One day a child will build a better future.

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Special Schools as Resource Centres

Briefing Document

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Contents

Executive Summary

MIET Africa is working in partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE) to create norms and standards for Special Schools as Resource Centres (SSRC) in the Province. This briefing document will inform the creation of norms and standards by providing the contextual background and an extensive overview of provincial, national and international policy with regards to Inclusive Education (IE) and special schools as part of an IE process.

This document looks at SSRC implementation with regards to human resources provisioning and development; physical infrastructure; resources and equipment; curriculum; support structures; admission policies; multi-sectoral collaboration; and the role of families and communities. Within each of these categories, guidelines and recommendations have been collected from various national and international policy documents. In addition, to further inform the writing of this document, three existing special schools in the province were visited.

The document ends with conclusions that will assist with the creation of norms and standards. Firstly, the conclusions highlight the importance of collaboration with schools and other stakeholders in the creation of norms and standards. Input from other departments, educators, principals, union members, NGOs, learners and parents should be used to inform the new SSRC model. Similarly, the SSRC model should build on what is already working well in special schools and should be flexible enough to work in a variety of contexts.

In addition, the findings reveal that there is a significant amount of upgrading that needs to be completed in schools, particularly regarding physical infrastructure, resources and equipment. In terms of human resources, a significant number of additional staff will need to be hired, and more focus needs to be placed on providing training to educators and staff at SSRC. The norms and standards will need to specify what training will be required, and how best to deliver it. The norms and standards will also elaborate on the specific human resource provisioning that will best suit SSRC, looking in particular at the specialist staff required for the different learning programmes.

Although the KZNDoE guidelines highlight the importance of structural support in the form of district- and circuit based support teams, these structures did not appear to be functioning appropriately, as none of the

schools was aware of them. The creation and effective functioning of these structures will need to be highlighted in the norms and standards document: the relationship between these structures and the SSRC is seen by the KZNDoE as a key component of the success of IE in the province.

The briefing document provides the necessary contextual information and an extensive review of guidelines and policies with regards to the role of special schools within an IE system. The norms and standards will draw on the findings of this document to create an SSRC model in KZN that works with both full-service schools (FSS) and mainstream schools, in order to provide access to quality education for all learners.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
CBST	Circuit Based Support Team
CHRC	Canadian Human Rights Commission
DBST	District Based Support Team
DPO	Disabled People's Organisation
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education For All
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FSS	Full-service schools
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
IE	Inclusive Education
ILST	Institution Level Support Teams
KZNDoE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
LER	Learner to educator ratio
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SA DoE	South African Department of Education
SASL	South African Sign Language
SIAS	Screening, identification, assessment and support
SMT	School Management Team

SNES   Special Needs Education Services

SSRC   special schools as Resource Centres

UN   United Nations

Glossary

Assessment standards: these describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcome(s) and the ways (depth and breadth) of demonstrating their achievement. They are grade specific and show how conceptual progression will occur in a Learning Area. (SA DoE 2005b)

Assistive aids and devices: these aim to reduce disabilities which come from impairments.

Hearing aids and magnifiers are obvious examples but it can also include special chairs to help children sit at tables; trolleys to help them move around or special frames to children stand. There are also aids to communication such as picture boards and symbol charts. (UNESCO 2001)

Barriers to learning: those factors that lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, that lead to learning breakdown or that prevent learners from accessing education provision. These factors can be located within the learner, the centre of learning, the education system or in the broader social, economic and political context. (SA DoE 2005b)

Best Practices (in universal design): building practices and procedures that comply with universal design principles and provide affordable design practices that meet the needs of the widest possible range of people who use the facility. (Canadian Human Rights Commission 2006)

Children with disabilities: include those children with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities and who are oftentimes excluded from learning in schools. They are children who were born with a physical or psychological disability, or they have acquired an impairment because of illness, accidents, or other causes. Impairments may mean that children will experience difficulty seeing, hearing, or moving, and they may learn more slowly and in different ways from other children. (UNESCO 2004)

Circuit Based Support Team: is chaired by the circuit managers and is made up of all ward managers; learner support, educator support and whole school/ward development portfolio committees; and other relevant professionals from within or outside the departments. The core responsibilities of the CBST are to assist ILSTs to assess support programmes and provisioning from within the cluster/district for their learners, educators or institution, to monitor and track support and support need trends in the circuit. (SA DoE 2005b)

Curriculum: this refers to all the organised experiences that schools provide to help children learn and develop. It includes the subjects taught as well as the teaching they receive; the school environment and other activities that take place outside of the classroom. (UNESCO 2001)

Curriculum Differentiation: modifications that relate specifically to instruction or content of a curriculum. Curriculum differentiation deals with adaptation, modification and any adjustment to: i) learning, teaching and assessment environment; ii) learning, teaching and assessment techniques; iii) learning, teaching and assessment support material that enhances a learner's performance or allows at least partial participation in a learning activity; iv) structure and number of learning programmes; and v) assessment. (DoE SA 2005b)

Disability: a physical or mental condition that may be temporary or permanent and that limits a person's opportunities to take part in the community on an equal level with others (Definition from UNESCO). Disabilities include learning difficulties, speech difficulties, physical, cognitive, sensory and emotional difficulties. (Definition from World Bank)

District Based Support Teams (DBST): is chaired by the district director and is made up of all circuit managers, heads of all sections in the district, and inter-sectoral experts and members of other government departments or organisations. The core responsibilities of the DBST are to provide support, to determine support need trends and to plan, budget and programme the additional support needs for the district. (SA DoE 2005b)

Full-Service Schools (FSS): ordinary schools which are specially equipped to address a full range of barriers to learning in an inclusive education setting. In addition to their ordinary learner population they will become accessible to most learners in an area who experience barriers to learning and provide the necessary support. In the initial implementation stages these full-service schools will be models of institutional change which reflect effective inclusive cultures, policies and practices. (SA DoE 2005b)

General Education and Training Certificate (GETC): Grade R-9. Divided into 3 phases: Foundation (Gr R-3), Intermediate (Gr 4-6) and Senior Phase (Gr 7-9). (SA DoE 2005b)

"Inclusive education" or **"inclusive learning**": refers to the inclusion and teaching of **ALL** children in formal or non-formal learning environments without regard to gender, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, cultural, religious, or other characteristics. (UNESCO 2004)

Institution Level Support Teams (ILST): teams established by institutions in general, further and higher education, as institution-level support mechanism whose primary function is to put in place co-ordinated learner and educator support services. The teams have different names in difference provinces such as Site Based Support Teams, Teacher Support teams, etc. (SA DoE 2005b)

Learning outcome: a description of what (knowledge, skills and values) learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of the GET band. (SA DoE 2005b)

"Learner-friendly": [this] means placing the child firmly at the centre of the learning process. A learning-friendly environment is one in which children benefit not only from learning by themselves, but also from the learning of others whose needs are also taken into consideration. It also is an environment in which teachers are helped and empowered to learn, in which they use and adapt new teaching methods, and in

which parents and community members are actively encouraged to participate in helping their children to learn and their schools to function. (UNESCO 2004)

Mainstreaming: placement of the learner with specific educational needs in a particular kind of system or integrating him/her into the existing system. The learner is provided with extra support if necessary in order to "fit in" or be integrated into the "normal" classroom routine. This system focuses on the learner in terms of the changes that should take place in the learner in order to "fit in". (SA DoE 2005b)

Professional Specialist Support Staff: those who address the provision of health, therapeutic, psychological and social support to enhance learners' capacity to achieve maximum benefit from learning experiences. (SA DoE 2005b)

Special schools: these schools are usually for children who have a particular impairment or disability. For example, in many countries there are schools solely for deaf children; those with visual impairments or those with intellectual disability.

Special Schools as Resource Centres: these would be special schools which are transformed to fulfil a wider function of accommodating learners who have high intensity support needs, as well as providing a range of support services to mainstream schools, full-service schools as part of the DBST. (SA DoE 2005b)

Support programmes: [these] refer to structured interventions delivered at schools and in classrooms within specific time frames. The support programmes would mainly consist of curriculum support but could also be support for educators and managers. Support programmes could provide for staff time and expertise (consultation, training, mentoring, therapeutic intervention) as well as physical and material resources (Transport, assistive devices, teaching and learning materials, ramps and accessibility features). (SA DoE 2005b)

1. Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT

In February 2010 the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, in partnership with MIET Africa, embarked on a project to create norms and standards that will be used to guide the development of Special Schools as Resource Centres in the province. SSRC are part of the national DoE plan for Inclusive Education (IE). Within this model, a continuum of support is provided, whereby learners receive basic levels of support in mainstream schools, higher levels of support in full-service schools, and the most intense level of support at SSRC for learners who experience severe barriers to learning.

The SSRC norms and standards will ensure that SSRC:

- respond to the demands of Education White Paper 6 (EWP6);

- provide value for money;

- reflect international best practice;

- are aligned to Departmental policy.

There are three phases to the project. Phase 1 consists of the creation of a briefing document that will then inform the establishment of norms and standards for SSRC in the province. (This report provides the briefing document for the first step of Phase 1.) The eight sites selected as part of the project will then be assessed, based on the agreed norms and standards. Eventually these norms and standards will lead to the creation of a detailed building design for SSRC.

This briefing document aims to conceptualise how the new SSRC will operate. It draws on the experience and systems used in current KZNDoE special schools and on local and international good practice and policy. It draws particularly on the Department's vision for the new SSRC, much of which is outlined in *EWP6.*

The report looks specifically at SSRC implementation with regards to:

- human resources development and provision;

- physical infrastructure;

- resources and equipment;

- curriculum;

- support structures;

- admission policies;

- multi-sectoral collaboration;

- the roles of families and communities.

By examining these vital components, this briefing document will explore how the new SSRC model will operate.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

The report is a combination of a literature review, policy audit and findings from visits to three special schools in KZN. Section 2 will outline the methodology used.

Section 3 provides the contextual background, detailing what is meant by "learners who experience barriers to learning", and also provides the historical background and the current status of education in South Africa.

Section 4 discusses Inclusive Education, looking particularly at the South African IE system as outlined in *EWP6*.

Section 5 provides information on relevant South African and international legislation and policies with regards to education for all.

In Section 6, a proposed SSRC implementation strategy is provided in detail. It looks at significant components of SSRC and outlines recommendations for SSRC based on international and national policies and literature. These are also considered in light of the current situation in special schools in KZN, based on findings from school visits.

Section 7 provides conclusions that will assist with interpreting the briefing document that will in turn feed into the establishment of norms and standards.

2.   Methodology

The background research for this study is derived from various policy documents, research papers and development reports that look at the key issues related to IE and the role of special schools. This review considers both international and South African literature, but delves more deeply into South African documents and policies. In particular, a considerable amount of policy and guidelines from the SA DoE is reviewed to gain a clear picture of the Department's vision for the SSRC model.

This desk review is intended to provide the contextual background for the development of IE and to inform the design of SSRC as part of the South African IE system, by looking at relevant policies, examples and research related to the changing face of Special Education and the use of special schools within an inclusive system.

Additional research was done for this report through the use of observations and focus group discussions with educators in three existing special schools in the province. The school visits and focus group discussions were held in June 2010. The discussion guide can be found in the annexure at the end of this document.

In each school, between six and eight educators participated in the discussion, which focused on their experiences at their school, and about what would need to happen in the school to convert it to an SSRC. In one school, the educators were unable to meet in the discussion group, so they instead submitted a report on the focus group questions. Principals also provided information on the current status of the school with regards to human resource provisioning, physical infrastructure and resources available at the school.

The findings from these visits will be used to provide contextual information on the current status of special schools, looking particularly at what is working well but also at where the schools currently fall short of national DoE SSRC recommendations.

From the list of eight pilot schools suggested by KZNDoE, three schools were selected based on their geographic location, their current level of resourcing, and the learner needs that are addressed in the school.

- Regarding geographic location: one school is in an urban area, one in a peri-urban area, and from a rural area.

- Regarding level of resourcing: one school is well-resourced, one has an average level of resourcing, and the third is poorly resourced.

- Regarding learning programmes: one school caters for learners with behavioural problems; one school provides support to learners with severe mental challenges; and the other school supports learners with physical challenges.

As is the case for all special schools in the province, all three are Section 21 schools.

3.   Contextual Background

This section looks at the contextual background related to education for learners who experience barriers to learning in South Africa. It first looks into the different barriers that are experienced by learners, and then provides a brief background on the history of South African education and the current situation. This information is necessary in showing why the new SSRC model is being developed, and what issues it will attempt to address in providing quality education to learners who experience severe barriers to learning.

3.1   LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Before delving deeper into the contextual background for the report, it is important that the term "learners who experience barriers to learning" is clearly defined. According to *EWP6*, there is specific terminology that should be used with regards to learners. These terms recognise that barriers to learning exist primarily within the learning system, rather than within the individual learners (SA DoE 2001).

The terminology that should be used is "learners who experience barriers to learning and development" rather than "learners with special education needs", or "learners with mild to severe learning difficulties" (SA DoE 2001). The terms "disability" and "impairments" should be retained when referring specifically to learners whose barriers to learning and development are rooted in organic/medical causes, either physical or mental.

Furthermore, "people-first" terminology should be used, such as "people who are blind, children with hearing loss, people living with HIV/AIDS," etc. (SA DoE 2005a). Part of creating an effective IE system requires a change in mindset among all stakeholders towards a *people-first* approach, and the belief in the educability

of all children - regardless of their social affiliations or physical characteristics (Govinda 2009). The first step to achieve this is to change how the issue is talked about.

Barriers to learning are not necessarily disabilities which exist in the learner, but also be located within the site of learning, within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context (SA DoE 2005a). The systematic barriers to learning identified by the SA DoE (2005a) include:

- poverty;

- ideology;

- physical inaccessibility to schools;

- an inflexible curriculum;

- inappropriate language and communication channels;

- lack of or inappropriate transport;

- lack of basic services and infrastructure.

Other factors which impact learning needs of learners as individuals include:

- physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments;

- psycho-social disturbances;

- differences in intellectual ability;

- particular life experiences;

- socio-economic deprivation;

- diseases and health concerns, such as HIV and AIDS.

Barriers to learning may arise from bodily impairments or from deprivation, e.g. malnutrition, poverty, poor health care (UNESCO 2001). They can also arise from socio-economic and psycho-social situations in the home environment. The negative effects of barriers can be reduced if children have the opportunity to

interact with peers in their community, are able to experience a range of environments, and are taught new skills (UNESCO 2001).

3.2 THE IMPACT OF APARTHEID

In creating an SSRC model for KZN it is necessary to consider the history of South Africa. The historical context of the country not only impacts on the current situation of education, but also on the potential success of current policies and models that are implemented.

The Apartheid era was fraught with inequality, including in the treatment of people who experienced barriers to interacting fully in society. Apartheid was institutionalised in all aspects of life, including education. There were separate education departments that were governed by specific legislation and which were fragmented along racial and ethnic lines (Engelbrecht 2006). Altogether there were 17 separate, racially designated Departments of Education under the Apartheid system (SA DoE 2005b).

During Apartheid, 20 per cent of learners with disabilities were accommodated in special schools (SA DoE 2001). The Apartheid system not only divided by race, but also by ability: children with physical and mental disabilities were separated from other learners (Engelbrecht 2006). As a result, separate educational facilities for children with special needs were designed according to the type of disability (SA DoE 2005b). This model placed the deficiency within the individual, and justified social inequalities based on biological inequalities (Engelbrecht 2006). In addition, little was done by mainstream schools to adapt teaching methods for children and youth who experienced barriers to learning (SA DoE 2005b).

The Special Schools Act passed in 1948, institutionalised exclusionary practices and created a belief amongst teachers that teaching children who experienced barriers to learning was beyond their area of expertise (Engelbrecht 2006). This acted to further discriminate against learners with disabilities, and create a system of embedded inequality.

3.3 THE CURRENT SITUATION

After the democratic elections of 1994, the new government committed itself to the transformation of education, and to promote the principle of education as a basic human right. Inclusive Education was

promoted as an educational strategy that could contribute to a democratic society and help right some of the wrongs of Apartheid (Englebrecht 2006).

In 2007 there were 408 special schools across the country, and 91 280 learners identified nationally as having special needs (SA DoE 2007). Special schools currently provide education services to learners who require intense levels of support, but also accommodate learners who require less support and could potentially be in mainstream schools (SA DoE 2001).

There are several concerns about special schools and how they are currently set up. These include:

Urban location of special schools

Special schools are often located in more urban and more affluent areas (UNESCO 2001, SA DoE 2007). This is often the case because such areas can support the schools with resources and specialised and well-educated teachers, whereas poor, rural areas are less able to do so. This may result in learners having to go to school far from their family homes, where they are separated from their communities and their peers (UNESCO 2001).

Less interaction with others

When learners who experience barriers to learning are separated from their peers, they have less opportunity to interact and socialise. This in turn means that there is less opportunity to learn through interaction, or participate in the life of the community (UNESCO 2001). In addition, there is less opportunity to foster tolerance and a positive attitude toward inclusion among mainstream learners.

Discrimination

Educating learners who experience barriers to learning in separate schools can further stigmatise and cause others to discriminate against them (UNESCO 2001). This is partially due to the lack of interaction with their peers, and separation from their communities. Including learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools, helps to create positive attitudes about disability and differences among peers and educators (Avramidis, et al 2000). Thus, in the long run inclusive schools can help to create a more inclusive society (Taylor ND).

4.   Inclusive Education

Over the past two decades there has been a marked movement both globally and nationally toward creating systems of inclusive education. South Africa has strongly committed itself to creating inclusive systems of education in every province. This section will serve as an introduction to the concept of Inclusive Education, and the strategies adopted for IE implementation, looking particularly at those used in KZN.

4.1   INTRODUCTION TO IE

UNESCO defines Inclusive Education as "a process intended to respond to students' diversity by increasing their participation and reducing exclusion within and from education" (from www.unesco.org). Inclusion encompasses attendance, participation and achievement of all students, with particular attention to those who are excluded or at risk of being marginalised, and those who experience barriers to learning. IE strategies are aimed at providing quality education to all students, regardless of their individual interests and needs.

In recent years, the appropriateness of separate systems of education has been challenged from both a human rights perspective and from the view of effectiveness. Although the international movement for a time focused on mainstreaming (whereby learners were integrated into the existing system, and were provided with the necessary support to fit into the normal classrooms), this was seen as unsuccessful. It was not accompanied by changes in the organisation of mainstream schools, curricula and teaching and learning strategies. So mainstreaming did not create a fundamental change in the system overall, and learners who experienced barriers to learning did not receiving the support they needed (UNESCO 2005).

 It is now recognised more widely that difficulties experienced by learners result not from individual problems, but rather from the rigid teaching methods and organisation of schools (UNESCO 2005). The "disability" is *not in the individual*, but rather is a result of the *inability of the system* to address the needs of all learners. This reflects a shift from seeing barriers to learning only in medical terms, but rather as seeing them as existing in the system (SA DoE 2005a).

According to UNESCO, IE is "a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning." UNESCO goes on to further define IE as:

> *A process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing the exclusion within and from education. (UNESCO 2005, 13)*

This definition is significant because it identifies IE as a *process* rather than as a *static policy*. Through inclusion and participation, the IE process works towards minimising barriers to learning by changing attitudes, behaviours, teaching methods, curricula and the environment, in order to meet the needs of all learners (SA DoE 2001).

IE systems must work to create education structures, systems and learning methodologies that meet the needs of all learners, because all learners are capable of learning (SA DoE 2001). Furthermore, IE transforms education systems and learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners, and to encourage opportunities for equal participation (UNESCO 2005).

4.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF IE

There are several significant guiding principles that provide the foundation for any IE system. The principles highlighted are derived mainly from UNESCO and SA DoE policies.

Human right to education

Education systems which are truly inclusive must be built upon the recognition that education is a basic human right that every human being is entitled to, regardless of his or her level of ability. Every child has the right to a free and compulsory education that is equal, inclusive and non-discriminatory (UNESCO 2005). Thus, an IE system must recognise that:

> *Education is, first and foremost, a human right of learning how to live, which implies to equip each child, teenager and youth with means and fundamental notions that enable him or her to understand the surrounding world and to behave as a responsible individual. This in turn demands*

that all stakeholders develop faith in the educability of all children irrespective of their social
background or physical characteristics (Govinda 2009, 22).

In South Africa the IE system also represents the promotion of the democratic values of equality and human rights that are enshrined in the South African Constitution (Engelbrecht 2006). Through IE, children are able to develop to their full potential with a sense of dignity and self worth.

Learner-centred approach to teaching and learning

The IE system requires a focus on preparing schools so that they can reach out to all children, rather than focusing on preparing children to fit into existing schools (Govinda 2009). IE is therefore based on the principle that all learners *can succeed* - in their own time, and with the necessary support. The learner is placed firmly in the centre of the learning process, and schools are environments where children are empowered to learn, and teaching methods are adapted to meet the needs of learners (UNESCO 2004).

Rather than withdrawing learners from the classroom for specialised individual interventions, as much as possible they should receive the necessary support within the classroom. When necessary, learners with high levels of support needs should be accommodated at SSRC, or additional support should be offered to schools through a support programme (SA DoE 2007).

A learner-centred approach also works to develop learners' strengths and empower them to become active participants in the learning process (SA DoE 2001). IE is therefore about empowering learners so that they are able to reach their full potential -in an environment that provides them with the necessary levels of support.

Curriculum differentiation

The principle of flexibility and variation of content, approaches, structures and strategies is similar to the principle of learner-centred teaching and learning (UNESCO 2005). Flexibility means that schools must ensure that all learners are able to access the curriculum, and that assessments are learner-friendly and adapted to the individual needs of learners. It is also necessary to rely on local context and culture in creating IE systems, and to ensure that the system is appropriate for the context in which it is being implemented (Govinda 2009).

Methods of flexibility and variation will be discussed in great detail in Section 7 of this document.

Participation and social integration

Equitable quality participation of all learners is a necessary component of IE. This participation is not only in academics, but also in social and sporting activities in schools (SA DoE 2007). IE therefore ensures that learners are able to participate actively and fully in all aspects of school life, not only in the academic aspects. This represents a move toward provisioning education for learners based on the intensity of support they need in any given context (SA DoE 2005a).

Inclusion as a process

As mentioned above, IE is a process rather than a static policy. It involves the process of increasing the participation of learners in all aspects of school life, including curricula, cultures and communities of local schools (Govinda 2009). As a process, it is constantly evolving and responding to specific communities, schools and individuals (SA DoE 2005a).

Involvement of family and community

A final principle of IE is the importance of involving parents/caregivers and the community in the life and services of the school (SA DoE 2007). Families should be involved in all decisions made regarding the education of their children. Similarly, IE should work to include and to educate the community and families in school activities. Involvement of the community also encourages early identification and assessment of, and education programmes for, learners who face barriers to learning (SA DoE 2001).

5. Relevant Policies and Agreements

5.1 INTERNATIONAL POLICIES AND AGREEMENTS

There are several international policies and agreements - to which South Africa is a signatory - that speak about the right of children to receive a quality education, and particularly the rights of marginalised children. It is necessary to highlight these agreements as the norms and standards created for SSRC must be in line with these international declarations.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

This Declaration demands the right to free and compulsory elementary education for all children. It also ensures the right of children not to be discriminated against, and states that children with disabilities should have:

> *Effective access to and receive education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development (article 23).*

Furthermore, Article 29 states that educational development of an individual is the central aim and that education should allow children to reach their full potential in terms of creative, emotional and cognitive capacities.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975)

This states that people with disabilities have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. It declares that:

> *Disabled persons whatever the origin, nature and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies that first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and as full as possible (Article 3).*

This further highlights the fact that children with disabilities - as is the case with all learners who experience barriers to learning - have the right to access quality education, and are as entitled to all other rights as their fellow citizens.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

This provides an even stronger call for the equal education opportunities for children who experience barriers to learning by ensuring that all children have the right to receive education without discrimination on any grounds. Furthermore, it states that the education of children with disabilities should aim to helping them achieve high levels of social integration and individual development.

Speaking specifically about children with disabilities, the document states that:

Recognising the special needs of a disabled child, assistance shall be provided to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education conducive to the child achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development (Article 23).

Furthermore, the Convention states that any governments who sign the agreement must ensure that the same rights apply to all children irrespective of their impairments or environments.

UN Education for All (EFA) (1990)

The EFA was established at the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All in 1990. The EFA agreement recognised that the inclusion agenda should be an integral element of the whole EFA movement (UNESCO 2005). The document states that:

All children have the right to access basic education of good quality.

Furthermore, the EFA dictates the creation of environments in schools and in basic education programmes in which children are both able and enabled to learn (UNESCO 2005).

The UN Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993)

This document affirms that all children, youth and adults have equal rights to accessing quality education. It states that education should be provided in integrated school settings. According to Rule 6 of the Standard Rules:

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

The Standard Rules are important because not only do they state that learners with disabilities have the right to equal education opportunities, but they also state that these opportunities should be available in integrated settings.

Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education/ Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO 1994)

The Salamanca Statement provides a framework for moving policy and practice forward with regards to education for learners who experience barriers to learning. It is arguably the most significant international document that speaks about special education (UNESCO 2005). In the statement, it is made clear that

> *Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. (Article 2)*

Thus, the Salamanca Statement further emphasises the movement of policy toward Inclusive Education.

It also says that educational systems should be designed, and educational programmes implemented, in a way that takes into account the diversity of characteristics and needs of children. The statement advocates for this education to take place in ordinary schools, as they have the ability to provide education to the majority of children in a cost-effective and efficient manner. However, the statement also recognises that certain children may be best taught in special classes or schools because of specific needs in communication (such as those who are hearing impaired).

World Education Forum Framework for Action, Dakar, and MDGs (2000)

These documents both further emphasise the right of all children to access education. The relevant MDGs include:

- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education by 2015;

- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower girls and women to have equal access to primary and post-primary education.

Although these focus more on universal primary education and providing equal opportunities for girls, rather than focusing on children with disabilities, they are relevant in that they re-emphasise the fact that all children should have equal access to education.

5.1.1   Summary

The above mentioned policies and agreements clearly state that all children have the right to receive an education that does not discriminate on any grounds, including caste, ethnicity, religion, economic status, refugee status, gender, language or disability. Furthermore, they dictate that specific measures must be taken by states to implement these rights in all learning environments.

These international policies and agreements also reveal a global shift toward IE and the integration of children with special educational needs in ordinary schools. IE, however, goes beyond just integration. It implies a restructuring of schools and of the school system overall so that all learners can be accommodated.

Unfortunately, none of these international documents speak specifically to the role that special schools can play within this IE system. However, South African Legislation and policies do provide a more specific vision for the role that special schools should play in providing support to learners who experience barriers to learning.

5.2   RELEVANT SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATION

The South African Government also lays out specific guidelines and mandates with regards to education and the rights of learners who experience barriers to learning. These must also be taken into account in the creation of an SSRC design.

The South African Constitution (1996)

The South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) established the country as a democratic state and gave all people common citizenship based on values of human dignity, achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms (SA DoE 2001). There are several sections that are particularly relevant to this briefing document:

- Section 9(2) commits the State to achievement of equality;

- Section 9 (3), (4), and (5) commit the State to non-discrimination;

- Section 29: "everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education...";

- The Bill of Rights (1996) entrenches the rights of all South Africans, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, culture, or language, to basic education and access to education institutions (Engelbrecht 2006).

The 1997 Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and National Committee on Education Support

Following the publishing of *Education White Paper 1 on Education and Training in 1994*, the SA DoE appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services. These two bodies were tasked with investigating and making recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in education and training in South Africa (SA DoE 2001). The joint report on the findings of these two bodies was presented in November 1997.

The findings concluded that special education and support in the country have been predominantly provided for only a small percentage of learners and have remained within special schools and classes. In addition, specialised education and support had been provided on a racial basis with the best resources reserved for white learners. Most learners who experienced barriers to learning had fallen out of the system, or were mainstreamed by default. In addition, the curriculum and education system had failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population (SA DoE 2001).

The committees recommended that the education and training system should promote education for all and should enable the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning. All learners should be enabled to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society (SA DoE 2001).

As a result of the work of these Committees, in August 1999 the National DoE published Consultative Paper No. 1 on Special Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System.

The following Education White Papers were then published in the following years:

- *Education White Paper 2: The organisation, governance and funding of schools (1996);*

- *Education White Paper 3: Programme for the transformation of Higher Education (1997);*

- *Education White Paper 4: Programme for the transformation of Further Education and Training (1998);*

- *Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education: Meeting the challenge of Early Childhood Development in South Africa (2001).*

Education White Paper 6 (2001)

Education White Paper 6 (*EWP6*) is of particular importance because it sets out the guidelines for Inclusive Education in the country, including for SSRC. It acknowledges the importance of providing an effective response to the educational experiences of learners with special educational needs, including those within the mainstream schools (SA DoE 2005b). *EWP6* seeks to:

- address the needs of all learners in one undivided education system;

- move from categorisation of learners according to disability, to assessing the needs and levels of support required by individual learners in order to facilitate their maximum participation in the education system;

- ensure that there is sufficient differentiation in curriculum delivery to accommodate learner needs, and to make support systems available for learners and schools (SA DoE 2005b).

EWP6 states that within each province there will be schools that offer varying levels of support to learners. In this continuum of support there are mainstream schools which provide basic levels of care and support for learners. Above these are full-service schools that provide higher levels of support through additional staffing and resourcing. Finally there are SSRC which provide the highest levels of support to learners who experience severe barriers to learning. These schools will also serve as resources to the full-service and mainstream schools.

The objectives of *EWP6* that speak specifically to SSRC are as follows (SA DoE 2001):

- to accommodate learners with severe disabilities in improved special schools that are part of the inclusive system;

- to improve the process of identifying, assessing and enrolling learners in special schools in a way that acknowledges the central role played by educators, lecturers and parents in the process of ensuring that learners receive the level of care and support that they need;

- to make special schools part of district support services in an incremental manner, where they can become resources for all schools;

- to outline the DoE's commitment to the provision of educational opportunities in particular for learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development.

5.2.1   Summary

Although there was a lack of focus in international policies on the role of special schools in an IE system, South African policy provides a more specific framework for this. In particular, *EWP6* creates a clear picture for the SSRC model and how that will work within the continuum of support. The Norms and Standards will draw heavily on SA DoE policies, particularly *EWP6*, in creating the SSRC model.

6.   Special Schools as Resource Centres as part of the IE system

6.1   THE ROLE OF SSRC: AN OVERVIEW

Over time, all special schools in KZN will be converted into SSRC that offer high levels of support to learners, as well as technical support and professional development to other teachers, schools and educational institutions within their district and region (SA DoE 2007). The role of special schools within the IE system in KZN is envisioned as a three-pronged approach in that it will provide:

Support for learners who require high levels of support

SSRC will continue to provide specialised knowledge, support, services and equipment to learners with high-level support needs (SA DoE 2001; SA DoE 2007). For some learners it is necessary to have specialised schooling because they require a high level of support (Govinda 2009). In addition to using the National Curriculum Statement, SSRC will also provide comprehensive education programmes that provide life-skills training and programme-to-work linkages (SA DoE 2001). The learning programmes developed by SSRC should focus on the individual needs of learners and contribute to the development of the necessary and relevant skills, knowledge, values and attitudes which will assist them in entering the world of work (SA DoE 2005b).

The staff at SSRC will have specialised skills and will help to develop learning material to specifically assist learners. The material will be available to other educators in the district (SA DoE 2001). Ideally, learners will only remain in SSRC for a short time while they are taught the skills and prepared for transition into full-service or mainstream schools (Taylor, ND). However, in some cases learners will need to remain in SSRC for their entire school career.

Ideally, all schools in the province would have these resources and skills, but because of financial constraints, SSRC will serve as nodes of service delivery.

Support for District Based Support Teams (DBST)

Representatives of SSRC should be integrated into DBSTs so that they can provide specialised professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to designated FSS and other neighbourhood schools (SA DoE 2001; SA DoE 2007). They will be transformed from special schools to SSRC, putting an emphasis on their roles as resources centres for other schools and for the DBST (SA DoE 2001). Together with the DBSTs, the SSRC will serve as a solid support base for FSS and mainstream schools in the immediate local and in the district (SA DoE 2005a). One of the roles of the SSRC with the DBST is to indicate how learners with disabilities will be identified, assessed and incorporated into SSRC, FSS and mainstream schools (SA DoE 2005a).

As part of the DBST, SSRC should coordinate and organise professional development activities for educators, school management and other staff in mainstream schools and FSS (SA DoE 2005a). They can also work with the DBST to create a catalogue and database of educational resources in the community for use by educators in mainstream schools and FSS (SA DoE 2005a).

Support for full-service schools and mainstream schools

According to the SA DoE (2007), the support offered by SSRC to mainstream and FSS is the most important lever in establishing a successful IE system. Professional staff at SSRC should allocate a minimum of five hours per week to offering external support (SA DoE 2007).

SSRC should provide support to FSS and mainstream schools through assistance with the identification, assessment and enrolment of learners (SA DoE 2001). Monitoring of learners in mainstream schools, FSS and SSRC should be ongoing (SA DoE 2005a). In addition, SSRC can provide support with regards to

curriculum, assessment and instruction, via their involvement with the DBST. SSRC specialist staff play a particularly important role in that they provide support to the community, visit schools and offer teaching resources (UNESCO 2001). SSRC professional staff can also assist other schools through the development of learning materials for learners with disabilities and those experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools (SA DoE 2005a).

In addition, the professional staff at SSRC should run training workshops in their districts for other educators. These workshops could focus on providing additional support in the classroom (SA DoE 2001). Another way in which SSRC should provide support to FSS, mainstream schools and the community is to establish a "helpline" for educators or parents to telephone in with queries (SA DoE 2001).

In the community, SSRC should make their physical and human resources available to the community through workshops and vocational training centres. Therapeutic and psychological services can also be used as outreach programmes for early intervention, parent counselling and mobilisation services (SA DoE 2005a).

SSRC should not only play a role by offering workshops, training and screening, but also to assist in the mobilisation of children and youth who are outside the system and who have no access to schooling (Taylor ND). Additionally, SSRC should work to enable all resources in the community to be utilised to develop and support education provision through a structured collaborative approach (SA DoE 2005a).

7. Strategies for SSRC implementation

This section includes the guidelines for establishing SSRC within the IE system in KZN. It focuses on human resource provisioning and development, physical infrastructure, resources, curriculum, structural support, admission policies, multi-sectoral collaboration, and family and community involvement.

7.1 HUMAN RESOURCES

The staff component is perhaps the most vital aspect of IE, and the most important determining factor of the success of SSRC. The teaching staff and support staff in SSRC are responsible for ensuring that learners in SSRC receive a high quality education that meets their individual needs. They are also responsible for

providing training and support to the DBST and to neighbouring schools and community members. This section will look at two key aspects of human resources, namely provisioning and development.

7.1.1　Human resource provisioning

The role of SSRC educators

As part of the transformation of special schools into SSRC, educators will need to play a new role both within the SSRC, *and* within neighbouring schools and support structures.

In neighbouring mainstream and full-service schools, educators will provide support in all areas of curriculum and assessment adaptation, learning material development and advice on how to identify and address barriers to learning. This includes providing guidance on translating the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for teaching learners who require high, moderate and low levels of support (SA DoE 2005a).

In addition, educators will provide training regarding barriers to learning and development, as well as training on different teaching styles to accommodate learners with different levels of intelligence and paces of learning (SA DoE 2005a). Educators will also provide adult education opportunities for community members and training of trainers.

Another new role that educators will play in SSRC schools is to serve as part of the team that manages the screening, identification, assessment and support (SIAS) process. They must play a key role in supporting schools to implement the SIAS strategy (SA DoE 2007). In addition, educators will provide guidance as part of the DBST regarding enrolment and placement (SA DoE 2005a, SA DoE 2001).

In the community, SSRC educators will provide outreach programmes on parent guidance and early intervention for young learners. They will also become involved in district programmes to promote more effective transitions from school-to-work for learners in mainstream schools, FSS and SSRC, as well as developing life-skills programmes which make learners who experience barriers to learning less vulnerable to abuse (SA DoE 2005a).

Recommended SSRC Staff provisioning

SSRC rely both on teaching and support staff. All staff, regardless of their position, should be thoroughly screened to ensure that they are capable of working with learners who experience barriers to learning (SA DoE 2007).

In addition to classroom educators, other staff members who are needed at SSRC include (source: SA DoE 2007 unless otherwise cited):

- full time technical assistants who can solve equipment problems, including problems involving computers and communication technology, at the SSRC and at schools where learners are identified for support (SA DoE 2005b);

- audiology technicians who can visit schools to assist learners with their hearing aids;

- house mothers and assistance house mothers in schools with boarding facilities;

- drivers at SSRC for learners who require assistance with transportation ;

- security guards to ensure the safety of the school premises and of the learners;

- management at SSRC who are responsible for the overall coordination of support provided at the school

    - the School Management Teams (SMT) are also responsible for ensuring that the school has an active ILST and that all learners are assessed regularly and have access to necessary assistive devices;

    - health professionals may be appointed and stationed at SSRC to provide support to learners. These include nurses, therapists, psychologists, etc;

- specific programmes may also require the following support staff:

    - scribes who are trained for educational purposes and are hired full-time to read questions/activities/tasks to learners and write down learners' spoken words verbatim (SA DoE 2005b)

    - South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters who are trained for educational interpreting (SA DoE 2005b)

- tactile interpreters should be hired for learners who need to access communication through tactile means on a one-on-one basis (SA DoE 2005b)

- readers may also be necessary to assist learners in accessing written texts; these readers should preferably be qualified teachers, but must remain neutral and impartial when reading assessment tasks (SA DoE 2005b).

According to the Special Needs Education Services (SNES) Directorate at the KZNDoE the number of learners in each class should be determined by the intensity and type of support required by learners. There should be one Head of Department (HOD) per phase, and one teacher aid per class. For every three classrooms, there should be one cleaner.

In terms of therapeutic support, each SSRC should be staffed with three therapists (one physical therapist, one occupational therapist and one speech therapist), three therapy assistants and two nurses. It is important for a nurse to always be on duty at schools during the day, and at the hostel during the weekends and evening. Because of the close relationship and trust that is often built between learners and nurses, it is important that nurses are based at the school rather than rotating in from nearby hospitals. In addition, each school should be allocated a career mentor/instructor to support school-to-work linkages (KZNDoE 2010).

Every SSRC should have one chief administration clerk for every 300 learners. They are responsible for overseeing support staff, hostel and school administration, cleaning and security services as well as school funds. The school should also have one administrative clerk for every 150 learners. Every SSRC also needs two drivers per school who are responsible for driving, cleaning and checking vehicles. In addition, SSRC should have one security guard during the day and two for the night shift (KZNDoE 2010).

In order to provide outreach programmes, each SSRC should have two staff responsible for maintaining the Resource Centre. In addition, there should be three-Level 2 therapists per circuit. There should also be two facilitators allocated to providing training and workshops to other schools, and one extra staff member allocated to participating in the CBST and DBST (KZNDoE 2010).

The SNES directorate further indicates that for schools with hostel facilities, there should be one housemother/housefather/senior housekeeping supervisor for every 100 learners who is responsible for the supervision of hostel staff and coordination of hostel activities. With regards to the superintendent/hostel

supervisors, there should be two for the first 25 boarders and one for every additional 25 learners after that. The hostel supervisors are responsible for overseeing educational programmes, discipline and welfare of learners. Each SSRC hostel should have one food service aid for every 75 learners who is responsible for preparing and serving meals and washing up. There should be one housekeeping supervisor for every 25 learners who require moderate levels of support, or one housekeeping supervisor for every 15 learners with high levels of support needs. The housekeeping supervisors are responsible for ensuring the cleanliness of learners and boarding facility, learner welfare, the provision of nutritious food, requisition and storage of goods in the hostel and attending to parents and visitors. In addition, there should be one housekeeping aid for every 50 learners, and one laundry aid for every 75 learners (KZNDoE 2010).

Findings from the school visits with regards to HR provisioning

The main needs expressed by the schools that were visited with regards to human resources provisioning was that more therapists, social workers and psychologists are needed. Educators are not able to address the medical and psychological needs of learners because of their roles in the classroom and because they are not able to have the same confidential and personal relationship that a specialist can have. In addition, educators are not necessarily qualified to identify the needs of learners.

All three schools also needed more qualified teacher aids and classrooms assistants to help the educators in the classroom.

One school had a psychologist who was visiting once a week for two hours. The educators at the school felt that this was not sufficient as he was only able to see two learners and then was not able to provide ongoing therapy and support.

At another school, the principal said that they had two posts for therapists but were unable to find anyone to fill them because of the salary offered and because therapists could receive better promotion and benefits options at hospitals.

According to educators from all three schools, the ideal learner to educator ratio (LER) for a school depends on the type of barrier experienced by the learner as well as the age of learners and the type of class. This is in line with national DoE guidelines, which state that class size will depend on the type of support required by learners. Smaller classes are often necessary for younger learners and for classes that are more practical. Two of the schools said that in most cases an LER of 10:1 was the ideal situation.

7.1.2   Human Resources Development

Staff at SSRC need to receive training that will empower them to support FSS and mainstream schools their area. In addition, they need training in working with and teaching learners with high support needs (SA DoE 2007).

Qualification and Training guidelines for educators

The DoE provides the following qualification and responsibility guidelines for SSRC staff at different levels:

- **Professional teaching staff —**which includes teachers, learning support teachers, and teaching assistants, should have the following qualifications and training (SA DoE 2007):

  - Diploma which includes training on special needs or IE; or if they have not received it when they are hired, they must receive such training immediately upon being hired;

  - Training in the development of inclusive learning programmes;

  - Ongoing professional development related to the needs of learners;

  - Competency in the method of communication used by learners.

- **Professional specialist support staff—** which refers to guidance and counselling specialists; psychologists; sign language interpreters; Braille instructors; therapists including occupational, speech and language, audiologists, music and physiotherapists; social workers; nursing staff; rehabilitation workers; child and youth care workers (SA DoE 2007). The experience, training and qualifications that these support staff members must possess include:

  - certificate/degree in their field/specialty

  - familiarity with EWP6;

  - regular in-service training to ensure that the support they offer adheres to the latest practice.

- **Non-teaching and non-professional staff—**must have the following qualifications and experience (SA DoE 2007):

- house mothers and assistance house mothers should possess a minimum qualification or training in health, social and/or home based care and should comply with standards outlined in the Children's Amendment Bill (2006);

  - in hostels that admit learners who are deaf, house mothers should possess minimum qualifications in SASL

  - All hostel staff should receive intense training to provide the necessary care to address learner needs

- security guards need to have received additional training in the needs of the learners at the school;

- drivers should have previous experience and a driving license appropriate for the type of vehicle:

  - drivers must also be trained in basic first aid and be able to support the learners that they are transporting.

- **Specific qualification and experience requirements for SSRC management staff include (SA DoE 2007):**

- principals should possess a minimum graduate qualification and any other qualification or training required of school managers

  - specialised qualifications are a strong recommendation, including qualifications in education management, management of inclusion, learning support, disability studies, educational psychology, social work or educational therapy;

  - principals should have some experience in mainstream schools or manager-exchange links with mainstream schools should be established to foster the sharing of ideas and strategies to enable inclusive policy and practice;

- all managers must have received training in *EWP6*, IE Programmes and Assessment requirements.

Findings from the school visits with regards to qualifications

In all three schools that were visited, there was a lack of qualifications among management, educators and support staff for working with learners who experience barriers to learning. In many cases, educators and management come from mainstream schools without prior experience of educating learners who experience high level barriers to learning. Many of the educators seemed to end up in these schools by chance, rather than because of special qualifications or a special interest in working with learners who experience barriers to learning. In one school, none of the educators were trained in SASL, even though several learners at the school were deaf.

In-service training required for educators

In order to fulfil the new roles that are required of them, SSRC educators must receive a thorough orientation on these expectations, both within the SSRC and in the district and neighbouring schools. Staff development is necessary at both school and district-level in order to put in place the IE system, including SSRC (SA DoE 2001). In addition, advocacy must be carried out throughout all of the schools in the province so that all principals and educators have a clear understanding of the role of SSRC.

According to UNESCO, there should be a shift away from pre-service based teacher training that is long and heavily theoretical, and toward ongoing in-service capacity building (2005). Similarly a case study done by UNESCO in various countries found that the best way to ensure that educators are skilled in transmitting knowledge and promoting equality was to offer continuous capacity-building opportunities and to provide follow-up support in schools to ensure that the trainings are having the desired impacts (Govinda 2009).

The SA DoE has mandated that teachers and support staff from SSRC should receive in-service courses to orientate them to their new roles. Teachers and support staff will then in turn become involved with the training of DBST and teachers from Full Service and mainstream schools (SA DoE 2005a).

Trainings need to capacitate educators in preparing and planning for teaching, using varied resources and developing materials appropriate for learners with different barriers to learning (Govinda 2009). Training should include both processes and methods of dealing with learners who experience barriers to learning as well as training to alter attitudes (SA DoE 2005a). In-service training is significant because of its ability to create more positive attitudes among educators toward inclusion (Avramidis et al 2000).

In addition to training in teaching methodologies and addressing barriers to learning in the classroom, SSRC educators also need to receive training in the use of specialised equipment to support learners (SA DoE 2007).

The cascading model is not recommended for training SSRC educators because past studies have shown that information is not effectively cascaded to all teachers (Engelbrecht 2006). However, SSRC educators should be trained to offer workshops and trainings for educators from mainstream and full-service schools.

Findings from the school visits with regards to training

Ongoing in-service training for educators was emphasised as being very important in all three schools. One school said that educators had received training from NGOs. However, funding was a constant barrier to attending trainings and educators at one school expressed the opinion that special schools were "looked down upon by the Department" and were not given the same training opportunities as other schools.

There was concern among educators at one school that universities were not appropriately preparing educators to deal with learners who experience barriers to learning. One educator said that the training was too theoretical and did not focus on the practical aspects of working with learners.

Training that the educators felt was most needed included: implementing NCS for learners who experience barriers, training on assessing learners with barriers, training in computer programmes that are used as assistive devices for learners, training on the medical needs of learners and training on offering psychological support to learners.

One school recommended that educators from other schools should come to their school to receive training in the environment of the school.

7.2   PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The physical environment at SSRC must be free of physical barriers. According to *EWP6*, "the manner in which the physical environment, such as buildings and grounds, is developed and organised contributes to the level of independence and quality that learners with disabilities enjoy" (SA DoE 2001, 28).

There are several requirements for SSRC that go beyond those for mainstream schools. For example, when designing SSRC or renovating existing special schools, architects who have experience in designing building for people with disabilities must be consulted. Furthermore, the school must have full physical accessibility, including ramps and space for manoeuvrability of all learners (SA DoE 2007).

With regards to the location of SSRC, there must be a minimum of services available, including: water, sanitation, transport, electricity, telecommunication and refuse removal. The schools can be located in rural areas, but they must have this minimum of services available.

7.2.1   Building guidelines

The Canadian Human Rights Commission has provided universal guidelines from international best practice for constructing special schools. Some of these guidelines are particularly relevant for SSRC and need to be considered in the construction of new buildings and renovation of existing buildings.

The minimum **clear floor area** for a manual wheel chair is 800x1 300 mm, while the minimum diameter for turning a manual wheel chair is 1 500 mm. The clear width for someone walking with crutches or with a guide dog is 1 200 mm and 1 500 mm is the best practice for footprint size of all larger mobility devices (CHRC 2006).

Access routes should be even and free of any rise, or only have a slight rise. The edges of carpets must be bevelled and thick pile carpets should be strictly avoided. Minimum clear headroom along pedestrian routes should be 2 400 mm and the minimum clear width should be 1 200 mm, or 1 830 mm in high traffic areas. Windows and doors should not open across walkways, corridors, stairs or ramps (CHRC 2006).

There should be **accessible parking** located near the building entrances. The minimum width of parking stalls is 2 600 mm and the surface of the parking area should be stable, firm and slip-resistant. Passenger drop-off and pick-up areas should be provided at the main entrance and should accommodate all vehicles, including buses and taxis (CHRC 2006).

Curb ramps are required to have a level transition between the ramp and the adjacent surface. The width of the curb ramp should be 1 000 mm. The maximum running slope of the curb ramp should have a slope ratio of between 1:12 and 1:16. **Ramps** leading to the building should have a slope of 1:16 to 1:20. Best practice

for ramp width is 1 000 mm and length is 2 000 mm. Ramps should be stable, firm and slip resistant with level landings at the top and bottom of the ramp (CHRC 2006).

With regards to **doors**, the minimum clear width for doorways should be 750 mm and the minimum space between two doors in a series is 1 800 mm. The main entrance should be an accessible route (CHRC 2006).

Elevators must be self-levelling and have an automatic reopening device. The minimum clear width of the elevator door is 800 mm. On **stairs**, handrails are required on both sides, one at 650-750 mm height and the other at 860-920 mm. Stairs should have a maximum riser height of 150-180 mm with a tread depth between of 275-300 mm. Horizontal strips are required at the edge of stair treads. The recommended headroom for stairs is 2 100 mm vertically (CHRC 2006).

In both the school and in hostel accommodations, **emergency alarm systems** must have both audible and visual signs (CHRC 2006).

Findings from the school visits with regards to building guidelines

One of the schools visited had ramps that were far too steep. This was of great concern because several learners at the school used wheelchairs and had trouble accessing the classrooms. Another school was a School of Industries and did not provide a "barrier-free environment." There were steps leading to different buildings and the toilets and showers were not barrier-free. The school overall was not accessible to learners with physical disabilities.

7.2.2   Building guidelines for classrooms

With respect to **classrooms**, the minimum classroom space must be in line with specifications for the nature of support programmes offered at the school and all classrooms should be accessible for the installation and use of specialist equipment, material resources and learning support equipment used (SA DoE 2007). The norms and standards document will provide a "menu" of physical spaces required by schools with a specific number that schools can select. Based on this, schools can, for example, select if they want more therapy space and less classroom space, or more computer room space and less multipurpose room space.

Findings from the school visits with regards to building guidelines for classrooms

Educators at the schools that were visited emphasised the fact that the standard size classrooms are far too small for SSRC because they limit the number of learners who can be in a classroom, particularly for learners who use wheelchairs.

One of the schools has classrooms that were built by an NGO, but still they felt they needed more classrooms to accommodate the needs of learners. In particular, the principal expressed the need for a "skills centre" where learners could have space for sewing, computer lessons, catering classes and arts and crafts.

Computer centres should be provided in each SSRC because access to computers and related technology is important for many learners who experience barriers to learning (SA DoE 2007).

In addition, there must be **library** facilities in SSRC, which house accessible and appropriate material (SA DoE 2007). Library aisles should be wide with sufficient space to allow someone who uses a wheelchair to turn. The recommended width for library aisles is 920 mm (CHRC 2006).

Multipurpose rooms play a particularly important role in SSRC. They provide space for parent guidance and consultation, community training, therapy, individual or small group interventions, orientation and mobility training and fitting/ adjustment of assistive devices (SA DoE 2007). Multipurpose rooms should have movable seating and tables (CHRC 2006). Additional private **consultation rooms** should be created for consultations with learners and/or parents who need support (SA DoE 2007).

Findings from the school visits with regards to multipurpose rooms

Educators from all three of the schools visited felt that they did not have a sufficient multipurpose room for providing trainings and workshops. In addition, two of the schools did not have space for private consultation or therapy. These are issues that will need to be addressed as schools are converted into SSRC and are expected to provide workshops and trainings.

Auditoriums and assembly areas should have accessible seating that does not block aisles or exit doors. In addition, there should be access lighting provided along the edges of aisle seats (CHRC 2006).

Other classrooms should be provided when relevant to the support programmes offered at the specific SSRC. In these additional rooms, safety measures and accessibility requirements should be put in place in accordance with the support offered to learners. In addition, schools should have **recreational facilities** that are appropriate for the learners at the school (SA DoE 2007).

The following quantitative guidelines for classrooms in SSRC have been put forth by the KZNDoE (2009):

Table 1: Building guidelines for learning spaces

Type of room	Size of room	Number of rooms
Standard Classrooms + office/store	50 m² + 12.5 m²	15
Multipurpose Classrooms + storerooms	75 m² + 25 m²	3
Workshops and storerooms	75 m² + 25 m²	1
Therapy Suite (attached to classroom)	25m²	2
Media Centres + storerooms	75 m² (105 m²)+ 25 m²	1
Computer rooms + storerooms	75 m² + 25 m²	1
Activity Room	130 m²	1

Source: KZNDoE 2009

7.2.3   Building guidelines for administration and support spaces

SSRC need to have adequate secure **storage space** for the safe-keeping of specialised equipment and assistive devices. Similarly, **workshops** need to be provided for minor maintenance work on equipment and for the calibration of instruments (SA DoE 2007). All SSRC will also have a garage to house the buses used by the school.

The following building guidelines have been set by the KZN DoE for administration and support spaces:

Table 2: Building guidelines for administration and support spaces from the KZNDoE

Type of room	Size of room	Number of rooms
Principal's office (admin block)	22 m²	1
Deputy Principal's office (admin block)	112 m²	1
Consulting Room (admin block)	12 m²	1
General Office (admin block)	30 m²	1
Staffroom with Kitchenette (admin block)	74 m² + 8 m²	1
Strongroom (admin block)	8 m²	1
Stationary/ General store (admin block)	13 m²	1
Printing room (admin block)	6 m²	1
Sick room (male and female) (admin block)	2x5 m²	1
Entrance Hall (admin block)	34 m²	1
Offices outside admin block	12.5 m²	4
small storeroom outside admin	12.5 m²	4
Large storerooms outside admin	25 m²	1
Garden stores and change room	25 m²	1
Guardhouse	4 m²	1

Source: KZNDoE 2009

7.2.4   Building guidelines for kitchen and dining

Cafeterias in SSRC need to be accessible to everyone, with seating spaces for persons in wheelchairs with adequate manoeuvring space to approach tables and counters. The tops of counters and tables should be 750-850 mm. In addition, **kitchens** should have adequate manoeuvring space so that people are able to use all appliances and counter space (CHRC 2006).

The following guidelines are provided with regards to what utensils and preparation equipment are needed for SSRC kitchen and dining areas:

Table 3: Building guidelines for kitchens and dining areas

Type of room or equipment	Number
Admin office	1
Cooking area:	
Oven	1
Deep Fryer	1
Steamer	1
Large Pot	1
Small Pot	1
Prep Area:	
Meat	1
Fish	1
Vegetable	1

Type of room or equipment	Number
Dry	1
Storage:	
Utensils	1
Equipment	1
Meat	1
Dairy	1
Vegetable	1
General	1
Cleaning	1
Scullery:	
Crockery	1
Pots	1
Refuse	1
Dining Area:	
Serving Area	1
Seating	300
Food Service Aids Cubicles	3

Source: KZNDoE 2009

7.2.5   Building guidelines for sanitation

Toilet facilities located in SSRC must cater to the specific needs of learners attending the SSRC. Washrooms need to have adequate manoeuvring space with an internal clear area at the door of 1 500x1 500 mm. The minimum recommended size of a toilet stall is 1 700x1 800 mm and the minimum stall door opening is 900 mm. The height of the toilet from the floor should be between 460 and 480 mm and the centre line of the toilet should be between 460-480 mm from the side wall. Toilet stalls should have horizontal grab bars mounted at a height of 750-850 mm and a length of 915 mm. Partitioned walls should not be used because they do not provide adequate support for grab bars (CHRC 2006).

Urinals should be at a height of 430-510 mm and should have vertical grab bars mounted next to them. Toilet paper dispensers should be located at a height of 600-700mm (CHRC 2006).

The KZN DoE provides the following guidelines in terms of how many toilets are necessary for an SSRC:

Table 4: Building guidelines for sanitation

Type of sanitation area	Number of Rooms
No Of Girls' toilets	6
No Boys' toilets seats and urinals spaces	6
No Of teacher toilet seats	4
No Of disabled toilets	2
No Of Grade R toilets	2

Source: KZNDoE 2009

7.2.6   Service guidelines

All SSRC should have access to piped water, electrification and fencing around the schools premises (SA DoE 2007).

Findings from the school visits with regards to services

One of the schools that was visited had unreliable electricity supply and a faulty sewage treatment system. These issues should be addressed as an issue of urgency. The other schools seemed to be in line with the service guidelines.

7.2.7   Hostel guidelines

All SSRC should provide hostel facilities because the schools work on a referral basis and learners who need the support of the school may live in a different part of the province and will require accommodation while attending school.

Hostel accommodation should be located in buildings dedicated for this purpose and must provide a secure and hygienic environment, complying with all health and safety standards. Hostels should accommodate up to 200 learners. In addition, hostels need to meet all physical needs of the learners who will be living there, which means that they need to have appropriate and adequate ramps, toilet facilities and bathing facilities. There need to be separate facilities for male and female learners, and the section for learners under the age of twelve must be separate from that of older learners (SA DoE 2007). In the norms and standards document, it will be necessary to identify which live-in staff will require accommodation in the hostel.

Due to space constraints, it is often necessary for hostels to be two levels. Although this is not the ideal situation for SSRC, where it is necessary, all services must be available on the first floor for learners who are not able to access the second floor.

The minimum clear floor space for sleeping areas is 800x1300 mm (CHRC 2006).

The **bath tubs** should have two grab bars, at a height of 650-760 mm from the floor and a length of 1200 mm. The shower hose should be at least 1500 mm and the maximum height of the shower head should be

1 000 mm. It should be adjustable between the floor and this height. Bath tubs should have a width of 760 mm and a length of 1 600 (CHRC 2006).

Showers must have a minimum clear floor space of 1 500x1 500 mm with a vertical grab bar mounted on the side wall at 750-850 mm. Showers should be roll-in and accommodate the use of a shower seat. Hand held showers are recommended with a minimum length of 1 500 mm. The floor should be slip-resistant even when wet and the temperature controls should be pre-set (CHRC 2006).

The KZN DoE provides the following guidelines as to how many of each room should be provided in SSRC hostels:

Table 5: Building guidelines for hostel accommodation

	Number for Boys	Number for Girls
No. of bed spaces	100	100
TV room	1	1
Games room	1	1
Duty room	1	1
Duty room cubicle	2	2
Sickbay- bed spaces	3	3
Sickbay- toilet and shower	1	1
Dispensary	1	1
Baths	2	2
Showers	4	4

	Number for Boys	Number for Girls
WC	4	4
Urinal	8	0
Washbasins	6	6
Baggage store	1	1
Tuck store	1	1
Linen store	1	1
Cleaning room	1	1
House mother/fathers' flat	1	1
Laundry facilities	Shared by boys and girls	
Sorting (dirty)	1	
Sluice	1	
Washing	1	
Drying	1	
Ironing	1	
Sorting (clean)	1	

	Number for Boys	Number for Girls
Storage	1	

Source: KZNDoE 2009

Findings from the school visits with regards to hostel facilities

Two of the three schools that were visited had hostel facilities. The principal at the third school expressed the desire to have a hostel at the school to cater for learners who come from far away. The school was currently using a hostel run by an NGO, but the principal felt that it was important for the school to have its own hostel.

7.3   RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT

An essential role of SSRC is providing the necessary equipment and resources to learners in the SSRC as well as in neighbouring schools. Resources and equipment refer to assistive devices, material resources and transportation. Resources and equipment should be allocated to SSRC according to the support programmes that are offered. They should be available for loan to other schools and the SSRC should offer training in the use and maintenance of resources and materials. SSRC need to keep full and up-to-date inventories of all types of learning and teaching support material in the school (SA DoE 2007).

7.3.1   Assistive devices

Assistive devices are any devices and technology that are used to aid learners who experience barriers to learning. They are often used to help learners increase their mobility or communication abilities (SA DoE 2001). Assistive devices should be strategically provided in SSRC according to the support programmes offered by that particular SSRC. All devices should be kept in good maintenance at all times (SA DoE 2007).

Examples of assistive devices used to help learners with communication are hearing aids (SA DoE 2001), Perkins Braillers, Braille printers (SA DoE 2007) and an FM system to amplify the educator's voice and reduce background noise (SA DoE 2005b). Another example of an assistive device is the use of computers

for visualisation, analysis of textual tasks and developing reading and speaking skills (Govinda 2009). Computers are a particularly important source of support for learners because they can provide voice synthesiser programmes and Braille programmes. In addition they can be used to enhance the writing abilities of students by offering alternative strategies to production and learning (SA DoE 2005b). In some cases, an adapted keyboard may also be necessary which could have smaller or larger keys, fewer key choices or a more compact layout (SA DoE 2005b).

Depending on the support programmes offered, SSRC should also provide audio equipment such as tape recorders, microphones and dictaphones, as well as video equipment such as video recorders and televisions (SA DoE 2005b).

Some assistive devices are designated to aid in mobility. These include trolleys, walking frames, crutches and wheelchairs (SA DoE 2001, UNESCO 2001). Other assistive devices serve as teaching aids, such as flashcards, wall charts and pictures. Play things such as rattles, dolls, puppets, puzzles and musical instruments are also considered assistive devices. These are particularly effective for learners with visual or intellectual impairments (UNESCO 2001).

Classroom equipment that can be used to assist learners includes using an abacus to help learners count and the use of rulers with raised or larger numbers. Special classroom chairs should also be available to learners with physical impairments (UNESCO 2001). In addition, SSRC should provide a library of technology for adaptive assessment (SA DoE 2007).

Findings from the school visits with regards to assistive devices

All three of the schools that were visited had equipment such as the necessary furniture, computers, photocopiers, fax machines, printers, projectors, TVs, DVD players and cameras. There was some concern at one of the schools that some of the desks and furniture were not appropriate for learners with physical disabilities. In addition, one school had very few assistive devices.

Two of the schools said that most of their resources were either funded by the school or donated by NGOs, rather than being purchased with DoE money. Educators raised the concern that the DoE would not be able to fund the necessary equipment for SSRC. The school that had purchased a large amount of resources and equipment through fundraising was concerned that if they were to be converted into an SSRC, they should not be required to lend their equipment to other schools, as the equipment was not purchased by the

DoE, but rather by the school itself. For example, the school reported that their blind unit was very expensive to purchase and maintain and that they had not received any financial assistance from the DoE in this. As a result, they did not think they should be required to use their Braille printers to create material for other schools. This is an issue that will need to be addressed. The norms and standards will address this concern by ensuring that the KZNDoE takes over the maintenance and care of resources and equipment. In addition, the norms and standards will make careful and specific guidelines for the lending and use of resources and equipment.

Two of the schools reported that they needed additional recreational and sport equipment for the learners to use.

One of the schools used a therapy technique called sound therapy. The assistive devices required for this are a computer, a microphone and quality headphones. In sound therapy sessions, learners speak into a microphone and then their voice is repeated back to them with the vibrational frequencies that should be there. According to the nurse at the school, this technique has been very successful and helps learners to heal hurts and traumas without having to speak about them. In addition, learners who use sound therapy have been noted to deal better with anger problems and have succeeded academically. The nurse felt that as a fairly low cost assistive device, this technique could be used in other schools as well.

7.3.2   Material resources

The use of learning and teaching support materials is a key component in offering quality teaching and learning in SSRC. The appropriate learning and teaching support material should be available at SSRC and should be provided in the appropriate format, for example Braille. Furthermore, SSRC should adhere to the DoE policy of one textbook per learning area or subject, but where necessary simplified versions and special editions of texts should be considered for curriculum differentiation (SA DoE 2007).

Examples of material resources that should be provided at SSRC include library resources and material in support of the particular needs of the learners and learning and teaching support material (SA DoE 2007).

Findings from the school visits with regards to material resources

At all three of the schools that were visited, educators did not have access to material resources that provided guidance on teaching learners who experience barriers to learning or on curriculum differentiation. They did, however, have regular text books for learners, and in some cases textbooks with enlarged print.

7.3.3   Transportation

SSRC are required to provide transportation to all learners who need it in order to access the school. DoE guidelines stipulate that the transport subsidy should be evaluated regularly to ensure adequacy. Daily transportation must be provided for registered learners who live up to 40 kilometres away from the school. Those learners who live more than an hour's drive from the school should stay at the school's hostel facilities during the week (SA DoE 2007).

Vehicles that are used to transport learners must be serviced regularly, inspected on an ongoing basis by the principal, and must meet all safety standards. Additionally, these vehicles should be driven only be appropriately licensed drivers and must provide easy access for all learners (SA DoE 2007).

In order to encourage learners to participate in extracurricular and community activities, the school should also provide suitable transport for learners to attend special events. Adult supervision must be provided on all learner transport to ensure learner safety, and such adults must be trained in first aid and in caring for the special needs of the learners being transported (SA DoE 2007).

Findings from the school visits with regards to transportation

Two of the schools that were visited had access to adequate transportation in the form of buses and vans. One school, however, did not have access to transportation for learners and as a result transported learners in the back of a *bakkie*. This is of great concern because it is both dangerous and illegal.

7.4   CURRICULUM

7.4.1   Curriculum Differentiation

The Revised National Curriculum Statement is the norm in all South African schools, including SSRC (DoE 2007). Differentiation does not mean creating a new or alternative curriculum, but certain aspects of curriculum content and delivery can be differentiated to support learners who experience barriers to learning. Learning programmes, work schedules and lesson plans can be adapted to cater for individual needs of learners (SA DoE 2005b).

The curriculum can be differentiated in several ways for SSRC to accommodate diversity of learners in a way that is inclusive and accessible for all learners irrespective of the nature or level of their learning needs (SA DoE 2001).

One way that the curriculum can be differentiated is through **time frame** flexibility. This flexibility should also allow for additional assistance for learners on classroom-based work and for educators to give special support in practical subjects (UNESCO 2005).

In addition, learners who experience barriers to learning because of intellectual disabilities may require a curriculum which **straddles two or more grades or phases** (SA DoE 2005b).

All **methods** of curriculum delivery should be child-centred and interactive. Educators have the freedom to choose teaching methods that best fit their learners (UNESCO 2005). Methods of **communication** may need to be adapted. For example, Braille, SASL and assistive devices can be used.

Similarly **activities** used in the classroom can also be flexible to the learners' needs. **Lesson plans** can be differentiated and adapted via the activities that are used. They can be adapted to accommodate the levels of development of learners' skills and knowledge in relation to the outcomes and assessment standards. In addition, the teaching methodology and assessment can be varied to meet the diverse needs of learners (SA DoE 2005b).

Methodologies used in the classroom need to be underpinned by the principle that the learner is the focal point of all teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, lessons need to encourage participation of all learners and also need to support learner differences. All teaching, learning and assessment should be

adapted to suit the needs of the learners, both in the levels and the paces that are comfortable for learners (SA DoE 2005b).

Educators should use multi-level teaching, which enables them to address the different needs of learners. Multi-level teaching is an approach that takes into account individualisation, flexibility and inclusion for all learners regardless of their personal skill levels. Rather than being considered a single methodology, multi-level teaching should be consistently implemented through all teaching methodologies. It advocates for one lesson that uses varying methods of learning, teaching and assessment and includes a variety of techniques aimed at reaching all learners (SA DoE 2005b).

Educators are encouraged to use the "curriculum ladder" to differentiate lesson plans to meet the needs of individual learners. The ladder suggests that the amount of work, level of difficulty of work, level of support needed and participation of learners in the task must be adjusted to meet the needs of learners. Below is an example of a "curriculum ladder:"

Table 6. Curriculum ladder for lesson plan differentiation

	Ask	Example
	Can the learner do the same as peers?	Spelling
If not can...	The learner do the same activity but with adapted expectations?	Fewer words
If not can...	The learner do the same activity but with adapted expectations and materials?	Matching the words to pictures
If not can...	The learner do a similar activity but with adapted expectations	Words that are functional and in the learner's daily environment
If not can...	The learner do a similar activity but with adapted materials?	Computer spelling programme

	Ask	Example
If not can...	The learner does a different, parallel activity?	Learn a computer-typing programme
If not can...	The learner does a practical and functional activity with assistance?	Play/work with a word puzzle

Source: SA DoE 2005b

An additional method of curriculum differentiation is to focus on aspects of **pre-vocational training** and programme-to-work linkages (UNESCO 2005).

The scale and scope of curriculum differentiation should be determined after a thorough assessment of individual learners. Parents, educators, DBST, ILST and other relevant professionals must be involved in the process of differentiation. **Individual support plans** should be used to outline how the needs of a particular learner will be addressed. These support plans should be created in collaboration with the ILST and should include the learning pathway that will describe the details of how the work schedule or year plan and specific lesson plans will be differentiated (SA DoE 2005b).

Findings from the school visits with regards to design differentiation

Educators from one of the schools visited said that work schedules and lesson plans were differentiated. They felt that it was difficult to achieve the goal of "one curriculum for all." Another school used multi-grade, multi-level teaching, in which learners are able to straddle grades and phases. Methodology was adapted by providing more direct, practical lessons. In addition, learners often required constant supervision and instruction.

Timeframe adaptation was cited as being particularly important for learners who are deaf as they often take longer to internalise concepts.

There was some concern that the DoE did not provide sufficient support to schools with regards to curriculum adaptation. Educators from one school felt that Department officials needed to be more aware of how curriculum and assessments could be adapted. There was a desire to have more consultation with schools because of a lack of understanding from high up.

7.4.2   Learning programmes

SSRC will be organised around the specialised support programmes they offer rather than being organised around the category of disability. Thus, the schools will become centres of excellence in providing a particular form of support and will also be able to offer outreach programmes to schools where learners with similar needs are being educated (SA DoE 2007). Each school will offer two or three learning programmes, which the school will become experts in delivering.

All learning programmes must follow the guidelines set by the DoE for inclusive learning programmes, which are (SA DoE 2007):

- learners must receive formal tuition each day;

- practical application and skills development must be linked to knowledge, theory and conceptual development;

- focus on curriculum delivery should be on differentiation in terms of content and/or methodology;

- adaptation in teaching and assessment should take into consideration the identified areas of difficulty;

- individual support plans for learners should emphasise acquisition of learning strategies for cognitive development and academic success;

- literacy, especially reading, must be a key focus for all learners;

- a school may not offer programmes outside of the RNCS without approval of provincial DoE.

The support programmes offered by SSRC will address the following barriers to learning: severe learning difficulties; hearing; vision; mobility; language use and social communication; complex, multiple and pervasive disability; behaviour and psycho-social factors; and social economic neglect (SA DoE 2007).

The SNES directorate recommends that each SSRC should offer on-site support in the form of two or three learning programmes from the list represented in the following table. Each SSRC must provide the Academic programme, combined with a selection of one or two other programmes listed.

Table 7. SSRC Learning programmes

Programme	Focus
Perceptual motor programmes	Auditory, visual and neurological interventions
Academic programme	Inclusive learning programmes, school to work linkages
Language Development programme	AAC, South African Sign language, software, low and hi-tech devices
Programmes for the visually impaired	Braille, visual support equipment, software, mobility orientation
Skills programme	Consumer studies and civil studies
Behaviour modification programme	Assessment, life skills, family integration
Home based programme	Mobility, life skills, literacy skills

Source: KZNDoE 2010

The skills programme will be of particular importance in many SSRC. Examples of skills classes include brick-laying, upholstery, welding and hair styling. These skills can also serve as school-to-work linkages and will assist learners in finding employment after school. However, it is necessary to limit the number of skills classes offered by each individual school because of staffing and space limitations. It is also important to create links between skills classes and academic classes as there is currently a lack of synergy between the two. Skills classes should be linked to the curriculum and to the prescribed learning outcomes. For example, skills classes can fall under Economic Management Studies or Arts and Culture.

Findings from the school visits with regards to learning programmes

All three of the schools visited offered two streams: one focused on curriculum and one on skills. The skills classes were provided for those learners that were not able to keep up with the regular curriculum. Skills classes included: agriculture, arts and craft, computer literacy, home economics and needlework.

There was concern that the DoE did not provide any guidance for the assessment or structure of the skills classes. Educators from one school said that learners were divided into the academic and vocational classes based on their age, academic history, and ability.

Differentiation of the design of learning programmes

As with other aspects of curriculum, it is necessary that learning programmes offered in the SSRC offer differentiation for learners with different skill levels. There are several methods of differentiation that are recommended by the DoE. First of all, learning programmes can **straddle grades and phases** because learners may not fit comfortably within a particular grade or phase. Thus they can work towards attaining an assessment standard from more than one grade within learning areas or learning programmes (SA DoE 2005b).

In addition, the **number of learning programmes offered can vary** according to the needs, strengths and interests of the learners and the available resources at an individual SSRC. Learning programmes can be academically or practically based, but it is essential that the learning outcomes and assessment standards as stated in the eight learning areas are addressed by various learning programmes (SA DoE 2005b).

The **weighting and duration** of learning programmes can also vary in SSRC. With regards to weighting, in order to give learners optimal opportunity the percentage of time allocated to a specific learning programme is flexible. The weighting, duration and complexity of learning programmes will depend on the level of support required by the learners (SA DoE 2005b).

Finally, although the minimum requirements for achieving GETC as outlined in the RNCS cannot be compromised, all learners should be able to fulfil their potential regardless of whether or not the end result will be a formal GETC (SA DoE 2005b).

Example Learning Programmes

For learners with hearing impairments: The classroom should be adapted so that learners with hearing impairments sit as close to the educator as possible. The teacher should always be facing the learner and should never cover his/her mouth when speaking. Educators need to speak clearly and loudly and use simple words or sentences. Classroom noises should be minimised. If a hearing aid has been prescribed it should be worn and in good condition. Learners with hearing impairments can also be paired with a hearing learner to assist when necessary (UNESCO 2001). This recommendation is problematic in that it puts too much responsibility on other learners.

For learners with visual impairments: Learners should be seated in the place which allows for optimal vision of the chalkboard. The light should not reflect on the board and any writing must be clear. Ensure that children with visual impairments know their way around the school and classroom and they should be warned of any obstacles. When teaching, educators should use large writing and visual aids. They should also read aloud what is written on the board. Learners should be given paper with thicker lines and may need to use magnifying glasses to enlarge the paper. Learners with visual impairments should be paired with seeing classmates who can assist them. Again, this recommendation is concerning in that it could take away from the learning experience of seeing learners. Assistive devices such as computers, abacuses and cassette players can also be used (UNESCO 2001).

For learners with intellectual impairments: Distractions should be reduced in the classroom and learners who tend to move around often should be strategically placed in the classroom. They can also be assigned tasks that allow them to move around in a way that is not disruptive, for example passing out papers. When possible, educators should work with learners with intellectual impairments on a one-on-one basis. Learners with intellectual impairments benefit from seeing examples of work, rather than just being told what to do. Educators should use simple words and real objects. Only one activity should be done at a time and it should be made clear when one activity is ending and another is beginning. Tasks should be broken down into small steps or learning objectives, and learners should receive plenty of praise and encouragement (UNESCO 2001).

Programme-to-work linkages

Programme-to-work linkages are a particularly important aspect of SSRC learning programmes and are vital to the education of learners with cognitive barriers who are unlikely to achieve a full GETC. These programmes should have the appropriate accreditation and certification for the level of skills that are achieved (SA DoE 2005b).

There are several ways to improve programme-to-work linkages. First of all, weighting of learning areas and time allocation can be adjusted. In addition, the skills learning programmes can allow for work related linkages by bridging across learning areas, assessment standards and grades. Similarly, collaboration between educators within and across a phase or grade is essential to ensuring effective programme-to-work linkages. At school level, partnerships with industry can be established and schools can issue a certificate of competence that includes reference to learning programmes reflected in the programme-to-work linkages (SA DoE 2005b).

Findings from the school visits with regards to programme-to-work linkages

Programme-to-work linkages were seen in all three schools that were visited, as illustrated by the vocational classes offered. Some of the vocational classes offered include catering, needlework and craft making. Computer literacy classes and assistive computer programmes were seen to be of particular importance. In addition, one school offered longer Life Orientation classes because of their importance to learners who would be entering the work force rather than continuing their education.

7.4.3   Assessment

Another part of the curriculum which can be adapted to better address the needs of individual learners is assessment. Although the assessment policies and qualifications framework "apply in principle" and all assessment practices should be in line with RNCS guidelines (SA DoE 2005b) there are several ways that assessment can be adapted.

Rather than relying only on traditional methods of examination, SSRC can use portfolios of work, project work, direct observation, functional assessment and students' self-assessment (UNESCO 2001). These

alternative methods of assessment may be educator-produced and can focus on assessing the individual learner's potential to learn (SA DoE 2005a).

Assessment standards should emphasise participatory, learner-centred and activity-based education and should leave room for creativity and innovation on the part of educators in interpreting how they teach. Educators may adapt the assessment standards to suit the level of development of learners, but the standards must remain within the same context and content of learning outcomes (SA DoE 2005b).

Assessment standards should be "designed down" when necessary. This means breaking down the assessment standards in order to build it up in a logical, progressive way. It involves dividing the standards into smaller, achievable components which are spread across the duration of the year (SA DoE 2005b). Thus each component can be achieved in a step-by-step manner, allowing the learner to work gradually toward achieving the assessment standards by year-end.

There are several suggested methods for adapting assessment (SA DoE 2005b):

- learners may need to write their exams in a separate venue so that a teacher or trained person can assist them and provide structure to the task and time allocation;

- long assessments can be broken down into smaller chunks;

- learners may need minimised visual distractions in the environment;

- learners may need to work in short units of time with controlled breaks;

- learners may need the educator to demonstrate tasks/activities and provide them with a checklist;

- learners may need to be allowed extra time to work on assessment exercises;

- learners may need visual and auditory reminders indicating the amount of time left.

With regards to progression, learners who experience barriers to learning may spend longer than four years in a phase, but learners must still advance through grades and cannot remain in the same grade throughout their school career. Furthermore, certification at least at Grade 9 level, and as far as possible at Grade 12 level, should remain part of the curriculum package of all SSRC (SA DoE 2007). In some cases learners who experience severe barriers to learning may not be able to achieve Grade 12 certification as a result of their barriers. In these cases, the goal should be achievement of Grade 9.

Findings from the school visits with regards to assessment

All three of the schools visited used adaptations in assessment. These include adjusting the timeframe, providing break periods and allowing for redirection. All three schools still used the NCS assessment standards, although one school said that they were not able to address all assessment standards. When necessary, learners are also allowed to use readers, scribes, magnifiers, desk adaptations, lamps and enlarged texts.

7.5   STRUCTURAL SUPPORT

Structural support in this instance refers to the DBSTs, CBSTs, and ILSTs that are created to provide support to schools and to educators within the IE model. For SSRC, DBSTs are of particular importance.

The function of the DBST is to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. In addition, the DBST builds the capacity of schools through supporting teaching, learning and management (SA DoE 2001).

DBSTs comprise of staff from provincial, district, regional and head offices and from SSRC. DBST members should come from DoE staff from curriculum, educational management development, Early Childhood Development (ECD), Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), teacher development, personnel planning, provisioning, physical planning units, as well as from IE units. Other members of the DBST may include specialised professionals such as psychologists, social workers and therapists. This integrated, multi-disciplinary team should work according to a consultative service delivery model (SA DoE 2007).

The DBST also plays an important role in that it liaises with other government departments such as Health and Social development to provide support to schools through their services. Similarly, Public Works can be contacted to implement job creation projects and to provide ramp access for learners (SA DoE 2001). Departments of Labour, Justice, Safety and Security, Correctional Services and Transport can also be contacted to develop a network of support for schools (SA DoE 2007). These links will also be key in facilitating learnerships, job placement and supported employment programmes (SA DoE 2005a).

In addition, the DBST helps to create links between SSRC and other schools by facilitating support to other schools and learners (SA DoE 2001). Principals of all SSRC in the district should be represented at DBST management committee meetings to help manage the balance between ensuring that quality teaching, learning and support takes place at their schools, while also ensuring that staff at SSRC provide support to the DBST and other schools.

Overall, the DBST is responsible for coordinating and driving all district activities related to IE. Its activities range from support to teachers in differentiation of the curriculum and management of diversity in the classroom to supporting principals to establish inclusive policies and practices. Also in this role with regards to IE, the DBST should support ILSTs to identify, assess and support children who experience barriers to learning, including disabilities and barriers of a socio-economic nature (SA DoE 2007).

Each district should have a single IE manager to oversee SSRC, DBST, and FSS in the district. In addition, principals of mainstream schools and SSRC should be involved to ensure that procedures are put in place to regulate the collaboration and exchange of staff between mainstream schools, FSS and SSRC (SA DoE 2005a).

Findings from the school visits with regards to structural support

In all three schools that were visited, educators and principals were unaware of functioning CBSTs and DBSTs in their areas. In addition, no ILSTs had been established.

7.6 ADMISSION POLICIES

According to DoE policy, SSRC may not admit learners who need lower levels of support than the school is staffed and equipped for. This represents a shift from the former policy of admission being based on disability category (SA DoE 2005a). Now, admission should be based on whether or not learners require high levels of support. Admission to SSRC should be viewed as a last option for a learner, only when appropriate support is not available in mainstream schools or FSS (SA DoE 2007).

Prior to admission, learners must undergo a screening and assessment process using the National SIAS strategy and relevant physical or sensory diagnostic assessments by professionals. After screening, those

learners who are assessed to be in need of high levels of support may be admitted to SSRC (SA DoE 2007).

Regardless of their eligibility to be admitted to SSRC, the final decision of whether to attend SSRC, FSS or mainstream schools should be made by the learner and their caregivers/guardians with guidance from DBST, professionals and educators. Ultimately, all admissions must be ratified by the DBST and no learner with very high needs may be refused admission based on the severity of the learner's support needs. The placement of learners should ideally be reviewed annually, but at least every two years, to determine if the placement is still appropriate (SA DoE 2007).

It is the responsibility of SSRC principals to manage the number of learners admitted to the school to ensure that the professional staff have sufficient time to provide support to learners and educators in FSS and mainstream schools when necessary. Ideally, SSRC should accommodate a maximum of 300 learners on site (SA DoE 2007).

With regards to grade structure, SSRC are not organised strictly according to grades, but rather the level and nature of support provided should be based on individual learner needs, strengths, barriers, learning style and learning tempo. Learning programmes should be based on the needs of the majority of learners in an SSRC and whether or not they require straddling of grades and phases (SA DoE 2005b).

Findings from the school visits with regards to admission policies

At two of the schools visited, learners were referred to the school by hospitals and by other schools. At the third school, learners were referred by social workers and then assigned to the school by a court. One school said that they had a large waiting list of about 70 learners who wanted to attend the school but could not currently be accommodated. That school selected learners based on their level of needs and whether or not the school could currently support the learner.

The School of Industries that was visited was currently running far below capacity. The educators at the school felt that this was due to the large amount of paperwork and time commitment involved with sending learners to the school because they had to go through social workers and courts.

The other two schools felt strongly that decision-making with regards to which learners are admitted should remain in the hands of the schools. One school in particular was concerned because they supported learners who are physically challenged but mentally/academically able. They were concerned that the

school would be forced to also admit learners who are severely mentally challenged, which would take away from the vibrancy and academic focus of the school. They also felt that it was important to have a mix of learners at the school, rather than only severely disabled learners. The mix allows for groups and clubs to exist where less disabled learners are able to support learners who face greater barriers to learning.

7.7 FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Families and communities play a vital role in the success and effectiveness of SSRC. However, for many years the voice of parents has been silent and their involvement has been limited. With the change to a new democratic South Africa, the role of parents in the education of their children has changed dramatically and now parents and caregivers can become integral partners in developing a more inclusive education system with shared decision making and responsibility for outcomes (Yssel *et al* 2007).

It is important that parents and learners have the right to decide whether to opt for an inclusive regular school or a special school initially, with IE as the ultimate goal (UNESCO 2005). As discussed with relation to admission policies, parents and caregivers play key roles in the decision of whether or not to send a learner to a mainstream school, an FSS or an SSRC. In addition, they should play a role in all levels of identification, screening, assessment and placement of their children (SA DoE 2005b).

SSRC must also provide support to families and parents of learners in the school. Support may include educational guidance as well as psychological and emotional guidance. In addition, SSRC staff should advise parents on possible career opportunities available to learners. SSRC should also have a library of relevant books and technological devices that parents and the community may access (SA DoE 2007). SSRC should also offer training to parents and communities that will equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate effectively in their children's learning and school life (SA DoE 2005b). This training would in turn support the learning of students and would have a positive impact on financial and moral returns for learners and parents (Govinda 2009).

Research studies show that the benefits of parent/family involvement in the education of children include:

- higher grades and test scores;

- positive attitudes and improved behaviour;

- more successful schools and programmes (Yssel *et al* 2007).

SSRC also play a role in the community by offering adult training, for example in SASL. In turn, SSRC should work collaboratively with the community and draw on their expertise and resources, including disabled people's organisations (DPO), parent's organisations, teacher unions and NGOs. SSRC can also draw on community resources such as traditional/ indigenous healers (SA DoE 2007). The quality of school functioning benefits greatly from close cooperation with communities, and thus it is necessary to build an atmosphere of trust among parents and the community with respect to SSRC (Govinda 2009).

In addition, SSRC should work with the community on advocacy and awareness with the aim of changing attitudes and creating community support for IE policy and practices (SA DoE 2007). Each SSRC should hire a Community Rehabilitation Facilitator as part of the Resource Centre staff. This person would be responsible for community outreach and education. In addition, they can play a role in working with health officials to ensure early identification of barriers to learning in children and as well as identifying children of school going age who are not attending school because they experience barriers to learning.

Unfortunately this role for parents and communities in SSRC is not always realised. Often the perspectives of families is not understood or considered in decision-making processes (Yssel *et al* 2007). The result of this lack of involvement is that parents are not always adequately informed of their children's problems or progress, and are deprived of the opportunity to participate in their children's development. In addition, parents are less able to understand the emotional and/or behavioural problems that their children experience (SA DoE 2005b).

Findings from the school visits with regards to the involvement of families and communities

Educators from the three schools that were visited reported that parents have very limited involvement with the schools. In some cases, they felt that parents had similar challenges and behaviour problems as the learners. In addition, the socio-economic status and low education levels of parents' limits their ability to become involved with their children's schooling. Some families also reject the learners because of the barriers that they experience. All three schools expressed concern that they become "dumping sites" where learners are left and the school is forced to cope without support from families.

There seems to be some degree of community involvement in all three schools. At one school, there was a significant amount of support in the form of funding from local businesses, charitable organisations and

NGOs. Another school had received funding from local businesses for infrastructure improvements and to sponsor excursions for the learners. Additional community support came in the form of local women teaching beadwork and needlework to the learners. There was also involvement of the Department of Social Development and Department of Health at one school. These Departments provided assistance with health services and grants.

7.8   MULTI-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

In order for SSRC to be effectively implemented in the Province, there must be significant multi-sectoral collaboration. SSRC should not only be a project of the KZN DoE, but also of other Departments in the province. Throughout the planning, implementation and running of SSRC, collaboration with other sectors including Health, Social Development, Labour, Justice, Correctional Services, Transport and Safety and Security is necessary to develop a network of support for schools (SA DoE 2007).

An example of multi-sectoral collaboration is working with the Department of Public Works to create employment opportunities through the physical infrastructure improvements that are needed at SSRC, such as ramps for learners (SA DoE 2001). In addition, the KZNDoE should work closely with the Department of Health in the implementation of an Integrated Nutrition Strategy in SSRC, and also to provide regular health screen and tests in schools. Further collaboration with the Department of Health can come in the form of working together to fill posts for therapists and health professionals in SSRC (SA DoE 2001).

Links should also be created with the Department of Labour to facilitate the creation of learnerships, job placement, supported employment programmes and other school-to-work linkages for SSRC (SA DoE 2005a).

8.   Conclusions

Several important conclusions can be made based on the literature review and school visits that were conducted. These conclusions should be used to inform the norms and standards that are created. These

are not necessarily recommendations for the norms and standards themselves, but rather issues that must be considered in the process of creating norms and standards.

8.1 HUMAN RESOURCE CONCLUSIONS

Many educators at special schools do not currently have the recommended qualifications or training to work with learners who experience barriers to learning.

Although the DoE has indicated the recommended qualifications and training that educators at special schools should have, this does not seem to be the case in many schools. At the three schools visited, there were several instances where educators had not received any special training to work at the school. It is important to note, however, that this was not always the case and that some educators had received additional training.

In addition, many support staff members had not received training in working with learners who experience barriers to learning. These additional training needs will be addressed in the norms and standards document.

The best way to provide HR development may be to have educators from neighbouring schools come to SSRC to work with teachers in their environment.

As highlighted in the above point, HR development will be a key component of the creation of SSRC in KZN. Educators from one school suggested that educators from mainstream schools and FSS should visit their school to learn methodologies in their environment. This also highlights the importance of educator and principal exchanges. Often it is difficult to learn new methodologies and ways of teaching outside of the context of the classroom and the school. Bringing educators into the SSRC would be an effective way of addressing this.

8.2 PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE CONCLUSIONS

The special schools do not currently have the capacity to serve as resource centres.

For the most part special schools have better physical infrastructure than mainstream schools. For example, none of the classrooms in the schools that were visited felt overcrowded and learners had sufficient space

to move around. However, none of the three schools had sufficient space for a resource centre or for a workshop/training room. Thus, further upgrading is needed to make the shift from special schools to SSRC.

There were some concerns in two of the schools that parts of the schools were not accessible to learners who used wheelchairs. These issues will need to be addressed in all SSRC.

8.3 RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT CONCLUSIONS

There is a concern among special schools about being required to share their equipment with other schools in the province.

The norms and standards need to clearly define to what extant SSRC will be required to loan out equipment or allow other schools to use equipment, particularly equipment purchased through fundraising done in the school. Because the DoE did not initially purchase this equipment or provide financial support for the maintenance and upkeep, it is not clear whether or not other schools are entitled to use this equipment. It will be necessary to further investigate this issue and the issue of ownership of equipment purchased by schools.

However, it must be kept in mind that the aim of the new SSRC model is to uplift schools that are below par, rather than to bring down schools which are already above par. These fears expressed by existing special schools should be addressed through extensive advocacy and orientation to the new SSRC model.

8.4 CURRICULUM CONCLUSIONS

There was concern among some schools about the level of inclusion that is possible and desirable in schools.

EWP6 puts forth the policy that all learners, given the right amount of support and time, can access the curriculum. Some of the educators did not fully agree with this and felt that trying to achieve it could serve as a hindrance to other learners. The new SSRC model needs to consider this policy of all learners accessing the curriculum and needs to look at how to make it realistic in the context of SSRC. It is clear that this is not currently happening because many learners focus on skills classes or vocational training rather than the

curriculum material. This is a realistic policy that recognises that these classes may be more beneficial to some learners than the curriculum material.

Furthermore, some educators were concerned about the IE policy overall. They felt that learners who experience severe barriers to learning require nurturing that they may not receive in other schools and that a holistic response to physical, emotional, mental and academic needs is necessary. This concern is actually in line with *EWP6*, which specifies that different levels of support are needed by different learners, and that some learners need to be accommodated for in special schools.

The model of referral for FSS and mainstream schools needs to be determined based on support provided rather than geographical location.

Prior to creating the norms and standards document, different models of referral must be investigated. Because SSRC will serve as centres of excellence in approximately three specific learning programmes, it will be most beneficial to have referral based on the needs of the learners rather than the geographical location of the school. For example, an educator who has a concern about adapting an assessment for a learner who has a physical disability should be referred to a SSRC that specialises in providing learning programmes related to that disability, rather than to a SSRC that is located nearby but does not provide support for that type of disability.

8.5 STRUCTURAL SUPPORT CONCLUSIONS

The structures envisioned to provide support in the Province are not functioning properly.

DBSTs, CBSTs and ILSTs are not currently functioning in the areas surrounding the three schools that were visited. If they are in fact functioning, special schools are not involved. None of the principals or educators at the schools that were visited had any knowledge of these structures or the role that SSRC should play in them. As the literature points out, the role of SSRC in these structures is vital to the success of IE in the province.

This issue will need to be addressed in the training that is offered to educators. This is not, however, an issue only for SSRC, but rather a district-wide and circuit-wide issue. DBSTs and CBSTs need to be established in all districts and circuits, with the involvement of representatives from SSRC. ILSTs need to be established at all schools, including SSRC.

Many special schools are already acting informally as resource centres to other schools.

Based on the school visits, it seems that many special schools are already acting informally as resources to other schools in the province. There is a considerable amount of communication between principals and educators at special schools in the province. This communication should be capitalised on in the creation of SSRC. It will be important to investigate the current methods of communication and issues that are discussed. In addition, it will be important to investigate to what extent mainstream schools and FSS are already referring to special schools when they have issues with learners. These practices that are already in existence should be captured and used to create a standardised model of support for FSS and mainstream schools.

8.6 ADMISSION POLICIES CONCLUSIONS

There is a need for standardisation of admission policies and procedures at all SSRC.

special schools currently seem to have a certain level of autonomy with regards to the admission policies and procedures that they use. Because of this autonomy, there is a lack of standardisation across special schools. This can be addressed by ensuring that the SIAS process is used in all schools, and also by educating SSRC on this process. SIAS assessment procedures should be used to determine what intervention is needed by learners, and thus to determine the placement of learners in SSRC.

In addition to being standardised, the norms and standards document needs to ensure that the admission policies enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of SSRC. The admission policies need to reflect the international mandate that all learners have the right to access and participate in a quality education, regardless of the barriers to learning that they may experience.

8.7 FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES CONCLUSIONS

It is important to increase the involvement of families and communities in SSRC.

The literature and guidelines highlight the importance of family and community involvement in SSRC. This is important for the full development of learners and for the success of SSRC. Schools have indicated that currently there is a lack of parent involvement. This needs to be addressed in the norms and standards that

are created. There are already policies in place through the DoE to encourage parental involvement in schools and to create schools as the centre of community life, but they are not being properly implemented. The norms and standards document can bring to light some of these policies and interpret them for the SSRC context.

Important steps have been made to foster community involvement in the schools that were visited, including relationships being formed with NGOs and small local businesses. It would be beneficial to investigate the various models of community, NGO and local government involvement in schools and the impact of this involvement. The norms and standards should suggest models of community involvement in SSRC and the audit should capture to what extent it is already happening in schools.

8.8 MULTI-SECTORAL COLLABORATION CONCLUSIONS

Although collaboration may be happening informally in some schools, it needs to be standardised across all SSRC.

The norms and standards document will need to outline exactly which Departments will be collaborated with and in what way. For example, a formal relationship should be established with the Department of Labour to facilitate learnerships and employment opportunities for learners from SSRC. Similarly, the Department of Health will play a key role in SSRC, beginning with participating in identification of learners who experience barriers to learning. In addition, the Department of Health can collaborate through the nutritional programmes of SSRC, through ongoing screening and testing, and through support for therapists and health professionals stationed at SSRC.

8.9 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

A considerable amount of HR provisioning and development, physical infrastructure and equipment needs must be addressed before converting existing special schools to SSRC.

When considering the guidelines that have been set by the DoE with regards to HR provisioning and development, physical infrastructure and equipment needs of SSRC, there is a great amount of work that will need to be done in schools. Although only a small sample of schools were visited, it was clear from these visits that the schools are in many ways struggling to meet the needs of their learners and feel the

task of acting as a resource centre to other schools would be overwhelming. There was also concern about taking educators out of the classrooms to serve as resources to other schools because they would then have to decrease their normal teaching loads. Thus, more educators, support staff, and specialists will be required in all schools.

In addition, none of the schools currently have the resources and physical infrastructure necessary to serve as SSRC. The school audit will help to identify exactly where these gaps are in each school.

Of considerable concern was the lack of training that educators had received in working with learners who experience barriers to learning. Many had never received any formal training in providing support to learners with specific needs or in curriculum differentiation. This would be the first step in creating SSRC before educators are able to themselves provide training to other educators.

There seems to be an overall feeling from schools that thus far the DoE has not provided concrete support to special schools.

Educators and principals in special schools seem to feel that they have not received the support and guidance that they need from the Department. In particular, they require more training opportunities and more assistance with curriculum and assessment adaptation. There were also several instances mentioned of the DoE not following through on concerns raised by schools or on promises made to schools.

Regardless of whether or not these claims are true, it must be noted that these concerns exist in many schools. The creation of SSRC norms and standards provides the opportunity to increase communication between schools and the Department, and also provides the opportunity for the KZNDoE to follow-through on concerns raised by schools.

8.10   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CREATION OF NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR SSRC

It is important to address the different experiences and needs of schools rather than creating a "one size fits all" model for SSRC.

Special schools in the province address vastly different learner needs and have a wide variety of experiences. For example, a school that offers vocational support to learners with behavioural problems will have different needs and challenges than a school that offers support to learners who have physical challenges. These different situations need to be considered and the SSRC model that is created needs to

be flexible enough to take into account the variety of learning programmes offered. Thus, the norms and standards will create an SSRC model which allows for variations within the overarching guidelines.

In addition, the norms and standards need to consider the differences between vocational classes and curriculum/academic classes. In all three of the schools that were visited, learners were split into either vocational/skills classes or academic classes which followed the RNCS. The norms and standards need to take into account the different situations of these classes. In addition, there is a need to standardise the vocational/skills classes that are offered in SSRC, particularly with regards to assessments.

Above all, it is important to build on what is already working well in schools. Many of the special schools in the province have created successful models for addressing learner needs and the new model should build on this. It is also important that schools do not lose all of their autonomy and are able to have some flexibility because of the unique situations of different schools. Because all of the SSRC are Section 21 schools, they will maintain some level of financial autonomy.

One way of ensuring that the norms and standards are not a "one size fits all" model is identifying basic requirements and optimal requirement for each category. For example the norms and standards may indicate that each school must have at least three therapists, but the optimal number of therapists is six. This allows for some flexibility and variation.

Unions and NGOs should also be included in the process of creating norms and standards for SSRC.

Unions and NGOs should have a voice in the creation of norms and standards for SSRC. In particular, NGOs that are involved with advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities should be involved. Receiving the input from a wide variety of stakeholders will help to strengthen the norms and standards and will also ensure the buy-in of schools and the community in the new model.

Some of the educators that participated in the focus group discussions feared that a new model will be imposed on them without their input. It is vital to provide a forum for input from unions, on behalf of the schools, during the drafting process of the norms and standards document. In many cases, educators and principals have valuable knowledge about special schools and about providing quality education for learners who experience barriers to learning. It will be vital to include their perspective of what works and what does not work in the creation of an SSRC model.

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10. Annexure

10.1 LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

To: Cluster Manager, District Manager   28 May 2010

Attn: Principal of INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL

Dear INSERT NAME OF PRINCIPAL

The Special Needs Education Services (SNES) directorate of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education is currently designing provincial Norms and Standards for special schools as Resource Centres (SSRC). These Norms and Standards will be in line with Education White Paper 6 and the model created will eventually be implemented in special schools throughout the province.

MIET Africa, an NGO based in Durban, has been selected as the collaborating partner in this project and have been granted permission by the SNES directorate to visit special schools in the province.

As part of the process of creating Norms and Standards, it is necessary to visit a sample of existing special schools to learn more about what is currently working well in the schools and where improvements can be made. Your school has been selected as one of three in the province that will provide insight on the creation of Norms and Standards.

As a researcher for MIET Africa, I will be visiting your school at 9h00 on

Date: School

Please plan on having the Principal, Deputy Principal or Head of Department available at that time to provide a tour of the school. In addition, I would like to meet with three or four educators from the school to hold a focus group discussion regarding the learning programmes offered, human resource provisioning, curriculum differentiation, physical infrastructure and the availability of resources and equipment. This discussion should last approximately 40 minutes to an hour.

Any queries can be directed to Ms. Jaime Gentile at MIET Africa (contact details below) or Mrs. Vuyi Zondi at the SNES Directorate (033 341 8602).

Sincerely,

Jaime Gentile

Tel: 031 273 2343

Cell: 078 368 3197

Email: jaime@miet.co.za

10.2   FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION CONSENT FORM

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education

MiET AFRICA

Focus Group Discussion Consent Form

The purpose of this focus group discussion is to gather information that will help guide the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, in partnership with MIET Africa, in creating the Norms and Standards for special schools as Resource Centres in line with the recommendations of Education White Paper 6.

Your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to discontinue your participation, you are free to do so.

Your participation in this discussion is anonymous. Your name will not be attached to responses in any way in the notes that are taken or in the report that is produced.

Your participation is highly appreciated, as it will help to create a Norms and Standards document that is accurate to the reality of special schools in the Province.

If you have any questions, you may contact Ms. Jaime Gentile from MIET Africa at 031.273.2343 or 078.368.3197. Alternatively, you may contact Mrs. Vuyi Zondi from the SNES directorate of KZNDoE at 033.341.8602.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign your name below:

Printed Name	Signature	Date

10.3   FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Special Schools as Resource Centres: Focus Group Discussion Guide

The purpose of this visit is to gather information that will help guide the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, in partnership with MIET Africa, in creating the Norms and Standards for special schools as Resource Centres in line with the recommendations of Education White Paper 6.

Human Resources provisioning

-    How do you feel about the number of learners you have in your class?

-    What do you think is the ideal LER for this school?

-    Tell me about the support that you receive from non-teaching staff in the classroom?

-    If you were able to hire five more staff members, which posts would you want to fill/create?

-    What sort of trainings are offered to the community and to other schools? Who facilitates these trainings?

Human Resources development

-    What trainings have you received that have been very helpful?

-    What trainings have you received that have been least helpful?

-    What additional training would be beneficial?

- What kind of special qualifications do you and your colleagues have to work at a special school? What percentage of educators would you estimate have these qualifications?

Physical infrastructure

- Is the physical infrastructure of the school appropriate for the learning programmes offered?

- Are there any aspects of the physical environment that act as barriers to learners?

- Are there any additional rooms or infrastructure alterations that are necessary?

- If the school is a hostel, please describe the current set-up

Curriculum

- What standards do you use to judge progress and assess learner achievement in your classroom?

- What methods of assessment adaptation do you use?

- What adaptations have you had to make to accommodate your learners?/ What methods of curriculum differentiation do you use?/ How have you had to adapt the curriculum for your learners?

- What adaptations do you use in your teaching methodology and lesson planning?

- How do you prepare learners for the work world? What kind of life skills do you focus on developing?

Resources and Equipment

- What assistive devices do you use in your classroom? What do other educators use?

- Which of these is most useful?

- What resources and equipment are available at the school to assist learners?

- If you could purchase five pieces of additional equipment, what would be your priority?

Outreach (DBST and neighbouring schools)

- Does the school currently provide training/workshops to teachers from other schools and to parents/community members?

- If the school does provide training, how successful has this been? If not, why? (Consider HR, physical infrastructure, resources and equipment)

- Tell me about the DBST? How have educators been involved?

- What roles do the families of learners and the community currently play in the school?

Admission

- How do you identify and select learners who need to be enrolled here?

10.4 SCHOOL VISIT OBSERVATION GUIDE

Special schools as Resource Centres: School Visit

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education is working in partnership with MIET Africa to create Norms and Standards for special schools as Resource Centres (SSRC). This checklist will help by providing information about the current situation of special schools in the Province.

School:

Principal:

Telephone:

Date:

Human Resources

Number of learners:

Number of educators:

Average class size:

Indicate the number of staff members currently employed in each category:

Management: _____Principal

_____Deputy Principal   _____Classroom educators

_____HoD   _____Of these, how many are HoD?

Classroom Staff: _____Teacher aids

Support Staff:

_____Admin clerk

_____Full time technical assistants

Please specify the posts: _____

_____

_____

_____Career counsellor/mentor

_____Drivers

_____Security guards

_____Cleaner

_____Cook

Health Staff:

_____Audiology technicians

_____Health professionals (i.e. therapists, nurses, etc)

Please specify:

Outreach Staff:

_____Staff responsible for maintaining Resource Centre

_____ Facilitators to provide training and workshops

_____ Staff allocated to represent DBST/CBST

For Schools with Hostel facilities:

_____ Housemothers/Housefathers

_____ Assistance housemothers/ Assistant housefathers

_____ Hostel supervisors

_____ Housekeeping aid

_____ Laundry aid

Other staff members not mentioned: _____

_____

_____

Physical Environment:

Indicate the number of following rooms:

_____ Class rooms	_____ Workshop
_____ Computer centres/media centre	_____ Admin office
_____ Library facility	_____ Sick room
_____ Multipurpose rooms	_____ Dining facility
_____ Private consultation rooms	_____ Kitchen
_____ Therapy suite	_____ Toilets
_____ Recreational facilities	_____ Toilets for learners with disabilities
_____ Secure storerooms	

Other:

For schools with hostel facilities, please indicate the number of rooms:

_____ Boys' rooms

_____ Girls' rooms   _____ Toilets/urinals

_____ TV room   _____ Baths

_____ Games room   _____ Showers

_____ Duty room   _____ Laundry facility

_____ Sickbay bed spaces   _____ Cleaning room

_____ Dispensary   _____ Linen store

_____ Bathrooms   _____ Tuck store

Other:

Of the rooms listed, are there any that create physical barriers to learners? Please explain

Resources and Equipment:

List the equipment the school has to assist with communication (e.g. Braille printer, hearing aids, microphone for educators, etc):

_____

_____

_____

List the equipment the school has to assist with mobility (e.g. wheelchairs, ramps, etc).:

_____

_____

_____

List the equipment the school has to assist with teaching (e.g. projector, visual aids, etc):

_____

_____

_____

List the material resources the school has (e.g. material on teaching learners with special needs, curriculum adaptation, etc):

_____

_____

_____

Does the school have a library of resources and equipment to lend to other educators and the community?

_____Yes   _____No

Does the school offer transportation assistance for learners?

_____Yes   _____No

Admission:

What is the admission policy at the school?

School stamp and date