriers to learning. Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) states that necessary provisions should be made to train staff at all levels of education in disability awareness and other areas relevant to disability-related skills (United Nations, 2006).

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, 2014a). SIAS is the mandatory instrument for teachers to identify barriers to learning and determine the levels of support required. It identifies educational support needs through a systematic process of screening, identification and assessment. 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 (ordinary, full service or special schools) can meet these needs. The SIAS identifies different categories for support, namely:

- › Provision of specialist services;
- › Curriculum differentiation;

- › Provision of specialised Learning and Teaching Support Material and assistive technology; and
- › Training and mentoring of teachers, managers and support staff.

According to the *Draft National Guidelines for Resourcing an Inclusive Education System* (DBE, 2018), learners who are eligible for a high level of support have a high intensity and high-frequency need for, among other things, differentiated curriculum and specially trained teachers. Indeed, one of the major strategies that enables 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 individual 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.

Despite this sound policy framework, evidence suggests that learners with disabilities have not been provided with sufficient reasonable accommodation or support to ensure that they can access education on an equal basis to that of their peers (Human Rights Watch, 2015; McKenzie et al., 2018). In addition, one of the major challenges in educating learners with disabilities is the entrenched attitude among teachers that children with disabilities are not able to learn to the same standard as children without disabilities (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Further, research shows that South African 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). 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).

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### 1.3 Teacher education in South Africa

South Africa has a well-regulated system of teacher education, which is laid out in the policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ). The policy “provides a basis for the construction of core curricula for Initial Teacher Education (ITE), as well as for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programmes that accredited institutions must use to develop programmes leading to teacher education qualifications” (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2015, p. 6). Qualifications for initial teacher education include a Bachelor of Education degree (NQF Level 7) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (NQF Level 7). Qualifications for continuing professional and academic development (CPAD) of teachers include an Advanced Certificate (NQF Level 6), Advanced Diploma (NQF Level 7), Postgraduate Diploma (NQF Level 8), Bachelor of Education Honours degree (NQF Level 8), Master of Education degree/Master’s degree (Professional) (NQF Level 9) and Doctoral degree/Doctoral degree (Professional) (NQF Level 10). There is also a qualification for teaching Grade R - Diploma in Grade R Teaching (NQF Level 6).

In the MRTEQ framework, the principles that underpin the design of programmes leading to teacher education qualifications are outlined. Within these principles, reference to inclusive education is made in that the policy states: “Inclusive education forms an important aspect of both general pedagogical knowledge and specialised pedagogical content knowledge” (DHET, 2015, p. 10). In addition, the policy states the following with regards to the knowledge mix within Bachelor of Education, Postgraduate Certificate in Education, and Advanced Certificate in Teaching degrees: “All...graduates must be knowledgeable about inclusive education and skilled in identifying and addressing barriers to learning, as well as in curriculum differentiation to address the needs of individual learners within a grade” (DHET, 2015, p. 23, p. 29 and p. 37).

Despite this requirement, teachers lack specialised knowledge in many of the key areas of disability, including education for learners who are visually impaired, D/deaf and hard of hearing, and have intellectual disabilities (DBE, 2014b). Civil society advocates for the right to education have indicated that there is a chronic and severe lack of teachers skilled in meeting the educational needs of learners with disabilities (Human Rights Watch, 2015; Fish Hodgson

& Khumalo, 2016). In addition, it is unclear to what extent teacher education qualifications offered at the 23 schools of education at universities and universities of technology address the impairment-specific needs of learners with SPSII.

In the informal sector, NGOs and DPOs offer impairment specific skills to caregivers and teachers. For example, Optima college under the aegis of the South African National Council for the Blind offers orientation and mobility instruction. Sign Language Education and Development (SLED) offers courses for teachers in using sign language within the national curriculum at an NQF Level 4 and 5 based on the Unit Standards accredited by the ETDP SETA, and Cape Mental Health offers a range of courses for people with intellectual disability and courses for caregivers in special care centres.

With a few notable exceptions, such as the Deaf Education programmes at the University of the Witwatersrand amongst others, there are minimal impairment-specific skills housed in the formal teacher education sector. The DHET has recognised this and set up three centres of excellence for the development of teacher qualifications for specialised teachers who are equipped to deal with impairment specific skills. These are the University of Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Pretoria specialising in neurodevelopmental disorders, Deaf studies and visual impairment respectively.

Considering the above evidence that teachers lack the necessary skills that empower them to cater for learners with varying needs, this analysis will serve to understand better the current situation of teacher education offered throughout South Africa.

## **1.4 Specific aims**

The overarching aim of this study is to gain an overview of the currently available teacher education resources specifically focused on teaching learners with SPSII. This is done through an examination of the provision for such teachers in:

- ▶ Formal, accredited teacher education in existing programmes;
- ▶ Informal teacher education run by NGOs and DPOs; and



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- ▶ The three centres of excellence at the University of Pretoria, University of the Witwatersrand and University of Johannesburg.

In light of the above aim, this study addressed the following research question:

*What teacher education addressing the educational needs of learners with SPSII is available in South Africa?*

**Section**

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## SECTION 2

# Research methods

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This section discusses the research methods utilised in this study. It describes the data collection and analysis procedures and ethical guidelines followed.

### 2.1 Data collection

For this study data were collected from three sources:

- (i) A review of university faculty handbooks;
- (ii) Online surveys with deans of education at South African universities and directors of NGOs and DPOs that have a specific focus on disabilities, and
- (iii) Interviews with centres of excellence at the University of Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg.

#### 2.1.1 Review of university handbooks

The first step in our data collection was to review university faculty handbooks for the 23 universities and universities of technology that offer teacher education programmes in South Africa. More specifically, we reviewed handbooks available

on institution websites with information on teacher education at universities and universities of technology, using a matrix with the following information<sup>1</sup>:

University/ university of technology	Qualification	NQF level	Specialisations	Length of course
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In the first step of the review the matrix focused on all available teacher education at the institution. In the second step of the review, the teacher education that focused specifically on the educational needs learners with SPSII, inclusive education and/or teaching learners with barriers to learning was identified in a separate matrix. While the focus of this study is on teacher education addressing the educational needs of learners with SPSII, we decided to broaden our focus to include inclusive education and teaching learners who experience barriers to learning more generally given the overlap between these areas, and given that teacher education that specifically focuses on severe to profound disabilities is limited.

In identifying this teacher education we looked for the following keywords in relation to the qualifications and specialisations listed in handbooks: disability, impairment, diversity, barriers to learning, inclusion, inclusive education, learning/learner support, learning/learner needs, visual impairment, blind, low vision, intellectual impairment/disability, hearing impairment, hearing loss, D/deaf, hard of hearing, special needs, South African Sign Language, braille, Deaf education and remedial education. In the final step of the review we collated all the teacher education focused on the educational needs of learners with SPSII (referred to as impairment-specific training), inclusive education and/or teaching learners with barriers to learning (referred to collectively as inclusive education).

### 2.1.2 Online surveys

After reviewing the university handbooks, we then went on to conduct online surveys with deans of education at universities and universities of technology as well as directors of NGOs and DPOs using the SurveyMonkey platform. SurveyMonkey is an online survey development software for the creation and management of customisable surveys. In recruiting the deans and directors we contacted them telephonically and by email to invite them to participate in an

<sup>1</sup> Initially we also set out to include information on whether teacher education was offered face-to-face or online. However, this information was often not stated in the university handbooks and we therefore made the decision to not include it.

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online survey regarding the availability of teacher education. Those interested in participating were asked to sign a consent form. After signing the consent form, they were directed to the online survey via a weblink. The first online survey conducted with a dean of education and director of an NGO/DPO served as a pilot. The two participants were asked to provide brief feedback on their experience of completing the survey. They both responded positively and thus no changes to the surveys were made.

As noted above, given the limited training available that specifically focuses on teaching learners with SPSII, we chose to ask questions related to inclusive education and teaching learners who experience barriers to learning more generally. Thus, questions in the online surveys focused on teacher training on inclusive education and/or impairment-specific education, including full qualifications, modules and short courses. In addition, the survey asked questions related to the participants views on the level of skills teachers gain from teacher education in preparing them to teach learners with disabilities.

We contacted deans of education at 23 universities and universities of technology and 13 directors of NGOs and DPOs. We received responses from 6 deans and 7 directors. Given the low response rate we chose to combine the data from the online surveys with the review of the university handbooks and the data from the centre of excellence interviews, and to analyse these data collectively.

### 2.1.3 Interviews with centres of excellence

Interviews were conducted with individuals from the centre of excellence at the University of Johannesburg (specialising in neurodevelopmental disorders) and the centre of excellence at the University of Pretoria (specialising in visual impairment). Unfortunately we were not able to secure an interview with the centre of excellence at the University of the Witwatersrand (specialising in Deaf studies)

An electronic letter of information and consent form was sent out to the principal investigators on the abovementioned projects. Those who agreed to participate returned the signed consent form. One participant from the University of Johannesburg (UJ) centre of excellence and two from the University of Pretoria (UP) centre of excellence were interviewed. The UJ interview was conducted via Skype and the UP interview was face-to-face. Each interview

was roughly one hour in length and 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. Questions focused on the courses and programmes offered by the centre of excellence. After the interviews were completed they were transcribed verbatim.

## 2.2 Data analysis

As noted above, the data from the the three different sources (university handbooks review, online surveys, and interviews with centres of excellence) were collated and analysed together. A combination of thematic analysis and descriptive statistics analysis was used. Thematic analysis is a process of methodically classifying, putting together and providing an understanding of the themes in a particular dataset, where a theme refers to a patterned response within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With descriptive statistics the basic features of the data are described through simple summaries about the sample and the measures (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002).

### 2.2.1 Categories of analysis

The first step in the analysis procedure was to categorise formal teacher education offered at universities and universities of technology according to the following categories:

- › Type of training: Whether the training is a full qualification, a module or short learning programme that falls within a full qualification, a theme across the qualification, or a short course.
  - A full qualification refers to a full university qualification (for example, a Bachelor of Education or a Postgraduate Certificate in Education).
  - A module refers to a component that falls within a full qualification. University qualifications are made up of a number of modules which students need to complete in order to be awarded the degree.
  - A short learning programme refers to a non-credit bearing or credit-bearing programme available all year round that is often designed to specifically meet the demands of business and industry
  - A theme refers to a specific topic that is a theme throughout a full qualification.

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- A short course refers to an unaccredited course that falls outside of a full qualification which may or may not accrue continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) points.
- Length of training: How much time the university gives students to complete a full qualification.
- National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level: What NQF level the training falls on.
- Inclusive education focus: Teacher training that focuses on addressing barriers to learning so as to ensure that the education system accommodates all learners, including those with disabilities.
- Impairment-specific focus: Teacher training that specifically looks at the impairment specific needs of learners with disabilities.

While we make a distinction here between inclusive education and impairment-specific training, we are not suggesting that the two are mutually exclusive. However, given that the focus of this report is on the impairment specific needs of learners with SPSII, it is important for us to highlight where training focuses more specifically on teaching such learners.

We are also aware of the debate as to whether inclusive education should be infused into general teacher training, or offered as separate qualifications. Forlin (2010) notes the need to move from considering inclusion as a separate course toward presenting it as embedded within the teacher education curriculum, within all topic areas. However, from the data collected from the university handbooks we are not able to determine the level to which inclusive education is infused into general training.

In the second step of the analysis procedure we took data from the online surveys with the directors of NGOs and DPOs, regarding informal teacher education offered through NGOs and DPOs that specifically focus on disabilities. These data were categorised according to the following categories: disability type and focus of training:

- Disability type - which disability the organisation focuses on.
- Focus of the training - The specific focus of the training offered.

In the third step of the analysis, we used descriptive statistics to analyse the above-mentioned data on formal and informal teacher education focused on

inclusive education and/or impairment-specific training. With regards to formal university training, we analysed the following:

- › The number of schools of education that offer formal teacher training.
- › The number of full qualifications, modules, short learning programmes, themes and short courses.
- › Whether the training offered is considered initial teacher education (Bachelor of Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education) or CPAD (Advanced Certificate, Advanced Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, Bachelor of Education Honours degree, Master Degree and Doctoral Degree), as per the MRTEQ.
- › How many full qualifications, modules, short learning programmes, themes and short courses focus on inclusive education, and how many focus on impairment-specific training.
- › The specific focus of the inclusive education or impairment-specific training.

With regards to informal training offered through NGOs and DPOs, we analysed the following:

- › The number of courses offered at the NGOs and DPOs.
- › The specific focus of the training.

In the final step of the analysis, we thematically analysed the transcripts from the centre of excellence interviews and from the open-ended questions asked in the online survey with the Deans of Education and directors of NGOs and DPOs. Specifically, the focus here was on the participants' views on teacher education specific to teaching learners with SPSII.

We have anonymised our data through the use of codes for each of the participant groups:

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University Dean	UD
Director of non-governmental organisation or disabled persons organisation	NGO
Centre of Excellence member	COE

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### 2.3 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: 486/2017). In all research, researchers need to abide by the ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and beneficence (the benefits must outweigh the risks; Willig, 2008). This study adhered to the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association [WMA], 2013).

**Section**

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# SECTION 3

# Findings

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In this section we present the findings of this report, focusing on teacher education specific to inclusive education and impairment-specific education that is offered at universities and universities of technology as well as through NGOs and DPOs. In addition, we discuss the views of the participants in this study in relation to teacher education focused on teaching learners with disabilities.

## 3.1 Teacher education at universities and universities of technology

Out of the 23 universities and universities of technology included in this study, 16 offer teacher education that has an inclusive education or impairment-specific focus. In the tables below we illustrate the number of teacher education opportunities in terms of:

- ▶ Type – full qualification, module, short learning programme, theme and short course;
- ▶ Focus – inclusive education and impairment-specific;
- ▶ Initial teacher education and CPAD (see Appendix A for a more detailed overview of these findings).

**Table 1: Type by number of trainings**

Type of training	Number of trainings	Number of universities
Full qualification	23	7
Module	31	13
Short learning programme	4	1
Theme	4	2
Short courses	8	2

**Table 2: Type by initial teacher education/CPAD**

Type of training	Initial teacher education/CPAD	Number of trainings	Number of universities
Full qualification	Initial teacher education	2	1
	CPAD	20	7
Module	Initial teacher education	17	8
	CPAD	14	8
Short learning programme	Initial teacher education	4	0
	CPAD	0	0
Theme	Initial teacher education	4	2
	CPAD	0	0

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**Table 3: Type by focus of training**

Type of training	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus
Initial teacher education full qualification	0	2
CPAD	9	11
Module	27	4
Short learning programme	4	1
Theme	3	1
Short courses	3	5

Out of the 23 universities included in this study, 16 offer teacher education that has an inclusive education or impairment-specific focus. Out of these 70 offerings, 22 are full qualifications offered at 7 universities, 31 are modules within full qualifications offered at 13 universities, 4 are short learning programmes within full qualifications offered at 1 university, 4 are themes within full qualifications offered at 2 universities, and 8 are short courses offered at 2 universities. As regards the full qualifications, 2 are initial teacher education, and 20 are CPAD. With regards to the modules within full qualifications, 16 are initial teacher education and 14 are CPAD. In total, there are 27 types of trainings (full qualification, module, short learning programme and theme) for initial teacher education and 35 for CPAD.

In terms of the focus of this training: 2 of the initial teacher education full qualifications have an impairment-specific focus (Deaf education), while none have an inclusive education focus. Nine of the CPAD full qualifications have an inclusive education focus and 11 have an impairment-specific focus. Twenty-seven of the modules within a full qualification have an inclusive education focus and 4 have an impairment-specific focus. With the short learning programmes, 4 focus on inclusive education and none on impairment-specific training, and with the themes, 3 focus on inclusive education and 1 on impairment-specific training. Lastly, with the short courses, 2 focus on inclusive education and 6 on impairment-specific training. In total, across the different types of trainings, 47 have an inclusive education focus and 23 an impairment-specific focus.

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While almost 70 percent (16 out of 23) of the universities and universities of technology offer teacher education that has an inclusive education or impairment-specific focus, the majority of this training - particularly with respect to the full qualifications (91 percent - 20 out of 22 trainings) - is offered at a CPAD level. The implication of this is that teachers who only have their Bachelor of Education or Postgraduate Certificate of Education are not being properly equipped with the skills to teach learners with disabilities.

In addition, most of the available training, particularly with respect to modules within full qualifications, looks at inclusive education and might neglect impairment-specific education: 87 percent (27 out of 31) of modules focus on inclusive education, with topics such as scholastic assessment in inclusive classrooms, learner support, barriers to learning and learner diversity (see Appendix A for a more detailed overview). While there are full qualifications that have an impairment-specific focus (62 percent - 13/21 trainings), the majority of this training (85 percent - 11/13 trainings) is offered at a CPAD level. In addition, these qualifications appear to focus on disabilities more generally; for example, looking at specialisations such as special needs education. For the most part, severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments is not adequately covered in teacher education: There is only one university developing a qualification in visual impairment studies, and one university that focuses on Deaf education. There appears to be no training specific to severe to profound intellectual disabilities, although there is one university that focuses on neurodevelopmental disorders of a less severe nature.

In the following section, we look at the availability of teacher education in NGO and DPO settings.

### **3.2 Teacher education at non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and disabled people's organisations (DPOs)**

In the table below we illustrate the teacher education offered by NGOs and DPOs to schools and teachers:

- › Disability – what disability the NGO/DPO focuses on
- › Focus of training – the specific focus of the training offered

All of the training is offered as short courses.

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**Table 5: Teacher education at NGOs and DPOs**

NGO/DPO	Disability	Focus of training
BlindSA	Visual impairment	Communication methods for blind and partially sighted persons Reading and writing in braille Orientation and mobility training
South African National Council for the Blind	Visual impairment	Braille training Screen-reader training Training of braille unit staff
Down Syndrome South Africa	Down syndrome	Understanding down syndrome How to include learners with down syndrome in the classroom
Epilepsy SA	Epilepsy	What is epilepsy Myths and misunderstanding Seizure management Disability sensitisation
AutismSA	Autism	Communication and teaching methods Positive behaviour support and managing difficult behaviour Sensory difficulties Observation techniques and assessment Typical development Augmentative and alternative communication Multi-level teaching - differentiation

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Cape Mental Health	Intellectual disability	Service provision for children with severe to profound intellectual disability Inclusive education
DeafSA	Deafness	Career choices and life skills Inclusive education

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The NGOs/DPOs surveyed in this study focus on visual impairment, Down syndrome, Epilepsy, Autism, intellectual disability and Deafness. A variety of training is offered at these NGOs/DPOs specific to each disability including, for example, communication methods for visually impaired persons, including learners with Down Syndrome, what is epilepsy, augmentative and alternative communication, and inclusive education. All of this training is offered in schools and/or to teachers.

NGOs and DPOs provide a platform from which to offer impairment-specific training, which is important in light of the fact that there is a dearth of this kind of training offered at universities and universities of technology, particularly with respect to SPSII. However, while teachers will no doubt benefit from this training, they may not have the motivation to participate in it, particularly if it is not accredited and/or if it does not provide them with CPTD points. As one study participant noted: *"There needs to be internal motivation from individuals in order to acquire skills"* (NGO5).

The feeling among NGOs/DPOs was that teachers benefitted from their courses by gaining insight and skills in working with a specific disability:

*Many participants have expressed that the training has informed them about many things that they were not aware of. Many had prior to the training felt that they were not equipped to teach children with Down syndrome but after the training were more positive on implementing the training* (NGO3).

However, cash-strapped organisations are not able to offer courses on a regular basis unless they are suitably compensated. In addition, these courses are largely not accredited or recognised by the DHET as teacher education courses. They therefore would not affect employment or promotion prospects and teachers would have few incentives to do the course other than their own professionalism and desire to meet the learners' needs.



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In the following section we discuss the views of the study participants in relation to teacher education that focuses on teaching learners with SPSII.

### 3.3 Views on teacher education

There was recognition amongst the study participants that there is a lack of training that equips teachers with the necessary skills to teach learners with disabilities:

*The teachers have an awareness of inclusive practices and may be able to identify a learner with a barrier to learning with reasonable accuracy, but they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide intervention strategies other than differentiated teaching strategies (UD4).*

Where there is impairment-specific training it is generally not offered in sufficient depth at universities and universities of technology:

*This is such a large subject area that all the impairments can't be discussed - time limits in the curriculum. And the impairments that are part of the curriculum are just introductions, identifications and some support ideas - not in depth (UD2).*

While there is agreement that teachers should be trained in inclusive teaching methods, the extent to which specific educational needs require specific training on the part of teachers is contested:

*[Some] people are not happy with the idea of specialisation but I see that in the way they look at the future. We do not agree because we want more specialisation. I think that is what is ...the problems in that the teachers do not know how to .....and they need more training ... and what is going to help them is if they try and work in the specific skills (COE2).*

Learners with SPSII require the curriculum to be adapted to suit their needs. Thus, teachers need to be trained in understanding these needs and how to make appropriate additions and adaptations to the curriculum (McKenzie et al., 2018). Currently, there is a more generalist approach evident as a member of one of the centres of excellence described her training:

*We have been exposed to that [severe disability] although it is not specific to which disability exactly or how to deal with it in a more deep way. But the foundation was laid (COE1).*

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As part of a shift in South Africa towards inclusive education, much of the specialised training on teaching learners with disabilities was done away with. In commenting on this, one participant said:

*It was a grave mistake with size and shape to stop the specialised training. Most universities lost precious knowledge, skills, resources, and programmes which will be very difficult to recover. It had a negative impact on the teachers teaching at special schools (UD6).*

This highlights a need to strengthen teacher education focused on teaching learners with disabilities. Placement for teaching practice in special schools could be one way to do this:

*I think the other aspect is when they go and do the teacher practice they will go and work in some of these schools, that is part of this whole process. They will not go to your mainstream schools but will go to your special schools so that they can see if it is something they would like to go further in and of course make them aware of post graduate courses (COE2).*

Another way to strengthen teacher education is for inclusive education to become a fundamental focus, rather than an “add on” feature:

*Inclusive education (IE) is not an add on. It starts with a way of seeing and being. IE should be infused in the whole programme and not be an add on that relegates the idea to a few lectures and modules (UD6).*

Participants also felt that universities need to provide additional impairment-specific training:

*Universities can provide additional courses for SPSII that is elective modules/ courses. These courses should provide in depth training for SPSII...For a B.Ed. degree it must be compulsory to have basic knowledge and skills about learners with impairments (UD2).*

*The institutions of higher learning must make means to train such specialised skills (NGO2)*

Stakeholders like the department of basic education and NGOs/DPOs can also become more involved in the training of teachers:

*Everything can't be taught through university modules. Role players need to become involved and teach the practical implications of Inclusive education.*

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*The DBE need to play a stronger role with in-service training and starting with the youngest children at Grade R level. These teachers need assistance with supporting, identifying and intervening in possible learning barriers as early as possible (UD5).*

*Additional information may be gained during some workshops the students are expected to attend organised by a local NGO and their mentor teacher during teaching experience (UD4).*

*NGO's and DPO's are the only organisations offering training that target specific disabilities, as they are in the best position to do so (NGO3).*

NGOs/DPOs express the need for greater partnerships in order to ensure that learners with specific impairments receive the specialised education that they need:

*The institutions of higher learning must make means to train such specialised skills and that alternatively the department of education must be inclusive with regards to inside job training/teacher development programmes to up skills the staff/educators. (NGO2)*

One NGO with a specific interest in the area of severe to profound intellectual disability (SPID) saw this partnership as being a broad one that would also include early childhood development (ECD):

*Training on disability should not be the responsibility of the NGO and DPO sector only. All training offered at universities and colleges towards a qualification where persons will be working with the public should include training on disability in general including intellectual disability. Intellectual disability and CSPID [children with severe to profound intellectual disability] training should be included in all ECD courses, educator qualifications and primary health care qualifications offered (NGO6).*

This highlights the need for more collaboration between the NGO/DPO sector, higher education institutions and the department of basic education when it comes to upskilling and empowering teachers of learners with disabilities. Each of these sectors have a pivotal role to play in improving teacher education.

**Section**

**4**

## SECTION 4

# Conclusion

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In this final section we provide a summary of the findings in this report, followed by a discussion of the limitations of this small study in light of the complexity of the teacher education terrain. Lastly, we discuss the implications of this study and suggestions for future research.

### 4.1 Summary of findings

This report provides an evidence base for the currently available teacher education in South Africa that is specifically focused on teaching learners with SPSII. Our findings are as follows:

- ▶ There is a lack of teacher education at universities and universities of technology that equips teachers with the skills that are needed for inclusive education. This is called for by the MRTEQ policy which states that “graduates must be knowledgeable about inclusive education and skilled in identifying and addressing barriers to learning, as well as in curriculum differentiation to address the needs of individual learners within a grade” (DHET, 2015, p. 23, p. 29 and p. 37). There is, however, evidence that this type of training might be on the increase.
- ▶ There is minimal provision of teacher education to equip teachers to offer specialised support within the domains of vision, hearing, learning and cognition and so forth, as they are outlined in the SIAS policy (DBE,2014a)

and the *Draft National Guidelines for Resourcing an Inclusive Education System* (DBE, 2018). It appears that this provision has been reduced with adoption of an inclusive education system, perhaps on the understanding that barriers to learning arising from disability can be fully addressed through a generic approach to learner diversity.

- ▶ While there is impairment-specific training available for teachers at NGOs and DPOs, there are few incentives for teachers to complete this training, particularly if it is not accredited. The provision is currently on a minimal scale. However, the contribution of these organisations both in terms of impairment-specific teaching skills and the valuable participation of parents and disabled people cannot be overlooked. Therefore the need for partnerships with higher education and the DBE and DHET has been highlighted.

## 4.2 Study limitations

As is often the case in research, the response rate for the surveys in this study was low: out of 23 universities and universities of technology, we received responses from six deans of education in our online surveys (26 percent response rate). From the 13 NGOs and DPOs we received responses from seven directors (53.8 percent response rate). In light of this low response rate, the data from the university handbook analysis was combined with the data from the online surveys. It is thus important to highlight that the data presented in this study may not necessarily accurately represent all teacher education in South Africa. The low response rate may be a reflection of the fact that we chose to conduct online surveys, as opposed to face-to-face surveys: With face-to-face surveys there is more accountability as participants commit to being interviewed at a certain time and date. The low response rate may also be a reflection of how busy deans of education and directors of NGOs and DPOs are given their position. Further, it might reflect the low priority of teacher education for learners with SPSII in these institutions. It would therefore be worthwhile to conduct face-to-face surveys, and include other members of education faculties and NGOs/DPOs.

A second limitation of this study is that we were not always able to determine the nature of teacher education through the data we collected. For instance, a course on inclusive education may have a substantial impairment-specific focus,

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but this may not be easily determined because of a lack of common terminology when it comes to disability training. Again, face-to-face interviews may be more beneficial in this regard.

## 4.3 Implications

South Africa has several means by which teacher education can be offered. This includes university qualifications (both in initial teacher education and CPAD), short courses and training offered by NGOs and DPOs. Unfortunately these mechanisms are not being used to good effect when it comes to equipping teachers with the skills needed to teach learners with disabilities, particularly learners with SPSII. In order to understand how this might be addressed, it is useful to examine what the South African inclusive education policy requires of teachers.

SIAS (DBE, 2014a) indicates that special schools are currently the preferred placement for children with high support needs, described as:

“...access to a hostel at the school or subsidised transport to and from school depending on the distance at which they live from school. These learners also require a very low staff: learner ratio and access to high frequency and high intensity support by specialised staff and/or to specialised equipment” (DBE, 2018, p. 13).

Teachers who work in these schools are therefore required to teach specialised programmes of support and also meet the minimum requirements for inclusive education as described in MRTEQ (DHET, 2015, p. 23). However, these are not the only teachers who need to be equipped to teach learners with SPSII.

Levels of support are not intrinsically tied to the place of provision since:

“High-level support will be available at special schools but should not be seen as site restricted. In the case where a special school is not within reach, alternative measures should be in place to ensure that a learner, who has high support needs, may receive reasonable accommodation in an ordinary public school.” (DBE, 2018; p.3).

Thus, children with SPSII may find themselves in special, full service or ordinary schools where they are entitled to receive a quality education that meets their individual needs. Furthermore, children with SPSII may attend regular schools as a result of having sufficient support such that they can be classified as having

moderate to low support needs. This is clearly a shifting terrain where the level of support needed in any school depends on what is already provided within that school system. As schools strive to increase their inclusivity, this support can be expected to grow.

Thus, while **all** teachers need knowledge of inclusive education, curriculum differentiation and meeting individual learner needs, **some** teachers need in-depth knowledge about learning needs within the specialised domains identified within South African policy. A further need exists for **just-in-time** teacher education where regular school educators can access relevant additional information on strategies for teaching SPSII when the need arises, albeit with less breadth and depth than the special schools educators who deal with a specific programme of support.

#### 4.4 Suggestions for future research

In order to address teacher education for SPSII there is a need to develop a landscape of teacher education within the framework of MRTEQ that can meet the needs of learners with SPSII in specialised programmes in a range of sites. Questions such as the following need to be addressed:

1. What initial teacher education in inclusive education is required to ensure that inclusivity is practised by all teachers in all schools? Among other considerations within this question, is how disability and SPSII is presented as an issue of diversity and social justice on a par with other barriers to learning.
2. What CPAD is needed in inclusive education for teachers who were not exposed to the concepts and practice in their initial teacher education?
3. What are the prospects for initial teacher education in specific specialised programmes of support such as visual impairment if teachers are to be qualified when they enter special schools?
4. How can CPAD full courses such as the advanced diploma in education meet the need for specialisation?
5. What is the role of South African Council of Educators (SACE) endorsed CPTD courses in short courses on specialised programmes that could meet the needs of teachers in full service and regular schools?



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6. How can teachers be expected to navigate this landscape and what is the role of teacher empowerment and professional learning communities in helping them to do this?

It is anticipated that some of the answers to these questions will emerge from the current Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme (TLDCIP) funded projects<sup>1</sup> that are currently operating as a network and will share their findings toward the end of their respective projects.

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<sup>1</sup> The DHET is engaged with the TLDCIP that covers areas of Primary teacher education, TVET and Community College lecturer education, Inclusive education and Early Childhood care and education. The projects relevant to inclusive education within this programme include: (i) Teaching For All consortium (*led by the British Council*), (ii) the consortium led by VVOB (*Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance*) with Inclusive Education South Africa, (iii) Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education (PIECCE), (iv) Centre for Deaf Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, (v) Centre of Excellence at University of Pretoria focusing on Visual Impairment, (vi) Centre of Excellence at University of Johannesburg focusing on neurodevelopmental disorders, and (vii) the Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project.

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# Appendix A

### 38/ Teacher education:

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#### APPENDIX A: Teacher education at universities and universities of technology that focuses on inclusive education or impairment-specific education

University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
University of Cape Town	Module	PGCE	Diversity and inclusion (compulsory)	Special studies (compulsory)	7	1 year full-time, 2 years part-time
	Short course	NA	Education for all: Disability, diversity and inclusion		NA	6 weeks
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Theme	BEd: Foundation Phase	Inclusive education (compulsory)		7	4 years full time
	Theme	BEd: Intermediate Phase	Inclusive education (compulsory)		7	4 years full time
	Theme	BEd: Senior/FET Phase	Inclusive education (compulsory)		7	4 years full time
	Module	BEd Hons: Teaching and Learning	Inclusive education (compulsory)		8	1 year full-time, 2 years part-time

University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
University of Johannesburg	Full qualification	Advanced Diploma	Remedial education		7	1 year full-time, 2 years part-time
	Full qualification	Postgraduate Diploma	Inclusive education		8	2 years part-time
	Full qualification	Masters in Education	Inclusive education		9	Info not provided
	Short Learning Programme	BEd: Foundation Phase	Scholastic assessment in inclusive classrooms		7	4 years full-time
			Learning support in inclusive classrooms			
	Short Learning Programme	BEd: Intermediate Phase	Scholastic assessment in inclusive classrooms		7	4 years full-time
		Learning support in inclusive classrooms				





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University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
University of Johannesburg (continued)	Module	BEd: Senior/FET Phase		Addressing neuro-developmental learning needs	7	4 years full-time
	Module	BEd	Learner support		7	4 years full time
North West University	Module	BEd	Educational psychology		7	4 years full time
	Full qualification	BEd: Hons	Learner support education		8	Info not available
	Full qualification	BEd: Hons		Special needs education	8	1 year full-time 2 years part-time
	Full qualification	MEd	Learner support education		9	1-3 years
	Full qualification	PhD	Learner support education		10	2-4 years
	Full qualification	Advanced Diploma in Education		Learners with special needs	7	Info not available
	Full qualification	MEd		Special needs education	9	1-3 years
Full qualification	PhD		Special needs education	10	2-4 years	

University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
Rhodes University	Module	PGCE	Inclusive education and barriers to learning (compulsory)		7	Info not available
SoL Plaatje University	Module	BEd: Intermediate phase	Inclusive teaching and learning (compulsory)		7	4 years
	Module	BEd: Senior/FET phase	Inclusive teaching and learning (compulsory)		7	4 years
Stellenbosch University	Module	BEd	Development and learning (compulsory) Learner diversity (compulsory) Addressing diverse learning needs (compulsory)		7	Info not available



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University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
Stellenbosch University (continued)	Theme	BEEd		Cognitive impairment, deafness and blindness	7	Info not available
	Module	PGCE	Educational psychology (compulsory)		7	Info not available
	Module	BEEd: Hons	Learning challenges (compulsory) Learning support (compulsory) Learning and cognition (compulsory)		8	1 year

University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
Stellenbosch University (continued)	Module	Masters Educational psychology	Inclusive Education		9	Info not available
			Psychological support			
			Educational support: Inclusive education, assessment and support			
Tshwane University of Technology	Module	ACE: Intermediate phase	Barriers to learning		6	2 years
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	Module	BEd: Hons Educational psychology	Psycho-educational learner support		8	2 years
	Full qualification	ACE		Special needs education	6	Info not available
	Full qualification	MEd		Special needs education	9	1-3 years
	Full qualification	PhD		Special needs education	10	2-4 years



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University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
University of KwaZulu-Natal	Module	BEd: Hons Educational psychology	Addressing barriers/intro to inclusive education		8	1 year full time, 2 years part time
	Module	BEd: Foundation phase	Learning support (compulsory)		7	4 years
University of Pretoria	Module	BEd: Intermediate phase	Learning support (compulsory)		7	4 years
	Module	BEd: Hons Educational psychology	Learning diversity (elective)		8	1-3 years
	Module	BEd: Early childhood education	Learning support		7	4 years
	Full qualification	Advanced Diploma (currently being developed)		Visual impairment studies	7	Info not available

University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
University of the Western Cape	Module	BEd: Foundation phase	Inclusive education		7	Info not available
	Module	BEd: Hons Educational psychology		Special needs and support services	8	1 year
University of Zululand	Module	BEd: Hons	Educational psychology (compulsory)	Special education (elective)	8	Info not available
University of South Africa	Module	BEd	Inclusive education		7	Info not available
	Full qualification	ACE	Inclusive education		6	Info not available
	Full qualification	BEd: Hons	Inclusive education		8	Info not available
	Short course	NA	Inclusive education		NA	1 year
	Short course	NA	Augmentative and alternative communication in inclusive education		NA	Info not available



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University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
University of South Africa (continued)	Short course	NA		Braille literacy for teachers and practitioners.	NA	1 year
	Short course	NA		Facilitators of persons with hearing loss.	NA	1 year
	Short course	NA		Teaching learners with autism spectrum disorder.	NA	1 year
	Short course	NA		Teaching deaf learners	NA	1 year
	Short course	NA		Play adaptation and proper positioning in children with disabilities	NA	1 year

University	Type of training	Qualification level	Inclusive education focus	Impairment-specific focus	NQF level	Length of full qualification
University of the Witwatersrand	Full qualification	BEd		South African Sign Language	7	Info not available
	Full qualification	PGCE		South African Sign Language	7	Info not available
	Full qualification	BEd: Hons		Deaf education	8	1 year
	Full qualification	Masters		Deaf education	9	2 years full-time 4 years part-time
	Full qualification	PhD		Deaf education	10	5 years full-time 6 years part time
	Full qualification	ACE	Learners with barriers to learning and education – remedial education		6	Info not available
University of Limpopo	Full qualification					







The Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion (TEDI) project aims to empower teachers to provide quality education for learners with severe to profound sensory or intellectual impairments (SPSII) through training that is focused on inclusivity, diversity and addressing learners' impairment-specific needs. To provide an evidence base for this training, this study addresses the following research question: *What teacher education addressing the educational needs of learners with SPSII is available in South Africa?* The analysis seeks to gain an overview of the currently available teacher education resources relevant to the education of learners with SPSII and to locate this provision within the South African inclusive education policy landscape. To strengthen teacher education, an understanding of the current status of offerings that address the impairment-specific needs of learners with SPSII is necessary. This can serve as a basis for the planning of new courses and modules that will improve the quality of education and teacher skills in addressing the needs of learners with disabilities. The report also provides critical questions to guide the setting up of a landscape of teacher education to meet the needs of learners with SPSII in specialised programmes in a range of sites.



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