Learner Support: What, Why & How?


Mary Malia

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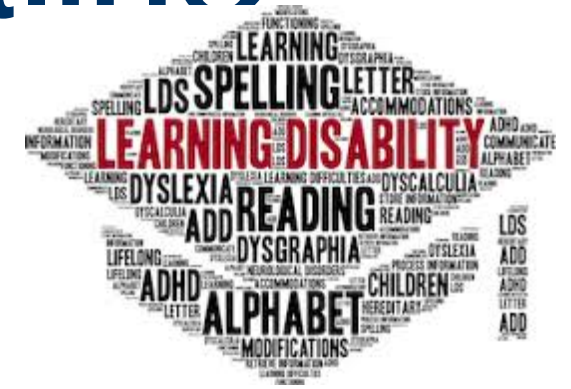
Introduction

- The Bill of Rights, in Section 29 of the **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996**, provides for Education:
- Everyone has the right
  a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and
  b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

- Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. To ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account
  a) equity;
  b) practicability; and
  c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

Introduction cont.

- Leaner / student support is not restricted to the traditional classroom at an independent school or private FET college. It also applies to adult learners engaged in studies through private AET colleges.

- The challenges and barriers are different for every sector and therefore the support is different. Even with that, no one-size-fits-all.

- Whilst learners at school need support, adult learners also need Instructional Support, significant encouragement, and scaffolding.

Introduction cont.

- In every sector, different stakeholders such as: teachers, lecturers, parents, caregivers, Department of Education, community members, different health professional specialists e.g., psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, medical personnel, etc.) play a significant role in supporting learners/students.

- Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), Inclusive Education acknowledges that all learners can learn and need support to do so. This brought a paradigm shift from the thinking that learners who did not fit in mainstream schools should be referred to special schools.

- People are labelled either "normal" or "different" OR negatively or positively due to their uniqueness.

- Inclusive education includes people who are differently-abled in one school/college and in one classroom.

What is learner support?

Some definitions related to learner support:

- **Inclusive Education** – An educational system in which learners are accepted and fully integrated both educationally and socially promoting equal participation and no discrimination within a single system (Bornman, 2010).

- **Special Education** – A customised instructional programme designed to meet the unique needs of an individual learner with a disability or a special need and is incapable of benefiting from mainstream education (Gargiulo, 2012).

Inclusive education is all–encompassing as it touches upon all spectrums of education and of educating learners. It does not only look at one aspect, which is mainstreaming of learners or including them in what are traditionally called "normal" schools, but it touches upon all aspects of education including the learner himself or herself.

What is learner support? cont.

- Learner support is a critical component of teaching and learning.

Dr Tony Bates (2014)

- Critical to **learner/student support**, is scaffolding, feedback, counselling and other students.

- Its focal point is on what the teacher / facilitator / lecturer or instructor can do to help learners or students beyond the formal delivery of content.

Why is learner support essential?

- Learner support forms an integral part of teaching and learning

- Every learner / student deserves equal opportunity

- It equips learners to cope with the demands of learning and life in general

- Effective learner support is essential for learner / student success.

- Learners/students who experience barriers to learning should be identified as early as possible.

The link between assessment and learner support

- Assessment plays a key role in identifying learners/ students who have additional support needs.

- A well-designed assessment tells us what learners/ students learned, how well they learned it, and where they struggled.

- It provides teachers/lecturers with information about what learners/students know and can do.

- It is used by teachers/lecturers to provide helpful feedback to learners/students on their learning and adjust their teaching to address students' needs.

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What types of learner support can be offered?

- Simpson (2000:6) suggests that learner support falls into two broad areas: academic (or tutorial) support and non-academic (or counselling) support.

- Some forms of learner support are from informal study groups.

- Administrative Support and peer support sessions.

- Learning centres as part of learner support.

- Support in the workplace.

Learner support confidentiality

- Learner/ student information must be kept confidential in line with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA)

- Teachers / lecturers are responsible for holding every student's data in confidence and sharing it only with necessary parties such as parents, other teachers/lecturers, and administrators.

- Confidentiality of student information:
  - **protects embarrassing personal information from disclosure**.
  - **helps to avoid people being exploited by others who may misuse that information**.

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Learner support confidentiality

Some ways of ensuring confidentiality and privacy:

- ✓ Password protect all data, where possible.

- ✓ Disable any auto-complete settings.

- ✓ Keep devices and hardcopy data under lock and key when not in use.

- ✓ Check that storage systems are secure.

- ✓ Limit access to data.

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Umalusi's Legislative Mandate

- **General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001, as amended in 2008:**

  - Enhancement of the quality of general and further education and training

- **National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008, as amended:**

  - Establishment of Umalusi as a QC, responsible for standard setting i.r.o the GFETQSF.

E&A's specific mandate in terms of the GENFETQA Act (2001)

CHAPTER 3

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PRIVATE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Quality assurance of private education institutions

23. (1) The Council must develop policy and criteria for quality assurance of private education institutions.

(2) Any institution that is required to register as—

(a) an **independent school** in terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996);

(b) a **private college for further education and training** In terms of the

Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 1998 (Act No. 16 of 2006); or

(c) a **private centre** in terms of the Adult Basic Education and Training

Act, 2000 (Act No. 52 of 2000),

must comply with the policy and criteria contemplated In subsection (1).

N.B The FET and FET Acts have been replaced by the Continuing Education and Training Act no. 16 of 2006.

Accreditation Criteria

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	PRIVATE COLLEGES
1. Leadership, management and communication 2. School ethos **3. Teaching and learning-** *(Learner support)* 4. School results *(Learner support)*	1. Mission directed leadership and management 2. Teaching, learning and training 3. Assessment and results **4. Student support** *(A core criterion)*

Learner support:
Requirements for accreditation

- Learner / Student Support Policy

- Learner Support Committee

- Learner support programmes and schedules

- Measures to identify learners with learning barriers.

- Communication strategies and feedback to parents

- Reports on learners/students to whom support has been provided

- Agenda and minutes of recent meetings where matters relating to learner/student support are discussed.

- Effectiveness of learner support system

- Privacy and integrity of learner/student information is protected.

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Conclusion

Let me conclude with the following profound quotes:

- "All students can learn and succeed but not in the same way and not in the same day"

- "Every child is gifted. They just unwrap their packages at different time"

- If a child isn't learning the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn"

- "Teaching the kids to count is fine but teaching them what counts is best".

- "The purpose of adult education is to help them to learn, not to teach them all you know and thus stop them from learning".

Thank you

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