

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ACADEMIC TURNAROUND STRATEGY FOR DEAF PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Further and higher educational institutions in South Africa are not accessible for Deaf people in terms of Sign Language as medium of instruction, since only 6% of the hearing community are able to communicate in Sign Language. This resulted in a situation where less than 30 Deaf people in South Africa's history have obtained university degrees. The underlying cause is a lack of initial teacher education at universities and limitations in the education system of South Africa. Currently, no university in South Africa trains qualified "teachers of the Deaf" on an undergraduate level and furthermore it is not a requirement from the National Department of Education that teachers should have formal qualifications in Ortho-Didactics and Sign Language to be appointed at schools for the Deaf.

2. PURPOSE:

The purpose of the presentation is to share the fundamentals of an Academic Turnaround Strategy for Deaf people in South Africa that was designed to redress the problem areas expressed in the introduction above.

3. METHOD:

In order to redress the state of affairs, the Development Institute for the Deaf and Blind designed an Academic Turnaround Strategy for Deaf people, which is currently being implemented as a Pilot Project in the North West Province of South Africa, before it will be rolled out to other provinces in South Africa.

There are valid reasons why the North West Province has been selected for the Pilot Project:

- The first school for Black Deaf learners, Kutlwanong School, is situated in the North West Province of South Africa. "*Kutlwanong*" is a Setswana word meaning "the place where people understand each other", where Setswana is one of the indigenous "Black" languages of South Africa.
- The first Sign Language Dictionary in South Africa was compiled in the North West Province at Kutlwanong School by the first principal, Norman Nieder-heitmann. This Dictionary is still one of the most influential documented resources of Sign Language in South Africa.
- The majority of schools for the Deaf that are situated all over South Africa originated from Kutlwanong School. The North West Secondary School for the Deaf is one of these schools, and forms part of the Pilot Project.
- Lucas Magongwa, the first Deaf teacher in South Africa and current Chairperson of the Deaf Federation of South Africa, was also the first teacher appointed at North West Secondary School for the Deaf.
- The Development Institute for the Deaf and Blind, one of the most important stakeholders of the Turnaround Strategy, is situated in the North West Province.
- The North West Department of Education is another key role player of the Turnaround Strategy and the budget and resource provider of the schools for the Deaf in the North West Province.
- The North West University, first University in South Africa that trained the largest numbers of hearing teachers in South African Sign Language, is situated in the North West Province and the key Higher Education partner of the Academic Turnaround Strategy.
- Sun City, home of the Million Dollar Golf Championships and most prominent Workplace-Training Partner of the Turnaround Strategy is situated in the North West Province.

3.1 PRINCIPLES AND DESIGN OF THE ACADEMIC TURNAROUND STRATEGY:

The Turnaround Strategy is based on the South African Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system and its underlying *principles*, where it is about:

- Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn, and that all children and youth need support;
- Accepting and respecting that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs, which are equally valued and an ordinary part of human experience;
- Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners;
- Acknowledging and respecting differences among learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status;
- Acknowledging that learning is broader than formal schooling, and may also occur in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures;
- Changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners;
- Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and curricula of educational institutions, and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning;
- Empowering learners to participate critically in the process of learning by developing their individual strengths.

The *design* of the Academic Turnaround Strategy was inspired by the search for answers to the following *academic challenges* that South African Deaf people experience.

- All universities in South Africa focus on generic teacher training, but no university in South Africa trains qualified “teachers of the Deaf” on an undergraduate level.
- There is a serious problem with the South African education system, since it is not a requirement for teachers to have formal qualifications in Ortho-Didactics and “Deaf” education to be appointed at schools for the Deaf.
- It is not a requirement set by the National- and Provincial Education Departments for teachers to have accredited qualifications in South African Sign Language in order to be appointed at schools for the Deaf. Sign Language is usually being acquainted by teachers once they are appointed at schools for the Deaf.
- No university or Further Education and Training (FET) College in South Africa is adequately accessible to Deaf people via Sign Language as medium of instruction. It is essential that lecturers and support staff be able to communicate in Sign Language in order for Deaf students to receive equal further and higher education and training than their hearing counterparts. To deny Deaf persons Sign Language, means to deny them their basic human rights to communication and education.
- Deaf students have problems to access Further Education and Training (FET). In the North West Province a group of Deaf learners were denied access to a specific FET College because the College was not accessible via Sign Language. Only when the Minister for Education intervened, the College appointed interpreters.
- Workplaces in South Africa are not accessible to Deaf people with regard to Sign Language communication, resulting in a situation where 65% of the South African Deaf population is unemployed.

3.2 IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS, TARGET POPULATION AND KEY RESULTS AREAS.

The strategic partners involved in the Academic Turnaround Strategy for Deaf people are the Implementation Partners and the Target Population who interact around the Key Results Areas in order to implement the Strategy.

3.2.1 IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS:

The implementation partners are:

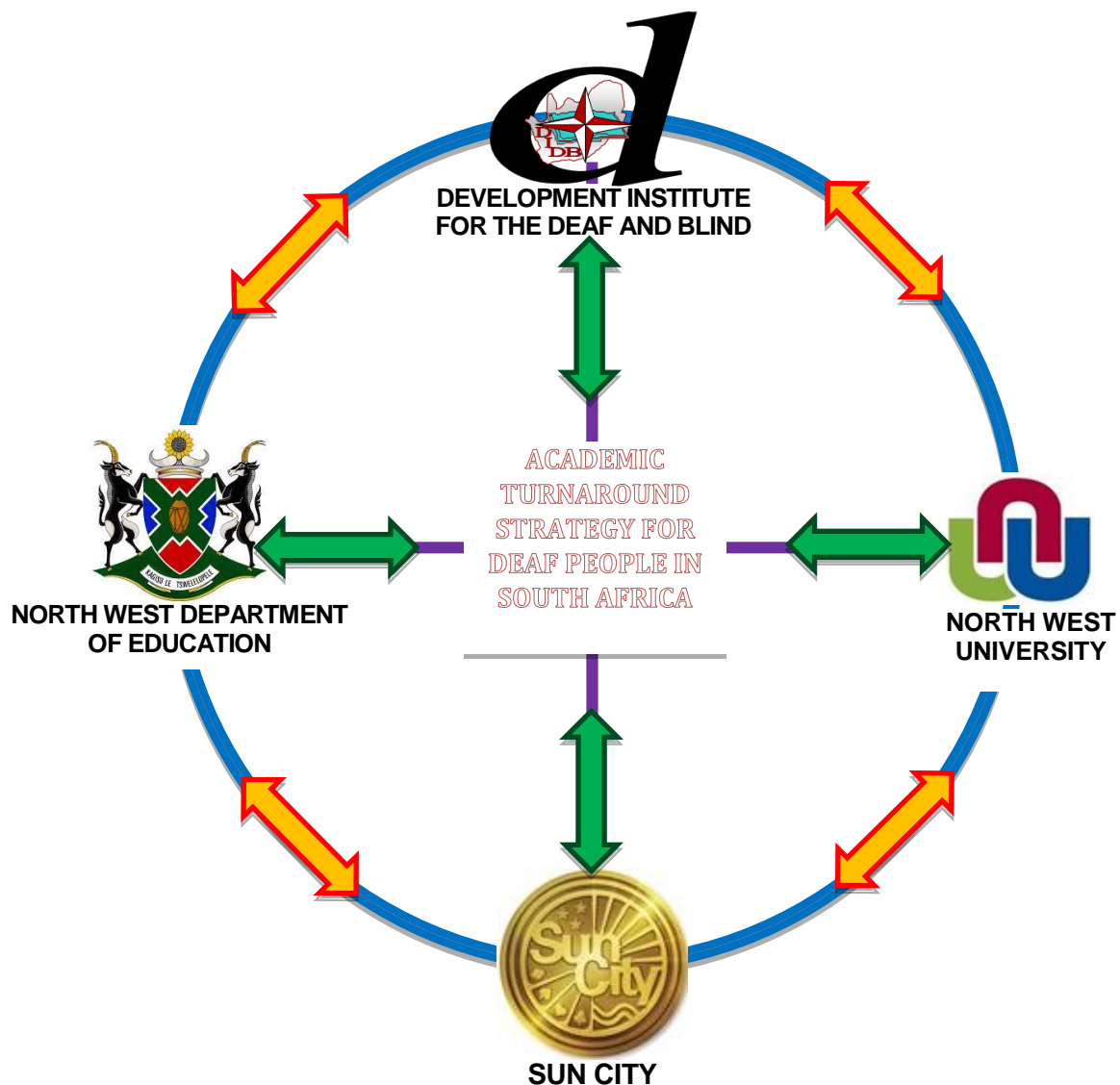
- Development Institute for the Deaf and Blind.
- North West Department of Education.
- North West University.
- Sun City.

3.2.2 TARGET POPULATION

The Target Population are Deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the following places:

- Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in Kutlwanong School for the Deaf.
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in North West Secondary school for the Deaf.
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in Full-Service Schools.
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing students in Further Education and Training Colleges.
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in workplace training and experiential learning.
- Out-of-school and unemployed Deaf and hard-of-hearing youth.
- Teaching- and support staff at these institutions.

Visual representation of the Academic Turnaround Strategy.



3.2.3 KEY RESULTS AREAS:

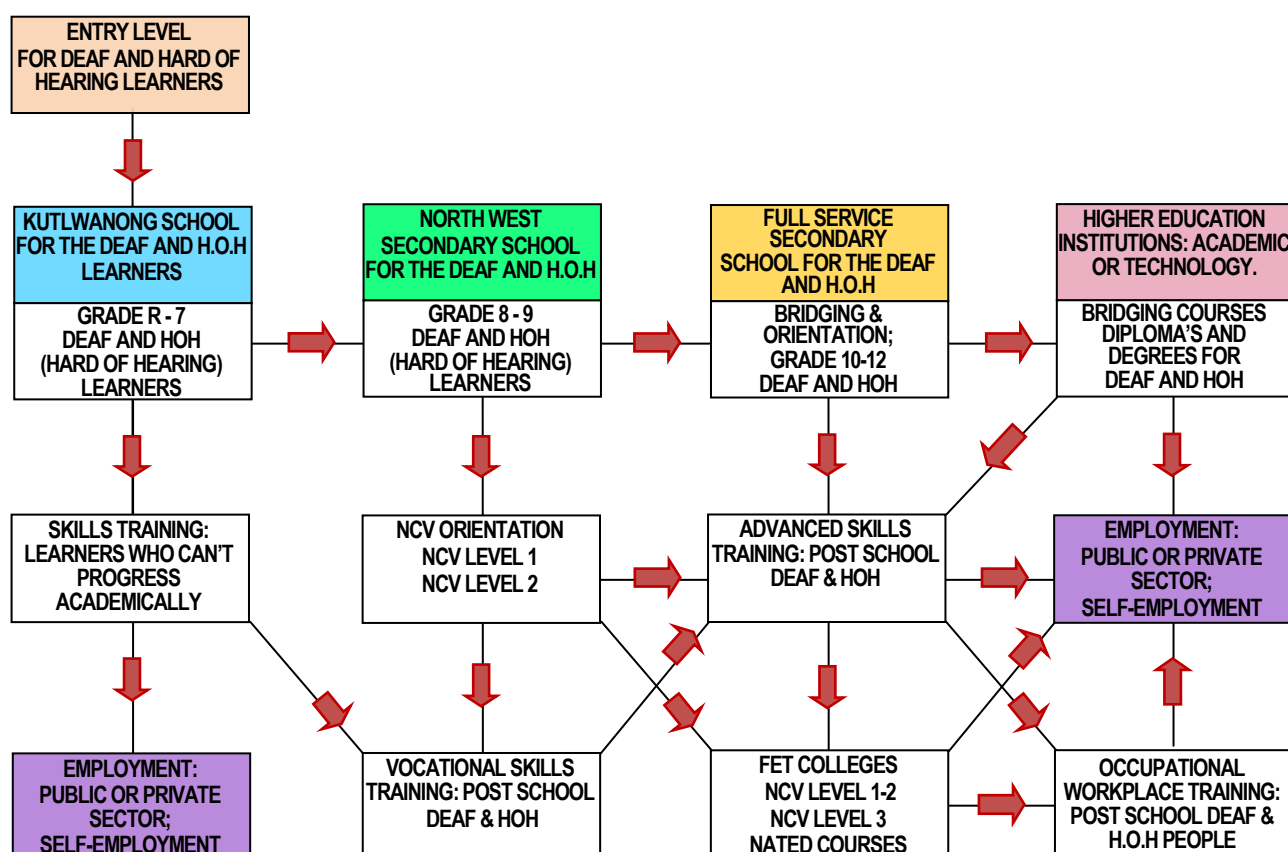
The Academic Turnaround Strategy as a Pilot Project has the following Key Results Areas:

- Implementation of new Learning- and Career Paths for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing people as framework for the Academic Turnaround Strategy.
- Accredited training of educators, lecturers and support staff of identified education and training institutions in SA Sign Language.
- In-service training and development of teaching- and support staff.
- Support to Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners and assistance to the education and training institutions where they are trained.

It makes provision for learning- and career paths such as an Academic Learning Path, Skills and Vocational Learning Path, Occupational Learning Path and Job creation and self-employment. In essence the learning and career paths are designed as follows:

- Practical skills path for Deaf and hard of hearing learners who can't progress in a primary school.
- Practical skills path for Deaf and hard of hearing learners who can't progress in a primary school, but with the ability to learn advance vocational skills.
- Academic career path for Deaf and hard of hearing learners.
- Academic career path for Deaf and hard of hearing learners who dropped out of higher education.
- Vocational career path for Deaf and hard of hearing learners who can't progress in a secondary school.
- Vocational career path for Deaf and hard of hearing learners who can't progress in a secondary school, but with the ability to learn advanced vocational skills.
- Occupational career path for Deaf and hard of hearing learners who completed college.
- Occupational career path for Deaf and hard of hearing learners who progressed through secondary school education, but did not enroll at an FET college.

The following diagram represents the variety of Learning- and Career Paths of the Strategy:

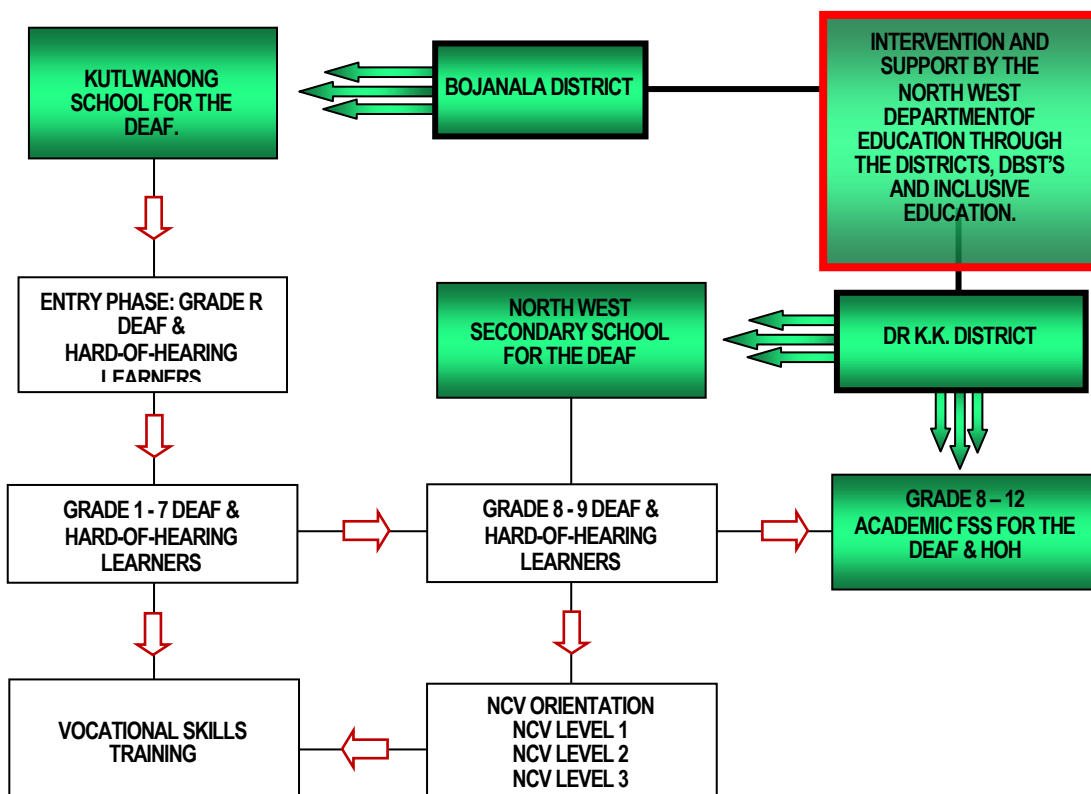


4. OUTCOMES AND RESULTS OF THE ACADEMIC TURNAROUND STRATEGY.

The Academic Turnaround Strategy has the following outcomes:

- It makes provision for different entry and exit levels to afford Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners the opportunity to exit the system once they have gained sufficient academic and/or vocational skills for employment.
- The learning- and career paths of the Strategy are flexible enough to allow re-entry to a different level if a learner cannot achieve competency at a particular or an advanced level.
- Procured specialised assistive devices, staff training and support.
- Optimal amplification of hearing rests for the hard of hearing learners, especially those with a conductive hearing loss.
- Accessible curriculum and accessible Learning and Teaching Support Materials.
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing people with relevant academic, vocational and occupational skills according to their different abilities.
- A differentiated approach designed for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people with high intellectual abilities, as well as those who cannot perform academically.
- Less unemployed Deaf and hard-of-hearing people that will enter the labour market in the public or private sector or self-employment.
- Critical intervention iro Sign language development and the implementation of SA Sign Language as a school subject.
- The Strategy is characterised by intervention and support mechanisms to address barriers that Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners experience. School level intervention and support are rendered by the District Based Support Teams, School Based Support Teams, Speech Therapists, Audiologists, Ortho-didactical and other specialists.

4.1 SCHOOL BASED INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT MODEL OF THE ACADEMIC TURNAROUND STRATEGY:



4.2 POST - SCHOOL INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT MODEL OF THE ACADEMIC TURNAROUND STRATEGY FOR DEAF PEOPLE:

POST SCHOOL INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT BY THE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND AND THE NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY:

- RESEARCH REGARDING THE CAREER PATH AND ITS COMPONENTS.
- ORTHO-DIDACTICAL TRAINING.
- TRAINING OF EDUCATORS IN SA SIGN LANGUAGE BY THE NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY.
- SUPPORT IN FURTHER- AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- SUPPORT IN WORKPLACE TRAINING.
- EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT
- ACCESSIBILITY INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT.

