

**INVESTIGATING THE CHALLENGES FACING ITINERANT  
LEARNING SUPPORT EDUCATORS (ILSE) IN THE CONTEXT OF  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE  
METRO SOUTH EDUCATION DISTRICT**

**BY**

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**JULY 2010**

## **DECLARATION**

I, Agnetha Arendse, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted to any other University.

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**Signature**

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**JULY 2010**



## **ABSTRACT**

The study aims to understand the challenges facing the Itinerant Learning Support Educators in an Inclusive Education framework.

At the onset of the study there were very limited research studies and literature available on the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators hence literature in the study drew on the development and history of Special Education towards a global shift with regard to Inclusive Education policy development. As such the literature was utilized to understand how global phenomena and policies in developed countries impact on local policy transformation and contexts.

The study followed a qualitative research approach to explore the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in performing their functions. To gain an in depth understanding of their perceptions a case study method was followed and data collection techniques included focus group interviews. The sample in this study comprised of 14 Itinerant Learning Support Educators. The data was analyzed using a thematic approach. The findings of this study highlighted that despite a shift towards Inclusive Education in South Africa, Itinerant Learning Support Educators found themselves challenged by a range of contextual issues that impacted on the effective delivery of inclusive principles and practices. The study recommends that the Department of Education should take cognisance of these challenges, review the job description of Itinerant Learning Support Educators and put clear guidelines and support structures in place to support them in functioning optimally within an Inclusive Education paradigm.

## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to God, my parents, my partner and my family.





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## ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

<b>DBST:</b>	<b>District Based Support Team</b>
<b>EMDC:</b>	<b>Education, Management and Development Centre</b>
<b>EST:</b>	<b>Educational Support Team</b>
<b>ILSE:</b>	<b>Itinerant Learning Support Educator</b>
<b>ILST:</b>	<b>Institutional Level Support Team</b>
<b>ISP:</b>	<b>Individual Support Plan</b>
<b>IQMS:</b>	<b>Integrated Quality Management System</b>
<b>MSED:</b>	<b>Metro South Education District</b>
<b>REQV:</b>	<b>Recognized Educational Qualifications Framework</b>
<b>SEN:</b>	<b>Special Educational Needs</b>
<b>SENCO:</b>	<b>Special Education Needs Co-ordinator</b>
<b>TST:</b>	<b>Teacher Support Team</b>
<b>UNESCO:</b>	<b>United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization</b>
<b>WCED:</b>	<b>Western Cape Education Department</b>

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Prior to 1994, South Africa operated within an apartheid system and the impact of this system on education resulted in the establishment of 18 racially separated education departments (Western Cape Education Department, 2002). These racially divided education departments were thus funded with resources on the basis of race. Furthermore, (WCED, 2008) notes that the impact of this system on schools resulted in learners being segregated and excluded on the basis of race as well as on the basis of physical disabilities. It therefore appears that this segregation and exclusion as a result of disabilities was referred to as a medical model approach. The medical model located barriers to learning within the learner and it ignored the barriers that emanated as a result of learners' contexts or the social environments from which they come (Dreyer, 2008). As a result, this model limited the learning potential of learners' with physical disabilities and excluded such learners from participating and engaging in the common national curriculum.

After the democratic elections, the South African Government committed itself to the eradication of the apartheid system and to the provision of equal educational opportunities for all learners. Therefore, the new democratic education system was built on principles of redress, access and equity. This is evident in the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996), which stipulates in section 5 (1) that public schools must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating against learners in any way. In addition, Section 12 (4) of this Act stipulates that education must be provided for learners with Special Education needs at ordinary public schools and provision must be made for relevant educational support services for such learners.



In addition, the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001) reiterates these principles of access, equity and redress as this policy clearly calls for the recognition of the rights of all learners and the provision of support to all learners. Consequently, Education White Paper 6 calls for the shift from a medical model approach with regard to learning barriers and development towards embracing a social model approach that is aligned to principles encapsulated in the Education White Paper 6. The social model then acknowledges that barriers are found within learners as well as in external contexts such as socio-economic, language and other barriers that learners cannot control. Consequently, this approach calls for a broad focus on the entire system, which includes the learner, the parents, the school, the community, the curriculum and the education system.

Similarly, the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) emphasizes that one of the key levers of an Inclusive Education policy is the establishment of various support structures that include District Based Support Teams (DBST) and Institutional Level Support Teams (ILST). Also, it states that the Institutional Level Support Teams and District Based Support Teams should aim to strengthen education support services in South Africa. To achieve this, the Western Cape Education Department established Institutional Level Support Teams in all the schools, which are called either the Teacher Support Teams (TST) or Educator Support Teams (EST).

As a result, soon after the release of the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) introduced its Learning Support model applicable to all mainstream schools. Prior to democracy, some schools employed school-based remedial educators that operated within the medical model framework. These school-based remedial educators were then viewed as an ideal component to achieve and implement the WCED's learning support model initiative (Dreyer, 2008). This resulted in school-based remedial educators being renamed as Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Today, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Learning Support model mainly focuses on itinerant learning support and this

resulted in Itinerant Learning Support Educators working between two or more schools withdrawing learners from the ordinary mainstream class whenever there is a need to do this.

## **1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

Prior to the introduction of Inclusive Education, learners who experienced barriers to learning and development, previously known as Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN), were supported by remedial educators or placed in adaptation classes. In addition, Inclusive Education, especially Itinerant Learning Support Educators is fairly new concepts in South Africa and the Western Cape hence there are very limited literature available on the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators. With the implementation of Inclusive Education the Department of Education inherited the remedial educators who were trained within the medical model framework. Some of the trained remedial educators, based at one school, were encouraged to become Itinerant Learning Support Educators in order to serve more than one school and these educators ultimately had to take responsibility for the implementation of a social model approach as well as deal with the demands of Inclusive Education. These demands include the provision of support to individual learners in a pull out system or withdrawal system and the co-ordination of Institutional Level Support Teams activities in two schools.

Based on the past system of inequality and racial segregation, these Itinerant Learning Support Educators had different training backgrounds. For example, some had remedial training, some foundation phase training and others psychological interventions training. As a result, different levels of support might be available in different areas and schools. Nonetheless, Itinerant Learning Support Educators are currently supporting between 160 learners between two schools with a maximum of ten learners in a group. Most Itinerant Learning Support Educators visit the schools on every alternate day whilst some spend one week at one school and the following week at the other assigned school. In this manner, the Department of Education ultimately aspires to offer learning support to all the mainstream schools (Department of Education, 2001).

Subsequently, since the demise of the apartheid system, educators faced many transformations and changes in the South African National Education System. These included the introduction of Curriculum 2005 with its heavy Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) focus, which later developed into the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and is currently, termed the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). These educational policies brought about by broader macro-economic policies seem to further impact and exacerbate the challenges brought about by the introduction of the Inclusive Education Policy. For example, teacher-learner ratios, lack of resources and proper or clear job descriptions.

Whilst conducting this study, I worked as an Inclusive Education Support Specialist at the Metro South Education District (MSED) in the Western Cape Education Department. However, I started my teaching career as an Itinerant Learning Support Educator and my particular interest in this study was motivated by the fact that there were many challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators at that time. These challenges included, working between two schools, carting resources between the schools, supporting approximately 160 learners experiencing barriers to learning and development, time missed out on a group was very difficult to make up due to not being based at one school. These were just a few of the challenges, which prompted me to undertake this study in an attempt to explore current challenges of Itinerant Learning Support Educators and to provide policy makers with insight into the challenges that Itinerant Learning Support Educators face. In addition, I would like to be able to contribute to the development of conceptual and operational guidelines for Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

### **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Inclusive Education has been a challenge for many educators, both mainstream educators and Itinerant Learning Support Educators (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). This could be especially true in a South African context, as educators had to make a paradigm shift from a medical model to a social model. This shift occurred during a time of rapid policy formation and could result in a range of challenges for education, most particularly the challenges for remedial teachers or Itinerant Learning Support Educators, who have to

provide support for learners and teachers at different schools. It is therefore vital to explore these challenges in order to make relevant recommendations which could facilitate the effective functioning of Itinerant Learning Support Educators within an Inclusive Education framework.

#### **1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the context of Inclusive Education, in the Metro South Education District (MSED), in the Western Cape Education Department. The following research questions were pursued in the study:

- What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as challenges in supporting learners with barriers to learning and development within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?
- How do Itinerant Learning Support Educators perceive their role within the Inclusive Education framework?
- What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as successes in supporting learners with barriers to learning and development within the context of Inclusive Education framework?

Chapter 3 discussed these research questions in depth with sub research questions.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a field of inquiry that explores social phenomena in their natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). The advantage of using this approach is that it provided opportunities for an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study.

The research was conducted in the Metro South Education District of the Western Cape Department of Education, with 14 Itinerant Learning Support Educators. The rationale for choosing this District and participants is explained in detail in Chapter three.

Focus group interviews were conducted as the research instrument to collect the data. These focus group interviews were semi-structured and conducted with Itinerant Learning Support Educators from Metro South Education District in the Western Cape Education Department. The intention for this approach was to elicit feelings, attitudes, perceptions and thoughts about the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators and to gain an understanding of the participants' perception of their roles as Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

Qualitative findings were analyzed thematically during the focus groups interviews from which many meaningful themes emerged that needed categorization and discussion. Chapter 4 discusses this process in more depth.

## **1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

This section provides clarification of the different concepts that are used in this study. The concepts include: Special Education, Inclusive Education, Remedial Educator, Itinerant Learning Support Educator, and District-Based Support Team, Institutional Level Support Team and barriers to learning and development.

### **1.6.1 Special Needs Education**

Landsberg, Krüger and Nel (2005) define Special Needs Education as a system that responds to children's special characteristics and needs. Therefore, Special Needs Education refers to the education provided to children that have needs which are different from the average young learner which suggests that such learners need adaptation or remediation in a specific area (Gericke, 1997). This study draws on this concept of Special Needs Education.

### **1.6.2 Inclusive Education**

Inclusive Education means different things in different contexts. For example, Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999) define Inclusive Education as a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners. On the other hand, Cheminais (2001) notes that inclusion is about creating a sense of community and belonging by encouraging mainstream and special schools to come together to support each other in their efforts to provide for the needs of “special children”.

For the purpose of this study, Inclusive Education means that all learners, including learners experiencing barriers to learning should have access to and participate in the general schooling system as defined by the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001).

### **1.6.3 Remedial educator**

According to Clark, Dyson, Millward and Skidmore (1997) remedial education is based on the assumption that it is possible to correct deficits within the individual pupil through limited interventions in a context where the curriculum itself remained essentially unchanged. Further, it is based on individualized programming based on the specific needs of the learner. Therefore, a remedial educator in this study is conceptualized as a special educator or Itinerant Learning Support Educator who withdraws learners from the mainstream classroom and provides learning support for the specific needs of the learners.

### **1.6.4 Itinerant Learning Support Educator**

In this study Itinerant Learning Support Educators are those educators who were formerly referred to as remedial educators or Special Needs Educators. Itinerant Learning Support Educator also implies that the educator is working between two schools or servicing more than one school.

### **1.6.5 District Based Support Team (DBST)**

Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) explains the establishment of the District Based Support Teams as one of the key levers of an Inclusive Educational policy. The primary function of the District Based Support Teams is to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. This is done through supporting teaching, learning and management and building the capacity of schools, early childhood and adult basic education and training centres, colleges and higher education institutions to recognize and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs.

### **1.6.6 Institutional Level Support Team (ILST)**

The establishment of the District Based Support Teams by the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) also led to the establishment of Institutional Level Support Teams previously known as Educator Support Team (EST) or Teacher Support Team (TST). The Education White Paper 6 states that Institutional Level Support teams, based at schools, are to put in place properly co-ordinated learner and educator support services to support the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs (Department of Education, 2001).

### **1.6.7 Barriers to learning and development**

Barriers to learning and development refer to a learning breakdown that may occur as a result of factors springing from within the learner (intrinsic), the education system as a whole and the wider society (Department of Education, 1997).

### **1.6.8 Education Support Services (ESS)**

The Education White Paper 6 encourages the involvement of all support professionals to increase their involvement in multiple areas and levels of support, e.g. on District and school level. Support professionals include Learning Support Educators, learning support advisors, school psychologists, school social workers and curriculum advisors. The

Ministry of Education in South Africa asserts that the key to reducing barriers to learning within all teaching and training lies in a strengthened education support service (Department of Education, 2001). Education support personnel within District Support Services will be provided to learners, educators and the system as a whole so that a full range learning needs can be met. Support services will be provided at, Government, Provincial, Regional and School level (Gericke, 1997). Education Support Services (ESS) should be very well organized.

## **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This study has been organized into 6 Chapters.

**Chapter 1** provides an introduction and background to the study. It presents the research design, objectives, and methodology and clarifies some major concepts used in the study. Additionally, it provides the rationale for the study, the statement of the study, research questions and concludes with a chapter outline.

**Chapter 2** reviews the literature that focuses on the developments within special education and inclusive education paradigms in relation to policy development in developed countries. This chapter then attempted to chronologically map these developments in an endeavour to understand how these policy developments impacted on developing countries such as South Africa.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the methodology adopted for the study including discussions on the research design, the participants, and the findings, gathering methods and/or instruments and the techniques for analysis. This chapter also features a discussion on the ethical considerations made in this study.

**Chapter 4** presents the findings and highlights the challenges faced by participants in the study. This chapter also features a summary of the patterns that emerged in the findings.

**Chapter 5** provides an analysis of the findings and identifies the main themes that emerged from the findings.



**Chapter 6** presents the findings and makes recommendations with regard to possible interventions in an attempt to address some of the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the Metro South Education District.

## **1.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the background to the study and attempted to highlight how the shift from an apartheid education system towards a democratic education system brought about more inclusive policies. Yet it also attempted to highlight how this shift led to challenges with regard to inclusivity. In addition this chapter featured the rationale for the study, the clarification of terms and organization of the remaining chapters of the research report.

The next chapter presents the review of related literature.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter the background, aim and motivation of the study were discussed. As mentioned earlier in Chapter one, the focus of this study was on the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Dreyer (2008) acknowledges that various attempts have been made to explore the roles of Itinerant Learning Support Educators. For example, in Australia the roles of Special Education Educators, also referred to as Learning Support Educators, is merely consultative and collaborative (Carrington & Robinson, 2004). According to the World Education Forum in Dakar of 2000, it was noted that in some schools children categorized as having special needs, have special tasks to do or even a separate teacher (UNESCO, 2003). The focus of this study is on the South African context in relation to global debates regarding the roles of Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

One should be mindful that since Itinerant Learning Support Educators are fairly new in South Africa, there is very limited research or literature on the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators. This chapter therefore, (i) provides an overview of education support services in South Africa; (ii) presents the theories underpinning Special Education and Inclusive Education; and (iii) reviews literature on challenges facing Learning Support Educators globally.

#### **2.2 EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES (ESS)**

##### **2.2.1 Introduction**

The word ‘support’ suggests a “shoring up of something that might be in danger of collapsing and it provides a vague hope that something might be improved upon” (Loebenstein, 2005). Therefore, support in education can be seen as a response towards

someone who needs help, mentoring and guidance with the intention to develop (Loebenstein, 2005). Similarly, “support” in the South African policy documents has been presented as a general responsiveness to a variety of unique needs which every learner may exhibit (Department of Education, 2001; 2005; Loebenstein, 2005).

In addition, the provision and conception of education support services in South Africa follows similar “general ideological pathways” as in other countries. These pathways proceed from superstitions, beliefs, neglect and limited support, to the development of legal frameworks which consider the provision of support as important, especially in the mainstream classrooms (Loebenstein, 2005). However, Loebenstein (2005) further adds that the difference between South Africa and other countries in terms of the provision of learning support is the political history and ideology of apartheid that contributed to the marginalization of the majority of learners.

There are two main frameworks that informed education support services in South Africa and other countries – Special Education and Inclusive Education (Loebenstein, 2005). The Special Education system has been operating globally for decades while Inclusive Education has recently emerged as a global movement that seeks to challenge the exclusionary practices of Special Education in the schooling system. Each of these frameworks claims to support learners who experience learning difficulties and each framework also claims that the support is provided effectively. However, criticisms have been levelled against each of these frameworks. Special Education and Inclusive Education are discussed in detail in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. Each of these sections

- (i) Describe the concepts “Special Education and Inclusive Education”;
- (ii) Discuss the assumptions made by these paradigms; and
- (iii) Describe how Learning Support and teaching practices are organized under each of these paradigms.

### **2.2.2 Special Needs Education**

Different researchers focusing on Special Needs Education have different perspectives on and definitions of Special Educational Needs. According to Gericke (1997) Special Education is an adapted form of education for learners with special needs which are different from the average young learner. Naicker (2001) adds that Special Education theory is primarily concerned with learners who experience learning breakdown. Both of these viewpoints imply that any breakdown was caused by individual deficits resulting in a diagnosis with a label. In other words these notions of special needs suggest that the individual is second-rate and the disability justifies the exclusion of learners from the mainstream classroom.

In support of this notion, Landsberg, Krüger and Nel (2005) define Special Needs Education as a system that responds to children's 'special' characteristics and needs. Similarly, Special Education is defined as an educational system that provides education for learners with Special Educational Needs (Gibson & Blandford, 2005). Yet, 'special' implies that learners are different and have 'special' characteristics and needs from their peers and that the system has to respond to these needs. As a result, the system perpetuated exclusion and separation from the mainstream classroom (Gibson & Blandford, 2005).

Consequently, special education is generally defined in terms of a disability, learning difficulty, handicap or a combination of these (Farrell, 2001; Gericke, 1997; Hay, 2003; Naicker, 2001). However, some view disability and learning difficulties in terms of physical, mental or sensory difficulties, whilst many others express disability and learning difficulties in terms of emotional, behavioural or psychological deficiencies (Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1997; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). Therefore, it seems that to function in the broader society learners with any of these disabilities are deemed dysfunctional, in need of exclusion from the mainstream and need to be 'fixed'. As a result, such as system of education is rooted in a functionalist paradigm.

Skrtic (1995) asserts that Special Education philosophy is based on the functionalist view of the world, that is, the education system is functional and any failure is located in the pathological condition of the learner. The learning problem or barrier to learning lies within the learner and the learner would be diagnosed and treated for the disability. This approach is then aligned to the medical model on special needs education and resulted in any learner or anyone deviating from the norm as being viewed or seen as ‘other’ and thus in need of treatment to fit in with the norm (Skrtic, 1995).

Auxiliary, Skrtic (1995) believes that Special Education is a more extreme version of functionalist education and suggests that Special Education’s disciplinary grounding lends itself to an approach of diagnosis. This author further adds that functionalists make use of standardized ability and achievement tests in order to group students according to their specific learning disabilities. It was generally believed that an advantage of labelling was the admission to some form of special service, hence appropriate diagnosis and treatment (Skrtic, 1995).

In essence it seems that the functionalist approach towards special needs education segregated learners with special needs via diagnosis and treatment. This diagnosis or treatment would inevitably lead to placement in special classes or special schools, hence using the pull-out system where the educator identifies the learner with special needs and refers him / her to a specialist for diagnosis and treatment. This model excluded learners from the mainstream because of a disability thought to be a natural and irremediable characteristic of a person (Naicker, 2001).

Over the years there have been many critics of this functionalist approach to Special Education (Skrtic, 1995; Wade, 2000). Critics questioned its medical or functionalist approach, exclusionary practices, tools and special classroom model as well as the ethics of these practices (Skrtic, 1995). There is growing evidence that separate education programmes have not been beneficial for students with disabilities (Wade, 2000). Such studies have shown that disturbed children did as well in the regular grades as in special classes (Thomas & Vaughn, 2004). The latter implies that special class settings are not especially beneficial to emotionally vulnerable children as a specific method of

intervention and correction. It is therefore imperative to find better ways of serving children with mild learning disorders than placing them in self-contained special schools or classes.

### ***History of Special Education***

Many authors agree that various labels are attached to students who are considered as learning challenged because of their physical or mental barriers or impairments (Gericke, 1997; Naicker, 2001; Gibson & Blandford, 2005). Children needing special resources, adaptations to a curriculum or different strategies to aid them, are often referred to as learners with Special Educational Needs (Gibson & Blandford, 2005). Hence, being referred to as learners with 'special needs' then implies otherness or difference that has to be treated or remedied. The process of categorizing such learners included being tested by a school psychologist and then the result of their Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score would determine the level of treatment or instruction. This specified treatment or instruction on the basis of a test score occurred either at a "special or adaptation" class at a mainstream school or at a special school. As a result, such learners were generally placed in specialized programs, which excluded them from the regular or mainstream education system (Gibson & Blandford, 2005).

The above trend continued during the 1960s on a global scale, socio-culturally deprived children with mild learning problems were labelled "educable mentally retarded" and were being excluded from the regular / mainstream school. This resulted in the establishment of self-contained special schools and classes as a way of transferring these "misfits", as they were called, out of the regular grades (Gibson & Blandford, 2005). Consequently, they were institutionalized because they could not be accommodated in the 'normal' or mainstream education system.

In 1980 the White Paper on Special Needs Education was introduced in South Africa, and in 1981 "Special Needs Education" implied that a child had Special Educational Needs as a result of a learning difficulty, which necessitated that special provision should be made for him/her (Gibson & Blandford, 2005). Therefore, special education needs focused on

breakdown in learning and learning disabilities only. Further, Gibson and Blandford (2005) also referred to this practice identify learning barriers and the subsequent tendency to segregate such learners from mainstream as the Medical Model of disability which occurred between 1971 till approximately 1989.

During the 1990's there have already been many debates to improve and enhance notions of Special Education and this resulted in the Social Model of disability and inclusion being introduced (Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1997). During this period, debates about the whole school approach emerged, which advocated that children with learning difficulties be educated in mainstream classrooms (Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1997). As the "whole school approach" evolved, the in-class support teaching strategy or co-operative teaching emerged as a concept or dominant pedagogy. This concept was ambiguous at the time and it could be conceptualized as support to individual pupils, support to the class educator and support to the development of appropriate curriculum and pedagogy (Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1997).

The following section highlights the development of policy and notions of special education in different countries.

**In 1993 the Canadian** government of Alberta released its policy on the placement of students with special needs, which encouraged the placement of learners with special needs in regular classrooms in local school (Alberta Educators` Association, 2006). As a result these learners required specialized support for their individual needs. This policy in Canada therefore advocates the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream classes.

**In the United Kingdom (UK)** Special Education was perceived as being necessary for children with learning difficulties (Smith, 1985). These children were categorized as educationally subnormal and required remedial services. Learners with learning difficulties were categorized as mild, moderate or severe (Smith, 1985). Special Education was then regarded as education provided in separate special schools (Smith, 1985). Smith (1985) further adds that during the 1980s in England and Wales, many

children who had gross physical or psychological handicaps were educated in special schools or special units. It appears that during the 1980s in the UK, learners with special needs were isolated and discriminated against as a result of their disabilities.

**In the United States of America** a pupil requiring Special Education was referred to as “disabled” (Farrell, 2001). Labels and specialized programs have changed over time and developed in the USA due to federal legislation and court rulings, i.e. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was renamed Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, [PL 101-476] in 1990), which was originally passed by Congress in 1975 (Wade, 2000). This was done to provide equal educational opportunity and access to public schools for students with disabilities. IDEA came into effect in 1976 and since then Special Education has evolved enormously. As a result, in the USA legislation included learners with special needs and envisages providing access to mainstream public schools (Wade, 2000).

**In South Africa**, Special Educational Needs started in 1863 when the Roman Catholic Church established the first school for deaf children in Cape Town (Western Cape Education Department, 2002). During that period the establishment of schools for the disabled was mainly due to private initiatives and such schools focused on specific disability groups. As a result the focus was on disabilities such as physical disabilities, blindness, deaf, etc (WCED, 2008).

On the other hand, this scenario changed from 1928 when the government assumed responsibility for Special Education and managed it centrally from the Head Offices of the Department(s) of Education (Schoeman, 2002). As mentioned earlier in Chapter one, after the introduction of Apartheid in 1948, education was provided within racial boundaries and this impacted on special education needs in significant ways, for example the South African Education Department was divided into 18 racially defined education departments, each with their own policies regarding learners with Special Educational Needs (WCED, 2008). Moreover, the focus was not merely on providing learning support to learners but the quality of such support was dependent on race. As a result, this led to varying degrees of learning support practices in South African schools that was



determined by race, for example the training of remedial teachers, the quality of remedial support and it was predominantly white female who were considered expert remedial teachers during that period. This then implies that during this period, white learners with special needs received specialized support whilst black, coloured and Indian learners with special needs either received a little or absolutely no specialized support for their needs (WCED, 2008).

### ***Remedial Education Practices in Special Education***

According to Clark, Dysan, Millward and Skidmore (1997) remedial education is based on the assumption that it was possible to correct deficits within the individual pupil through limited interventions in a context where the curriculum itself remained essentially unchanged. In addition, Landsberg, Krüger and Nel (2005) argue that remedial education conventionally adheres to the medical model of diagnosis and treatment that it is problem-centred and takes on a needs-based approach. Putnam (1993) takes this argument further by contending that remedial programs have been found to have little coherence with the various instructional activities experienced in the general or mainstream classroom. Putnam (1993) also adds that the “remedial model” of Special Education practiced by departments of education does not adequately address the social needs and learning deficits of children with disabilities. As a result, notions of remedial teaching followed a traditional approach i.e. identifying, labelling and rectifying (Putnam, 1993).

Accordingly, there are two notions central to traditional remedial education: a distinction between the retarded and the innately dull and a system of coaching in the basic subjects (Smith, 1985). In relation to coaching, learners with special needs were withdrawn from some of the regular subject timetable, to receive intensive coaching from a specialist educator until s/he reached the required level of ability in the respective area of concern (Skidmore, 2004). Upon reaching this required level of ability, learners would return to the mainstream curriculum on a full time basis. However, Skidmore (2004) states that learners reaching the accepted level of ability, remained in the remedial system throughout their school career. Clark, Dyson, Millward and Skidmore (1997) refers to a

common curriculum, but one that is adapted and differentiated to meet the specific learning needs of the learners. As a result, such learners spent most of their time in the remedial system hence was not exposed enough to the mainstream curriculum at hand (Skidmore, 1997).

Subsequently, remedial education was concerned with the prevention, investigation and treatment of learning difficulties from whichever source they may emanate and which hinder the normal educational development of the student (Smith, 1985). Therefore, the perceived intention was to offer pupils a more individualized and intensive education than was possible in the mainstream class. This resulted in a form of education that was recognizably “special” to a relatively large number of pupils without removing them from the mainstream school. Consequently, remedial teachers would be viewed as teachers who teach special learners and thus have a ‘special’ function to perform (Smith, 1985).

Bines (1986) describes remedial educators as “support educators” who are involved with adaptation of curricular materials and who encourages group and individual programs. The remedial educator was then expected to share expertise through consultation, giving advice and collaboration on teaching materials and methods. The remedial educator therefore works alongside the educator in the mainstream class, hence working toward ‘whole school’ policies. As a result, remedial teachers had to provide support on both pedagogy and learner needs (Bines, 1986).

In the UK remedial educators were regarded as “Special Education Needs” co-ordinators and were later called learning advisors (Bines, 1986). On the other hand, in Scotland remedial educators became educators’ aids. Some remedial educators were interviewed in Scotland and felt that the ‘new role’ could be quite stressful – working in a number of departments, switching from one subject to another, working with individual educators could also be stressful because of the need to adapt to every individual educators’ “style” or methods. Redefinition of remedial education therefore implied changes in organizational structure, curricular content and teaching methods (Bines, 1986). The new role for remedial educators therefore demanded a new kind of expertise. Nonetheless, in both contexts remedial educators’ roles were viewed as supportive, experts diagnosing

deficit learners and then mentoring and guiding educators, learners and the curriculum. It therefore appears that traditional responsibilities and expertise were not abandoned after the implementation of a redefined remedial education system in Scotland and UK.

### **2.2.3 Inclusive Education**

Inclusion is a reconceptualization of values and beliefs that welcomes and celebrates diversity, not only a set of practices and thus it is rooted in attitudes, values or a belief system of inclusion and acceptance of otherness (Villa & Thousand, 1995). In the same way, Booth, Ainscow, Black-Kawkins, Vaughn, and Shaw (2000) define inclusion as being the identification and minimizing of barriers to learning and participation and the maximizing of resources to support learning participation. In this way then, inclusion is also about ensuring that all pupils who have a disability or who experiences difficulties in learning, should enjoy the same rights of membership of the mainstream as all other pupils (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004). Hence in an inclusive system, living and learning together benefits everyone, not just children labelled as having a difference. The gifted learners would be accommodated in the same class as the learner with language barriers or disabilities but the curriculum would be adapted and differentiated to suit the specific needs of each of these learners. Likewise, practices in schools and education became more focused on an inclusive education approach (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004).

Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999) define Inclusive Education as a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners. This then implies that mainstream schools should consider all pupils to ensure that each child has the same rights of access, that each child belongs and that each child is entitled to appropriate support to meet their individual needs. Chambers (2003) refers to this whole system of inclusion as Inclusive Education and asserts that it is a Human Right and that it makes good social sense. In addition, Cheminais (2003) describes inclusion as engendering a sense of community and belonging. Thus it encourages mainstream and special schools to come together to support each other and especially pupils with Special Education needs. In line with this, Thomas and Vaughan (2004) define inclusion as being about the child's

right to participate where schools reject segregation or exclusion, thus maximizing the participation of all learners, making learning more meaningful and relevant to all. Therefore, Inclusive Education implies rethinking and restructuring policies, curricula, cultures and practices in schools i.e. a more social humanistic approach.

Lomofsky and Green (2004) further agree that it is the basic human right of a learner to be included in the regular school of his / her choice. Villa and Thousand (2005) define Inclusive Education as being about embracing everyone and making a commitment to provide each student, each citizen in a democracy, with the alienable right to belong. Therefore, the ultimate goal of this system in building inclusive schools is to contribute towards the development of an inclusive society where all members of society are able to fulfil their potential and participate optimally. Similarly, Nutbrown and Clough (2006) refer to the concept of inclusion and describe it as a drive towards maximum participation and minimal exclusion between schools and society. As a result, the ultimate aim of Inclusive Education is to transform the whole education and training system to accommodate a comprehensive range of learning needs.

In addition, the Salamanca Statement on Inclusion (UNESCO, 2007) reiterates the notion that inclusion is about all children being accommodated in ordinary schools, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions, making provision of education for all within the regular education system. Therefore, Inclusive Education is underpinned by the social model which sees the circumstances of people with disabilities and the discrimination they encounter as socially created trends that have little to do with the impairments of disabled people (Department of Education as cited in Engelbrecht & Green, 2007).

In summary, Inclusive Education seeks to change the philosophy and structure of schools so that all students, despite differences in language, culture, ethnicity, economic status, gender and ability can be educated with their peers in the regular classroom in their neighbour schools (Wade, 2000). It is generally believed that for Inclusive Education to be successful, fundamental changes is needed in curriculum, instructional practice, assessment and for students with disabilities to be successful in general education

classrooms, necessary support and services must accompany them to the classrooms (Wade, 2000). The contribution of Learning Support assistants in the classroom is often an important factor. The learning assistant can assist with differentiation strategies in class (Farrell, 2001). The ideal inclusive setting seem to suggest that all disabled students remain in the regular classroom for the entire day and are taught by the regular education teacher with support from a special education teacher (Holzchuher, 1997). Therefore, the concept of inclusive education encouraged a shift from changing individuals to changing the curriculum and pedagogy. However, it seems the main concern is how to meet learners' individual educational needs within the regular classroom context without segregating them.

### ***History of Inclusive Education***

The principle of Inclusive Education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education, and was restated at the Dakar World Education Forum of 2000 (UNESCO, 2003). At these conferences, Inclusive Education was considered a human rights issue, meaning that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their barriers/challenges.

For the past 10 years inclusion has been the main focus of educational debate globally. Location (where the learner is placed), social and functional support has been the main methods of bringing children with Special Education needs together with their peers. The inclusion of learners with barriers to learning and development in ordinary schools and classrooms has become a global human rights movement UNESCO (2003). It has therefore become imperative for all countries to create "equal opportunities" for all learners to learn and succeed.

In response to this call, special schools as well as mainstream schools have encountered the challenges of being asked to take on pupils with special needs that are outside their experiences or expertise (Tutt, 2007). Both special schools and mainstream schools have had to find ways of making sure that they adapt to the changing practices of inclusive education in order to provide for such pupils. As a result, the Departments of Education

ultimately assumed responsibility for the implementation of inclusive education their respective countries (Tutt, 2007). This definitely implies that there has been a shift from integration in the 1980's to inclusion in the 1990's (Tutt, 2007).

The turning point with regards to the development of Inclusive Education policies for all South Africans was the 1994 democratic elections. The Constitution, Sections 2a(1) and 9 (2,3,4 and 5) stipulates that all learners have the fundamental right to basic education addressing key issues of access, equity and redress. This is supported in the Bill of Rights as stipulated in the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) which ensures the right of all South Africans to basic education.

On this point, Landsberg, Krüger and Nel (2005) state that in South African education, the shift towards inclusion led to a radical change from a medical deficit or within-child model, to a social systems change approach or inclusion. These authors further add that the South African medical model was also rooted in notions of diagnosis, treatment and placement in special classes or special schools. Hence, children were singled out and labelled accordingly. For example, concepts associated with the medical model included; Special Educational Needs, handicap, disability, remedial, diagnostic, prescriptive and exclusionary practices (Landsberg, Krüger & Nel, 2005).

In contrast, the social approach or inclusion is simply about accommodating all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Additionally, Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff (2007) assert that contextual demands have required a shift from the traditional child-deficit, medical model towards an ecological and multi-systems paradigm. The notion of integrating focuses on the inclusion of individuals into mainstream schools, with the onus on the pupil with Special Education needs being partly responsible to adapt to the mainstream environment (Tutt, 2005). Inclusion on the other hand, signals a change as schools themselves now need to adapt to meet the needs of all the pupils who come to them and to allow these learners access to the mainstream curriculum. Therefore, the conceptual shift from deficit and exclusion towards accommodation and inclusion is bound to bring about tension with regard to attitudes and practices (Tutt, 2005).

### ***Inclusive Education Practices Globally***

For this study I will concentrate on, the role of Learning Support Educators or Special Education Educators within the context of Inclusive Education. Learning Support Educators or Special Education educators encounter many challenges which include considerable stress due to heavy workloads and administrative tasks. In addition they must produce a substantial amount of paperwork documenting each student's progress (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). This section discusses inclusive practices globally as well as the role of Special Education Educators or Learning Support Educators.

Inclusive Education is a global issue and thus many developed and developing countries have embarked on this inclusive approach. However, Inclusive Education practices vary from country to country and from context to context (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). For example, some Special Education educators or Learning Support Educators work in a variety of settings such as their own classrooms where they only teach Special Education students; others work as resource educators and offer individualized support to students in ordinary classrooms; whilst several others teach together with the mainstream educators in classes (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).

The following section drawing on findings from UNESCO (2007) takes a look at Inclusive Education policy and practices in developed and developing countries.

**In Belgium** to be enrolled in a special school, two documents have to be obtained. The 1<sup>st</sup> document covers content pertaining to whether the child is able to benefit from a regular classroom and will indicate the level and type of special teaching within Special Education is needed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> document justifies the certificate with a synthesis of professional assessments. It is also a certificate of acceptance with an agreed educational plan (UNESCO, 2007). A child is re-assessed after two years to re-determine the relevant placement.

**In Italy** disabled children may be enrolled in a regular school in a class of not more than 20 pupils provided that assistance of a specialized educator and psycho-pedagogical



services are available. Such children will be monitored and assessed and the results are reviewed twice a year (UNESCO, 2007).

**Sri Lanka** has a multidisciplinary team which comprises of parents, educators, Special Education educators, school managers, health / social workers, paediatricians, psychologists, paramedics and therapists (UNESCO, 2007). The extent to which integration in ordinary schools are possible is still debated. These debates question ordinary schools capacity to provide facilities (i.e. adapted accommodation, specialist educators, equipment, and multi-disciplinary professional support) that are suitable for each child's special need. It is generally acknowledged that some children have such disabilities and / or learning difficulties that education in a special school is necessary (UNESCO, 2007).

**The Chinese** have a team of experts from the Ministry of education, who decides if a child should be placed in a special school, special course, in a regular class or ordinary class (UNESCO, 1996).

**On the other hand, in Denmark** pedagogical and psychological counselling is required upon consultation with the pupil and his / her parents. Denmark believes that everyone regardless of sex, social or geographical origins, physical and mental handicaps should have the same access to education and training (UNESCO, 1996).

**In El Salvador** diagnosis and evaluation takes place in special schools or by professionals hired by the child's family. If a child is able to attend a regular school, s/he may do so with the assistance of a Special Education educator.

**In Japan** the implementation of part-time special classes, as part of the formal education system has been a distinctive innovation where students with milder forms of disabilities are, as far as possible, mainstreamed into regular settings (Jimenez & Ochiai, 2001). In principle then, students with moderate disabilities are included in mainstream classrooms with some periods in special classes depending upon their needs. Therefore, they attend general subjects in ordinary classrooms and receive specialized tuition in special classes



to overcome their disabilities and improve their general life skills (Jimenez & Ochiai, 2001).

**Scotland** is currently in a period of significant educational transition with many policy statement changes in Scottish education that encourages more inclusive practices (SCoTENS, 2009). This situation of transition was precipitated by the creation of the Scottish parliament in 1999 that has significantly impacted on the current transition in education (SCoTENS, 2009). In 2004 the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act came into being, attempting to provide new opportunities and to address issues that have troubled Inclusive Education in Scotland (SCoTENS, 2009). The emphasis of the act is on the system to provide support because the belief is that policy alone will not lead to more inclusive practice without further positive intervention (SCoTENS, 2009). Therefore, this act covers the additional support that should be available to learners if and when they need it.

For this purpose, the Scottish Executive funnelled considerable resources towards local authorities and their schools to promote inclusion and positive discipline (Riddell, 2007). As a result, additional support staff has been appointed (Riddell, 2007). Subsequently, the role of the Learning Support Educator in Scotland is to ensure that pupils with mild learning difficulties achieve maximum proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school (SCoTENS, 2009). In addition, one Learning Support Educator is shared between two or more schools and learners are withdrawn from mainstream classes and work is done on areas of specific learning difficulties for example reading, writing, spelling, language and mathematics. More importantly, Learning Support Educators work with children who have physical, hearing or visual impairments, or emotional, behavioural as well as learning difficulties (Careers Scotland, 2008).

Although inclusion is promoted in Scotland, the law allows for separate provision in exceptional circumstances (Riddell, 2007). Many students with Special Educational Needs are taught in mainstream schools, often through a Learning Support department or through a special unit attached to the school or otherwise they attend or take part in ordinary lessons with the help of a special needs assistant or support educator (Careers

Scotland 2008). In addition, these learners are normally taught in small groups or individually.

An Equity Group in Scotland is working on developing sustainable Inclusive Education structures for all children in Scotland especially those in need of additional support (Prior, 2003). However, this Equity Group believes that the Scottish Bill on Additional Support for Learning is unworkable and unhelpful in practice. They emphasize the fact the educators need resources and support to build on their inclusive practice since teachers have to deal with providing additional learning support as well as curriculum support (Prior, 2003). Yet, they do believe that children are still being labelled with Additional Support for Learning (ASL) and Curriculum Support Plan (CSP).

**In England and Wales**, the revision of the National Curriculum brought about more changes to personal and social education and included a policy statement of inclusion (Farrell, 2001). The inclusion statement highlights the importance of creating a suitable setting for learning challenges, responding to pupils' diverse learning needs to overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for individual and groups of pupils (Farrell, 2001). Consequently, the policy draws attention to inclusion with adequate support and resources implying that physically sitting in a classroom is not inclusion and children can be excluded by being included in a classroom where the Department s of Education or schools have not planned to meet their needs (Farrell, 2001). So too, Smith (2006) argues that forcing children with special needs into mainstream classes that lack adequate support is a form of abuse.

To provide adequate support aligned to the policy of inclusion, UK Special Education Needs Educators are expected to teach either individual or in small groups of pupils, within or outside the class. In addition they collaborate with the classroom educator and liaise with other professionals, such as social workers, therapist and psychologists (Ellis, 2009).

Still, research done by Lovey, (2002) includes some insightful aspects regarding the different roles of the Learning Support Educator in the UK. For example, some Learning

Support Educators indicated that new staff regarded them as educator assistants; hence they were not given responsibility on trips out or during events, whereas at secondary schools, Learning Support Educators have a distinct role in taking groups of dyslexic children out of the classroom for specialized help. Others reported a considerable amount of special needs administration and being regarded as the right-hand assistants to their overburdened special needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) where they are heavily involved in drawing up and reviewing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) as well as preparing the reports for statement reviews (Lovey, 2002). As a result, there remained some confusion about the role of these Learning Support Educators because some accepted jobs as teaching assistants and others accepted posts as educators. This confusion resulted in the fact that they did not mind acting as educators in doing withdrawal work and sharing a class (Lovey, 2002).

**In the United States of America (USA),** Learning Support Educators are also known as special needs co-ordinators (Hornby, Atkinson & Howard, 1997). These special needs co-ordinators assume the role of effective learning consultants who would be responsible for analyzing and planning learning situations and managing resources in order to support educators in accommodating individual learner differences in their classes (Hornby, Atkinson & Howard, 1997).

During the 1990s in the USA, inclusion was still regarded as Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in the law (94-142) and it has provided the initial legal impetus for creating Inclusive Education. Meanwhile it was not a legal requirement in practice and not reflected in policy, yet, it implied rejection, segregation and isolation of people with disabilities. LRE therefore resulted in the development of “mainstreaming” and “integration”.

**In Canada,** Inclusive Education takes place as a process of educating students with special needs in regular classrooms. This process of inclusion occurs in local or neighbourhood schools where learners with special needs are placed with same-aged peers without special needs, on a part or full time basis (Alberta Educators` Association, 2006). Hence, in Canada students with diverse needs receive their education in regular

education settings. The success of the student is directly related to additional resources, including assistive devices and human resources and support services.

Further to provide adequate support, appropriately trained educator assistants must be employed, resources and class sizes reduced in order to help to effectively meet the needs of all students. As a result, in the Canadian context placement of students with special needs into regular classrooms is only deemed successful and appropriately implemented when appropriate resources and support services are provided (Alberta Educators` Association, 2006). Therefore, it appears as if the Canadian context strives towards true inclusion. True inclusion implies the full-time placement of students with disabilities in regular classrooms with appropriate and adequate resources and support (The Roeher Institute, 2004).

In 2004 schools in Canada were in the early stages of true inclusion. It is generally agreed that schools need a strong philosophy of inclusion which supports the right of all children to participate in an inclusive way. The Roeher Institute (2004) stated that it is unreasonable to expect one educator to be solely responsible for meeting the needs of a student with intellectual or multiple disabilities in an inclusive situation. The premise for preparation is to make the educator feel not only accepting but competent at the job at hand. An overall shortage of needed services may all conspire to undermine the possibility of inclusiveness, however generally there is a growing awareness for accepting the disabled in society.

Additionally, according to the Alberta Educators` Association (2006), the benefits of inclusion are that it improves attitudes toward individual differences by non-disabled students and stimulates a greater tolerance for individual differences in our society. UNESCO (2007) suggests that in order to change the school system, there must first be change in attitudes of the stakeholders by raising awareness of the potential benefits. To enhance inclusion it is imperative that the infrastructure and sanitation improves, curriculum must be relevant and flexible, teachers must be trained to deal with special needs learners and teachers must also be supported with appropriate materials (UNESCO, 2007).

Effective Inclusive Education enables all students to be educated to their full potential in the most enabling environment. The limitations are that full-time placement of students with special needs in regular classrooms is not always appropriate for all students. Support and appropriate resources are essential, because without it, students will continue to be segregated from their non-disabled peers, even though “placed” in proximity to them (Alberta Educators` Association, 2006). Hence educators require ongoing staff development, adequate preparation time and sufficient professional support.

In Alberta, Canada, educators who act as Learning Support Educators are called Special Needs Educators and Resource Educators (Alberta Educators` Association, 2006 & Porter, 1997). These Special Needs Educators are expected to work closely with parents and professionals, perform diagnostic assessments, develop educational plans, work with teaching assistants, and to assist educators to teach most subjects for a class. Their roles were to emphasize collaboration and peer support to mainstream educators (Porter, 1997). They should meet with students from regular school classrooms on an individual basis or in small groups and work in co-operation with classroom educators and travel from school to school providing tutorial services (Alberta Educators` Association, 2006).

**In 1984, Australia** introduced the right of every child to be educated in a regular school. Therefore, in Australia it is illegal to discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability (Slee, 2005). Provision is organized according to needs rather than disability and the belief is that all children can learn and be taught in mainstream classrooms and that integration is a curriculum issue. Subsequently, Inclusive Education reflects the values, ethos and culture of a public education system committed to excellence by enhancing educational opportunities for all students. It promotes that resources and school services be school-based and that decision-making be collaborative. Thus Inclusive Education is for everybody and is everybody`s business (Slee, 2005). In the Australian context it appears then that it is about shaping the society in which we live and the type of society to which we aspire.

**In South America** it is believed that a disabled person is one who possesses a permanent prolonged physical or mental defect (British Columbia Association, 2007). Special

Education is designed for children, adolescents and young persons who possess mental and physical deficiencies. The students with mental and physical disabilities as well as gifted students will receive special treatment. In Columbia they maintain that all persons are born equal under the law and will receive equal protection and equal treatment by the authorities so as to benefit from equal rights and opportunities without any kind of discrimination (British Columbia Association, 2007). Special Education is therefore designed for persons who have physical, mental, emotional and social deficiencies or persons who have special learning difficulties. This implies that all learners with special needs should receive specialized support and should be integrated within mainstream contexts and not discriminates and label against persons with special needs. It however also highlights the notion that different countries have different interpretations of inclusion (British Columbia Association, 2007).

**Lesotho** began with their inclusive journey in 1987 with an intention to find a way to educate children with disabilities (Johnstone, 2007). Since then they have encountered many challenges which included educator training and inconsistent policy implementation. As a result, Inclusive Education was introduced in the 1990s. Lesotho perceived educator training to be vital in the move toward Inclusive Education because they believe that educators should be able reach all learners with the necessary competencies. The challenge though is that not all educators have been exposed to Inclusive Education training. This has led to a growing resistance to Inclusive Education because educators in Lesotho started to perceive Inclusive Education as a heavier work load. As a result, in this context the effective implementation of inclusive education is hindered (Johnstone, 2007).

**Namibia** defines Inclusive Education as a process which addresses and responds to the diverse of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion (Zimba, Möwes & Naanda, 2007). Furthermore, in Namibia it is believed that learners should have ample opportunity to be educated in a normal class hence special needs cases are only considered after at least two failures and/or the development of

insurmountable scholastic problems, language enrichment by the class educator or the remedial educator (UNESCO, 2007).

Namibia's intention was to ensure that learners with special needs and learners with disabilities have access to education through integration ((Zimba, Möwes & Naanda, 2007). Therefore, Namibia has committed itself to the effective implementation of Inclusive Education. However, this commitment could only be realized when the following few factors were in place ((Zimba, Möwes & Naanda, 2007):

- educators and schools were equipped to adapt curricula and syllabi
- educators were able to create, adapt and modify teaching materials for individual learners
- regular schools were resourced with support staff, equipped, organized and prepared socially and emotionally

**In South Africa** the 1994 democratic elections was a turning point for all South Africans for example, it was the end of Apartheid and a start of a new democracy. In this new democracy, the South African society had to undergo changes reflected in the constitution, meaning all sorts of discrimination needed to be addressed (Naicker, 2001). The South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) envisaged an education and training system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that ensures all learners, with or without disabilities, pursue their learning potential to the fullest. Thus implying that South Africa has a new unified education and training system, one that is able to accommodate the full range of learning needs and the support services that should be put in place which include; curriculum adaptation and differentiation, additional human resources, additional physical resources, bringing the support to the learner (Naicker, 2001).

Inclusive Education therefore focuses on including learners on all levels, that is, social inclusion, curriculum accessibility and emotional inclusion. The inclusion of learners with special needs or learning barriers into mainstream is part of a universal human rights movement and it has become imperative for all countries to create equal opportunities for all learners to learn and succeed (Western Cape Education Department, 2002).



Above and beyond, The South African Constitution of 1997 (Western Cape Education Department, 2002) introduced a human rights approach restructuring South African society and the Ministry of education responded with the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, July 2001 (Schoeman, 2002). As a result, this led to a Commission of Inquiry, one into Special Needs in Education and Training and the other into Education Support Services. Furthermore, this led to the introduction of an initiative to convert special schools into resource centres that were integrated with District Based Support Teams (DBST). We should then evaluate existing resources and how these resources can be strengthened and transformed in order to contribute to the building of an inclusive system (Department of Education, 2001).

More importantly, the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) notes that mainstreaming is about getting learners to fit into a particular system, while giving them extra support. On the other hand, Inclusion is about recognizing and respecting differences among all learners, supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. Therefore, mainstreaming is not the only focus but moreover that once learners are mainstreamed, they need to be included through respect for their differences and appropriate support. Subsequently, Inclusion focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevents it from meeting the full range of learning needs. In addition, the Education White Paper 6 emphasizes that classroom educators will be the primary resource for achieving the goal of an Inclusive Education and Training system. This implies the need for further training, improved skills, attitudes, values and knowledge. Therefore, staff development at schools and district levels would be critical and essential (Department of Education, 2001).

The Education White Paper 6 put emphasis on intensive levels of support for all learners who require it and makes reference to Educational Support or Learning Support that is essential support services such as effective multi-disciplinary teams (Dreyer, 2008). Learning Support is therefore support provided by mainstream educators in collaboration with a Learning Support Educator and an Institutional Level Support Team and professionals from the District Based Support Team. For this reason, Learning Support



Educators are defined as those educators who have specialized competencies to support learners, educators and the system in order to ensure effective learning by all learners (Department of Education, 1997a). This component of learning support i.e. Itinerant Learning Support Educators thus replaces remedial support that was based on the medical model (Dreyer, 2008)

As a result, the Inclusive Education System in South Africa has its foundation in a Learning Support Model that refers to a framework in which Learning Support is delivered to learners who need additional support by facilitating participation, inclusivity and flexibility to prevent and break down barriers to learning (Theron, 1999). This model defines Learning Support as all activities that contribute to the capacity of a school to respond to the diversity of its learners (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughn & Shaw, 2000). Educational Support or Learning Support refers to the role those educational support professionals such as educational psychologists, school councillors, therapists, special educators and mainstream educators play in addressing the diverse needs of learners. Inclusive Education should therefore be organized so that it can provide various levels and various kinds of support to learners and educators.

In my opinion, in the South African context it is possible that a large number of educators are still influenced by functionalism, which encourages the medical model of addressing educational challenges. A functionalist approach to Special Education theory, focus on deficits within the child, segregation from the mainstream and standardized testing. Nevertheless, inclusion should be based on the principle that learning disabilities arise from the education system rather than the learner (Department of Education, 2001). The Education White Paper 6 acknowledges that some learners may require more intensive and specialized forms of support to be able to develop their full potential. It started including terminology such as `learners with special needs`, learners with mild to severe learning difficulties, barriers to learning, and itinerant learning support educators (Department of Education, 2001).

Landsberg, Krüger & Nel (2005) state that the Itinerant Learning Support Educator acts as a link by collaborating and working together with the District Based Support Team

(DBST), special schools (resource centres), other educators, parents and learners in order to combat barriers to learning. Furthermore, The Itinerant Learning Support Educator (ILSE) should act as a co-ordinator of a team and facilitate meetings and discussions. Full Service Schools (FSS) might designate an Itinerant Learning Support Educator who is a competent and experienced educator with collaborative and facilitating skills (Landsberg, Krüger & Nel 2005). The task of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator as suggested by Department of Education (2005) would be that of consultant who work with other educators, staff, parents and various outside agencies to ensure learners succeed. Mittler (2000) describes the role of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator as that of a facilitator, supporting colleagues in the mainstream in meeting the needs of all learners in their classes.

In South Africa, prior to 2005 Itinerant Learning Support Educators were already appointed and based at mainstream schools. Itinerant Learning Support Educators (ILSE) is on the establishment of the District Based Support Team (DBST) but this component of support is based at mainstream schools, offering direct learning support to learners and educators (Landsberg, Krüger & Nel 2005). Additionally, the Itinerant Learning Support Educator is part of the School Based Support Team (SBST) and should be competent, innovative and should have good collaborative skills (Landsberg, Krüger & Nel, 2005).

The Learning Support Model of the Western Cape Education Department suggests that an Itinerant Learning Support Educator should withdraw learners from the mainstream class for small group instruction and this support should be strengthened in addition to the support provided by a mainstream educator (Dreyer, 2008). The Western Cape Education Department circular (0219/2003), clearly stipulates the role of learning support posts at mainstream schools. Itinerant Learning Support Educators are linked to a specific Education District in the Western Cape Education Department in order to be utilized in the most cost effective manner, i.e. itinerant educator working at two or more schools. In this way, The Itinerant Learning Support Educators would be able to render support to educators and to as many learners with special needs in the mainstream school in a specific classroom. On the other hand, if the latter is not effective then the Itinerant

Learning Support Educators can withdraw learners for one or more teaching periods for a temporary period of time and until they are returned to the mainstream as soon as the necessary support was offered (Dreyer, 2008).

From the above, it is evident that the role of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator in South Africa is diverse, challenging and very demanding. The introduction of Itinerant Learning Support Educators was highly welcomed by mainstream educators because it implied that someone will suggest instant solutions or remove certain learners from the classroom or from the school as whole (Mittler, 2000). In the South African context then an Itinerant Learning Support Educator should not only support the learner holistically but also offer support to the educators and parents collaboratively. The literature acknowledges that the diversity of role of Itinerant Learning Support Educators widens hence they are required to take on new challenges.

In view of all this (UNESCO, 1996) one can deduce that the extent to which special education, inclusion and integration is carried out in any country, ultimately depends on the context, nature and scale of the child's needs as well as the capacity of government and an ordinary school to meet these needs. In conclusion, UNESCO (2007) notes, that in some countries it is acknowledged that some pupils are unable to follow a regular program, but that they might still graduate with approved replacement lessons. This understanding occurs in Belgium, Chile, Spain, Philippines, France, and Germany.

In 1990, Spain adjusted their curriculum and the organization of schools to meet the needs of all the students. In Chile, mental and sensory motor differences in Special Education courses are offered in parallel to regular classes or through integration workshops with the assistance of special educators, while mild or moderate disabilities follow common courses at every level. In 1991, France introduced classes of school integration similar to Chile.

In Germany they have resource centres with the relevant expertise and remedial programmes assisting educators with special needs competence, advising parents, generally co-ordinating in a multi-disciplinary way.

In Namibia selected class educators are trained at certain schools in the rudiments of diagnosing learning problems, discussion with parents, principals and advising other educators of children with learning difficulties (Zimba, Möwes & Naanda, 2007). Students with serious problems are referred and weekly meetings are conducted with colleagues and the principal for case studies.

In South Africa as mentioned earlier Inclusive education policies such as Education White Paper 6 emphasizes the strengthening of education support services as pivotal to the effective implementation of Inclusive Education (Department of Education, 2001). In addition, Itinerant Learning Support Educators play a pivotal role in the implementation and roll-out of Inclusive Education which is done by providing learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning.

### **2.3 CONCLUSION**

In light of the notion that there is very limited research and literature on Itinerant Learning Support Educators this literature review therefore drew on theories underpinning Special Education and Inclusive Education. It clarified concepts such as remedial education, where it originated and how it has been redefined to function within an Inclusive Education framework. Authors such as Naicker (2001), Landsberg, Krüger and Nel (2005), Tutt (2007), Schoeman (2002) and Gericke (1997) defined and discussed concepts such as Inclusive Education and provided valuable insight about Education Support Services, Itinerant Learning Support Educators and remedial educators. Most importantly, it attempted to highlight the history, development and transformation in beliefs and attitudes reflected in policies of special education in developed countries and the impact of this on third world countries such as Lesotho, Namibia and especially the South African context.

The next chapter explains the research methodology used in this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators within the Inclusive Education framework in the Metro South Education District at the Western Cape Education Department. The goal of this study was to shed light on the challenges and perceptions of Itinerant Learning Support Educators about their challenges and the issues they perceive as successes in an inclusive education paradigm in the Metro South Education District.

The following research questions and sub questions were posed:

What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as challenges in supporting learners with barriers within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?

- What would you regard as challenges in your role as Itinerant Learning Support Educator?
- Describe the length of the support sessions for the groups and what is the maximum amount of learners in a group?
- Describe the support structures available for Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

How do Itinerant Learning Support Educators perceive their role within the Inclusive Education framework?

- What does an Itinerant Learning Support Educator do?
- What is an average day at your base school?
- What is an average day at each school?
- Describe your role at your base school. What is your role?

- Do you find that your “other” duties at your schools distract you from your role as Learning Support Educator?
- Explain what you think the difference is between a remedial educator and an itinerant learning support educator.
- In what ways are your duties different from working as a remedial educator?
- Describe your role in the ILST
- What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as successes in supporting learners with barriers within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?
- What would you regard as successes in your role as itinerant learning support educator?
- Describe the framework of macro and micro planning in learning support in the EMDC?

This chapter presents the research paradigm adopted for the study. It also describes the research methodology and particularly the case study approach, the participants, collection methods, the procedure for data collection and the ethical considerations that were utilized for the purposes of this study.

## **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design refers to the approach a researcher selects to study a phenomenon. In other words it is the framework on which the research draws in order to show how all the major components of the research project work together to address the research questions (Trochim, 2006).

### **3.2.1 Qualitative Research Methodology**

According to Woods (2006) a qualitative approach focuses on natural settings by gathering information relevant to meanings, perspectives and the understandings of the participants about the study. In addition, Holman, (1987) reiterates that a qualitative

approach allows the researcher to gain insights into another person's views, perceptions, opinions, feelings and beliefs in a natural setting.

Woods (2006) lists a couple of strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research. A weakness of a qualitative research approach is that it can be time consuming because it takes time to negotiate access, assemble a sample, develop trust and rapport; to find out what is "going on" or what people are thinking. Nonetheless, being part of the Western Cape Education Department staff, following a qualitative approach made access and negotiation easier. Also, there was already a rapport or relationship of trust between participants and the researcher.

In addition, the strength of qualitative research on the other hand, is that it has the ability to reveal the subtlety and complexity of cases or issues. Swartz-Filies (2007) further adds that qualitative research provides the researcher with an understanding from the perspectives of the participants with regard to the meanings they give to events in their lives. As a result, being aware of challenges that Itinerant Learning Support Educators face, a qualitative approach allowed for a more detailed and insightful understanding of the issue at hand based on the participants' views. Furthermore, a qualitative researcher seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations, and what their perspectives are on particular issues (Woods, 2006). As a result, a qualitative methodology facilitated a process where an understanding of the opinions and views of the people being studied emerged. It is therefore appropriate for this study because it also allows the researcher to obtain in-depth and detailed information about the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Finally, within the qualitative paradigm the researcher has used a qualitative case study.

### **3.2.2 A Qualitative Case Study**

Many authors have defined case studies in various ways. For example, Merriam (2001) noted that a case study design can be employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and the meanings that those involved in the study ascribe to a particular situation or the phenomenon under scrutiny. Another, definition of a case study is the

interest in individual cases, not by methods of inquiry used (Stake, 1994). A case study therefore involves detailed examination of a particular example or instance of a phenomenon which implies that the case may be a large group of people or a smaller group or a single individual. Fouché (2005) referred to a case study as a process, activity, event, program or individual group of people. In addition, case study approaches have provided some useful methods available in educational research (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997). This study may be regarded as an instrumental case study because it elaborates on theory and provides the researcher with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the challenges that are faced by Learning Support Educators (Denzin, Lincoln, 2005).

At the onset of this study, there was no other research or scientific enquiries made about the challenges faced by Itinerant Learning Support Educators. For this reason, a case study methodology was initiated because the researcher encountered many challenges as an Itinerant Learning Support Educator and wanted to explore the challenges other Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South may experience. As a result, a case study method was employed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the Metro South Education District within the framework of Inclusive Education.

### **3.3 SAMPLING**

A sample is a predetermined part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole (Webster, 1985). When dealing with people, it can be defined as a set of respondents (people) selected from a larger population for the purpose of a survey. Sampling is therefore the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Webster, 1985).



### **3.3.1 Purposive Sampling**

Purpose sampling is viewed as a particular case that is chosen because it illustrates some features or process that is of interest for a particular study (Silverman, 2000). As a result, Metro South was selected because firstly, the researcher was an Itinerant Learning Support Educator in Metro South and it was easy to gain access to the schools. It applies to both individuals and sites. With purposive sampling, the researcher intentionally selected individuals and sites to learn and understand the central phenomenon, in this case the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South. This approach indeed succeeded in achieving a cross-section of the population. In addition, purposive sampling is frequently preferred to as a random sample; when using purposive sampling the researcher uses his / her judgment as to which segments should be included (Mertler & Charles, 2005). This concept has therefore appealed to me as it was easy to identify and gain entry to both the site and the individual participants who participated in the study.

### **3.3.2 Convenience Sampling**

Convenience sampling is often a preferred option to other methods of sampling because it allows an experimenter to pilot-test an experiment with minimal resources and time. It is also relatively inexpensive and allows the researcher to get a gross estimate of the results (Blurtit, 2009). Convenience sampling generally assumes a homogeneous population, and that one person is pretty much like another (Syque, 2009). Convenience sampling is used when you are unable to access a wider population, for example due to time or cost constraints. A convenience sample therefore chooses the individuals that are easiest to reach or sampling that is done easy. In this study the Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South Education District were easily accessible and easy to reach.

## **3.4 PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY**

In the Western Cape Education Department there are 8 Education Districts divided into urban and rural districts. The urban districts include Metro Central, Metro South and

Metro East. The rural districts include West Coast, Cape Winelands, Overberg, Eden and Karoo (Western Cape Education Department, 2008).

In 2007 there were 30 872 educators in the Western Cape of which an estimated 5000 are in Metro South. Of the 5000 educators, there are approximately 74 Itinerant Learning Support Teachers in Metro South (Western Cape Education Department, 2008). This study started with a purposive sampling approach in that the researcher selected Metro South Education out of eight Districts in the Western Cape.

In this study, Itinerant Learning Support Educators were deliberately selected because of the focus of this study. However, I was aware that there was the danger that I may be subconsciously biased in selecting the sample but as the researcher I was highly cautious of this (Gray, 2005). Secondly, as an Itinerant Learning Support Educator, the researcher encountered many challenges and had many unanswered questions. Subsequently by initiating research about these challenges, the researcher had the opportunity to pose these questions to fellow Itinerant Learning Support Educators and moved closer to answering questions about the challenges faced by Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South Education District.

In Metro South, approximately 74 Itinerant Learning Support Educators were invited to participate in this study. This type of sampling is called convenience sampling. In this study 14 Itinerant Learning Support Educators participated from Metro South Education District in the Western Cape Education Department. The research sample includes all those who provide support services in the Inclusive Education system.

The researcher invited all the Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the District to participate in the study. Of the total number of Itinerant Learning Support Educators (which was 74), 23 Itinerant Learning Support Educators responded. However, 9 participants were unable to participate due to unforeseen circumstances which resulted in the remaining 14 Itinerant Learning Support Educators participating in this study. The 14 participants were Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South Education District and were all employed by the Western Cape Education Department. The participants

were all coloured and black females aged between 25 and 55 years. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 5 to 35 years and their qualifications included foundation phase training, remedial training and basic educator education training. Itinerant Learning Support Educators were categorized as post level 1 educators in the education department's Recognized Educational Qualifications Framework (REQV) document. Furthermore, the participants were also representative of both well-resourced and under-resourced schools, i.e. Mitchell's Plain, Grassy Park, Retreat, Constantia and Wynberg areas.

The researcher selected 14 Itinerant Learning Support Educators from the Metro South Education District specifically in order to learn and understand their perceptions about the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators within the framework of Inclusive Education. Participation was voluntary and participants were not compelled to participate. In addition, participants were requested to complete consent forms which stipulated that information and findings obtained from this study may be utilized for the purpose of this research.

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

This section describes the data collections methods used in the study as well the procedures followed. The method used for findings collection in this study is interviews and focus groups.

#### **3.5.1 Interviews**

An interview offers a versatile or flexible way of collecting data and can be used for all age groups (Parker, 2005). Interviews tend to tap into the depths of the reality of the situation and discover meanings and understandings which make it essential for the researcher to develop rapport with the interviewees and win their confidence and also to be unobtrusive in order not to impose one's own influence on the interviewee (Woods, 2006).

There are different types of interviews, namely, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and unstructured interviews (Huysamen, 1994). In structured interviews, the interviewer asks all the participants a series of pre-established interview questions with a limited set of responses and not diverting from the stipulated questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Unstructured interviews are referred to as “conversation with a purpose”, meaning that it merely extends and formalizes conversation (Greef, 2005). Semi-structured interviews are often used to gain a detailed picture of a participant’s beliefs or perceptions about a particular phenomenon because the researcher will have a set of prearranged questions and be guided by the interview schedule and focus groups are group interviews where participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common relating to the topic of the focus group (Greef, 2005).

In this study, semi-structured focus group interviews were employed.

### **3.5.2 Focus Group**

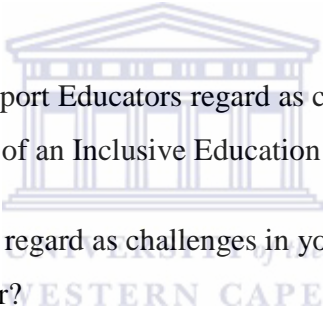
In this study participants were clustered in focus groups and were accommodated in a central venue that was at a school central to all participants. There were 2 venues for 3 focus groups. One of these focus groups was accommodated at a school in Rocklands, Mitchell’s Plain that was central and accommodated participants from the Mitchell’s Plain area. The other 2 focus groups were accommodated on different days at a venue in Ottery that was central for these focus groups and accommodated participants coming from the Steenberg, Retreat and Grassy Park areas.

Kreuger (1988) defines a focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Patton (2002) defines a focus group interview as an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Focus groups are used to obtain general background information about a topic of interest, stimulating new ideas and creative concepts and learning how respondents talk about the phenomenon of interest which in this case are the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). For the purpose of this study, 3 focus group interviews were used. Furthermore, the

researcher used interview guides and not schedules. Interview guides are lists of topics and aspects of these topics (not specific questions) which have a bearing on the given theme and which the interviewer should bring up during the course of the interview, whilst interview schedules are specific questions which must be adhered to with no flexibility (Huysamen, 1994). In this study the researcher obtained in-depth information derived from probing. The researcher was the interviewer and was in complete control of the interview situation. The researcher also ensured that all questions were answered and ensured that each participant had a chance to respond to the questions. The order of the questions also changed because of direction the interview took. I had the platform in which to clarify any misunderstandings or misconceptions.

An interview guide was used for each focus group and the questions asked were the following:

What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as challenges in supporting learners with barriers within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?

- 
- What would you regard as challenges in your role as Itinerant Learning Support Educator?
  - Describe the length of the support sessions for the groups and what is the maximum amount of learners in a group?
  - Describe the support structures available for Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

How do Itinerant Learning Support Educators perceive their role within the Inclusive Education framework?

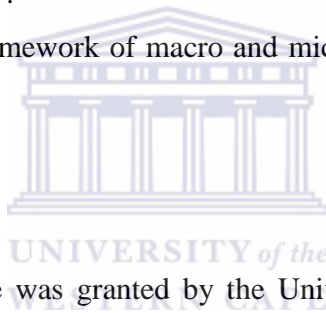
- What does an Itinerant Learning Support Educator do?
- What is an average day at your base school?
- What is an average day at each school?
- Describe your role at your base school. What is your role?

- Do you find that your “other” duties at your schools distract you from your role as Learning Support Educator?
- Explain what you think the difference is between a remedial educator and an itinerant learning support educator.
- In what ways are your duties different from working as a remedial educator?
- Describe your role in the ILST.

What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as successes in supporting learners with barriers within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?

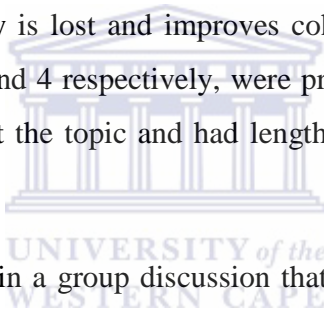
- What would you regard as successes in your role as itinerant learning support educator?
- Describe the framework of macro and micro planning in learning support in the District?

### **3.6 PROCEDURE**



At the outset ethical clearance was granted by the University of the Western Cape to conduct the research. Permission was also granted from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct research in the schools. After permission was granted by the Western Cape Education Department, the researcher made contact with the Metro South Education District to obtain consent from the Director and Head of the Specialized Learner and Educator Support. Immediately when consent was obtained from the District, approximately 74 Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the Metro South Education District were approached. Fourteen Itinerant Learning Support Educators responded positively. Each Itinerant Learning Support Educator received a formal letter of request to participate in the research. The letter provided information on the nature of the study and the conditions for participation. It included an attached reply slip which required signatures as consent from both the learning support educator as well as the relevant principals of the schools represented.

This study was conducted using semi-structured focus group interviews. The focus groups were economical and less time-consuming than if the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews. Semi-structured focus group interviews were appropriate because it was easily controlled by the interviewer and they were more flexible and it allowed for a combination framework for analysis (Wellington, 2000). In other words it includes probes designed to obtain additional, clarifying information. This approach was ideal for the research study because it comprises a large amount of participants, i.e. Fourteen Itinerant Learning Support Educators from Metro South Education District. It is suggested that the size of the group should not be too large as to be unwieldy or to preclude adequate participation by most members nor should it be so small that it fails to provide substantially greater coverage than that of an interview with one individual (Merton, Fiske & Kendell, 1990). These authors assert that a small group ensures that everybody participates; nobody is lost and improves cohesion among members. In this study, smaller groups of 5, 5 and 4 respectively, were preferred because the participants had a great deal to share about the topic and had lengthy experiences with the topic of discussion (Kreuger, 1988).



The Focus Group participated in a group discussion that intended to explore challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South Education District within the framework of Inclusive Education. As the researcher, I facilitated the entire process and it provided me the opportunity to gather information by recording the group interviews whilst taking down notes simultaneously. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), some topics are better discussed by a small group of people who know each other who in this case are Itinerant Learning Support Educators sharing similar challenges and experiences. Participants were engaged in interactions, which initiated feedback comments, thus offering a wider perspective of the research topic.

There was the risk of high cost in terms of preparation and application of the interviews. However, the researcher was very selective when the researcher selected the participants for the semi-structured, focus group interviews. The researcher also ensured that not more than 5 individual participants were interviewed. Time taken to conduct interviews can be

a limitation. The cost associated with the proper training for the interviewer and the travelling costs may be very high for interviews done over vast geographical areas. This was taken into consideration and the researcher was cautious at all times when it came to possible limitations.

The researcher made use of audio-taping of interviews which provided a detailed record of the participants' viewpoints on Inclusive Education and the roles that they played to assist with implementation of inclusivity. Audio-taping during the interview was effective; and taking notes was very helpful in the event that the audio equipment failed me. Thus implying that planning in advance was essential and also whether transcribers were to be used (Creswell, 2003).

The interviews were primarily conducted in English but when some of the participants experienced difficulty in expressing themselves they were allowed to respond in their mother tongue which was Afrikaans. Their responses were translated to the other English speaking participants for purposes of clarity. Permission was obtained from each participant to have the interviews tape recorded. The researcher assured the participants that the information recorded will be treated confidentially and no one else other than the researcher and the research supervisor would have access to the recordings and the subsequent information it would reveal. In order to ensure anonymity during the recordings, each participant received a letter of the alphabet as a code for identification during the interview, in order to ensure anonymity. When responding to the interview questions, each participant identified herself using the letter of the alphabet which was very helpful during transcription. This allowed the researcher to discern if each participant had a chance to respond to each interview question.

The interviews were discussion-based which produced qualitative findings. Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences and give their opinions and perspectives on the challenges in terms of the role and job description facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators. This approach was ideal because it allowed the researcher to get an intimate understanding of the participants. The interviews were tape recorded and the researcher transcribed the findings. The researcher wanted to capture understandings, perspectives



and experiences which could not be meaningfully be expressed by numbers or quantity (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 2001). The researcher's aim for using focus group interviews was to possibly arrive at a group consensus about the issue at hand.

### **3.7 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

This section describes how the data collected were analyzed to answer the research questions in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

Before the interviews were tape recorded, the researcher obtained permission from the participants to record the interview. Each participant had a name or a code in order to be distinguished when transcribing the information. During the recordings participants were encouraged to speak one at a time to avoid garbling the tape (Kreuger, 1988), whilst (Howe & Lewis, 1993) suggest that it is essential that participants identify themselves before they speak. In this study the participants identified themselves with a letter of the alphabet assigned to them respectively.

Basing the analysis on audio-taping; avoided pitfalls of inaccurate and selective manual recording and inaccurate and selective recall by the researcher. The focus group interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher. This was done by transcribing word by word, expression by expression and exactly as it was on the audio tape. Notes were made throughout the transcription process. The researcher read through all the raw findings numerous times in order to obtain a general sense of the information and also to reflect on its overall meaning. To ensure trustworthiness of the findings, transcriptions were sent to the participants. The majority of the participants confirmed the accuracy of the findings in writing.

The thematic analysis approach was employed to analyze the findings. According to Coolican (1999), a thematic approach includes extensive discussion about the major themes that arise from analyzing data that was collected in a qualitative research paradigm. It is the understanding of the content of conversation and it allows for the identification of major themes arising from a discussion. Thematic analysis is therefore

concerned with how people understand the meanings of the words and phrases that they use. Often this approach uses extensive quotes and rich details to support the themes. Findings was carefully sorted and re-sorted to produce a system of categories or themes (Coolican, 1999). It emphasizes both commonalities and differences between participants concerning the dominant themes. It often amounts to little more than a grouping of quotes from the material, the better the “analytic” examples of the approach organize the themes into a structure that illuminates the material.

This approach seems highly suitable because the aim of this study was to elicit common themes and about the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators. The themes that emerged in this study included the role of Itinerant Learning Support Educators, Remedial Educator, educator and parent support, co-ordinating the institutional level support team, successes, learner achievement, educator development, placement and challenges. These themes are described in detail in Chapter four.

As the analysis of findings is a reflective activity it required that the researcher maintained a detailed record of the analysis process. Therefore the audio tape recordings and transcriptions were kept in a safe place. The final interpretation of the findings analysis is presented in Chapter 4.

### **3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA COLLECTED**

The quality of research relies heavily on the reliability of the methods used and the validity of the conclusions drawn (Silverman, 2005). The reliability of a psychological measuring device is the extent to which it gives consistent measurements and the greater the consistency of measurement, the greater the reliability of the tool (Banyard & Grayson, 2000). The validity basically checks whether the test measures what it is supposed to measure. In this study the researcher took cognizance of trustworthiness of the findings collected as a measure of validity and reliability by following Guba’s model on identification of four aspects of trustworthiness, which includes truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Krefting, 1991). This is relevant to this study due its qualitative nature.

Truth-value is important in qualitative research. The researcher provided the participants feedback on the transcriptions to confirm whether the transcription is a true reflection of their responses. Participants had the opportunity to provide their opinions regarding the accuracy of the interpretation of the transcriptions (Krefting, 1991).

Applicability in this study is relevant because the purpose of this research is to obtain a general sense of the challenges faced by Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South Education District (Krefting, 1991).

In terms of consistency for this study, there are common themes arising from the experiences of the participants as Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South.

With regards to neutrality of the analysis, the findings of this research will be solely a function of the informants or participants and on the conditions of the research and not on other forms of biases (Krefting, 1991).

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study was conducted in accordance with some of the ethical guidelines for research suggested by Goodwin (2002) and Wellington (2000) when conducting research with human subjects.

All participants were treated with respect and sensitivity. The ethical issues pertinent to this study included negotiations and dissemination of information, human rights and values, informed consent and voluntary participation, privacy and confidentiality and inclusion and exclusion.

#### **3.9.1 Negotiations and Dissemination of information**

As I indicated earlier in the research, permission was requested in writing from the Western Cape Education Department, the Metro South Education District, schools and Itinerant Learning Support Educators. All participants signed a consent form for participation in the study. In terms of dissemination it is noted that all participants have a

right to the information. Participants were involved in decision-making throughout the process. Most research projects including this study conform to widely accepted principles such as: obtained informed consent, ensure that participation is voluntary, preserve confidentiality, privacy etc. (Swann & Pratt, 2003).

### **3.9.2 Human Rights and Values**

I was committed to conduct this research ethically by respecting the human rights, value orientations and religious denominations of all participants. I undertook not to allow personal value orientations and beliefs to influence this research in any way. All participants were treated fairly, with consideration, with respect and honesty (Goodwin, 2002).

### **3.9.3 Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation**

Obtaining informed consent ensures that all information regarding possible advantages or disadvantages participants may be exposed to, are followed and emphasis must be placed on accurate and complete information from the onset (Strydom, 2005). Nobody should be coerced into participating in a research project, because participation must always be voluntary (Neuman, 2003). Participants were not coerced to participate in this study. I entered into an agreement with participants that clarified the nature of the research and the responsibilities of both parties. They were requested to provide written consent after being fully informed about the aims and objectives of the research. No attempt was made to deceive or mislead participants in any manner. Principles such as openness and transparency were employed throughout the study. All participants were invited and participated voluntarily in the study.

### **3.9.4 Privacy and Confidentiality**

Privacy implies the element of personal privacy, while confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner which can be ensured by coding and anonymity (Strydom, 2005). The participants were assured of anonymity by the researcher who would thus conceal their identities and ensure that participants'

transcripts would not to be accessed by anyone. Personal or intimate questions were avoided in order to ensure privacy. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained at every stage of the study.

### **3.9.5 Inclusion and Exclusion**

The researcher ensured non-discrimination throughout the findings-collection process (Wellington, 2000). All participants had an opportunity to respond to the interview questions. Equal participation was ensured by the researcher by means of a coding system. The researcher posed all questions in such a manner that each participant could respond. The small focus groups also ensured optimal response opportunities for participants.

Finally, feedback was given to participants as part of the final dissemination process. Although the main aim for disseminating this research is a thesis for the requirements of a Masters' degree, the results will also be returned to the participants.

## **3.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented the research paradigm that was used for the purpose of this study. It provided an outline of the research methodology and the research process. It gives details with regard to theory of a qualitative research design. In particular, it explained the case study method as this was the method by which the data were collected. Focus group techniques were used, their interviews recorded and transcribed and a thematic approach was used to analyze the findings. In conclusion, issues regarding trustworthiness were discussed and the ethical guidelines for this study were presented.

The next chapter presents the findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapter three, the research design and methodology of the study was discussed. This chapter presents the findings collected regarding the perceptions of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators and their perceived challenges of providing support within an Inclusive Education Framework. As a result, it presents the findings and it illustrates the relevant themes that emerged from the findings.

Below follows the research questions and the relevant themes that emerged from the findings.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as challenges in supporting learners with barriers within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?

How do Itinerant Learning Support Educators perceive their role within the Inclusive Education framework?

What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as successes in supporting learners with barriers within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?

#### **4.3 PERCEPTIONS OF CHALLENGES**

Participants were asked to describe the challenges they experienced in supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning and development as part of the learning support that they provide at the two schools that they are allocated. The challenges described by the participants included the following:

Carrying out duties of other professionals

- Educator Support
- Parental Support

Limited understanding of the Inclusive Education Paradigm

Unrealistic workloads for Itinerant Learning Support Educators

- Co-ordinating the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST)

Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities and unclear job descriptions

Lack of resources

Lack of accommodation

Negative attitudes from the mainstream educators towards Itinerant Learning Support Educators

Inadequate time for learning support

Inappropriate quality management performance measurement

Lack of support for Itinerant Learning Support Educators

#### **4.3.1 Carrying out duties of other professionals**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators implied that they were expected to perform duties of other professionals which included educator support and parent support. Educator support would primarily be conducted by District Officials such as Learning Support Advisors and Curriculum Advisors whilst parent support included support that should be provided by School Psychologists or School Social Workers.



#### 4.3.1.1 Educator Support

The participants stated that they assisted or trained educators to adapt and differentiate the curriculum for learners experiencing barriers to learning. Over and above the training, informational support are provided to educators in the form of handouts containing information about practical activities associated with development and perceptual skills, motor skills, assessment methods for numeracy and literacy and various other forms of support related to the use of behavioural principles, especially that of positive reinforcement. In addition, Itinerant Learning Support Educators were expected to assist mainstream educators to complete Institutional Level Support Team referral forms as well as referral forms to special schools. Despite this being perceived as part of their role, Itinerant Learning Support Educators felt overwhelmed by the unrealistic overload of educator support expected.

One participant said:



**No, look, whenever there is a form to be filled in then there is frenzy. Everybody is running around, show me again man. They have been doing it for the past five years just to fill out the Institutional Level Support Teams form and even for the application to special schools. The learning support teacher must fill in the forms even if you have given them a booklet and have supported them.**

Another participant said:

**Ek moet selfs al die vorms in vul. Die onderwysers doen niks nie. Ek verkies om die vorms self in te vul want as ek vir hulle die vorms gee dan kry ek dit seker die einde van die jaar terug en dit wil sê ek het niks kinders om te onderig nie.**

**(I am even expected to fill in forms. The teachers do nothing. I choose to complete the forms myself because when I do give them the forms then I will**



**most probably get it back at the end of the year which means that I will not have any learners to teach)**

#### **4.3.1.2 Parental Support**

Some of the participants expressed with concern that parents thought that Itinerant Learning Support Educators could solve some of their social problems. For example, Itinerant Learning Support Educators were expected to solve problems such as truancy, trauma emanating from parent divorce, emotional, sexual and physical abuse. When schools were faced with these social-emotional cases they automatically refer the case to the Itinerant Learning Support Educator.

Furthermore, Itinerant Learning Support Educators also reported that they provided information to certain parents who found it difficult to deal with children that experience learning difficulties. This information included explaining various learning difficulties, and identifying and addressing these difficulties. Individualized programmes were worked out for the parents to support their children at home, such as learning support activities in the areas of numeracy and literacy. If these efforts were not effective, the Itinerant Learning Support Educator would refer the parent to the District Based Support Team for further support and intervention. They would conduct interviews with parents and educators in order to locate the primary barrier by investigating extrinsic factors which could attribute to the learning difficulty.

It appears that it was required of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator to support the parents with regard to the social, emotional and psychological challenges in addition to the barriers to learning and development that learners experienced.

Furthermore, the Itinerant Learning Support Educators indicated how burdensome it was for them when they were expected to perform roles such as counsellors and social workers by counselling parents, solving daily problems as indicated earlier and providing the parent with some form of home program to support the learner at home as well.

The Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that they provided academic and emotional support to the parents of the learners who are in the learning support program at the school. In terms of emotional support, the Itinerant Learning Support Educators felt that they were expected to work like social workers in the manner in which they assisted parents. Furthermore, Itinerant Learning Support Educators claimed to have provided some advice to parents on where and how support services could be accessed for the identified social needs of the learners. Sometimes they gave parents advice about social and emotional issues by referring cases beyond their competencies to other specialists in the specific fields such as psychologists or occupational therapists.

One participant said:

**Hulle verwag as die leerder na jou toe kom en in twee dae moet jy die kind kan help of dit sosiaal was of kindermisbruik dan verwag hulle jy moet dit kan uitsorteer. Somige ouers sien jou selfs as die sosialewerker by die skool**

**(They expect that when the learner comes to you then in two days you should be able to help the child whether it is social or child abuse, then they just expect you to sort it out. Some parents see you as social workers at school)**

Another participant stated:

**Where I get distracted is where I have to help with everybody else's social problems any time of the day. People always think that you can help with everything. `Jy moet nou help met `n ouer wat bo op jou staan en die ouer kannie weggaan noe voordat jy nie vir hulle gehelp het nie`.**

**(You are expected to help parents immediately and the parent does not leave until you help them).**

One participant said:

**I would work out an IEP for the child and then me working closely with that IEP and consulting with the teacher and the parent to work with the IEP.**

Another participant said:

**Sometimes it's just that the child needs to be sent to Dr. Fairburn (School Doctor) for instance or to the school psychologist and the parents or the teacher.**

One participant said:

**Ek voel dat jy word oorlaai met werk. Dit is te veel vir jou as een person te hanteer. Met die gevolg is jy moet hierso help and daarso help en dit laat vir jou disorieenteerd.**

**(I feel that one is over burdened. It is too much for one person to handle. As a result, you must help here and help there which makes you disorientated).**

Another participant said:

**I am not a counsellor. So you are more the counsellor or social worker than you are the teacher.**

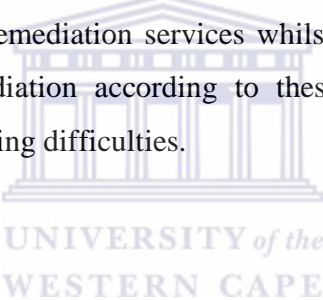
This section highlighted that Itinerant Learning Support Educators found it very challenging and overwhelming to provide psychological and social services to parents. This role for Itinerant Learning Support Educators was found to be very overwhelming because most of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators were not professionally skilled and trained to provide these specialist services to parents. The findings suggest that there were unrealistic expectations which posed many challenges for Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

#### **4.3.2 Limited understanding of the Inclusive Education Paradigm**

All the participants indicated that their core function was to provide learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning. Learners are assessed by the Itinerant Learning Support Educator and the results of the assessment informed the development of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). However, the findings showed that there is a mismatch between the educators understanding of providing learning support and remedial teaching. The quotations that follow indicate the perceptions or mismatches of Itinerant Learning Support Educators in terms of the difference between learning support and remedial.

In terms of remedial support, five participants viewed their role to be to withdraw special needs learners from the mainstream class and provide remediation. Nine participants maintained that they provide remediation services whilst the other five noted that they offer learning support. Remediation according to these participants has to do with diagnosis and fixing of the reading difficulties.

One participant claimed:



**I would say there is definitely a difference. Your approach is different because now you don't only give support to child but you also go and give advice to the teacher as to what she can do with the child and also the parents and give advice to them.**

Another participant noted:

**Well with remedial you have to find what the child's weakness is and then you have to work on that. Say for instance it is the b-d or the b-d-p confusion then you are going to focus on that and you are going to do some exercises to try and remediate that so that is how I function. There is a period where the whole school does remedial.**

One participant said:

**I don't think that there is any difference because learning support is in actual fact remedial and that is the child who has a problem in a learning area and you have to remediate that problem and then send the child back to his class. But in our case the learners that come to us, very, very few of them are learning support, they are mostly the old adaptation.**

One participant added:

**In the old days remedial cases used to be referred to the remedial teacher via the psychologist. The psychologist would assess the child and then the child has an average IQ and has a backlog in maths or in language. Now the TST refers the child to the learning support teacher.**

Another participant added:

**Support is obviously withdrawing children with learning barriers and supporting the teacher and the parents. We call the school psychologist and they don't always come so sometimes we call a private psychologist who I recommend to come and assess the learner.**

It is clear that not all the Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South were working within the same paradigm and that there were mismatches between their perceptions of the concepts learning support and remedial support. These could have implications for pedagogy, practices and the support that individual learners receive at different schools within the same Metropole. In addition, this section indicated that the Itinerant Learning Support Educators who participated in this study did not have a common understanding about their roles and responsibilities. This was evident in that some of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators were working within the remedial framework whilst others claimed to work within a Learning Support framework. This in itself illustrates that the role of Itinerant Learning Support Educators is diverse with broad expectations. However, this alludes to the fact that not all Itinerant Learning

Support Educators received an official job description from the Western Cape Education Department. Each participant identified different roles from other Itinerant Learning Support Educators. On the contrary, they identified one common understanding with regards to their primary responsibility which was to support learners who experience barriers to learning. The findings therefore suggest that there is a lack of understanding of the inclusive education paradigms and a unified consensus between a remedial and learning support framework.

### **4.3.3 Unrealistic workloads for Itinerant Learning Support Educators**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators implied that they have unrealistic workloads to perform such as co-ordinating the Institutional Level Support Teams (ILST).

#### **4.3.3.1 Co-ordinating the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST)**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that their role on the Institutional Level Support Teams also differs. In most cases an Itinerant Learning Support Educator was expected to take the leading role on the Institutional Level Support Teams by being the co-ordinator. This role included the setting up of the Institutional Level Support Team meetings and the facilitation of discussions on learners that are referred for additional support. They found themselves ensuring that the Institutional Level Support Teams meet regularly. In some cases the Institutional Level Support Team only comprised of a principal and an Itinerant Learning Support Educator.

However, the Western Cape Education Department discourages that Itinerant Learning Support Educators become the co-ordinator of the Institutional Level Support Team because they are not school-based which means that they are not at the same school every day.

One participant stated that:

**Before there was an Institutional Level Support Team at my one school but it was not functioning and there was no Institutional Level Support Team at**

**my other school. Somebody else must be the co-ordinator but you will find that the Itinerant Learning Support Educator is the co-ordinator because with the referrals and the forms you will find that the forms becomes your baby and everybody else will look at you and want to know from you what to do.**

Another participant said:

**I agree with the previous speaker that I also do have to take a leading role. At both my schools I am the co-ordinator. On the ILST your sole purpose there is completing the forms, window dressing for when the teams come for promotion and progression and being the co-ordinator.**

One participant said:

**Even though the department said that we must not be the co-ordinator of the ILST, we are still expected to do it.**

#### **4.3.4 Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities**

Generally, the Itinerant Learning Support Educators felt that their roles are more demanding than the school-based Itinerant Learning Support Educators. They reported that being itinerant implies servicing two different schools, under two principals. More often than not these principals had different demands from that of the Western Cape Education Department. This lack of common understanding created a range of confusions and uncertainties among Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study. One reason for the confusions cited was that not all of them received a job description. Due to the lack of an official job description Itinerant Learning Support Educators have created their own job descriptions. Often these job descriptions became overwhelming and it opened up possibilities of Itinerant Learning Support Educators being exploited by schools, principals and mainstream educators. In terms of the different expectations from the principals and staff members, the Itinerant Learning Support Educators felt that the expectations were too demanding. This resulted in Itinerant Learning Support Educators

having different roles at each school and this resulted in challenges for the Itinerant Learning Support Educator in relation to function and perform efficiently.

Furthermore, Itinerant Learning Support Educators needed to fit in with the school where they are placed, fitting in with the context and culture of that school. It appeared that many principals and staff members were not aware of the role of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator. On the other hand, when principals and staff know the Itinerant Learning Support Educator's job description, it made it somewhat easier for them to understand the role of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator.

One participant said:

**I actually have two roles... the expected role from the education department and the role expected from the schools.**

Another participant added:

**I think the only thing for me is that the principals or the educators expect from you to supervise when an educator is absent. That's the only problem that I have. They actually don't realize that you also have work to do.**

A participant said:

**It's a very autocratic principal. So the principal demands everything. When you busy in the class then that time when he calls you then you must listen and then you must pay attention now.**

Another participant said that:

**In terms of your day to day running at the school it depends on the mood of my principal, really because if he is in a good mood then you can go ahead with your class. But if he is in a bad mood then you can be sure that man is going to scratch out something that isn't there now and he's going to start looking and questioning you.**



A participant said:

**It is like they said we are an entity on its own and you don't fit in with any of your schools and any of the clicks of the schools. It creates problems for you.**

One participant said:

**We were given a job description that very first year when it started, remember? I don't think that we are sticking to that job description. It definitely goes beyond that.**

Another participant added:

**I never ever got a job description. I've never received anything and I did speak to one of my advisors about it last year and the year before and she told me don't worry too much about it now.**

Further a participant noted:

**I have an old job description I received at Oatlands in Simons Town. That's quite a number of years ago. That's the only one I have.**

One participant said:

**I think my principal studied the job description in 2003 so with the result when educators give me work then he say that is not part of my job description and at both my schools I have the principals on my side. So I can use that all the time.**

The above findings show that there is a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities. The lack of a clear job description poses enormous challenges in supporting learners. However, the findings also hints that if the leadership at schools are knowledgeable about the job descriptions of Itinerant Learning Support Educators then it could facilitate better working conditions for Itinerant Learning Support Educators. It is apparent that Itinerant

Learning Support Educators were not completely sure about their job description. Some have received a job description in 2003 and many others have not received a job description at all.

#### **4.3.5 Lack of resources**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators claimed that there was a lack of resources as well as lack of access to resources such as computers, copy machines and printing facilities at the schools. The Itinerant Learning Support Educator had to ask permission from the deputy principal to access the computer lab at the school whilst the other staff members could access the computer lab at their leisure.

One participant said:

**In terms of the computer room I'm only allowed in the computer room with a senior. I cannot be there on my own. Now you tell me who is my senior there? It's frustrating.**

Another participant added:

**I can't even make copies. I can only make 200 copies per child per year or I don't know what. I have to ask people to do it for me so that is a big challenge.**

Some schools purchase stationery for the staff but not for the Itinerant Learning Support Educator. It therefore became very difficult for Itinerant Learning Support Educators to provide optimal support to the learners experiencing barriers to learning.

One participant said:

**You are not even included with the stationery at the schools. You don't get everything that you should get and you spend a lot of money. Everybody is getting their things, the pritt and books get sent to them and then you stand last in the line all the time.**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators also reported that they have to purchase their own educational charts and games. It was mentioned that this could be very expensive when Itinerant Learning Support Educators have to do this at both schools. Sometimes they shared the resources they purchased between the two schools in order to cope with supporting the learners effectively. This also made Itinerant Learning Support Educators feel that they did not belong to any school. This led to feelings of despondency, and inadequacy which had a negative impact on the provision of support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development.

One participant felt:

**I think the another challenge is the amount of money you spend is double out of your pocket because now you have to buy two of everything, two prep books, two files, two whatever, whatever, whatever. Everything that you have to buy, you have to buy double.**

Another said:

**Everybody is getting their things, the pritt and books get sent to them and then you stand last in the line all the time. If somebody has to move out of a class you are the first one to go. I was chucked out of my class many times. You know and every time I paint the room because the room looks terrible. I think that's why they move me to paint and decorate the rooms. So we always end up at the short end of the stick. It takes money out of your pocket.**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators also reported that they have to cart their resources from school to school because their schools did not provide the necessary resources. This is problematic because loading and unloading of resources can be very time-consuming which in this case took up valuable time for planning and support.

One participant said:

**You have to cart your resources from school to school sharing you resources between the schools. You can't even belong to a lift club because you move up and down.**

The findings thus suggest that carting and acquiring resources has become a major challenge for Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the attempt to support learners experiencing barriers to learning and development.

#### **4.3.6 Negative Attitudes from mainstream educators toward Itinerant Learning Support Educators**

Generally most of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators experienced major challenges working between two schools especially in terms of attitudes toward Itinerant Learning Support Educators and being accepted at the schools. They reported experiencing negative attitudes from some mainstream educators.

Some of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators have reported that they were deliberately made to feel as outsiders or that they were labelled as belonging to or as being from the department. The Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that they did not feel part of the staff at both schools because they only visited the school two to three times per week. In actual fact, Itinerant Learning Support Educators were on the staff establishment (that is the list of educators allocated to a school) of the Metro South Education District department and not on the school's staff establishment. Itinerant Learning Support Educators generally reported that they felt that they did not belong anywhere because they were labelled being Metro South Education District officials or representing the department. Itinerant Learning Support Educators are seen as not belonging to a particular school. One of the main impacting factors is that the principals and educators do not know or understand their roles at the schools and as a result they experience bad attitudes from their mainstream colleagues. They felt that they have to

prove themselves constantly to their respective schools and the principals are not making it easy for them.

A participant said:

**You don't actually belong to the school and they often tell you that also because you are not part of the staff establishment because like the school-based teachers they belong there, they are part of that school and you've been there how many ever years. With the itinerant teachers, today you here tomorrow you gone.**

One participant said:

**In my experience I don't belong anywhere. The least of things like your birthday is not important to the staff because you are labelled as working for the department. Your birthday is not even displayed like the rest of the staff.**

#### **4.3.7 Insufficient time to provide adequate learning support**

On average, Itinerant Learning Support Educators saw their learners twice or thrice a week for about 30 minutes per session. Educators received timetables for the learning support program; however, time was wasted between periods when learners have to be fetched from their classes because some educators forget to send the learners to the learning support class. Itinerant Learning Support Educators have reported that they spend about 20 minutes in actual contact time with the learners which do not do justice to learning support.

One participant said:

**I can only get in 20 minutes of learning support to the learners because it takes forever for those learners to get to you. If you don't have an intercom system then it is even worse because now you have to send out your call cards and then with the type of learners you have you find yourself having to run**

**around. If you do send one of the learners you find that they get lost on their way. So at the end of the day you sit with something like 10 to 15 minutes per lesson which is not going to happen. You know what I mean? What can you really teach? What have you done thus far since the beginning of the year?**

#### **4.3.8 Inappropriate quality management performance measurement**

Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) is a performance management system which has a monetary value attached to it. Itinerant Learning Support Educators are rated as post level 1 mainstream educators for IQMS. Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that their job descriptions were linked to IQMS hence with no job description in place they are unable to meet the required rate for IQMS. However, it appears that the performance standards are not really addressing the requirements of Itinerant Learning Support Educators. They reported that this has a negative impact on their performance scores because they are rated as post level one mainstream educators as opposed to being rated or measured uniquely as Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Further, not all Itinerant Learning Support Educators have received a job description nor have they received a framework for planning. As it were, IQMS had a direct impact on salary.

One participant said:

**I can't come up with anything of what the Metro South Education District is supporting us with because I don't know who to go to. I can only go to my advisor. The advisors will come to you with the IQMS and tell you no you can't get more than two because you were not trained for that and that you did not get specialized training but then you are in the position. Your class looks too much like the mainstream. If you have a problem then your advisor will help you to solve it but further than that I don't see any support coming from the Metro South Education District because they don't listen to our complaints.**

Another participant added:

**They don't tell you how you must run your program or what you must do in your class or how you must select your learners. You do it because of the knowledge that you do have. You don't even know if you are on the right track but they don't come and support you but then they tell you no you are on the right track, no this is right but when they come it's for IQMS and then they tear you apart and this is not right and that is supposed to be here.**

#### **4.3.9 Lack of accommodation**

The findings show that accommodation at the schools also was also raised as being a challenge. Itinerant Learning Support Educator reported that they were moved constantly out of a class, into smaller rooms, libraries, staff rooms and resource rooms with no consultation in most cases.

One participant reported that when she came to the school one day she was told by the caretaker that she could no longer use a particular classroom and needed to move to a smaller room. She was not consulted, was not informed by the principal either and when she confronted the principal she was told that she just had to accept it. Practices such as these seemed to create a sense of instability for Itinerant Learning Support Educators which has an impact on the learners as well. It was reported that it leads to a sense of instability and that it becomes disruptive when learners were exposed to constantly adapting to a new learning environment. This particular Itinerant Learning Support Educator found it extremely challenging when organizing the classroom and displaying the resources when the venue was constantly moved or changed.

One participant said:

**When I came to the school this year, I was put out of my class, nobody told me anything. When I got to the school, they were busy moving my things out. I was put out of my class last year because they wanted to extend the computer room and they never did that. They gave it now to somebody that**

**has a sports program after school that are not using it during the day but I can't go back there now because it's their room now.**

Another said:

**I wanted to say that accommodation is a major problem with the LSEN educator. I'm in learning support for a year and a half now and for the year I have been in four different classes. I think that's so unfair because you do such a lot for the school so we are the people that get the least out of everything.**

#### **4.3.10 Lack of support for Itinerant Learning Support Educators**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators generally felt that they were not being supported enough by the Metro South Education District and the Western Cape Education Department especially in terms of their planning. It seemed as if advisors were not conveying the same message with regard to expectations for Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Itinerant Learning Support Educators felt isolated because they felt that they get no support from the schools and not much support from the Metro South Education District. They had to find their own means for planning support and interaction with the schools. Some Itinerant Learning Support Educators received a framework for planning from their advisors. This framework guided them in terms of their planning. However, this was not the case for all Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Those Itinerant Learning Support Educators that received a framework appeared to have more confidence in their planning and their approach in accommodating learners experiencing barriers to learning. The Itinerant Learning Support Educators who did not receive a framework found it very challenging to plan appropriately for the learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. Therefore, not all learners received adequate support from Itinerant Learning Support Educators in addressing their barriers to learning and development.



One participant said:

**With the challenges and successes report, I've been writing the same challenges for the past five years and no answer.**

Another participant added:

**I feel that they don't actually support you. They only come to your school when they are told to do some business.**

One participant said:

**I plan mainly from assessments that I've done, that I've picked up weaknesses and areas that has problems and then I work from there. I draw up programmes from there. I don't do my planning with this RNCS. I don't know how to do it so I don't do it. I do it the old way and I get very low marks when it comes to IQMS. I still plan the old way.**

When support was given it made a big difference, as one participant made it clear:

**Just something I want to add. In the past we got absolutely nothing in terms of a framework, however this year we received a CD with programmes on to help make it easier in the learning support classroom.**

The findings highlights the challenges that Itinerant Learning Support Educators face as these challenges appear to be directly influencing the function of Itinerant Learning Support Educators at schools but more importantly it highlights how these challenges could impede the vision of the department's inclusive education ideals.

#### **4.4 ROLES OF ITINERANT LEARNING SUPPORT EDUCATORS**

The participants were asked to describe their roles and responsibilities. Nine Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that their roles at the schools are primarily to

support the learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development, as well as to support the educators and the parents.

The Itinerant Learning Support Educators claimed that they provided informational and curriculum support as well as support with psycho-social issues. The nature of support identified ranged from support in the classroom, provision of additional literacy and numeracy intervention activities to the educators, as well as support and feedback to the parents regarding the progress of the learners.

One participant mentioned:

**In terms of my one school you are seen as the social worker, psychologist, and nurse whatever they need you are supposed to be.**

Another participant said:

**My rol eintlik by daai een skool is net basically remedial...vir wiskunde en geletterdheid.**



**(Actually my role at the one school is basically remedial...in numeracy and literacy)**

Further another participant added:

**Learning support is where you just help the teacher to get to know the curriculum and help the child to adjust to the new curriculum.**

One participant said:

**At my schools I am the co-ordinator.**

Another participant added:

**At the other school it is expected of me to actually co-ordinate the Institutional Level Support Teams even though we were told not to. I even have to complete the Institutional Level Support Teams referral forms.**

Further another participant noted:

**I know that at the District they say that the application forms to special schools are not the learning support teacher's duty to complete but if you leave the future of that child in the teacher's hands, well I'm sorry I can't do it.**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators did not seem to have a common understanding regarding their roles and responsibilities regarding at schools. Not all Itinerant Learning Support Educators have received a job description which evidently influenced their roles and responsibilities but more importantly their practices and quality of support that they provide.

#### **4.5 PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESSES**

The question posed at this stage attempted to determine what Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as successes achieved within the context of Inclusive Education. The findings show the following successes:

Improvement / change in learner behaviour


Professional development of mainstream educators

Placement in special schools

#### **4.5.1 Improvement / change in learner behaviour**

The Itinerant Learning Support Educators felt rewarded when they saw progress in the learners attitude and behaviour towards their learning development. In addition, learner behaviour with regard to discipline also improved in the learning support classroom. They have reported that after the exposure to additional learning support, learners became more confident and in some cases they returned to the mainstream class displaying more confidence and became more interactive in group activities in the mainstream class. In some instances, some of the educators changed their attitudes towards the Itinerant Learning Support Educator because of the learners' increase in confidence levels. Learners experiencing language barriers were also benefiting from the learning support program because some of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators were investing some of their time in supporting learners.

A participant said:



**I think my success is when a child returns to class and s/he can actually raise his / her hand, s/he has enough confidence to also participate in class or when the educator reports back and say that the child is able to do something in class s/he was never able before. The smallest success makes a difference to me.**

One participant said:

**I would regard that after you have your children we try to instil confidence into the child. Now when the child goes out and the educator tells you that the child is different you know then that I regard as successes because that is when the child becomes eager in their class.**

One participant said:

**Like we have at the Afrikaans school we have many different children whose parents put them in the Afrikaans class? They come from an English school**

**and come to an Afrikaans school so they don't have a learning barrier but have a language barrier and that's where I assist the child with vocabulary.**

The findings highlights that Itinerant Learning Support Educators based their successes on the progress and development of the learners.

#### **4.5.2 Professional development of mainstream educators**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that they found that the educators on their staff, who have studied further, and have done the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) with Special Needs as a module, were much more supportive of the role of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator, as well as the role of the educator support team. It seemed that awareness and capacity building assists with educator interest and participation in the Institutional Level Support Teams.

One participant said:

**I find that since educators that are doing the ACE course they are more interested in Inclusive Education and it makes your task much easier. The educators are more involved in the EST and the co-ordinator now takes her role more serious. So I am just a member of the EST now.**

Another participant commented:

**The educators who are studying are becoming more aware of things because our co-ordinator has finished her studies and she is very enthusiastic about the EST and the researcher role is to work out programmes.**

#### **4.5.3 Placement in Special Schools**

Itinerant Learning Support Educators have reported that in most cases they have found placement for learners who experience barriers to learning at special schools. This implied that referrals and placement appears to be the most successful solution for learners experiencing barriers to learning. Referrals to special schools require application

forms to be completed. Some of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators assume the responsibility for the completion of these forms in order to ensure that the applications will be processed. They also felt that they were personally responsible for the successful placement of their learners. Hence Itinerant Learning Support Educators have reported that since they have placed their learners in special schools they receive positive responses from the special schools and the parents because the learners are doing well in terms of working independently and participating fully in society.

One participant said:

**Another success to me is when some of our learners get placement at special schools or school of skills because before educators did not know how to apply to the special schools. Hence I am also taking responsibility for the referrals to special schools. I have trained the staff in placement of learners to special schools, however they still are not competent to complete the application forms for placement, not even the deputy principals or the school principals know how to complete the forms.**

Another said:

**I would regard success as the completion of the forms and successful placement of the learners at special schools.**

One participant said:

**I would regard success as the completion of the forms and successful placement of the learners at special schools.**

Another participant added:

**When I pick up the learners that I send to Batavia some of them come back with such lovely stories and then I think goodness me I'm so glad that I could get them in there because you know he has just shone since he's there.**

## 4.6 CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators are experiencing successes and challenges. They are however facing much more challenges than successes. The following chapter will discuss the themes that emerged from the above findings.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presented the results of the findings. The patterns in the findings revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators found their roles and responsibilities in an inclusive paradigm context at the Metro South Education District challenging and demanding in relation to policy implementation and practical constraints. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of these findings and the consequent challenges it revealed in relation to Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the context of Inclusive Education.

In the discussion, this chapter makes a link between the findings of the study and the literature in relation to the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in an inclusive education paradigm in the Metro South Education District.

#### 5.2 CHALLENGES FACING ITINERANT LEARNING SUPPORT EDUCATORS

This section discusses the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the case study. The findings in this study highlighted challenges such as:

Limited understanding of the Inclusive Education paradigm

Unclear roles and the responsibilities of Itinerant Learning Support Educators including a clearly demarcated job description

- Unrealistic workloads for Itinerant Learning Support Educators

Co-ordinating the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST)

Insufficient time to provide adequate learning support



Lack of resources and accommodation for Itinerant Learning Support Educators

Negative attitudes of mainstream educators towards Itinerant Learning Support Educators

Lack of support for Itinerant Learning Support Educators and

Inappropriate quality management performance measurement.

### **5.2.1 Limited understanding of the Inclusive Education paradigm**

The findings revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators were not all working within the same paradigm. One of the reasons cited was that some Itinerant Learning Support Educators were not adequately trained or orientated in the principles guiding an Inclusive Education paradigm and inclusive practices.

The findings highlight that the former remedial educators, who are now Itinerant Learning Support Educators were still making use of remedial approaches to identify and support learners that are referred to them with learning difficulties. In other words, they assessed learners and then attempted to fix the 'problem' i.e. operating in the medical paradigm. The findings suggest that these Itinerant Learning Support Educators merely aimed to fix the problem within the learner.

On the other hand, there was a group of Itinerant Learning Support Educators who claimed to be using a holistic approach where barriers to learning and development are located within the entire system. Hence they claimed to collaborate with mainstream teachers, parents and the education department official in supporting learners.

As a result, the findings suggest an inconsistency with regard to the nature of support provided by Itinerant Learning Support Educators. This inconsistency has implications for the effective functioning of Itinerant Learning Support Educators. This is of great concern because it implies that learners experiencing barriers to learning and development are not being supported holistically. Further, this could imply that not all the

learning barriers are considered for intervention. As a result, there might be a lack of optimal learning support for learners experiencing barriers to learning.

The findings therefore suggest that Itinerant Learning Support Educators have a limited understanding of the Inclusive Education paradigm and this poses implications for the effective functioning of learning support for the Itinerant Learning Support Educators and the learners. In this study they reported that learners were separated from the mainstream classes for short periods. This practice is therefore similar to the withdrawal concept and the remedial education approach of a withdrawal or pull-out system. However, the Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study did not perceive the withdrawal of learners as posing any challenges for inclusion. The findings suggest that Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard withdrawal of learners with barriers to learning as supporting the learners.

There is growing evidence that separate education programmes have not been beneficial for students with disabilities (Wade, 2000). Subsequently, although the former remedial teachers in this study were confident about the benefits of the remedial approaches they used, it can be argued that the remedial education has its own limitation.

### **5.2.2 Unclear roles and responsibilities of Itinerant Learning Support Educators, including a clearly demarcated job description**

This study revealed that, the functions of Itinerant Learning Support Educators at schools included being a social worker, being an institutional or school level support co-ordinator, and being responsible for applications and placement of learners at a special school. Being itinerant and having all the latter responsibilities distracted the Itinerant Learning Support Educator from his/her core function. The majority of the participants in the study claimed that they were not certain about their roles and responsibilities at schools. One of the reasons cited was that they were not given an official job description by the Department of Education. However, some Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that they have received a copy of the job description but that it has changed by word of mouth so many times that they are still unsure of their roles and responsibilities.

Further, they felt that their roles differed from context to context. According to these participants, this lack of clarity created confusion and that this confusion was in fact exploited at some schools.

In addition the participants in this study felt that the expectations of principals and staff at both schools were overwhelming. They expressed feelings of frustration, overload, burdensomeness, depression, feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness. Lortie (1975) states that uncertainty about job description leads to emotional flooding, feelings of frustration, a sense of inadequacy, a sense of failure, anger at the learners and despair. As a result, Itinerant Learning Support Educators' feelings of frustration could have a negative impact on the standard and quality of learning support offered to the neediest learners.

Further, the findings also reveal that in most cases the school principals did not have a copy of the learning support educator's job description. Eleweke and Rodda (2001) argue that a job description will address many of the loopholes hindering the provision of appropriate services in inclusive settings. The findings then suggests that a job description would provide guidelines on what kind of support services should be provided, who should provide it, and where and how it should be provided. In addition providing clarity on roles and responsibilities would enable Itinerant Learning Support Educators to develop a common vision, shared values, and agreements about what constitutes good practice.

### **5.2.3 Unrealistic workloads for Itinerant Learning Support Educators**

The core function of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators was to assist the learning support educator at the schools that they were allocated but the findings showed that their workload was often blurred and varied depending on the contexts that they found themselves in. As mentioned in chapter 4 in 4.2.3, Itinerant Learning Support Educators in my study were also expected to solve problems such as truancy, trauma, and emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Therefore, principals and schools expected from these Itinerant Learning Support Educators to also counsel and advise those parents who

could not deal with their child's emotional, psychological or social dysfunction. However, not all Learning Support Educators were trained to do counselling.

### **5.2.3.1 Co-ordinating the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST)**

As mentioned before in the study, each school was responsible to establish a school based support team synonymously known as Institutional or School Level Support Team who is responsible for the implementation of inclusive practices at the particular school. However, the findings showed that there was a perception that many schools were not very open to the establishment of an Institutional or School Level Support Team and hence made the Institutional or School Level Support Teams the responsibility of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator. Further, at some schools it was automatically expected of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators to co-ordinate the Institutional or School Level Support Teams. As a result, it became part of the workload of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

This situation then became challenging as the Itinerant Learning Support Educators were then expected to co-ordinate two Institutional or School Level Support Teams as they worked between two schools. The participants in the study claimed that they had unrealistic workloads. For example, Itinerant Learning Support Educators stated that they had to deal with learning barriers of learners at schools, complete referral forms and provide counselling and advice to parents in conjunction with co-ordinating the Institutional or School Level Support Teams at school.

Participants reported that it was very challenging for them to co-ordinate two institutional or school level support teams because these teams required a co-ordinator present at the school on a daily basis. As the Itinerant Learning Support Educators were not present daily, it had a negative impact on the support provided by the Institutional or School Level Support Team. According to the Itinerant Learning Support Educators, their work ultimately relies on the referrals done by the institutional or school or school level support team who should provide the names of learners experiencing barriers to learning. If learners were not referred to the Itinerant Learning Support Educator then there would

be no learners in the learning support program. This could have resulted in perceptions that Itinerant Learning Support Educators were not performing or executing their duties. This was especially so when learning support advisors visited the Itinerant Learning Support Educators and they requested a daily register, the list of learners as well as referral forms which the Itinerant Learning Support Educator did not have because learners were not referred. Participants therefore generally expressed emotions such as anger, anxiety, aggression or depression due to these unrealistic workloads.

In summary, the findings thus suggest that Itinerant Learning Support Educators have enormous workloads that might ultimately have a negative impact on the provision of learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. In addition, despite the fact that Itinerant Learning Support Educators show empathy for the learners experiencing barriers to learning and development, the huge workload meant that they were highly strung and frustrated which hampered the effective implementation of Inclusive Education at these schools.

#### **5.2.4 Insufficient time to provide adequate learning support and the withdrawal of learners**

Most of the participants in this study claimed that the time they spent on providing learning support to learners in schools is inadequate. Itinerant Learning Support Educators were expected to withdraw learners from the mainstream class for one period twice a week and thereafter learners returned to the mainstream class. Itinerant Learning Support Educators have a maximum of 12 learners in a group and approximately 160 learners in total between two schools. At some schools they were expected to withdraw learners from grade 1 to grade 7.

The class timetables of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators can accommodate eight periods a day and they spend two to three days at a school. Learners received a maximum of 20 minutes of support per session because mainstream educators forget to send the learners and learners take their own time to get to the learning support class. There is a lack of continuity and stability with the learners because the Itinerant Learning Support

Educators do not see the learners' every day. These logistical issues highlight that Itinerant Learning Support Educators might not have sufficient time to address barriers to learning and development in the mainstream.

### **5.2.5 Lack of resources and accommodation**

Alberta Educators' Association (2006) notes that support and appropriate resources are essential because without it, students will continue to be segregated from their non-disabled peers, even though `placed` in proximity to them. In addition, The Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) clearly emphasizes the need for optimal resources to provide effective and optimum support to learners experiencing barriers to learning. Yet, the findings revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators still have limited access to resources.

Most of the participants in the study claimed that they were not provided with appropriate resources at their schools. Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study claimed that they have limited access to resources at their respective schools. For example, some schools did not provide stationery and having limited access to computers at the schools because they were not considered part of the school's staff establishment. This was perceived as a challenge because they stated they were unable to provide optimal learning support to the neediest learners. The Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that they made use of their personal finances to purchase materials and resources for their classes and in most instances they were forced to share their resources between the two schools due to lack of resources.

Furthermore, Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that in addition to resources, accommodation was a challenge for them because they were not at the same school every day. Some of them reported that at any point in time their classrooms were also used for other activities without any consultation. Some Itinerant Learning Support Educators reported that they were forced to move to many classes and venues in one year and they sometimes found that there was no venue to work in.

The findings therefore suggest that a lack of resources and accommodation could negatively impact on the effective provision of learning support in mainstream schools. It is generally acknowledged that adequate resources and conducive physical learning environment enhances service delivery and factors such as the absence of support services, relevant materials and support personnel are the major problems of effective implementation of inclusion (Eleweke & Rodda, 2001). It is therefore argued that inadequate resource provision was one of the major obstacles to the implementation of meaningful programmes such as learning support in many developing countries (Eleweke & Rodda, 2001).

### **5.2.6 Lack of support for Itinerant Learning Support Educators**

The findings reveal that the majority of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators did not get the necessary support from the WCED and the Metro South Education District especially in terms of planning. The participants claimed that they did not receive regular class and school visits from their respective advisors. Some Itinerant Learning Support Educators complained that their learning support advisors only visited their schools when the principals complained about them thus supporting the principal instead of them. Subsequently, Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study felt very isolated.

The findings further reveal that the majority of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators were qualified and trained in remedial, psychology and foundation phase. Hence they lacked adequate training in Inclusive Education theory and pedagogy. The findings therefore further suggest that the participants felt that they were thrown at the deep end and simply have to find their own way in terms of planning. Each learning support educator planned on his/her own. Only some of the Learning Support Educators have received a framework from their advisors and those who had a framework displayed more confidence in their approach than those Itinerant Learning Support Educators who did not received one. As a result, those without a framework reported that planning for the learners being withdrawn from the mainstream classes was challenging because the requirement is that each learner must have an individual support plan (ISP). Itinerant Learning Support Educators claimed this to be difficult because they are only able to



develop ISP for the learners in conjunction with the Institutional or School Level Support Team and the educator.

The findings suggest that Itinerant Learning Support Educators were not getting sufficient support from the department of education in order to provide the effective support to our most needy learners as expected. This could result in Learning Support Educators not providing optimal or sufficient support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. This was indeed the case in India where many learners with special needs were forced to drop out of the support program due to lack of relevant support and resources which clearly suggests that factors such as lack of support services could be a major stumbling block towards effective implementation of inclusion (Chadha, 1999; Chadha, 2000). In essence one can therefore argue that Itinerant Learning Support Educators cannot be expected to meet the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development if they did not get appropriate support from schools and the department of education.

### **5.2.7 Negative attitudes from mainstream educators toward Itinerant Learning Support Educators**

The majority of Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the study reported experiences of negative attitudes from mainstream educators at the schools where they are based. They claimed that staff members were very resistant to the training offered by Itinerant Learning Support Educators and that they perceived Itinerant Learning Support Educators as departmental officials and outsiders trying to 'teach' them how to do their jobs. The findings suggested that this left Itinerant Learning Support Educators feeling like outcasts and that they experienced a sense of being outsiders.

The findings suggest that if principals and schools understood the role of Itinerant Learning Support Educators, then mainstream educators would develop more positive attitudes and respect toward Itinerant Learning Support Educators. It is therefore argued that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive



practices since teachers' acceptance of the policy of inclusion is likely to affect their commitment to implementation (Hornby, Atkinson & Howard, 1997).

### **5.2.8 Inappropriate quality management performance measurement**

The majority of the participants raised their concerns about the inappropriate manner in which they were being measured in terms of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). This IQMS is a performance management system that has monetary value attached to it. Itinerant Learning Support Educators are rated as post level one mainstream educators for IQMS. With no job description in place they were therefore unable to meet the required rate for IQMS. As such, Itinerant Learning Support Educators felt they were being 'marked down' because they did not meet the performance standards that are included in the evaluation. Subsequently to that, Itinerant Learning Support Educators were measured according to the performance standards and performance indicators applicable for a post level one educator. This had a negative impact on their performance scores because it appears that the performance standards were not really addressing the requirements of Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Itinerant As it is now, IQMS has a direct impact on salary.

In essence the findings suggest that Itinerant Learning Support Educators experienced many challenges within the context of Inclusive Education. The following section highlights the perceptions of successes experienced by Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

## **5.3 PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESSES**

This section highlights the indicators of success for Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the case study. These successes include:

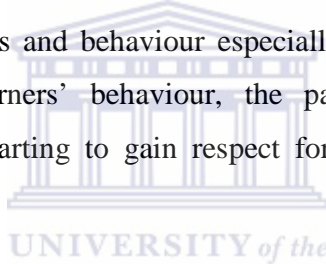
Early identification and Learner progress

Professional development of mainstream educators

## Placement in Special Schools

### **5.3.1 Early identification and Learner progress**

The Itinerant Learning Support Educators indicated various experiences of success one of which was early identification and learner progress. Some of participants claimed that they regarded early identification and learner progress as a success when some learners displayed some progress in the learning support program. The participants reported that the learners progressed well when they were identified early in the foundation phase. In addition early identification of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development also resulted in positive outcomes for learning support interventions. The sooner the barrier was identified to sooner the gap or learning backlog was bridged. Furthermore, some Itinerant Learning Support Educators claimed that mainstream educators reported a difference in learners' attitudes and behaviour especially in terms of confidence. As a result of the change in learners' behaviour, the participants reported that some mainstream educators were starting to gain respect for the Itinerant learning support educator in some cases.



These findings then suggest that Itinerant Learning Support Educators measure their personal success of the implementation of Inclusive Education differently. There were very few Itinerant Learning Support Educators who reported progress of learners in the learning support program. This could be influenced by many factors such as the manner in which Itinerant Learning Support Educators measure their own success which vary from individual to individual. This implies that success for individual Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study varied from individual to individual and from context to context.

### **5.3.2 Professional development of mainstream educators**

The Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the study claimed that they collaborated with mainstream educators, who have studied further or doing the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) with Special Needs. These mainstream educators were much more

supportive of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator and very supportive of the learning support program. Further, they claimed that since the Itinerant Learning Support Educators exposed mainstream educators to special needs and Inclusive Education by means of workshops and staff training, some of them were inspired to learn more about inclusion. Consequently it seems that awareness, academic development and capacity building has positive spin offs in terms of mainstream educator interests' and participation in the Institutional or School Level Support Teams. This is in line with research that has shown that personal enrichment leads to empowerment and creates awareness because professional knowledge needs to be developed in terms of lifelong learning (Moreno, 2007).

### **5.3.3 Placement in Special Schools**

Most of the participants regarded placement of learners in special schools as one of their main successes. Hence Itinerant Learning Support Educators based their success on the successful placement of learners at special schools. Special School placement steers toward a functionalist approach, which segregated learners with Special Needs via diagnosis and treatment and thus it excludes learners from the mainstream (Naicker, 2001). This process of placement then speaks to the medical model or deficit model and does not form part of the Inclusive Education discourse. The researcher is of the opinion that placement at special schools promotes the notion of exclusion and segregation. It is concerning when engaging with the findings which suggested that despite the rigorous move toward inclusion, Itinerant Learning Support Educators were still regarding placement for learners with barriers to learning and development at special schools as the first resort or option.

The findings therefore suggest that despite the fact that placement at special schools is only recommended for high intensity level support, most Itinerant Learning Support Educators were considering placement as the first option for moderately impaired learners. This then alludes to a gap between an inclusive policy and inclusive practices that leans strongly towards a functionalist approach.

## **5.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators within the framework of Inclusive Education in the Metro South Education District of the Western Cape Education Department. The findings highlighted that itinerant learning support educators experienced enormous challenges in their work. These challenges included a limited understanding of the Inclusive Education paradigm; unclear roles and the responsibilities of Itinerant Learning Support Educators including a clearly demarcated job description; unrealistic workloads for Itinerant Learning Support Educators; insufficient time to provide adequate learning support; lack of resources and accommodation for Itinerant Learning Support Educators; negative attitudes of mainstream educators towards Itinerant Learning Support Educators; lack of support for Itinerant Learning Support Educators and; inappropriate quality management performance measurement. These challenges are hampering the effective functioning of Itinerant Learning Support Educators within the context of Inclusive Education. This in turn hampers the effective implementation of Inclusive Education policies in Metro South Education District in the Western Cape Education Department.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings and makes recommendations that could assist and support the Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study in to be able to function more effectively in an inclusive education paradigm.

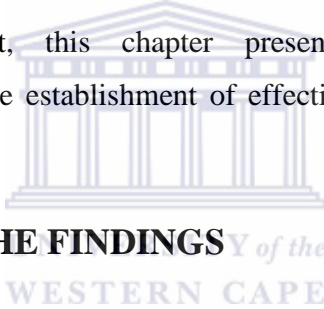
## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study was initiated from an aspiration to make a positive and meaningful contribution to the implementation of Inclusive Education and the establishment of effective learning support services in South Africa. A qualitative approach was employed to explore the challenges facing learning support services in South Africa.

In order to highlight the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators within the framework of Inclusive Education in Metro South Education District in the Western Cape Education Department, this chapter presents a summary and makes recommendations for the future establishment of effective learning support services in South Africa.



#### **6.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

##### **6.2.1 Introduction**

Most of the challenges related to the roles and responsibilities expected for Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Itinerant Learning Support Educators had different perceptions and views about their roles and responsibilities and the findings suggested that they were working in two opposing paradigms in providing support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development.

##### **6.2.2 Challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators**

The findings of this study revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators were faced with many challenges and that policy development is essential to provide clear and distinctive guidelines for service delivery. Many challenges emerged from this study and these included lack of job description, lack of understanding of the Inclusive Education

paradigms, unrealistic workloads, and negative attitudes toward Itinerant Learning Support Educators, inadequate time for learning support and withdrawal of learners, inappropriate quality management performance measurement and lack of support for Itinerant Learning Support Educators.

### **6.2.3 Summary of successes**

The findings of this study revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators experienced minimal successes as Itinerant Learning Support Educators. These successes included placement in special schools, measurement of personal success for Itinerant Learning Support Educators and professional development of mainstream educators.

## **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study acknowledges that Itinerant Learning Support Educators work within different contexts and they are faced with vast challenges in the context of Inclusive Education. In other words, the effective implementation of Inclusive Education is hampered by these challenges. This section therefore makes recommendations to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and Metro South Education Department (MSED).

Given the challenges discussed in this study, these recommendations are based on the assumption that implementing Inclusive Education is a good thing. The recommendations are organized around the key issue relating to the roles and responsibilities of Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Most of these recommendations could be considered and possibly pursued across the province and districts. It should be noted that some of these recommendations are not new. However, all emerged from the findings of this study. One could therefore argue that many of them reinforce recommendations that have already been made by different studies at national level.

### **6.3.1 Unclear roles and responsibilities of Itinerant Learning Support Educators, unrealistic workloads and a lack of job description**

The findings suggested that there is a clear lack of explicit roles and responsibilities. The study found that blurred guidelines exposed the Itinerant Learning Support Educators to unrealistic workloads from schools, staff and principals. The findings suggest that Itinerant Learning Support Educators often have to assume roles as Institutional or School Level Support Team Co-ordinator at both schools as well as act as social workers and psychologist. Further, clear guidelines are necessary with regard to the staff establishment that Itinerant Learning Support Educators should belong to. The study found that Itinerant Learning Support Educators felt that they did not know where they belong. For example, they felt that even though they were on the staff establishment of Metro South Education District, they are based at the two schools and not at the District. As a result, Itinerant Learning Support Educators found that they were on the boundaries of both staff establishment i.e. school and district. As such in this study, participants experienced feelings of isolation and being an outsider.

Further, the findings revealed that there were some Itinerant Learning Support Educators who have been working for years without an official job description. This lack of job description has added to the confusion of their roles and responsibilities. In addition, it has positioned Itinerant Learning Support Educators in an exploitative position – principals and schools developed their own job descriptions, unique to a specific school, for Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Itinerant Learning Support Educators were therefore exposed to three different jobs descriptions, one from the Western Cape Education Department and one each from the two schools that they serviced respectively.

Furthermore, the findings disclosed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators are often exposed to unrealistic workloads at the schools. These include co-ordinating the Institutional Level Support Teams, counselling and advising parents. However, Itinerant Learning Support Educators are not professionally trained to counsel and provide social work services. Their roles on the Institutional Level Support Team includes completing the referral forms to special schools for all learners at both schools, providing psycho-

social support to the learners, educators and parents, capacitating mainstream educators to deal with barriers to learning and development, and ultimately ensuring the smooth running of the Institutional Level Support Team, with very limited support from the mainstream educators and the principals.

Furthermore, Itinerant Learning Support Educators had to take a leading role in the Institutional Level Support Team co-ordinating the Institutional Level Support Team at both schools. Itinerant Learning Support Educators found themselves in this position because their daily functioning requires the effective functioning of the Institutional Level Support Team. If the Institutional Level Support Team did not function then no learners would be referred to the learning support program. Additionally, the findings highlighted that this function was mostly expected from schools or principals and that Itinerant Learning Support Educators experienced it as time consuming and burdensome.

In conclusion, the findings revealed a lack of provincial support at district and school level, no clear job descriptions, confusion of roles and responsibilities, extensive workload, limited support from principals and mainstream educators. Based on the finding it is recommended that:

- The Western Cape Education Department should provide all schools with a clear job description of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators in order to ensure that principals and mainstream educators are au fait with the roles and responsibilities of Itinerant Learning Support Educators
- The Western Cape Education Department must ensure that all Itinerant Learning Support Educators are in possession of an updated job description
- The job description should be used as a framework to develop a learning support policy for the specific context of the school
- The Western Cape Education Department should ensure that all district officials such as learning support advisors have clear guidelines and a framework in which to support the Itinerant Learning Support Educators. In addition the Western Cape Education Department should monitor the kind of support provided by learning support provincially



- The Western Cape Education Department should ensure that all mainstream educators be trained and skilled about Inclusive Education
- The Western Cape Education Department should create regular platforms to encourage regular feedback from educators about the challenges they may experience with regard to the implementation of Inclusive Education
- The Western Cape Education Department should employ strategies to encourage the enabling of the Education White Paper 6 in order to effectively manage the implementation of Inclusive Education
- Mainstream educators must be optimally skilled in basic counselling, networking and referrals in order to collaboratively support Itinerant Learning Support Educators to address barriers to learning and development
- Parent skills training should be introduced so that parents are more equipped to deal with the barriers to learning and development that their children face

### **6.3.2 Limited understanding of the Inclusive Education paradigm**

Some Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study were working predominantly within the remedial education paradigm, whilst other Itinerant Learning Support Educators were striving to work within the Inclusive Education paradigm. Itinerant Learning Support Educators referred to remedial education and Inclusive Education synonymously. This is a clear indication that Itinerant Learning Support Educators lack clarity on their roles and responsibilities as Itinerant Learning Support Educators within an Inclusive Education paradigm. In addition the findings suggest that there was a continued focus on a functionalist approach despite the shift towards inclusive education. An example of this was evident when Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard the placement of learners at Special Schools as a success. Education White Paper 6 clearly suggests that a shift from placement and encourages the integration and inclusion of learners with barriers to learning and development in the mainstream.

This study also revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators were constantly referring learners for placement at special schools. Total inclusion leaned toward the notion that all learners have the right to equal and quality education despite barriers to

learning and development. This implies that the movement towards inclusion discourages placement of learners in special schools. Special schools should be the last resort for high intensity support for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development and should not be the first consideration for intervention and support. This study found that Itinerant Learning Support Educators lack adequate theoretical understanding of inclusive education. This was clear as Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study had different perspectives on remedial teaching versus learning support. Some Itinerant Learning Support Educators perceived remedial support synonymous to learning support implying that the medical approach is synonymous to the social approach. This clearly implies that there is a clear lack of solid theory underpinning the practices of Itinerant Learning Support Educators. It is therefore recommended that:

- The Western Cape Education Department should ensure that the Head Office Officials, District Officials, Itinerant Learning Support Educators and mainstream educators make paradigm shifts if total inclusion is to be achieved
- Formerly trained remedial educators who come from the old system should be re-orientated and trained in the Inclusive Education paradigm / philosophies
- Newly appointed Itinerant Learning Support Educators should be orientated about the role and responsibilities of Itinerant Learning Support Educators
- Itinerant Learning Support Educators should receive in-service training about new developments with Inclusive Education policies; and The Western Cape Education Department should review the type of provision for optimal support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development in the mainstream and special schools
- The Western Cape Education Department should provide clear guidelines on placement within the Inclusive Education paradigm
- The Department of Education should ensure that mainstream schools understand policies about total inclusion by providing orientation and training about inclusion to all educators

### **6.3.3 Lack of resources and accommodation**

The findings revealed that the participants in the study experienced enormous challenges to access resources and adequate accommodation. For example, they were not included in the disbursement of resources at the schools and usually were the last to receive funds available for resources. In addition, they did not have accommodation conducive for learning support. In most cases their accommodation was also used for other school activities which had a negative impact on service delivery for Itinerant Learning Support Educators. This resulted in principals and mainstream educators thinking that the Itinerant Learning Support Educator was in any case not present at the school on a daily basis. Hence his or her venue was regarded as being available for extra mural activities at school and in some cases venues were constantly changed throughout the year without consultation with the Itinerant learning Support Educator. The following recommendations are suggested:

- The Western Cape Education Department should allocate a budget to schools specifically for the provision of learning support in the learning support class
- The Western Cape Education Department should ensure before learning support posts are allocated to schools that schools have the capacity to accommodate the Itinerant Learning Support Educators. If not, then the Department must provide accommodation that will be conducive to the provision of learning support

### **6.3.4 Insufficient time to provide adequate learning support and withdrawal of learners**

The study revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators experienced huge challenges regarding time constraints and the withdrawal of learners. As discussed in chapter 5, it was highlighted that Itinerant Learning Support Educators missed out on valuable time when learners were withdrawn from the mainstream class. This was due to mainstream educators forgetting to send the learners and learners forgetting or not being sure where the venue was due to constant changes of venues. The following recommendations are suggested:

- Principals should ensure that mainstream educators rigidly follow the learning support timetable
- The Western Cape Education Department could review the withdrawal policy by piloting the effectiveness of in-class support from Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Instead of withdrawing learners, the Itinerant Learning Support Educator could support the learner in the mainstream class
- Learning Support policies should review the effectiveness of working itinerantly that is, working between two schools. This will create consistency and stability for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development

### **6.3.5 Lack of support for Itinerant Learning Support Educators**

The findings highlighted that Itinerant Learning Support Educators have different qualifications and training backgrounds which have implications for the type of learning support services provided to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. Their qualifications and training predominantly included remedial, psychology or foundation phase training. Therefore, they were not adequately trained in an inclusive education theory and pedagogy approach as is encapsulated in the Education White Paper (6). The findings also suggested that the lack of support structures and a framework resulted in Itinerant Learning Support Educators working and functioning differently from each other. The following recommendations are suggested:

- Principals should ensure that mainstream educators rigidly follow the learning support timetable

### **6.3.6 Inappropriate quality management performance measurement**

The findings highlighted that Itinerant Learning Support Educators were measured or moderated with the exact same tool as post level one mainstream educators. This resulted in Itinerant Learning Support Educators often scoring low because the criteria do not reflect the role that the Itinerant Learning Support Educators have to perform at schools. This would have implications for the monitoring and evaluation of Itinerant Learning

Support Educators in terms of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). IQMS has a monetary value and progression of salary attached to it. The unfair criteria in this tool deprive many of the Itinerant Learning Support Educators from salary progression. This led to a lack of motivation and Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study felt undervalued. Based on the finding it is recommended that:

- The Integrated Quality Management System should be specific for Itinerant Learning Support Educators

### **6.3.7 Placement in Special Schools**

The study revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators were regarding placement in special schools as a success and were constantly referred learners for placement at special schools. Special schools should be the last resort for high intensity support for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development and should not be the first consideration for intervention and support. It is recommended that:

- The Western Cape Education Department should review the type of provision for optimal support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development in the mainstream and special schools
- The Western Cape Education Department should provide clear guidelines on placement within the Inclusive Education paradigm
- The Department of Education should ensure that mainstream schools understand policies about total inclusion by providing orientation and training about inclusion to all educators

## **6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The researcher was exposed to a number of limitations at the onset of this study. These included:

- Very limited literature and research available on Itinerant Learning Support Educators and the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators in the South African context
- All the Itinerant Learning Support Educators in Metro South Education District were invited to participate in the study, however, only 14 responded positively

The above-mentioned limitations justify further research in the pursuit to overcome barriers to learning and support at schools in the Western Cape Education Department.

## **6.5 FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

The study revealed that Itinerant Learning Support Educators had different perceptions and views about their roles and responsibilities and also that they were working in two opposing paradigms to support learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. This study therefore recommends that the Western Cape Education Department reviews the inclusive education policies as well as itinerant learning support policies in order to enable total inclusion as envisaged by the authors and initiators of Education White Paper 6.



In conclusion, The Western Cape Education Department should ensure that universities offer courses for Itinerant Learning Support Educators about Inclusive Education, with a strong focus on theory that is integrated with pedagogy and practice. The Itinerant Learning Support Educators in this study experienced many challenges. There was a lack of understanding when it came to the roles of Itinerant Learning Support Educators. Because many of them did not have access to an updated job description, it left gaps for schools to exploit the services of Itinerant Learning Support Educators. School management teams and mainstream educators did not completely understand the role of the Itinerant Learning Support Educator. As a result Itinerant Learning Support Educators were sometimes used to supervise classes; they were expected to co-ordinate the Institutional Level Support Teams at both schools; had limited access to resources had no control over accommodation and they were unable to make up for lost time when they missed a group. Inadequate time for learning support was another major challenge. They

had up to 12 learners in a group with eight periods a day. This implies that Itinerant Learning Support Educators supported approximately 160 learners between the two schools. Groups were only seen twice a week with literally 20 minutes actual contact time. With this in mind, one can state that the Department of Education is not doing justice to the philosophy of supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning. It appears that Itinerant Learning Support Educators were left to fight their own battles at the respective schools, be it with Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) matters or even planning. There was limited support from learning support advisors. The Itinerant Learning Support Educators simply did not feel supported by the schools, the district and Department of Education. They perceived themselves as outcasts unable to fit in and who at the same time had no support systems in place.

In essence this chapter provided a comprehensive list of recommendations in an attempt to improve itinerant learning support in Metro South Education (MSED) in the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). These recommendations emerged from extensive research into the available literature on special needs and inclusive education and a systematic research approach that was applied in this study. The researcher is of the opinion that the Western Cape Education Department should take cognizance of these recommendations as doing so might enhance and strengthen support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. In my opinion by addressing the challenges facing Itinerant Learning Support Educators, I believe that total inclusion can be possible in South Africa by 2020.

It is therefore hoped that this study will foster innovation in facilitating the effective functioning of Itinerant Learning Support Educators within the framework of Inclusive Education. Further and most essential, valuable insights gained from this study could contribute to the Department of Education's policy regarding itinerant learning support within the context of Inclusive Education.



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# APPENDIX 1

## WCED Circular 00219/2003

Close this circular

Maak omsendbrief toe

Buyela emva

Navrae  
Enquiries  
IMibuzo  
Telefoon  
Telephone  
IFoni  
Faks  
Fax  
IFeksi  
Verwysing  
Reference  
ISalanthiso

**D FLANDORP**  
**H HUFKIE**

**021 467 2000**

**021 467 2996**

**7/1/B**  
**20030604-0015**



**Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement**

**Western Cape Education Department**

**ISEBE IeMfundo IeNtshona Koloni**

CIRCULAR : 0219/2003  
EXPIRY DATE : NONE



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

**TO: CHIEF DIRECTORS, DIRECTORS, HEADS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND  
CHAIRPERSONS OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES AND COUNCILS OF EDUCATIONAL  
INSTITUTIONS**

**BRIEF SUMMARY:** *Emphasis on the policy and procedures regarding the awarding and utilisation of  
ELSEN posts at mainstream schools.*

**SUBJECT: ELSen EDUCATOR POSTS AT MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS**

1. Policy measures in the above regard are contained in [Circular 47/2002](#) of 24 April 2002. However, it has been noted with concern that not all role-players have total clarity on the allocation, utilisation and management of posts for learners with special education needs (ELSEN posts) (CS Educator post level 1 posts) at mainstream schools.



2. The core policy of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), as stated in paragraph 2 of the above-mentioned circular, is that all ELSN posts are linked to the establishment of EMDCs so that they can be utilised in the most economic manner at one or more schools.
3. Should an ELSN post have been allocated to a school before 1 July 2001 and if it has been filled on a permanent basis since then, the school will retain the post for as long as that incumbent of the post fills it. Such post will be indicated as additional to the staff establishment of the school. However, as soon as the post become vacant, it will be transferred to the EMDC district in which the school is situated. These posts may only be utilised for learners with special education needs and in terms of WCED policy. This implies that the posts can only be utilised in the following ways:
  - The ELSN educator renders support to educators with regard to as many learners with special needs as possible within the ordinary mainstream classes.
  - If the above-mentioned approach cannot be applied effectively in a specific class or school, the ELSN educator can withdraw (for one or more teaching periods) the learners with specialised needs from the mainstream classes temporarily and return them to their classes as soon as possible after they have received the necessary support.
  - If there are a few learners in a school who cannot be supported effectively in the above-mentioned ways, the ELSN educator can keep them with her or him in a core group, but these learners must join the mainstream classes as often as possible.

For further clarity regarding the above-mentioned working methods, please contact the learner support co-ordinator and facilitator at your EMDC.

4. The EMDC director concerned will, at his or her discretion and taking the needs of the school which loses or will lose the post into account, utilise the post in terms of paragraph 3 above and paragraph 3 of the above-mentioned circular. This vacant post will be advertised in the Vacancy List in the customary way and the EMDC will be solely responsible for the filling of this post in terms of the prescribed processes. A school served by the post may also be implicated in this process.
5. Schools which have a need for ELSN posts must submit written requests to their EMDC director concerned for consideration if and when such posts become available.
6. Please bring the contents of this circular to the attention of all governing bodies.

**SIGNED: J.H. HURTER**

**HEAD: EDUCATION**

**DATE:** 2003:11:13

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Meld asseblief verwysingsnommers in alle korrespondensie / Please quote reference numbers in all correspondence /

Nceda ubhale iimombolo zesalathisa kuyo yonke imbalelwano

Grand Central Towers, Laer-Parlementstraat, Privaatsak X9114, Kaapstad 8000

Grand Central Towers, Lower Parliament Street, Private Bag X9114, Cape Town 8000

**Close this circular**

**Maak omsendbrief toe**

**Buyela emva**



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS

**1. What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as challenges in supporting learners with barriers within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?**

- 1.1 What would you regard as challenges in your role as itinerant learning support educator?
- 1.2 Describe the length of the support sessions for the groups and what is the maximum amount of learners in a group?
- 1.3 Describe the support structures available for LSEN educators.

**2. How do Itinerant Learning Support Educators perceive their role within the Inclusive Education framework?**

- 2.1 What does an Itinerant Learning Support Educator do?
- 2.2 What is an average day at your base school?
- 2.3 What is an average day at each school?
- 2.4 Describe your role at your base school. What is your role?
- 2.5 Do you find that your “other” duties at your schools distract you from your role as Learning Support Educator?
- 2.6 Explain what you think the difference is between a remedial educator and an itinerant learning support educator.
- 2.7 In what ways are your duties different from working as a remedial educator?
- 2.8 Describe your role in the ILST.

**3. What do Itinerant Learning Support Educators regard as successes in supporting learners with barriers within the context of an Inclusive Education framework?**

- 3.1 What would you regard as successes in your role as itinerant learning support educator?
- 3.2 Describe the framework of macro and micro planning in learning support in the District?

## APPENDIX 3

### COPY OF CONSENT FORM

**STUDENT** : Ms. Agnetha Arendse  
9 Chelsea Avenue  
London Village  
Mitchells Plain  
Tel : 021 374 3991 (h)  
082 941 5260 (c)  
[aarendse@vodamail.co.za](mailto:aarendse@vodamail.co.za)

**SUPERVISOR** : Mrs. Sindiswa Stofile  
UWC  
Bellville  
Tel : 021 959 3819 (w)  
083 650 3819 (c)  
[sstofile@uwc.co.za](mailto:sstofile@uwc.co.za)

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Date : March 2008

Dear Colleague

My name is Agnetha Arendse. I was an itinerant learning support educator at Harvester Primary and Lantana Primary Schools. I am currently a Masters' Degree :Education Psychology student at the University of the Western Cape. I am currently busy with a research project and would like you to participate.

The research will involve 20 Learning Support Educators from EMDC-Metropole South.

The research attempts to investigate the challenges facing itinerant learning support educators in the context of inclusive education in the EMDC-Metropole South. This research question is one that is pertinent within the discussions amongst learning support educators and I thought that it would be beneficial to research this topic of concern.

**Aims of the Research :**

This study aims to investigate the challenges facing itinerant learning support educators in the context of inclusive education, in the EMDC-Metropole South.

You have been selected to participate in this research for the following reasons :

- You are an itinerant learning support educator
- I would be able to obtain valuable insight about the challenges facing itinerant learning support educators in the context of inclusive education.

I would like you to be interviewed in a group of itinerant learning support educators and would like you to complete a questionnaire as well. Both processes will be confidential and under no circumstance will your identity be revealed. The recordings will be in such a manner that you cannot be identified and after I have recorded and analyzed the information, the tape recordings will be destroyed. During the course of the research, I will take utmost care that no information will be available to anyone except myself.

The following is very important :

- You should volunteer to participate.
- All relevant information regarding the research will be available to you.