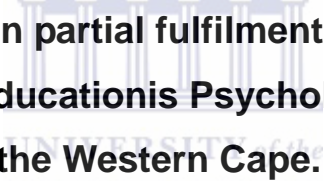


INVESTIGATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT STRATEGIES BY TEACHERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE OF A SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE.

RENE HAZEL JOORST

A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Educationis Psychology in the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape is centered in the background. It features a classical building facade with a pediment and columns, with the text 'UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE' overlaid in a light blue font.

Supervisor: Dr. B. Johnson

November 2010

ABSTRACT

INVESTIGATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT STRATEGIES BY TEACHERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE OF A SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE.

Learner support has come under scrutiny after the dismal academic performance of primary school learners over the last decade. Despite an elaborate education policy guiding the practice of teachers in the support of all learners, South African numeracy and literacy levels are rated as being amongs the lowest in the world. The cause of this discrepancy provided the impetus for this investigation.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the implementation of learning support strategies by Intermediate Phase teachers. The study also determined the factors (enhancing or limiting) that impact upon the successful implementation of learning support strategies specifically in a rural school.

The study was conducted at one primary school in the Western Cape. The research participants were ten teachers involved in offering learner support at this school. Focus group discussions as well as in-depth interviews were used to explore the teachers' views of their support strategies. The data was analysed using a thematic approach.

The main finding of this study is that a huge gap exists between inclusive education policy expectations and the actual manifestation of teachers' support to learners with learning difficulties. The findings of the study reveal a combination of external as well as internal and systemic factors working in conjunction and culminating in a lack of capacity amongst teachers. This study recommends a review of policies with the aim of providing opportunities for a thorough understanding of new concepts and practices, focussed and professional development of teachers in the area of learner support and more monetary and infrastructural resources.

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT STRATEGIES
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CAPE.**

KEYWORDS

Education

Democracy

Transformation

Inclusive

Policy

School

Support strategies

Learner and learning support

Effectiveness

Intermediate Phase



DECLARATION

I declare that: Investigating the implementation of learning support strategies by teachers in the Intermediate Phase of a school in the Western Cape, is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Furthermore, this is a mini-thesis of limited scope and should be reviewed as such.

Rene Hazel Joorst



Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the following people:

- **To God, Almighty, for opportunities, strength and wisdom.**
- **To my supportive and understanding husband, Jerome, whose example of academic commitment and perseverance encouraged me tremendously.**
- **To my daughters, Laylah and Zea, for their love, encouragement and understanding.**
- **To Dr. Bridget Johnson for her support, motivation and her tireless efforts during the period of my study.**
- **To the principal and teachers who participated in this research.**
- **To the Western Cape Education Department for permission granted to do this research.**



ACRONYMS

ADHD	:	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
B.Ed	:	Baccalaureus Educationis
DBST	:	District Based Support Team
DoE	:	Department of Education
ILSP	:	Individual Learner Support Plan
ILST	:	Institution Level Support Team
IP	:	Intermediate Phase
SASA	:	South African Schools Act
OBE	:	Outcomes Based Education
WCED	:	Western Cape Education Department

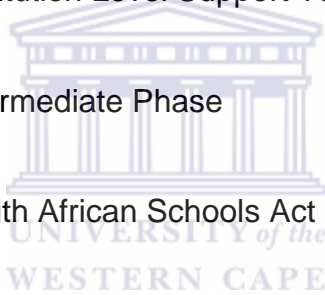


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CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in 1994 served as a landmark for the recognition of the human rights of persons with disabilities. Several incentives were included in this statement, such as, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All and the many United Nations declarations which led to the 1993 United Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 1994).

According to Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001), the South African approach to education is strongly influenced by international trends. Lomofsky and Lazarus contend that South Africa has followed the dominant American education model since the late 1950's, which was based on categories of exceptional physical, sensory and cognitive abilities. Learners with such differences were then placed in special schools which were divided along racial lines and which catered mostly for Whites. This 'medical model', according to Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001:305), "*located the deficit in the learner and resulted in supports being curative*". The medical model promotes the view of a disabled person as dependent and needing to be cured or cared for, and it justifies the way in which disabled people have been systematically excluded from society.

Towards the end of the 1960's, countries like Scandinavia, the United Kingdom and America started with the integration of learners with special needs. The United Nation General Assembly on the 4th of March 1994 adopted a resolution which dealt with equal opportunities for learners with special educational needs (UNESCO, 1994). Part of this resolution states that "education in mainstream presupposes the provision of the interpreter and other appropriate support services. Adequate accessibility and support services, designed to meet the needs of persons with different disabilities should be provided (UNESCO, 1994).

According to Dreyer (2008), the Salamanca Statement distinctly states that inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercising of human rights. This also symbolized a move away from the medical approach which was

still prevalent before.

Introduced to ordinary public schools in South Africa through the adoption of White Paper 6, an inclusive approach to education held the promise of helping to eradicate long held discriminatory practices regarding learners with learning challenges in schools under apartheid (DoE, 2001). White Paper 6 set out to address the needs of all learners in a unified education system (DoE, 2005c). Instead of separate special classes which often led to stigmatization of learners with special educational needs, learners would now be accommodated in ordinary mainstream schools. The spirit of this legislation is premised on the idea that educational support can be offered to learners by teachers who provide multi-level classroom instruction which is responsive to learner needs (DoE, 2001). This, as envisaged by the Salamanca Statement, would help to combat discriminatory practices thereby creating welcoming communities and inclusive societies and achieving education for all (UNESCO,1994).

South Africa faces a daunting task in complying with global moves towards inclusive education versus its local obligation to provide quality education for all. While having to adapt to fierce and competitive global pressures, South Africa is still grappling to come to terms with its racial past. Mere policy changes without real commitment by all stakeholders undermine the ideals of an inclusive society.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The new government after 1994 sought ways to change the education system which was until then based on racial and other differences. Outcomes Based Education (OBE) came into being as one of the initiatives of the White Paper on Education and Training (DoE, 2001). OBE was designed to provide for the diverse needs of learners in South African schools. It was declared national policy in South Africa after 1994 (DoE, 1997). Some of these needs included cultural deprivation, the inability of learners to read and write at an expected level and learners with certain disabilities. OBE was based on the assumption that all learners can achieve. Instead of learners adapting to the system, their individuality is respected and catered for by training teachers in a new education approach. In contrast with the traditional curriculum, OBE was thus aimed at developing teachers' capacities in to respond to the diverse educational needs of learners and their

different levels of performance (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

OBE was filled with new expressions, terminologies and ideologies and while it required teachers to implement strategies on how to help learners with special educational needs, it fell short of making recommendations as to how teachers should go about doing it. Since 1997 the national curriculum was adapted three times (from OBE to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2002, to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in 2007). What was very obvious in this adaptation of the curriculum was the fact that training of specialist learning support teachers was completely eradicated. To compensate for this, the education authorities proposed that teachers should (without training for it) put in place support strategies in order to help learners with special educational needs. Policy was adapted in order to allow learners to progress to a new grade with his or her peers irrespective of whether that learner had met the outcomes of the grade he or she was in (DOE, 2005c).

One of the stipulations in the assessment policy of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of 2002 is that teachers must have proof of support for learners who do not meet the outcomes of the specific learning area. It is expected of teachers to design these support strategies, implement them and administer them so that learners with learning backlogs can be helped in order to be able to progress to the next grade. It appears however, as if teachers implement support activities to learners which do not match the learning disabilities of these learners. It also appears as if teachers design these support activities simply to be seen to have their administration in order. Looking at the growing number of learners at my school who, after receiving learner support, are still not ready to progress to the new grade, the effectiveness of such support activities becomes questionable.

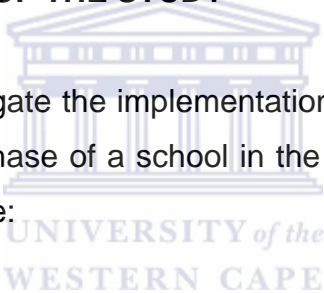
It was these developments in the education system that sparked my interest to investigate and evaluate the implementation of learning support strategies used in schools. I am convinced that an understanding of the implementation of learning support strategies in primary schools can provide an important basis for policy-makers to address this issue adequately.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

During my career as a teacher which spans over more than a decade, I was and still am, part of the transformation process in our country's education system. During this period of transformation in education, I have witnessed and experienced interesting developments in terms of learners with special educational needs. What was particularly interesting to me was the termination of the traditional adaptation classes for learners with special educational needs and their inclusion in the mainstream classes, especially after 1994. I was curious to understand why educational policies concerning learners with educational challenges were changed and how the needs of these learners were going to be addressed within the mainstream schooling. It was this curiosity that prompted me to do this research study.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to investigate the implementation of learning support strategies by teachers in the intermediate phase of a school in the Western Cape. More specifically, the objectives of the study were:

- 
- (a) To understand how teachers perceive support to learners,
 - (b) To understand how teachers implement support to learners,
 - (c) To explore the factors (enhancing or limiting) that impact upon the successful implementation of learning support strategies.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The significance of this study lies in its ability to offer a conceptual understanding of the effective implementation of learning support strategies through the experiences of teachers. The findings of this study will be helpful for the Western Cape Education Department and South Africa as a whole in order to broaden the knowledge-base about the implementation of learning support strategies and to make recommendations for the improvement of support strategies.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

According to Miller and Dingwall (1997), qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers to understand human beings in their social context. The qualitative approach is a multi-perspective approach to social interaction. It is aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing this interaction in terms of the meanings that the subject attaches to it or representing people, actions and events in social life (Mouton, 2001). The ultimate goal, according to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990), is to portray a complex pattern of what is studied in detail so that one who has not experienced it can understand it. I felt that a qualitative approach would best meet the aim of discovering and understanding the role that teachers play in offering learner support.

Following Cresswell's (1998) argument that a case study can be described as an exploration or in-depth analyses of a bounded system, I used a case study as instrument to explore teachers' perspectives of the effect that their support strategies have on their learners at one specific school. This line of thinking is in line with Cohen and Manion's (1994) contention that the case study is an in-depth study of a single case, a school or a community. Leedy (1993) corroborates that through a case study, data are gathered directly from individuals in their natural environment in order to study their interactions, attitudes and their characteristics. In this case study I employed two methods of gathering data, namely interviews and focus group discussions.

Interviews formed my primary method of data collection as it allowed my participants to not only describe their experiences, but also to reflect on their descriptions. The interviews in this study were tape-recorded in line with Smit's (1995) contention that a tape recorder allows a much fuller record than notes taken during the interview. It also means that the researcher can concentrate on how the interview is proceeding and where to go next. The tapes were used for transcription and close analyses.

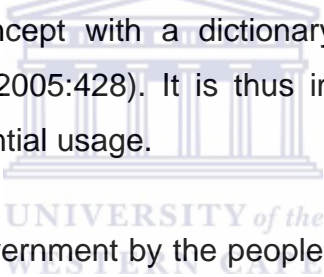
The focus group discussion in this study was employed as "*a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher*" Morgan (1997:06). The respondents had the opportunity to elaborate on statements made and were therefore not limited to specific answers. This method allowed me to explore the

“why” behind participants’ descriptions. These discussions were video recorded in order to ensure that all the conversations, which took place, even the interruptions, were captured.

Data from the responses to the interviews and the focus group discussions was analyzed. The analyzing of qualitative data involved reading and editing of the descriptive interviews and focus group discussions. The data was interpreted and categorized according to themes and patterns that emerged. The research design and methods are explained in detail in chapter three.

1.7 Conceptual analysis

The idea of conceptual analysis is based on the Wittgensteinian theory of language, according to which the meaning of a word lies in its actual use. While it is thus helpful to start one’s analysis of a concept with a dictionary definition, such a definition is insufficient in itself (De Vos, 2005:428). It is thus important to carefully analyse the concepts in its actual and potential usage.

- 
- Democracy** Government by the people, by consensus, by referendum or by means of elected representatives of the people (Oxford, 1983:254).
- Education** Any education and training provided by an education institution (SASSA, 84 of 1996).
- Transformation** Transformation is the process of changing from one qualitative state to another (<http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com>). In this thesis transformation is used as a definition of quality and focuses on the process of enhancement and empowerment of the learner.
- Inclusive** Placing of learners in the mainstream as a matter of human rights, transforming the human values of integration into the

immediate rights of excluded learners (Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Skidmore, 1997).

Policy A deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcome(s) (to be) adopted by government, schools, party, person, etc. (Oxford, 1983:793).

School Refers to any public or private institution registered with the Department of Education to deliver a programme of learning (DoE, 2002).

Support strategies All the activities which increase the capacity of a school to respond to diversity (DoE, 2005). Strategy also refers to a plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal.

Learner Any person, whether a child or an adult, who receives education or must receive education in terms of the Schools Act (SASSA, 84 of 1996).

Learning support Guidance and support to learners, aimed at addressing barriers in (West of England Learning and Skills Research Network, 2002).

Effectiveness The extent to which an activity fulfils its intended purpose or function. This is a measure of the match between stated goals and their achievement Fraser (1994: 104).

Intermediate Phase Consists of Grades 4, 5 and 6 in a primary school (DoE, 2002).

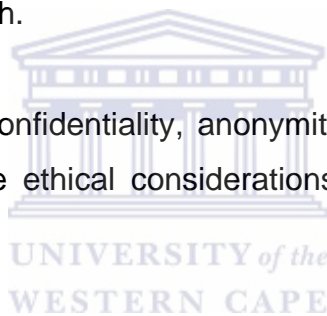
1.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a set of moral principles that offers behavioral expectations about the most correct conduct towards participants (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel &

Schurink, 2005). Within the realm of educational research, ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interest and well being of people are not harmed as a result of the research being done (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Keeping in mind that unique ethical problems might come to the fore when human beings are the objects of study, I used the ethical code as prescribed by the University of the Western Cape's Research Ethical Committee as a guide. I also consulted relevant literature on the subject. With this in mind, I made sure that:

- (a) The research goals were clear to the participants,
- (b) The participants knew that they could withdraw from the study at any stage,
- (c) The results of the research were accessible to them,
- (d) They were assured of no harm or exploitation due to their participation in the research.

Issues of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation also formed an integral part of the ethical considerations and are expanded upon in the following paragraphs.



1.8.1 Informed consent

According to Williams, Tutty and Grinell (1995) informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures which will be followed during the investigation, the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives. I provided all my participants with a letter elucidating to the aforesaid aspects. I also made sure they understood these issues before signing consent forms. I obtained permission from the Western Cape Education Department as well as the school governing body, principal and educators to conduct the research in the school.

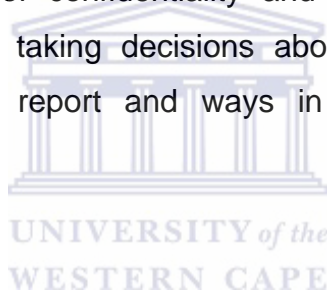
1.8.2 Voluntary participation

Nobody should ever be coerced into participating in a research project, because

participation must always be voluntary (Neuman, 2003). Babbie (2001) calls informed consent “*voluntary participation*”. My insistence on providing my participants with adequate information about the research, their accessibility to data provided by them and their rights to withdraw at any stage, gave my participants a sense of assurance and therefore they participated voluntarily.

1.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were formalized in a letter. This letter stated that data provided by them would be kept confidential and that codes and pseudonyms would be used in order to protect their identities. Platt (1976) alluded to this with his contention that loyalty to those who sponsor the study and those who are studied, violation of secrecy and privacy as well as harm to the individual are important factors in the consideration of confidentiality and anonymity. In these terms, the participants were involved in taking decisions about what would be included and excluded from the research report and ways in which confidentiality would be maintained.



1.9 OUTLINE OF THESIS

This mini-thesis has five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction and overview of the thesis. It sets the background for the investigation, the research questions, the aims and objectives of the research and also an overview of the research methodology. It also includes an outline of the different chapters.

In chapter two, I provide a comprehensive review of the literature which falls within the confines of inclusive education. I focus on providing an understanding of the factors that influence the successful implementation of learning support strategies in unique school contexts.

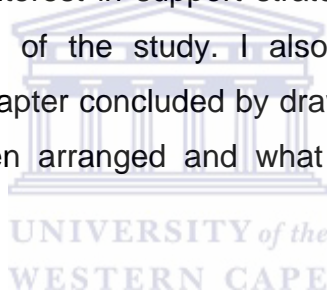
In chapter three, I restate the main aims and objectives of the research. I explain the research design and the research methodology employed. The research participants and the analysis of the data are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations that I applied in the study.

In chapter four, I present the findings of the research. The chapter starts with the contextualization of the research and a discussion of all the responses. The findings are thematised and discussed.

Chapter five presents the interpretation and discussion of the results as well as conclusions. Recommendations for the implementation of learning support strategies are provided. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the study and identifies themes for further research.

1.10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study was contextualized in the field of inclusive education. This chapter seeks to explain why I developed an interest in support strategies in schools. I discussed the context, aims and objectives of the study. I also shed light on the reasons for undertaking the study. This chapter concluded by drawing attention to the way in which the mini-thesis itself has been arranged and what each chapter in the mini-thesis contains.

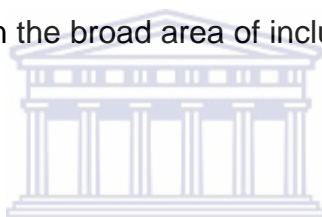


The next chapter will provide a literature overview on inclusive education and education support. Chapter two also sets out to provide literature on factors that might impact on the successful implementation of learning support strategies. It concludes with the theoretical framework that the study is based on.

CHAPTER: 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of literature on special needs education and inclusive education with particular focus on literature relevant to my research question and topic, which is the implementation of learning support strategies. This chapter provides detailed information on educational support to learners, its characteristics, and the principles upon which it is based. This is followed by a section that reviews strategies to support learners who experience barriers to learning. The final part of the chapter consists of a discussion on the present and continuing debates around support to learners and the challenges teachers face in providing effective support to learners. I locate my research study within the broad area of inclusion.



2.2 INCLUSION

According to Swart and Pettipher (2005), inclusion is a complex concept. They point out that international literature provides multiple definitions of inclusion. These range from extending the scope of ordinary schools so that they can include a greater diversity of children (Clark, Dyson & Millward, 1995), to a *“set of principles which ensures that the student with a disability is viewed as a valued and needed member of the community in every respect”* (Uditsky, 1993:88). Some definitions focus on human interaction. Pearpoint and Forest (1992) for example, view inclusion as a way of dealing with difference, while Ballard (1995), Clark, Dyson and Millward (1995) and Rouse and Florian (1996), adopt an institutional perspective and focus on organizational arrangements and school improvement. Inclusion has therefore come to mean different things to different people, to such an extent that authors such as Dyson (2001) and Florian (1998) make us aware of the varieties of inclusion that exist in different international contexts. Mittler (2000) also points out that inclusive education had its origins in the international human rights movement. The term inclusion means more than just mainstreaming because it is regarded as a moral issue of human rights and values as embodied in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which sees inclusion as a part of the creation of an inclusive society (Clark, Dyson, Millward &

Skidmore, 1997). An inclusive education approach reflects a move from a medical deficit or within-child model to a social system change approach (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). From the lens of inclusive education, special needs are perceived to derive from the difficulties or barriers encountered by the individual in interacting with his or her environment. It is the system which is required to adapt in order to accommodate the individual (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). This philosophical view has been represented widely in literature in contemporary psychology (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997; Engelbrecht, 1999). Inclusive education is about acknowledging that all children can learn and need to be supported to bring about changing attitudes. Eleweke and Rodda (2002) see inclusive education as a call for respect of differences.

Although there are different interpretations of the concept and diverse ways in which it is implemented in different contexts, there are a few common threads which run across all varieties of inclusion. Inclusion is about developing inclusive communities and education systems. It is based on a value system that recognizes and celebrates diversity arising from gender, nationality, race, language of origin, social background, and level of education achievement or disability (Mittler, 2000). This implies that all pupils have the right to attend the neighbourhood school, which is important for social reasons. It also means that all teachers are responsible for the education of all children. The curriculum must therefore be adapted to cope with diversity (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). The inclusive education model focuses on shifting from disability theories, assumptions, practices and models to non-disability, inclusive systems of education (DoE, 2002). Voltz, Brazil and Ford (2001) state that effective management of the classroom and effective instructions provided by the teacher are essential components of inclusive settings. For inclusive education to be successful, teachers need to support all learners so that the whole class can benefit.

In summary, although there are nuances in its understanding, the various commonalities which run through inclusion provide a holistic understanding of the concept. It is emphasized that the focus of inclusion shifted away from disability theories to non-disability theories. It is now necessary to look at how inclusion is perceived globally to understand inclusion in the South-African context.

2.2.1 Inclusion Globally

More than forty years ago, the nations of the world, through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, asserted that everyone has a right to education (World Education Forum: Dakar, Senegal, 2000). The impetus of the World Conference on Education for All and the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education have led to an international debate on how schools can become more inclusive. As a result, many countries have reviewed the ways in which they provide quality education for all their young people.

The Salamanca Statement of the UNESCO World Conference On Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (June 1994) states that education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of children's characteristics and needs. The Salamanca Statement was adopted by ninety-four governments and over twenty non-governmental organizations. One of the main resolutions of this conference was that learners with special educational needs should have access to mainstream schools. This should provide them with a child-centered pedagogy that accommodates their needs. These resolutions were strongly influenced by the assumption that mainstream schools with inclusive orientations would be the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, it provides an effective education for the majority (without special needs) and improves the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

In a number of Scandinavian countries, the emphasis of the educational provision for learners with disabilities was shifted from separate special schooling to integration - the placement of such learners in regular schools (Meijer, Pijl & Hergarty, 1994). They were followed in the 1970s by countries such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) (Lipsky and Gartner, 1996; Clark et al, 1997). Italy passed legislation which led to the closure of most special schools (Abbring & Meijer, 1994). Spain adopted inclusion by inviting schools to volunteer and in return receive a reduction in class size as well as the services of a support team (Meijer et al, 1994).

Mitchell (2005) asserts that inclusive education in developed countries are advanced in

terms of socio-economic development, infrastructure and literature, but they differ regarding contexts and cultural values and beliefs in which inclusion is conceptualized. Developing countries face somewhat different social and educational issues from that of developed countries due to the fact that their cultural contexts are different (Kisanji, 1999; Peresuh & Ndawi, 1998). They face many challenges in implementing inclusive education, but since the 1980's there has been a movement towards integration of special education into mainstream in most of these countries. One such country was South Africa.

2.2.2 Inclusion in South Africa

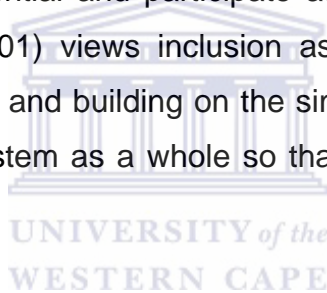
Educational thinking in South Africa has been strongly influenced by international trends. In the early 1960's, South Africa followed the dominant American model by creating categories of 'exceptionality' for physical, sensory and cognitive disability (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Learners with such challenges were placed in special schools, segregated along racial lines, which mostly provided for the educational needs of white children (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

Since 1994, the new democratic South Africa has been in the process of social, political, economic and educational transformation aimed at developing an egalitarian and healthy society (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). The South African Constitution (1996) set the pace for the new paradigm with clauses such as "*There may not be discriminating against any person on the grounds of his race, gender ... age, disability, religion ... or language* (Equity - p.8). *Everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education, training and equal access to education* (Education - p.32)". Further streamlining was needed in order to ensure that what was envisaged in the constitution became part of education policy.

The National Committee for Education Needs and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Services (NCESS) (DoE, 1997) were the outcomes of such a focus. The NCSNET and the NCESS favored an approach that focused on interventions based on transformation of institutions. Both the NCSNET and NCESS endorsed curriculum development through initiatives aimed at providing for diverse educational needs of learners and clearing obstacles to learning and development.

In July 2001, the Ministry of Education (DoE, 2001) launched Education White Paper 6, Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. One of its main aims was to serve as a reminder that the constitution challenges the country's citizens to ensure that all learners strive to reach their full potential (DoE, 2001). In his introduction to White Paper 6, the Minister of Education (Kader Asmal) said that *“the Government is determined to create special needs education as a non-racial and integrated component of our education system”* (DoE, 2001:4).

The South African White Paper 6 (2001) on inclusive education reflects a commitment to the development of an education and training system that promotes education for all. It also fosters the development of inclusive and supportive centres for learners that enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they can develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society. The Department of Education (2001) views inclusion as recognizing and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities. It is about supporting all learners, teachers and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met.

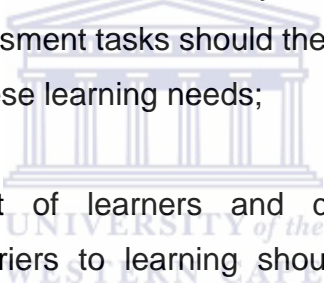


In South Africa, therefore, inclusive education encompassed the recognition and respect of the differences among all learners and building on similarities, supporting all learners, teachers and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs could be met. Structures and processes at all levels of the system that prevented learners from achieving success were highly emphasised (DoE, 2001).

The new curriculum, with its outcomes based approach, is well suited to inclusion (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 1999). Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was based on the assumption that all learners can achieve and instead of learners adapting to the system, their individuality is respected and catered for by training teachers in a new education approach. The following statement emphasizes the fact that inclusion is central in the curriculum: *“Inclusive education and training are about enabling teaching and learning methodologies and curricula. It is also about the maximizing of the participation of all the learners in the culture of educational institutions”* (DoE, 2001: 11, 12 par. 1.1.6 – 1.1.7). In an inclusive system, the

curriculum can respond to the needs of all the learners through flexible approaches and accessible content (DoE, 1997). If inclusion is the goal, then meaningful learning opportunities need to be provided to all students within the regular classroom setting. Matters relating to the curriculum must be flexible, particularly with regards to assessment of learning, teacher preparation and availability of learning support to pupils (Saleh & Väyrynen, 1999). OBE was therefore also aimed at developing teachers' capacities in order to respond to the diverse educational needs of learners and their different levels of performance (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). Central to this process, is the issue of assessment.

The National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications (DoE, 2007: 9) stipulates that:

- 
- (a) It is important that learners who might experience barriers to learning and development are identified early, assessed and provided with support. All assessment tasks should therefore be adapted to accommodate these learning needs;
 - (b) The assessment of learners and decisions made about learners experiencing barriers to learning should involve partnerships between teachers, learners, parents and educational support services (ESS);
 - (c) Assessment instruments and procedures must be appropriate to the intensity and the nature of support needed by the learner. The result of such assessment should be used to develop support programmes. Such programmes, which needed to address barriers uncovered during the assessment process, will be coordinated by a District Based Support Team (DBST) and should be used by the Institution-Level Support Team (ILST) and the teachers to ensure that the learners access the curriculum;
 - (d) The process of assessing all learners should follow the principles in this policy and in Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (2001);
 - (e) Implement them and administer them so that learners with learning backlogs can be helped in order to be able to progress to the next grade.

It can therefore be seen that since 1994, South Africa moved away from special education policy to inclusion. In South Africa particular emphasis was on the recognition of diversity. This implies an inclusive approach to education in the sense that all learners are entitled to appropriate education. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999) argued that this was only possible if one education system is responsible for educational provision, and not two systems (mainstream education system and special education system).

2.3 EDUCATION SUPPORT

Education support is a phenomenon that exists all over the world. Hergarty (1993), states that efforts to realize more integrated settings have resulted in different educational arrangements in different countries. These arrangements have been the focus of much attention in debates on integration and in turn necessitate changes in organizational structures, the curriculum, teacher training and the legislative framework.

In America general education intervention is an attempt by a child's classroom teacher, with input from others, to resolve a problem the child is having before a referral is made for a full and individual evaluation. Interventions require direct instruction and data is collected to determine if the intervention is effective. The premise behind the practice is that many concerns can be resolved by the classroom teacher resulting in the child remaining in general education classes. The practice of general education interventions being implemented prior to referral is part of the Iowa Administrative Rules of Special Education which include: teacher consultation with special education support and instructional support personnel, measurable and goal-directed attempts to resolve the concern; communication with parents; collection of data; intervention design; implementation and systematic progress monitoring to measure the effects of interventions (<http://resources.saiowa.org/.specialized/index.html>).

Support teams in England provide a set of advisory and support services concerned with all aspect of teaching pupils with special needs. According to Hergarty (1993), special educational provision in regular schools in England is provided through special classes or through support given in regular classes. In England a number of processes support the learner in progressing and achieving his or her learning objectives. Firstly,

the recruitment process ensures that learners embark on a suitable programme. An individual learning plan specifies the learning objectives and how they will be achieved, based on an initial assessment of the learner. Progress reviews check that steady progress is being made by the learner and identifies changes that need to be made to the learning plan or the support arrangements.

Closer to home, in Botswana, School Intervention Teams form a school-based resource service for assisting and advising teachers who have children with special education needs in the classes. Their membership varies from school to school. The head teacher, senior teachers and the individual child's parents form part of the team provided through the district and institutional-level support team structures (http://www.enet.org.uk/theory_practice/modelscbr.doc).

South Africa's approach to inclusive education requires that we think differently about education support. According to Johnson and Green (2007), education support in an inclusive education system has many implications in terms of the range of support options, the population to be served, the nature of support structures and the roles and responsibilities of Education Support personnel. The authors argue that since barriers to learning are understood differently, the range of support options is expanded. Barriers to learning are understood within an eco-systemic perspective (explained later in this chapter) which means that interventions to remove or minimize barriers need not focus directly upon the learner but may involve change in one or more systems of which the learner is a part. Johnson and Green (2007) argue that the purpose of education support is no longer simply to respond to the learning difficulties of individuals, but whenever possible, to prevent problems and work towards enhancing the well being and academic success of all learners.

Educational support or learning support therefore refers to the role educational support professionals such as educational psychologists, school counselors, therapists, special educators and mainstream educators play in addressing the diverse needs of learners (Arendse, 2010).

2.4 LEARNER SUPPORT

Learner support could be defined as all activities which increase the capacity of the school to respond to diversity (DoE, 2005c). Inclusive practice is an important component of support and refers to strategies adopted, technical support provided, structures and procedures applied and actions carried out in the pursuit of including learners who experience barriers to learning (Booth & Ainscow, 1998). According to Bouwer in Landsberg (2005), the practice of learning support is essentially constructivist in approach and a high degree of flexibility is maintained with regard to the individual learner's course of cognitive development. Bouwer in Landsberg (2005) further asserts that learners should be supported in reducing, circumventing, breaking through and even removing barriers, for each to achieve the maximum independence possible learning.

Garrison and Baynton (1987:7) define learner support as: "*the resources that learners can access in order to carry out the learning process.*" They add that the teacher is the most important form of support in an educational transaction, which through guidance and direction can assist the students to achieve their goals and develop control of the educational processes. They observe that these resources may include library facilities, various media and software programs to support learners. Providing support to individuals is the only way of attempting to make learning context and lessons accessible to all learners. Support must be organised in such a way that a range of barriers to accessing the curriculum is uncovered and addressed (DoE, 2001).

Vygotsky (1978) argues that a learner has development potential which manifests itself in what he can achieve with the help of a more capable person. A key concept within the theory is the zone of proximal development which represents the level of development immediately above the learner's present level. Tasks within the zone of proximal development are ones that a learner can only do with the assistance of adults or more capable peers and involves utilizing the learner's strengths. Much of Vygotsky's work provides a useful academic foundation for other theorists in the field of inclusive education. The next few paragraphs provide an account of how barriers to learning are being dealt with in other parts of the world.

International inclusion practice asserts that learners who experience barriers to learning should attend their neighborhood schools and be taught alongside their peers in the regular classroom (Morgan & Demchak, 1998). If the inclusive regular classroom represents diverse learning needs, appropriate support for all learners needs to be provided. Specialist support personnel have a vital role to play in the inclusive practice of schools in developed countries. Teachers, with specialist training in special needs education, work collaboratively with general classroom teachers in providing support to learners either within the classroom or on a “pull-out” basis (Forlin, 2001; Welding, 1996; Schnorr, Black & Davern, 2000).

In the United Kingdom (UK) a Special Needs Co-coordinator (SENCO) would organize and manage a school’s overall provision of support for learners through liaison and training, and would also provide support for individual learners (Roaf, 1998). Bradley, King-Sears and Tessier-Switlick (1997) describe the role of occupational and other therapists working in multi-disciplinary teams at schools as sharing their expertise in their pursuit of common educational goals. In addition to the provision of specialist support personnel, inclusive schools in developed countries provide training and make practical arrangements to enable general classroom teachers to meet the variety of learning needs effectively. Training is regarded as essential for the successful implementation of inclusion (Paul, Roselli & Evans, 1995; Rouse & Florian, 1996) with teachers needing not only knowledge and understanding of barriers to learning, but also practical training in teaching strategies that facilitate inclusion (Pivik, McComas & Laflamme, 2002).

An account of international inclusive practice provides a useful framework for the exploration of South African inclusive practice. Reduced class sizes (Hunt & Goetz, 1997; O’Shea, 1999); manageable teacher loads (Salend, 1999); teacher aids (Giangreco, 1997; Booth & Ainscow, 1998); adaptation of classrooms and other facilities to allow for access by paraplegics (Morgan & Demchak, 1998); differentiated instruction; (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Sapon-Shevin, 2007, Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995) and teaching that accommodate a variety of learning and cognitive styles (Kluth, Biklen & Straut, 2003; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995), are other prerequisites for the proper implementation of support strategies. Individualised education programmes (Aiello & Bullock, 1999); suitable assessment techniques (Elliot & Marquart, 2004) and sufficient

technology in the form of assistive devices (Male, 2003; Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002) form an integral part of international support strategies.

However, not all of the international practices described above have been incorporated into South Africa's policy and guidelines. Teacher aides and special needs co-ordinators are, for example, not mentioned in the White Paper. Specialist support personnel are envisaged to operate at district, rather than school level (DoE, 2005b).

2.4.1 The scope of learner support in South Africa

The point of departure for learning support is *“the pedagogy of possibility that takes into consideration barriers to learning, different intelligence and different styles”* (DoE, 2002:22). Teachers should make provision for every learner to achieve. Teachers must be creative and work productively so that every learner can reach his/her full potential. According to Landsberg (2005), learners learning styles must first be determined before learning strategies are chosen. Teachers have to guide these children through the learning process. The learning process should incorporate a variety of teaching strategies that provide learners with ample opportunity to succeed in their learning (Smutny, 2003).

The assessment of learners and decisions made about learners experiencing barriers to learning should involve partnerships between teachers, learners, parents and education support services (DoE, 2000). Inclusive education implies that all learners are educated in the mainstream class, but it is recognized that learners may require more intensive and specialized forms of support to develop to their full potential (DoE, 2001).

The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) was launched in 2008, providing strategies to teachers to implement the main elements of an inclusive education system in a collaborative working relationship with parents and learners (DoE, 2008). According to the strategy, the uncovering of barriers to learning must be based on sound observation, interviews, and consultation, reflection, previous records and also be grounded in the curriculum (DoE, 2008).

Educational difficulties may arise from a number of sources, such as intrinsic, extrinsic,

curriculum and social barriers. Intrinsic barriers include physical, sensory and neurological and developmental impairments, chronic illness, psycho-social disturbances and differing intellectual ability while extrinsic barriers are those factors that arise outside the learner, but impact on his or her learning (such as the family and its cultural, social and economic context, lack of parental involvement and family problems like divorce, death, and violence) (Pillay & Di Terlizzi, 2009).

Educational policies in South Africa envisage support as a collaborative procedure at different stakeholder levels. *“An inclusive education and training system is organised so that it can provide various levels and kinds of support to learners and teachers”* (DoE, 2001:16). At the first level the mainstream teacher is at the core of learning support. The teacher must uncover barriers to learning and implement strategies to support learners to overcome barriers. The second level of support, after the teacher exhausted all strategies, is to consult with the Institution level support team (ILST). The ILST support the teacher in helping the learners to overcome learning difficulties. The ILST will consult with other education support professionals like the District based support teams (DBST) if higher levels of supports are needed.



2.4.2 District based support teams (DBST)

According to the operational guidelines for District Based Support Teams (DoE, 2005b), the DBST's main role is to initiate the inclusive education process, to provide support to institutions and to support the development of effective teaching and learning. The team must support teachers and enable them to create effective and supportive spaces for learners. The DBST must provide learning support materials to help teachers to support learners who experience barriers to learning. The focus will be *“on teaching and learning factors and emphasis will be placed on the development of good teaching strategies that benefit all learners on overcoming barriers in the system”* (DoE, 2001: 19).

2.4.3 Institution level support teams (ILST)

The conceptual and operational guidelines for district-based support teams (DoE, 2005b) describe ILST as an internal support team within institutions such as early

childhood centres, schools, adult learning centres and higher education centres. ILST should consist of senior management, phase representatives, teachers with specialized knowledge relevant to the type of barrier (e.g. reading or mathematics barriers), representative council learners, referring teacher, learners, non-academic personnel, etc.

All teachers at some time must serve on the ILST team. They have to make use of teachers with specialized skills and knowledge in an advisory capacity. There must be a core team who will be held accountable. These people could be brought into some of the ILST meetings to assist with particular challenges: parents/caregivers with specific skills can strengthen the team. Other departments, for example health and social development, can give expert advice. Specific members of the DBST can support ILST where necessary. Local community members with particular contributions can help meet specific challenges. Teachers from other education institutions (for example, special schools) can also help with support strategies.

Conceptual and operational guidelines for district-based support teams (DoE, 2005b) stipulate the core purpose of the ILST as: Coordinating all learner, teacher, curriculum and institution development support in the institution, so as to facilitate the co-ordination of activities and avoid duplication; collectively identifying institutional needs and, in particular, barriers to learning at learner, teacher, curriculum and institutional-levels; barriers to learning; drawing in the resources needed, from within and outside of the institution, to address these challenges; and evaluating the work of the team within an 'action-reflection' framework.

The success of the implementation of support depends largely on the ability of the support teams to implement and provide effective support to teachers. They must acknowledge the diversity of the learner population - differences in learning styles, needs and objectives. They must also provide sufficient flexible and co-operative support to accommodate the diversity of schools. Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001) and the Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education (DoE, 2002) stipulates guidelines to support teams. The emphasis is on the essential fact that inclusive education implies adequate classroom (and beyond) support to learners experiencing barriers to learning.

2.4.4 Individual learner support plan (ILSP)

Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes (DoE, 2005d: 6) define the Individual Learner Support plan as:

“a plan that will be designed for learners who need additional support or expanded opportunities. The plan to support learners will be developed in collaboration with the parents, the teachers and the ILST. This plan should be captured in the learner profile and used to inform the kind of ongoing support that is given by teachers in the classroom as well as by other support providers.”

An effective ILSP is at the heart of assessment, learning support and achievement. It helps the learner to become an active, motivated partner in learning. The ILSP is a personalized and flexible route map to guide each learner’s journey. It is a dynamic working document, owned and used by the learner, supported by teachers, employers and others. It is also a record of learning goals and progression routes, initial and diagnostic assessment information, learning targets, progress and achievements within different contexts of learning (http://www.sflip.org.uk/PDF/4.2sflguidance_4.pdf).

Reflections on the learning process and follow up with interventions where necessary is underlined in the Assessment Guidelines for Intermediate and Senior Phase (DoE, 2005c). One must reflect on how the learners performed and why. Based on what you discover, you should adjust your teaching and assessment accordingly. According to the Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes (DoE, 2005d), it is important that the learning opportunities for these learners be planned against assessment standards within the same learning outcomes and that the learning opportunities also show conceptual progression.

In summary, the section above outlined the partnerships required between different stakeholders (teachers, learners, parents and education support services) in order to assess learners and make decisions about providing support to learners experiencing barriers to learning. The next section will focus on the challenges to the implementation of support strategies.

2.5 CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORT STRATEGIES

South African schools have unique challenges that can compromise support strategies. Vislie (2003) contends that despite major policy initiatives and a growing commitment to inclusive education, there still remain significant challenges regarding the rhetoric and legislation on inclusive education and practical implementation.

According to Visser (in Duncan, Bowman, Naidoo, Pillay & Roos, 2007:104) *“Changes in human behaviour may be possible when patterns of social, organizational relationships, or the physical environment, changes.”* It stands to reason that the social and physical environment of learners outside of the classroom or school will impact on their performance inside the classroom or school. The next section alludes to factors that can influence the implementation of support.

2.5.1 Policy implementation challenges

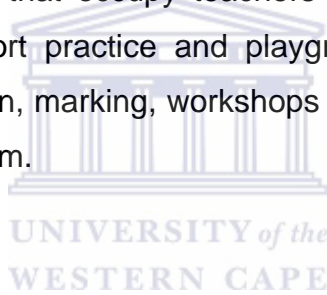
Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009) contend that South Africa is still growing and developing in the field of inclusive education and it appears that while some have accepted the ideology of inclusion, the reality is that South Africa, as a developing nation, is not equipped with resources and facilities required to meet the needs of inclusion. It would appear that the school fees at mainstream schools may not be sufficient to provide the facilities and resources that would be required. Da Costa (2003) argues that there is a gap between conceptualizing inclusive education and understanding how to implement it in the day to day life of the school which is apparent not only among teachers, but at all levels of the system.

This is corroborated by Stofile's (2008) recent research about the factors that affect the implementation of inclusive education. This study revealed that teachers and officials lack capacity to implement inclusive education which includes insufficient resources and unrealistic workloads. Findings also show that there was uncertainty about policy, because the DoE did not provide clarity about the meaning of inclusive education and how it should be implemented.

2.5.2 Workload and time of teachers

Engelbrecht and Green (2007) state that implementation of inclusive policy is a real challenge in terms of time and resources needed for implementing the policies. The writers heed that teachers in South Africa currently have to cope with a workload that has increased significantly over the last couple of years and that this might lead to work overload. These writers also sensitize us to the fact that teachers and learners' buy-in to inclusive practices is a slow procedure and that there are many issues to overcome before this approach would be fully accepted in practice.

In research conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council it was found, for example, that more than 80% of teachers believed that their workload had increased considerably since the year 2000 (Rademeyer, 2005). Classroom contact time is only one of a number of activities that occupy teachers in their daily work. Other factors include learner guidance, sport practice and playground monitoring, extra-curricular activities, meetings, preparation, marking, workshops and much more, all falling outside formal teaching in the classroom.



2.5.3 Capacity of teachers

Wearmouth (2001) points out that the quality of assessment, support and leadership will depend on the effective identifying of the problem, assessment and the provision for the individual needs. The interaction between different support service networks of learners with special educational needs also plays a crucial role in effective implementation of support. In order to enable a teacher to diagnose learning disability and provide learning support, it is necessary for that teacher to have the knowledge and skills to do so. Lesson plans of such teachers will then indicate how learners' needs are addressed and how they are evaluated against their individual abilities. In order for inclusive education to be realized therefore, teachers need to be qualified to teach learners with special educational needs.

Hergarty (1993) alludes to the fact that in-service training should be provided for teachers, because many teachers feel that they do not have sufficient training and support to meet any challenges presented by learners who experience barriers to

learning in the classroom. Teachers make crucial decisions on the curriculum and the academic organization of the school and effectively control the progress of any school reform. For this reason, in-service training is centrally important and is probably the most important single factor in determining the extent to which effective reform will take place (Hergarty, 1993). The literature thus far seems to suggest that in service-training with a special focus on quality of assessment, support and leadership is a prerequisite for teachers who provide learner support.

Teachers are supposed to devise and implement intervention strategies with systemic and capacity challenges. Johnson and Green (2007) argue that teachers' lack of confidence in their own professional expertise, or those whose training has been less than optimal, will require considerable support before they are comfortable with this aspect of their lives.

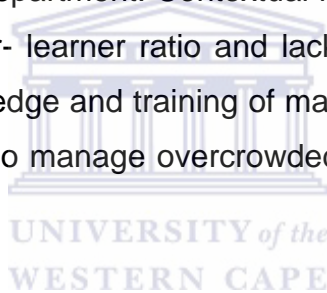
The literature shows that it is unfair and unrealistic to expect teachers with no training to work creatively and effectively to meet the needs of all the learners in their class (Flem & Keller, 2000). Teacher training institutions should also consider programs where students can gain practical experience in a positive, supportive and inclusive environment (Loreman, Forlin & Sharma, 2007). According to Mahaye (2000), teaching methods could be described as specific techniques that teachers employ to assist learners to gain the knowledge they need to meet their specific outcomes.

According to Landsberg (2005), the role of teachers has changed from transferring knowledge to practicing learner-centered teaching. Approaching and assessing learning in this manner allows a wider range of learners to successfully participate in classroom learning. As learners do not learn in the same way, they cannot be assessed in a uniform fashion. Therefore, it is important that a teacher creates an "intelligence profile" for each student. According to Lazear (2004), the teacher can properly assess the child's progress if he knows how each student learns. Teachers must therefore feel comfortable using a wide variety of instructional techniques to meet the needs of a diverse classroom.

While the National Curriculum Statement & Assessment Policy, Grades 4-6, (DoE, 2009) emphasizes the important role of teachers as transformation agents, it is very

vague on how teachers should go about fulfilling this important role outlined in the Norms and Standards for Teachers of 2000 (Government Gazette No 20844). Teachers are seen as mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and learning area/phase specialists (DoE, 2009). However, no word is mentioned on teachers' capacity development and resources allocated in order to affect these grandiose ideals.

This lack of capacity and experience of teachers coupled by the lack of resources may therefore constrain the implementation of support strategies. Findings of a recent study by Dreyer (2008) on the provision of learning support in an inclusive system, conclude that support aimed at addressing barriers to learning in mainstream schools is not effectively implemented. The lack of support relates to contextual factors in school as well as within the Education Department. Contextual factors include ineffective teaching strategies, the current teacher- learner ratio and lack of differentiation and support to learners which relate to knowledge and training of mainstream teachers (Dreyer, 2008). Also, the inability of teachers to manage overcrowded classrooms can impinge heavily on the provision of support.



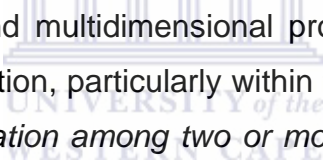
2.5.4 Class size

Teachers in overcrowded classrooms, according to Engelbrecht and Green (2007:34), “often become managers of group dynamics rather than purveyors of knowledge.” To this end, these writers continue, valuable dimensions related to the social and intellectual growth of diverse students may be lost in environments where teachers must maintain control over large numbers of students. Engelbrecht and Green (2007) are of the opinion that the more learners there are in a classroom, the more challenges arise in terms of inclusive education. Wearmouth (2001) sees teachers' workload, the changing profile of class groups which call for more complex planning and preparation and the greater responsibility overall which teachers have to contend with as problematic. The involvement of parents in the classroom can be seen as a solution to some of the challenges teachers have to face.

2.5.5 Parental involvement

In her study of European School Governance, Riley (1998) notes that schools do not exist in a vacuum. Studies conducted in Canada, Denmark, England, France and USA on parental involvement in the education of their children, points out that children's learning becomes more effective if their parents participate in education (Riley, 1998). Parental involvement is very crucial in inclusive education because parents can offer teachers valuable information and give support to help their children (Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 2001). Parents' absence from the educational process of their children due to their own personal problems suggest that education, especially extra educational help, are left to teachers alone. This can place enormous constraints on teachers' attempts to support learners. Another crucial factor that might challenge teachers' support efforts is ineffective collaboration between different roleplayers.

2.5.6 Collaboration



Collaboration is a complex and multidimensional process that has been increasingly advocated in the field of education, particularly within the branch of special education. It has been defined as "*co-operation among two or more people concerning a particular undertaking*" (Dunst & Paget, 1991:28). According to Engelbrecht and Green (2001), collaboration can be described as a creative partnership between all the role players who work together to not only identify and define barriers and needs, but also ways to meet those barriers and needs. Collaboration enables teachers to share their expertise, diverse and specialized knowledge and skills to benefit all learners. Moran and Abbot (2002) contend that the most critical strategy for creating successful learning experience for all, regardless of barriers, is "teamwork". Collaboration skills are essential for the effective functioning of ILST's and DBST's. This collaboration is crucial in giving effective support to learners (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

To collaborate successfully, roleplayers need to develop skills in problem solving, interpersonal communication, dealing with differences and managing themselves and their time (Engelbrecht & Green, 2007). This collaboration takes time and requires effective organisation and certain basic resources (Johnson & Green, 2007). Engelbrecht and Green (2007) state that teams must identify site-specific learner,

teacher and institutional needs and coordinate efforts to address them within individual schools.

Support teams, however, are still facing major challenges in developing inclusive schools to provide support to all learners and teachers. According to Landsberg (2005), learner support in principle assumes collaboration of all roleplayers, adaptation of the curriculum and specialized intervention.

In summary, the section above provided a discussion of some of the unique challenges in the provision of effective learner support as it is experienced in South African schools. The supposed gap between policy and implementation was highlighted as one of the main contributors to the challenges in learner support. Specific references were made to teacher overload, class size as well as their lack of capacity and how this impedes learner support. This section concluded with the importance of teacher collaboration. The next section will focus on the theoretical framework on which my assumptions are based.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems provides a conceptual framework for understanding how learning support must be implemented at different levels in order to be effective. The outcomes of teachers' implementation of support are dependent on the interaction between teachers and the context they are exposed to. How teachers perceive learners with barriers to learning and how they provide support to these learners may influence these learners' development as persons. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, "an individual (learner or teacher) exists within layers of social relationships: the teacher (micro-system), the classroom environment (meso-system), parents and colleagues (exo-system) and culture and society (macro-system).

The micro-system is a blueprint of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by a developing person in a given context or setting with particular physical and material characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The teacher who is central in the micro-system may be influenced by teacher knowledge, training and classroom experiences.

The meso-system includes the interrelations among two or more micro-systems in the context in which the person participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the meso- system the teacher comes into contact with all the learners in the classroom, including the learners with barriers to learning. The teachers and the learners establish a relationship in the classroom environment. The effective managing of classrooms can give a feeling of mastery and achievement with regards to teaching and learning (Romia & Leyserb, 2006). Overcrowded classrooms can lead to the inability of teachers to manage their classrooms. This can compromise support to learners with barriers to learning.

In the exo-system two or more settings interact and do not necessarily involve the person directly, but the person is affected by what happens within the settings (Bronfenbrenner 1979). The principal, colleagues (ILST), learners, and parents can influence the micro and meso systems. Support to teachers by the ILST, in-service training and opportunities for professional development by the principal will have an influence on the meso- and micro-system. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), parental involvement extends to the school and the classroom level within the ecological model. Parental involvement can ensure that support strategies implemented by teachers can also be monitored by the parents. If a supportive relationship exists between the parents and the teachers, support to learners with barriers can be much more successful.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) viewed the macro-system as the overarching ideology and organization of social institutions that are found in cultures. The macro-system includes the community, the DBST, health care professionals and the department of education. Alterations occurring on one level have the potential to affect the entire system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Educational policies developed by the DoE have an impact on learners. Schools should create the conditions for learners to succeed in addressing their barriers to learning (Holz & Lessing, 2002).

The ecological model views the whole system and highlights the fact of interconnectedness between the different systems in its quest to support all learners. The ecological model has much relevance to emphasizing the interaction between an individual's development and systems within the social context (Landsberg, 2005). The model is also useful in understanding classrooms, schools and families by viewing them

as systems in themselves (Frederickson & Cline, 2002). The ecological system can bring a holistic understanding of the learners, with educational barriers, psychological, social and academic experiences. Research shows that ecological systems can either have a negative or positive impact on each other. One of the limitations noted is that Bronfenbrenner's model neglects the important influence of resilience in overcoming adversities that may be present in the system (Engler, 2007).

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of literature pertaining to the area of inclusion. The global trends of inclusion practices provide a useful framework through which the South African inclusive practices could be explored. It highlights, among others, the fact that South Africa (compared to international standards) still has a long way to go before the envisioned goals of inclusive education can be realized.

Under the scope of learner support at different levels, the importance of partnerships in addressing the issue of learner support in South Africa was highlighted. Partnerships between stakeholders in and outside the school were underlined as central to assess and make decisions about learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Despite its complexity and multi-dimensionality, collaboration is strongly advocated in the field of special education. Collaboration between different levels of support structures was discussed, emphasizing the development of specific skills, time, effective organisation and resources as prerequisites for successful collaboration.

This chapter also alluded to a supposed gap between policy and implementation as a central influence in learner support with special reference to teacher overload, class size as well as lack of capacity.

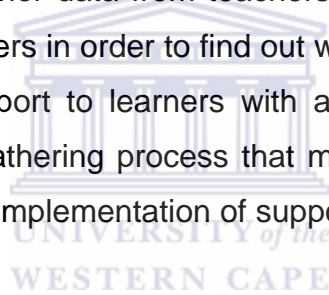
This chapter was guided by a conceptual framework embedded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model. Despite its limitations, Bronfenbrenner's theory provides a useful lens through which the intricacies involved in learner support could be understood. The relevance of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model for this study lies in its explanation of the interconnectedness of classroom, schools and families in the quest to

support learners.

2.8 CONCLUSION

The preceding review of literature has focused on the issue of learner support in schools. The literature suggests that, while it strives to comply with international trends in inclusive practices, South Africa, as a young democracy, has unique historical, socio economic and political challenges to consider in its quest for an inclusive education system.

The literature showed that despite the political and educational changes that took place in this country, learner support in schools still has a long way to go before achieving its intended goals. There appears to be a gap between policy and implementation. It will therefore be interesting to gather data from teachers who, on a daily basis, work with learners with educational barriers in order to find out what their experiences are in terms of the implementation of support to learners with academic barriers. This study will proceed to outline the data gathering process that might shed light on constraining or facilitating factors in teachers' implementation of support strategies.



CHAPTER: 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a description of the research methodology and design for this study. It also outlines the research approach and data collection methods, sampling procedure and ethical implications of my research. My aim was to “*gain a better understanding*” of the effectiveness of the implementation of support strategies in the intermediate phase of a primary school by using a case study as instrument (Mark, 1996:219).

3.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to investigate the implementation of learning support strategies by teachers in the intermediate phase of a school in the Western Cape. More specifically, the objectives of the study were:

- (a) To understand how teachers perceive support to learners,
- (b) To understand how teachers implement support to learners,
- (c) To explore the factors (enhancing or limiting) that impact upon the successful implementation of learning support strategies.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 Qualitative Research Methodology

This study employed qualitative research methodology in an attempt to understand meanings teachers are making of their experiences with regard to the implementation of learning support strategies. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as “*real world settings where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest*” (Patton, 2002:39). Qualitative research, broadly defined, means “*any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification*” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17) and instead, the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the “*phenomenon of interest*”

unfolds naturally" (Patton, 2002:39). Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997).

3.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research methodology

Qualitative data can be used very effectively to identify patterns or trends in relation to a specific phenomenon (Walford, 2005). According to Walford (2005), the real strength of this way of researching lies in the fact that quoting from participants is able to offer insight and humanity into the analysis.

The qualitative approach, however, has the following limitations: It can be time-consuming and demanding as the data obtained through it is voluminous (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993); it is more expensive because of travelling costs and the need for a tape and video recorder; and the risk of human bias and error is always present because the researcher becomes immersed in the phenomenon being studied (Bailey, 1996; Clark, et.al, 1997; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

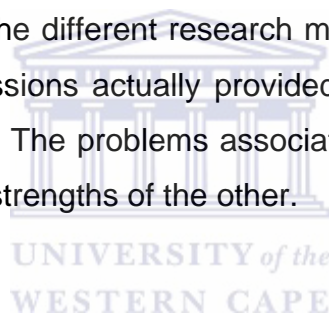
Despite the above mentioned limitations, I felt a need to use this method because this research is concerned with understanding behaviour from the research subjects' frame of reference (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Flick (1998) asserts that qualitative research is geared towards analyzing concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity, starting from people's expressions and activities.

3.3.3 Issues of validity and reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that sustaining the trustworthiness of a research report depends on the issues, quantitatively referred to as validity and reliability. The idea of discovering truth through measures of reliability and validity in qualitative research methodology is replaced by the idea of trustworthiness (Mishler, 2000), which is "*defensible*" (Johnson 1997: 282) and establishes confidence in the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If the validity or trustworthiness can be maximized or tested then a more "*credible and defensible result*" (Johnson, 1997:283) may lead to limited generalizability.

To ensure trustworthiness of this research, I compiled pilot questions in order to get an idea of the interpretation of the questions and what kind of answers would be obtained from it. I used focus group discussions in which the same questions were asked of the participating group. If one were to ask the same questions to the same group of participants a week later, the results would hopefully be the same.

Triangulation is often employed as a strategy (test) to improve the trustworthiness of research. Mathison (1988) asserts that triangulation is important to control bias and establish valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology. Patton (2002) contends that the use of triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. In an attempt to triangulate and at the same time control bias, I opted to use different methods (interviews and focus group discussions) to gather data. The different research methods complemented each other in that the focus group discussions actually provided the same sort of information as that of the in-depth interviews. The problems associated with the one research method were compensated for by the strengths of the other.



3.4 RESEARH DESIGN

3.4.1 Interpretive paradigm

A paradigm, according to Babbie (2001), is the fundamental model or frame of reference we use to organize our observations and reasoning. Monette, Sullivan and De Jong (2002) refer to Thomas Kuhn (1970), who concluded that scientific activity is shaped by paradigms, which are general ways of thinking about how the world works and how we gain knowledge about the world.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), interpretive research is based on naturalistic enquiry that uses non-interfering data-collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them. This definition suggests that the researcher should observe and interpret what is happening in a natural setting.

This study was guided by an interpretive paradigm because I wanted to probe teachers' perceptions of their implementation of support strategies and thought that those involved (research participants) are best suited to describe their own situation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:19) support this approach with their contention that "*in interpretive research, individual behavior can be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference: understanding of individuals' interpretations of the world around them has to come from inside, not the outside*". In this study I interacted with, and listened to, the participants in an attempt to "*make sense of their perceptions and experiences*" (Udjombala, 2002:43).

3.4.2 Case Study

Cohen and Manion (1994) qualify the use of the case study research method by contending that the case study is an in-depth study of a single case, a school or a community. This is because a case study investigates the contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, it provides a space to investigate and focus in more depth on the study (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Benbasat, Goldstein and Mead (1987) also consider the case study to be viable for three reasons: It is necessary to study the phenomenon in its natural setting, the researcher can ask "how" and "why" questions, so as to understand the nature and complexity of the processes taking place and, research is being conducted in an area where few, if any, previous studies have been undertaken.

In line with Stake's (1995) contention, the exploration and description of this case takes place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context. In this case it includes interviews as well as the focus group discussion regarding the implementation of learner support. This method requires the researcher to have access to and to have the confidence of the participants. The product of this research is an in-depth description of the case under discussion. The researcher situates this case within the larger context, but the focus remains on the issue that is illustrated by the case (Cresswell, 1998). Following Mark (1996), this is an instrumental case study as it is used to "*gain a better understanding of a social issue*". This case study serves the purpose of facilitating the researcher's gaining of knowledge about a social issue, which in this case, is the implementation of learning support strategies.

3.4.3 Research participants

There are 26 schools and 17664 learners (10th day enrollment of 2010) in Circuit 3 of the West Coast Education District. The school under investigation is a rural school situated in a low socio-economic area just outside of Vredenburg. The school has no trained learner support teacher, but has an established Institutional Level Support Team (ILST). One of the most important tasks for a qualitative researcher is deciding on the participants to be selected for the investigation. De Vos, Schunink and Strydom (1984) advise that the participants should be information rich, as they form an integral part in the selection of the sample study. In order to derive authentic data in relation to the study, ten intermediate phase teachers were interviewed. The choice of participants was informed by the desire to obtain well-informed perspectives regarding the topic.

In this research, purposive sampling was used, because of its “*non-probability*” (Polit & Hunglar, 1999:284). Polit and Hunglar (1999) expands that with this type, the sample is “*hand-picked*” for the research. In purposive sampling a particular case is chosen because it illustrates some feature or process that is of interest for a particular study (Silverman, 2000). In purposive sampling the researcher must first think critically about the parameters of the population and then choose the sample case accordingly. Clear identification and formulation of criteria for the selection of respondents is therefore, of cardinal importance. Cresswell (1998:118) comments that “*the purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study*”. In purposive sampling researchers purposely seek typical and divergent data. This kind of sampling offers the researcher the advantage of “*honing in on people or events which there are good grounds for believing will be critical for the research*” (Descombe 1998:15).

Dane (1990) concurs by contending that instead of going for the typical instances, a cross-section or a balanced choice, the researcher will be able to concentrate on instances which display wide variety – possibly even focus on extreme cases to illuminate the research question at hand. In this sense, according to Descombe (1998), it might not only be economical but might also be informative in a way that conventional probability sampling cannot be. This sampling method is used so that information collected from part of a group can be used to make generalizations about the whole group (Singleton, Straits & Straits, 1993).

3.4.4 Data collection techniques

(a) Focus group discussions

There is a wealth of literature on focus group discussions. Morgan (1997:6) defines focus group discussions as *“a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher”*. Jayanthi and Nelson (2002) contend that focus groups refer to the role of the group that is the focus of a specific point of discussion. Focus groups, says Kingry, Tiedjie and Friedman (1990), validates constructs and may be used for conceptualization. Focus groups allow the researcher to investigate a multitude of perceptions in a defined area of interest (Nyamathi & Shuler, 1990). The purpose of focus groups, according to Krueger and Casey (2000), is to promote self-disclosure among participants. It is to know what people really think and feel. Focus groups are useful when multiple viewpoints or responses are needed on a specific topic. This kind of data can be obtained in a shorter period of time than in individual interviews. Focus groups are fundamentally a way of listening to people and learning from them, and of creating lines of communication. There is a continual communication between the facilitator and the participants, as well as among the participants themselves.

In this study the focus group discussion was limited to the teachers that served on the ILST. The focus group discussion was aimed at gathering data about the immediate context and how collaboration takes place to implement effective support to learners with educational barriers. The respondents got the opportunity to elaborate on statements they made and were therefore not limited to specific answers.

The focus group discussion was also useful because, as Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 63) puts it: *“some people sometimes need the presence of others to talk... initially the respondents are shy to talk, but they soon converse fluently.”* Babbie and Mouton (2001:292) make it very clear that *“focus groups are useful because they tend to allow a space in which people may get together and create a meaning among themselves, rather than individually.”* Moreover, advantages of focus groups are that they give the researcher an opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a particular topic in a limited period. They also give direct evidence in terms of similarities and differences

in participant's opinions.

As a novice researcher, I did not have much previous experience with the use of this technique. There were instances, true to the disadvantages of focus group discussions, where some of the respondents were too shy to talk; where some individuals dominated the discussion and where some of the respondents appeared to be distracted by the video camera. This however occurred mostly at the beginning of the discussion and soon changed once they gained more confidence. Because my respondents generally participated well, I was able to extrapolate additional information when clarifications were made. From the data obtained through this method the general knowledge or lack thereof about inclusive education among these teachers became apparent.

Jayanthi and Nelson (2002) elaborate further on the advantages of focus group discussions with their contention that this method is adaptable in the sense that there is not only one specific way in which to conduct it. Data gained from focus group discussions also have validity value, because what you see is what you get. The data is not difficult to understand. Focus groups stimulate participants so that participants' answers trigger reaction and answers from the other respondents. Additional information can often be obtained from focus group discussions for example the non verbal behavior of respondents (facial expressions and expressions of emotion) (Jayanthi & Nelson, 2002).

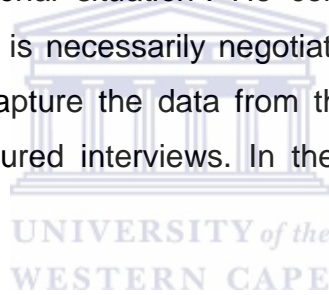
On the other hand, focus groups can be quite costly and require researchers who are skilled in group process. Nyamathi and Shuler (1990) also state that a disadvantage is that findings cannot automatically be projected onto the population at large. If the group facilitator is unskilled, expressions of only the active participants may be voiced. This creates the risk that passive participants may be unduly influenced or inhibited by active participants.

As a researcher, I consulted widely (see Kreuger & Casey, 2000; Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Morgan & Kreuger, 1998; Morgan, 1997; Nyamathi & Shuler, 1990) regarding the preparation, facilitation and analysis of focus groups. Audio and video taping have disadvantages because audio and video come with procedural bias (presence of

equipment, distractions, background noise and movement that may be distracting and time consuming to transcribe). It does, however, offer the advantages of accuracy, no personal bias and later transcription, at home (Macintyre, 2000). The advantage of video-taping is that it allows for more accurate transcription of the data (Macintyre, 2000). The focus group discussion with teachers helped me to gain a general or broad sense of teachers' perceptions about the whole concept of implementation of support.

(b) In-depth interviews

Teachers' knowledge, skills and experience in working with learners and implementing of learning support strategies are central to this research. Following Cuningham (1993), I was able to delve into the respondent's knowledge, opinions, feelings or behaviour which was related to the topic discussed. Denzin (1998:1) adds to this by referring to the interview as an "*interactional situation*". He contends that interviews are social interactions in which meaning is necessarily negotiated between a numbers of selves (Denzin, 1998). In order to capture the data from the respondents I opted for semi-structured instead of unstructured interviews. In the following paragraphs I offer an explanation for this.



The unstructured interview, sometimes referred to as the in-depth interview, merely extends and formalizes conversation. It is referred to as a "*conversation with purpose*" (De Vos et al, 1998:292). At the root of unstructured interviewing, argue De Vos et al (1998), is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. It is focused and discursive and allows the researcher and participant to explore an issue. It is used to determine individual perceptions, opinions, facts, and forecasts and their reactions to initial findings and potential solutions. The unstructured interview is a type of interview which the researcher uses to elicit information in order to achieve understanding of the participant's point of view or situation.

Semi-structured interviews are used in order to gain a detailed picture of a particular topic. The method gives the researcher and the participant more flexibility. The interview allows a respondent the time and the scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. The focus of the interview is decided by the researcher and there may be areas

the researcher is interested in exploring. The objective is to understand the respondent's point of view rather than make generalisations about behaviour. It uses open-ended questions. The researcher tries to build a rapport with the respondent and the interview is like a conversation. Questions are asked when the interviewer feels it is appropriate to ask them. They may be prepared questions or questions that occur to the researcher during the interview.

Semi-structured interviewing was ideal because it was simpler, more efficient and more practical to gather the data rather than unstructured interviews. During the semi-structured interviews people were able to provide more detail and depth about the data. The interviewees were able to speak for themselves with little direction from the interviewer. Complex questions and issues could be discussed or clarified. The interviewer could also probe areas suggested by the respondent's answers, picking-up information that had either not occurred to the interviewer or of which the interviewer had no prior knowledge.

As with the focus group method, I first acquired the relevant information concerning the pros and cons of semi-structured interviewing with specific focus on conducting, recording and analysis. Smith (1995) advises for example that tape recording of interviews makes for much fuller records than notes during the interview. Denzin (1998) mentions that the events recounted and experiences described are made more substantial, more real, through being recorded. These tapes, Smit (1995) maintains, can later be transcribed; Morse and Field (1994) point out that consent can be obtained during preliminary interviews when finalizing arrangements, or a verbal consent may be recorded at the beginning of the interview.

Interviews have particular strengths. They are a useful way of getting large amounts of data quickly and are an especially effective way of obtaining depth in data. However, interviews also have limitations. They involve personal interaction, and cooperation is therefore essential. Participants may be unwilling to share and the researcher may ask questions that do not evoke the desired responses from participants.

With the in-depth interviews, I managed to extrapolate teachers' knowledge about what support strategies entail, their opinions and feelings about the implementation of

support strategies and factors that influence support to learners with educational barriers. The in-depth interviews complemented the focus group discussions, with the added advantage that the interview was conducted with teachers individually. After gaining a general idea of the respondents' perceptions about the support strategies, the in-depth interview narrowed down the issue to individual opinions and viewpoints about the implementation of support strategies.

3.4.5 Procedure

In this section a brief description is provided of the procedure followed in the design and conduct of the interviews. An explanation of the nature of the questions and the purpose of the investigation preceded the data collection. The researcher, herself a South African teacher with 18 years of experience, personally administered the interviews and the focus group discussion with the participants. Since interviews and verbal communication were important aspects of the research process, the researcher's skill in establishing rapport, building trust and encouraging verbal responses proved to be an asset to the research process.

The interviews were conducted with all ten teachers that teach in the intermediate phase at this school. The interviews were conducted individually and the focus group discussion was held with the members of the ILST. I started by conducting focus group discussions in order to get a general view of the issue at hand. This was followed up by individual interviews to gain a better understanding of the implementation of learner support.

I designed and composed the main questions for the interviews and the focus group discussion. I drew up pilot questions in order to get an idea of the interpretation of the questions and what kind of answers would be obtained from it. The questions were translated to Afrikaans, because the participants could express themselves better and fluently in their first language. Before conducting the interviews, I explained the purpose of my study to the interviewees. I explained clearly to the participants that the information I received would be used for academic purposes only. I obtained permission to take notes and to tape record the interview and video record the focus group discussion. I finalized the signing of the consent forms and informed the participants

that they could withdraw at any time if they wished to do so.

I then explained to my participants the way in which their responses would be recorded. Smit, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy (1995) heed that tape recording has its disadvantages in that the participant may not feel happy with being taped and may even withdraw. For this reason I positioned the tape recorder inconspicuously so as not to unnerve the participant. I had a trial with the video recorder before my final attempt. I established rapport by attentive listening, showing interest, understanding and respect for what the participants said.

Video recording is referred to within the qualitative research methods literature as a data collection strategy that permits the research to assume an outside view of the phenomenon under study (Paterson, Bottorff, & Hewatt, 2003). The use of this technology allows the researcher to review the video recorded data in slow motion or in rapid speed, frame to frame, and as a microanalysis of behaviors, language, and interactions (Andersen & Adamsen, 2001). I video recorded the focus group discussions to ensure that all the conversations that took place were captured.

I prevented the “stacking of interviews” (De Vos et al, 1998) by transcribing and analyzing it immediately after the interview. I also used preliminary coding. I compared the responses on tape with the notes that were made during the transcription process, in order to get a better understanding of the data.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Qualitative analysis was used throughout the data collection process. The analysis commenced with reading the data and then transcribing it into meaningful units. Following Krueger and Casey (2000), I analyzed the meaningful units by organizing it into categories on the basis of themes, concepts or similar features. The patterns and trends identified were very helpful in making sense of the data. The concepts were linked together in terms of sequences. Meaningful units of the data were thematised in relation to the purpose of the study as well as the research questions. The themes and recurring patterns that stood out in the

data were:

- (a) Teachers' knowledge and experiences of inclusive education,
- (b) The provision of educational support in the classroom,
- (c) Individual learning support plans,
- (d) Gender issues,
- (e) Factors influencing success,
- (f) The role of the ILST and DBST in providing support,
- (g) Collaboration with the ILST and DBST,
- (h) Proposals for the successful provision of support.

The accuracy of the data was checked by handing the transcriptions of the interviews back to the participants to interpret and verify the data for correctness.

3.6 RESEARCH ETHICS

Within the realm of educational research, ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interest and well being of people are not harmed as a result of the research being done (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Ngubane (2005) describes ethics as indicative of the moral dimensions of about what is right and wrong while one is involved in research. As a researcher, I was continuously guided by ethical principles throughout the study and conducted the research according to the University of the Western Cape's Research Ethics Committee guidelines.

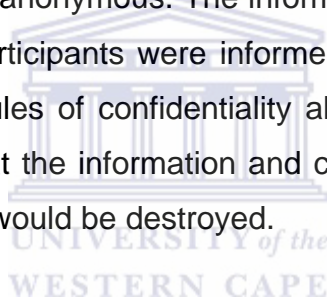
De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel and Schurink (1998), state that informed consent relates to the communication of all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedure, possible advantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed. All participants in this study were provided with letters elucidating the research study, including the rationale as well as the data collection methods which were to be employed. I obtained permission from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct research in the school. I also obtained permission from the school governing body, principal and teachers to gather information from them.

Research was conducted during the time allowed by the principal, school governing

body and Western Cape Education Department. I selected teachers on the basis that they were willing to participate and able to articulate their thoughts and feelings. Participation was only allowed after careful reading, understanding and signing of consent forms. The consent form informed the participant of his or her voluntary participation and of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Following Burgess (1985) the voluntary consent of the participant was absolutely essential. This implied that all participants in the study had to have legal capacity to give consent, were in a position as to exercise free power of choice and offered consent without the intervention of any force, fraud, deceit, duress, overreaching or any other ulterior form of constraint or coercion.

Consent forms used in this study also covered the aspect of confidentiality. Hereby the participants' names were kept anonymous. The information provided by the participants remained confidential. The participants were informed that the data might be seen by the supervisor, but that the rules of confidentiality also extend to the supervisor. The participants were informed that the information and consent forms will be safeguarded for five years after which they would be destroyed.



In terms of possible benefits and risks, the participants were informed that there are no risks involved in the study. Furthermore no participant received direct benefit from participating in the study. Nevertheless, the information obtained from the participants in the study would help the teachers and ILST to improve the support strategies to learners.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the research methodology used in this study. The qualitative approach was very useful to effectively identify patterns or trends in relation to the implementation of support strategies (Waldorf, 2005). The other advantage of this approach becomes evident in the usage of quotes from participants in chapter four.

This chapter included the data collection and data analysis process used to obtain the findings. This case study was useful in understanding the nature and complexity of

teachers' perceptions about learner support because no previous studies on this topic have been done at this school. The data collection methods used complemented each other. One of the shortcomings of the focus group discussions was the tendency among participants to be influenced by the views of the more assertive participants. The in-depth interviews however made it possible to capture the unsaid opinions of these respondents. The ethical considerations were outlined in this chapter. Following ethical procedures assured me that my quest in finding the truth was legal and trustworthy. The next chapter deals with the analysis of the collected data and presents the findings of the research.



CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a presentation of the findings of the research. The process that was applied is presented in chapter three. The information derived from the interviews and the focus group discussion was integrated. For confidentiality reasons, the respondents are coded.

4.2 CONTEXTUALISATION

Following McMillan and Schumacher (1993), I am of the opinion that presenting the context is essential for the reader to understand the study and for extending the understanding acquired to future research or practices. In the next few paragraphs, I briefly describe the school and the respondents in order to get a sense of the milieu in which the participants are involved. It also offers an idea of the participants' work-experience, qualifications and training in the field of learner support.

Hopevale Primary School (pseudonym) was established in 1970 and is situated in a remote and predominantly poor coloured community approximately fifteen kilometers outside of the nearest town. The school, with grades R to grade nine, has 700 learners with 20 teachers and no remedial teachers. The outer appearance of the school resembles that of three blocks of dilapidated face brick buildings with one makeshift structure that also serves as a classroom. There are no sports fields or training facilities at the school. The majority of learners are bussed in from surrounding farms and the local town. The teaching staff make use of private cars as their mode of transport to and from the school. Every morning and afternoon is characterized by a frenzy of people at the school's gate as learners are being loaded off or onto busses.

There is significant diversity in the barriers to learning that is present at the school. This includes attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, family problems, language barriers, behavioral disorders, fetal alcohol syndrome, lack of parental involvement and socio-economic deprivation. Support to these learners has to take place during normal school hours, because of the travelling of learners and

teachers. All the teachers are also involved in extra mural activities that are offered by the school.

The following table provides primary information of the respondents in this study.

RESPONDENT	AGE	GENDER	RACE	STATUS AT SCHOOL	QAULIFICATION	TEACHING EXPERIENCE (YEARS)	LEARNER SUPPORT TRAINING (Y/N)
R1	52	Female	White	Contract	3 Year Teaching Diploma	31	Y
R2	44	Female	Coloured	Permanent	4 Year Teaching Diploma	22	N
R3	50	Female	Coloured	Permanent	4 Year Teaching Diploma	27	N
R4	24	Female	White	Permanent	B.Ed degree	1	Y
R5	51	Female	Coloured	Permanent	4 Year Teaching Diploma	15	N
R6	50	Female	Coloured	Permanent	4 Year Teaching Diploma	26	N
R7	34	Female	Coloured	Permanent	4 Year Teaching Diploma	7	N
R8	40	Female	Coloured	Permanent	4 Year Teaching Diploma	12	N
R9	31	Female	Coloured	Permanent	B.Ed degree	9	N
R10	57	Female	Coloured	Permanent	4 Year Teaching Diploma	35	N

Table 1: Respondent primary information

The issue of planning and implementing support strategies to cater for a variety of educational needs for learners in intermediate phase classrooms produced by participants in this research has revealed a number of distinct core themes. These themes will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.3.1 Teachers' knowledge and experiences of inclusive education

(a) General knowledge

It was interesting to discover that just a few of the teachers knew what inclusive education was all about. Some participants mentioned that inclusive education is that all learners must feel welcome in your class. Teachers continue to provide support to learners without knowing whether or not the support is implemented correctly or what inclusive education is all about:

R7: *Inclusive education is that all the learners must feel at home in your class.*
[“Inklusiewe onderwys is dat elke leerder moet tuis voel in die klas”]

R5: *All learners must be included despite the barriers that the child might have.*
[“Alle leerders moet ingesluit word ongeag die gebreke wat die kind het.”]

R4: *Inclusive education is a big matter* [“Inklusiewe onderwys is ‘n groot kwessie”]

(b) Policy knowledge

In varied responses, most of the interviewees in this study indicated that they had very little or no knowledge of the policy regarding inclusive education. The respondents could not elaborate on the contents of this document. In this case study teachers appeared to be relatively uninformed about the policy. Here are some of the responses:

R1: *I don't know any inclusive policies* [“Ek ken geen inklusiewe beleide nie”]

R5: *I am really not sure of the [policy]* [“Ek is regtig nie so seker daarvan [beleid] nie”]

R6: *I do not have any knowledge of policies.* [“Ek dra nie kennis van beleide nie”]

Some of the respondents had a very faint idea of the policy which encompassed their actions of support.

R2: *White Paper 6...no, I don't know any other policies.* ["Witskrif 6...nee, ek ken nie ander beleide nie"]

R4: *White Paper 6, but I don't know of any other policies.* ["Witskrif 6, maar ek weet nie van enige ander beleide nie"]

(c) Experience gained

Teachers' support actions were directed by their experiences gained over the years of teaching. Teachers were aware of the fact that their support strategies were not done according to guidelines, but they felt that working in class or with colleagues would compensate for this:

R3: *Through the years with children, you learn things* ["soos 'n mens met die jare kom, met die kinders, tel jy tog goed op"]

R8: *Over the years you get experience with all type of learners in your class...at this moment the support programs are mostly for groups.* ["Oor die jare doen 'n mens ondervinding op met verskillende tipe leerders in jou klas...op die oomblik is die ondersteuningsprogramme, meeste vir groepe"]

(d) Training received

Teachers who were supposed to devise and implement support strategies struggled with skills and capacity challenges. The respondents admitted that there was a need to help certain learners with special educational needs in the classroom, but cited their lack of training as a hampering factor. One respondent noted that he needed to be trained in inclusive education. Respondents were unanimous in their responses on this issue:

R1: *I had no training.* ["Ek het geen opleiding gehad nie"]

R2: *I had no training, just workshops with occupational therapists.* “Ek het geen opleiding gehad nie, net werksinkels met arbeidsterapeute”]

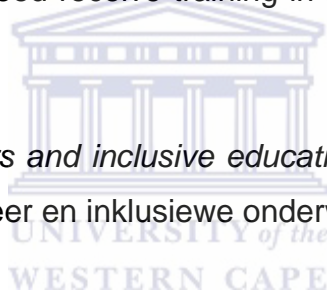
R3: *No formal training.* [“...Geen formele opleiding.”]

R7: No [“Nee”] (did not receive any training).”

R10: *Some studies should be undertaken in order for inclusive education to come into its own.* [Sekere studies moet ondergaan word om inklusiewe onderwys regtig waar tot sy reg te laat kom.]

As a nuance, it should be noted that it was encouraging to know that the new generation of teachers did indeed receive training in inclusive education, as one of the respondents remarked:

R4: *I studied for 4 years and inclusive education was one of my main subjects.* [“...ek het 4 jaar gestudeer en inklusiewe onderwys was een van die hoofvakke”.]



4.3.2 The provision of educational support in the classroom

(a) How teachers identify learners with support needs

Teachers were aware of the fact that they were obliged to show some kind of proof of support and they were committed to do so. The result is that teachers eventually end up with some kind of report which identifies certain learners for support:

R6: *Progress in his work in class will show whether he requires support. I put him on my intervention list and give him the necessary support.* [“vordering en sy werk in die klas sal vir my wys hy het hulp nodig. Ek plaas hom op my intervensielys en ek gee hom die nodige ondersteuning”]

R7: *I get the background to identify the problem. Collaborate with the parents and give the necessary support.* [“Ek verkry agtergrond om die probleem te

identifiseer. Betrek die ouers en bied ondersteuning aan die leerders”]

R8: *To analyze mistakes and have a support programme for such a learner in place.* [“deur foute te analiseer en dan vir so ‘n leerder ‘n ondersteuningsprogram in plek te het.”]

(b) Types of support provided to learners

Teachers have a responsibility to uncover the barriers to learning and plan intervention and support as part of the learning process. Some teachers prefer to use group work and other prefers to work individually with the child. The data shows that teachers use support strategies which are practical and with which they are familiar:

R8: *A support strategy that I currently use is groupwork.* [“‘n Ondersteuning strategieë wat ek op die oomblik gebruik is groepwerk”]

R5: *To work individually with the child.* [“om individueel met die kind te werk”]

R9: *Work together as a team and see where we can help the child.* [“Werk saam as ‘n span en kyk waar ons die kind kan help”]

(c) Resources available to provide support

To effectively provide support it is important that teachers make use of resources to adequately support the learners. Teachers must have access to all the appropriate resources and equipment for teaching. The data shows that teachers use whatever resources are available to implement their support strategies:

R4: *visual pictures...and concrete objects.* [“visuele prente...en konkrete voorwerpe”]

R5: *I use posters and reading texts, newspaper and magazine articles.* [“Ek gebruik plakkate en leestekste, koerant artikels, tydskrif artikels”]

R6: *Literacy, flash charts, wallcharts.* [“Geletterdheid, flitskaarte,

muurkaarte...”]

(d) Support strategies utilized

Teachers must plan strategies and activities to effectively address the barriers to learning of every individual learner. It is important that strategies that are utilized benefit all the learners in the class. Responses indicate that these teachers use simple techniques (which are not necessarily the most effective) to offer support to learners:

R2: *I give extra simple tasks.* [“Ek gee ekstra eenvoudige oefeninge.”]

R8: *To give similar questions to see if they can get to the problem.* [“Om soortgelyke vrae te gee om te kyk of hulle by die probleem kan uitkom.”]

R10: *The type of academic support is to repeat the lesson again.* [“Die tipe akademiese ondersteuning is om weer die les te herhaal.”]

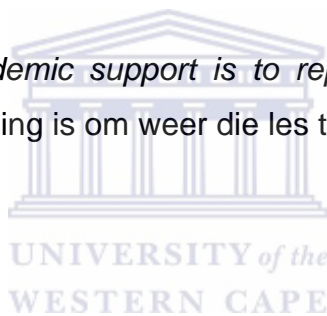
(e) Success rate

Measuring the success rate of learners’ procedures must be done for monitoring and evaluating learners’ achievements. Evaluating provides an indication that strategies of support and resources are implemented effectively and barriers are being addressed. It is evident from the responses that there are no clear indicators that their support strategies are measured:

R6: *Some of them do better than they previously did.* [“Sommige van hulle vaar beter as wat hulle voorheen gevaar.”]

R7: *The tempo is average.* [“Die tempo is gemiddeld.”]

R9: *You can’t really measure the success, because you take all the children as part of the team.* [“Jy kan nie regtig enige sukses meet nie want jy vat maar elke kind as ‘n deel van die span...”]



4.3.3 Individual learning support plans

An individual learning support plan for learners is a route map to guide the teacher to provide support for every unique learner. As learners do not learn in the same way, they cannot be assessed in a uniform fashion. An individual learning support plan is thus important to keep track of learner achievements and performances. None of the respondents indicated that they have individual learning support plans for learners:

R7: *No, I don't have an individual plan for learners.* ["Nee, ek het nie individuele plan vir leerders nie"]

R4: *I don't have an individual plan.* ["Ek het nie 'n individuele plan nie"]

R5: *I will draw up a collective plan for them.* ["Ek sal vir hulle 'n gesamentlike plan opstel"]

4.3.4 Gender issues

Failure to take cognizance of the physiological differences between boys and girls contributes to ineffectiveness of support strategies. From the literature in chapter two, it appears as if there may be differences that can impact differently on boys and girls. These respondents don't take into account that boys and girls can respond differently to support and that some support strategies can be more effective for girls and some can be more effective for boys. Various responses to that effect:

R4: *We don't do it specifically on boys or girls so I can't say which one is the best.* ["Ons doen dit nie spesifiek op meisies of seuns nie so ons kan nie sê watter een is die beste nie"]

R5: *Currently I don't distinguish. It depends on the situation, whether it is a group of girls or boys.* ["Huidiglik tref ek nie onderskeid nie. Dit hang af van die situasie as dit 'n groep meisies of seuns is"]

R3: *Sometimes it is girls that perform better, practically the boys perform better."*

[“Soms is dit meisies wat beter vaar, in prakties vaar die seuns beter”]

R8: *“Girls are wittier than boys.”* [“Meisies snap vinniger as seuns”]

4.3.5 Factors influencing support

(a) Parental involvement

The data collected suggests that parents of learners with special educational needs are not as involved in their children’s scholastic progress as they ought to be. Parental involvement is central in effectively solving children problems. Parents don’t have enough time to help their children due to their work obligations. Socio-economic problems in poorer communities have a direct influence on the education of the children. Indications are that learners drop out of school which leaves them with bleak futures, girls fall pregnant, sometimes abuse drugs and they simply don’t have the skills to be responsible parents. From the focus group discussions the following data emerged in support of this fact:

R5: *There is little interest from some parents.* [“...daar is egter min belangstelling van sommige ouers se kant”]

R10: *Parents work late and children are asleep when the parents get home and the wake up early to go to work.* [“Ouers werk laat en kinders slaap saans as hul by die huis kom en staan vroeg op om te gaan werk”]

R2: *A lot of parents are young and expect the school to be solely responsible for the learners’ progress.* [“Baie ouers is jonk en verwag die skool moet alleen verantwoordelikheid dra vir die leerder se vordering”]

R9: *Many are single parents.* [“... baie is enkelouers”]

(b) Class size

The participants were unanimous in pointing out class size as one of the major in-school

factors that hamper the effective implementation of support strategies. At this specific primary school, according to the respondents, there are between 40 and 50 learners on average in one class. The respondents sight teacher-learner ratio as a contributing factor to the ineffectiveness of support strategies. Here are some of the responses in support of this view:

R2: *Inclusive education is a beautiful dream to have but it is not possible if the classes are so huge.* ["Inklusiewe onderwys is 'n mooi ideal om na te streef, maar dit is nie altyd moontlik as die klasse so groot is nie"]

R10: *The classes must get smaller because many times it is not possible to reach a class of fifty children, then you must give support and run with the academics as well.* ["die klasse moet baie kleiner word, want baie kere is dit nie haalbaar as jy sukkel met 'n klas van oor die vyftig kinders nie, en dan moet jy ondersteuning ook gee en dan moet jy oor die akademie ook hardloop"]

Some of the newer generation teachers were trained to deal only with one child with learning barriers at a time. This results in these teachers not providing effective support in practice – with huge classes where half of the learners in a class need support:

R4: *I received practical training in the years of teacher training and work specifically with one child to address learning problems...this is where the problem is, you sit with a huge class in front of you and you can't reach everybody.* ["Ek het praktiese opleiding gekry en spesifiek met een kind gewerk om leerprobleme aan te spreek...dit is waar die probleem inkom, want jy sit met 'n groot klas kinders voor jou en jy kan nie by almal uitkom en al die leerprobleme aanspreek nie"]

(c) Time available

Little or no provision is made for intervention activities for learners with special educational needs during a normal school day. From the responses it is evident that time constraints due to time tabling, extra-mural activities straight after contact time, transport arrangements for learners (90% of the learners are bussed in to school)

prevent intervention from taking place after school. This view is held by most of the respondents in this research:

R5: *The normal school timetable makes no provision for intervention...after school learners go home with the busses or teachers must perform extra-mural activities.* [“die normale skoolrooster maak nie voorsiening vir intervensie nie...na skool gaan die kinders huius toe met die busse of opvoeders moet aandag gee aan buitemuurse bedrywighede”]

R9: *You have to run through your work, you can't stand still at intervention...you have to give a child a task to show that you give support to the child. You can't do everything in a lesson hour.* [“...’n mens moet so hardloop om deur die werk te kom dat jy nie kan stilstaan by intervensie nie...jy gee net die kind ‘n takkie dat jy ‘n bewys het dat jy die kind ondersteun het. Jy kan nie alles in die lesuur doen nie”]

(d) Workload per teacher

The new curriculum brought with it extra administrative tasks which contribute a great deal to teachers feeling overwhelmed by work. This leads to exhaustion and in turn a lack of enthusiasm to implement possible planned support strategies. Responses from the focus group discussions as well as interviews indicate an array of reasons why teachers experience difficulty in addressing the needs of all learners in their classes. Workload due to administrative responsibilities together with extra mural activities, constant meetings, departmental development sessions, and constant retraining of teachers due to constant curriculum changes, is seen as one of the main reasons for insufficient support to learners with special educational needs. All the respondents indicated that individual support for learners is the best. Contributing factors like workload, time and huge classes make it impossible for teachers to give individual support to all the learners with barriers, as the following responses suggest:

R1: *The work is so much I just try to keep my head above water.* [“Die werk is so baie ek probeer net kop bo water hou”]

R10: *I handle all of them (learners) the same because of the heavy workload.* ["Ek hanteer hulle (leerders) almal dieselfde omdat die werklading so baie is"]

R2: *Individual attention is the best, but time doesn't allow it and we are forced to fall back on children learning from their peers.* ["Individuele aandag is die beste, maar die tyd laat dit nie altyd toe nie, ek is genoodsaak om terug te val waar kinders leer van hul portuur"]

4.3.6 Functioning of the ILST and DBST

The core purpose of the ILST is to coordinating all learner, teacher, curriculum and institution development support in the school. The ILST is running well and according to teachers, the ILST members do what they can to support teachers. From the focus group discussion it is clear that although they don't have training to perform the duties of the ILST, they do what they can to support teachers and learners. As one teacher said:

R10: *I don't think anybody has training, but we are in a portfolio because we have experience.* ["Ek dink nie een van ons het opleiding nie, maar is in 'n portefeulje omdat ons ondervinding het"]

The collaboration between role players is of utmost importance for the effective support of learners. It appears that there is collaboration between the support teams to provide effective strategies to support learners. The ILST also collaborates with DBST as the following response indicates:

R2: *The support team works well with the DBST...the psychologist comes to test the learners and the social worker visits the school to solve problems.* ["Die hulpspan werk goed saam met die DBST...die sielkundige kom toets die leerders...en die maatskaplike werker besoek die skool om probleme op te los.

4.3.7 Collaboration with the ILST and DBST

(a) Nature of support provided

As mentioned by some of the respondents, some attempt is being made by the ILST and the DBST to address special needs of learners. The nature of support depends on the needs of the individual learner or the group. The ILST also try to provide support teachers on different levels in the education system:

R7: *Yes, they (ILST) provide support in different fields and on different levels.* ["Ja, hulle (hulpspan) bied ondersteuning in verskillende velde en vlakke"]

R8: *The ILST's stuff is in place. They organize sessions.* ["Die hulpspan se goed is in plek. Hulle reël sessies"]

(b) Procedure for accessing support

The procedure for accessing support of learners by the teacher, ILST or DBST seems to be clear and teachers use these resources effectively. Guidelines and support for teachers by the ILST and the DBST make this a collective process that the learners can benefit from:

R4: *The ILST gives guidelines as to how we have to place children and we also collaborate with psychologists.* ["Die hulpspan gee vir ons riglyne hoe ons kinders moet plaas...en ons skakel ook met sielkundiges"]

R10: *The ILST provides the necessary support through the referrals that they do for the teachers.* ["Die hulpspan bied die nodige ondersteuning deur verwysings wat hy vir die onderwysers doen."]

R2: *Organize courses, get psychologist in and ensure that there are resources that the teachers can use...* ["Reël kursusse...kry sielkundiges in en sorg dat daar bronne is wat opvoeders kan gebruik..."]

(c) Effectiveness of support provided

The ILST do what they can, but a lack of capacity hampers the effectiveness of support. From the discussion it became clear that ILST members are also class teachers. This hampers effective support to teachers and learners, because ILST members must attend to their own classes, planning, administrative work and support to learners with academic barriers in their classes. ILST members are not trained to provide support to teachers. They try to implement what is required from them by the DBST. As mentioned in chapter three, the DBST has to service twenty six schools with 17664 learners. With one psychologist and one social worker, the effectiveness of their support to learners and teachers is being questioned:

R3: *The ILST, I believe do everything they can do at school, but they are really not trained.* ["Die hulpspan glo ek by die skool doen alles wat hulle kan, maar hulle is regtig nie opgelei nie.]"

R9: *Certain things are prescribed by the ILST. The teacher is still responsible for what is applied. So it still depends on when the teacher gets the chance to apply it in the classroom.* ["Daar word sekere dinge voorgeskryf deur die hulpspan. Die opvoeder is steeds verantwoordelik vir dit wat toegepas word. So dit hang nog steeds af van wanneer die opvoeder nog 'n kans kry om dit wel toe te pas in die klaskamer in."]

R 4: *It would be ideal if they physically come in and take you by the hand with that specific child, but the time each teacher has to spend in the classroom does not allow for that time and the school's system also does not allow it.*

["Dit sal ideal wees as hulle fisies inkom en vir jou aan die hand vat met daardie spesifieke kind, maar die tyd en dat elke onderwyser in hul eie klas moet wees laat die tyd nie toe nie en die skool se sisteem laat dit ook nie toe nie."]

4.3.8 Proposals for the successful provision of support

Teachers feel that there are many challenges, but there are ways to improve support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in the classroom. Respondents are of the

opinion that the learner support teacher (remedial teacher) can provide specialized and individualized support to learners. Teachers also felt that if there can be less learners in class then they can also provide individualized support. The training of teachers to provide support to learners with educational barriers was identified as a crucial matter. A respondent also recommended that all the teachers must collaborate to educate learners in their totality. What follows are some of their recommendations:

R7: *If every school can have a remedial teacher.* ["As elke skool 'n remedierende onderwyser kan hê"]

R10: *Classes can get smaller.* ["Klasse baie kleiner kan word"]

R3: *Training is important.* ["Opleiding is belangrik"]

R8: *The teachers must all work together to educate the child in his totality.* ["Die opvoeders moet almal saamwerk om die kind in sy totaliteit op te voed en te onderrig"]

R2: *The government should provide money where it is needed. Extra support should be provided at schools that can help teachers.* ["Die regering moet geld sit waar nodig is. Ekstra hulp by skole wat opvoeders kan help moet voorsien word."]

R5: *Colleagues can share successes with each other in a practical manner and qualified people can be called upon to come and address us.* ["Sukses wat opvoeders behaal het, kan hulle met kollegas deel op praktiese wyses en opgeleide persone kan ingeroep word om ons toe te kom spreek"]

4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter highlights the relationship between normative policy expectations on the one hand and the actual manifestation of policy in the real world of schools and their contexts on the other. By exploring the key questions of *how* teachers perceive and implement support to learners and *what* factors contribute to the successful

implementation of learning support strategies, this study reveals a formative interaction between teachers' lack of capacity (due to lack of training and available resources) and the support practices in which they engage.

My own observations and considerations of teachers' perceptions of and implementation of learning support strategies reveal that what is expected in policy is far removed from the realities in practice. Most of the teachers in this study did not receive specialist training that could provide them with the necessary skills to identify and support learners with learning challenges. As one of the respondents remarked, R3 (chapter 4.3.1d): *"No formal training, but as the years go by you tend to learn things"*. Comments such as *"It's a wonderful notion, but not very practical"*, R2 (chapter 4.3.1a) not only reveal scepticism about the policy's practicality, but also its credibility in practice. Judging from, R2 who says: *"White Paper 6... no, I don't know...."* (4.3.1b) it appears that the policy is generally unknown, illustrating the point that all stakeholders in the education system were not involved in its conception and development.

The chapter reveals numerous systemic factors that influence learner support. The respondents in comments such as: R5: *"There is little interest from some parents"* and R10: *"Parents work late and children are asleep when the parents get home from work..."* (4.3.5 a) suggest that teachers struggle with non-participating parents. Class size is seen as another hampering factor in teachers' attempts to provide learner support. R2 provides evidence for this when she contends, *"Inclusive education is a beautiful dream to have but it is not possible if the classes are so huge"* (4.3.5 b). The respondents also view time constraints as a negative influence in the provision of learner support. R5 describes how with this remark: *"The normal timetable makes no provision for intervention... after school learners go home or teachers must perform extra - mural activities"* (R5, 4.3.5c). Finally, the data highlights teacher overload as a contributing factor to ineffective learner support. R1 gives a frustrating account with this contention, *"The work is too much... I just try to keep my head above water"* (4.3.5d). The data shows that although teachers are open to the idea of learner support and have been doing so for years, their support practices have been negatively influenced by various factors.

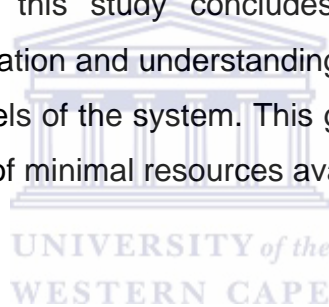
My contention is that unrealistic policy changes together with inadequate training and

resources to back these policy changes unfairly place teachers in the middle of having to comply with policy expectations on the one hand, but not being trained and resourced on the other. Most schools in South Africa (more so for rural schools) today are still under resourced, poor and without specially trained learner support teachers. Teachers in these schools work with the bare minimum of resources and it takes its toll on their enthusiasm for and professional engagement with their task in these schools. In this study reference was made to teacher frustration and despondency. The education of learners with and without disabilities relies on the commitment and effective support of teachers. Mainstream teachers see inclusive education as being foisted upon them and they have raised many concerns regarding the implementation of inclusive education (Engelbrecht, 2000; Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff & Pettipher, 2000). The net result is ineffective support to learners, underlining the gap between the rhetoric and the reality.

Following Da Costa (2003), this study concludes that there is a gap between conceptualizing inclusive education and understanding how to implement it in the day to day life of the school at all levels of the system. This gap is caused by unrealistic policy expectations and the realities of minimal resources available at this school.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the research findings. Different themes that contribute to the ineffective implementation of support strategies were identified and discussed. From the data it is evident that various factors contribute to the implementation of learning support strategies at this specific school. The concluding comments and recommendations will be presented in the next chapter. The findings will be discussed in detail and recommendations for further study will be made.



CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to investigate the implementation of learning support strategies by teachers in the intermediate phase of a primary school in the Western Cape. Understanding how teachers perceive and implement support to all learners is crucial because it could enhance learners' academic performance. Research shows that although teachers are not against inclusive education and the provision of support, it is their lack of capacity that is hampering the implementation of support.

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings, a summary of the study and provides recommendations that may help to improve the effective implementation of support.

5.2 REVIEW OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In this study, I have explored the perceptions and experiences of teachers who are expected to offer learning support to learners at an Intermediate Phase level. I wanted to find out how teachers perceive and implement support and what factors (enhancing or limiting) impact upon the successful implementation of learning support strategies. In line with this purpose and research questions, the content of the interviews and focus group discussion were structured in such a way that it extrapolated the following issues:

- (a) Teachers' knowledge and experiences of inclusive education,
- (b) The provision of educational support in the classroom,
- (c) Individual learning support plans,
- (d) Gender issues,
- (e) Factors influencing success,
- (f) The role of the ILST and DBST in providing support,
- (g) Collaboration with the ILST and DBST,
- (h) Proposals for the successful provision of support.

This research aimed to investigate the implementation of learning support strategies by

teachers in the intermediate phase of a school in the Western Cape. More specifically, the objectives of the study were:

- (a) To understand how teachers perceive support to learners,
- (b) To understand how teachers implement support to learners,
- (c) To explore the factors (enhancing or limiting) that impact upon the successful implementation of learning support strategies.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings in chapter five is presented with reference to the literature reviewed in chapter two. Through well planned data collecting methods (as discussed in chapter 3) certain themes emerged to which I often refer in this chapter. From the data it is evident that various factors influence teachers' implementation of learning support strategies. These factors include, external (out of school) factors such as parental involvement and collaboration with the DBST, and internal (in school) factors such as lack of resources, overcrowded classes, time constraints and a lack of gender sensitivity. Finally, factors such as teachers' interpretation of policies regarding educational support are examined while scrutinizing their capacity to offer learning support.

5.3.1 How teachers perceive and implement support

In White Paper 6 it is envisaged that an inclusive education and training system is organised so that it can provide various levels and kinds of support to learners and teachers (DoE, 2001). The roles and responsibilities of teachers are outlined as different levels in the Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (DoE, 2005c). It suggests that at the first level, the mainstream teacher is at the core of learning support. The teacher must uncover barriers to learning and implement strategies to support learners to overcome barriers. This is in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) reference to the micro-system where the teacher is central and support may be influenced by teacher knowledge, training and classroom experiences. At the second level of support it is suggested that, after the teacher exhausted all strategies, he/she is to consult with the Institution Level Support Team (ILST). The ILST supports the teacher

in helping the learners to overcome learning difficulties. The ILST is supposed to consult with other education support professionals like the District Support Teams (DBST) if higher levels of support are needed. For teachers to uncover barriers of learning effectively, it is suggested that it be done through sound observation, interviews, and consultation, reflection, formative assessment, previous records and also be grounded in curriculum as suggested in policy (DoE, 2005c).

In spite of policy prescriptions (White Paper 6), teachers in this study identify learners with support needs through the writing of random tests. Those learners who then fare poorly are included on the list of those pupils who need support. This practice, according to Engelbrecht *et al*, (2001), can be attributed to imbalances of the past and the fact that teachers were not trained to work with learner diversity.

It is envisaged in White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001) that the ILST of a school should consist of a team that coordinates all learner, teacher, curriculum and institution development support in the institution (chapter 2.4.3). The success of the implementation of support depends on the ability of this team to implement and provide effective support to teachers. If one considers that the composition of the ILST would take up half of this school's staff members who are not trained in learner support and who are already under huge administrative burden of the curriculum and extra-mural activities, then the viability of such a team and what it is expected to do also comes into question. I come to the conclusion that support is also hampered by the lack of information.

5.3.2 Factors that influence the successful implementation of support

Forlin *et al* (2001), (chapter 2.4) suggests that specialist support personnel should work collaboratively with general classroom teachers in providing support to learners either within class or on a "pull-out" basis (the learning support teacher may periodically withdraw learners experiencing barriers to learning from mainstream for individual or small-group support). The reality of this school is that there is no specialist trained learner support teacher. It is expected of general classroom teachers to perform this important task.

As mentioned in the literature (chapter 2.4.2), the DBST is supposed to support teachers and enable them to create effective and supportive spaces for learners by providing learning support materials to teachers (DoE, 2005a.). In the district in which this school resides there is only one learner support subject advisor who must service 26 schools. Considering that most of the schools in this circuit are poor schools and that most of the learners in these schools are in need of learner support because of their socio-economic challenges, the effective provision of this support at district level comes into question.

Several challenges emerged from the collected data. According to Mittler (2000), teachers' interpretations and attitudes are fundamental in teachers' responses to new policy. This view is supported by Davies and Green (1998); Oswald et al. (2000) who contend that many teachers feel threatened by the different practices introduced in the curriculum and inclusive education training initiatives. This study shows that policies of inclusion are being interpreted differently at grassroots level. This creates a gap between policy and implementation which further contributes to teachers' challenges in the classroom.

Teachers in this study appear to be either uninformed about policies and legislation regarding inclusive education or when informed, they appear to have little faith in the system (4.3.1 b). Policies were not workshopped with teachers. Teachers were also not afforded the opportunity to work collaboratively to explore the practice.

Policy guidelines which are supposed to provide practical information on how to take measures of reasonable accommodation within the education system, more particularly in the classroom (DoE, 2009) appear to be unclear. This leads to teachers being unsure of how to implement these policies. Stofile (2008) as discussed in Chapter 2 also highlighted an uncertainty about how to implement the policy amongst officials as well as teachers. The policy, it would seem, is very specific on *should* but very vague on *how*.

The data indicated that teachers' excessive workload has an impact on teacher morale and the way they provide support. Policy overload, the curriculum, together with the system of continuous assessment and the Integrated Quality Management System,

creates additional work overload. The literature showed that 80% of teachers believe their workload had increased.

The data revealed that teachers need more time to get to know each student's personality and academic strengths and weaknesses. With less time taken up by classroom management and extra-mural activities, teachers can spend more time supporting learners with academic barriers. This study showed that little or no provision is made for intervention activities for learners with special educational needs during a normal school day. Time constraints due to time tabling, extra-mural activities straight after contact time and transport arrangements for learners were identified as challenges in attempts to provide support to learners. Effective management of time is key in a functional school. If time is not set out for learner support sessions, the effectiveness of such a strategy will be compromised.

Data regarding in school factors shows that a lack of resources negatively impacts on teachers' ability to offer learning support to learners in need. The teachers in this study use whatever resources are easily accessible, but not necessarily the most effective. The lack of resources can exclude learners from the learning process. Adequate and appropriate resources should be available for teachers to provide effective support (Mohay & Reid, 2006).

Overcrowded classrooms force teachers to work with groups rather than individual learners. The participants in this study were unanimous in pointing out class size as one of the major factors that hampers the effective implementation of support strategies. According to the teacher respondents, the training institutions that did offer some form of specialization in learning support only trained the teacher to work with one child who has barriers to learning. The reality in the field is very different to that which future teachers are trained for. At this specific school (and many others with similar conditions), there are more than forty five learners in a class. More than half of the class experiences some sort of learning barrier.

This study revealed that teachers don't take cognizance of the physiological differences between boys and girls and how these gender issues are important in the way learners perceive support. This contradicts current literature that suggests that there is a distinct

difference between how boys and girls learn (Pomerantz, Altermatt, & Saxon, 2000). The findings suggest that girls are wittier than boys and that boys do better at practical subjects.

Teachers' uncertainty of policy implementation also impairs the effective collaboration between the support structures. The ILST in this school consists of class teachers who cannot regularly attend, collaborate and consult to provide effective support to children with learning difficulties. The ILST in this school consists of teachers with no formal training but they were chosen based on the years of teaching experience. Support from the school district (DBST), according to Engelbrecht and Green (2007) is supposed to include capacity building and supporting schools in recognizing and addressing learner difficulty. The DBST in this school's district faces the challenge that it has too many schools to serve with very limited staff and resources and they therefore struggle with capacity building.

External (out of school) factors suggest that parents of learners with special educational needs are not as involved in facilitating their children's scholastic progress as they ought to be. Due to parents' work obligations in order to provide properly for their children; parents don't have enough time to help their children. Socio-economic problems such as teen pregnancies, drug abuse and school drop-outs in poorer communities have a direct influence on the education of their children

The aforementioned paragraphs have outlined some of the major factors that drive teachers to "pseudo-support". All of these factors contribute in visible and overt ways, to teachers' lack of capacity in to engage with the issue of learner support. Teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of learners.(<http://www.qcda.gov.uk/4336.aspx>). If learners have the support they need, they can master the skills to overcome their learning difficulties. However, due to various challenges outlined in this study, learners do not receive the necessary support which leads to persistent learning difficulties and eventual stifled educational growth of learners.

5.4 SUMMARY

The findings of this research confirmed that the implementation of learning support strategies is not as effective as it ought to be. Guided by research questions this study concludes that: Teachers' implementation of support to learners with barriers to learning is not effective and does not help learners to overcome their learning barriers. Various factors contribute to this lack of success, which include:

- (a) external factors, such as poor parental involvement, global forces and socio-economic circumstances, unemployment and poverty.
- (b) internal factors, such as a lack of adequate resources, overcrowded classes, time constraints, language barriers, poor policy interpretation at grassroots-level, weak support structures and mainly, teachers' lack of capacity and a lack of gender sensitivity.

I am of the opinion that the above-mentioned constraints must be dealt with before proper support can be provided. Research by Swanepoel and Booyse (2003:99) suggests that "*the imposed educational changes since 1994 were too ambitious and far-reaching for teachers to cope with*". Teachers must therefore be guided in the process of inclusive education. Strategies and resources must be put in place to help teachers to support all learners. An interconnected approach, as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1979) in chapter 2 is needed where all the different stakeholders work together interactively.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In chapter two it was noted that the Department of Education (2001:17) views inclusion as recognizing and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities. As the National Curriculum Statement and inclusive policy makes provision for support and the necessary flexibility to accommodate all learners in an inclusive setting, the procedures used must enhance the teaching and learning practice. Therefore, recommendations that are made acknowledge that successful implementation of support is possible with collaboration at the different levels of the education system.

Recommendation 1

Teachers have to make a meaningful paradigm shift to ensure successful transformation. Teachers must ensure that learners have sufficient time and opportunity to learn what is required and that support is in place. Early diagnosis and prompt remediation of barriers to learning must be in place and teachers should be trained to use learning support material.

Recommendation 2

Professional development of teachers should be integral to school policy. Professional growth of teachers must be stimulated in order to keep up with educational demands of the twentieth century.

Recommendation 3

Teachers must be given opportunities to share knowledge in real situations in in-service training sessions. They need opportunities to share what they know, discuss what they learn and connect new concepts and strategies in their own unique context. Teacher education institutions need to reflect on teacher training programmes in order to properly prepare prospective teachers for the current realities in schools.

Recommendation 4

Policy-makers must rethink policies and provide opportunities for everyone in the school to understand new concepts and practices. This is important because the success of new policies depends on effective staffing, funding and managing of schools as well as the effective responses to specific teacher and learner needs.

Recommendation 5

The school needs to build relationships with community structures so that they can assist parents to support their children. Programmes can be offered to parents so that they can gain a better understanding of what the education of their children is all about.

Recommendation 6

There is an urgent need for training and support of ILST. Increased government funding can contribute to the appointment of learning support teachers, social workers,

therapists and psychologists so that the gap for specialized support to schools can be narrowed.

Recommendation 7

To improve collaboration with the DBST, a support centre can be established. Support services such as psychologists, welfare officers and therapists can be based at this support centre. Schools and parents can have access to support and advice more efficiently.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In this research more themes regarding effective implementation of support arose which were not addressed in this study. These themes included the role of specialized support services, the role of community services, provision of learning support teachers at all the schools and the impact that current support has on learners with barriers to learning. These unexplored topics can be further researched in order to improve learning support in schools.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were a number of limitations in this study that must be acknowledged. The study is limited to a single case which might limit the generalization of the findings to other schools. According to Merriam (1998), a researcher as a human instrument is limited by being human because personal biases interfere during research. Subjectivity may have occurred as the researcher is a teacher at this particular school. In an attempt to minimize subjectivity, I involved my participants in interpretation of the questions that were asked and in the verification of the data. As also acknowledged by other researchers in this field of study (Dreyer, 2008), another limitation of this study was that there is very little literature available on structures that provide learning support to learners experiencing learning difficulties in mainstream primary schools.

5.8 CONCLUSION

Guided by an interpretive paradigm, an investigation into the implementation of learner support strategies was conducted. This phenomenological approach was appropriate

because it attempted to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation (Leedy & Omrod, 2001). This allowed the researcher to use qualitative methods to collect data.

The literature review in chapter two focused on the journey to inclusion which included educational transformation. This is aimed at inclusion of all learners in the quest towards Education for All. In the literature review some of the key points included a description of inclusion (globally and locally), the scope of learner support at different levels (from outside to inside the school), the importance of individual learner support plans to provide effective support. This was followed by a discussion of collaboration between these different layers of support as well as challenges to teachers' effective implementation of support strategies.

Chapter three provided an in-depth account of the research design and methodology used in conducting the study. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. This was followed by a discussion of how the researcher collected, analyzed and interpreted the data. This chapter concluded with a discussion of the ethical guidelines which guided the research.

Different themes emerged in chapter four. The interviews and focus group discussions were thus planned in such a way as to extrapolate information regarding these themes. Chapter four provided a detailed analysis and interpretation of data collected through the focus group discussions and interviews.

In the final chapter, findings regarding the implementation of support were discussed in relation to the literature review in chapter two. Concluding statements were made and followed up with recommendations. The purpose of the recommendations is to improve the implementation of support in schools to all learners.

This research therefore offers insights into teachers' perspectives on the efficacy of the support strategies employed by teachers. The data showed that teachers are generally receptive to the idea of inclusion, but that numerous adverse factors make them despondent. It is important to acknowledge that attempts are made by teachers to support learners with barriers of learning. What is lacking here though is the necessary

training and resources to make policy expectations a reality. Parents need to exercise their rights and get involved in their children's education. Existing practices and policy should be closely scrutinized by all the roleplayers so that appropriate measures can be taken to improve the implementation of support to identified learners.

This research identified several factors as influential in the provision of support to learners with barriers to learning. Stakeholders urgently need to address these factors. They have to develop strategies to improve literacy and numeracy levels and thereby reduce the high levels of unemployment and poverty in our country.



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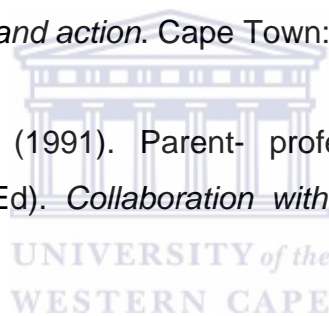
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APPENDIX 1: WCED PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.



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Enquiries Dr
Imibuzo

Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

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Verwysing
Reference 20090320-0014
Isalathiso

Ms Rene Joorst
P.O. Box 721
VREDENBURG
7380



Dear Ms R. Joorst

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNER SUPPORT STRATEGIES ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, teachers and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, teachers, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Teachers' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **22nd April 2009 to 30th June 2009.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).

7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 26th March 2009
March 2009



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APPENDIX 2: Participant information sheet


Dear Participant

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

Project title

Investigating the implementation of learning support strategies by teachers in the intermediate phase of a school in the Western Cape.

Purpose of the project



One of the stipulations in the assessment policy of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of 2001 is that teachers must have proof of support, help and support for learners who do not meet the outcomes of the specific learning area. It is expected of teachers to design these support strategies, implement them and administer them so that learners with learning backlogs can be helped in order to be able to progress to the next grade. Looking at the growing number of learners at this school who, after receiving learner support, are still not ready to progress to the new grade, the effectiveness of such support activities becomes questionable. It was these developments in the education system that sparked my interest to investigate and critically evaluate the effectiveness of support strategies used in school.

The main aim of this study is to investigate, from teachers' perspectives, how effective the support strategies employed by teachers in the intermediate phase of a school is at improving the academic performance of learners.

The findings of this study will be helpful for the Western Cape Education Department

and South Africa as a whole in order to broaden the knowledge- base about effective support strategies and to make recommendations on improving support strategies.

Description of the study and your involvement.

The study will include individual interviews and focus group discussions with the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST). Questions about their experience and challenges will guide the interview and discussions with them. I intend to make use of a Dictaphone to record the interviews. Notes will be made so that I can compare it to the responses on tape during the transcription process in order to get a better understanding of the data. I shall also video-tape focus group interviews in order to ensure that all conversations that took place, even the interruptions, are captured.

Confidentiality

Your name and identity will be kept anonymous. The information provided by you will remain confidential. The data may be seen by my supervisor, but I would like to ensure you that the rules of confidentiality extend to everyone who participates in the research. The information and consent forms will be safeguarded for five years before it will be destroyed.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time if you wish to do so. You may refuse to answer questions if you don't feel comfortable with it.

Possible benefits and risks

There are no risks involved in the study. You will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study. Nevertheless, the information obtained from the participants in the study will help the teachers and ILST to improve the support strategies to learners.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact:

Rene Joorst

Student number: 0836593417

Email: jpjoorst@telkomnet.sa



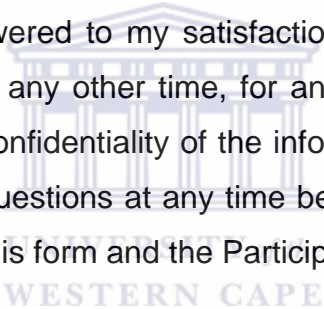
APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of research project

INVESTIGATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT STRATEGIES BY TEACHERS IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE OF A SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE.

If you agree to take part in the above research study your signed consent is required before I proceed with this interview/discussion.

I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet, which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in the research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any other time, for any reason and without prejudice. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information will be safeguarded. I am aware of my freedom to ask questions at any time before and during the study. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.



Data protection: I agree to the processing of data that I supplied for any purposes connected with the research project that was outlined to me.

I hereby consent to participate in the research study.

Name of participant(print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of researcher(print).....Signed.....Date.....

APPENDIX 4: Research questions for interviews with teachers.

Investigating the implementation of learning support strategies by teachers in the intermediate phase of a school in the Western Cape.

Background

1. Tell me about your experiences as a teacher.
2. Elaborate on your experiences as a teacher in the intermediate phase.

Knowledge about inclusive education

3. What do you think of Inclusive Education?

Inclusive education policy

4. What policies, do you think, are important in the field of inclusive education?

Experience of inclusive education

5. Have you had any experience in Inclusive Education?

Training in inclusive education

6. Discuss the training (if any) you had in providing support to learners with academic barriers.

Provision of educational support in classrooms

Guidelines to identify support.

7. What are the guidelines that you use to provide academic support?

Types of support provided to learners.

8. Explain the kind of academic support you provide in the classroom.

Resources to provide support.

9. Discuss the resources you employ to provide effective support.

Support strategies utilized.

10. What support strategies do you find to be more successful?
11. What teaching strategies do you find most effective in giving support to pupils? Explain why.

Success rate.

12. How do you measure the outcomes of the support you give?
13. Discuss the success rate of learners that receive academic support.

Individual support plan.

14. Explain the differentiation between pupils' (who need support) individual support plans.

Gender issues.

15. On which learner groups (girls/boys) are the strategies more effective. Why do you say so?

Collaboration with the parents

16. How do you as the teacher collaborate with the parents in supporting their child who receives academic support at school?

ILST's.

17. How does the ILST fulfil their role in supporting learners with academic barriers?

Support to teachers.

18. How does the ILST help teachers to provide effective support to pupils?



APPENDIX 5: Research questions for focus group discussion with ILST

Investigating the implementation of learning support strategies by teachers in the intermediate phase of a school in the Western Cape.

1. Can you give me an overview of how this ILST is composed? Discuss in detail.
2. Do any of you have training as members of the ILST? Please elaborate.
3. Explain how you identify learners with special educational needs.
4. Describe the kind of barriers that learners have that exist presently at your school.
5. Describe the procedure that you follow when learners has difficulty in meeting the learning outcomes of the grade.
6. Elaborate on your learners' rate of progression after receiving academic support.
7. Do you think the ILST fulfils their role to support learners with barriers? Explain.
8. Discuss how the ILST collaborates with class teachers to help learners with academic barriers?
9. Elaborate on how the ILST collaborates with the DBST.
10. Discuss how the ILST collaborates with parents to support their children with special educational needs.
11. Can you think of ways to improve support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in the classroom? (Proposals for the successful provision of support)



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