

(De)constructing systems discourses in South Africa's Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education

First submission: March 2002

White Paper 6, on Special Needs Education, released in July 2001, is a response from the South African government's Ministry of Education to the inclusion movement. In this article we examine systems discourses in this policy document. We discuss their implications, as we deconstruct them for inclusion or exclusion. We do not construct conclusions, but rather (de)construct the polyphony of voices, truths and realities speaking into and out of White Paper 6. This article thus offers an alternative approach to policy analysis.

Die (de)konstruksie van sisteemdiskoerse in die Suid-Afrikaanse regering se Witskrif 6: Spesiale Onderwysbehoefte

Witskrif 6: Spesiale Onderwysbehoefte is in Julie 2001 vrygestel as 'n reaksie van die Ministerie van Onderwys van die Suid-Afrikaanse regering op die inklusiewe beweging. In hierdie artikel word die sistemiese diskoerse wat in hierdie beleidsdokument waargeneem word, bestudeer. Die implikasies wat die sistemiese diskoerse vir inklusie/eksklusie het, word bespreek. In hierdie artikel konstrueer ons nie gevolgtrekkings nie, maar (de)konstrueer ons liever die veelstemmigheid ten opsigte van waarhede en realiteite wat neerslag vind in en spreek uit Witskrif 6. Hierdie artikel bied 'n alternatiewe strategie met betrekking tot die analise van beleidsdokumente.

Ms B van Rooyen & Dr R Newmark, Dept of Psychology and Specialised Education, University of Stellenbosch, Private Bag X1, Matieland 7602; E-mail: bmvnrooyen@mweb.co.za & rnew@sun.ac.za; & Dr L le Grange, Dept of Didactics, University of Stellenbosch, Private Bag X1, Matieland 7602; E-mail: llg@sun.ac.za

Since 1994 policy documents, Green Papers, White Papers and Acts have been produced with the ostensible aim of promoting and protecting the rights of people with disabilities.¹ In education, children with disabilities are construed as being part of a larger group which has been labelled “learners with special needs” or “learners experiencing barriers to learning and development”. Texts promoting their in/exclusion are:

- the Education White Paper 1 on Education and Training (RSA 1995) which discussed the importance of addressing the needs of learners with special needs in both special and mainstream schools;
- the South African Schools Act, no 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996) which stated that principals and heads of departments should take into account the rights and wishes of parents in deciding how to place learners with special needs. It was also recommended that schools accommodating such learners should include people with special-needs expertise on their governing bodies;
- Quality Education for All: the Report of the National Commission on Special Education Needs and Training and the National Committee for Education Support Services (Dept of Education 1997a) which described the conditions underlying special needs as “barriers to learning and development”, with disability constituting one category of barrier;
- Consultative Paper No 1 on Special Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Dept of Education 1999), based largely on the recommendations of the previously mentioned document;
- the Higher Education White Paper (Dept of Education 1997b) which called for the identification of existing inequalities “which are the product of policies, structures and practices based on racial, gender, disability and other forms of discrimination or disadvantage” and “a programme of transformation with a view to redress”.

1 This article is based on research conducted by Ms Brenda van Rooyen as part of her M Ed (Psych) studies. We thank Dr Edmonds for assisting with language editing and the anonymous reviewers for offering helpful comments on an earlier draft of the article.

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- the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (Dept of Education 2001), the text to be examined in this article.

The research question of the broader study from which this article derives was “what grand narratives, discourses, agents, actions, objects, binaries and voices on the margins constituting in/exclusion and (dis)ability” may be (de)constructed in reading White Paper 6? (cf van Rooyen 2002: 5). In this article we specifically examine the agents, actions, objects, binaries and voices on the margins constituting in/exclusion or (dis)ability in terms of systems narratives in White Paper 6. The reasons for selecting White Paper 6 for deconstruction were immediacy (the text was published in July 2001) and relevance (we consider it central to the construction of (dis)ability and in/exclusion in education in South Africa today).

In positivist terminology, our choice could be described as “purposeful sampling”. Patton (Merriam 1998: 61) argues that

the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the narrative, thus the term purposeful sampling.

We find Patton’s language problematic in that “learning” here might suggest that there is a “truth” to be discovered. We would also like to substitute the term “meaning-rich” for “information-rich” and to stress that we posit “issues of central importance” and the “purpose of the narrative” as these emerge from our interests as “emancipatory enquirer[s]” (Lather 1991: 15).

Why pursue a poststructuralist reading of a policy such as this? Policy is defined by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as “a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual” (Pearsall 1999: 1106). When that organisation is the government — the governing body of a state — the languaging of objects, agents and actions in policy is given explicit power. The government is an instrument of “control or influence; it steers, the origins of the word ‘govern’ being the Greek *kubernan* ‘to steer’” (Pearsall 1999: 614). Documents promulgated by government thus become texts constituted as “steering”. We argue that if, as poststructuralists claim, language constitutes reality — “language is not representational; what

we call 'reality' resides and is expressed in one's descriptions of events, people, ideas, feelings, and experiences" (Sluzki 1992: 219) — the languaging of reality in such texts should be (de)constructed as a matter of course. Following Slee (2001: 169), we suggest that in all texts — but particularly in texts constituted as "steering" — we need to reflectively examine "the way in which the uses and abuses of language frame meanings that disable and exclude". We would also like to see what Cherryholmes (Lloyd 2000: 149) describes as the creation of "alternative discursive practices", continuing: "We need to find a way of thinking/speaking that gives power no place to hide".

1. (Re)search approach

Our research is broadly informed by poststructuralist theory. We treat poststructuralism as a response to structuralism: structuralism, which is constructed as the search for deep, stable, universal structures, regulated by laws, underlying any phenomenon (Miller 1997). Cherryholmes (1988: 11) argues that structuralist thought seeks "rationality, linearity, progress and control by discovering, developing, and inventing metanarratives [...] that define rationality, linearity, progress and control by discovering" whereas poststructuralist thought is "skeptical and incredulous about the possibility of such meta-narratives". The poststructuralist contention is that a meta-narrative is just another narrative.

Within the poststructuralist "interpretative framework" we use deconstruction as a policy-reading strategy ("method"). Derrida (1988) points out that "deconstruction" is not "destruction" because of its associations with "annihilation or a negative reduction". We find the view of deconstruction of Appignanesi & Garratt (1994: 79-80) particularly useful. They write:

This is deconstruction — to peel away like an onion the layers of constructed meanings [...] Deconstruction is a strategy for revealing the underlayers of meanings 'in' a text that were suppressed or assumed in order for it to take its actual form — in particular the assumptions of 'presence' (the hidden representations of guaranteed certainty). Texts are never simply unitary but include resources that run counter to their assertions and/or their authors' intentions.

So, the intent of our narrative is (de)constructive and emancipation is seen as emerging from such a process. We call such a process (de)constructive in that we aim to disrupt “truth” or “unquestioned” assumptions by exploring the binaries, hierarchies and inconsistencies constituted by discourses and the silences and “rebel voices” in their margins (Boje & Dennehy 1999). We see our approach as emancipatory in that, in (de)constructing such stories space is created for alternative narratives or knowledges. As Clough & Barton (1998: 5) cogently state:

One move which has been characteristic of emancipatory research and its variants is to exploit the potential for multiple constructions in order to subvert and critique those constructions which are currently dominant.

Various deconstructive strategies are available to us in our quest for emancipation. Gough (2000: 74) lists the following reading strategies:

- pressing the literal meanings of a metaphor until it yields unintended meanings;
- looking for contradictions;
- identifying gaps;
- setting silences to speak;
- focusing on ambiguous words or syntax;
- demonstrating that different meanings can be produced by different readings, and
- reversing the terms of a binary pair and subverting the hierarchies.

We shall draw on some of these strategies to deconstruct White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (Dept of Education, 2001), reading it in the following ways:

- (de)constructing objects in the text;
- (de)constructing agents and actions in the text;
- (de)constructing binaries in the text;²

2 Binary opposition was a central theme in Derrida’s narrative. He constructed systems as creating binary pairs [for example, abled-disabled; inclusion-exclusion], with one term prioritised over the other. Deconstruction illustrates how the term given priority or centred is in fact dependent upon the marginalised other, which is therefore, in some sense, centred (Mann [54]).

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- (de)constructing discourses/power-knowledges constituting those objects, binaries, agents and actions;³
- (de)constructing grand narratives constituting and constituted by those discourses;⁴
- (de)constructing voices/alternative knowledges on the margins of those discourses.

For the purposes of this article we focus our attention on the grand narrative of systems as read in White Paper 6. We wish to point out, though, that the broader study of which this research forms part also deconstructs functionalist, radical structuralist, radical humanist and postmodern grand narratives (cf Van Rooyen 2002).

2. The systems (grand) narrative

Higgs & Smith (2002: 33) describe systems theory as a “general science of organization and wholeness”. They state that it “can also be regarded as a philosophy that claims that life is a system of which we [human beings] are a part”. These authors note that the “key assumption in systems theory, as its name suggests, is that everything — including human beings — is a system of some sort”, which implies that an individual can only be understood within its cultural system. Modern systems theory includes the following assumptions: the parts of a system work together; a system is a whole; systems have goals as well as input and output; some form of energy is absorbed and generated by all systems; systems function “in a certain order”; they must be controlled, and are specialised (Higgs & Smith 2002: 33-34).

“In many ways, systems theory is problem-centred. It sees the world and human activity largely as a process of problem-solving” (Higgs & Smith 2002: 34). Higgs & Smith (2002: 36-7) argue that systems theory has certain advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include simplicity, the elimination of artificial barriers, and versatility. The disadvantages are that systems theory “ignores the

3 Discourses we construct as practices, which may be verbal (written or spoken) or non-verbal, that “systematically form the objects of which we speak” (Parker 1994b: 94).

4 Grand narratives (re)present what could otherwise be called paradigms or world-views.

real problem of power and the misuse of power” (Higgs & Smith 2002: 38). Higgs & Smith (2002: 39) point out that Foucault provided examples of systems (such as the school system) to demonstrate how “systems dominated and imposed themselves on individuals”.

In an exploration of systems theory the concept “ecosystemic” also comes into play. Mikesell *et al* (1995: 11) see ecosystemic theory as a worldview that has emerged from the deconstruction and reconstruction of perspectives such as the Newtonian worldview and the earlier systems worldviews (first-order cybernetics). “Cybernetics” indicates the “science of communication and control in animal and machine” and, according to the anthropologist Bateson (2000: 1), focuses on form and patterns, a way of looking at things and a language for expressing what one sees. Observation, including decision-making, is the process underlying cybernetic theories of information-processing. Within the fields of cybernetics and the epistemology of systems, the involvement of observers in what is observed is taken into consideration (second-order cybernetics). This is qualitatively unlike the earlier interest in the ontology of systems, which focused on observing from outside the system (first-order cybernetics). A second-order cybernetics perspective holds that in the case of living systems it is impossible for an observer to be objective and accepts that what we see is at least partially constructed by us. A second-order cybernetics perspective is also called an ecosystemic approach. The term represents a dual focus on systems and on ecology, emphasising the complicated, interlinked and everchanging networks of ideas and meaning within and between systems.

In the movement away from a Newtonian perspective in the social sciences, general systems theory may be seen as a stepping-stone. While it broke away from reductionism, it still implied an external, objective observer and linear causality through its emphasis on interaction and power. By its rejection of objectivity and its emphasis on the autonomy of systems, an ecosystemic approach constitutes a further step away from Newtonian epistemology (Brennan 1998: 23; Fourie 1998: 11-7; Bateson 2000: 1-2). O'Connor & Ammen (1997: 17) note that an ecosystemic framework embraces the value of diversity to the health of humankind as a whole. These authors further hold:

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The purist phenomenological view states that although we may come to some consensus about what comprises external reality, we can never actually know whether that reality exists or even whether those with whom we have reached a consensus really view the world in the same way we do.

Against this background we now look at how systems discourses constitute and are constituted by White Paper 6.

3. Deconstructing systems discourses in White Paper 6

As a discourse-shaping policy White Paper 6 constitutes and is constituted by the systems discourse. Throughout the document there are references to systems: in the adverb “systematically”; in nouns such as “system”, “the education and training system”, “education structures and systems”; in the adjectives “systemic” and “system-wide”. The word “system” appears on 47 of the 56 pages of the document (it is not on pages 14, 29, 31, 35, 41, 44, 47-49). The White Paper constitutes its language as consistent with its systems discourse, stating that to maintain consistency with the inclusive approach, which sees barriers to learning as existing primarily within the learning system, it uses the term “barriers to learning and development” (Dept of Education 2001: 12).

3.1 Objects constituted

On reading White Paper 6, we (de)construct a central entity constituted by the systems discourse as the “inclusive education and training system”. It includes:

- the home, the community and other formal and informal settings and structures within which learning occurs (Dept of Education 2001: 6);
- centres of learning, both inclusive and supportive, and
- ordinary schools, full-service schools, special schools and special settings (Dept of Education 2001: 10).

These systems have components. The home comprises parents, fathers and mothers, as well as children. Mothers and fathers are presented as those who need to be persuaded not to keep disabled child-

ren in “dark backrooms and sheds” (Dept of Education 2001: 4). Their lack of involvement and recognition becomes a reason why different learning needs may arise (Dept of Education 2001: 7). They are therefore constructed as agents with whom educational institutions will form partnerships (Dept of Education 2001: 50). Parents also seem to be viewed as conscripts in that they will be “armed” with information, counselling and skills: we (de)construct the information dissemination and advocacy campaign as the arms supply that will be provided by the Ministry.

Centres of learning comprise educators, learners, management, governing bodies, professional staff, curricula, the environment, resources (human and material; physical and professional) and education support services. “Inadequately and inappropriately trained” (Dept of Education 2001: 7), education managers and educators constitute another reason why different learning needs arise. They are constructed as “human resources” in need of development (Dept of Education 2001: 18) and support (Dept of Education 2001: 49).

The Ministry attaches a possessive term to educators, who are described as “*our* primary resource for achieving *our* goal of an inclusive education and training system [our emphasis]” (Dept of Education 2001: 18). Resources are defined as “a stock or supply of material or assets; an action or strategy adopted in adverse circumstances; personal attributes and capabilities that sustain one in adverse circumstances; a teaching aid”. The origins of this word are to be found in the Old French dialect: *resourdre*, “rise again, recover” (Pearsall 1999: 1219). In White Paper 6, we argue, educators’ personal attributes and capabilities are not accorded their true value. Educators are the Ministry’s raw materials, in need of refinement in order for the Ministry to reach its goal. It is not a mutual goal.

White Paper 6 defines the South African curriculum as “inflexible” (Dept of Education 2001: 7) and “one of the most significant barriers to learning” (Dept of Education 2001: 19). Again, educators need to be assisted to create greater flexibility in the curriculum. “Inappropriate and inadequate” education support services are described as a further reason why different learning needs arise (Dept of Education 2001:7) and they are said to require strengthening. In their strengthened form they will be organised into district support teams,

institutional support teams, trained education managers and an educator cadre. Special schools and settings will become resource centres (Dept of Education 2001: 29).

The questions we found ourselves asking about the constitution of an inclusive education system as an entity included the following:

- A number of anomalies, doubts and contradictions become lodged in the reader's mind as the tenor of the Paper defines itself. A crucial misgiving is whether, given the desegregation of schools, the inclusive system is materially different from the old. Exclusive sub-systems are still formed within the inclusive system — systems which exclude on the basis of their not being able to meet the requirements of learners with severe or multiple disabilities, disabilities defined by White Paper 6 as rooted in organic/medical causes.
- If the home and the community are included as systems within which learning can take place, why does the Minister of Education write: "I hold out great hope that through the measures that we put forward in this White Paper we will also be able to convince the thousands of mothers and fathers of some 280 000 disabled children — who are younger than 18 years and are not in schools or colleges — that the place of these children is not one of isolation in dark backrooms and sheds" (Dept of Education 2001: 4). The home, here, is constituted as a place of isolation and imprisonment, not of possible learning. Parents are constructed as prisoners unwilling to see their wrong: they need to be convinced. They are constructed as stubborn: the Minister of Education questions the capability of "we" to convince them, hoping that the "we" will be able to do so. Are "we" rendered inadequate when confronted by the parents of children with disabilities?

Within the inclusive education and training system as well as the workplace, certain entities are construed as necessary primarily to identify barriers to learning and development. There are also key strategies and levers, mechanisms and approaches for identifying and overcoming these barriers, and interventions including resource development, curriculum adaptation, and graded levels of support.

3.2 Agents constituted

A central agent constituted by the systems discourse in White Paper 6 is “we”: a “we” not defined but which we as readers (de)construct as referring to the “Ministry of Education” or the “Ministry”. A ministry is an amorphous body — a government department headed by a minister (Pearsall 1999: 907). The individuals comprising the “we” or the “ministry” are anonymous, with the exception of the minister, Professor Kader Asmal, who identifies himself in the introduction but disappears into the “we” thereafter. The origins of the word minister and ministry lie in the Latin words *minister* “servant” from *minus* “less”. We (de)construct the practice of using the upper case to refer to the “Ministry” as an effort to elevate the “we” from servants to controllers of the process of systemic transformation.

On page 46 of the White Paper the Ministry becomes the “Department of Education” which, together with “the nine provincial departments of education, will play a critical role [...] in laying the foundations of the inclusive education and training system” (Dept of Education 2001). Again the upper-case is used: to indicate hierarchy? superiority? power relations? Is the Department of Education the most important agent in this process? Can systemic change happen without the Department of Education directing it?

Abstract constructs — institutional development, transformation and change — are also agents identified by White Paper 6 (Dept of Education 2001: 26, 32) which self-referentially constitutes itself as another primary agent. The White Paper is referred to as outlining policy and as providing the policy framework (Dept of Education 2001: 10, 11).

By constructing the central or primary agents as an anonymous “we”, a body such as a ministry, texts and policy, the drafters of the White Paper are seen to be covering a move away from accountability, which is also evidenced in the use of the passive voice. The agents of change become anonymous, amorphous groups, or texts, or subjects hidden by passive constructions: “a wider spread of educational support services will be created”; “there will be a qualitative upgrading of their services” and so on.

3.3 Actions constituted

In White Paper 6, some proposed changes to the system are presented in the passive voice without active agents ever being constituted for these actions. An example of this is: “[t]he overhauling of the process of identifying, assessing and enrolling learners” (Dept of Education 2001: 8). Other changes are initially presented in the passive voice, with active agents later linked to them. “The qualitative improvement of special schools” (Department of Education 2001: 8), the reader later discovers, will be implemented by the “we”, who will “review, improve and expand ‘participation’ in special schools or resource centres and full-service institutions” (Dept of Education 2001: 32).

The Ministry, “we” and the White Paper are linked to most actions:

- Among the actions performed by the Ministry are: collaborating, giving urgent attention to, putting forward a framework, reviewing existing policy and legislation, believing, investigating future methods, recognising, accepting, acknowledging, requiring, making recommendations, expecting and monitoring.
- The “We” is to direct efforts, require, outline, define, acknowledge, strengthen, evaluate and decide.
- White Paper 6, among other actions, outlines “key strategies and levers”, provides the framework for establishing an inclusive education and training system, details a funding strategy, and lists key steps to be taken. It outlines a policy which will systematically move away from using segregation to categorise institutions; introduce strategies and interventions; give direction for education support services; indicate how learners will be identified, assessed and incorporated, and provide clear signals about how special schools serve learners with disabilities and act as resources (Dept of Education 2001: 10).

By being the doers of these actions, White Paper 6, the Ministry and the “we” are constituted as the planners, decision-makers, evaluators and monitors of the process of system-wide change. On the receiving end of action are management and governance teams, education support personnel, professional staff, educators, parents and learners. They are constituted as objects who must be trained, made aware or identified, assessed and allocated.

3.4 Binaries constituted

An inclusive education and training system as opposed to an exclusive education and training system constitute the binary of inclusion-exclusion noted in Table 1. An inclusive system, as constituted by White Paper 6 (Dept of Education 2001: 12), is one in which the learner or worker is not seen as inherently disabled but as rather disabled primarily by barriers within the system. An exclusive system we thus read as one in which the learner is seen as inherently disabled and thus unable to participate in the system.

After defining an inclusive approach in this way, White Paper 6 goes on to describe some learners' barriers to learning and development as rooted in organic/medical causes. It calls them learners with disabilities or impairments. After advocating inclusion as defined, the White Paper likewise conceives of exclusion in terms of the criteria laid down for inclusion. It also constitutes a system in which learners with severe or multiple disabilities are physically excluded or segregated from both ordinary and full-service schools (Dept of Education 2001: 23). Rather than independently setting criteria for each, it conceives of one situation in terms of its opposite. Table 1 notes other binaries read as associated with the inclusion-exclusion opposition.

Table 1: Binaries constituted by the systems discourse

Exclusion	Inclusion
Immoral	Moral
Decadent (decaying)	Generating
Past	Present and future
Apartheid	Post-apartheid

These binaries can be read in the words of the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, in White Paper 6: "*Race* (apartheid) and *exclusion were* (past tense) the *decadent* and *immoral* factors that determined the place of our innocent children" [our emphasis] (Dept of Education 2001: 4). The term *race* is read as relating to the apartheid ideology noted in Table 1 while "were" places this in the past. The terms *decadent* and *immoral* are self-explanatory.

Considering the degree of exclusion within inclusion already noted — particularly as regards learners with moderate and severe disabilities — the Department of Education therefore constructs itself as (im)moral, both decadent and generating, set in the past, present and future and retaining elements of apartheid or segregation as related to people with disabilities.

Another binary constituted by the systems discourse is that of system/chaos. “System” is defined as a noun describing

a complex whole; a set of things working together as a mechanism or interconnecting network; the human or animal body as a whole; an organised scheme of method; orderliness; method; the prevailing political or social order, especially when regarded as oppressive and intransigent (Pearsall 1999: 1453).

We (de)construct inconsistencies in the use of this signifier in the document which, rather than describing things working together, describes “we”, the Ministry, as working on things. Thus perhaps the use of the word system is most in line with the third definition, re-(presenting) oppression and intransigence — power relations in which those at the top of the hierarchy (indicated by upper-case letters) dictate what those below will do. This, in turn, we (de)construct as inconsistent with phrases claiming that the policy and process are democratic and participatory, phrases such as: “These values summon all of us” and: “In building our education and training system, our Constitution provides a special challenge to us” (Dept of Education 2001: 11).

Perhaps systems, with their inherent orderliness, inspire the need to direct? Perhaps the fear is of the other term of the binary — chaos:

complete disorder and confusion; behaviour so unpredictable as to appear random, owing to small changes in conditions; the formless matter supposed to have existed before the creation of the universe (Pearsall 1999: 236).

Yet is it possible to achieve real change from the top down? Is the policy not advocating small changes — “our vision of an inclusive education and training system can only be developed over the long term; action we will take in the short to medium term must provide us with models for later system-wide application” (Dept of Education 2001: 6). There are no existing models. The implication is of taking

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a step into the unknown, the void. The origin of “chaos” is the Greek *chaos* “vast chasm, void”. Is the need for a system and top-down control not born out of fear of the void and the unknown?

3.5 Implications for in/exclusion

The systems discourse constituting and constituted by White Paper 6, in particular, is one in which objective outsiders can observe and assess a system, determine barriers and supports, recommend guidelines or a framework for change, implement it, monitor it and evaluate it. This is referred to by Becvar & Becvar (1996: 75-6) as simple cybernetics (first-order cybernetics).

This document comprises observations made by the National Commission on Special Education Needs and Training and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCSNET/NCESS), and accepted by the Ministry of Education. These bodies were appointed by the ministry to “investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in education and training in South Africa” (Dept of Education 2001: 5). These bodies observed barriers to learning and development in the education system. The White Paper pinpoints factors from which learning needs arise, as well as weaknesses and deficiencies of the current system. It outlines a framework for establishing an inclusive education and training system and the strategic changes to be implemented.

The process covers a wide range: funding; introducing, developing and re-allocating resources (human and material); adapting environments; developing new teaching strategies and materials, and changing policy and attitudes. It involves creating an input which will produce a different output (an inclusive system). The input is graded according to short-, medium- and long-term goals, outcomes are defined, a time-frame is established (20 years) and strategic plans for the next eight years are outlined (Dept of Education 2001: 45-51).

Table 2: Learning needs and system-wide solutions

Factors giving rise to learning needs (Dept of Education 2001: 7)	White Paper's framework (Dept of Education 2001: 24-34)
Inflexible curriculum Inappropriate languages Communication	Create curricula accessible to all learners
Negative attitudes and stereotyping of difference	Information, advocacy and mobilisation
Inaccessible and unsafe built-up environments	Develop sites of learning that provide physical access
Inappropriate and inadequate support services	Strengthen education support services: institutional and district support teams
Inadequate policies and legislation	Review all existing policies and legislation in line with the White Paper
Non-recognition and non-involvement of parents	Information, advocacy and mobilisation
Inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and educators	Human resource development
Socio-economic deprivation	Expand provision and access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobilise out-of-school youth • create ordinary, full-service and special schools • early assessment and intervention
Differences in intellectual ability	
Physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments	
Psychosocial disturbances	

New measures are proposed — initiatives delineating and solving systemic deficits — and with these power relations, as the knowers constitute the known in terms of strengths and weaknesses, problems and solutions, barriers and supports. Instead of special needs educators, there are systems analysts.

3.6 Voices on the margins

A strong voice on the margin — present in the need to constitute a framework, monitor, evaluate and control — is that of the cybernetics of cybernetics or second-order cybernetics (Becvar & Becvar 1996:

76). This is the voice that says that observers are part of the system and cannot view it objectively: what they construct is self-referential. It also sees systems as generating a unity, not because of the nature of the parts (the resources, the funds, the environment) but because of the way in which the parts relate (learners are still assessed to identify their barriers to learning and allocated to sites according to their need for support).

The cybernetics of cybernetics further states that systems will determine the range of structural variation without loss of identity: “The environment, therefore, does not determine what a system does” (Becvar & Becvar 1996: 79). The voice of “we”, the Ministry and the White Paper, cannot change a system which it observes from a distance in predictable ways. They cannot outline “how the education and training system must transform itself [...] how it must change” (Dept of Education 2001: 11). They can only couple or join with the system (Becvar & Becvar 1996: 80) — change their own ways of relating and being, and then observe whether this leads to some reaction in the system.

Dictating a policy, or maintaining a top-down mode of outlining, monitoring and evaluating change is unlikely to generate or encourage alternative responses. Instead of, for example, proposing think-tanks with teachers and learners to generate alternative teaching strategies and materials, the document lays down the training of teachers. Educators are constituted as unable to participate in the process. The public and parents are not conceived of as partners to work with either, but rather as objects which must be exposed to information and advocacy campaigns. Rather than working with systemic transformation, the White Paper prescribes to and attempts to dictate and control it.

Yet despite policy outlining and prescribing, the voice of systemic determinism is heard in White Paper 6 (Dept of Education 2001: 11): “The White Paper outlines how the education and training system must transform itself [...] how it must change”. It is not possible for the White Paper, the Ministry, or “we” to transform the system: it must transform itself. Control is lost at this point.

A verse from Gottfried Benn’s poem, *Foreign Minister*, captures for us the chaos within systems and the systems within chaos — the efforts to constitute system, hierarchy and control:

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In parliament — not at all humbug by any means,
but methodic like Sanskrit or nuclear physics,
vast laboratory: official advisors, press releases, empiricism,
character too must be felt to be at work
seriously: character they do have, those come to the top,
not because of possible law suits
but it's their moral sex appeal —
true, what is the State?
'One existing thing among many others',
Plato said long ago.

Another voice which we (de)construct in the margins in its absence is that of materialist critical writers. Ideology and reproductions of power relations are not explicitly languaged in this policy (except for references to democracy and the socio-economic deprivation from which different learning needs arise) but are present in:

- the hierarchies established by who does and who is done to; who is agent and who is object;
- upper- and lower-case usage representing power relations, and
- the constitution of the curriculum as not ideological.

The curriculum is constituted by White Paper 6 (Dept of Education 2001: 19) as:

- content,
- language or medium of instruction,
- how the classroom or lecture is organised and managed,
- the methods and processes used in teaching,
- the pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum,
- the learning materials and equipment used, and
- how learning is assessed.

That all the above could reflect and be reflected in ideology that reproduces power relations is not recognised by the document. As Bernstein (1975: 85) writes:

How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control [...]

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Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as valid realization of this knowledge on the part of the taught.

The White Paper (Dept of Education 2001: 25), in fact, constitutes curricular adaptation as the easiest aspect:

We are persuaded *{by whom?}* that the inclusion of learners with disabilities that stem from impaired intellectual development will require curriculum adaptation rather than major structural adjustments or sophisticated equipment. Accordingly their accommodation within an inclusive education and training framework would be more easily facilitated than the inclusion of learners who require intensive support through medical interventions, structural adjustments to the built environment and/or assistive devices with minimal curriculum adaptation.

Is the White Paper saying it is easier to change the reproduction of power relations through the curriculum than to make physical structural changes, buy assistive devices or offer medical interventions?

Other voices on the margins are those of the objects which “we”, the Ministry, and the White Paper aim to transform. These are voices acknowledged by the Minister of Education:

I am deeply aware of the concerns shared by many parents, educators, lecturers, specialists [...] I understand these concerns [...] I am also deeply aware of the anxieties that many educators, lecturers, parents and learners hold about our inclusion proposals (Dept of Education 2001: 3).

Among these are the voices of:

- Parents of children recognised as in need of mild or moderate support who feel their children will not receive the resources, facilities and protection or security they need in ordinary or full-service schools in an inclusive system.
- Children with mild or moderate support needs, placed in ordinary or full-service schools, who fear unequal competition, teasing and not being able to cope in an environment in which they may receive less time than they need.
- Parents of children ranked as having low support needs who feel the rights of their children will be infringed: teachers will have

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less time for their children, standards will drop, and classes will be disrupted.

- Educators in mainstream schools who consider themselves overworked, underpaid, under-trained and unable or unwilling to play the role expected of them in an inclusive system.
- Special needs educators who are expected to change roles within the inclusive system. Rather than working primarily with children whom they recognise as having special needs (in both special schools and other settings), they will also be expected to train and support teachers.

The Ministry's response to these voices is to mobilise public support (Dept of Education 2001: 50): to launch an information dissemination and advocacy campaign. Rather than listening to these voices, the authorities seek to change them by informing those who disagree with the policy and their "rights, responsibilities and obligations" (Dept of Education 2001: 34). Only when mobilisation is discussed are parents recognised as partners who will be armed (by the Ministry?) with "information, counselling and skills" to participate in inclusion activities (Dept of Education 2001: 50). Before this, parents are thought of as those who keep their children isolated in "dark backrooms and sheds" (Dept of Education 2001: 4) — enemies of, rather than partners in, inclusion.

4. "Concluding" reflections

White Paper 6 constitutes and is constituted by multiple discourses, namely functionalist, interpretative, radical structuralist, radical humanist and postmodern discourses (cf Van Rooyen 2001). This article has (de)constructed the systems narratives constituting and constituted by White Paper 6. In Kappeler's (Lather 1991:30) words: "[We] do not really wish to conclude and sum up, rounding off the argument so as to dump it in a nutshell on the reader. A lot more could be said about the topics [we] have touched upon [... We] have meant to ask the questions, to break out of the frame [...] the point is not a set of answers, but making possible a different" policy reading.

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