Implementation of Inclusive Education: How Far Are We?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The usual assumptions associated with the implementation of new policies are that sufficient funding has been secured and the implementing agencies have the capacity to deliver. Arguably, the presence of both conditions does not guarantee actual implementation. But it is equally true that should one of the conditions be less than optimal, serious disruptions to service delivery become a real possibility. It could also be that both conditions exist in a less-than-ideal form, thus creating formidable problems for implementing agencies. The net result is a situation where service delivery becomes a function of available ‘capacity’ instead of delivering on the actual demands of the policy.

This paper addresses the government’s inclusive education and training policy by asking whether provincial education departments have access to sufficient funding and implementation capacity. Concomitant with these questions is an investigation into the funding and service delivery challenges that provinces face in implementing inclusive education and training policies. Inclusive education and training is outlined in Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. At a bare minimum, inclusive education and training requires that all education programmes explicitly confront ‘disability’ in its varied medical, social and economic senses. By insisting upon an expanded definition of disability and by partially locating the origin of non-medical disabilities within educational practices and institutions, inclusive education assumes the mantle of a meta-discourse. It is no longer the sole preoccupation of special needs education directorates, but is diffused into the entire national and provincial education system. This paper tracks the funding and service delivery challenges of this unfolding educational discourse and practice.

Provincial funding of inclusive education and training has been influenced by:

- left-over effects of the 1996–98 period during which wage costs increased dramatically, leading to a concerted effort at controlling wage costs in public schools specifically and provincial education generally;
- the subsequent shift of funding priorities from personnel to non-personnel expenditures, which reduced the leverage of inclusive education, especially given its new human resources challenges;
- the increasing priority accorded to redistributive policies in public schools, Grade R and further education and training colleges, which negated inclusive education’s claim for greater resources.
The prospects of provincial education funding of inclusive education and training were further damaged by the delay in the implementation of a national conditional grant and the absence of funding norms and standards for the special needs education sector. While Education White Paper 6 dismisses claims for large additional resources flowing to the inclusive education and training sector, it made a strong argument for the purchasing of assistive devices and other key non-personnel expenditure items. In spite of the fact that this proposed national conditional grant represents one of the short-term goals of Education White Paper 6, nothing has come of it as yet. It is not clear whether provincial education departments are unable to present viable business plans or whether the national Department of Education has not put forward a convincing case to the National Treasury. What is clear is that since many of the older education conditional grants were phased out in the post-2000 period, there was fiscal space for a national inclusive education conditional grant. The absence of a national conditional grant is putting further financial pressure on the already hard-pressed budgets of special school institutions.

What further complicates the funding plight of provincial education departments is the delay in the publication of funding norms and standards. It is an accepted truth that provincial decision-makers often need something concrete to anchor and support specific funding requests. The delays in the finalisation of the funding norms and standards for the sector will have weakened education’s quest for better funding of special school institutions and inclusive education and training as a whole. There is no clarity as to when the funding norms and standards will be published, thus adding to the funding uncertainty that characterises this sector. The reformulation of provincial education budgets to ensure a better resource-flow to inclusive education and training priorities has not occurred. Reformulation of such budgets is premised upon the idea that the national conditional grant creates demand for future funding and the funding norms and standards create a concrete platform to bid for greater resources. The fact that both these initiatives are stalled conveys a powerful view of the stalemate in implementation that characterises present provincial efforts.

What we have is a thoroughly disjointed funding system, which shows the folly of official policy in expanding inclusive education without a corresponding commitment to improving the overall availability of resources for implementation. Poor funding of the inclusive education and training initiative is an important reason for the delay and non-implementation of policies, but is not the only reason for the lack of progress. We took each of the main short-term service delivery goals of Education White Paper 6 and asked provinces to report on progress made in realising policy goals. We report on:

- progress in the ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns within education departments;
- the mobilisation of out-of-school youth;
- the conversion of primary and special schools into full-service schools and resource centres; and
- the establishment of the district-based support teams.

At provincial education level, we found little evidence of well-directed and active advocacy and information campaigns aimed at winning the hearts and minds of all relevant provincial education staff. Understood from the vantage point of intra-departmental advocacy, this suggests that special needs education officials benefit little from informal or formal exchanges with their counterparts in other provincial education programmes. We also found that there was no consensus about the parameters of the interventions that were intended to eliminate systematic barriers to learning. Apart from the differences in perception about the scope of implementation of inclusive education, many of the interviewees did not understand the shift in orientation required by Education White Paper 6. For some it meant the bolstering of the special needs schools, while for others it meant a complete overhaul of the education and training system. While we acknowledge that provincial education departments are not the passive recipients of national policy, one cannot but apportion some of the blame to the national Department of Education. It may well have tried to explain the rationale behind the concept of inclusive
education, but our interviews reveal that there is very little common ground binding the main
movers of inclusive education at the provincial level.

Provinces did not conceptualise a strategic campaign and integration strategy for the inclusion of
marginalised children and youth with disabilities. Thus, in cases where learners were successfully
mobilised, provinces did not have the requisite resources (financial and learning) to provide
access to education in the existing institutions. This had led some provinces to eschew aggressive
mobilisation campaigns for fear of being unable to provide for such learners’ needs. The
mobilisation of out-of-school learners was further complicated because provinces did not have
accurate numbers of potential learners and, therefore, were not able to set targets and annual
benchmarks of children and youth to be integrated. Providing for those learners who were
successfully mobilised requires a school environment that is able to cope with the diverse
learning needs of all learners. The conversion of public primary schools into full-service schools
and special schools into resource centres is intended to serve such purposes. However, the field
tests, which represent the experimental conversion phase, have been delayed and will only be
completed in 2009. However, field testing in 2006 resulted in large numbers of teachers having
been oriented towards their roles within the new type of learning environment. With regard to
the conversion of schools in terms of physical infrastructure, provinces did not in all cases select
schools according to the criteria developed for site selection. Many of the chosen sites require
considerable infrastructural improvement, which causes further setbacks in implementation. To a
large extent, these challenges can also be attributed to conditions of neglect, poverty and lack of
service provisioning that characterise the presidential nodal areas in which all the selected schools
are located. This situation was also exacerbated by the time it took to complete protracted
infrastructure tender processes when the conversion of schools was finally initiated.

Schools that are converted require access to specialised support because of the explicit attempt to
practise and manage diverse learning environments. Education White Paper 6 proposes the
establishment of district-based support teams, which would be functional at the district level, and
actively supporting both public ordinary and special school institutions. As with the delays in the
conversion process at the school level, the establishment of district-based support teams as
conceived by Education White Paper 6 is not yet a reality in all provinces. What we have in some
provincial education departments is an attempt at reconfiguring the existing support services to
service a broader client base, while other provinces have not yet made similar moves. This
replicates a dangerous trend that is noticeable in the early childhood development field where
policy and implementation vacuums have led some provinces to develop their own models. In the
rural provinces, the future establishment of district-based support teams is threatened by
these provinces’ inability to attract and retain the professionals who make up the district-based
support teams.

So, where are we in the implementation of inclusive education and training in South Africa?2
Firstly, claims about the so-called cost-effectiveness of implementation pale into insignificance
when we learn that many provincial education departments do not even have funds to pay for the
recruitment and placement of out-of-school learners. Secondly, the fact that some provincial
education departments eschewed aggressive campaigns to get these learners into the system
points to the discussions that should be had among provincial special needs and public ordinary
school officials. It also reveals the precarious state of infrastructure provisioning in public
schools. Thirdly, it is abundantly clear that inclusive education cannot be driven by special needs
education directorates and that the appropriate discussion about suitable organisational location
must be resolved as speedily as possible. In fact, we believe that it was a mistake to attach the
notion of ‘inclusive education’ so closely to ‘special needs education’ and that the former should
have been elevated to a transversal status similar to outcomes-based education.

Instead of ending fragmentation in the implementation of education policy in South Africa, the
implementation of inclusive education and training frames ‘what gets done’ as a function of
available capacity. In so doing, it mirrors the very disconnectedness it was intended to overcome.
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education 2001) occupies a special place in the development of education policy in the post-1994 period. Firstly, it represents the completion of the grand policy-making processes for the main education sub-sectors. Secondly, because of its location at the tail end of the policy-making process, it suggests a retrospective revision of all the main education sub-sector policies to bring these in line with the concepts of inclusive education. Thirdly, no other education policy in the post-1994 era has been as clear and critical about the status quo and how it contributes to the further marginalisation and exclusion of learners, especially in the public ordinary schooling system.

The two narratives included here serve to illustrate what is at stake in the transformation of the education system to make it more ‘inclusive’. Shamiela’s experiences illustrate the integration of children with disabilities into public ordinary schools, while Stanley’s experiences highlight the range of diverse issues that could also be considered barriers to learning within public ordinary schools.2

Box 1
The stories of Shamiela and Stanley

Shamiela is a 16-year-old girl who was diagnosed with spina bifida (a hole in her spine affecting her legs and various internal organs). She has undergone surgery many times and requires monthly hospital treatment. She has been confined to a wheelchair since she was 11 years old due to dislocating her hip after a fall. Shamiela attended a pre-school for children with disabilities. When she started her primary schooling career at a special school, the school recommended placement in a public ordinary school. Shamiela’s mom was able to convince a local primary school to take her in. She recalls her experience: ‘I was asked to identify a school that would accept her. I did not struggle as [the school] was my first port of call. The school was accepting as we lived in that community.’ Shamiela required her own caregiver at school as she needed assistance. Even though she moved to another primary school, when the family moved house, she was readily accepted at the public ordinary school. At both schools, Shamiela’s mom had to give information sessions to the staff to help them understand Shamiela’s requirements for support and explain the details of her medical condition. Although she was teased by some children at school, Shamiela also formed firm friendships during her primary school years. She remembers fondly the final years of primary school as she cannot recall being treated differently by the teachers; she was also punished along with others as well as getting her chance to be class monitor. She recalls: ‘The bus picked me up and other kids made fun of me. I was smaller and walked funny … overall it was a positive experience … only the teasing was negative.’ High school was more difficult as the infrastructure was more challenging – the school was on two levels and she was confined to a wheelchair. In addition, she recalls that teachers were not willing to move their classes downstairs to accommodate her. However, the boys at school carried her upstairs to attend these classes. Her second year at high school was interrupted for four months by the need for medical intervention. She failed four of the ten subjects during that year and teachers began to make suggestions that she was lazy and perhaps would fit in better at a special school. Shamiela’s mom received special permission from the provincial education department for her to complete only the four subjects at a special school. Shamiela was reluctant to return to the same public ordinary school for her further education and training phase of schooling and has been accepted at a different public ordinary school that is more amenable to accommodating children with disabilities.

Stanley is a 19-year-old boy living on the perimeter of an urban environment. His experiences of schooling have not been positive. Stanley was ‘forced’ out of the school system because of gang
It is clear that the nature of the educational challenges facing these two learners is very different. However, in terms of the overall scope of Education White Paper 6, both experiences and their associated challenges are meant to be addressed through this national policy intervention.

The main purpose behind the present paper was to understand how education authorities fared in delivering on the key objectives of Education White Paper 6. An analysis of these key objectives represents a narrow view of the implementation of inclusive education, because there are many implementation challenges in the White Paper that are not explicitly conceptualised in the main policy document. However, in spite of these limitations, we persisted with the key service delivery and implementation challenges as outlined in Education White Paper 6. Thus, we have avoided the temptation to impose our own critical grid in assessing provinces’ progress in the implementation of inclusive education. By assessing progress according to the objectives of the White Paper, we hope to present and use the available evidence as a gauge of how far the government has come in terms of improving access to education for those on the periphery of society.

Data collection and research methods

Our main objective was to collect pertinent service delivery information from the implementing agencies, namely the provincial education departments. Although such an approach is limited, our experience in engaging with provincial education officials suggests that the frankness of our past exchanges has provided valuable insights into the implementation of education policies. It is obviously ideal to collect information about how the recipients of such services experience service delivery, but such an approach fell outside the scope of the paper and our available resources. To obtain information on funding and service delivery challenges faced by provincial education departments, we designed two questionnaires, one for the National Department of Education and the other for the nine provincial education departments. The questionnaire for the Department of Education focuses on the department’s monitoring role, how it supports provincial education departments, its understanding of the most common funding and service delivery challenges faced by provinces, and its own assessment of how far provinces have advanced the cause of inclusive education. The questionnaire for the provinces focuses on typical funding and service delivery challenges. We also wanted to understand how provinces perceive the national policy-making process and whether they feel that provinces are ably supported by the Department of Education.
We selected interviewees on the basis of our knowledge of who the relevant (policy and implementation) experts are in the respective education departments as well as on the recommendations of the respective heads of department. The search for the appropriate interviewees consumed a lot of time in provinces where directorates were understaffed, because the relevant persons were required to undertake site visits on a regular basis. We were looking to interview persons with both a conceptual understanding of the policy and knowledge about the practical implementation of inclusive education. We scheduled telephonic interviews for eight provinces (excluding the Western Cape) and the national Department of Education. In most instances, we attempted to complete the interview in one sitting (approximately 90 minutes), but there were many instances where we had to do a quick follow-up interview. Any outstanding factual information that was not provided by the provincial and national interviewee during the actual interview was pursued in follow-up electronic correspondences and short telephonic interviews.

There were several limitations to the research process we followed. Inclusive education is much broader than special needs education, yet in most instances we interviewed personnel from the special needs education directorates. There did not appear to be personnel from public schools or any of the other main programmes with the requisite skills and qualifications to interview. This suggests that we may reproduce perceptions of inclusive education that are still restricted to the notion of special needs education, even though most of the practitioners disavowed the special needs label. We did not obtain information or perceptions from suitably qualified personnel who have a cross-programme understanding of inclusive education. A second limitation relates to the assumptions of the provincial questionnaire: we wanted to extract key lessons from the experiences of provinces in implementing inclusive education. These questions constituted a sizeable proportion of the total questions, but because of slow or zero progress in implementation in some areas, many of these questions had to fall away. We were then forced to focus on the reasons for the slow pace of implementation in some instances, and the reasons for the complete lack of implementation in other instances.

In the service delivery section that focuses on funding and implementation challenges, we make liberal use of quotes from the interviews with the ten education agencies. The working method that we adopt is to place relevant quotes in textboxes, which are relatively distinct from the main text. We have done this to give the reader a sense of the understanding in the different provinces of the key elements of inclusive education and training policy. Because we did not interview provincial education officials from other directorates, we could not offer direct evidence of contrasting or consenting views within the same provincial education department. This is definitely material for a follow-up study.

We have also adopted the convention of not attaching the names of provincial education departments to these various quotes. Given that the debate about the implementation of inclusive education and training is only in its early stages, we did not want to identify provinces with particular views. We took this approach because the officials interviewed were chosen for their knowledge about implementation and not because they represent the official departmental position on inclusive education. Furthermore, divisions within provincial education departments make it even more undesirable to identify views with any specific provincial education department.
Research questions

The research questions were divided into four main categories. Firstly, we probed provincial education departments on their main funding challenges. We wanted to know whether additional funding has been set aside for the implementation of inclusive education, what the sources of these new resources are, and the special needs programme’s ability to attract more funding. Questions on the funding aspects explored the role of the government and the donor community. We also asked provincial education departments to identify what they consider to be the most serious funding challenges. Secondly, pertinent service delivery challenges were also explored. Questions examined the extent to which provincial education departments are able to deliver on the key goals of Education White Paper 6. In addition, we asked provincial education departments to identify any other service delivery challenges that have not been anticipated by themselves or the national Department of Education. Thirdly, assuming that implementation has already progressed, we wanted to know what lessons provinces and the Department of Education were learning from the field-testing phase of Education White Paper 6. Such lessons presumably covered both funding and service delivery aspects. However, as we indicated earlier, in some instances there was no visible progress, and all the questions on lessons learnt had to fall away. This meant that we focused more strongly on the reasons for the delay in the implementation of the objectives of Education White Paper 6. Fourthly, we explored the monitoring role of the Department of Education and also asked provinces whether they are well supported. Provincial education departments were also required to indicate where additional support (financial or otherwise) would be most useful.

Road map of the occasional paper

Section 2 explores the national policy framework and offers a critical description and analysis of Education White Paper 6. Apart from offering a brief summary of the national policy framework, we also present what we call the ‘policy blind spots’ of Education White Paper 6. Section 3 explores service delivery challenges facing provincial education departments. This section is divided into two main sections exploring funding challenges as well as implementation challenges. In the funding sub-section, we locate inclusive education within financial developments in public schools at the end of the 1990s, while also discussing the most important funding trends that emerged in the interviews. In the service delivery (implementation) sub-section, we use information provided by education officials to judge the extent to which progress has been made in delivering on inclusive education and training policies. Section 3 forms the heart of the paper and provides the framework for the concluding remarks that we offer in section 4.
SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING THE NATIONAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

According to Muthukrishna and Schoeman (2000) the process of developing Education White Paper 6 started with the establishment of consultative policy development bodies, namely the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and the National Committee on Education Support Services. The report developed jointly by the commission and the committee has provided the conceptual framework for Education White Paper 6 because it broke with the concept of ‘special needs education’ and introduced the notion of ‘barriers to learning and development’. The report conceptualised ‘barriers to learning and development’ as originating within the education system. These barriers include: problems in the provisioning and organisation of education, socio-economic barriers, negative and discriminatory attitudes, inflexible curricula, language and communication, inaccessible and unsafe built environments, inappropriate and inadequate support services, lack of parental recognition and involvement, lack of human resources development, as well as a recognition that learners with disabilities also experience specific barriers (Muthukrishna & Schoeman 2000: 325).

The identification of these ‘barriers’ led the two forums to develop the following strategies to transform the education system:

- building an integrated education system, abolishing notions of ‘special’ and ‘ordinary’ schools;
- forming direct support services to provide systemic support;
- establishing a holistic approach to institutional development;
- developing a flexible curriculum;
- recognising community-based support, especially the involvement of parents;
- adopting a preventative and developmental approach to learner support; and
- developing educators and other human resources. (Muthukrishna & Schoeman 2000: 327–329)

Already, at the early stages of policy development, policy-makers saw public schools as the natural conduit through which inclusive education could develop. This view of the central role of public schools was held not only by the government; a range of non-governmental organisations took similar positions. If public schools were the main conduits of change, then one would expect future policy and legislation to pay extensive attention to the role of public schools in the overall realisation of inclusive education in South Africa.

At the same time that the strategies proposed by the two consultative forums were published, public schools were struggling with spiralling teacher costs due to historical public service agreements (Department of Finance 1998: 16). It is unclear how the inclusive education deliberations were influenced by tensions in public schools, but our reading suggests that the financial developments in public schools were not fully understood at the time. In the context of policy-makers’ priorities to right-size personnel expenditures and restore a better balance between personnel and other critical expenditures, future education policies could not bank on a strong human resources investment and expansion in the ‘special needs education’ sector.
Education White Paper 6

Education White Paper 6 aims to create positive learning conditions for potential learners who are presently out of school and learners who experience ‘barriers to learning’ in extant educational institutions. One of the fundamental assumptions of the White Paper’s approach is that the majority of out-of-school learners with disabilities (especially those with mild to moderate support needs) can and should be accommodated within public ordinary schools, while only a handful of learners qualify to be placed into special needs institutions.

Contemporaneous with attempts to reduce out-of-school learner numbers is the establishment of full-service primary schools in selected presidential and poverty nodes. In their piloting and field-testing stages, full-service schools represent the gradual expansion of inclusive education into public ordinary schools and serve as an experiment for educational authorities keen to learn about the human and financial resources required to make inclusive education a reality. The conversion of primary ordinary schools to full-service schools takes place alongside the conversion of special schools into resource centres. In both instances, restructuring produces the need for available expertise to guide educators through the unfamiliar time of recognising and positively dealing with learners who have diverse learning needs and capabilities. This introduces the notion of district-based support teams that would advise educators and schools about coping with their learning and teaching challenges. District-based support teams are conceptualised to have core educational, psychological and other medical professional expertise, which would be made available to a full-service school or resource centre. From a costing perspective, Education White Paper 6 argues that deployment of such professionals at the district level is much more cost-effective and embodies one of the cost-saving drives of the White Paper.

The conversion process is absolutely vital to the evolution and successful implementation of Education White Paper 6. From a funding perspective, the government needs to know:

- what infrastructural adjustments must be made to enable the full participation of learners with learning and other mild disabilities;
- what the ideal human resources requirements are for the successful establishment of a district-based support team;
- the type of non-personnel expenditure required, as well as the overall size of such expenditures, that would meet learners’ needs in such schools; and
- the overall changes to the personnel establishment and key non-educational support staff.

From a policy perspective, the government needs to obtain information on the appropriate class sizes, successful teaching methodologies and appropriate curriculum offerings, as well as information on changes to the way in which teachers are to be trained. The fact that none of the funding and policy implications is developed in detail in Education White Paper 6 points to the much-spoken-about policy revisions that are required in other education sub-sectors. This undoubtedly introduces an element of complexity into inclusive education and training policy, precisely because such details must still be worked out. The conversion process in primary schools and special needs institutions is also intended to support long-term objectives such as the conversion of secondary schools and higher education institutions. Schools that do not form part of the immediate full-service school conversion project would benefit from a national advocacy
campaign and information programmes to increase awareness of the inclusiveness model. Also, campaigns that aim to change school governing bodies’ and the broader community’s attitudes regarding issues that affect learners with disabilities form an integral part of the implementation strategy.

How do the proposals above compare with the proposed recommendations in the report by the consultative forums? Firstly, Education White Paper 6 confirms the central importance of public schools as key centres for the realisation of inclusive education policies. Although Education White Paper 6 makes reference to further education and training colleges and higher education institutions, it is abundantly clear that the main entry point for inclusive education is through public primary schools. However, the key role of public ordinary schools does not lead to the destruction of the distinction between public ordinary and public special schools. However, it does lead to the conversion of special schools into resource centres, which serve as expert advice centres to other public special and ordinary schools.

Secondly, while the distinction between public ordinary schools and special schools remains intact in Education White Paper 6, systemic support in the guise of the district-based support teams does away with the public ordinary-special school distinction. This implies that these teams offer support to both types of institution without the need to form institution-specific professional support.

Thirdly, we believe that the ‘mainstreaming’ of disability, the establishment of district-based support teams, and the lengthy period of implementation of inclusive education are the pillars of the government’s cost-savings measures for inclusive education and training.

Fourthly, it is not yet clear what kind of human resources development strategies will be employed to help teachers cope with increased teaching challenges. However, if recent policy announcements are to be believed, teacher development does not necessarily mean bigger personnel budgets for public ordinary or special schools. All of the above seems to suggest the reconstruction of an entire education and training system without a corresponding transformation of its funding fortunes.

**Policy Blind Spots in Education White Paper 6**

In summary, Education White Paper 6 responds to the work done by the consultative committees by stating the Department of Education’s commitment to ‘the provision of educational opportunities in particular for those learners who experience barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate their learning needs’. Education White Paper 6 recognises that systemic transformation is a lengthy and complicated process. There is also a strong realisation that an audit of capital, material, human and funding resources currently available in special schools is needed to form the basis from which an inclusive education and training system will be built. (Department of Education 2001: 42, 47)

While Education White Paper 6 has gone a long way in absorbing recommendations from the earlier policy discussions, there are key issues whose consequences we feel are not clearly articulated in Education White Paper 6. We believe that these issues constitute
fundamental implementation hiatuses, which, if not addressed, may affect the destiny and successful implementation of inclusive education policy in South Africa.

‘Inclusive education’ is undoubtedly broader than the old special needs education programme concept. We do not dispute this, but it is also clear that the main point of expansion of inclusive education is in public primary (and later, secondary) schools. The initial success of ‘mainstreaming’ will be measured by the extent to which public schools practise, encourage and accommodate diverse learning and learners. In spite of the relatively broad implications of inclusive education for public schools, there is not enough discussion in Education White Paper 6 of the important role of public schools, or of the most common obstacles schools would face in furthering the goals of the White Paper.

Accepting the point above that inclusive education is not restricted to special needs directorates and that public schools are conceptualised to play a key role, there are legitimate questions about the location of the inclusive education initiative in provincial education departments. Should overall responsibility for inclusive education rest with the heads of department, or should a new cross-programme unit be formed? We could not find any of these issues discussed in Education White Paper 6, which proceeded as if special needs directorates are still required to drive the implementation of inclusive education. We regard this as a disjuncture between the grandness of the policy ideal and the means used to achieve such policy goals.

Education White Paper 6 is explicit about the reduced chances of ‘special needs’ or inclusive education in attracting significantly increased real resources. However, successful implementation, even in the early stages of policy implementation, requires additional resources. These resources are needed for the adaptation of schools, assistive devices and the proper establishment of district-based support teams, which are some of the most immediate funding pressures. This policy modesty precludes the Department of Education from carefully delineating new costs associated with policy changes. This blindness is potentially debilitating for provincial education departments.

Education White Paper 6 is relatively unabashed about the experimental nature of initial implementation and how such experiences must deliver vital lessons for future implementation. In this regard, it indicates the myriad research tasks that still need to be undertaken. Apart from a considerable increase in complexity for policy implementers, it does not indicate who is going to do the research, when such research will be done and how the results thereof will be utilised in the overall implementation regime.

Although we explore some of these issues in the following section, it is clear that follow-up research needs to be done to obtain further clarity on these issues. In our view, special focus must be given to the location of the inclusive education initiative, because its present location in special needs education directorates deprives the initiative of much-needed political and administrative clout.
SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AT THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION LEVEL

This section is divided into two main sub-sections. The first deals with funding challenges at the provincial education level. Before discussing reported funding challenges as outlined by provincial education departments, we locate the special needs education programme within budgetary trends in the post-2000 period. We also offer brief comments on provincial education departments’ inability to reformulate their budgets in line with proposals contained in Education White Paper 6. The second subsection, dealing with service delivery, examines whether provincial education departments have successfully accomplished key short- and medium-term goals of Education White Paper 6. Information about funding and service delivery challenges was obtained exclusively from interviews with provincial education officials.

Funding Challenges at the Provincial Education Level

Our approach in discussing funding challenges at the provincial education level is to give the readers a sense of perspective first before discussing some of the actual problems provinces are struggling with today. The appropriate perspective focuses on whether special needs education budgets profited from small real increases in the post-2000 period. It also highlights the position of the special needs education programme relative to other provincial education programmes.

The Funding Context

Provincial education budgets shifted funding priorities decisively to non-personnel expenditures in the post-2000 period (Wildeman 2003). This was directly related to efforts to achieve two key objectives: the rightsizing of the personnel versus non-personnel expenditures, and the controlling of claims by the education sector on national budgetary resources. Non-personnel expenditure priorities that were enjoying increasing attention were infrastructure expenditure, school-level expenditure in the guise of the funding norms and standards, and the expansion of early childhood education through conditional grants. The push to increase non-personnel expenditure was further supported by results from empirical studies that demonstrated the importance of complementary school inputs such as learner support materials. This research linked non-personnel expenditures directly to the delivery of quality education, thus solidifying policy-makers’ resolve to contain personnel expenditure at all costs.

Given this background, one would not expect a policy document that was released in 2001 to show major deviations from this broad framework. Education White Paper 6 does not challenge the predominance of non-personnel expenditure and delivers a funding framework in line with budgetary developments after 2000. Firstly, it indicates that:

It should be emphasised that no real increase in the fiscal envelope is envisaged in this staffing strategy in the short to medium term. What is being proposed here is a much more cost-effective use of specialist educators than is currently the practice. (Department of Education 2001: 41)

Secondly, where funding support will be provided is in the area of non-personnel expenditure:

New conditional grant funding from the national Government is proposed for non-personnel funding for the first five years. Firstly, it will be used in both
special and full-service schools to provide the necessary facilities and other material resources needed to increase access for those currently excluded. Secondly, it will be used to provide some of the non-educational resources that will be required to ensure access to the curriculum, such as medication, devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, hearing aids, guide dogs, interpreters and voice-activated computers, and social workers. (Department of Education 2001: 40)

Throughout our publications on education finance in South Africa, we preserve the question about whether this broad framework adopted after 2000 really served the development of policy well. In later sections of this paper where we discuss service delivery strategies, we pass comment on the appropriateness of a strategy that freezes real increases in personnel expenditure in a sector that is in dire need of expert professional support. But one thing that is already clear is that the overall result of the proposed funding framework is no different from what was pursued in the public schools and early childhood development programmes: no funding action in any of the education programmes should significantly increase the education sector’s claim on national and provincial resources.

Given the above, how does special needs education compare to other education programmes at the provincial education level? Table 1 provides information about consolidated provincial education programmes over the present medium-term period.

Table 1: Consolidated provincial education expenditure by programmes, 2005/06–2008/09

<table>
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<th>2005/06 (R’000)</th>
<th>2006/07 (R’000)</th>
<th>2007/08 (R’000)</th>
<th>2008/09 (R’000)</th>
<th>Real ave. annual change, 2002/03-2008/09</th>
<th>Real change, 2005/06-2006/07</th>
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<td>5 224 490</td>
<td>5 556 141</td>
<td>6 042 095</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public ordinary schools</td>
<td>61 332 619</td>
<td>65 889 114</td>
<td>72 513 303</td>
<td>78 801 359</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent schools</td>
<td>346 503</td>
<td>370 941</td>
<td>412 257</td>
<td>457 432</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs schools</td>
<td>1 976 092</td>
<td>2 260 989</td>
<td>2 432 783</td>
<td>2 591 636</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education and training</td>
<td>1 543 840</td>
<td>2 088 301</td>
<td>2 331 493</td>
<td>2 663 287</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult basic education</td>
<td>704 382</td>
<td>798 142</td>
<td>923 769</td>
<td>1 048 244</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood</td>
<td>471 140</td>
<td>683 809</td>
<td>980 150</td>
<td>1 315 001</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary and associated</td>
<td>1 615 131</td>
<td>1 735 014</td>
<td>1 858 041</td>
<td>1 945 746</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72 933 052</td>
<td>79 050 800</td>
<td>87 007 937</td>
<td>94 864 800</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Public school budgets are approximately 30 times the size of special needs budgets for 2006/07 (R65.9 billion versus R2.2 billion), while further education and training surpasses the absolute level of spending for special needs in 2008/09 (R2.7 billion versus R2.6 billion). Also, over the present medium-term period, further education and training's real average annual growth rate is approximately three times that of special needs education budgets. The growth in further education and training budgets is fuelled
by the recapitalisation process, thus further cementing the important role of non-
personnel inputs. Throughout the period 2002/03–2008/09, special needs education
budgets comprise on average 2.7 per cent of consolidated provincial education budgets,
while further education and training consumes on average 2.3 per cent of consolidated
provincial education resources. However, further education and training budgets are
projected to gradually increase its share of education resources, but special needs
education budgets actually shrink from 2.9 per cent in 2006/07 to 2.7 per cent in
2008/09. This provides clear evidence of the lack of funding prioritisation that special
needs education budgets enjoyed in the post-2000 period.

Figure 1 visualises the expenditure trade-offs within consolidated provincial education
expenditure over the period 2002–2008.

**Figure 1: Programme expenditure framework in consolidated provincial education
budgets, 2002–2008**

![Programme expenditure framework in consolidated provincial education budgets, 2002–2008](image)


*Note: Although the legend denotes calendar years, it should be interpreted as financial years, i.e.,
2003 should be read as 2003/04.*

If we follow the trajectories of the special needs education budgets and that of the
consolidated provincial education budgets, we observe that the former recorded annual
growth rates mostly below consolidated education growth. This is in sharp contrast to
the early childhood development (ECD) growth curve for this period, which consistently
achieved annual growth rates above consolidated provincial education budgets. The same
could be said of the further education and training (FET) programme, which shows rapid
growth after 2005. Although the public schools programme often achieves growth rates
equal to or below consolidated provincial education growth, its massive size renders any
comparisons with the three other programmes meaningless. However, we can note that
tardy growth rates in public schools are the direct result of a process of disciplining
personnel claims on consolidated provincial education budgets. This action is the
primary reason for the growth of small programmes such as early childhood
development and further education and training. Fiscal space that has opened up has
been taken by early childhood development and further education and training, leaving
special needs education with no real benefits from increased provincial education
budgets. This, we believe, places this programme in a distinctly weaker position in
implementing inclusive education and training policies.

While special needs education features poorly in the absolute funding stakes, a different
picture emerges if we take the average learner expenditure for the main service delivery
areas. Table 2 provides information about average learner expenditures for the main public service delivery programmes. Learner information was obtained from official Department of Education publications, but there are provincial enrolment data that look very suspect. This is particularly applicable to the special needs education and the adult basic education and training (ABET) sectors.7

Table 2: Average learner expenditure for the main service delivery programmes as a factor of the consolidated provincial education department (PED) average, 2002–2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>2002 (Rands)</th>
<th>Factor of PED average</th>
<th>2003 (Rands)</th>
<th>Factor of PED average</th>
<th>2004 (Rands)</th>
<th>Factor of PED average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public ordinary schools</td>
<td>3 830</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>4 265</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>4 587</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs education</td>
<td>17 821</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>19 086</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>20 870</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education and training</td>
<td>2 897</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3 095</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>3 491</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult basic education and training</td>
<td>1 772</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2 024</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1 965</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood development</td>
<td>1 524</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>1 872</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2 357</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consolidated PED average</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 105</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 600</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 930</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wildeman (2006: 33, 38, 42, 45, 49)

Special needs education invests the largest amount on average for each of the learners accommodated in special schools across the country. Using public schools as a benchmark, we observe that the average expenditure on learners in special needs education institutions is more than four times that of the corresponding investment in public schools. This is a telling number and reveals just how costly it is to run and maintain special needs education programmes. These ratios were maintained across the three years represented in the table above. To better contextualise these numbers, one should compare special needs education to a programme of almost equivalent size, namely the further education and training programme. While the latter programme is projected to spend more in absolute terms than special needs education in 2008/09, its average expenditure on learners in 2008/09 represents a level six times lower than that of special needs education. This situation reflects the small learner base of special needs education as well as the large differences in costs between the two programmes.

Reformulation of Provincial Education Budgets

Education White Paper 6 states that provincial education budgets ‘will need to be reviewed and reformulated to meet some of the needs of the proposed inclusive education and training system’ (Department of Education 2001: 40). Reformulation is necessary because the present distribution of funding at provincial government level makes it unlikely that education will receive large real increases in the foreseeable future. Understood within this context, the reformulation of education budgets implies a better and more strategic use of present levels of resources. It also requires provincial education trade-off patterns that are more favourably disposed towards special needs education budgets. We have seen that such favourable trade-offs have not yet taken place in support of better special needs education funding. The reformulation of provincial education budgets happens alongside attempts by the Department of Education to obtain a national conditional grant for the special needs education sector. The assumption must be that while conditional grant funding alleviates immediate funding
pressures, reformulation of provincial education budgets must enable provinces to assume responsibility for such expenditures when the national grant is terminated. Also, while donor funding was intended to drive the mobilisation of out-of-school learners, providing for these learners remains ultimately the responsibility of provincial education authorities. Thus, even in the present situation where external funding will be brought in, the long-term implications of such actions must still be borne by provincial education authorities. This is the ultimate context and meaning of the ‘reformulation’ of provincial education budgets. The critical question, therefore, is where and how provincial education departments will obtain the funds to deliver sustainable and quality inclusive education and training programmes.

Officials in the special needs education directorates reported that provincial education departments were unable to bring about the ‘reformulation’ of their provincial education budgets so as to increase funding support to the special needs education programmes. Two factors contributed heavily to this outcome, namely the delay in the implementation of a national conditional grant and delays in the publication of funding norms and standards for the sector. Provincial education departments argue that a conditional grant would have relieved some of the funding pressures, especially those relating to the purchase of assistive devices or the arrangement of better transport for learners and teachers. The net result of the delay in the implementation of the conditional grant has been further financial pressure on special needs budgets that have performed poorly relative to other growth areas in provincial education funding after 2000. One may also argue that once a national grant is instituted, the relevant provincial department could ask the province to compensate it for losses sustained once the national grant is terminated. This would create additional fiscal space for the activities associated with the implementation of Education White Paper 6.

Some provinces reported receiving dedicated funding from the national sphere, but examination of Division of Revenue Acts for the 2003–2005 period does not reveal any official grant funding. The Department of Education reported that the National Treasury made available R160 million over the three years of the 2006 medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) to enable provinces to address neglect in special schools as identified in the national audit of special schools. The Department of Education also indicated that ‘conditional grant’ funding was made available to start work on the draft national strategy for screening, identification, assessment and support. This funding became available in 2003/04, at the same that another ‘conditional grant’ was allocated to four provinces to enable capacity building of district-based support teams, special schools and resource centres. The interviews with provincial education officials show that poor provinces were prioritised and the additional funding was used to improve infrastructure and learner/teacher support materials. None of this funding described above relates to the original proposals in Education White Paper 6 for the establishment of a national conditional grant aimed at supporting the non-personnel needs of special schools.

The reformulation of special needs education budgets is also hampered by the delay in the publication of the funding norms and standards for the special needs sector. It is common knowledge that provincial education planners use the publication of funding norms and standards as a hook to argue for better funding of the education sector. In the absence of funding norms and standards, such arguments could not be made. Similar to the situation of a national conditional grant, funding norms and standards anchor a programme’s (and, by definition, a department’s) request for additional funding. In the
overall context of resource deprivation, the delay in the publication of the funding norms and standards is extremely costly.

**Actual Funding Needs as Reported by Provincial Education Departments**

Table 3 provides a summary of actual funding needs listed by provincial education departments. We would like to emphasise that this list applies to all provinces without exception. We have structured provinces’ funding needs into four categories.

**Table 3: Actual funding needs as reported by provincial education departments during interviews in 2005 and 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human resources challenges</th>
<th>Physical and learning infrastructure</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Funds related to mobilisation of out-of-school youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff training</td>
<td>Physical upgrading</td>
<td>Transport for learners and educators</td>
<td>No funds for mobilisation of out-of-school children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Adaptation of existing classrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building of ramps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• New toilets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Widening of doors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of educators</td>
<td>No school places to accommodate new learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment of support staff</td>
<td>Assistive devices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources development</td>
<td>The cost of interpreters and Braille equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Personal interviews with officials from the nine provincial education departments in 2005 and 2006*

Although all four categories of funding needs are equally important in contributing to the realisation of the policy goals in Education White Paper 6, it is particularly worrying to note provinces’ concerns about the mobilisation of out-of-school youth. Provincial education departments reported that they have struggled to find proper methods and guidance in determining the number of out-of-school learners and youth. Furthermore, some provinces were reluctant to advertise the mobilisation campaign too widely for fear of not being able to place and adequately resource these learners. This is why we have listed lack of available school places as one of the key infrastructure issues. What also transpires from the description above is that key donor funding that would have paid for the mobilisation of out-of-school learners and youth appears not to have materialised. This reflects badly on the ability of the education sector to finance its own policies. One may argue that without the complete mobilisation of out-of-school learners, a vital part of inclusive education policy is simply not met, thus casting further doubt on the notion of inclusive education.

A second funding issue that cuts across provincial borders relates to infrastructure provisioning. Apart from the inability to accommodate newly found learners, provinces reported run-down infrastructure as well as delays in the physical adaptation of schools. Simple things such as the widening of doors to allow the free flow of wheelchairs have not been tackled. The sense of desperation about the poor state of infrastructure is voiced by one of the provincial co-ordinators in Box 2.

**Box 2**

‘Parents of children with disabilities often feel a sense of depression if they come into the school and it is run down. It is like they feel that this is the final act of dumping my child; this is just not good.’
From a learning infrastructure point of view, the costs at which assistive devices must be bought are causing many financial problems. Presently, many special schools use funds from their operational budgets to cover the costs of assistive devices. This is the area where the absence of the national conditional grant is felt the hardest. Naturally, once a decision is taken by schools to buy assistive devices, then further financial sacrifices in other areas of the operation of the schools must inevitably be made. One of these sacrificed areas is the transport of learners and teachers. This affects all provinces, but the rural provinces are even more affected because of the large distances between schools. The sometimes vast distances between the learners and designated resource centres, which are critical from a systems support perspective, have led an official to make the comment in Box 3.

Box 3
‘Learners would probably go to another school that may not be as well-equipped as the resource centre rather than being in the place and waiting for people to come and get them.’

Another prominent area where funding needs are presently unmet is the whole issue of human resources capacity and development in the special needs sector. Provincial education department officials argued that the sector has underestimated the need for non-educator support. They also indicated that educators who are required to be the torchbearers of inclusive education do not have the requisite skills to tackle their new and daunting tasks.

What do these four areas of funding needs convey about the state of inclusive education at the provincial education level? Firstly, the delays in the implementation of key projects such as the mobilisation of out-of-school learners and the conversion of primary schools into full-service schools appear to have affected funding at the provincial education level. If these key milestones had been met on time, there would have been greater critical weight in tackling the backlogs at special schools and soon-to-be-converted public primary schools. Secondly, provincial fears that newly integrated learners will not be properly provided for reveal the weak link between special needs education directorates and public school directorates. This also reveals the pressure that public schools are under to deliver better infrastructure facilities for their learners. Weak linkages between special needs education directorates and public school directorates suggest that one of the blind spots of Education White Paper 6 – lack of discussion of the role of public schools in realising inclusive education – seriously affects service delivery goals. Thirdly, the available evidence suggests that as soon as resource difficulties become insurmountable, provincial education departments restrict their service delivery mandates to the old ‘special needs education’ mode. Fourthly, in spite of the substantial energy that is expended at the provincial education level, special needs education (or inclusive education) does not top the agenda of provincial education issues. This lack of prioritisation then feeds into a cycle of poor resources and delayed implementation schedules, which further marginalise the inclusive education initiative.

We are not implying that poor funding is the only reason for the lack of implementation of inclusive education policies; the next section records service delivery struggles of provincial education departments. What we are saying is that should some of the funding obstacles be removed, immediate relief could be provided to schools in desperate need of financial succour.
Service Delivery Challenges at the Provincial Education Level

The immediate to short-term steps of the implementation plan to be rolled out by the Department of Education and provincial education departments comprise:

- a national advocacy and education campaign on inclusive education;
- a targeted outreach programme to mobilise disabled out-of-school youth;
- an audit of special schools to improve efficiency and quality;
- conversion of 30 special schools to resources centres;
- conversion of 30 primary schools to full-service schools;
- establishing district support teams in 30 districts;
- introducing management, governing bodies and professional staff to the inclusion model; and
- a system for early identification and addressing of barriers to learning in the Foundation phase. (Department of Education 2001: 43)

Using the interviews with provincial education officials, this section discusses provinces’ progress in accomplishing these short-term objectives of Education White Paper 6. Two of these objectives are not discussed, namely the audit of special schools and attempts at developing systems for the early identification and addressing of barriers to learning. Information from the interviews with provincial education departments suggests that provinces have not yet prioritised the development of systems for the early identification and addressing of barriers. This is an area for further research and, accordingly, we do not discuss this issue in the present paper. The audit of special schools is a Department of Education responsibility. A national audit on special education provisioning was conducted in 2002, and this became the basis of a funding bid from the Department of Education to the National Treasury. Such funding was intended for the improvement of conditions for the most neglected special schools, and an amount of R160 million was awarded over the 2006 MTEF for these purposes.

The first stage of implementation was intended to commence between 2001 and 2003. The six objectives that are discussed fall under the 2001–2003 implementation period and we bunch these objectives in three clusters. Firstly, we discuss the extent to which provincial special needs education officials and staff generally are informed about the shift in orientation announced in Education White Paper 6. We do this because special needs education officials are the key implementers and advocates of the policy goals of Education White Paper 6. Secondly, we examine the outreach campaign of the provincial education departments in their quest to mobilise out-of-school children and youth with disabilities. We are particularly interested in assessing the ability of provincial education departments to strategically plan for the extension of this inclusion model by involving communities in the identification of marginalised children. Thirdly, we establish what progress has been made in converting selected primary schools into full-service schools and special schools into resource centres. We also discuss provinces’ attempts to constitute district-based support teams that include a wide range of professionals.

Key Advocates of the Inclusion Model

The national advocacy and information campaign is arguably the most important facet of the inclusive education and training policy in its bid to transform the entire education and training system. Education White Paper 6 identifies parents and local communities as the primary targets for this programme. Understanding provincial education officials’ awareness of the educational and institutional shifts that will be necessary to realise
inclusive education is integral because these officials have been designated as the primary advocates of the new orientation.

Most provincial departments recognised in principle the importance of an advocacy and information campaign. There was also a realisation that if a transformative shift was envisaged within the education and training system, this would mean debunking past myths about learner capacity by highlighting challenges that the system presented. The extracts in Box 4 show two provinces’ understanding of the importance of a campaign and who needs to take responsibility for it. On the last point, there is no final consensus among provincial education departments.

**Box 4**
‘… you need champions otherwise you are in trouble.’
‘I think it is coming out clearly thanks to the new Superintendent-General … he’s approached inclusive education system-wide … people understand now that it is a cross-cutting issue … because it is a system-wide process, it had to be elevated to the head of the department.’

During interviews it was also difficult to ascertain whether the campaign was ever formalised and uniform across the provinces. A campaign will need to conceptualise strategies, time frames and targets in order to ensure success. Details about the campaign were not apparent from a reading of Education White Paper 6 or from the interviews conducted. This is an indication that not enough strategic thinking was employed during the conceptualisation process of this important initiative.

Recognising the importance of an advocacy campaign is not the same as understanding the institutional and job-related changes that are called for by Education White Paper 6. It became apparent that provincial education officials who should be the advocates of this new approach did not altogether understand the nuances of what is being called for; in fact, some were afraid that this change would have a negative effect on the continuity of their jobs. Some provincial education officials did not demonstrate a clear understanding of how special needs education was distinct from inclusive education. Thus, the inclusion model is interpreted in its narrow sense as being primarily a mechanism to increase the profile of special schools, which may be bolstered by increases in funding.

**Box 5**
‘… there is still a fear of change … you become comfortable with change only when you understand the process. People ask to be informed about their jobs and their positions. They have to know their policy.’

When one speaks about shifts in orientation, the assumption is made that all provincial education officials charged with implementing inclusive education agree on implementation parameters. However, this is not necessarily the case, because while some do not foresee major changes, others are questioning the boundaries that are imposed by resource limitations upon the implementation of inclusive education.

Many officials who professed their belief in the inclusive education model were excited by the systemic approach of Education White Paper 6, especially in its rejection of a ‘learner deficit’ model. These officials viewed this new policy as an affirmation of the capacity of learners and of the need for an education system to be critical of its failure to fully satisfy the child’s right to education and to address learner dropout rates. The shift
from barriers to learning within the learner to barriers within the system was broadly appreciated. Such officials, therefore, endorsed the broader view of implementation, so eloquently articulated by one of the provincial officials in the Box 6.

**Box 6**

‘There is no difference [in orientation proposed by the new policy], but the way schools are treated or administered presently might be a difference.’

‘… there is a need for us to agree on what would be the borders of our implementation. Are we going to look at the barriers to learning [as] the intrinsic barriers that people experienced? Are we going to go beyond that and then look at maybe social barriers such as poverty and orphan-hood because that changes the picture completely? … definition for me is important if the starting point is only looking at intrinsic barriers, then you need to say: ‘buy so many wheelchairs, we need to have so many systems of support’. If the definition is extended beyond that, you will need more money for funding, resources, skills and so forth. The picture becomes bigger.’

Shifts in orientation also require a re-examination of the institutional structures that should deliver inclusive education. Some officials are doggedly opposed to immediate integration of special needs education and other directorates, arguing that this would be a body blow for inclusive education. These officials see special needs education directorates as charged with the unique mandate of kick-starting the process and providing expert guidance to other programmes that have not confronted ‘disability’ explicitly. Others feel that inclusive education should not be regionalised and should become the core mandate of each programme. This would endorse special needs education directorates as focusing strictly on special needs education issues, while public schools and other programmes should also be allowed to incorporate the elimination of discrimination against learners with disabilities. Still, others feel that a transversal structure such as the head of the education department’s office should be responsible for driving inclusive education. The adherents of this approach believe that this arrangement would give inclusive education administrative clout and remove the stigma that is attached to special needs education.

**Box 7**

‘If you are narrow and looking at medical barriers then of course you would confine it to certain directorates … but if you are looking at societal factors out there that are impacting on the performance of learners at schools, then you’ve got to go broader than that.’

‘There are even people who just want to say no; if you want to be inclusive, you need to be integrated, whatever. That would be the end of inclusive education; you lose the bargaining power immediately. The idea is to be 100 per cent integrated, but there is a process to get there.’

The above point about the importance of administrative clout in delivering inclusive education is further accentuated by the relatively small share of overall provincial education resources that special needs education commands. This situation would favour the idea of having a champion within the broader provincial education department who could place this matter at the forefront of the provincial education agenda. In one particular case, where the special needs directorate attests to the success of the permeation of the inclusion model across directorates, the shift was propagated by the Superintendent-General (SG). In this instance, the SG recognised the importance of the policy as a system-wide goal. However, this was not the case in any of the other provinces, where lobbying the key decision-makers is still problematic, whether one is referring to the administrative or the political head.
In principle, provincial education department officials attest to the importance of an advocacy and information campaign aimed at challenging conventional notions of disability in education. However, at provincial education level, there is little evidence of well-directed and active advocacy and information campaigns aimed at winning the hearts and minds of all relevant provincial education staff. Understood from the vantage point of intra-departmental advocacy, this suggests that special needs education officials benefit little from informal or formal exchanges with their counterparts in other provincial education programmes. Provincial education officials tasked with the implementation of inclusive education do not have a shared understanding of implementation parameters. Some believe that little will change with the introduction of the new policy framework, whereas others complain that lack of resources hinders a much broader implementation view of inclusive education. These differences are also reflected in the location of the inclusive education mandate: some actively resist the idea of immediate integration, while others promote the concept of inclusive education in each of the education programmes. While we acknowledge that provincial education departments are not the passive recipients of national policy, one cannot but apportion some of the blame to the national Department of Education. It may well have tried to explain the rationale behind the concept of inclusive education, but our interviews reveal that there is very little common ground binding the main movers of inclusive education at the provincial level.

**Drawing in Marginalised Out-of-School Children and Youth with Disabilities**

Every child’s right to basic education is secured in the South African Constitution. However, in the past not enough has been done to ensure this right is realised for the most marginalised of children, for example, children with disabilities. The rights perspective is a key motivating factor driving the adoption of the new inclusion model in South Africa (Muthukrishna & Schoeman 2000: 316–317; Lomofsky & Lazarus 2001: 304). Even though the aim of securing access to schooling for children with disabilities is laudable, we need to verify whether successful mobilisation campaigns have been run, and also identify any service delivery hiccups that reduced the impact of the campaigns. The first question to ask is whether mobilisation campaigns actually took place, and although the response in Box 8 is not representative of all provinces, it provides a rough guide of what actually took place.

**Box 8**

‘A campaign has got certain descriptive qualities … in your face visibility … lots of advocacy … political backing … management outcomes and numbers … [specific] time … I do not think there is anything like that happening.’

One of the biggest problems provinces face in relation to out-of-school children and youth with disabilities concerns the availability of accurate estimates of the size of the potential learner population. The number is complex to determine as there are children and youth who have not attended school at all, whereas others may have commenced schooling but have not completed their tenure. This is demonstrated by the statement made by a provincial education official in Box 9.

**Box 9**

‘We have never had a system in South Africa of finding out why people leave our schools. Why does somebody disappear from the formal school environment, where did they go and what are their reasons? … when kids drop out of school it is often not because they cannot cope with the curriculum, but it is because other things are impacting on their experiences in schooling that they drop out of school.’
What this quote suggests is that provincial education departments do not have accurate estimates of the number of out-of-school learners and youth who should be in school. Some of the methods that have been used by provincial education departments are:

- taking the total Department of Education estimate of 280 000 out-of-school learners and youth and dividing that number by nine to derive the provincial head count;
- using data from Census 2001 and any other relevant databases that have information about out-of-school learners and youth;
- running door-to-door campaigns in communities;
- working with other government and non-governmental role players to identify out-of-school youth (the other social sector departments – Welfare and Health – were particularly useful, as they had previous contact with the target population due to social grant or health service provisioning);
- Drawing upon the non-governmental organisations that work directly with disability advocacy in locating learners who should be in school; and
- information-sharing meetings with all relevant stakeholders.

In order to assess the progress made by the campaign, provinces were asked whether they had established targets and annual benchmarks as part of the plan for their campaign. The aim of this question was to understand how provincial education departments planned to gradually reduce the number of out-of-school learners and youth, especially in a context of limited resources and competing needs. Such an approach also holds the value that newly placed learners are a powerful argument for better funding and provision to schools wherever they are placed. Only one province reported that they worked on the basis of established annual benchmarks, but it was unclear how they calculated the total potential learner population. Ignorance of the correct numbers of out-of-school learners and youth has provided protection to provinces, especially where resources are fought over vigorously. In such situations, it is easy to see how attention will have shifted to others parts of the policy agenda, providing, in our view, further evidence of the policy-capacity link. This represents a situation where ‘what gets done’ is not a function of the stated policy, but rather of available (financial and other) capacity.

Where mobilisation campaigns were run, the most serious shortcoming of these campaigns was that provincial education officials did not adequately plan how previously marginalised children and youth with disabilities would be ‘integrated’ once they were identified. Several provinces reported estimates of potential learners that ran into hundreds, even thousands. However, very few of those identified learners could immediately be provided with access to education. In hindsight, many provincial education officials regretted raising expectations that they could not fulfil due to already saturated schools. They realised that the campaign should have been far more carefully conceptualised. In fact, one province admitted that the most strategic intervention in this case was not initiating a campaign at all until they were certain that all children and youth identified could be catered for adequately.

The rights approach emphasises drawing into education provisioning those learners who have not been able to access schooling. Provinces did not conceptualise a strategic mobilisation campaign and integration strategy for the inclusion of marginalised children and youth with disabilities. What this means is that learners who were successfully
mobilised often found themselves in resource-deprived schooling environments. This raises serious ethical questions about the ability of provincial education systems to improve the life chances of these historically marginalised children. In other instances, provinces were much more circumspect and avoided serious campaigning for fear of creating expectations that might not be fulfilled. Provincial education departments also did not have accurate numbers of potential learners and, therefore, were not able to set targets and annual benchmarks of children and youth to be integrated. Even though there was a dearth of information, provinces rolled out media and research campaigns and drew on alliances to identify potential learners.

**Progress in school-level implementation of the inclusion model**

Key levers of the implementation model to be completed by 2003 were the conversion of 30 special schools into resource centres and 30 primary schools into full-service schools. Full-service schools would participate in a field-testing phase, from which the Department of Education planned to draw as many lessons as possible for the eventual extension of full-service schools to many other geographic areas. The field-testing phase would not only encompass adaptation of physical infrastructure but also include curriculum redesign in order to support multi-level classrooms as well as significant training and support of the educators who are at the coalface of the transformation process. This field-testing phase forms the foundation of the roll-out to cover more districts in each province in subsequent years. However, predating the publication of Education White Paper 6, pilot conversion initiatives were being undertaken by a few provinces, co-ordinated by the national Department of Education and funded by international donors.

The pilot conversion projects seemed to be driven by the international momentum towards inclusive education. These projects were conducted between 1998 and 2003 with Swedish and Finnish funding support. The Scope (Swedish) projects were located in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga provinces, whereas the Danida (Finnish) initiatives were implemented in the North West, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape provinces. These projects were conducted by the national Department of Education to develop best-practice examples for inclusive education and to create implementation impetus for the inclusion model on the ground. The other intention of the pilots was to ‘leverage the policy development process’ that was then underway. These projects influenced the implementation plan proposed in the White Paper and were the basis on which a field-testing phase was conceptualised. Essentially, it seems that provinces were coerced by the lure of donor funding and by the determination of the national Department of Education to test and subsequently adopt a model that had not been co-operatively developed with all implementers.

The field-testing phase was envisaged to replicate these pilot initiatives in all nine provinces. The criteria developed by the national Department of Education for selection of the field-testing sites in each province included:

- selecting three primary and three special schools for conversion;
- the primary and special schools identified should be in close proximity to each other and a high school;
- the schools should be located in the Presidential poverty nodal areas;
- there should be basic infrastructure at the school (electricity, water and sanitation);
- there should be support structures in place to facilitate the conversion process;
the schools must have a full-time principal;
the school governing body should be fully functional; and
the school community must have a positive attitude and commitment to the inclusive education initiative.

However, in the implementation phase, the provinces found it difficult to adhere to the criteria and were not always able to find schools that fulfilled all the criteria. Alternatively, provinces deliberately chose this opportunity to assert their right to involvement in the process.

The national Department of Education reports that the field-testing phase was subject to significant delays and that it became obvious that this policy goal would not be realised by 2004. Provinces were either unwilling or unable to select schools that matched all the criteria. They selected schools that required major infrastructural development rather than just the upgrades that would be needed to make schools accessible. It may be that the provinces were hoping to leverage the national Department of Education to invest in infrastructure development that was sorely needed. This factor contributed to significant delays in the implementation of the field-testing phase. The national Department of Education, in turn, could not provide sufficient funding support to convert the identified schools. When the funds became available, the protracted tender processes to undertake the infrastructure development also hampered the initiative. Therefore, the national Department of Education requested an extension from the provinces, which enables the special needs directorate to complete the field-testing phase in 2009.

**Box 10**

‘According to the dates set out in the White Paper, we are now supposed to be finished with the field tests, but because of a few delays we are still midway through … the process has been complicated by the fact that the schools that we selected have actually been in a bad physical state … the field-test date deadline has been extended from 2004 to 2009.’

‘… [started conversion] at least over the last 3 years … about one and a half years ago, we became aware that actual donor funds have been secured for the roll-out of the Education White Paper.’

Some provinces have the ability to convert more than the minimum of three schools that were suggested for each province in the field-testing phase. These are the more affluent provinces in which sites comply fully with all criteria. Such provinces may have the resources to spread across the increased number of sites, but most provinces are not able to convert more than three institutions. There are provinces that will struggle to convert just three institutions of each kind. Even if they have found sites that have all the correct infrastructure as well as staff and governance structures with the will to succeed, there are other factors that undermine their efforts. One province lost one of its sites to an adjacent province after the provincial boundaries were subject to changes in demarcation.

**Box 11**

‘[We] will start field testing inclusive education now for the next two years [2006–2007] … we will have at least three resource centres in every district, so it means 21 instead of three.’

‘… we can only concentrate on one school and do that properly and then go on to the other two.’
Conversion of public primary schools into full-service schools and special schools into resource centres drives the demand for expertise equipped to advise schools about their new diverse learning environments. A core component of the inclusion model is the establishment of district-based support teams (DBSTs), which are intended to provide systemic support instead of learner-level interventions based on the learner-deficit model. These support teams would consist, for example, of medical practitioners, psychologists and occupational therapists who were previously located at special schools servicing small learner numbers. The reconfiguration of the level of support they will provide in future means that many more learners will be able to benefit from these services, albeit indirectly. The role of the new DBSTs would shift to providing training and support to educators in order for them to deal with the challenges related to multi-level classrooms and the curriculum adaptations that will be needed to ensure effective learning and teaching. Ultimately, learners should benefit from this expertise, as barriers within the system that hamper learning will be systematically eliminated.

Provincial education departments have not established DBSTs as conceived within the parameters of policy laid out in Education White Paper 6. What some provinces were able to do was to adapt their present educational support services and customise these to approximate DBSTs. Some provincial education departments reported that plans were in progress and that negotiations were required and training was being provided to facilitate this reorientation in approach.

Establishing DBSTs, even in the proposed skeletal form, has not proved to be easy for many provincial education authorities. Provinces noted that lack of human and financial resources are the main obstacles to establishing fully functioning DBSTs. Poorer provinces indicated that they are unable to attract and retain suitably qualified professionals to constitute professional support teams. Provincial education officials also made it clear that a significant portion of new funding is required to support the retraining and functioning of these specialised professionals. Consequently, this important support mechanism is not available to educators, principals and governing bodies to facilitate the conversion of the education system. In Box 12, provincial education officials explain their struggles in constituting a DBST type of structure.

**Box 12**

‘... not as yet [we don’t have existing DBSTs] ... we are busy with training them, awareness campaigns and we talk to their directors.’

‘We have not formalised the DBST ... DBST needs to be functional, we need them urgently ... we need them to be provided with the expertise at different levels where they would be therapeutic learning-base support or even just support to schools.’

‘[DBSTs] are not fully operational ... but we have identified members of the DBST’s in all of our 24 districts ... we will start in the nodal areas.’

‘We are running our DBST almost as a transversal project team ... support from the lines in relation to ensuring that the necessary expenditure or the necessary non-personnel resources are available towards making the DBST work.’

‘... in this province, it’s been particularly difficult to attract the kind of skills to the kind of places where they need it ... You have got to have the numbers – you cannot have half a team. It physically must exist in sufficient numbers to make the impact.’
‘In our department, there is no money to employ those professionals nor staff in the office. They are going to play a pivotal role in terms of linking the learners to resources and in terms of assisting and supporting them in overcoming whatever challenges they are going through.’

Other challenges related to the formation of these DBSTs include transport and employment contract negotiations. Poorer provinces, in particular, find it difficult to cope with distances between schools, which make it very difficult for effective operation of the professional support teams unless they are mobile. We have already mentioned transport problems as a key funding priority and here we have further evidence of how deficient transport arrangements hamper the full functioning of national policy. A further challenge concerns the conditions of service of those professionals who are contractually bound to a specific institution. The formation of DBSTs requires significant reorganising of the current structures. Provinces are required to revisit their organisational structures and, in the same process, renegotiate new service agreements. It is clear that national guidance is needed on this issue, as some provinces have had great difficulties renegotiating the employment contracts of these professionals. This higher-level intervention should assist the provinces in operationalising their DBSTs.

The quotes in Box 13 represent some of the service delivery challenges associated with the formation of DBSTs.

**Box 13**

‘... there is a problem and it has to do with line functions, structures … who should report to whom and that is not sorted out.’

‘... conditions of service tied them [professional support staff] to a school …’

‘... we still have the problem of distance, which means we will have to make special attempts and arrangements for the resource centre to be accessible to others. They would probably have to go out to other schools rather than being in the place [resource centre] and wait for other people to come to them.’

Finally, reporting structures have also been mentioned as one of the teething problems in the development of the new support system. The services and information to be provided and generated by the DBSTs will be integral to facilitating the transformation of the system. Instead of learner-level information that is focused on psychometric tests, which was the basis of the medical model, the new focus of the DBSTs will be to make systemic interventions that assist the implementers of the inclusion model. This is supported by the introduction of the Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, which aims to replace medical testing by early identification processes, and involves teachers and parents in the decision-making about the kind of support needed by learners and where such support can best be provided. However, it is not yet clear what additional type of information system will be employed by the DBSTs and what data they will be expected to generate for reporting purposes. Also, the reporting mechanisms and lines of reporting for the DBSTs have not been finalised. It is safe to say that provinces are fully stretched in finding the necessary financial and human resources to establish DBSTs. Thus, little or no strategic thinking is put into conceptualising the models for the functioning of these teams.

Box 14 reflects some of the information challenges of the soon-to-be constituted DBSTs.
The conversion of public ordinary and special schools signifies the transformative impetus of the inclusive education and training philosophy at work. The conversion model was premised on pilot projects that seemed to be the result of the international momentum towards inclusive education rather than a co-operative in-country process. The actual field-testing phase of the conversion process was delayed due to the nature of the infrastructure development projects that needed to be undertaken, the lack of sufficient funding for the conversions, and the protracted tender processes to award the redevelopment of the schools to suitable service providers. Provincial education departments have different capacities in terms of the actual number of institutions that can be converted at any one time. This creates a situation where the implementation of inclusive education and training becomes a function of financial, resource and other capacities. Again, the fact that the division is between traditionally poor and rich provinces suggests a reproduction of the special needs education fault lines of the past. Concomitant with the delay in the conversion of public ordinary and special schools, DBSTs, which should provide professional educational and psychological expertise to newly converted schools, have not been constituted. Provinces with extensive old support services have customised such structures to approximate the concept of the DBST. Poorer provinces appear to have great difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled professionals. These provinces are also burdened with vast distances, which could severely compromise the effectiveness of future DBSTs. Other challenges that face provincial education departments include the development of appropriate employment contracts for professional support staff and the development of reporting structures for the DBSTs.

Box 14
"We are not quite there yet in terms of the information system with regards to the district-based support teams …"

"Record of learner interventions … trying to move away from the type of intervention that has psychometric tests … support should be able to intervene with the learner and assist the educator to assist the parent …"

"… regional support teams are playing an important role … school-level support teams give all the statistics and data to the regional support team … In each region we have the inclusive education co-ordinator."
CONCLUDING REMARKS

The publication of Education White Paper 6 was intended to signal the end of two processes. On the one hand, the grand policy-making processes that carved out new legislation and policy for public schools, higher education, early childhood development, further education and training, and adult basic education and training were now complete. On the other hand, what was also supposedly coming to an end was a view that treated the policy and service delivery challenges of the main education sub-sectors as disconnected and unrelated. Education White Paper 6 was presented as a meta-discourse that embodies the anti-discriminatory practices and philosophy of the post-apartheid regime.

What was the kind of context within which Education White Paper 6 was produced? At the same time that the first outputs of various ‘special needs’ policy forums became publicly available, education authorities were detainted by the problems in public ordinary schools. Spiralling teacher costs produced wage bills that threatened to squeeze out expenditure on other areas in provincial education. The 1998 Education MTEF Sector Review warned of large expenditure overruns in public schools if escalating wage costs could not be contained. This led to a concerted battle to right-size the personnel/non-personnel expenditure ratios. The most immediate consequence of this policy and financial perspective was that funding priorities after 2000 shifted decisively in favour of non-personnel expenditure, which served as a corrective to the wage cost challenges of the 1996–98 period and represented an attempt at moderating education’s claims on national budgetary resources.

How did this situation in public schools affect the development of policy for the special needs education sector or inclusive education? From a funding point of view, special needs education was unlikely to receive large real increases given the overall national objective of containing education costs. This also meant that policy-makers could not suggest an expansive human resources regime, because cuts on personnel were one of the most potent weapons in controlling overall education costs. Education White Paper 6, which was released in 2001, fits the predominant trend in that no massive expansion of human resources was proposed, and the policy prides itself upon the fact that it promotes a much better utilisation of existing human resources. In fact, there are three facets to Education White Paper 6 that further justify its tag as a conserver of resources, namely the ‘mainstreaming’ of disability, the establishment of district-based support teams, and the lengthy period of implementation of inclusive education and training policy. This policy modesty in terms of its assessment of resource requirements is not conditioned by actual service delivery demands, but represents just another instance of the dearth of resources for education policies in the post-2000 period.

It is instructive to note that while human resources expansion in inclusive education was ruled out, Education White Paper 6 argues that additional funding should be channelled towards non-personnel expenditure. An argument is made for the purchasing of assistive devices, which would be funded through a national conditional grant. In spite of the fact that this national conditional grant represents one of the short-term goals of Education White Paper 6, nothing has come of it as yet. It is not clear whether provincial education departments are unable to present viable business plans or whether the Department of Education has not put forward a convincing case to the National Treasury. What is clear is that since many of the older education conditional grants were phased out in the post-2000 period, there was fiscal space for a national inclusive education conditional grant.
Provincial education departments argue that the absence of a national conditional grant is putting further financial pressure on the already hard-pressed budgets of special school institutions.

Education White Paper 6 also foresees further financial involvement for the international and national donor community, especially with the roll-out of the mobilisation of the out-of-school youth campaign. Until now, no provincial education department has successfully produced an accurate estimate of the number of out-of-school youth and learners, and very few have been able to secure stable funding for this campaign. Thus, a key component of the realisation of inclusive education and training has not been seriously addressed. Lack of government and donor funding meant that provincial education departments were unable to ‘reformulate’ their education budgets to bring about a better flow and distribution to the old special needs budgets. What further complicates the funding plight of provincial education departments is the delay in the publication of funding norms and standards. It is an accepted truth that provincial decision-makers often need something concrete to anchor and support funding requests. The delays in the finalisation of the funding norms and standards for the sector will have weakened education’s quest for better funding of special school institutions and inclusive education and training as a whole. There is no clarity as to when the funding norms and standards will be published, thus adding to the funding uncertainty that characterises this sector.

Provincial education departments indicated four areas of funding that are badly neglected and that impact upon their ability to deliver inclusive education and training services. Human resources requirements, the physical and learning infrastructure, transport and special funding to finance the mobilisation of the out-of-school youth campaign are four pressing areas of financial need. The extent of the funding deprivation of the inclusive education sector is nowhere more evident than in some provinces’ reluctance to aggressively campaign to get out-of-school youth into the public school and special school institutions. Not only does it reflect a squeeze on inclusive education resources, but it also reveals the weak bargaining power of special needs directorates in negotiating with their public ordinary school counterparts. Provincial education departments openly admitted that they did not plan properly what to do with learners who were targeted and also did not have a resource strategy to accommodate such learners. If we add provinces’ concerns about the cost of retraining professionals or the need to attract and retain professionals who would constitute the district-based support teams, then the Education White Paper 6 claims about the effective use of resources sound hollow. What we have is a thoroughly disjointed funding system, which shows the folly of official policy in expanding inclusive education without a corresponding commitment to better finance parts of the affected education system.

Poor funding of the inclusive education and training sector is an important reason for the delay and non-implementation of policies, but is not the only reason for the lack of progress. We took each of the main service delivery goals of Education White Paper 6 and asked provinces to report on progress made in realising policy goals. We reported on progress in the ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns within education departments, the mobilisation of out-of-school youth, the conversion of primary and special schools into full service schools and resource centres, and the establishment of the district-based support teams.
In principle, provincial education department officials attest to the importance of an advocacy and information campaign aimed at challenging conventional notions of disability in education. However, there is little evidence of well-directed and active advocacy and information campaigns aimed at winning the hearts and minds of all relevant staff at provincial education level. Understood from the vantage point of intradepartmental advocacy, this suggests that special needs education officials benefit little from informal or formal exchanges with their counterparts in other provincial education programmes. Provincial education officials have expressed the need for strategic intervention from administrative and political heads to ensure greater success in the implementation of inclusive education and training policies. However, this by no means implies that there was complete consensus about the parameters of the interventions that were intended to eliminate systematic barriers to learning. Many officials articulated the view that should an expanded definition of inclusive education be accepted as the starting point of implementation, then the available resources to do this work must be drastically increased. Others have taken the more realistic view that inclusive education should really be focusing on strengthening special needs education institutions in the short term. Apart from the differences in perception about the scope of implementation of inclusive education, many of the interviewees did not understand the shift in orientation required by Education White Paper 6. For some it meant the bolstering of the special needs education institutions, while for others it meant a complete overhaul of the education and training system. While we acknowledge that provincial education departments are not the passive recipients of national policy, one cannot but apportion some of the blame to the national Department of Education. It may well have tried to explain the rationale behind the concept of inclusive education, but our interviews reveal that there is very little common ground binding the main movers of inclusive education at the provincial level.

One of the first policy goals was to restore the rights of those children who were out of school for reasons of disability, neglect, poverty or any other socio-economic reason. The rights approach emphasises drawing into education provisioning those learners who have not been able to access schooling. Provinces did not conceptualise a strategic campaign and integration strategy for the inclusion of marginalised children and youth with disabilities. Thus, in cases where learners were successfully mobilised, provinces did not have the requisite resources (financial and learning) to sustain the education process. This led some provinces to eschew aggressive mobilisation campaigns for fear of being unable to provide for such learners’ needs. The mobilisation of out-of-school learners was further complicated because provinces did not have accurate numbers of potential learners and, therefore, were not able to set targets and annual benchmarks of children and youth to be integrated. Even though there was a dearth of information, provinces rolled out media and research campaigns and drew on alliances to identify potential learners. However, once identified, few of these children and youth could immediately be catered for within the system. This demonstrated lack of foresight amongst provincial education department officials. It is our view that provinces should have invested much more in obtaining better data about actual learner needs or, alternatively, should have explicitly committed themselves to realistic learner intake targets over the short to medium term.

Learners who are successfully integrated into public primary schools or special needs education institutions require an environment that recognises diversity. This is the driving idea behind the conversion of public primary schools and special schools into full-service schools and resource centres, respectively. After piloting the conversion
process, the efforts of the next few years will focus on the field-testing phase that will
cover close to 60 institutions across the country. The field tests have been delayed and
will only be completed in 2009. This is due to the lack of buy-in from provincial
implementers, evidenced by the identification of sites that required significant
infrastructure development, which led to insufficient funds being available to convert
identified schools. This situation was exacerbated by the time it took to complete
protracted tender processes. It also proved challenging to identify appropriate sites for
conversion in order to ensure a measure of success in the first round of implementing
the inclusion model.

Schools that are converted require access to specialised support because of the explicit
attempt to practise and manage diverse learning environments. Education White Paper 6
proposes the establishment of district-based support teams, which would be functional at
the district level and actively support both public ordinary and special school institutions.
The raison d'être of these professional teams of psychologists, occupational therapists and
other socio-medical specialists is to support teachers at the school level in their dealings
with learners who have diverse educational needs. Because of the delays in the
conversion process at the school level, district-based support teams, as conceived by
Education White Paper 6, are not yet a reality. What we have in some provincial
education departments is an attempt at reconfiguring the existing support services to
serve a broader client base. This replicates a dangerous trend that is noticeable in the
early childhood development field where policy and implementation vacuums have led
some provinces to develop their own models. However, once the national policy-making
process has closed the policy or implementation gap, it becomes difficult for provinces
to forego their own implementation models. In the rural provinces, the future
establishment of district-based support teams is threatened by these provinces’ inability
to attract and retain the professionals who make up the teams. These provinces correctly
indicated that such teams must operate at full capacity, otherwise their crucial support
function is compromised.

In the body of this paper, we broached the issue of policy blind spots and argued that
these issues need to be resolved if inclusive education is to become a reality. If we
approach these blind spots from the available funding and service delivery trends, then a
distinctly pessimistic picture emerges. Firstly, claims about the so-called cost-
effectiveness of implementation pales into insignificance when we learn that provincial
education departments do not have funds even to pay for the recruitment and placement
of out-of-school learners. Secondly, the fact that some provincial education departments
eschewed aggressive campaigns to get these learners into the system points to the
discussions that should be had among provincial special needs and public ordinary
school officials. It also reveals the precarious state of infrastructure provisioning in
public schools. Thirdly, it is abundantly clear that inclusive education cannot be driven by
special needs education directorates and that the appropriate discussion about suitable
organisational location must be resolved as speedily as possible. In fact, we believe that it
was a mistake to attach the notion of ‘inclusive education’ so closely to ‘special needs
education’ and that the former should have been elevated to a transversal status similar
to outcomes-based education.

Instead of ending fragmentation in the implementation of education policy in South
Africa, the implementation of inclusive education and training frames ‘what gets done’ as
a function of available capacity. In so doing, it becomes part of the very
disconnectedness that it was meant to overcome.
ENDNOTES

1 Russell Wildeman is an education specialist with Idasa. Christina Nomdo is a former employee of Idasa and was employed as a researcher/trainer in the Children’s Budget Unit. She now co-directs a social development research and training company called ON PAR Development.

2 Documentation of the two case studies – reflecting the experiences of children in relation to barriers to learning – was facilitated by these children’s involvement in a parallel Idasa initiative. The project aimed to build children’s ability to monitor the realisation of their rights by analysing government policy and budgets. In terms of the originals plans for the present paper, we wanted to interview many more children, but once we had settled on a strictly service-delivery approach, such interviews became less important. This same consideration applies to our plans to interview key civil society organisations that are active in the ‘disability’ sector. The names of the children have been changed to protect their identities.

3 The Department of Education published a joint report on the work and findings of these bodies (see Department of Education 1997).

4 We made the point in our annual review of education budgets that emphasis on the ‘quality of education’ and the ‘quality of human resources’ does not necessarily imply the transfer of larger personnel resources. We stated (Wildeman 2006: 63):
   The national minister of education, Ms Naledi Pandor laid out the key ingredients of the quality improvement strategy in her education budget speech to the National Assembly 19 May 2006. She announced the establishment of a ‘well-crafted, targeted, Quality Improvement and Development Strategy’ to which government is apparently committing R12.5 billion over a five-year period. This strategy will also be focused on the most disadvantaged schools in society. The minister is careful not to conflate the term ‘resources’ with money, but a careful reading of the speech shows that fiscal investment to support these new initiatives will proceed via the old non-personnel input route. In this regard, such a framework does not destroy the assumptions of earlier budgets with their concentrated focus on non-personnel inputs:

   ‘It is important to stress resource does not refer to money; it may refer to teacher competence, to an inadequate or no library, to lack of teaching material or poorly specified curricula and teaching standards. Schools will be provided with education support in the form of libraries, laboratories, and teaching materials. Teachers in these schools will be supported through high-quality school-based education development programmes and by strengthened district development teams.’

5 While the language in Education White Paper 6 displays ‘policy modesty’ in its assessment of resource needs, this stands in contrast to the proposed funding norms and standards for the Grade R phase (2006). In the latter policy, education policy-makers sound an impatient note about the extent to which education priorities are properly supported at the provincial level. Funding norms and standards are explicitly used as a hook to pull much-needed funding resources to education. The difference in the tone of Education White Paper 6 and the funding norms and standards for Grade R captures education funding debates in two separate ‘periods’. The immediate post-2000 period still dealt with the disciplining of education’s claims on national resources, while the subsequent declining share of education expenditure of total national resources has begun to galvanise national education policy-makers to play a more activist role.
Empirical studies that examined the relationship between inputs and outputs were very prominent during the 1990s and used ordinary least squares regression to establish such relationships. Without commenting on the methodological and statistical problems associated with these studies, we do note that while the results of such studies provided evidence of non-personnel expenditures in the delivery of quality education, evidence about personnel qualifications and resources also emerged. For a study that argues the case for non-personnel expenditure inputs and their potential for quality improvements, see Van der Berg (2001). On the same theme, see also the paper by Crouch & Mabogoane (1998). The latter paper also provided evidence of the importance of teacher qualifications, even though the authors were at pains to emphasise the importance of functional institutions within which teachers work.

Using learner data from official Department of Education publications, we found serious anomalies in provincial data, which could not be clarified by the Department of Education or the relevant provincial education departments. In the special needs education programme, we specifically flagged the Northern Cape's learner numbers for 2002 and the sudden decreases in learner numbers for the 2004 and 2005 academic years. These anomalies were not restricted to the special needs education programme, because learner numbers in the adult basic education and training programme were also queried. In this instance, exceptionally high average learner expenditures for the Mpumalanga province were difficult to believe, especially in the context of poor spending on adult basic education and training.
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Gauteng Department of Education – Mr A Meyers, Chief Education Specialist Inclusion, Special Schools and Support

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education – Mrs CT Sifunda, Director Special Needs Education

Limpopo Department of Education – Mrs A Mojapelo, Chief Education Specialist Psychological and Special Education Services

Mpumalanga Department of Education – Mrs M Lekgau, Chief Education Specialist Inclusive Education and Training

National Department of Education – Mrs M Schoeman, Chief Education Specialist Inclusive Education Directorate

Northern Cape Department of Education – Mrs H Abass, Director Inclusive Education and Training

North West Department of Education – Ms J van Wyk, Director Curriculum Development Services

Western Cape Department of Education – Dr M Theron, Director Specialised Education Support Services