Revisiting the Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Therapists in South African Schools: 1 June 2013

# Reply to reviewers’ feedback: Editor’s feedback, Reviewer A, and Reviewer B (126\_ReviewerAP)

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| Comments from editor | | Action taken by authors | |
| As it stands the paper is very long - it needs to be edited to no more than about 8000 words including references and tables etc. The number of references should be reduced to no more than 30. I think that considering what the main contribution the paper makes (and as per reviewer 2 - how it differs from the Kathard, Wium, Jordaan et al paper that appeared in the SAJCD 2011) will help to focus it. At the moment it covers very wide ground and the key message/s is getting lost. | | The length of the paper has been reduced to have an all-inclusive word count of 8,000 words.  References have been reduced to 30. | |
| In terms of writing style it is repetitive in places and could be more tightly focused with each paragraph having one clear message. Having a clear idea of the main arguments and carefully editing all extraneous bits will really help. Refer to other papers that cover the same ground and focus mainly on what your paper adds. | | The entire text has been revised and edited.  Focus is mainly on what this paper builds on, and adds to Kathard et al., 2011. | |
| Comments from Reviewer A | Comments from Reviewer B | Action taken by authors | |
| The title Revisiting the roles and responsibilities of SLP’s in schools is therefore appropriate. The abstract is not well written, too vague and fails to summarise the content of the article. | This paper covers some (I think) quiet similar ground to the Kathard et al (2011) paper that fronted the special edition. I think that paper needs to be referred to more and it is important to show how this differs from / or builds on that paper. | This revised article builts on the Kathard et al., 2011 article, which is evident right from the start in the abstract and introduction (with 17 citations).  E.g. in the abstract the following is stated:  “The role of the SLT in schools in South Africa needs to be revisited based on the changing educational needs in the country. This article builds on a previous paper by Kathard, Ramme, Pascoe et al. (2011) which discussed the changing needs of the country with regard to the role of Speech-Language Therapists (SLTs) working in schools. South African policy changes indicated a shift from supporting the child, to supporting the teacher, but also places more emphasis on the support of all learners in literacy in an effort to address past inequities.  The current article addresses several of the questions that emerged from Kathard et al. ([2011](#_ENREF_19)) and explores the collaborative roles played by SLTs on four levels in the education context. | |
| Background and Introduction | | | |
| LITERATURE REVIEW  In general, this section is poorly formulated and fails to provide clear arguments for the need for changes in the roles of speech-language therapists in the education context. The author provides a historical overview of the changes that occurred in education in South Africa. This section, however, is marked by inaccuracies, e.g. “SA gained independence from Britain in 1961” (p 3) and “Coloured, Indian and Black children did not receive any formal support in terms of communication and literacy acquisition” (p 3). The significance of terminology when referring to speech-language therapists, namely speech therapist vs. speech-language therapist, is not clearly stated. Outcomes based education and the various curriculum documents that followed the political changes in 1994 are described, but not explored in terms of how these changes require changes in the scope of practice of speech-language therapists working in schools. The section on inclusive policies is incoherent and it is unclear what the author meant by the paradigm shift that such policies requires. | ‘This paper discusses the change in the roles and responsibilities of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in the South African education environment over the past few decades.’  Feels vague; can you be more specific in terms of timeframe? | | All comments in the introduction and historical overview sections in the previous version of this article are no longer relevant because these sections were deleted. The introduction has been rephrased with a much stronger focus on the need for collaboration. |
| educational needs of the country | |
| In an effort to redress past inequities a new education system was implemented which did away with previous support services that benefitted only a small minority of learners, | |
| Factors such as e.g. the multi- lingual population, the dearth of SLPs proficient in African languages, | |
| However, due to the changes in the education and the expansion of the profession, a need for a more comprehensive document that would formalize the roles and responsibilities of SLPs in the education system was identified. | |
| , multi-lingualism, unemployment etc.) ([Wium, 2010](#_ENREF_69)). With the publication of Education White Papers 5 and 6, collaboration with teachers has been added to the role of SLPs in schools, and lately, also literacy ([Department of Education, 2001b](#_ENREF_15)). | |
| **Collaboration in the educational system:** | | | |
|  | Try to avoid repetition | | Repetition deleted |
|  | SLPs need to promote the profession by creating an awareness of our important role in contributing to learner’s educational success and enabling all leaner’s to meet their educational goals. | | This section has been deleted in the current article. |
|  | Within the concept map in Figure 1 - Don’t need to keep saying. | | Repetition avoided - redundant |
|  | Russel and Kaderavek ([1993](#_ENREF_61)) Quite old now | | Deleted in current article |
| Figure 1 portrays a framework for collaboration between speech-language therapists and other professionals at different levels. The discussion of this framework in the text is unfortunately poorly formulated, too vague and fails toc provide a coherent rationale for the implementation of the proposed model. |  | | The framework portrayed in Fig 1 is used to demonstrate how the SLT profession can contribute to various levels of the current education system. This framework is placed within the four main topics in the paper, which are the questions posed by Ehren (in Kathard, 2011). A discussion of the roles of SLTs within each of these levels is substantiated with references to relevant literature. |
| **Roles and responsibilities of SLTs** | | | |
| In the section, Roles and Responsibilities of SLP’s Working in Schools, the author provides a brief and superficial list of duties based on the ASHA (2010) guidelines but fail to address the complexities of service delivery in the South African context. A major part of the article focuses on collaboration between speech-language therapists and other professionals at different levels in the education context. | The drive for inclusive education necessitates that SLPS move away from the ‘pull-out’ model of service delivery, and increasingly make use of the ‘push-in’ as it allows learners to receive direct therapy from the SLP without missing out on the classroom instruction ([ASHA, 1996](#_ENREF_1), [2010](#_ENREF_2)). | | The focus of the current paper is on this issue collaboration on various levels of the education system. |
| True collaboration between SLPs and teachers cannot be taken for granted when these two professions are brought together as they stem from different disciplinary specialization and knowledge bases. According to Forbes ([2008](#_ENREF_30)) true collaboration needs to be learnt and worked at. | | This section has been omitted – not relevant any more. |
| In table A1 the author attempts to demonstrate that there is considerable overlap between the roles and responsibilities of educators and speech-language therapists and that they can support each other to reach their mutual goals. The discussion of the framework in the text is again too vague and superficial. |  | | The section pertaining to Table 1 in the previous version has been deleted.  The current article has a much stronger focus on collaboration at various levels of the education system. |
| The section on undergraduate preparation and training of SLP students seems out of place and not relevant to the main theme of the article namely changes in the roles and responsibilities of speech-language therapists in the education context in South Africa. |  | | The changes in the roles and responsibilities of SLTs working in schools have important implications for the preparation of future SLTs.  Suggestions for curricular review and professional development are discussed. |
| Editorial care is unsatisfactory. The abstract and references are not presented in APA style and format. Different formats for in-text references were followed and the reference list is poorly edited. |  | | The document has been edited.  APA referencing style used for citations and reference list (Endnote was used) |
| In general, the article did not really address what it set out to do, namely to provide of second language learners, the needs of children from different socio-economic backgrounds, inequalities in the education system and the unique challenges of providing speech-language therapy services in a multilingual and multicultural society were not addressed in sufficient depth. |  | | This current article specifically re-visits the roles and responsibilities of speech-language therapists in South African schools. The article  addresses several of the questions that emerged from Kathard et al. ([2011](#_ENREF_19)) and explores the collaborative roles played by SLTs on four levels in the education context.  It is proposed that SASLHA responds to the changes by developing a position statement on the roles and responsibilities of SLTs in schools. |