

**THE CHANGING ROLE OF DISTRICT-BASED EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES
IN ESTABLISHING THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOL SETTINGS: AN ECOSYSTEMIC
APPROACH**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

THE CHANGING ROLE OF DISTRICT-BASED EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES IN ESTABLISHING THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOL SETTINGS: AN ECOSYSTEMIC APPROACH

is my own work, that all the resources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this thesis was not previously submitted by me for a degree at any other university.

Signature

Date

T.J. Makhalemele

DEDICATION

I hereby dedicate this work to my parents: my father, Tebello Jonathan Makhalemele and my late mother, Mathabo Makgauta Paulinah Makhalemele.

“My parents, despite the hardship of life, you managed to teach us with the little you have and created a home for us to be responsible and I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart. My father, I honour you with this piece of work for raising us in absence of your wife. You really stood firm for the tough test of life. Mathabo, I know your spirit was around me and gave me strength. Thank you very much”.

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of support provided by District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs) to learners experiencing barriers to learning in the Free State province. The study focused specifically on the implementation of the changed role of the DBSTs as proposed by the Education White Paper 6 in 2001.

This was a two-phased study involving a literature study and empirical research. The first phase of this study focused on a literature study undertaken on topics such as the history of learner support in South Africa, the previous role of Education Support Services at school and school district level and different education documentation and policy documents relating to the topic. Furthermore the literature study explored the ecosystemic approach to learner support specifically focusing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Epstein's model of human development.

The second phase of the study comprised empirical research. A quantitative approach was used to collect data with a little element of the qualitative approach just to verify some information. For the quantitative component of the research, a questionnaire consisting of both closed and open-ended questions was administered, while for the qualitative component, the researcher held some interviews with participants selected randomly at first, but with a snowball effect. The research was conducted in all the districts of the Free State Department of Education.

The data collected revealed that the implementation of the proposed changes to learner support is in fact subdued due to various problems experienced by District Based Support Teams. These problems hamper the effective implementation of the changes set out in various education policy documents. The study contributes to the practice of learner support by proposing a model for the DBSTs to implement their changed roles.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS

ADD	Attention Deficiency Disorder
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASs	Assessment standards
BLD	Barriers to learning and development
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
COLTS	Culture of Learning, Teaching and Services
DBST	District-Based Support Team
DCES	Deputy Chief Education Specialist
DEC	Department of Education and Culture
DET	Department of Education and Training
DOE	Department of Education
ECD	Early childhood education
ESS	Education Support Services
FET	Further education and training
FS DoE	Free State Department of Education
GET	General education and training
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEP	Individual Education Programme
ILST	Institutional-Level Support Team
INSET	In-Service Training
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISP	Individual Support Plan
IT	Information Technology
LOLT	Language of learning and teaching
Los	Learning outcomes
LTSM	Learning and teaching support materials
LSEN	Learner with Special Educational Needs
LSF	Learning Support Facilitator
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and

Training

NDoE	National Department of Education
NGOs	Non Government Organisations
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PACSEN	Parents' Association for Children with Special Education Needs
PIDA	Panel for the Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SAFCD	South African Federal Council on Disability
SAPS	South African Police Services
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
TAT	Teachers Assistance Team
TBVC	Transkei, Boputhatswana, Venda and Ciskei
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION.

In the context of the Inclusive education system that is envisaged for South Africa educational support services that are aimed at enabling learners to overcome barriers to learning are the responsibility of new structures, namely Institutional-Level Support Teams as well as District-Based Support Teams (SA, 2001). This means that the inclusive education system represents a move away from the dual system of education that consisted of mainstream education on the one hand and special education on the other (Du Toit, 1996). In view of the inclusive education system, envisaged the psychological services are to be rendered differently. The White Paper on Inclusive Education sketches the way in which these services must be rendered (SA, 2002:29).

The White Paper encourages movement away from the medical model of rendering educational support services and promotes a model aligned to the systems theory that encourages collaboration among stakeholders such as the private and public sector. In addition, support can also be provided by other members of the community, including parents/ care-givers, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, specific community leaders and healers (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2009:25). This represents role change or adjustment. The feature of this approach (medical model) was to categorize learners according to disabilities and placing them in separate learning situations that served to alienate children from society mainstream (Engelbrecht, 2008; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000; Swart & Pettipher, 2009; Uys, 2009). According to Engelbrecht (2008:17), thinking in education support has traditionally focused on the so-called medical deficit approach, according to which educational difficulties are explained solely in terms of learner deficits. Uys (2009:406) sees the major problem about the medical approach as being built on the premises that whatever fault there is lies within the individual. Thus, problems were taken as located within the learners and not in any part of the systems surrounding the learners.

The need to change this perception and the roles of the District-Based multidisciplinary teams can be traced back to the predemocracy in South Africa when the education system was based on the policy of apartheid. The history of education support services in this country reflects massive deprivation and lack of provision for the majority of learners in South Africa especially the African child (NEPI, 1992:4). A major problem for education support services has been their fragmentation and lack of coordination across different racially segregated authorities, as well as within those authorities (Engelbrecht, 2008:19). According to Hay (2003:129) and National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (1992:5), marginalization, lack of integration, inequalities, and lack of clarity and focus were seen as the key problems in relation to education support services.

Lack of integration was visible as some of the services were administered by racially segregated departments (NEPI, 1992:5). For instance, special education and guidance and counselling services were under Psychological Services, whereas school health services were offered under Departments of Health and Welfare. With regard to inequalities, there were disparities in resource allocations to the different departments. Hay (2003:129) mentions that the privileged education departments, specifically white education, had more access to services than others. Fragmentation of services in well-resourced areas was compromising the quality of support services offered, and indeed contributed to the low status mentioned earlier in this paragraph.

Minimal support services were available to the majority of schools educating black learners compared to schools educating white learners. Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001:306) and Swart and Pettipher (2009:15) are of the opinion that there were inequalities between support services and, if available, the quality of the kind of support was questionable. Literature, with regard to the history of support services in education, emphasized that the provision of these services were peripheralized and limited resources that were available had been unequally distributed among the different education departments (Engelbrecht, 2008; Hay, 2003; NEPI, 1992).

In redressing the situations highlighted in previous paragraphs, legislation and policy documents were developed and implemented. The Constitution of South Africa (SA

1996a) Act 108 of 1996 clearly states in Section 9(1) that everyone has the right to basic education and this fundamental right to basic education is further developed in Section 9(2), which forces the state to provide equal opportunities to all learners. That is also applicable to learners with special education needs. In addition, Section 9(3), (4) and (5) commit the state to non-discrimination. These clauses were important in the introduction of a new system of education in South Africa.

The provisioning of support services was enhanced by the South African Schools Act (SASA) (SA, 1996b:44). Section 12 (4) emphasizes that learners with barriers to learning and development must be accommodated and provided with relevant education support services. Section 12 (5) further mentions that physical facilities at public schools must be accessible to them. The Green Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy for South Africa emphasizes the need for a shift from a “welfare” model of disability to a developmental model premised on fundamental human rights. Furthermore, White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa provides a comprehensive framework for the transformation process which is needed to change the education system into one which will meet the needs of all learners (SA, 1997a:43). The greater details of these policies will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

The above policies paved the way to the inclusive education system. Green (2008:4) and Naicker (2008:19) pointed out that inclusive education is the term used to describe educational policies and practices that uphold the right of learners with disabilities to belong and learn in mainstream education.

Inclusive education is an approach which transforms the whole system of education and responds to the diversity of learners in the system, thus emphasizing the important role of the DBST and other support structures and role-players. Inclusive education is aimed at enabling both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge, as well as an enrichment of the culture of the learning environment, rather than as a problem (UNESCO, 2000). An inclusive system of education is thus the practice of including everyone in supportive mainstream schools and classrooms where

all learners' needs are met. Engelbrecht (2008:7) believes that, to practise inclusion, general and special teachers and resources must come together in a unified, consistent effort. Dyson and Millward (2000:3) describe inclusive education as non-discriminatory in terms of disability, culture or gender, involving all learners in a community with no exceptions, irrespective of their intellectual, physical, sensory or other differences. In line with the above paragraphs, the redressing of the situations highlighted through the introduction of inclusive education changed the phase of education support services and as a result the role of service providers within the education support services was also affected. Therefore, the focus of this study is on problems implementing the changing role of District-Based Education Support Services as suggested in White paper 6.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND ITS BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Background of the problem

The reasons behind this study emerge from my experiences as a child from a typical poor rural area in the Eastern Free State and being the educator and Head of department of Humanities at secondary school. It was in this position where I was involved in working directly with learners experiencing barriers to learning. In my personal and professional experience learners experiencing barriers to learning are part of South African life; one that has always concerned me. These learners are affected by many of the barriers (e.g. socio-economic, negative attitudes towards differences, inappropriate language, lack of parental recognition, disability) that manifest themselves in many ways. The largely rural and poor Eastern Free State where I was born and raised is also characterized by social problems such as urbanization, poverty, unemployment, child-headed households and HIV and AIDS (Le Roux, 2001:95). Many parents migrate to the more industrialized parts of not only the Free State Province but to also other parts of the country in search of employment and a better life. Behind they leave their children in the care of their often unemployed wives, poor relatives or older siblings that at times they did not have interest in education. Such children struggle in

their schooling career and some did not complete their studies as they did not get proper support neither at school nor home.

In observing the way these children struggled in their education life without proper intervention I was aware of their vulnerability and what I believed will force them to drop out. These types of learners always need educational support to be able to cope with the difficult circumstances they faced at school and home. Therefore their survival in this tragedy depends on teachers as well as providers of education support services at district levels. Therefore, it is when I came face-to-face with the plight of learners experiencing barriers to learning when I taught at a high school for thirteen years and served in Institutional-Level Support Team/ School-Based Support Team whose aim was to identify and address barriers to learning at school.

1.2.2 Problem statement

The research study will focus only on District-Based Support Team members in the sub-directorate of Inclusive Education situated in all five education districts in the Free State province. This five education districts are known as Thabo Mofutsanyana, Motheo, Lejweleputswa, Xhariep and Fezile Dabi education district. The purpose of this study is to investigate the problems experienced by District-Based Support Teams in the execution of their changed role and to come up with guidelines in this regard. On paper, theoretically in policy documents, it looks very promising, but implementing all of this is not always possible.

The following research questions were formulated as a way to guide this research study:

- How has the role of the support services changed after White Paper 6?
- What infrastructures are available to support the changing role?
- Which elements hamper the provision of education support services?

- What measures can be taken to ensure that the changing role can be implemented successfully?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are mainly:

- to determine the changed role of DBSTs after White Paper 6;
- to investigate whether infrastructures are available to support the changing role;
- to investigate the elements that hamper the provision of support by the DBSTs;
- to determine measures that can be taken to ensure that the changing role can be carried out and implemented successfully;
- to come up with recommendations that will help the DBSTs to implement their changing role effectively; and
- to come up with a proposed model for the DBSTs to implement the changed role.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

To investigate problems mentioned in this research, the researcher used a two-phase study involving literature study and empirical research. The following paragraphs briefly explain the design referred to above.

1.4.1 Phase One: Literature review

I undertook a literature study and collected data relevant to the problem investigated. Primary and secondary literature sources were consulted to outline accumulated knowledge in the mentioned field of interest which, in this study, is the changing role of the DBST in establishing an inclusive school setting. The following key words were used by the researcher to gather information relevant to the study:

Education Support Services; special education; South African education policies; inclusive education; District-Based Support Team; Institutional-Level Support Team/ Site-Based Support Team; resource centres; ecosystemic approach.

1.4.2 Phase Two: Empirical study

The empirical study aims to examine how district-based education support services are offered and to focus on problems experienced in the implementation of the changing role of district-based education support services as proposed by White Paper 6. In this study my main data collection strategy was quantitative; however, I also used qualitative research strategies in order to obtain richer data. These two approaches are discussed below.

1.4.2.1 Quantitative research

A quantitative approach entails incorporating a statistical element designed to quantify the extent to which a target group is aware of, thinks, believes or is inclined to behave in a certain way (Stubbs, 2005). In the quantitative approach, the researcher provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population and from the sample results, the researcher generalizes or makes claims about the population (Creswell, 2009:145). From the viewpoint of Neuman (1997:153), quantitative research addresses the issue of integrity by relying on an objective technology – such as precise statements, standard techniques, numerical measures, statistics and replication.

The researcher chose to use a survey design for the quantitative study. In survey designs, the researcher systematically asks a large number of people the same questions and then records their answers (Neuman, 1997:43). Creswell (2005:218) emphasized that in survey research, the researcher does not manipulate a situation or condition to see how people react. He or she simply records answers from many people who have been asked the same question carefully. Fink (2002) highlights four types of data collection, namely: self-administered questionnaires, interviews, structured record reviews and structured observation. Initially in this research, the self-administered

questionnaires were used to collect data. Furthermore, statistics were used to quantify the research population's response to the subject of enquiry.

1.4.2.2 Qualitative research

Ivankova, Creswell & Plano (2007:257) and Pogrebin (2003:4) highlight qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants conducted in a natural setting. This approach allows the researcher to approach reality from a constructivist position that will allow individual experiences in different meanings. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:17), one of the major reasons for conducting qualitative research is that:

- not much has been written about the topic or population being studied;
- the research is exploratory; and
- the research seeks to pay attention to the ideas of participants and build a picture based on their ideas.

The relevancy of this approach to this study was explained better by Creswell (2005:214) when he stated that it affords participants the opportunity to state their opinions regarding their problems clearly. This is easier for the participants since, in a qualitative approach, the data is collected from people immersed in the setting of everyday life in which the study is framed. As indicated above (*cf.* 1.4.2), there was a need to collect additional data, and this was through a quantitative approach. To this end, the data were collected from DBST members in the directorates of inclusive education whose perceptions, it was decided, would give a better indication of how the DBSTs implement the changed role as proposed in White Paper 6. Furthermore, data were also collected from former professionals who were working in Child Guidance Clinics with the intention of having an overview on how they were providing support to learners. The information about the backgrounds, behaviours, beliefs or attitudes of a large number of participants was gathered and inferences were made.

1.4.2.3 Data collection instruments

1.4.2.3.1 Questionnaires

In this research, I used self-designed questionnaires as a vital tool to gather data. A questionnaire is a data-gathering instrument used when factual information is desired (Best & Kahn, 2003:230; Esterhuysen, Horn & Liebenberg, 2005:38; Pogrebin, 2003:8). In this respect, it is expected that the participants respond to a list of written questions. According to Human, Llewellyn, Tshabalala, Eksteen and Miller (2005:213), a questionnaire is constructed to elicit information relevant to the researcher's subject of enquiry.

For the benefit of this research, I used information gathered from the literature study to develop and design a questionnaire to gather information from the DBST members in the directorate of inclusive education about their current practices in District-Based Education Support Services. Although I relied on the questionnaire as the main data collection strategy, I was also fully aware of the limitations of questionnaires. After developing questionnaire I pilot-test the questions with the intention to effect necessary changes based on feedback from individuals who completed it and to enhance reliability and validity.

The above data collection techniques and instrument will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

1.4.2.3.2 Interviews

Though I placed a priority on quantitative data collected as a major aspect of the data collection process, I also use small qualitative component as stated in 1.5.2 above (Creswell, 2002:515). Thus, I used interviews as secondary data collection methods in order to obtain richer data after realizing that the data gathered through questionnaire was insufficient to answer the research question. Creswell (2002:214) declares that an interview is a way of finding out what is in or on someone else's mind, his/her individual lived experience and knowledge, opinions, beliefs and demographic data. Greef (2007:287) sees interviews as an attempt to understand the world from the participant's

point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. The advantage of an interview is that it provides feedback immediately Greef (2007:287) McMillan and Schumacher (2001:269).

In this study, I employed semi-structured interviews as the technique to collect data. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:269) argue that in semi-structured interviews, there are no choices for answers, they are open-ended questions that are fairly specific in their intent and indeed in my interview guides for both DBST members and former professionals from Child Guidance Clinics were open-ended that gave participants an opportunity to elaborate. (*cf.* Annexes D and F). I also consider the reliability of the data gathered through interviews and this was discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

The advantage of using interviews in this qualitative study was that many of the participants (DBST members) in the research explain themselves better in their home language, which is Sesotho, while former professionals from Child Guidance Clinics were comfortable with English. The researcher personally conducted these semi-structured interviews because he is fluent in both Sesotho English. A tape recorder was used to ensure validity.

1.4.2.4 Population and sampling

The target population for my study was all District-Based Support team members. However researchers often select a representative sample from the population since it is impossible to include the whole population in a single study. There are five education districts in the Free State Province. The numbers of the DBST members in these Inclusive Education sub-directorates vary, depending on the size of each district. The biggest district had a total number of 20 members and the smallest, disadvantaged district had 12 members. This would mean that there were 94 members in all five districts. Furthermore, the target population for this study comprised of ten former professionals from Child Guidance Clinics in the Free State province.

Therefore for the quantitative phase of data collection, I targeted all available members (94) in the districts and for the qualitative phases I focused on only a few mental health-

care professionals in the districts and in former Child Guidance Clinics. In line with Leedy and Ormrod's (2005:207) assertion that at and beyond a certain point the sample size may be irrelevant, McMillan and Schumacher (2001:45) emphasize that in most sample sizes, decisions do not focus on estimates for the total population, but rather concentrate on the minimum sample sizes that can be tolerated for the smallest subgroups of importance. In the quantitative phase of this study, I used simple random sampling to select DBST members in the sub-directorate on inclusive education (n =94) in all education districts in the Free State Department of Education.

In the qualitative phases of my study I used snowball sampling procedures. According to Strydom and Venter (2002:208) snowballing involves approaching a single person in order to gain information and requesting them to recommend another person who in their knowledge may add to the data collected. Therefore, DBST members (12) and former professionals (5) recommended each other after each successful interview until a total of 17 participants were interviewed. Therefore, for the qualitative phases a total of 17 participants were involved at which point, saturation had been reached (Strydom & Delport, 2002:336).

The research was conducted in the Free State and the focus was on its five education districts, namely Thabo Mofutsanyane, Motheo, Lejweleputswa, Xhariep and Fezile Dabi education district. It was more economic for the researcher to conduct empirical research in the Free State because all of its head offices were accessible to the researcher.

1.4.2.5 Pilot survey

According to Creswell (2002:367) for purposes of validity, a questionnaire has to be piloted. In this regard, Creswell (2002:367) points out that a pilot test of a questionnaire is a procedure for making changes in an instrument based on feedback from a small number of individuals who complete and evaluate the questionnaire and provide written comment on the survey.

As indicated in 1.5.2.3.1, the questionnaire was piloted with a selected group of respondents (n = 10) from the Thabo Mofutsanyana district. The aim of piloting was also to determine the questionnaire's qualities of measurement, as well as to review it for clarity. It was found to be valid with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.825. In this regard, a detailed explanation is done at Chapter Five.

1.4.2.6 Research ethics

Research ethics should be observed in all research undertakings (Leed & Ormrod, 2005:101-104; Strydom, 2005:58-68) and in this study I adhered to basic prevailing guidelines. I also took into consideration the participation of human and precautionary measures were observed to ensure that they were not harmed in any manner (Leed & Ormrod, 2005:101). Strydom (2005:58-68) mentioned that prevention from harm, informed consent, privacy, capability and competence of the researcher, release of findings, donors and debriefing of the respondents should be considered when dealing with human participants. Therefore I considered the above mentioned ethical aspects in this research and they have been deeply discussed in Chapter Five. Furthermore, permission was obtained from the director of the Department of Education in the Free State and informed consent was also obtained from the participants. Participants took part in this study voluntarily. They also gave permission for tape-recording during the interview sessions. The data were recorded anonymously to maintain self-respect and human dignity.

It is also important for the researcher to be familiar with the ethics policy of the relevant institution (Maree & Van der Weshuizen, 2007:42). For this study I was familiar with the ethics policy of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle campus).

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is my view that findings brought forth by this study will impact fruitfully on the provision of education support services by DBST members as the target group of this research. It is expected that the findings of this study will help DBST members to extend their personal education, professional competence and general understanding of the role

which they and the schools are expected to play in their changing societies. As Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2009:25) indicates, it is through proper service delivery that support services personnel may succeed in identify and addressing barrier that are prevailing in education. Therefore the study's significance is located in the proper implementation of the inclusive education policies.

1.6 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Throughout my study, I conceptualised the following core concepts as defined here:

1.6.1 Inclusive Education

A policy that ensures the accommodation of a full variety of educational needs in a single education system. This policy is about including everyone within the education setting regardless of ability, gender, language or disability, so that all learners can belong in school and have access to the educational outcomes that the schools offer (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:4). Thomas and Loxley (2001:118) assert that inclusion is about more than "special needs" or disabilities, and is concerned with comprehensive education equality and collective belonging. Inclusive education reflects the values, ethos and culture of an education system committed to excellence by enhancing educational opportunities for all students (Brennan, 2000:23).

1.6.2 The ILST

This is the team developed at schools as proposed by the Education White Paper 6. The purpose of having such teams is to address challenges that affecting both teachers and learners. The focus of the Institutional-Level Support Teams is on empowering teachers to develop preventative and promotional strategies in the health-promoting school framework. It includes assisting the school as a whole, which is an important aspect of the process of support and change. Lazarus *et al.* (2008:159) urge that the team must address all the difficulties that emanate as a problem to the learner and also the learners who might be labelled according to a classification system for behavioural and learning problems in the school. The existence and role of this team should be

known at school and further each of the members should know which role to perform and how to do so effectively.

1.6.3 The DBST

The DBST is team established at district level as proposed the Education White Paper 6. The intention to have such a team at district level is to reduce barriers to learning within all education and training departments. The primary focus of this team is to provide education support to schools and other sites of learning. According to White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:28), the DBST should be at the centre of the education support service and should comprise of staff from provincial, district, regional, head offices and from special schools. The specialists from this team provide resources to the school and to the surrounding community that can meet most of the challenges and also help with advice and interventions. In general, Lazarus *et al.* (2008:55) asserted that this team should consist of a core of education support personnel who have the competency to fulfil their role in the district, as well as a network of support resources in the area concerned. White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:29) stated that the primary function of the DBST is to evaluate programmes, diagnosis of their effectiveness and suggesting modifications.

1.6.4 Medical approach

This is the approach that categorizes learning problems as medical and also alienates children from the mainstream education. The medical approach is highly focuses on the pathology, sickness, the nature and aetiology of the presenting problem, and deal with the specific pathology in a centred way (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:317; Swart & Pettipher, 2009:5). Engelbrecht (2008:17) added that in this approach the educational difficulties are explained solely in terms of learner deficits. People who support this approach hold the view that learners have problems, but they do not consider the impact of other factors in the system on the lives of learners. The medical approach locates the deficit in the learner and in interventions being curative (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:305). According to Swart and Pettipher (2009:5), its practitioners follow the “find-what’s-wrong-and-cure-it” approach and this implies that, after the assessment

of a child's strengths and weaknesses, diagnosis was made for placement in a specialized environment and categorization plus labelling were done.

1.7 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

The study was feasible in that:

- it was conducted within the Free State Department of Education on selected members of the district-based support teams which was accessible to the researcher;
- literature resources used for information gathered were sufficient and readily available; and
- the study is relevant to the current world trends in inclusive education, as well as in the South African education system and, as a result, it may elicit genuine and useful responses from the study population.

1.8 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF THE STUDY

From the viewpoint of Creswell (2002:75), the central undertaking of research is to understand the subjective world of human experience and the role of theory is then to show how reality comes together or how it may be changed to be more effective. This implies that theory is a set of meanings that give insight and understanding of people's behaviour.

In order to formulate a "generalizing science of behaviour", it has been realized that the task of social science is to develop a set of concepts such as norms, expectations, positions and roles. I believe that the theoretical underpinning of the research has influenced the choice of the problem, the formulation of the questions to be answered, methodological concerns, as well as the kind of data sought.

Lincoln and Guba (2000:39) mention that, in the philosophy of education, many theories exist, such as ecosystemic, post-positivism, behaviourism, positivism, pragmatism, to name but a few, each maintaining its own viewpoint from which behaviour can be

explained. The ecosystemic was chosen to form the underpinning of this research and links to the purpose of research.

Santrock (2007:39-40) believes that an ecosystems theory is a meta-theory that offers social work practitioners/clinicians a way of thinking about and assessing the relatedness of people and their impinging environments. The emphasis of this theory is on the 'interaction between the clients and their environment.

The ecosystemic theory is a philosophy that encourages seeking out the processes and doing the things that work best to help to achieve desirable ends by including all the systems involved. Workers can focus on how family, community, social, economic and political factors affect the client's situation (Santrock, 2007:41).

The key assumptions of systems theories are that:

- individuals function as a part of many systems - they are affected by these systems and affect the systems;
- because systems are in dynamic interchange, a change in one part of the system will have consequences for other systems;
- problems arise because of a misfit between individuals and the systems of which they are a part; and
- the role of the support professionals is to enhance the fit between the individuals and the systems affecting them (Donald *et al.* 2009:25).

Within this paradigm, the research made sense and contributes to the body of knowledge called Educational Learner Support.

In conclusion, the implication of an ecosystemic theory claims that knowledge arises out of actions, situations and consequences, rather than antecedent conditions. There is a concern with the application of "what works" – and solutions to problems. Instead of methods being important, the problem is important and researchers use all approaches to understand the problem.

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapter division of this research is as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction, statement of the problem and research methods of the thesis

Chapter Two: Literature study on origin and role of the provisioning of assistance by support services in education

Chapter Three: Literature study on the District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs) and Site-Based Support Teams (ILSTs). This provides the necessary contextual background to the problem investigated

Chapter Four: A discussion of an ecosystemic approach to child support

Chapter Five: Empirical research design

Chapter Six: Analysis and interpretation of the data collected

Chapter Seven: A proposed model for the DBSTs to implement their changed role

Chapter Eight: Findings, recommendations and suggestions

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented an orientation to the study by outlining the research problem and the research design, which includes aims, method, instrument and the description of the population. Finally, the chapter division for the study is outlined.

The following chapter presents the literature review on the origin and the role of the provisioning assistance by DBSTs.

CHAPTER TWO

GENERAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE ORIGIN AND THE ROLE OF THE PROVISIONING OF ASSISTANCE BY SUPPORT SERVICES IN EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

All learners should have access to support services in education. These services aim at helping people, specifically learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. This kind of support normally takes place in areas of formal educational settings, which Lazarus *et al.* (2008:45) regard as formal education support services. In South Africa, this kind of support service is provided by teams of experts that work together to identify and meet the needs of the learners. This chapter therefore explains the role of the multidisciplinary teams in South African education support services.

2.2 HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES PRIOR TO 1994

Prior to 1994, the education support services in South Africa were combining both the preventative and curative approach even though they were more aligned to an individualistic clinical approach. Thus deficits were not seen to be in the education system, but within the learners. Furthermore, not all schools were provided with support services and in those schools where provision was available, it was not equal. For the benefit of this study, the history of organizational structure, provision of education support services and that of the provision of resources in different education departments will be discussed.

2.2.1 Organizational structure

During the apartheid era, the education departments in South Africa were racially segregated and the structural organization of support services was reflecting the same qualities. Engelbrecht *et al.* (2008:1) state that different support services were managed by racially segregated education departments and service provision was characterized

by glaring inequalities and inconsistencies, a lack of co-ordination and a lack of national focus and clarity on the nature of support services.

It was further mentioned by Engelbrecht (2008:19) that under the apartheid government, the decent provision of support services was for those education departments serving advantaged learners, while support services for learners from other population groups were inadequate or non-existent. Some of the educational services, such as special education, guidance and counselling, and social work, were under psychological or auxiliary services and were included under each of the racially segregated education departments, whereas other educational services, such as school health, were not part of support services under education (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:306; NEPI, 1992:12; Swart & Pettipher, 2009:15).

In South Africa, the school health services were managed by various racially based health departments and the provision of services in some places (such as Transkei, Boputhatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC) and the Bantustans) was taken as an extension of community health, rather than as a separate service. NEPI (1992:16) highlighted that there was very limited intersectoral co-operation, since fragmentation of school health services was evident in their relationship to other education support services. On the other hand, the structure of guidance and counselling were also reflecting segregation. In the Department of Education and Culture (DEC) – (which was further divided into the House of Assembly, the House of Representatives and the House of Delegates), guidance and counselling services were both district/clinic and school-based and in the African education departments' services, where they did exist, they were primarily or exclusively school-based, with little access to specialist referral systems (NEPI, 1992:21; Swart & Pittipher, 2009:15).

Thus education support personnel from the DEC were located at clinics, and schools referred learners with barriers to learning and development to them, whereas in some Department of Education and Training (DET) schools the same work was done by the Panel for the Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance of children with problems (PIDA). As with all other aspects of education, special education has been fragmented and

marginalized as a result of apartheid structures. Lazarus *et al.* (2008:46) and NEPI (1992:30) highlight that the administration and control of special education was located as an auxiliary service within the racially and ethnically segregated education departments. It is evident that linkages of special education with other education support services existed, but there was very little integration of services.

2.2.2 Provision of education support services

In South Africa, the provision of support services in education was minimal and unequally provided to different race groups. The availability of resources had great influence in the provision thereof. The limited resources were disproportionately distributed across the different departments, causing the more privileged sectors of society (Whites, for the most part) to receive the best services, while the most disadvantaged sectors (Africans, and those living in rural areas) had little or no access to any support services (NEPI, 1992:13). According to Swart and Pettipher (2009:15), the education support services were reasonably well developed in departments serving Whites, Coloureds and Indians, while they were grossly underdeveloped in departments serving Africans.

Inequality with regard to special education, guidance and counselling, school health and social welfare was evident. Services like social welfare and school health were disadvantaged in terms of provision and there were no clear goals for what they had to achieve. Furthermore, lack of adequate personnel and training, as well as of any form of appropriate referral system, made the existing services extremely problematic (Engelbrecht, 2008:19; Green, 2008:5; NEPI, 1992:15).

School health services in all education departments did not have a consistent policy. Each department administered this service differently and departments with more resources had adequate school health services. Swart and Pettipher. (2009:16) reveal that only Whites and Indians received any form of effective school health services. Coloured learners received services, but to a lesser extent. In African schools, it was only primary schools that had access to school health services, though in DET schools, the majority of them did not get these services.

The provision of guidance and counselling services also shows disparity across different education departments. NEPI (1992:23) shows that even though the administration of psychometric assessment occurred in all education systems in South Africa, it was particularly pronounced in the African education systems. In this guidance and in counselling services, inequalities with regard to specialized and non-specialized personnel was evident, the DET had no specialized personnel to deal with referrals and supervision, while DEC had access to specialized services (Engelbrecht, 2008:18; NEPI, 1992:24). In DET, guidance and counselling continued to be almost non-existing and these services were mainly available to secondary schools.

The provision of special education services was done through special schools in all education departments and this was also done differently. The professionals of these special education services were providing support on an itinerant basis to assess learners. Where possible, they transferred them to special schools. NEPI (1992:32) state that special classes in the DEC were established to cater for children with a mild mental handicap and they could also be part of ordinary schools or be accommodated in special high schools, while in the case of their counter part, there was little provision of special education services and few special classes were instituted. The department serving the privileged sectors had extracurricular support for special education and in the DET schools, where it did exist, it was minimal with evident disparities (Swart & Pettipher, 2009:16).

2.2.3 Provision of available resources

In terms of sharing resources, the education departments were also biased, more resources were allocated to White schools in DEC and few were shared with Black education. NEPI (1992:16) highlights the fact that materials such as teaching resources, assessment tools, treatment equipment and books were scarce, questionable in terms of quality and disproportionately distributed. Hay (2003:129) mentions that human resources in support services received little attention, particularly in the African education departments.

Funding of school health services was inadequate in all education departments and this made it difficult for professionals in this discipline to plan and implement health services effectively. The implication was that scarcity of resources led to poor service provision due to marginalization of these services. The provision of guidance and counselling at various schools was also ineffective due to inappropriate distribution of resources and this caused a loss of posts for guidance and counselling in all education departments (NEPI, 1992:25; Swart & Phasha, 2009:214).

In school health services, inequalities in human resources were more evident since Whites, Coloureds, and Indians had access to tertiary training, leading to the attainment of qualifications that included guidance and counselling, while African education departments were dependent on in-service-training programmes provided by NGOs, tertiary institutions and government departments (NEPI, 1992:26). Resources for special education services were also showing the same inequalities across different education departments. The African child with special educational needs was neglected in the teacher-training curriculum, while a course in remedial education was stipulated as a requirement in White primary teaching qualifications (NEPI, 1992:37). With regard to the training of other specialists in this discipline, there was still an unbalanced need for special education.

It is clear from the above discussed situation in South African education support services that there was a need to develop effective and appropriate education support services.

2.3 SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES AFTER 1994

2.3.1 The NCSNET/ NCESS

After 1994 the government of South Africa appointed a National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to investigate and recommend special needs and education support services. In 1996, the Minister of Education, Prof. Sibusiso Bengu, appointed the NCSNET and the NCESS to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects

of “special needs and support services” in the South African system of education. The investigation was jointly ventured by these two bodies and they presented their reports to the Minister in November 1997. The final report was published in February 1998 White Paper 5 (SA, 2000:7).

The NCSNET/ NCESS had a vision of an education and training system that promotes education for all and fosters the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society. According to the DoE (1997a:1) and Stofile and Green (2009:54), the guiding principles for the attainment of this vision were acceptance of principles and values; human rights and social justice for all learners; participant and social integration; equal access to a single, inclusive education system; access to the curriculum; equity and redress; community responsiveness and cost-effectiveness.

Transitional arrangements would ensure a phasing in of the transformation envisaged. This would include: a variety of strategies aimed at the redressing of education and support provision for learners who had been historically excluded or neglected, with every attempt being made to ensure that learners currently in the system do not experience interruption of their current learning processes; developing the capacity of all centres of learning to provide a teaching and learning process and environment that is responsive to diversity and able to overcome and prevent barriers to learning and development; developing the capacity of the various aspects of the community-based support system to identify, overcome and prevent barriers to learning and development, capacity building of all major sections of the department of education to provide leadership and management in this regard; human resource development of teachers and support providers (including parent empowerment); and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process to inform future policy and practice development (DoE, 1997a:iii).

The work of the NCSNET/NCESS was to advise the Minister of Education on the education and support of learners with special educational needs. The

recommendations made to the Minister by these two bodies regarded the following aspects (SA, 1995:2):

- immediate and long-term national and provincial needs and strategies for the education of learners with special needs in education;
- support structures required by the Minister of Education, the provincial Ministers of Education, the DoE or any other relevant authority for implementation of the strategies;
- training of personnel for specialized education and education support services;
- implications of the policy of mainstreaming for general education and strategies for marketing the policy to communities;
- organization, governance and funding of schools providing education for learners with special education needs;
- implementation plan to effect the above;
- guidelines for the involvement of international agencies and their interaction on provincial and local level; and
- a project plan and time frame for implementation.

The reports from the NCSNET/NCESS entail, among others, the following recommendations:

- the separate system of education (“special” and “ordinary”) needs to be integrated to provide one system, which is able to recognize and respond to the diverse needs of the learner population;
- there must be provision for a range of options for education provision and support services in the integrated system of education; and

- learners must be able to move from one learning context to another, such as from early childhood education (ECD) to general education and training (GET); from a specialized centre of learning to an ordinary centre of learning; or from a formal to a non-formal programme (DoE, 1997a:55).

It was expected that the work of NCSNET/NCESS would ease the implementation of education support services and the provisioning of support needed by learners with special educational needs. The introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in South African education also had important implications for the provision of support to learners with special educational needs. Furthermore, policies that forced the change of the education system to accommodate all learners are of the utmost importance. The paragraphs below will overview some of these policies.

2.3.2 Policies forcing changes in the education system to accommodate all learners

A move of the South African education system from exclusion facilitated by apartheid policy to inclusion has been in line with values such as non-discrimination, freedom, equity, respect and social justice which provided the framework for the Constitution (Green, 2008:10; Swart & Pettipher, 2009:16). These values form the core of the education support services in South Africa which aim at providing adequate support to all learners. As a result, policy documents that enforce the development of support services in an inclusive system of education emerged. This section highlights these documents related to education support as it was assumed that their implementation would bring positive results.

2.3.2.1 The Constitution

The South African Constitution expresses the fundamental values on which the country is built and which are: non-racialism and non-sexism; supremacy and the rule of law; human dignity, equality, as well as human rights and freedom. These values are crucial during policy formulations in education departments since new policies must be in line with them. Generally, the South African Constitution is regarded as the 'mother' of all

policies and from it, policies such as the White Papers, Bill of Rights, Statutes and Laws derived.

According to the Bill of Rights (SA, 1996a), everyone has the right to a basic education. The implication is that all learners, including those experiencing barriers to learning and development, are entitled to education from the foundation phase to adult basic education. Furthermore, the Bill of Rights (section 9 (2)) emphasizes equality that includes equal enjoyment of all rights and freedom. The equity in this respect indicates that all learners must be fairly and equally treated. All learners must be given the same opportunity to access learning content and assessment. The South African Constitution does not undermine the involvement of parents in education, specifically parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning. It is stated in the Schools Act (SA, 1996b: section 5 (6)) and supported by McKenzie and Loebenstein (2009:189) that the parents of a learner experiencing barriers should be consulted when the education department considers placement.

2.3.2.2 The White Paper on Education and Training

One of the policy documents that emerged to ensure appropriate response to diverse learning needs is the White Paper on Education and Training (SA, 1995). This document focuses mainly on key initiatives to respond to the diverse needs of learners. According to Swart and Pettipher (2009:17), the initiative in this policy document includes the Culture of Teaching, Learning and Services (COLTS); the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); Curriculum 2005 based on an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach; and The New Language Policy. All the above documents are taking into consideration the fact that all learners should learn according to their ability and adequate support should be given to them once they experience barriers.

2.3.2.3 The South African Schools Act

The South African Schools Act (SASA) (84/1996) was promulgated and completely opposes unfair discrimination at schools. In most schools, learners experiencing barriers to learning are discriminated against. SASA section 5 (1) boldly states that a

public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfair discrimination in any way. In terms of curbing discrimination against the assistive device and special learning support, the schools are encouraged to make their facilities accessible to learners who need them and also to make necessary arrangements if the school cannot meet the needs of such learners.

2.3.2.4 The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy

In the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, strategies for access to the curriculum for learners with impairments are emphasized (Swart & Pettipher, 2009:16). This policy document also emphasizes the right of all learners, specifically, learners with a disability, to appropriate quality education. Stofile and Green (2009:53) and Swart and Pettipher (2009:16) believe that the policy document stresses and supports the paradigm shift from a medical model of disability to a socio-critical model that is based on the principle that society must change to accommodate the diverse needs of its entire population.

2.3.2.5 The NCSNET/ NCESS reports

The other force of proper support to learners experiencing barriers to learning was brought about by the report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) that were published in 1997. These reports contain the results and proposals aimed at creating an education system that recognises and addresses (by removing and preventing) barriers to learning and development. Engelbrecht (2008:18), Green (2008:12) and Swart and Pettipher (2009:17) agree that the NCSNET and NCESS reports specifically contributed to an understanding of the nature and extent of barriers to learning within South Africa and the use of acceptable and respectful terminology.

2.3.2.6 The Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system

Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system (SA, 2001) came up with a framework for establishing an inclusive

education and training system in South Africa. Swart and Pettipher (2009:19) are of the opinion that this policy document explains the relevant principles that are integral to an inclusive education system and also that learning is broader than formal schooling. Thus, learning also occurs in the home and community. The implication is that adequate support to diverse learning needs of all learners, teachers and the school as a whole must be provided in order to meet what Education White Paper 6 proposes.

2.3.2.8 Other Acts that influenced the establishment of Learner Support Services

Other Acts, such as the Higher Education Act (101/1997), the Further Education and Training Act (98/1998) and the Employment of Teachers Act (76/1998) have further enhanced the establishment of learner support services. According to the DoE (1999:19), these policies uphold the rights of all learners, parents and teachers. Parents and teachers were motivated to accept responsibility for the organization, governance and funding of schools, further education and training, and higher education institutions in partnership with the government.

2.4 THE NEW INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The problem of providing adequate education support for all learners, with or without impairment, in the South African education system, led to various enquiries, reports and new policies. The inclusive education policy is a solution proposed and accepted after years of deliberation in an attempt to provide an effective learning environment for all learners. The concept inclusive education has been defined in many literature sources and all the definitions focus on the response to the diverse needs of learners. The DBSTs are expected to provide services in such a way that it promotes inclusive education.

2.4.3 Definitions of inclusive education

Inclusive education can be defined as a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2008:18). According to the Azalia College (2001:17), it means that children who were previously taught at special schools, are

allowed to go to any regular school and attend classes with their “normal” peers. Inclusion in its purest form can be defined as “a warm and embracing attitude, accepting and accommodating others unconditionally” (Engelbrecht, 2008:6). Genuine inclusion, however, does not mean dumping students with disabilities into general education classes without support for teachers or learners.

Engelbrecht *et al.* (2008:32) maintain that inclusive education should accommodate all learners, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted learners, street children and working learners, learners from remote populations, learners from cultural minorities, as well as learners from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.

According to Kaufmann and Hallahan (1995:222-223), inclusive education refers to a broad philosophical and principled position in relation to the education right of all children. It means decentralization of power, simultaneously empowering teachers and building the efficiency level of administrators; a fundamental reorganization of the teaching and learning process through innovations like co-operative learning and thematic teaching; and the redefinition of professional relationship within administrative departments. Inclusion means that learners with disabilities are educated in supported, heterogeneous, age-appropriate and natural and student-centred classrooms (Kaufman & Hallahan, 1995:320).

The inclusive system of education is aimed at establishing an inclusive society. Thus, the notion of inclusivity places the welfare of all citizens at the centre of consideration. The emphasis of the system is directed towards challenging and removing old policies and practices of exclusion. According to Donald *et al.* (2010:49), inclusion is about the participation of all children and young people, as well as the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice. One may conclude that inclusive education is about responding to diversity.

Inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. It is an education phenomenon that transforms the whole system; responds to the diversity of

learners in the system; aims at enabling both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity; and to treat it as a challenge and enrichment of the culture of the learning environment rather than a problem (UNESCO, 2000). The inclusive system of education is therefore the practice of including everyone in supportive mainstream schools and classrooms where all learners' needs are met.

Engelbrecht (2008:6) believe that, to practise inclusion, general and special teachers and resources must come together in a unified consistent effort. Dyson and Millward (2000:3) generalize inclusive education as non-discriminatory in terms of disability culture, gender or other characteristics of students or staff that are assigned significance by society. It involves all learners in a community with no exceptions, irrespective of their intellectual, physical, sensory or other differences, having equal rights to access the culturally valued curriculum of their society as full-time valued members of the age-appropriate mainstream classrooms. As it is one of the main aims of inclusive education in the South African education system to establish an inclusive society by meeting the diverse needs of all learners, this should be applicable to all parts of education departments, including District-Based Education Support Services.

The purpose of inclusive education is the development of education to ensure that the system becomes more responsive to the diverse needs of all learners. The investigations made by the NCSNET/NCESS covered all aspects of education, namely education support services, early childhood development, general education and training, further education and training, and adult education (DoE, 1997a:1). According to the Salamanca Statement on Special Educational Needs (UNESCO, 1994: ix), inclusive education is the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes; creating welcoming communities; building an inclusive society; and achieving true education for all.

2.4.4 The development of inclusion from international perspectives

Towards the end of the twentieth century, most industrialized countries practised some type of special education that catered for learners with disabilities. Inclusive education thus originated from the rich developed countries that practise both regular and special

education systems. Engelbrecht (2008:7) mention the example of Scandinavian countries that shifted the educational provision for learners with disabilities from separate special schooling to “integration”, i.e. the placement of such learners in regular schools in the 1960s. In the 1970s, countries like the USA and the UK followed, while later Spain and Italy also followed suit (Dyson & Forlin, 2008).

In recent years, there have been two significant developments internationally in the education of learners with disabilities. First was the integration movement of the 1960s and, later, the transformation of this into the “inclusion” movement (Dyson & Forlin, 2008:25). This transformation was clearly an attempt to accommodate and support learners with disabilities at regular schools. Besides the above-mentioned developments, there was a second development, namely the internationalization of the inclusive education movement. Many of the developed countries such as China, Canada and Australia had adopted inclusion as a policy and created inclusive schools to accommodate learners with disabilities. Inclusion has thus become a common term describing the restructuring and relocation of learners, resources and expertise into regular education systems.

2.4.3 The development of inclusive education in South Africa

Both international and national patterns and trends regarding disability have undergone major shifts which, to a large extent, have influenced the movement towards inclusive education in South Africa. In South Africa, the promotion of inclusive education has reached an advanced stage with the completion of policy development by the NCSNET/NCESS at the end of 1997 (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2008:12).

The following discussion pays attention to the history of inclusive education in South Africa, and attention is also given to the link between inclusive education and OBE as the predominant approach in the new South African school curriculum.

2.4.3.1 International influences on the development of inclusive education in South Africa

International perspectives regarding disability had a great influence on the movement towards inclusive education in South Africa. According to Naicker (2008:12), the move towards inclusive education in South Africa was centred around the move from a medical discourse to a right discourse. These discourses have been very influential in shaping provision of education support services in South African education.

For the purpose of this study, a brief overview of these discourses is given, as provided Green (2008:4) and Naicker (2008:13). This author believes that four kinds of discourses have constructed the support of learners in education, namely the medical, the charity, the lay and the rights discourses.

2.4.3.1.1 The medical discourse

According to this discourse, impairment is linked with disability. Naicker (2008:12) and Uys (2009:406) maintain that from this perspective, problems, needs and syndromes are individualized, defined, as well as explained, in terms of a person's inabilities and attributes. This discourse considers disability to be an abnormal and irremediable condition that requires treatment by "normal" experts (Green, 2008:4).

2.4.3.1.2 The charity discourse

The perspective of this discourse is that people having disabilities are in need of assistance; they are objects of pity and eternally dependent on others. In most of the cases they are regarded as underachievers and people who are in need of institutional care. According to Green (2008:4), charity discourse constructs those with disabilities as victims, permanently dependent and deserving pity and assistance.

2.4.3.1.3 The lay discourse

The lay discourse is normally related to ignorance, hate, prejudice, fear and even paternalistic tendencies. In other words, much of this has to do with the isolation of people who deviate from the normal physical appearance (Naicker, 2008:14). Green

(2008:4) explains this discourse as characterized by ignorance and prejudice and excluding the disabled out of fear.

2.4.3.1.4 The rights discourse

According to Green (2008:5), the rights discourse is an overtly political position that emphasizes equality and full citizenship in a similar manner to other equal opportunity claims. Thus this kind of discourse is aimed at extending full citizenship to all people. It stresses equal opportunity, self-reliance, independence and wants rather than needs (Green, 2008; Naicker, 2008). From the perspective of a rights discourse, disability is not a personal tragedy, an abnormality or a disease needing a cure, but it is a form of discrimination in which overly protective attitudes and values legitimate and maintain a sort of individualized pathology. According to this discourse, impairment is linked to societal issues, implicating that the entire society must accept and recognize the existence of disabled people.

At international level, several forums were convened to promote the rights discourse. During 1990, the World Conference on Education for All was held in Spain (Swart & Pettipher, 2009:8). At this conference the emphasis was placed on inclusive education. According to Naicker (2008:14), the driving force behind inclusive education was recognized in the resolution reached at that conference (which became to be known as the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education). The Salamanca Statement was endorsed by more than 300 participants, representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations.

Besides the above conference, there were also others that were held with the intention of recognizing the rights of persons with disabilities. As a result, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution regarding standards rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities on 4 March 1994.

The South African Federal Council on Disability (SAFCD) called for the development of a single inclusive education system for South Africa. The SAFCD (1995:1) emphasizes that learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) have a right to equal access to

education at all levels in a single inclusive education system that is responsive to the diverse need of all learners, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning, as well as different language needs, ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricular, organizational arrangements, technical strategies, resource use, as well as partnerships with their communities.

In accordance with the appeals of the SAFCD, the South African Constitution also emphasizes a non-discriminatory type of education. The Constitution of South Africa clearly points out that every person shall have the right to basic education and to equal access to educational institution (SA, 1996a:16). Similarly, the White Paper 5 on Education (SA, 2000) enhances the awareness of the importance of ESS (Education Support Services) in an education and training system which is committed to equal access, non-discrimination, as well as redressing the inequalities of the past. This White Paper outlines how the education and training system must change to contribute to establishing a caring and humane society, as well as how it must change to accommodate the full range of learning needs and the mechanization that should be put in place (SA, 2000:6-7). It can thus be concluded that the rights discourse is also eminent in South Africa.

2.4.3.2 Inclusive education and OBE

The idea of Outcomes-Based Education was developed in the pre-1994 policy period as part of a set of policy proposals drawing heavily on international experience, particularly that of the UK, Australia and New Zealand (Christie, 2008:107). By that time, there was an argument that an outcomes-based curriculum would satisfy the goals of both equity and the development of human resources. Consequently, the transformation of the education system in South Africa relied quite heavily on the implementation of OBE as the approach to be used in the new curriculum, Curriculum 2005. One of the main reasons for the introduction of this approach was that the traditional method of teaching and learning adopted in the past did not sufficiently equip learners with the skills and knowledge required to be able to make a productive contribution to the economic development of the country. One of the goals of OBE is that all learners should have

equal access to education in order to value and to succeed in lifelong learning, thus making provision for the inclusion of children with disabilities – those who are out of school, as well as those with special education needs (DoE, 1997a:48).

The OBE approach focuses on the outcomes of the learning experience. The DoE (1997a:48) mentioned that the emphases of OBE are on what learners can do at the end of the learning experience, the achievement of outcomes and the application of skills and knowledge in real life situations. Donald *et al.* (2010:2) agrees with the above statement by stressing that outcomes are actions and performance that embody and reflect learner competence in using content, information, ideas and tools successfully.

Since an inclusive education system is aimed at including learners at mainstream schools, it is clear that these learners will need adequate and efficient support from the Department of Education to enable them to reach the desired outcomes. Therefore this kind of support should be available at all levels, such as the national, provincial and school level.

2.5 EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES AT SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEVEL

The South African Department of Education at National level provides a broad framework for education support services at national, provincial and school level. Within this framework, support teams at all levels of education play a primary role in identifying and addressing barriers to learning in their immediate context (Donald *et al.*, 2009). These teams interact with district-based support teams who provide integrated and, if necessary, more specialized services (DoE, 2005a).

2.5.1 Learner support at schools

Hall *et al.* (2008:161) mentions that the following main ideas for support to learners with special educational needs are critical:

- Specific steps to solve the problem or support the need, but flexibility to allow opportunity for the educator or other individuals' creativity and initiative.

- Problem-solving teams to support learners and teachers with problems and needs (These teams may consist of any number of members and volunteers. If necessary and available, a specialist such as psychologist, speech therapist or occupational therapist may be included).

If problems are addressed with care and classroom management is adequate, effective teaching, learning and development of learners should be enhanced.

2.5.2 Different approaches regarding support

Lazarus *et al.* (2008:52) believe that the NCSNET/ NCESS report, together with emerging policies such as the White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (1995), The South African Schools Act (84/1996), the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997**b**) and Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001), promote a two-prong, three-tier approach to support schools and other educational institutions. The focus of the two-pronged approach is centred around:

- interventions aimed at facilitating transformation of the institutions and curriculum through addressing the barriers to learning and development, and the diverse needs of the learners; and
- adequate provision of additional support to learners throughout or at some point in their learning.

Besides the above approach, a three-tiered approach entails:

- competencies of all sections of national and provincial departments to address diversity and barriers to learning and development, providing the framework for service delivery at district and learning-site level;
- DBSTs with the primary responsibility of developing the capacity of learning sites to understand and address diversity and barriers to learning and development; and

- ILSTs with the responsibility of managing the process of addressing barriers to learning and development at local level (Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:52).

The purpose of these approaches is mainly to make use of an integrated approach that will utilize all the relevant human and physical resources to support schools to address barriers. Furthermore, it will be expected that members of the community be involved to draw local and indigenous resources in order to provide support. Engelbrecht (2008:23) and Lazarus *et al.* (2008:52) strongly argue that, in this situation, the community-based approach is a central feature of the support system envisaged for South Africa. Thus support to schools and other sites of learning is expected to be provided by natural support systems, volunteers, parents and non-governmental organizations. Support must also be shown by teachers, as well as by peers. Lazarus *et al.* (2008:53) emphasize the sharing of human and material resources between schools and other sites of learning as the important aspect of community support, and also include the utilization of professional support services from district teams and other government departments.

2.5.3 Barriers to learning and development

It has been stated in the report of NCSNET/ NCESS that the main objective of the inclusive education system is to provide quality education for all learners to reach their potential and contribute to and participate meaningfully in their society. For them to participate as expected in their society, there must be assurance that the education system creates equal opportunities for effective learning by all learners. The DoE (1997a:11) as well as Lazarus *et al.* (2008:53) recognize that there are ranges of needs that exist among learners and within the education system which must all be met if effective learning and development is to be provided and sustained. Therefore the envisaged education system must accommodate a diversity of learner and system needs.

There were two concerns from NCSNET and NCESS during the investigation of special needs and education support services that led to a clear definition of the concept “barriers to learning and development”. The first was that learners are excluded in the

system when the system of education fails to provide for and accommodate their diversity. The second concern was that a complex and dynamic relationship exists between the learners, the centre of learning, the broader education system and the social, political and economic context of which they are all part. The DoE (1997a:12) highlights that, if the system should fail to meet the needs of a wider range of learners, or, if problems should arise in any of these components, the learner or the system might be prevented from being able to engage in or sustain an ideal process of learning. Therefore barriers to learning and development may be seen as factors that make the system unable to accommodate diversity, resulting in learners not being able to access educational provision.

The NCSNET/ NCESS report mentions that these barriers usually manifest themselves in different ways and become obvious when learning breakdown occurs, when learners “drop out” of the system or when exclusion becomes visible. Some of the barriers can emanate during the learning process and they also need interventions or strategies to prevent them from causing learning breakdown. Lazarus *et al.* (2008:53) mention the following as the most critical barriers to learning and development, having a severe impact on effective learning: socio-economic barriers such as lack of access to basic services, poverty and underdevelopment, factors which place learners at risk such as violence, negative attitudes towards difference, an inflexible curriculum, inappropriate language and communication channels and competencies, inaccessible and unsafe environments, lack of or inappropriate transport, lack of parental recognition and involvement, disability, inappropriate and inadequate support provision, inadequate or inappropriate utilization and development of human resources, and inadequate policy and legislation.

The barriers mentioned above are regarded as challenges to the education support services and it is expected that the education support services should understand, identify or assess and then draw up an action plan to address these barriers. Thus, all aspects of school life that cause barriers should be identified as well as all factors that facilitate a welcoming and supportive environment for all members of the school

community. Strategies to address these challenges can only be found when the above-mentioned facts can be brought together. These barriers will now be discussed.

2.5.3.1 Socio-economic barriers

Socio-economic conditions have a great impact on the education provision in any society and this needs to be recognized. The lack of both human and physical resources in any society hinder learning, since effective learning is determined by resources. In South Africa, the number of centres of learning is limited and because of this the educational needs of the population are not easily met. Green (2008:10) and Swart and Pettipher (2009:16) mention that inadequacies in provision of education are linked to other inequalities in society such as urban or rural disparities, as well as inequalities arising from discrimination on grounds of, for example, gender, race and disability

According to the researcher, lack of access to basic services appears as the most powerful socio-economic barrier to learning. Swart and Pettipher (2009:15) is of the opinion that in South Africa, especially in rural areas, most learners cannot reach centres of learning because of lack of road transport or because of the roads that are poorly developed and maintained. One may take it further in claiming that insufficient transport facilities also have an impact on learners with disabilities. Most of the learners from rural areas are unable to reach the centres for learning since the road transport which is available is either physically inaccessible or unwilling to transport them, or because of the bad condition of the roads (Naicker, 2008:39).

Lack of access of learners to health service centres also seems to be a problem that threatens the education system in South Africa. If a child has a chronic illness, for example, medical treatment which may be needed may result in learners experiencing periods of long absence from the classroom to reach treatment or in learners “dropping out” of school in order to be hospitalized in a facility where no provision exists for learning support to continue during the period of treatment (Swart & Pettipher, 2009:7). The danger for this barrier might be a reduction in the ability of the learners to work in an inclusive setting and also their worsening impairment. That means the affected

learners will be unable to develop skills that will help him/her to survive and at times the impairment may be worse as there is no assistance.

The inclusive system of education emphasizes the collaboration of various departments in order to meet the educational needs of all learners with common, yet divergent contexts and activities. Therefore it becomes clear that inadequate inter-departmental collaboration also prohibits effective learning. The DoE (2005a:29) argues that lack of access to other services, such as welfare and communication services, also affects the learning process and leads to learning breakdown.

The researcher also had seen poverty and underdevelopment as another examples of socio-economic barriers to learning. Poverty also has a great impact on the education system, on the learning process and on learners themselves. There are a number of factors that lead to poverty, but the most dominant one is unemployment. Unemployment usually deprives families of resources to satisfy basic needs such as shelter and healthy food. According to Donald *et al.* (2010:319), malnutrition leads to a lack of concentration and other symptoms which affect the ability of the learners to engage effectively in the learning process. Furthermore, learners living under such conditions are subject to increased emotional stress which adversely affects learning and development. In many cases such conditions encourage learners to leave school to seek a comfortable environment outside the school.

Learning breakdown and the inability of the education system to maintain effective teaching and learning normally prevails in poverty-stricken communities. The majority of schools in poverty-stricken areas are under-resourced in both physical and human resources, leading to poor teaching and learning. One may argue that human resource utilization and development within a school can be regarded as the most important facet of a school. This element includes the areas of human resource development (such as staff development and parent development), informal interpersonal relations and dynamics (including conflict management), as well as the conditions of employment (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2008:60). According to this aspect, the implication is that in inclusive

school settings the maximum participation of education districts and the community is expected to support the school to minimize the effect of poverty on schools.

The point of view taken in the reports of the NCSNET/NCESS (DoE, 1997a) is that for the schools to minimize poverty, they should include the use of existing guidance teachers, learning support teachers, psychologists, social workers, nurses and other specialist personnel, as well as teachers, learners, parents and community resources. The management structure of such schools should include adequate parent, educator and learner representation (RCL) and all of them should jointly work together to run the school. Teachers should be provided with ongoing support through the centre-of-learning-based support teams, peer support, support from the district support facilities, as well as ongoing professional development. From these perspectives, all programmes that challenge teachers' own prejudice towards learners experiencing barriers to learning and development, should be included.

It is also important that teachers of such schools should attend all relevant pre-service and in-service training programmes that might include issues pertaining to addressing diversity and barriers to learning and development. Such training programmes usually enable teachers to develop the skills necessary to organize a classroom that encourages effective learning. In addition, Swart and Pettipher (2008:40) point out the important role of teamwork in the development of human resources. Teachers should be encouraged to form teams or partnerships within which the members agree to assist one another. Such teams usually also involve groups of teachers teaching the same age group of learners or the same subject. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) can also be regarded as a key element in empowering parents in school communities and facilitating their greater involvement. Belknap *et al.* (2008:173) emphasize the need for capacity-building programmes (preferably organized by SGBs) in achieving this goal. Belknap *et al.* (2008:173) strongly support parent empowerment by stating that they (the parents) must be empowered to make informed choices in consultation with professionals and .It thus becomes clear that schools in poverty-stricken areas should support all the programmes that aim at parent empowerment or capacity-building.

2.5.3.2 Attitude

The DoE (1997a:15) believes that the attitudes resulting from prejudice against people on the basis of race, class, gender, culture, disability, religion, ability, sexual preference and other characteristics manifest themselves as barriers to learning when such attitudes are directed towards learners in the education system. In most of the instances, a negative attitude leads to the labelling of the learners as “drop-outs”, “repeaters”, “slow learners”, “underachievers”. Donald *et al.* (2009:193) fear that once so identified, the danger is that they will become what they were labelled. Furthermore, some learners are placed in a certain learning environment just because they have been labelled as belonging to a category of learners for which a particular kind of educational placement exists. Thus the placement may be inappropriate to the learner’s needs and this may also result in the learner’s being marginalized.

Inappropriate placement may also happen to learners with physical disabilities. In the case of the learners with physical disabilities things like necessity of assistive devices and physical accessibility need to be considered in order to motivate their placement in a special learning context, the reason simply being to avoid placing them by mistake, since there will be a failure in what is needed from the system in order to meet their needs. Thus the system might not have what is necessary to meet the needs of learners with physical disabilities and as a result the system will fail to meet their demands.

The perception of some teachers may also be a barrier on its own that results from fear and lack of awareness. For instance, some teachers fear learners with high ability. Lomofsky *et al.* (2008:70) agree that teachers whose professional education took place in a climate which viewed intelligence as fixed and unmodifiable are likely to have limited expectations about learners’ capacity or propensity for learning and to be pessimistic about their progress. The danger of this is that such learners are driven to face denial concerning their significant abilities.

With regard to attitude, the researcher concludes that people have to be cautious in labelling learners. This will result in dooming increasing numbers of learners to failure

under the guise of saving them from it. Donald *et al.* (2009:193) feel that one should 'label' learners as requiring special educational needs only in the case of those with clearly observable conditions such as cerebral palsy, severe mental handicap, blindness, visual impairment, deafness, hearing impairment and so on.

2.5.3.3 Inflexible curriculum

Curriculum is also seen as one of the most significant barriers to learning for the majority of learners at schools if it is not well implemented. White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:19) briefly states that barriers to learning arise from different aspects of the curriculum, such as the content (i.e. what is taught), language or medium of instruction, how the classroom is organized and managed, methods and processes used in teaching, pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum, learning materials and equipment that are used and how learning is assessed. It must be realized that the learning breakdown will occur once the learners cannot access the above-mentioned aspects of the curriculum.

2.5.3.4 Language and communication

Learners who are not taught in their mother-tongue could well develop linguistic problems such as inability to speak and read, which could lead to learning breakdown. The DoE (1997a:17) argues that such learners are subjected to low expectations, discrimination and lack of cultural group peers and that their teachers are encountering difficulties in providing support to them.

Besides language, a failure to communicate may appear as a barrier to learning and development and this can occur in both informal and formal settings. A reason may be that physical, mental or intellectual disability affects learners' ability to speak. The DoE (1997a:17) sees the cause of this as the augmentative and alternative communication strategies that are not available to enable learners to engage in the learning process.

2.5.3.5 Inaccessible and unsafe constructed environment

The learners with disabilities must have access to the physical environment of any school and this includes the surrounding terrain, school building, classrooms and equipment. The concern here is all about their safety and health. Most of the South African schools are physically inaccessible to a large number of learners, as well as teachers. Teachers and learners who use wheelchairs or any other mobility devices are not accommodated at most schools. The NCSNET/NCESS report (DoE, 1997a:71 - 72) suggested recommendations for provisioning of “barrier-free access to the construction of environment” for learners and other members of the teaching and learning community with physical disabilities. The recommendations were as follows:

- All education departments must:
 - accelerate their building programmes to provide access for all those requiring special education and training;
 - improve the physical condition of all centres of learning, such as properly sized classrooms, water supplies, toilets, barrier-free access to the building; and
 - ensure adequate provisioning of equipment and learning materials (DoE, 1997a:71).

It is clear that schools have to develop barrier-free teaching and learning environments which accommodate the diverse needs of the learning population for example, enabling all learners to move around freely (Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:50).

2.5.3.6 Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services

Inappropriate and inadequate provisioning of education services may also appear as a barrier to learning. In some instances, some of the barriers emanated from the system as it was. This was misleading to people who were trying to address barriers to learning and development since they focused on problems of learners rather than on those of

the system. One has to notice that this kind of intervention caused more breakdowns. The DoE (1997a:17) emphasizes that the type of intervention may lead to a learner being removed from a learning environment rather than addressing the problems which may exist in that environment. Another problem that is relevant to this is that most rural schools, if not all, are hardly supported by the education support services. Naicker (2008:39) believes that the inadequate distribution of services may further disadvantage learners, rather than being a service that contributes to effective learning.

2.5.3.7 Lack of parental recognition and involvement

Parental involvement in the education of their children is seen as an important factor in South Africa. Policies and legislation such as the White Paper on Education and Training, (1995) and the South African Schools Act (1996) have paved the way for the involvement of parents in education. Their strength in education has been intensified by allowing them to have a say in the assessment of the needs of their children. This involvement in assessing learners was fully exhausted in the NCSNET/ NCESS report and the emerging policy. According to Lazarus *et al.* (2008:55), the major role of parents in the education of their children is involvement in the processes of identifying barriers to learning and development, and in developing plans of action to address these barriers. Furthermore, it is expected that they (parents) should provide extra help where additional support is required at the school as well as in the classroom. Their involvement in education is beneficial, since they can develop a range of skills. This range of skills may be acquired through participating in the development of local school policies. Thus parents should be acknowledged as a central resource to the education system.

One may realize that parents' lack of participation or minimal participation in the education of their children will hamper effective teaching and learning. Belknap *et al.* (2008:172) states that a negative attitude towards parental involvement, lack of resources to facilitate such involvement, lack of parent empowerment and support for parent organizations (particularly in poorer communities), all contribute to a lack of parental involvement in centres of learning.

2.5.4 The DBST and ILST

“It seems to be a priority to align district based education support services with inclusive education, as the latter depends primarily on adequate and effective support” (Hay, 2003:135). Inclusive education implies adequate support to learners who experience barriers to learning and development, and this adequate support should be provided by teachers and professionals in support services. In addition, support can also be provided by other members of the community, including parents/ care-givers, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, specific community leaders and healers (Donald, *et al.*, 2009:25).

White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:29) suggests the establishment of DBSTs and highlights its primary function as to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. Furthermore, through supporting teaching and learning, the DBSTs are expected to create and develop structures such as the ILSTs, assess the level of support needed by a learner, monitor and make available the support needed in terms of curriculum and institutional development, identify the resources, and facilitate the admission of all learners to schools (SA, 2006b:95-96).

The responsibility of all institutions to establish the ILSTs with the intention of addressing all barriers to learning and development has also been imposed by Education White Paper 6. The then minister of education, Professor Kader Asmal, mentioned that ILSTs should be established at institutional levels, such as general, further and higher education (SA, 2001:29). Their sole responsibility is to put in place properly coordinated learner and teacher support services with the intention of supporting the learning and teaching process. This can be done by identifying and addressing the needs of learners, teachers and institutions. Some of these needs are easily addressed when schools are equipped with both human and physical resources. For schools to develop and ensure efficient and effective learning and teaching activities, enough of these resources should be available (Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:60).

The provision of education support services to learners who experience barriers to learning and development, needs to be managed efficiently and effectively. The only

efficient and effective way of managing this provision of education support services is by means of wider collaboration with various stakeholders and, in this regard, the support teams at district level and school level must be fully engaged. These support teams should, therefore, comprise of and be lead by suitably qualified people with knowledge of learner support (Hay, 2003:137; SA, 2001:29). The teams must provide support to learners according to the guidelines determined by White Paper 6 and any other policies of inclusive education. Furthermore, these teams should have frequent meetings and all members should be present in every meeting. There must be clear consultation between the teams with the intention of addressing barriers to learning and development (SA, 2001:29). The success of the implementation of inclusive education greatly depends on the quality of support services in education. Hay (2003:135) is of the opinion that teachers and especially support service professionals are struggling to come to grips with the new way of doing things in education support services, even though national policy documents are in place.

Support professionals are thinly spread (Engelbrecht, 2008) throughout the Free State. This seems to hamstring the DBSTs and ILSTs in their efforts to provide the services needed by vulnerable learners. Poor or lack of adequate training among teachers who, according to White Paper 6 (SA, 2001), should be core members of the ILSTs also makes it difficult for learners to access the services that they need in order to gain access to the curriculum. Furthermore, ILSTs and DBSTs, which are expected to provide quality education support services to learners who experience barriers to learning and development, do not seem to operate within their frame of work.

Furthermore, the DBSTs seem to lack human resources such as psychologists, social workers, speech and language therapists. Lack of proper parental involvement in support services at school and district levels is another challenge facing the education support services. At school levels, the ILSTs are getting inadequate support from the DBST, which might be caused by the lack of facilities and infrastructures and also the unclear changing of special schools to resource centres.

2.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter engaged in a study of general perspectives on the origin and the role of the provisioning of assistance by education support services.

It was revealed that educational support services provided various psychological services that were aimed at helping people, specifically learners who experience difficulties in different areas. This kind of support normally took place in areas of formal educational settings and these educational support services include school health, social work, psychological, specialized educational, guidance and counselling services.

Support of learning and DBSTs with the intention to reduce barriers to learning within all education and training departments was looked into. It was concluded that the primary focus of DBSTs is to provide support to schools.

In the next chapter, the site-based support team and district-based support team in South Africa and Free State in particular, receive attention.

CHAPTER THREE

PERSPECTIVES ON DBSTs AND ILSTs IN SOUTH AFRICA IN GENERAL AND SPECIFICALLY IN FREE STATE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The effective role of the DBST and ILST cannot be understood if their status and specific context are not studied. This chapter will therefore attempt to reveal the situation, level of functions and composition of the DBST and ILST in South Africa and, more specifically, in the Free State.

3.2 ROLE PLAYERS IN DBSTs

The DBSTs are multidisciplinary teams of experts with various knowledge, skills and experiences. These teams comprise of support staff from provincial and regional departments of education, as well as from special schools (Muthukrishna, 2008:48; Johnson & Green, 2009:162). The support staff from these teams are each expected to exercise the expertise in his/her field. The aim of having such teams is to pool limited available resources in order to make optimum use of them (Muthukrishna, 2008:49). The DoE (2005a:17) and Landsberg (2009:63) categorize the core support service providers within DBSTs as follows:

- **Support personnel** such as therapists, psychologists, learning support teachers, experts on specific disabilities, as well as other health and welfare professionals are currently employed by the Department of Education. From the viewpoint of Johnson and Green (2009:162), the psychologists, therapists and remedial teachers who are members of a DBST are not expected to take individual referrals, but to juxtapose their expert knowledge with the contextual expertise of the local school community and facilitate collaborative problem-solving.
- **Curriculum specialists** who can provide curriculum support to teachers. The key responsibility of these teams is to provide curriculum, assessment and instructional support as stated in White Paper 6 (DoE, 2006a:56; SA, 2001:3).

- **Management specialists** who must provide guidelines on management to schools. In this regard, the DBSTs will capacitate managers of schools concerning different approaches and strategies to address barriers, proper functioning of managers, as well as ongoing management training, since the dynamics of power at schools is central to this.
- **Administrative experts** who provide administrative and financial management support to schools.
- Other **government professionals** such as local government structures. Muthukrishna (2008:49) regards this inclusion of other governmental professionals in education support as intersectoral collaboration. The inclusion of these various government professionals depends on the particular needs and availability of resources in the education district. According to Johnson and Green (2009:162), the effective functioning of both DBSTs and ILSTs requires successful intersectoral collaboration between education structures and other governmental departments.
- **Community role players** such as parents, grandparents and other caregivers, NGOs, disabled people's organizations, members of the school governing body, teachers, learners, etc., who will develop a holistic, community-based approach to support services (Muthukrishna, 2008:49).

According to the DoE (2005a:18), the designated district director should act as leader of the support team, with the major responsibility being that of providing leadership and management, focusing on coordination and collaboration to ensure holistic and integrated support.

According to Landsberg (2009:63), the DBSTs should be a flexible team that may differ according to the needs of the schools and the learners, but all members should possess the required competencies to fulfil their roles. Thus the constituency will be determined by the nature of the barriers the learner experiences and the relevancy of the required skills which the team members possess. Competencies required, include a range of

skills and experiences such as highly specialized skills practised by people with specialist training and generic skills that are relevant to address barriers to learning (Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:55).

3.3 OTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS WORKING TOGETHER WITH DBSTs

According to the DoE (2005a:18), members of DBSTs could draw on the expertise of teachers and support personnel from Special Schools/Resource Centres, Full-Service/inclusive Schools, Higher Education Institutions and all other education institutions. For the benefit of this study, the Resource Centres and Full-Service Schools will be discussed.

3.3.3 Resource Centres

The Government suggested that special schools will be converted to Resource Centres that will have two primary responsibilities, namely: to provide improved educational services to their targeted learner populations and to be integrated into DBSTs so that they can provide specialized professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to designated full-service and other neighbourhood schools (Muthukrishna, 2008:49; SA, 2001:47). Resource Centres will further be used as a centre of learning for all learners who need high-intensity support.

The draft guidelines of the DoE (2002:25-33) and Landsberg (2009:65), see functions of Resource Centres as follows:

- A Resource Centre should function as an integrated and coordinated part of the DBST. The implication is that the role of the learning-support teachers from special schools will be to provide support to both teachers and learners experiencing barriers to learning and development at full-service schools, ordinary schools and Resource Centres. Muthukrishna (2008:49) state that the Resource Centres could also contribute in preparing children with disabilities for inclusion into ordinary schools, providing and supporting early identification and intervention for children with disabilities.

- A Resource Centre should provide specialized professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to neighbouring schools. In this regard, coordinating and organizing professional development activities for teachers, school management teams and other staff in full-service and ordinary schools can be seen as a priority of the Resource Centre. However, it is the opinion of the researcher that this provision might be ineffective since the location of Resource Centres in some education districts is problematic to some schools. Thus one Resource Centre serves many schools and some of them might be far away enough that they may be unable to access the services.
- Support from the community such as health and welfare, disabled people's organizations and the business sector should be coordinated by the Resource Centres. In interacting with the community, these centres should provide home-based support and further engage in community outreach activities that target disability awareness and advocacy (Muthukrishna, 2008:49).

3.3.4 Full-service schools

Full-service schools will be established to strengthen the provision of education support services. According to White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:48), primary schools will be converted into full service schools with the purpose of expanding provision of services to, and easing access by disabled learners from neighbourhood schools. The full-service schools will cater for learners who need medium-intensity support and equip teachers at ordinary schools with adequate skills to provide services at their schools.

Landsberg (2009:65) emphasizes the role of full-service schools as to:

- provide support to learners and teachers by means of competent and experienced learning-support teachers;
- support neighbouring schools with knowledge, information and assistive devices regarding barriers to learning; and to

- work in close collaboration with the DBST to coordinate support. Collaborating with ILSTs, Resource Centres and DBSTs, the full-service schools will easily build capacity at ordinary schools, identifying and prioritizing learning needs and addressing challenges arising in neighbourhood schools.

3.4 FUNCTIONS AND ROLES OF DBSTs

The DBSTs are central to service delivery since their primary function is to evaluate and, through supportive interaction, build the capacity of all education institutions to recognize and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs (DoE, 2006a:55; Johnson & Green, 2009:162; SA, 2001:47). The team must provide a co-ordinated professional support service that draws on expertise in further and higher education institutions and local communities, targeting special schools, full-service schools, primary schools and other educational institutions (Landsberg, 2009:63; SA, 2001:8).

The national educational policies mention the key purpose and functions of the DBSTs as:

“to support all learners, teachers and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. The focus will be on teaching and learning factors, and emphasis will be placed on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners; on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs; and on adaptation of support systems available in the classroom” (DoE, 2005a:20; DoE, 2006a:56; SA, 2001:19).

“to assist teachers in institutions in creating greater flexibility in their teaching methods and the assessment of learning. They will also provide illustrative learning programmes, learning support materials and assessment” (DoE, 2005a:21; SA, 2001:20).

“to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. Through supporting teaching, learning and management, they will

build the capacity of schools, early childhood and adult basic education and training centres, colleges and higher education institutions to recognize and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs.” (DoE, 2005a:21; SA, 2001:29).

“to provide direct interventionist programmes to learners in a range of settings, and/or, serve as ‘consultant-mentors’ to school management teams, classroom teachers and school governing bodies” (DoE, 2005a:21; SA, 2001:41).

In order for the DBSTs to perform the above-mentioned, all barriers to learning and development must be identified and addressed at all levels, with the intention of fostering effective teaching and learning at schools. For identification and addressing barriers, the team will have to perform certain functions that some literature sources refer to as the core functions (DoE, 2002:102; DoE, 2005a:21; Landsberg, 2009:64; Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:55). The following paragraphs briefly explain these core functions.

Johnson and Green (2009:162) and Lazarus *et al.* (2008:54) emphasize that the primary function of these teams is the development and ongoing support of ILSTs in early childhood and adult learning centres, colleges and schools. The DoE (2005a:21) states that, in this regard, the teams will support the capacity building of education institutions, identify and prioritize learning needs, identify the support needed to address barriers, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, the DBSTs will co-ordinate the formal and informal support in the community with all education institutions and any other government departments (DoE, 2005a:22; Landsberg, 2009:64).

The DBSTs will further provide both indirect and direct learning support to learners. The main focus would be to provide indirect support to learners through supporting teachers and school management to ensure that the teaching and learning environment is responsive to the full range of learning needs (DoE, 2005a:22; Johnson & Green, 2009:162; Landsberg, 2009:64). The provision of direct learning support to learners will only be done where necessary and possible. In this instance, this kind of support will be available where ILSTs are unable to respond to particular learning

needs (DoE, 2002:103; DoE, 2005a:22; Landsberg, 2009:64). This confirms the researcher's view to the problem on implementation of the changed role of the DBST in the sense that DBST members are given a choice to provide direct support to learners. The problem in this regard is that policies do not describe clearly the level of direct support. Furthermore, the seriousness of the problem may not be equally perceived by all DBST members. Therefore, if this is not clarified in the policies, the implementation of the changed roles may be hindered.

In addition to the above, the provision of education support services is not balanced across various education districts in all provinces. In some education districts there has been no meaningful support for some time, specifically in rural and historically disadvantaged areas.

Even though the teams fulfil some of the above-mentioned roles, they lack competency and provide minimal support. For instance, they provide only certain forms of classroom-based support, such as:

- direct learning support to learners with “special education needs”;
- training and ongoing support of teachers to respond to learners' needs;
- curriculum development to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are responsive to different needs; and
- provision of teaching and learning materials and equipment to facilitate learning for all learners (DoE, 2005a:9).

The above-mentioned minimum forms of classroom-based support authenticate the necessity of the problem stated by the researcher that implementation is troublesome. The problem becomes worse as the DBST members also lack competency on provisioning of support to learners and schools.

Another disturbing factor is that the provision of DBSTs is housed in different departmental structures. According to DoE (2005a:10), the provision is through different

kinds of departmental structures in the nine provinces and, in other instances, it is provided through separate structures in the Department of Education affecting the efficiency thereof.

From the viewpoint of DoE (2005a:10), the fragmentation and uncoordinated provision of support services at district level is further shown by the different support providers who are not working as a team around common issues. The result is that empowering of teachers to provide education support is not developed in an integrated way, which results in teachers attending workshops dealing with issues in an isolated manner as against a holistic and integrated approach. This supports the view of the researcher that there are problems featuring in the implementation of the changed roles of DBSTs and ILSTs.

3.5 THE NATURE OF THE ILST

Though the study is focused on the changing role of the DBST in establishing the inclusive school settings, it seems necessary to focus on the ILST. In fact the ILST is part of the implementation of the changing role of the DBSTs, compelling the researcher to discuss the functioning of ILST.

The ILST is seen as an “internal” support team within institutions such as early childhood centres, schools, colleges, adult learning centres and higher education institutions. According to the DoE (2005a:34) and Johnson and Green (2009:163), this team will ultimately be responsible for liaising with the DBST and other relevant support providers about identifying and meeting their own institution’s needs. The constituency of these teams should be made up of teachers and staff from each individual institution, and where possible and appropriate, of parents and learners (Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:54). The team may also be seen as a committee of staff members within a school who consult with individual teachers who have requested assistance regarding learners experiencing barriers to learning.

3.9 POLICIES AND LEGISLATIONS PAVING THE WAY FOR THE ILST

There are a number of existing policies and legislations regarding the provisioning of educational support whereby the ILST is emphasized and there is an outcry for its revision and strengthening. The development of governance and management structures to provide site-based support, is aimed at consistently addressing the causes and effects of learning difficulties and is seen as the vehicle for assisting learners with difficulties at institutional level. Thus the hope is placed on institutional governance structures to develop the competencies necessary to address learning difficulties.

The DoE (1999:18) stated that the most significant changes in educational governance since 1994 have stemmed from the democratic Constitution, according to which separate and ethnic departments of state, institutions and governance structures were outlawed. The first policy that highlighted the provision of inclusive education support services was the White Paper on Education and Training (SA, 1995) that was acknowledged by the Ministry of Education. It was mentioned that vulnerable learners could be categorized as learners with special educational needs, such as those with disabilities, as well as those who experience learning difficulties and those “at risk” as a result of HIV and AIDS.

Various education and training policies developed after the introduction of White Paper on Education and Training that emphasized the significance of educational support services (ESS). These policies mainly focused on the provision of academic assistance within higher education and career guidance and counselling services for further education and training (FET). In actual fact, guidance and counselling services were neglected and underestimated for showing their preventative role at schools before the introduction of White Paper on Education and Training.

After the introduction of White Paper on Education and Training, policies such as Education White Paper 2 (on the organization, governance and funding of schools), Paper 3 (on higher education) and Paper 4 (on further education and training), together with the South African Schools Act (84/1996), the Higher Education Act (101/1997), the Further Education and Training Act (98/1998) and the Employment of Educators Act

(76/1997) further enhanced the establishment of learner support services. The DoE (1999:19) indicates that these policies provide for, among others:

- national co-ordination and the promotion of a national common purpose that promotes co-operative governance at public schools, institutions for further education and training, as well as higher education systems;
- redress of past injustices in educational provision, the extension of high quality education on a progressive basis to all learners and the combating of racism, sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance;
- substantial powers for public schools, further education and training and higher education institutions, with strong stakeholder representation and representation from the management, staff and learners at the institution of learning with legally constituted governing bodies and councils that shall determine their mission, ethos and institutional plans, manage their financial affairs, raise additional revenue, and improve efficiency in learning through the optimum use of public financial allocations;
- upholding the rights of all learners, parents and teachers, and the promotion of their acceptance of responsibility for the organization, governance and funding of schools, further education and training, and higher education institutions in partnership with the government; and
- the employment of teachers by the government at any public school, further education and training institutions, departmental officers or adult basic education centres with due regard to equality, equity and other democratic values and principles as enunciated in Section 195 (1) of the Constitution, which include the ability of the candidate, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past in order to achieve broad representation (DoE, 1999:19).

The basic framework for school support with its affirmation of the right of equal access to basic and quality education for all learners on a non-discriminatory basis, was also mentioned by the South African Schools Act (84/1996). Section 12 (3) of this act, states that a public school must be an ordinary school or a school for learners with special education needs.

The Further Education and Training Act (98/1998) also requires the further education and training institutions to pay attention to the rights and responsibilities of people and learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development. The Higher Education Act (101/1997) emphasizes that discrimination in higher education be addressed, and that representativity and equal access to education be achieved. The DoE (1999:26) mentions that priorities within higher education should include institutional and curriculum transformation to promote access and provide support to learners who experience learning difficulties. The type of support could include curative medical and counselling support, learning support through general academic development and specific forms of support for learners with disabilities.

In line with the above-mentioned, the researcher is convinced that the changed role of the DBSTs theoretically looks very promising as documented, but implementation of all of this is not always possible, without encountering multiple problems.

3.10 THE ORIGIN OF ILSTs

As mentioned in Chapter two of this study, the MEC for education appointed the NCSNET and the NCESS in 1997 to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of “special needs and support services” in education and training in South Africa. It was noticed that the close relationship between “special needs and support” encouraged the two bodies to undertake a joint investigation which focused on the challenge provided by the entire education system to address the diverse needs of the learner population. According to DoE (1997a:66) and Donald *et al.* (2009:24), the investigation conducted by NCSNET and NCESS extended to challenge, minimize, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development in order to promote effective learning and development of all learners.

Due to the recommendations of the NCSNET/ NCESS, the Ministry proposed that a core component of the support system should be situated within each institution of learning. According to the DoE (1999:37), these teams established for the purpose of providing support within a particular learning context are a successful method that was proved within many countries, including many parts of South Africa. Furthermore, the primary function of these teams will be to put into place properly co-ordinated learner and teacher support services that are able to support the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, teacher and institutional needs (DoE, 1999:13; DoE, 2005a:35, SA, 2001:48). With regard to the purpose of the establishment of such a team, one may believe that these teams would be the most important mechanisms for identifying and addressing learning difficulties within the institutional context. These teams would be known as the ILST (Institutional-Level Support Teams).

In education White Paper 6 the establishments of ILST are spelled out as follows:

“At the institutional level, we will assist general and further education and training institutions in establishing institutional-level support teams. The primary function of these teams will be to put in place properly co-ordinated learner and teacher support services that will support the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, teacher and institutional needs. Where appropriate, institutions should strengthen these teams with expertise from the local community, DBST and higher education institutions. DBST will provide the full range of education support services, such as professional development in curriculum and assessment, to these ILST” (SA, 2001:48 – 49).

3.8 STRUCTURES OF THE ILST

The structure (in terms of membership) of the ILST is not well defined in policies that are encouraging its establishment. The researcher holds the view that a poorly structured ILST, due to unclear policies, may influence the provisioning of the support at schools negatively and as a result it implies that DBSTs are not functioning properly. In DoE (1999:37); Hall *et al.* (2008:160); Lazarus *et al.* (2008:54) and SA (2001:48), the ILST has been conceptualized as comprising mainly of teachers at the school itself and,

where possible and appropriate, parents and learners. It has been proposed further that the ILST be co-ordinated by members of staff and preference should be given to someone who has received extra training in one of the specialized competency areas emerging from the NCSNET/ NCESS report and emerging policy, such as life-skills education, counselling, or learner support.

There are two types of membership within every team, namely the core members and the additional members (FS DoE, 2005:05): the number of core members, ranging from five to ten, elected from the teachers, and the number of the additional members which should be determined by the needs of the school. The following people are regarded as part of the membership of the ILSTs:

Core members (5 – 10):

- principal;
- co-ordinator;
- teachers with skills in areas such as learner support (remedial and special education), life skills, guidance or counselling;
- teachers who volunteer or are appointed by the principal; and
- leaders of the Teachers Assistance Team (TAT).

Additional members (if the need arises):

- parents/ guardians/ care-givers;
- learners;
- members of the DBST;
- community members (businessmen, retired people, and others);
- NGO and other committee members; and

- knowledgeable teachers of other schools.

Each member in this team should be assigned some specific duties to be performed in order that the team perform its functions. The duties of some of the members of the ILST are viewed for the benefit of this study.

3.8.1 Principal

The principal forms the cornerstone of the ILST at school. As the manager of the school, a principal's general responsibilities are clearly outlined in the South African Schools Act. The DoE (2006b:68) maintains that, in line with school support, the principal should ensure that all policies are implemented correctly at the school. Thus one may conclude that the critical success of support offered to learners, teachers and parents, depends on the efforts and co-ordination done by the principal. The DoE (2006b:68) argues that the more specific role of the principal in this regard includes:

- supporting inclusive education policies and practices in practical terms, such as the functioning of the ILST, and maintaining links with the DBST;
- ensuring that the school develops policies such as admission policies which are in line with the overall policy of inclusive education;
- disseminating inclusive education policies and procedure information drafted and adopted by the School Governing Body (SGB), the School Management Team (SMT) and the ILST to the school, staff, children, and parents;
- ensuring that the assessment and identification of children experiencing learning barriers and intervention is done according to the procedures outlined in the National Inclusive Education Policy and according to the school policies that have been developed;
- working with the ILST, the parents and the SGB, to facilitate the accommodation of children experiencing barriers to learning;

- ensuring that inclusive education activities take into account the full range of diversity of children and does not exclude, for example, talented children;
- ensuring that all learning diversity is accommodated; and
- ensuring that the parents and the child are consulted and are informed about every stage of the support process.

Furthermore, as a member of the ILST, there are certain functions that the principal needs to perform and among them, the following are crucial to this position, namely:

- the establishment of the ILST at the school;
- appointing a co-ordinator for the ILST;
- supporting the ILST in the implementation of policy, making time available for the team to meet on a regular basis and assisting the co-ordinator to be functional; and
- attending problem-solving meetings.

3.8.2 Co-ordinator

The teacher in this position is elected by staff or nominated by the principal. This teacher carries a mandate from the principal to co-ordinate the ILST and to convene the meetings. The DoE (2006b:138–139) emphasizes that the co-ordinator of the ILST should be an expert in working with barriers to learning or be committed to developing this expertise, and that they should also arrange for effective chairing and record keeping of ILST meetings. The functions of the co-ordinator may be summarized as follows:

- co-ordinating the ILST and the TAT (Teacher Assistance Team);
- handling the case referral files;
- setting case priorities;

- scheduling meetings.
- consulting with referring teachers;
- recording recommendations and action taken on each case; and
- ensuring that follow-up takes place.

3.8.3 Referring teacher

The referring teacher is the one who has identified that support is essential and who seeks the help of the ILST in addressing particular support needed. He/she should remain as a member of the team until the problems are suitably addressed. The major role of this teacher is to supply the ILST with information about the existing problem and to make some recommendations. From the viewpoint of the DoE (2006b:138), the referring teacher should not try to hand over all responsibility to the ILST, but should rather adapt teaching strategies, talk to parents, observe the learner and consult informally with other teachers. As mentioned earlier on, while he/she should provide information about the referred learner, it is expected that a record will be kept of what is observed and the strategies attempted, using the learner profile, and such information should then be used by the ILST.

3.8.4 Teachers Assistance Team (TAT)

This team is defined as being the “sub-team” of the ILST and it entails didactic assistance by class or learning area teachers. Members of the TAT are encouraged to be committed to addressing barriers to learning, since these actions strengthen the ILST. The core functions of this team are to offer didactic assistance or encourage re-teaching with the intention of meeting the needs of learners. With information relevant to the problems identified, the TAT should report to the co-ordinator of the ILST. The team is also flexible in engaging in a range of actions to address problems, e.g. where the issue is one that relates to parent involvement, it will be necessary to include parents in the problem-solving team. One may imagine that the referring teacher should feel

comfortable with the team members and that all members of the team should respect the confidentiality of what is discussed (DoE, 2006b:139).

3.8.5 Teachers with learning support skills

Teachers in the ILST must have a range of learning support skills such as remedial and special education, life-skills, guidance and counselling. It is expected that such teachers should exercise profound knowledge in addressing the needs of the school as well as those of the learners. The teacher/s must be able to:

- describe any teaching strategy that attempts to provide a more appropriate form of education for children whose physical or mental condition makes normal teaching methods unsuitable for them;
- draw up a programme of action which has a reasonable chance of restoring the educational performance of children whose progress has been adversely affected by environmental factors,
- identify the extent and severity of the difficulties encountered by learners, finding out whether learners are underdeveloped in all or only in limited aspects;
- investigate the causes of the problems by studying the child's record with regard to matters such as home background, health, school attendance, intelligence and general ability,
- draw up a remedial programme that seeks to prevent further effects from those factors that contributed to the learner's negative development and also provides strengthening exercises in the skills in which they are weak;
- provide learners with essential skills that make life easier, increasing the possibility to realize their potential and becoming productively involved in the community;
- equip learners with those skills necessary for successful living and learning;

- enable learners to translate knowledge –attitudes and values – into action as actual abilities;
- instill knowledge into learners on how to prevent and cope with life's problems and challenges;
- assist learners with advice, comfort or guidance in order to relieve or overcome problems, and
- make provision for staff counselling.

3.8.6 Parents in the ILST

In South Africa, parents are given a forefront position in the education of their children. Policies encouraging learner support ensure that the voices of parents are heard and social movements that consist of parents are formed, such as the Parents' Association for Children with Special Education Needs (PACSEN). Such an organization articulates the need to take the rights of the disabled seriously (Belknap *et al.*, 2008:171). Although policies encourage a high level of parental involvement, the current situation regarding parental involvement is not ideal. Many teachers complain that parents are not involved in their child's education or other school activities. It is clear that the ILSTs are facing a serious challenge of bringing parents to school since they also have to serve in these committees.

The contribution of parents as primary caregivers in the ILSTs is important. Since parents and children interact on a daily basis, the parents' experiences with their children can provide useful information to the ILST concerning the child's physical and emotional well-being and learning style. Therefore the team has to regard the parent(s) as an important source of support and information. In some instances, parent(s) can be a part of or entirely responsible for abusing or neglecting a child, thus being responsible for existing problems. In this regard, Belknap *et al.* (2008:175) argue that this does not mean that the parent should now be ignored or excluded, and the teacher or team should not immediately assume the role of a social worker or counsellor in such a

situation. The team must try to gain some understanding of the reasons for the breakdown in parental care and to be sensitive to the parent's difficulties.

It is essential that parents and teachers share their aims concerning the learner and jointly set educational goals. The ILST has to use parents to acquire knowledge about learners' capabilities to avoid a situation whereby a parent may feel that his/ her children are underestimated or overestimated by the teacher, or are over-anxious to fulfil the perceived high expectations of the parents, because they have not clearly agreed on what is expected. Belknap *et al.* (2008:176) mention that parents, especially of a child with a particular disability or chronic illness, who are well informed about the child's condition, will be able to impart this knowledge to the team of professional practitioners or organizations that offer support and expert advice. Furthermore, parent(s) may be willing to talk to the class and/ or school about their child or about attitudes to disability or help the school or ILST to identify people who could render assistance.

The level of literacy of parents in the ILST does not have much influence on their participation in this team. Parents who are illiterate can also offer their support. Although they may not be able to assist the child/ learner with exercises in literacy and numeracy, they could assist with physical care and life-skills education and possibly with musical enrichment, cultural activities, gardening projects, feeding schemes, sport and recreational activities (Belknap *et al.*, 2008:177). Alternatively, parents who are literate or have a higher level of formal education may be involved in general reading programmes, extra reading programmes for struggling readers, library duty, story-telling, life skills programmes, computer training and many other forms of educational enrichment.

Parents in the ILST have to encourage other parents to visit schools and talk to teachers about their children's work. This might assist parents in getting an idea of how their children are getting on and it helps teachers to resolve possible misunderstandings with the parents that might exist.

3.8.7 Learners

Learners also qualify to be members of the ILSTs, but they are often overlooked as part of the support system. In most instances, they do not always realize that they have a contribution to make. It has to be acknowledged that they can play a vital role. The DoE (2006b:69) sees their roles in the team as offering peer support to learners experiencing mobility or sensory barriers such as a lack of ramps or audiovisual equipment at school. Furthermore, the same learners should identify and communicate the needs of other learners to the team. At times they can report if they see their classmates and even learners from another class going through a difficult period. Because of the experience they are going to acquire, these learners from the ILST will be able to take the initiative to support other learners. Thus they will be able to organize learners from the neighbourhood and class to accompany a particular learner to school, to assist with homework and to invite the child to their homes to combat loneliness or isolation.

3.9 BUILDING NETWORKS IN THE ILST

As a member of a ILST, nobody is alone in the supporting process. There are many others with whom a person may link and they should support one another. It is critical to see everybody as part of a team or 'network' of people. This network may consist of:

- ***colleagues, from the same school or from other schools.*** The latter may be particularly effective where teachers with a common interest or concern from different schools come together to share their expertise, experience and lend mutual support (Hall *et al.*, 2008:160; Landsberg, 2009:63);
- ***parents and other members of the community.*** Parents and other members of the community representing a wide range of skills, resources and capacities can be drawn on. Building co-operative relationships in this sphere can be powerful in extending the team's network;
- ***members of supporting professions and other organizations.*** Hall *et al.* (2008:160) and Landsberg, (2009:64) believe that, particularly in the broader community, members such as doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, as

well as members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), may have particular expertise that can be drawn on. It will be easier to establish contact with such people who might be able to assist in building an effective network in addressing many of the barriers to learning and development; and

- **education support services.** Establishing contact with and actively requesting the support and help of DBST is critical (Landsberg, 2009:64). It is also one way of ensuring that such services actually develop to meet individual needs.

Likewise, in education, this networking has to be cultured and nurtured or it will not grow. This may only be achieved as long as an individual member in the ILST is active in this process of network-building.

3.10 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ILSTs

An important element in the establishment of ILSTs at school level is the clarification of roles. During its establishment, teachers may be doubtful and confused, until they understand the meaning of the concepts “collaboration” and “teamwork”. Hall *et al.* (2008:160) maintain that the commitment of the whole staff is a prerequisite for an effective team approach. Even though the bigger number of members in the ILSTs are teachers, factors such as a hidden curriculum and the internal organization of schools could affect teachers’ attitudes and expectations.

Hall *et al.* (2008:160) state that setting up an ILST, depends on clear and detailed initial communication and negotiations between the principal, staff members and those who facilitate the process. One of the challenges facing the facilitator, is to be familiar with the community of teachers, parents and learners within which the support team will be set up. The facilitator should also bear in mind that teachers may experience difficulties to implement their roles in the ILSTs. There will be a need for individual empowerment of teachers, thus increasing the demands of the teaching profession.

The school interested in establishing a ILST should address the following six questions:

- Who is the target population?

- Who has the responsibility for referral to the team?
- Who should serve on the team?
- Who should coordinate the team?
- How should the team operate?
- How effective should the team be? (Adapted from Hall *et al.*, (2008:160)).

After the members of the team are selected at schools, there should be a series of In-Service Training (INSET) offered by the DBST. During this training, team members should acquire the necessary skills which will enable them to understand, not only the concept of ILSTs, but also that of small group collaborative work. Hall *et al* (2008:161) believe that they also need experience in the accuracy of describing, analysing and conceptualizing learners' needs and classroom problems, communication principles for interviewing, selecting and defining realistic intervention goals, conducting problem-solving meetings, brainstorming strategies, procedures for assessing intervention effectiveness and in planning how to orientate teachers at their schools with regard to the ILST concept.

3.11 THE EFFECTIVE ROLE OF ILSTs AT SCHOOLS

The ILST set up within the school has a pivotal role to play in changing schools and learners for the better. A number of literature sources (DoE, 2006a:91; DoE, 2006b:53; Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2008:159) believe that the ILST is the first source of support and assistance for teachers trying to address barriers to learning, and its major role is to assist the school community (including parents and the surrounding community) to understand what it means to build a school that cares for its learners and address the challenge of learner support in practical terms. Since barriers to learning and development (BLD) may rise at different levels of the system, the ILST usually functions within an ecosystemic framework, thus not working with individual learners, but rather looking at ways of minimizing barriers within the school context (DoE, 2006b:53).

Education White Paper 6 (SA, 2001) indicates that the task of the ILST is to manage and support any task that makes the school more supportive. In this regard, good management should make the implementation of learner support easier. It is also an aspect that will be reflected in the quality of learning and teaching that occurs in classrooms; by the quality of care and respect evident in all the relationships at a school; by the welcoming appearance of the school; and by the willingness and confidence of the staff to reflect on themselves and be open to growth. The role of the ILST involves the following:

- co-ordinating all learners, teachers, curriculum and institution development support in the institutions. This includes linking the support team to other school-based management structures and processes, or even integrating them 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;
- collectively developing strategies to address these needs and barriers to learning. This should include a major focus on teacher development and parent consultation and support;
- drawing in the resources needed, from within and outside the institution, to address these challenges; and
- monitoring and evaluating the work of the team within an “action-reflection” framework (DoE, 2006a:91; DoE, 2006b:53–54).

It is clear that the above-mentioned roles cannot be finalized overnight by the ILST, but the team has to be concerned with increasing the capacity of its school to provide for diverse learning needs. It should also be remembered that the ILST is not a special group of professionals, trying to solve the problems referred to them by teachers at the school. They are also the team that assists the school as a whole. The DoE (2006b:54)

mentions that the ILST should play a role when admitting learners with special needs. The team's role in this regard would be:

- to ensure that new admissions being referred to them by the admissions committee are fully screened in the spirit of inclusivity;
- to decide on the class to which the child will be admitted and to outline support measures to be implemented, in collaboration with the teacher;
- to orientate teachers in meeting these support needs; and
- to inform the DBST of additional support needs in terms of training materials, equipment and other necessities.

3.11.1 ILST's role in classroom adaptation

The ILST also plays an important role in managing the classroom adaptation to suite learners experiencing barriers to learning. It is therefore important to look into the role of these teams in terms of classroom adaptation, since that can reveal its effectiveness.

It is well known that learners who experience physical, visual and auditory barriers, need to be accommodated at the ordinary school. The inclusion of these learners means that there must be changes at school and in the classroom to accommodate them. The main reasons for making such adaptations to the classroom can be:

- firstly, some children will not be able to participate or even enter a classroom. For example, if a child is in a wheelchair, there has to be enough space in the classroom and there has to be wheelchair- friendly ramps; and
- secondly, if learners who experience barriers are able to see that teachers and the school community are making an effort to include them in the schooling system, they will be given a psychological boost, making them feel included. This is good motivation for any child (DoE, 2006a:22).

It should be possible to accommodate all learners at schools through some infrastructural changes and advice the school gets from people within the community such as nurses, doctors, therapists, NGOs, parents and the child him/ herself. In this regard, one role of the ILST at school is to ensure that the physical environment is adapted. Furthermore, the team may liaise with organizations that deal with disabilities, and/or invite them to the school to look at the physical adaptations and to speak to staff about the educational and emotional needs of learners experiencing learning barriers.

Learners who experience intellectual barriers to learning can also be accommodated through making changes to curriculum adaptation. The ILST should be available to help teachers who need support in assisting such learners, since they may be able to share ideas on how to adapt their lessons and to create a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to learning for all learners. The team may also liaise with organizations which deal with intellectual barriers.

Effective learning is also influenced by an environment conducive to learning and it is a fact that learners always learn effectively when they feel safe and encouraged. According to DoE (2006a:30), most learners experience various emotional needs at different stages in their lives and it is important for teachers to pay attention to the 'quiet' children, because they are the ones who often need attention. Children feel safe and cared for in the classroom once they realize that teachers know them well, and also when they realize that they are given a chance to express themselves and speak about their feelings. Teachers have to encourage a caring relationship among learners, because, at times, children become withdrawn, because they believe that nobody cares about them. DoE (2006a:31) indicates that there may be learners in a classroom who are disruptive and difficult, often taking up much of the teacher's time. Such behaviour can easily make learners withdraw, and learning gets disrupted. In this respect, the ILST must ensure that learners accept and welcome those experiencing barriers and those who are different. The team must model warm and accepting behaviour. Furthermore, the team should monitor behaviour at the school such as bullying, and once a problem presents itself, they should set up a meeting with the staff to address the issue.

Another factor that needs attention is the curriculum. According to the DoE (2006a:51), before teachers differentiate and adapt the curriculum, they have to determine the diverse learning needs of all the children in their classroom. The importance of this is that they will easily realize that most learners have needs that have to be accommodated in the learning process, not only the group of learners whom they have identified as so-called learners “who experience barriers to learning”. Because of a great deal of diversity within a class, it is advisable that the teacher ensure that there is a range of activities in the lesson plan to accommodate a variety of learning styles. The ILST can also play an important role in this regard, by helping teachers to draw up learner profiles and, in this way getting to know their learners better. The ILST should also assist teachers to plan how they will be supportive throughout the phase of working towards achieving learning outcomes (LOs) and assessment standards (ASs) associated with OBE principles.

Another role of the ILST in curriculum differentiation is to be part of the development of an Individual Support Plan (ISP) that caters for the individual learning needs of a learner who is identified as needing substantial support. It provides a comprehensive record of the learner’s learning needs, goals and progress. The *Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes* describes the Individual Support Plan as follows (DoE, 2005b:06):

“This plan will be designed for learners who need additional support or expanded opportunities. The plan to support a learner will be developed in collaboration with the parents, the teachers, and the ILST. This should not be fixed but should be reviewed on a regular basis in terms of its applicability and effectiveness. It should be applied to enhance the learner’s participation in all classroom activities, taking in account all factors that may hamper his/ her progress at an academic, social or emotional level. The plan should be captured in the Learner profile and used to inform the kind of ongoing support that is given to him/ her by teachers in the classroom as well as by other support providers. Such a plan should never become a stand-alone programme that functions outside the scope of the curriculum planning which teachers do for all learners”(DoE, 2005b:06).

The ILST was supposed to take part in the processes of adapting the ordinary work schedules to accommodate learners with special needs. In this regard, the team should guided teachers on compiling work schedules and learning programmes, and also how to add more detail to the aspects deriving from the learning programme. The DoE (2006a:61) stated that the following three points were important when adapting work schedules for learner support:

- They did not have to be applied rigidly in the time-frame of one year.
- Learners could carry over outcomes and assessment standards to the next year.
- When you planned a work schedule, you had to design or break down the assessment standards into manageable steps.

Even though teachers will not have to compile their own work schedules and learning programme once the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is implemented at schools, they will still have to look at the suitability thereof for learners with special needs.

When differentiating lesson content, the ILST has to encourage teachers to plan their lessons as a team and to share ideas on differentiating tasks and designing downwards. If designing down is problematic to teachers, one of the knowledgeable and experienced ILST members should be invited to help with designing down. The *Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes* maintain that teachers and the ILST may explore the following ideas for differentiating curriculum content (DoE, 2005b:34–35):

- Remember that some learners coming from different backgrounds may respond differently to a specific text.
- Even if some of them have not fully mastered English as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), they may still understand the key concepts.

- The text may not be of interest to them and this may affect their behaviour during the activity.
- Certain learners can have the skill of communicating, without necessarily having mastered the language.
- The level of abstract content can be reduced.
- Set a substitute task of similar scope and demand.
- Replace one task with a task of a different kind.
- A more challenging or complex text can be selected for learners who need expanded opportunities.
- Shorten the tasks.
- Select texts and books that are culture-sensitive.
- Provide reading materials that will interest learners and that are not too linguistically difficult to read.
- Use another planned task to assess more outcomes or aspects related to the outcomes than were originally intended (DoE, 2005b:34–35).

Teaching strategies need to be varied by teachers to accommodate learners with different needs. According to the DoE (2006a:65), teaching strategies are seen as the way in which teachers present content and encourage skills development. It is advisable for teachers to vary their teaching strategies in order to accommodate all learners. One may conclude that different children have different needs, and therefore they will need to use different teaching strategies in order to help them to overcome the barriers that they are experiencing. The role of the ILST during the differentiation of teaching strategies is to provide a space where teachers can share teaching strategies around different learning styles. In some cases, a certain teacher from another school could

possess a lot of expertise, and it is the responsibility of the ILST to invite such staff to share ideas.

The ILST also has to play a pivotal role in the adaptation of the teaching and learning aids for learners experiencing barriers. The team has to provide a forum for teachers to discuss and share learning and teaching support materials (LTSM). It is expected that the team has to advise teachers that the materials need to be contextually appropriate, developmentally appropriate and age appropriate. Teachers tend to view limited resources as a problem at many schools in South Africa and it may take a while for resources to be readily available, but it cannot be used as an excuse or for poor quality teaching of learners.

In inclusive assessment strategies, the ILST also plays an important role. It is clear that before the introduction of the Inclusive Education system, assessment was done to benefit only certain groups of learners, while others were ignored. Policies that supported inclusion were also commented upon and it was suggested that all learners have to benefit from any form of assessment. The DoE (2006a:79) states that assessment can be structured to cater for individual learners' needs by differentiating according to the level of support needed. The following have to be recognized:

- different types of barriers will have to be addressed through different methods of assessment;
- a specific barrier might require more than one chance; and
- some learners might experience more than one barrier.

With regard to inclusive assessment strategies, the ILST may firstly invite someone from an organization for the disabled to talk about assessment needs of learners with specific barriers. Secondly, someone from the DBST could also be invited to discuss Assessment Strategies.

3.13 THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ILSTs VIEW PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

The manner in which the ILSTs view problems and solutions, contributes a great deal to the success of these teams. The attention problems and solutions received, make a great difference to its enactment. In an inclusive education system, understanding and responding to barriers to learning are systematic when trying to unravel problems. Therefore, the ILST has to visit all areas (that might include the learner, teacher, curriculum, school, home environment, and broader community and social factors) carefully when dealing with the problem. This might help to develop profiles of the learner and also diagnostic forms of assessment to ensure that many aspects of the system are considered in understanding and responding to challenges. Below are the aspects that need to be considered:

- When a learner is having a problem, the purpose of solving the problem is to help him/her to cope with that problem in and outside the classroom through addressing barriers involved. Sometimes the learner him/herself may contribute to the problem and it is the responsibility of the ILST to determine how the learner is actually contributing. For instance, he/she may not be able to hear properly.
- The team also have to keep in mind that teachers may sometimes contribute to the problem. According to DoE (2005a:28), this includes considering how the teacher manages the class, how teaching and learning take place in the classroom, and so on. If the teacher fails to manage the class effectively, that may also disadvantage learners, because others who are ill-disciplined will capitalize on that and misbehave, others who are bored may seek attention until they notice that they are recognized. Thus it is important that the teacher is able to manage and control a class firmly, because an uncontrolled class can be like a “runaway lorry” and cause havoc and misery to a great number of people. Without authority, a teacher is unlikely to be able to control a class. At times, teachers, through inadequate training, use teaching styles which may not meet

the needs of some of the learners. For instance, the teacher may teach at a pace which only suits learners who learn very quickly and, alternatively, the pace and style of teaching may limit the initiative and involvement of learners with high levels of ability.

- The curriculum on its own has an influence on teaching and learning. The ILSTs also have to consider whether there are other aspects of the curriculum impacting on the problem (DoE, 2005a:28). In this regard, one may consider the adequacy or inadequacy of the learning materials and whether they are accessible or not to all learners. Learners may be prevented from accessing the curriculum through inadequate provision of materials or equipment they need for learning to take place. Learners with disabilities, who do not receive the necessary assistive devices which would equip them to participate in the learning process, are often the victims of these barriers. The DoE (1997a:16) mentions that lack of provision of assistive devices for learners who require them, may impair not only the learning process, but also their functional independence, preventing them from interacting with other learners and participating independently in the learning environment. Furthermore, the assessment procedures that are not sensitive to the different needs of learners in the class, may have an impact on the problem. The assessment that leads to problems are the ones that are often inflexible and designed to assess only particular kinds of knowledge as aspects of learning, such as the amount of information that can be memorized, rather than the learner's understanding of the concepts involved.
- The physical and interpersonal environment of the school may also affect the problem and it is the responsibility of the ILST to keep this issue in mind. Factors such as interpersonal conflict at the school, mis-management, a lack of adequate materials or equipment, inaccessible buildings and classrooms for learners with disabilities, may indirectly be acting as barriers to the teaching and learning process (DoE, 2005a:28). The team (ILST) has to take into consideration that, in many contexts, the vast majority of schools are inaccessible to a large number of learners, teachers and communities and this inaccessibility is evident when

schools are physically inaccessible to anyone with disabilities using wheelchairs or other mobility devices.

- The ILST also have to consider in what way the teaching and learning process is influenced by the home environment. The DoE (2005a:28) believes that influences from the home environment include consideration of family dynamics, home-language, socio-economic class, cultural background and the economic conditions of the family, including employment or unemployment status. For example, for many learners teaching and learning take place through a language that is not their first language and this not only places these learners at a disadvantage, but also leads to linguistic difficulties which contribute to learning breakdown. In many cases, the second language learners are often subjected to low expectations, discrimination and lack of cultural peers.

The ILST also has to look at the broader community and social factors that create barriers to the learning process. The DoE (2005a:29) states that this includes the number of social challenges facing schools and other education institutions, including poverty, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, various forms of violence, substance abuse and so on. For instance, lack of access to basic services may be the effect that sustained poverty has on learners, the learning process and the education system. Most learners from poverty-stricken families are subject to increased emotional stress that adversely affects learning and development, and also a lack of concentration and other symptoms caused by under-nourishment that affect the ability of the learner to engage effectively in the learning process. The DoE (1997a:13) indicates furthermore that poverty-stricken communities are communities which are frequently characterized by limited educational facilities, large classes with high pupil/teacher ratios, inadequately trained staff and inadequate teaching and learning materials. Learning breakdown and the inability of the system to sustain effective teaching and learning are raised by these factors mentioned. Another example, when recognizing the broader community and social factors that have significant impact on learners, is the occurrence of HIV/AIDS. Many learners do not only have to deal with HIV/AIDS infection, but also have to deal with the loss of family members, particularly breadwinners, due to HIV/AIDS.

3.13 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE ILST

From the viewpoints of Hall *et al.* (2008:162), the effective ILST should:

- be committed to a common vision;
- accomplish change and improvement in task completion;
- communicate personal feelings and attitudes to improve team functioning;
- share all viewpoints and make decisions;
- recognize that all members' opinions are important;
- accept individual differences, needs, concerns and expectations;
- focus the responsibilities for success on all members;
- encourage individual freedom of expression;
- use the unique talents and abilities of each member;
- face problems and make modifications; and should
- handle conflict in a productive fashion.

The DoE (2005a:39) supplies some suggestions for effective teamwork:

- being sensitive to the needs of others in the group, including being aware that we all need “to be needed” and valued, and that we all have fears that can interfere with our ability to make an optimal contribution;
- acknowledging and respecting the resources that others contribute;
- respecting all members of the team as equal partners;
- respecting our own needs and resources, and sharing these resources when and where needed; and

- being accountable to the team: doing our “bit” to complete the “whole”.

With regard to the above paragraphs, it is clear that teachers do not work alone. Indeed they are likely to be conscious of the presence of colleagues, since they can hardly avoid meeting them repeatedly during the day and are very likely to find their voices infiltrating their classrooms, since no one is further than a raised voice away. Such intimacy makes it advisable to work towards co-operation and good relations. Furthermore, the need for co-operation has an immense impact, since the tasks that face teachers are large and complex, and the benefits deriving from teamwork are impressive.

3.14 THE BENEFIT OF WORKING IN THE ILST

After exploring the roles and responsibilities of the ILST, it becomes clear that all members of this team will benefit in one way or another. Thus the school and individuals should benefit from working in this team. The benefits listed are regarded as the most essential to the team members and have been derived from substantial research:

- People who have learnt to support and trust one another share information instead of keeping it to themselves.
- Resources, special talents and strengths are shared, instead of hoarded.
- Pitfalls threatening people who work in isolation are avoided or uncovered by teamwork.
- Better quality decisions are made.
- The morale is higher when people work together.
- Excellence results from teamwork. Everyone wants the team to look good (Hall *et al.*, 2008:162).

The ILST may make a significant difference to the quality of teaching and learning when the conditions at school are appropriate and suitable for them. Problems that cannot be

solved at the school need to be referred to an external support structure such as DBSTs, special school personnel or any other resources to which the school has access (Hall *et al.*, 2008:163). The referral to the external support structures is done by schools as a pre-intervention. The paragraph below will discuss the pre-referral intervention.

3.16 THE PRE-REFERRAL INTERVENTION SYSTEM

3.15.1 The description of the pre-referral intervention system

The pre-referral intervention is important in making instruction relevant in order to support learners experiencing barriers to learning. When practised properly by ILSTs through the support of DBSTs, the school setting becomes inclusive. For the benefit of this study, it will be briefly described in the sections below.

3.15.1.1 Overview

The pre-referral intervention system is solely based on the principle of prevention. It is aimed at helping learners to find themselves in the least restrictive environment. Since the resources are reduced by members of support team at school offering intervention from various areas, these resources are directed at providing intervention assistance at the point of initial referral. The manner in which these resources are directed, makes one believe that the pre-referral intervention model is based on an indirect, consultative model of service delivery. The Free State DoE (2005:03) believes that this kind of intervention normally assumes the adoption of an ecological perspective on viewing learning barriers in the classroom. Thus numerous factors affecting learning are assessed, analysed and taken into account in intervention planning. The pre-referral intervention system is characterized by six stages.

3.15.1.3 Stages of the pre-referral intervention process

The six stages of the pre-referral intervention process directed by the Free State DoE (2005:04) is explained in the sections that follow.

Stage 1: *Request for collegial assistance (consultation)*

- The classroom teacher requests consultation (problem-solving intervention) from the assigned ILST co-ordinator; and
- The initial referrals are screened by the ILST co-ordinator for group solving.

Stage 2: Collegial assistance

- An individual learner's needs are laid on the table by his/ her classroom teacher who, in this instance, becomes a member of the team.
- An assessment is made of the discrepancy between the learner's current performance level and the teacher's expected performance level for the learner. Relevant classroom variables are analysed as they affect this discrepancy between actual and desired performance.
- The team proposes teaching strategies, suggests resources, presents alternatives, such as consulting professionals and colleagues; and
- An intervention is designed collaboratively by the referring teacher and the team. Follow-up and review are always built in.

Stage 3: External consultation

- The Learning Support Facilitator (LSF) is consulted about unresponsive cases.
- The LSF evaluates the problem and the initial intervention strategies and decides whether to give additional suggestions for further classroom intervention or, on the basis of the nature of the problem, consults with other members of the DBST.
- The LSF or assigned member of the DBST such as the Learning Facilitator or Social Worker takes appropriate action.

- The classroom teacher is supported and the learning progress monitored; and
- If successful, the process ends here; if not, the next stage follows.

Stage 4: Conference/ Meeting

- A meeting is held with the ILST to confer, share information and make a decision.
- A meeting occurs with the referring teachers, LSF and other DBST members concerned with the case.
- Previous data on collegial assistance, consultations and effectiveness of interventions are shared.
- Feedback is solicited from team members.
- The decision is made to either continue with interventions as implemented, modify interventions or refer the learner to the DBST for psycho-educational assessment and consideration for special education eligibility; and
- The parent should be part of all decisions.

Stage 5: Formal Referral

- At this stage a formal appropriate referral is made for psycho-educational assessment of the learner.
- The evaluator uses data collected. The information that has been collected on the success of different interventions should assist in decision-making and guide the selection of assessment strategies; and
- assessment techniques are selected on the basis of answering specific questions such as (a) What decision is being made?
(b) What data must be collected to make the decision?

Stage 6: Formal Programme Meeting

- Relevant members of the DBST meet and the results of the psycho-educational assessment are discussed.
- Data from stages one to five are shared, and alternative plans including appropriateness of alternative placement are discussed.
- If appropriate, the team develops goals for IEP.
- The DBST determines whether special education is necessary or whether intervention in the regular classroom will suffice.
- The learner is mandated/ not mandated as requiring special education.
- The LSF takes the report to the school, which informs the parent of the decision taken; and
- the leader (DBST) becomes responsible for placing the learner in the appropriate setting.

According to the Free State DoE (2005:04), it may be concluded that the above six stages of the pre-referral intervention are extremely significant and that no one aspect is more important than the other. Again, these stages cannot be attained in every instance. It depends on the nature of the problem. Thus the above guidelines do not apply to cases of rape, serious trauma, attempted suicide or neglect. These cases call for immediate intervention by a psychologist/ counsellor, a social worker and other related persons.

3.15.3 The goals of the pre-referral intervention model

In the Free State DoE (2005:03) the goals of the pre-referral intervention model are defined as follows:

- to implement systematic intervention strategies in the regular classroom;

- to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies before a learner is formally referred for consideration for special education placement;
- to reduce inappropriate referrals and placements in special education;
- to identify successful interventions so as to help learners remain in the least restrictive environment; and
- to help make the decision-making process more instructionally relevant and data-based on the effectiveness of interventions as a major component of the decision-making process.

3.15.3 Perspectives on the pre-referral intervention model

According to the Free State DoE (2005:01), the current situation is one in which learners are referred for psychological testing in large numbers – often for reasons that have little to do with learners' functioning. Such referrals are not discriminating against the learning disabled from low achieving learners to determine special education eligibility. The concern at this point is that once these learners are referred, they are tested almost automatically, often with technically inadequate tests, and this could lead to the large number of learners being placed in special education. From the researcher's point of view, this is the evidence that some DBSTs are still struggling with implementation of the new way of referrals and this hinders the provision of support services at districts. The end result to this is that some learners are disadvantaged by wrong placing in the Resource Centres.

Another problem during referral is the validity and reliability of the tests used. In some cases when a learner is tested, test results are often not instructionally relevant and generally not helpful to teachers. The Free State DoE (2005:02) states that when learners are declared ineligible for special education services, regular classroom teachers are often left without any useful suggestions – these learners end up not receiving alternative classroom interventions. This concurs with the opinion of the researcher on failing of the implementation of the changed roles by the DBSTs. In this regard, the DBSTs appear to be failing to capacitate teachers and schools to

accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. The referral model also does not take into consideration factors such as the curriculum, economic factors, family, past experiences of the learner, as well as methods of instruction and others. The reason is that its process involves a search for what is wrong with the child – (that is a search for pathology) – that can be identified and corrected through special education.

The Free State DoE (2005:02) sees the pre-referral system as based on an ecological model viewing learner problems in the context of classroom, teacher, curriculum and social variables, as well as learner variables, and attempting appropriate interventions that are not focused solely on the learner, but on the whole system. The purpose of this pre-referral is to provide interventions at the initial referral which is recognized as the most important point of the process.

3.16 SOME POSSIBLE PHASES THE ILST COULD UNDERGO DURING THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS

When the ILST attempts to solve the problems referred to above, there are certain phases that it could encounter. The nature of the problem determines whether all stages will be reached or not, thus all stages in some of the problems are accomplished, while in others they cannot be attained. According to Hall *et al.* (2008:161) possible stages of the team problem-solving process include the following:

- Stage 1:** The appointed team co-ordinator states the reason for the meeting and explains the process to be followed and the problem to be dealt with.
- Stage 2:** The referring teacher makes a brief statement about the problem.
- Stage 3:** Team members ask questions to the referring teacher to clear up any uncertainties they may have, such as exactly what the problem is or what the circumstances are.
- Stage 4:** Once the problem has been clearly defined and analysed, a range of possible interventions must be created. A round table brainstorming

session is held to generate suggestions from team members as to how the problem may be solved. Brief practical statements are encouraged and are directed to the facilitator. The referring teacher does not interact with others at this stage.

Stage 5: The co-ordinator and the referring teacher discuss the suggested strategies with the team, but the ultimate selection of strategies rests with the referring teacher.

Stage 6: A plan to follow up on the ideas or strategies that have been selected by the referring teacher is established. All aspects of the plan should be put in writing, at least in outline form, so that each team member involved has a clear idea of his/ her responsibilities. This written plan also serves as a record to facilitate accountability.

Stage 7: The co-ordinator thanks team members and ensures that all participants leave the meeting, feeling that something constructive has come from it. (Hall *et al.*, 2008:161–162).

3.17 THE KIND OF SUPPORT THAT THE ILST SHOULD GET FROM THE DBST

The DBST was established with the purpose of developing the capacity of learning sites to understand and address diversity and barriers to learning and development. The White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:47) clearly states the primary function of this team as to evaluate and, through supportive teaching, build the capacity of schools, assist with early childhood and adult basic education and training centres, as well as with colleges and further and higher education institutions, to recognize and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs.

The DBST should develop and support the ILSTs and together they should strive to assist all schools to provide direct specialized support to teachers and learners. Besides, the team may also link the ILSTs and their schools with formal and informal support systems in their communities, link schools with one another and with community-based organizations, parent groups and so on. The DBST should also co-

ordinate and manage the inter-sectoral collaboration with other government departments with the purpose to address barriers to learning and development. According to the DoE (2005a:37), there are specific interventions from the DBST that it could pursue to be able to generalize the kind of support rendered to the ILST, which are the following:

- Where no ILSTs exist, the DBST could assist institutions to set them up.
- In the early stages of developing ILSTs, the participation of a district support member in regular meetings at the institution will assist in building the institution's capacity to identify and address its own needs and challenges.
- Where ILSTs already exist, but are struggling to function, the DBSTs could assist them.
- DBSTs could inform ILSTs about what expertise is available in the district support structures, and how to obtain assistance when they need it.
- DBSTs could assist institutions to form "clusters" with other neighbouring institutions, with the purpose of providing "peer-support".
- DBSTs should also assist these teams to identify and use local community support networks for the purpose of improving teaching and learning processes.
- The DBST needs to ensure that it provides well-coordinated and collaborative support to the institutions.

In order to perform the above-mentioned interventions, the DBST members should develop certain competencies as well as a network of support resources in the area concerned. Lazarus *et al.* (2008:55) believe that competencies considered to be crucial for providing appropriate support include: management and co-ordination of support; teacher and parental support; psychosocial, paramedical and medical support of learners and learning support relating to specific needs; and institutional and curriculum development.

From the above paragraphs one realizes that the ILSTs should benefit immensely from the DBSTs, depending on the effectiveness of the DBSTs.

3.18 CONCLUSION

This chapter has striven to show that ILSTs are “internal” support teams in educational institutions and aiming at providing support to learners with barriers to learning and development. The primary function of these teams is to put in place properly co-ordinated learner and teacher support services that will support the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, teacher and institutional needs. It was shown that the team comprises mainly of teachers at the school itself and, where possible and appropriate, parents and learners. The team is co-ordinated by a member of the staff who has received extra training in one of the specialized competencies in life skills education, counselling or learning support.

It was also indicated that, at provincial level, the Department of Education established the DBST which should develop and support the ILSTs. Furthermore, the team is aimed at linking the ILSTs and schools with formal and informal support systems in their communities, linking schools with one another and with community-based organizations, parent groups and others.

Chapter 4 comprises the ecological systems theory and model that exposes the development of the child in a diversity of environments.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ECOSYSTEMIC APPROACH TO LEARNER SUPPORT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as well as the Epstein's ecological model. The topic of this research refers to *an ecosystemic approach model*. Since both Bronfenbrenner and Epstein support this model, the researcher thought it necessary to explain exactly what is meant with this concept.

4.5 BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

This theory focuses on the development of the child in the context of the system of relationships that form his/her environment. In actual sense, it emphasizes the interconnections of events and the bi-directionality of effects between an organism and its environment. The perception of viewing human development from a person-in-environment context, as well as the emphasis of the principle that all growth and development take place within the context of such relationship, form the core of the theory (Green, 2008:8). This theory is known as the "biological systems theory" and the main reason is that it places emphasis on the fact that a primary environment fuels or enhances the child's development, thus, the interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family or community environment and the societal landscape, fuels and steers his/her development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001:1).

Paquette and Ryan (2001:1) and Swart and Phasha (2009:213) believe that Bronfenbrenner's theory can be described as having complex "layers" of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. As these layers are joined to each other, one may assume that any changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout the other layers as well. This may support the idea that in the child's development, the child's immediate environment must be looked at, as well as the interaction of the larger environment. Paquette and Ryan (2001:2) state that Bronfenbrenner's structure of environment contains the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. It is in these systems that the child's

development takes place (Donald *et al.*, 2009:41). The interaction of different environments in the development of the child is determined by the complex interaction within the wider environment.

The microsystem has been described as the closest to the child and it is assumed that it contains the structure with which the child has direct contact. In this structure, the child is closely involved in interactions with other familiar people. Berk (2000:28) qualifies the above statement by emphasizing that the relationships and interactions a child has with his/her immediate surroundings are encompassed in this layer. Because this is closest to the child, it can easily change a child for better or for worse. Berk (2000:28), Donald *et al.* (2009:41) and Paquette and Ryan (2001:2) mention that structures that are included in the microsystem range from family, school, neighbourhood or childcare environments. Microsystems involve roles, relationships, and patterns of daily activities that shape many aspects of cognitive, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development (Donald *et al.*, 2009:41).

The mesosystem is the second environmental layer closest to the child, even though the child does not have a direct contact with structures contained in it. According to Swart and Phasha (2009:215), the child and the family unit are embedded in the broader mesosystems consisting of peers, extended family, teachers, neighbours and close personal acquaintances with whom the child actively interacts. Berk (2000:29) believes that this layer differs from others in the sense that it provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem. Examples in this regard may be the connection between the child's teacher and his parents, between his church and his neighbourhood. Thus, if the relationship or contact between the teacher and parents is poor, the child's performance at school might be similar and *vice versa*.

The exosystem is the third layer of the Bronfenbrenner's structure of environment. In this layer, the child does not function directly, even though it is defined as the larger social system. Donald *et al.* (2009:42) argue that this level includes other systems in which a child is not directly involved, but which may influence the people who have proximal relationships with him in his microsystem. Berk (2000:29) sees the structure in

this layer as having an impact on the child's development by interacting with some structures in his/her microsystem. According to Paquette and Ryan (2001:2), in this layer the child may not be directly involved, but he/she does feel the positive or negative force involved in the interaction with his/her own system. An example of a connection in this regard may be a parent workplace schedule or community-based family resources.

The macrosystem is regarded as the fourth layer of this theory. In relation to the child's environment, the macrosystem is seen on the outermost layer, because it comprises elements such as cultural values, customs and laws. From the viewpoint of Donald *et al.* (2009:42), the macrosystem involves dominant social and economic structures, as well as values, beliefs and practices that influence all other social systems. According to Paquette and Ryan (2001:2), the effects of larger principles defined by the macrosystem have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. An example cited here is the belief that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children and that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents. The parents ability to carry out that responsibility towards their child within the context of the child's microsystem is likewise affected (Berk 2000:30).

The final layer in this theory is the chronosystem which is characterized by the relationship of a child's environment to the dimension of time. Donald *et al.* (2009:42) state that in this layer, the developmental time affects the interactions between these systems, as well as their influences on individual development. Paquette and Ryan (2001:3) believe that elements within this system may be either external, such as the timing of a parent's death, or internal, such as physiological changes that occur within the ageing of a child. In other words, when children get older, they respond to each environmental change in a different manner and that determines how change will influence them. Subsequently, the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory could be seen as focused on the context and quality of the child's environment. His argument is based on the idea that the child's development is determined by the complex interaction within the environments.

According to Swart and Phasha (2009:216) the most destructive force to a child's development is the instability and unpredictability of family life. One of the factors that creates this instability is the economy in which various families find themselves. Poor families are struggling to give their children the best education, while those who can afford it, are able to give their children quality education. This could lead to a situation wherein some children do not have the constant mutual interaction with important adults, including departmental officials, for their development. Paquette and Ryan (2001:4) mentioned that the "broken relationships" in the child's immediate microsystem normally makes him/her have no tools to explore other parts of their environment.

The Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory also encourages support of learners at schools. This can be attained only when DBST members have full knowledge of any breakdown occurring within such childrens' homes, as well as at school. DBST members should also initiate stable, long-term relationships between a child's home, the school and teachers. Paquette and Ryan (2001:3) highlight the fact that Bronfenbrenner believes that the primary relationship needs to be with someone who can provide a sense of caring that is meant to last a lifetime and the person or people who have to foster such a relationship must be within the immediate scope of the child's influence.

It should be noted that parents, teachers and peers play a primary role to support learners because of the proximal interactions that occur in the microsystems of which they are part. As a result, it is important for schools, as well as teachers, to support learners who experience barriers to learning and to create an environment that allows such support to occur. However, Donald *et al.* (2009:42) and Green (2008:7) indicate that the problems learners and their families face may be caused by the conflict between the workplace and family life – not always between families and schools.

4.6 SYSTEMS FORMING PART OF THE ENVIRONMENTS

In the helping process, all the mentioned environments have to work together as a system. It is important to notice that if a part of the system does not function, the whole system will fail. As a result, the learner will fall out of the education system. In this section, different parts of the system will be discussed shortly.

4.6.1 Family

One part of the mesosystem that is influential in the life of the learner is the family. The relationship within the family and between the family and the social environment, influences individual development and family functioning. From the viewpoint of Paquette and Ryan (2001:5) and Swart and Phasha (2009:220), the influences of the family extend to all aspects of the child's development, such as: language, nutrition, security, health, as well as beliefs, and are all developed through the input and behaviour-related feedback within the family. Learners from a school come from families with a divergent status and they are simply the products of the families they are a part of. Therefore, teams of people who are working directly with them – such as ILSTs and DBSTs – are expected to be able to deal with a great variety of family systems.

Families are changing nowadays and the culture of families practised by our elders no longer exists. Single parent families, generation skipping families and other non-traditional groupings are more common today than the traditional family consisting of father, mother and children (Swart & Phasha, 2009:215). All those different types of family have an effect on the development of their children. Paquette and Ryan (2001:4) add that another common force that acts as changing the family landscape in our society, is divorce. Normally, the lives of children from such families are split in two. They sometimes spend time with their father and other times with their mother, where only one parent might be involved in his/her education. In some instances, none of the parents take responsibility for school expenses. It is clear that a divorce can have a profound effect on the family and the development of the child.

In conclusion, the researcher agrees that a good interaction between family and school increases consistency in the child's life and the two will share a joint focus that enriches the child's development. On the other hand, a mismatch between family and school values can introduce tension in children, which would negatively impact on their development and freedom to explore (Alant & Harty, 2009:85).

4.6.2 Schools

The child's positive development is also determined by the relationship with his/her school. Schools can play a role in helping learners to cope, since it is concerned with the welfare of learners. Therefore the need to rethink the role of schools in supporting the development of learners is necessary (Swart & Phasha, 2009:225). Schools appear as the only institution that is well placed in terms of accommodating learners, because it has access to a large number of young people during their early ages. NEPI (1992:2) regards schools as being in a position to provide services in a natural setting by minimizing the likelihood of separating children from one another. Some schools do not place a strong emphasis on family involvement and support, and that leads to a poor parent-teacher relationship

Barriers like low income and poor language skills may prevent some families or parents from collaborating with schools. Donald *et al.* (2009:23) add that some of the barriers that may be included at this point are lack of time and energy, feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem, lack of understanding about the structure of the school and unacceptable communication channels, cultural incongruity, race and class bias on the part of school personnel, and perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administrators.

Paquette and Ryan (2001:3) believe that because of the amount of time children spend at school, such relationships carry real weight and some children may, for the first time in their life, develop relationships with adults outside their immediate family.

From the viewpoint of Paquette and Ryan (2001:13), Bronfenbrenner sees this interaction as bi-directional and mentions that there are five propositions that explain how relationships developed at home and at school, could work together for positive child development:

Firstly, the child must have an on-going, long-term mutual interaction with an adult (or adults) who have a stake in the development of the child (Paquette & Ryan, 2001:3). When this interaction exists between the two, the relationship becomes easily enhanced

and it should last for a lifetime. Adults must show unconditional love and support to their children and they must also believe that the child is “the best” in their relationship. The child should also know how adults feel about them.

Secondly, because of this strong tie and the pattern of interpersonal interaction it provides, it should help the child relate to features of his/her mesosystem. The skills and confidence encouraged by initial relationships will increase the child’s ability to explore effectively and grow, owing to external activities.

Thirdly, attachments and interactions with other adults will help the child progress to more complex relationships with his/her primary adults. The child will gain affirmation from a third party relationship, and will bring those new skills to the primary relationship. Also, these secondary adults should give support to the primary adults and help the child see the importance of the primary role.

As a next step, the relationship between the child and his primary adults could progress only with repeated two-way interchanges and mutual compromise. Children need these interchanges at home and at school or in childcare. Parents need these interchanges in their neighbourhoods and workplaces.

Lastly, the relationship between the child and adults in his/her life also requires a public attitude of support and affirmation of the importance of these roles. Public policies must enable time and resources for these relationships to be nurtured, and a cultural value must be placed on the people doing this work. This includes the work of parents and teachers, but also the efforts of extended family, friends, co-workers and neighbours.

4.6.3 The community

Paquette and Ryan (2001:3) believe that the involvement of the structures in a child’s mesosystem is meant to provide the adult relationships required for positive change. In this case, the relationships within the family and between families must be adequate to promote or enhance the positive development of the child. School, as well, should nurture and maintain the relationship of the learners aimed at positive development (Swart & Phasha, 2009:222). With regard to the above fact, these relationships are

known as bi-directional, as explained in the bio-ecological systems theory, and lays the foundation for a child's cognitive and emotional growth. Dean and Huitt (2008:24) explain that the support for such a relationship is provided by the community, society and culture which are the structures of the ecosystem. In actual fact, they serve as a basis where these relationships operate, since they provide the value, material resources and the context of such a relationship.

Even though the structure of the child's mesosystem is important in the formulation of adult relationships, some failures could occur. Failures that could occur are those of single parenting, poverty and illiteracy, and both parents working far from home. Dean and Huitt (2008:25) cite, as example that about 25% of the children in 1999 were living with a single parent in most of the African countries. Furthermore, 20% of all children in the African countries live in a household whose annual income falls below the poverty level. In some families, both parents are working far away from home and this causes minimal involvement in their child's development.

The community plays a vital role in supporting children-adult relationships towards the child's positive development. Part of its role entails the provision of access to people with similar problems who can function as resource and emotional support to parents (Paquette & Ryan, 2001:3). Furthermore, interaction among families is encouraged by communities through the provision of child care, parent employment and designated programmes. The combination of community agencies and business and industry also provides valuable resources for families, which is in line with the community as a structure of the exosystem. These needs within the community can be provided through a partnership with all stakeholders involved.

4.6.4 The Society

Like the other structures of the exosystem, a child's society is responsible for providing resources that enable structures of the child's mesosystem to flourish, thus aiding in the child's positive development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001:1). The context in which the families function can be created by factors such as the values of the society, financial resources provided by the society and legislation. For example, the custom of the

society usually governs the length of a working day for employees. Government programmes aimed at assisting the poor, disadvantaged families and people through a variety of grants, are also influenced by society. Furthermore, there are acts that govern the treatment of children and others, addressing the rights of families created by society.

The society, just like the community, could also experience malfunctions that lead to the problems within mesosystemic relationships. In respect to that, Paquette & Ryan (2001:1) asserts that technology has changed society and there are few, if not any, resources to prevent the damage done to the societal environment. He further argues that one should foster societal attitudes that value work done on behalf of children at all levels: parents, teachers, extended family, mentors, work supervisors, legislators.

According to Prinsloo (2009a:449), the level of support granted by public programmes to struggling families is established through the expectation that parents should declare themselves indigent for the purpose of qualifying for help in solving problems that may arise.

4.6.5 Global influences on the macrosystem

Global influence on the macrosystem has a significant impact on the lives of children. Advanced technology makes global news a regular phenomenon in the lives of today's children. Donald *at al.* (2009:45) mention that in the past, the global influences on children were limited to health and ecological issues, but now the reaction to international events from economic forces is more dominating than it was in the past. Paquette and Ryan (2001:1) believe that once the employment opportunities change due to the global competition, there is the likelihood that families could be affected directly when the employee earn less money than before. This can have a negative impact on the economy of the communities when businesses close or relocate to other areas. In one way or another, such events can have an impact on school funding from the side of the government, and can also have an impact on the learners' families.

4.6.6 Culture

From the viewpoint of Paquette and Ryan (2001:1), children are affected by their culture through the communication of beliefs and customs parents receive from other structures in the meso- and exosystems. Different beliefs with regard to school, family, religion, and community life are dictated by the culture that people become a member of. It has been noticed that these cultural values are passed from one generation to another and the developing child has to 'abide by the rules'. An example highlighted by Paquette and Ryan (2001:1) is that one culture in this country has the belief that parents are primarily responsible for their child's up-bringing, and when help with the task of providing for one's family is requested, this is regarded to be a negative aspect in a specific culture. Because of this belief, societies have passed legislation that provides aid for families based on a deficit model.

Donald *et al.* (2009:197) state that culture plays a vital role in the identity of the individual child. It is clear that since each child has his/her own culture, children come in contact with one another at schools and other places of activity, always leaving the 'door open' for potential conflict between cultures. Though some circumstances differ, people may come together to form one society, yet the majority of them maintain different cultures, ethics, religion and nationalities. Prinsloo (2009b:37) indicates that the force of the dominant culture in communicating conflicting messages to families of other cultures can create crises of identity in children.

4.7 EPSTEIN'S MODEL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The ecological model of Epstein explains the interconnections of events and the bi-directionality of effects between organism and environment. Swart and Phasha (2009: 216) highlight the fact that Epstein's model emphasizes the importance of the family-school relationship and the mutual responsibility for children's learning and development. According to Epstein (2002:3), an ecological perspective perceives human development from a person-in-environment context, where all growth and development takes place within the context of relationships. In this regard, the study of a child must be based on the environment within the family where the family has to be

seen within the context of its community and the larger society. This model provides a clear explanation about the importance of family in the development of the child.

There are guiding principles in the ecological model that apply to all kinds of systems including business and industry, community organizations, schools and families. The importance of these principles is to ensure an understanding of the functions of the family and the interaction of families and communities. Most authors such as Donald *et al.* (2009:38), Green (2008:8) and Swart and Phasha (2009:217) mentioned some of the principles relevant to a family-centred approach as following:

- **Interdependence:** One part of the system cannot be understood in isolation from the other parts. Children cannot be understood outside the context of their families. Any description of a child has to consider the two-way patterns of interaction within that child's family and between that family and its social environment.
- **Subsystems:** Family subsystems include spousal subsystems, parent-child subsystems and sibling subsystems. A family's roles and functions are defined by its subsystems.
- **Circularity:** Every member of a system influences every other member in a circular chain reaction. A family system is constantly changing as children develop. Therefore it is almost impossible to know the cause of behaviour for certain.
- **Equifinality:** The same event leads to different outcomes and a given outcome may result from different events because there are many paths to healthy development and there is no agreed-upon way to raise children.
- **Communication:** All behaviour should be seen as messages between people that contain both factual and relationship information.
- **Family rules:** Rules operate as norms within a family and serve to organize family interactions.

- **Homeostasis:** A steady, established state should be maintained in the continuing interaction system through the use of family norms and a mutually reinforcing feedback loop.
- **Morphogenesis:** Families also require flexibility to adapt to internal and external change.

The structure of the ecological model is considered to be the development as well as the environment or setting in which it occurs, thus the “ecology” of the family is determined by the comprehensible interactions within and between the different environments of a family.

4.4.1 Help or hindering of development through the environment

From the viewpoint of Epstein (2002:5), a given environment may either be supportive of development or impoverishing and menacing to a child’s development. Some of the factors could play a vital role either to facilitate or to hamper the development. Among these factors one can consider the lack of opportunities in family functioning which would then hinder the healthy development of children. Epstein (2002:7) gives examples of the impact of different environments on a child and the family’s ecology, which are:

- When children move out into the world, their growth is directly influenced by the expectations and challenges from peer groups, care-givers, schools and all other social settings they encounter.
- The depth and quality of a family’s social network judges their healthy family functioning. During normal family transitions, all families experience stress. Having someone to talk to about the children, exchange child care advice or offer help with projects, could buffer a family against the stresses of normal family life.
- Strong linkages between families and community organizations such as schools, open channels that allow vital information and resources to flow in both directions, support families, schools, and communities.

- The work environment, community attitudes and values, and large society shape child development indirectly, but powerfully by affecting the way a family functions.

4.4.2 The ecology of the child

The evaluation of the challenges and opportunities of the different environments is important when the ecology of a child is contemplated upon. These settings range from a face-to-face contact of the child with other important people, the interaction of various situations included in a child's ecology where the child does not participate directly and, lastly, a larger social setting.

A face-to-face contact of the child with other people could make a great contribution in determining the ecology of that child. Epstein (2002:5) stresses that these significant contacts with other people can take place in the family, school, peer groups or church. By looking at the challenges and opportunities in this setting, one may notice that the acceptance of the child, as well as positive regard of the child, could lead to reinforcement and competence in behaviour. Furthermore, this type of setting would enable one to realize an exposure of the child to a diversity of roles and relationships.

Swart and Phasha (2009:217) believe that there are challenges and opportunities in a setting whereby a child's ecology such as home-school, home-church, school-neighbourhood interact. According to Epstein (2002:6), during the interaction of a child's ecology, the settings must respect one another and must also present basic consistency in values. Swart and Phasha (2009:217) further say that the ecology of a child needs effective communication that should present opportunities and that openness to collaboration and partnership must not be ignored by those involved in the process of assisting the child.

Furthermore, challenges and opportunities in settings whereby the child does not directly participate, are clearly visible in their lives. An example of such settings is the parent's place of work, the school board and local government. It must be remembered that even though the child is not directly involved in these settings, they have a powerful impact

on family functioning. Epstein (2002:6) maintains that decisions that are made should keep the impact on families and children in mind. Other authors (Donald *et al.*, 2009:42 and Epstein, 2002:6) argue that these settings include support aimed at helping families in balancing the pressure that these settings create.

4.4.3 The ecology of a family

The environment which families encounter may also be considered as a contributing factor to child development, similar to the environments that children are experiencing. Epstein (2002:6) highlights the fact that within its community settings, each family constructs its own web of support, making use of formal and informal resources available. The functioning of a family offers challenges and opportunities through various community settings. The interactions of family and community in this regard may be seen as the following:

- Rural and urban families experience different life standards of living that predominantly make a distinction between the two groups.
- Swart and Phasha (2009:226) believe that lower economic wellbeing, fewer educational opportunities, few employment opportunities, less access to health care and poor provision of social services, are visible in rural areas.
- Urban families, on the other hand, experience higher population density, noisier living conditions, higher crime rates and more impersonal ties.
- Both the rural and urban families display certain unique characteristics that differ from one another, especially as a result of specific development.

Many parents have to cope with the threat of violent crime in their neighbourhood. A family's response to demands and challenges from a community environment may promote or hinder family functioning and child development. Withdrawing emotionally, keeping children inside the dwelling and restricting child activity are coping strategies which parents use when faced with violence in their neighbourhood, but they may also impede normal development (Donald *et al.*, 2009:42; Swart & Phasha, 2009:217).

The way community organizations respond to the needs of the family always has an impact on families. In this regard, programmes such as early childhood development and education for learners with special needs, must respond positively to needs of families. Alant and Harty (2009:87) believe that there are strategies that could make these programmes, specifically for early childhood, more approachable to families and these are: assessing family and the child needs; involvement of parents in decision-making; increasing parent-programme communication; redefining staff roles and using community residents, as well as giving parents choices between different programmes.

The kind of relationship between families and their communities also play an important role in the development of children (Donald *et al.*, 2009:42; Green, 2009:8; Swart & Phasha, 2009:217). These relationships are very important although there are some of them that change over time. Since the needs and interests of family members change over their life-span, these issues of responsiveness also change with coping and with stages of child development.

From the viewpoint of Swart & Phasha, (2009:216), “community” may refer to relationships and social networks, as well as to a physical location. A family’s informal social support network often provides services that are more accessible, culturally appropriate and acceptable than the services offered by a formal support system.

4.4.4 A developmental perspective of the ecological model

The focus of ecological perspectives on developmental processes may involve the way stress, coping and adaptation contribute to development. Epstein (2002:7) believes that a healthy development and effective functioning depend on the correlation between the needs and resources of a child or family and the demands, support and resources offered by the surrounding environment. In this regard, as an individual develops, he/she has to respond to the environment. This kind of response is always associated with stress management, coping and adaptation.

4.4.4.1 The development of the child

During the development of children, there are clear needs and demands that contribute to their growth. There must be a match in the developmental needs of the child and the demands, resources and capacities of the family, school and community environments. Epstein (2002:7) concurs with the above fact by saying that part of the developmental process is when the child adapts to specific demands and expectations from the community, school and home. Furthermore, there are some factors that contribute to shaping the development of the child, namely skills and competencies required of a child by the home, school and community.

Children behave in a different manner when they are at school, thus their behaviour at home may be completely different to that at school. Swart and Phasha (2009:218) indicate that these differences in behaviour may be triggered by differences in goals, priorities and expectations between home and school, and as a result, this could lead to low academic achievement. The match between a child and his/her home, as well as between school and community environments, determines whether or not a child is able to meet basic needs, form nurturing and supportive relationships, and develop social competence, all of which greatly influence the course of a child's life (Epstein, 2002:9).

4.4.4.2 The development of the family

Because families are important to the development of the child, one needs to know that this has to be strengthened and supported (Donald *et al.*, 2009:213). Family development also goes through developmental stages just as children do. Epstein (2002:7) maintains that families must respond to the demands and expectations from work, social groups, community institutions and society as a whole. If the family fails to meet the demands and expectations of the social environment, the end product will be an increase in the levels of stress. Stress beyond a certain point increases, for whatever reason, a family's ability to nurture its children.

4.4.4.3 Mismatch concerning the environment

Epstein (2002:8) believes that sometimes a mismatch can occur between children and their family or school environments, or between a family and the community environment. According to Epstein (2002:6), the mismatch between a child and the expectations of the school setting usually triggers problem behaviour at school. Mismatches also happen when the home culture and values differ from the dominant values of the school environment. This poses a threat to the linkages between family and school. The threat is lessened when both sides are respectful and recognize the importance and value of each to the child. When a mismatch occurs and a child is disruptive or a family needs outside help, it may not be due to a deficiency in the child or family. The mismatch may come from a lack of resources or support from the social environment.

4.5 THE COURSE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT: RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

If the probability of any negative outcome is predicted, the risk has to be considered. Donald *et al.* (2009:168) believe that the positive side of vulnerability and risk can be seen as the resiliency and protective factors. This risk and protective factors prevail within the child, as well as within a child's environment.

Epstein (2002:8) strongly believes that a child or family's course of development results from the negotiation of risks on the one hand, and the exploitation of opportunities on the other. Risk and protective factors can be recognized by the following (Epstein, 2002:9):

- The presence of a single risk factor typically does not threaten positive development. In situations where a child is vulnerable, the interaction of risk and protective factors determines the course of development.
- If multiple risk factors accumulate and are not offset by compensating protective factors, healthy development is compromised.

- Poverty increases the likelihood that risk factors in the environment will not be offset by protective factors.
- When a child faces negative factors at home, at school and in the neighbourhood, the negative effect of these factors is multiplied rather than simply added together.
- Resiliency studies explain why two children facing similar risks develop differently. A core of dispositions and sources of support or protective factors that can support development under adverse conditions have been identified.
- Dispositions that act as protective factors include an active, problem-solving approach and a sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Resilient children are characterized by a belief in their power to shape and have an impact on their life experiences.
- Caring and support, high expectations and opportunities for participation are protective factors for children found in families, schools and communities.

4.5.1 Protective factors

Many roles are performed by protective factors in the development of the child and their family. The most important role is its influence on the way a person responds to a risk situation. Epstein (2002:9) emphasizes that this protective factor is not and can never be a characteristic of the person or situation, but a result of the interaction between the two in the presence of risk. As a result, the child's development structure can be changed from a negative to a positive outcome. Epstein (2002:9) mentions the following as examples of the way protective processes redirect human development:

- If a child with a genetic disability has supportive nurturing care-givers, the developmental impact of the disability is reduced.
- A teen mother's strong social support network reduces risks to the mother-child relationship.

- If a child has one strong parent-child relationship, the risk associated with marital discord is reduced.

4.5.2 Application of a family-centred approach

A family-centred approach usually uses risks and protective factors to promote nurturing environments for children and families, schools and communities. According to Kujiwana, Myburg & Poggenpoel (2010:11) there are four mediating mechanisms that act in ways which:

- reduce the impact of risks;
- reduce negative chain reactions;
- maintain self-esteem and self-efficacy through relationships and task achievement; and
- open opportunities for positive development.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Literature on the Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as well as the ecological model of Epstein was studied in this chapter to highlight the importance of making use of an ecosystemic approach in supporting learners at schools. Various opinions were disclosed about contributing factors in the development of the child/learner, as well as the interaction of various environments. The risk and protective factors prevailing within the child, as well as within a child's environment, were also highlighted.

This concludes the literature study of this research. The next chapter focuses on the research methodology employed during empirical investigation.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research design in other words, it explain how this study was conducted. The chapter begin with problem statement and aim of the study. Furthermore, the main issues discussed involve the data collection methods and how the data were analyzed.

5.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the problems experienced by District-Based Support Teams in implementation of the changed role and to come up with guidelines in this regard. On paper, theoretically in policy documents, it looks very promising, but implementing all of this is not always possible. The below research questions were formulated as a way to guide this research study:

- How has the role of the support services changed after White Paper 6?
- What infrastructures are available to support the changing role?
- Which elements hamper the provision of education support services?
- What measures can be taken to ensure that the changing role can be implemented successfully?

5.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to examine the changing role of the district-based education support services in establishing inclusive school settings. To realize the aforementioned aimed, I further explored the following objectives:

- to determine the changed role of DBSTs after White Paper 6;
- to investigate whether infrastructures are available to support the changing role;

- to investigate the elements that hamper the provision of support by the DBSTs;
- to determine measures that can be taken to ensure that the changing role can be carried out and implemented successfully;
- to come up with recommendations that will help the DBSTs to implement their changing role effectively; and
- to come up with a proposed model for the DBSTs to implement the changed role.

5.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This was a two-phased study that involved literature study and empirical research. Phase one involved literature review while phase two involved empirical research. Therefore, in order to answer the research questions stated in chapter one, I used both a literature study and empirical research.

5.4.1 Phase One: Literature review

In order to gather information about support services in education and the changing roles of DBSTs in the context of the Inclusive education system, I studied both primary and secondary literature sources. For this purpose, I consulted the library in order to locate books as well as peer-reviewed journals. I also used the internet where I obtained abundant literature in the form of peer-reviewed articles. In this regard, I used Google Scholar and EBSCOHOST as data bases.

I used the following key words in order to search for relevant literature:

education support services; special education; South African education policies; inclusive education; district-based support team; institutional-level support team/ site-based support team; resource centres; ecosystemic approach.

Literature study enabled me to note what is known and highlighted the gaps that existed in literature.

5.4.2 Phase two: Empirical Study

In this study my main data collection strategy was quantitative; however, I also used qualitative research strategies in order to obtain richer data. These two approaches are discussed below.

5.4.2.1 Quantitative data collection procedure

Quantitative research involves the use of questionnaires and uses descriptive statistics as a way of organizing data, facilitating the organization and the interpretation of numbers obtained from measuring a characteristic or variables (Leedy & Ormord, 2005:30; Vockel & Asher, 1995:192). Quantitative research is therefore, a formal and systematic process whereby data are collected about a certain phenomena (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smith, 2004:5; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:190). It also measures the reactions of many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data which giving a broad, general set of findings (Best & Kahn, 2003:148). The first phase of data collection in my study involved the use of a self-designed questionnaire in order to collect quantitative data (*cf.* Annexure C).

Questionnaires are normally used in a survey research design where participants in a study respond to a set of questions or statements. As noted earlier, I studied literature and designed a questionnaire as a data collection instrument. Since my study involved the whole Free State Province, a questionnaire was a convenient way in which I could reach the government officials that were dispersed all over the province and situate in Districts. The questionnaire facilitated quick data collection and was more economical for my study because as it involved only the duplication and distributing expenses (*cf.* Creswell, 2002:361).

Furthermore a questionnaire is regarded as the most broadly used technique for acquiring quantitative data. My questionnaire had structured and unstructured questions and enabled participants to remain anonymous (Best & Kahn, 2003:301; Delport, 2002:172).

Although I relied on the questionnaire as the main data collection strategy, I was fully aware of the following limitations of questionnaires (Best & Kahn, 2003:307):

- participants who do not have an opinion of or knowledge concerning the subject, will answer the questions instinctively and participants who have little interest in a particular problem, might answer the questionnaire indiscriminately.
- as motivation of the participants is difficult to check, the researcher might receive misleading responses and misinterpretation of questions can occur.
- the participants can be forced to give simple answers to complicated issues.
- questionnaires that do not probe deep enough may not reveal a true picture of opinions and feelings.
- the length of a questionnaire can give cause to inaccurate responses and a low percentage of feedback.

I am however convinced that the advantages of a questionnaire as used in my study, outweigh the disadvantages and I kept these in mind when designing and analyzing data.

5.4.2.1.1 How I designed the questionnaire

The questionnaire that I designed was influenced by the study variables (Delpont, 2002:174). In my study the changing roles of DBSTs in the context of inclusive education were investigated with a view to learning about progress as far as implementation is concerned. Therefore, the items that formed part of the questionnaire focused on these roles and whether implementation was successful or not.

The format of the questionnaire was also informed by the fact that this would be a questionnaire distributed by contact persons at education districts in Inclusive education sub-directorate. The questionnaire was accompanied by the letter from the quality assurance director of the Free State Department of Education notifying all education districts about the intended study (*cf.* Annexure B). The informed consent form detailing

the rights of the participants was also part of the package of questionnaires (*cf.* Annexure E).

The composition of questions was guided by basic principles like brief sentences, clear language, unambiguity, measure a specific aspect of the study's objectives or hypotheses, necessary rules about the process of answering, relevance and non-threatening phrasing (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996:294).

In line with these principles, I carefully selected items from the literature review and used them to construct the questionnaire. During the construction of the questionnaire, I also took into consideration the aim of the empirical research. As seen in Annexure C, the questionnaire for this research was divided into two sections, namely Section A and Section B.

In Section A, the biographical information of the participants was required. According to Delport (2002:225), biographical information relates to categorical variables which can include both nominal and ordinal variables, and relate to a group a subject belongs. The information gathered here assists in statistically determining reasons for any discrepancies in responses. The items included in this section involved the participants' age, experience in support services, level of education in terms of qualifications and professional qualifications.

Section B had a total of 28 questions that were aimed at investigating the current situation about the provisioning of education support services at district level. Questions 1 – 22 in this section were categorized according to themes derived from the literature study. The themes were grouped as follows:

- Resource Centres (Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4)
- Availability of infrastructure (Questions 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9)
- Communication and co-operation both at district and national Level (Questions 10 and 11)

- Inclusion (Questions 12 and 13)
- Professionalism of DBST members (Questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22)

Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they viewed each item in their present work situation and environment. A Likert scale was used for this purpose, for example,

- Fully agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

Furthermore, the remaining questions in this section (question 23 – 28) were open-ended which gave the participants a chance to provide brief explanations about their experiences in support services. The questionnaire was further subjected to a process of standardisation that included the piloting and refinement of the questionnaire. This means that after the development of the questions a researcher should pilot test the questions, which helps to determine whether the questionnaire is effective, the individuals in the sample are capable of completing the survey and that they understand the questions (Creswell, 2002:367).

Pilot-testing enables a researcher to effect changes to an instrument, based on feedback from a small number of individuals who completed it (Creswell, 2002:368). Since a pilot group provides feedback on the questionnaire, the results are always excluded from the final sample for the study and in this research they were indeed excluded. A sample of DBST members from the sub-directorate of inclusive education in the Thabo Mofutsanyana education district in the Free State Department of Education (n=10) was involved in the pilot process. In designing and piloting the questionnaire, I aimed to enhance reliability and validity.

5.4.2.1.2 Reliability and validity

From the viewpoint of Delport (2002:166), the validity of a measuring instrument is determined by whether or not the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and measures it accurately. The implication is that the instrument has content validity, face validity, criterion validity or construct validity. On the other hand, Delport (2002:168) confirms that reliability is determined by the accuracy or precision of an instrument and the extent to which that instrument yields the same or similar results under comparable conditions.

To establish the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, I used the empirical research questions and the literature review as starting point to ensure that the questionnaire content and the constructs used in relation to roles of DBSTs were appropriate and would ensure dependability and reproducibility, and that the questionnaire would measure what it was supposed to measure. Content validity is the extent to which the content of the research instrument appears logically to examine and comprehensible enough to include the characteristics it is intended to measure (Anon, n.d.; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:92).

The study leader scrutinized the questionnaire to establish its reliability and validity. Only after her input, especially regarding the terminology appropriate for learner support was, the final draft of the questionnaire pre-tested to ascertain reliability. Therefore, in this research, the questionnaire was found to be valid with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.825. After the pilot study, the necessary adjustments were made and the questionnaire finalized (see annexure C). The finalized questionnaire, (98 copies) was personally distributed to the identified contact persons at education districts. A covering letter was enclosed (Annexure E) with the aim of orienting the participants to the questionnaire, assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity, and outlining the purpose of the research questionnaire (Creswell, 2002:369; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:203). The collection of the questionnaire was mostly done personally but also with the help of contact persons at Education Districts where the questionnaires were distributed.

Of the questionnaires distributed, 76 were usable. Table 5.1 illustrates the return-rate of the questionnaires per population category.

Population category	Questionnaires distributed	Questionnaires returned	% return
DBST members (Inclusive Education)	94	76	81

Table 5.1: The return rate of questionnaires

It can be noted from Table 5.1, that the return rate from the DBST members was 81% which, according to Delport (2002:172), is considered an acceptable return rate. This return rate can be attributed in part to the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

5.4.2.2 Qualitative data collection procedure

The quantitative data that I collected were paired with the qualitative data that I gathered in the next qualitative phase of data collection. Therefore, I embedded qualitative data collection strategies in my study. Qualitative research is a naturalistic form of research that studies phenomena in the natural contexts. In this regard, Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133) point to two common things that are noteworthy in qualitative research. Firstly, it focuses on phenomena that occur in natural settings and secondly, it studies these phenomena in all their complexities. Thus qualitative researchers recognized that phenomena they study have many dimensions.

As noted, qualitative research is an enquiry process of understanding a social and human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:395; Pogrebin, 2003:4). Therefore, a qualitative enquiry collects data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their natural settings. Qualitative research heavily relies on the abilities of researchers to interpret

and make sense of what they see. In my study, I used semi-structured, one-on-one interviews as data-gathering tools.

5.4.2.2.1 How I used interviews

I used interviews as data-collection strategies (Greef, 2007:287; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:269). Two interview guides namely, Annexure D for the DBST members and Annexure F for former professionals from defunct Child guidance Clinics, with open-ended questions were developed. Using the interview guide (Annexure D) I met the participants (DBST members) in their offices. The interviews took place in the afternoons. Twelve one-on-one interviews were conducted over four days. This means that I interviewed 3 participants per day. The interviews lasted for between 25 and 35 minutes.

I then used a second interview guide (Annexure F) in order to conduct further interviews with five former state employees who served as members of the multidisciplinary teams in Child Guidance clinics. I met them in their offices too, in the afternoons. The interviews lasted, on average, for 35 minutes. I interviewed two officials per day. The interviews were conducted in English. In order to ensure that I lost no data, I recorded the interviews with permission from the participants. The participants were aware that I was going to use their responses in compiling the findings of my study and that I was going to use their responses in articles on completion of my study. They understood that for ethical reasons I was going to omit their names and those of their organisations. The recorded interviews were transcribed for inductive content analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:98).

5.4.2.2.2 Trustworthiness in qualitative research

Trustworthiness relate to how reliable the gathered qualitative data are (Leedy & ormrod, 2005:100; Nieuwenhuis, 2007:113-115). In this study, I ensure trustworthiness by paying attention to the aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as mentioned by Lincoln and Guba (Merriam, 2008). Below is the brief explanation on relevance of the aforementioned aspects in this study.

- **Credibility**

Credibility is concerned with members checking, triangulation and peer review (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:115-116). De Vos (2005:346) further mentioned that data are considered credible when the collected findings reflect an in-depth description showing the complexities of the research process and its setting. I did this by interacting with the participants to gather data. During that interaction I provided a detailed description of the participants and settings. The participants' responses were recorded as raw as they were and when I had analysed these, I asked them to check my interpretation. I discussed the conclusions with my study leader and this guided the credibility of the data.

- **Transferability**

Lincoln and Guba (2005:346) refer to transferability as findings which can be generalised to another situation. Transferability depends on the similarity between the original and subsequent contexts, therefore the researcher collects sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and reports them in great detail. To allow for transferability, I tried to describe the research process and setting in detail and to choose quotes carefully so that data were not misinterpreted (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:115).

- **Dependability**

Dependability relates to how reliable the collected data is. For this reason I should describe the contexts and circumstances of the research in detail, reflect previous research findings that were similar or explain differences (De vos, 2005:346). I described the data collection process in detail. In Chapter Six, I do note when my findings are similar to and different from previous sources.

- **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to data being member-checked by participants or other interested stakeholders (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:114). In this study, I gave participants some of the transcribed and translated data in order to check if their data had not been

misinterpreted or misconstrued. I also asked them to check how I had interpreted their questionnaire responses. My supervisor also provided critical comments.

5.4.2.3 Population and sampling

The target population for my study was all District-Based Support team members. However researchers often select a representative sample from the population since it is impossible to include the whole population in a single study. There are five education districts in the Free State Province. The numbers of the DBST members in these Inclusive Education sub-directorates vary, depending on the size of each district. The biggest district had a total number of 20 members and the smallest, disadvantaged district had 12 members. This would mean that there were 94 members in all five districts.

For the quantitative phase of data collection, I targeted all available members (94) in the districts. However for the qualitative phases I focused on only a few mental health-care professionals in the districts and in former Child Guidance Clinics. Different authors commenting on sampling in research, advocate different sample sizes for populations in quantitative research. Leedy and Ormrod (2005), McMillan and Schumacher (2001), Strydom and Venter (2002) mention the fact that among other sampling guidelines, sample sizes of between 10% and 20% are recommended as representative of population sizes larger than 1000. Therefore a simple random sampling strategy was employed during the quantitative phase of my study.

For the qualitative phases of my study I used snowball sampling procedures. Snowballing involves approaching a single person in order to gain information and requesting them to recommend another person who in their knowledge may add to the data collected (Strydom & Venter, 2002:208). Therefore, DBST members (12) and former professionals (5) recommended each other after each successful interview until a total of 17 participants were interviewed. Therefore, for the qualitative phases a total of 17 participants were involved at which point, saturation had been reached (Strydom & Delpont, 2002:336).

5.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The North-West University Vaal Triangle Campus Statistical Services were approached for assistance in the analysis of data collected through questionnaires. Frequencies were computed to determine descriptive statistics and these were scheduled in tabular and graphic form. Furthermore, rank order of the themes was computed with the intention of finding the themes on which participants agreed or disagreed.

Qualitative data analysis tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:98). In this study, data analysis started with data collected through the questionnaire and interviews, and ended up with grouping of common ideas from the participants. Therefore, interview data were grouped into themes mentioned in 5.3.2.1.2 above.

After the data from questionnaires and interviews from both DBST members and former professionals from Child Guidance Clinic was sorted, I compared the three sets of data and this is known as triangulation (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter 2007:380). Triangulation means that the researcher uses different types of sources that can provide insights about the same events or relationships. The purpose of using triangulation was to check the relations and confirm the changed role of the DBST in establishing an inclusive school setting. Finally, I synthesized data and summarized it for the compilation of the research report.

5.6 ETHICAL ASPECTS

In this study human participation were also taken into consideration and therefore precautionary measures were observed to ensure that they were not harmed in any manner (Leed & Ormrod, 2005:101). Maree and Van der Weshuizen (2007:42) suggest that it is also important for the researcher to be familiar with the ethics policy of the relevant institution. For this study I was familiar with the ethics policy of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle campus). Strydom (2005:58-68) mentioned that prevention from harm, informed consent, privacy, capability and competence of the researcher,

release of findings, donors and debriefing of the respondents should be considered when dealing with human participants.

5.6.1 Prevention from harm

Strydom (2005:58) mentioned that participants' physical, emotional and psychological well-being should not be harmed. The researcher should respect the beliefs and well-being of the participants and try his/her level best to protect them. If the participants might experience psychological discomfort, they should be made aware of this possibility beforehand and debriefing should be done (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101). In this study participants were not exposed to any harm. I looked cautiously for signs from participants that might reflect discomfort caused by the contents of the questions asked.

5.6.2 Informed consent

The participants should be briefed about the nature of the study and be given a chance to choose to participate or not (*cf.* Annexure E) (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101; Strydom, 2005:58). I explained the aim of the study in detail to the participants. They signed the consent form to confirm that they agreed to take part in the programme and that they were aware of the possible risk and benefits. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the interviews if they wished to do so (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101).

5.6.3 Privacy

I respected the rights of the participants to confidentiality and took them into consideration (Strydom, 2005:61). The participants were allocated different alphabet as their names so that their identity is protected. Furthermore, the comments of the participants were kept confidential by reporting in an anonymous way (e.g. Y reported that....) (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101-103).

5.6.4 Capability and competence of the researcher

I was competent and aware of the ethical responsibilities (Strydom, 2005:69). My ability to conduct interviews was strengthening by attending relevant workshops on research

organised by my employer. It also boosted by the knowledge and experience gathered while I was a teacher at high schools.

5.6.5 Release of findings

When final reports are released, I must be aware that the findings should be accurate, objective, clear and contain all the important information. Plagiarism and other offences should be avoided (Strydom, 2005:71). In this study, I took care to report the findings honestly and not to plagiarise.

5.6.6 Donors

Strydom (2005:64) mentioned that contributors to the research should be acknowledged. For this study, there were no external donors but only the funding from the North-West University.

5.6.7 Debriefing of the respondent

De briefing after the study should be done in order to minimize the possibility of harm to the participants. During debriefing the participants will have an opportunity to express their feeling and emotions. Any misunderstanding that occurred during the research should be rectified (Strydom, 2005:43). In this study, debriefing was done at the end of each interview sessions. Participants were free to express their feeling and emotions about the challenges in implementing the changed roles of DBSTs.

5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The focus of this chapter was on the research methodology that was used. The entire research plan was outlined. Furthermore, empirical research instruments, the population and sampling procedures and the administrative procedures were discussed.

Chapter Six deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results of the empirical study are presented and interpreted. The study was conducted through interviews and questionnaires (Annexure C, D and F) to investigate the problems experienced with the implementation of the changing role of district-based education support services in establishing an inclusive school setting.

6.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Hatch (2002:14) mention that data analysis is a set of information obtained through systematic investigation and refers to information that is numerical or narrative. Bogdan and Biklen (2003:147) argue that this is a technique for gathering and explaining the content of text. The content includes meanings, thoughts, words, themes and messages that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual and spoken which is utilized as a medium for communication. This chapter assumes both the quantitative and qualitative method of data analysis, with narrative reporting and interpretation of results.

6.3 DESCRIPTIVE PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Quantitative and qualitative data are not presented in the same pattern. A noticeable distinction is that in quantitative data the researcher explores traits and situations from which numerical data can be obtained and on the other hand, the qualitative researcher explores traits of individuals and settings that cannot easily be described numerically. Maxwell (2005:96) indicates that in qualitative research the information is largely verbal and is collected through observation, description and recording. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:15-17) maintain that quantitative research primarily makes use of measurement and statistics. At times, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in the same research, as is the case in this research. After the initial organizing of

data, information obtained is tabulated (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:15-17) and data is displayed as an element of analysis.

6.5 DATA ANALYSIS

In the questionnaire I used, questions 1 to 22 were closed questions and the statistical analysis was done by the North-West University (Vaal Campus) Statistical Consultation Services. Question 23 to 27 were open-ended questions. I scrutinized the responses, selected the most commonly used terminology in the responses, and used it as themes for analysing the answers to these questions. Furthermore, I also analyse the qualitative data to confirm the findings with the intention of getting deeper understanding of the problem research. A summary of these responses is given in paragraph 6.4.2.

In the next section the biographical information of the participants is presented as I believe that is relevant for this study.

6.4.1 Demographic data of the participants

The demographic data of the participants indicate relevant information on their backgrounds and provide the opportunity to get a better understanding of who they are in terms of their biographical details. This may clarify why they are finding it difficult/ or not, to implement the changes regarding learner support in education support services. The data is represented by means of frequency counts (f) and percentages (%). Tables are used for this purpose.

6.4.3.1 Age of participants

Table 6.1 Data on the age of participants

Variables	f	%
20-30 years	4	5.3
31-40 years	18	23.7
41-50 years	29	38.2
50 years and older	25	32.9
Total	76	100.0

From the data in table 6.1, it seems that the majority of DBST members (38.2%) in the Free State Department of Education fall within the 41-50 years of age category. This is followed by staff in the 50 years and older category (32.9%), 31-40 years category (23.7%) and, lastly, the 20-30 years category (5.3%). This finding is significant in terms of perceptions on the changed role of district-based education support services in that, clearly, most DBST members sampled can be assumed to be experienced people, whose responses can be considered valuable for this research. Furthermore, it can be expected that their perceptions about provisioning of support to learners would differ as the age category may dictate different outlooks towards levels of support. For instance, the older members might be more knowledgeable when working with learners experiencing barriers to learning because of their parental experiences, as against much younger members who might be inexperienced in this regard.

6.4.3.2 Experience in support services

Table 6.2 Data on experiences of participants in support services

Variables	f	%
1-3 years	11	14.5
4-8 years	13	17.1
9-15 years	26	34.2
16 years and more	26	34.2
Total	76	100.0

From the data collected, the majority of participants (34.2%) fall within the 9-15 years and 16 years and more category of experience in support services respectively. This is followed by 17.1% whose experience is 4-8 years and lastly 14.5%, who have 1-3 years of experiences. The majority of the DBST members have relatively long experience in providing support services which might be an advantage for them to implement their changed role easily. This is corresponding with data collected with regard to the ages of participants, which can, as also indicated in 6.4.1.1, have an effect on DBST members' approach to providing services.

6.4.3.3 Qualifications of the participants

Table 6.3 Data on qualifications of participants

Variables	f	%
Diploma	1	1.3
Under-graduate degree	19	25.0
Hons (BEd)	36	47.4
Masters and Doctorate	19	25.0
No response	1	1.3
Total	76	100.0

In this category, I aimed to gather information about the qualifications of the participants, irrespective of their relevance. The purpose was to find out the level of education that DBST members have, as this may have greater influence in Learner Support. From the data collected, it seems that the majority of participants (47.4%) have an Honours Degree. 25% of participants are in the categories of an undergraduate degree and Masters and Doctorate respectively. Only 1.3% are in the category of Diploma. The data on qualifications indicate that the majority of members in DBSTs are highly qualified and as a result they must provide quality support to learners and also be in a position to implement their role without struggling. This also signifies that DBSTs can carry their roles successfully because being qualified might imply that the members will be better able to understand and interpret policies of education support services.

For example, the Masters and Doctoral Degrees increase the scope for understanding implications for introducing and implementing new ventures.

6.4.3.4 Professional qualifications of the participants

Table 6.4 below illustrates data on the professional qualifications of participants. From the data collected, there is a marginal difference in terms of the number of participants having professional qualifications (93.4%) and those not having professional qualifications (1.3%). This will present an interesting exploration of the possibility of the practice of support service customs in the education sector. The idea is that people having professional qualifications in education far outweigh one without it in terms of knowledge and skills in that specific field. This implies that the provision of effective support can be done most effectively by DBST members who have professional qualifications rather than by their counterparts. As a result, the expectation is that all DBST members should have a professional qualification in order to provide effective education support services. For instance, the Social Worker or Speech Therapist having a professional qualification in education will most probably be able to work more effectively in the Department of Education since he/she should be familiar with all policy documents in the education department, in particular policy documents regarding Learner Support, such as White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (1995), White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (SA 1997b), and Education White paper 6 (SA, 2001), to name a few.

Table 6.4 Data on professional qualifications of participants

Variables	f	%
Yes	71	93.4
No	1	1.3
No response	4	5.3
Total	76	100.0

6.4.3.5 Data on professional qualifications related to Learner Support**Table 6.5 Data on professional qualifications related to Learner Support**

Variables	f	%
Diploma in Remedial Education	11	40.7
Diploma in Special Education	3	11.1
Honours BEd Degree (Inclusive Education)	8	29.6
Masters in Education (Learner Support)	5	18.5
Total	27	100

Table 6.5 illustrates data on professional qualifications related to Learner Support. I noted that out of the 76 participants, only 27 have professional qualifications related to Learner Support. With regard to the data in this table, I assume that most of the DBST members do not have adequate knowledge regarding Learner Support because they possess different professional qualifications which do not relate to learner support as indicated in the above table. It can be assumed that this irrelevancy of professional qualifications is a determinant meaning that the DBST members cannot implement their changed roles effectively. This points to a possible reason why the changed role is not being implemented efficiently.

6.4.4 Quantitative and qualitative data analysis on the current situation in the provisioning of education support services at district level

The questionnaire (Annexure C) for this research was structured according to themes mentioned below and data collected were then analysed in terms of these themes. The themes referred to are as follows:

- Resource Centres
- Availability of infrastructure
- Communication and cooperation both at district and national level
- Inclusion
- Professionalism of DBST members

For the purpose of analysis, the responses pertaining to “fully agree” and “agree” were combined to denote “agree”, and those for “disagree” and “completely disagree” were also combined to denote “disagree”. On the other hand, data analysis of interviews conducted in four Free State education districts was also presented. I failed to make contact with the fifth district after several attempts. Members did not respond to the calls when I tried to secure appointments for interviews. Twelve members from different

education districts, namely T, X, F and L, were interviewed and given pseudonyms for ethical reasons. For the benefit of this study the participants from DBST members were named DA, DB, DC, DD, DE, DF, DG, DH, DI, DJ, DK, DL and former professionals from Child Guidance Clinic were F1, F2, F3, F4, F5.

6.4.4.1 Resource Centres

In the past, the provision of support services was the responsibility of the Child Guidance Clinics, principals and remedial or special class teachers. The result was that only a few learners experiencing barriers to learning were getting help and the majority were neglected (*c.f.* Question 3). It is clear that this was benefitting only a few learners, especially those from schools where principals were interested in learner support. As the role changed with the intention of providing adequate education support to all learners experiencing barriers to learning, the National Department of Education introduced the establishment of DBSTs to all education districts in all provinces and further converted special schools into Resource Centres that would be part of the DBSTs. The primary responsibilities of Resource Centres are to provide improved educational services to their targeted learner populations, and to be integrated into DBSTs so that they can provide specialized professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to full-service schools (*cf.* 3.3.1). Muthukrishna (2008:49) sees the role of the Resource Centres as preparing children with learning disabilities for inclusion into ordinary schools, providing and supporting early identification and intervention for children with learning disabilities. In line with the above-mentioned roles of Resource Centres, it is clear that the implementation of the changed role could not be successful when these centres are not functioning as expected. It was my intent to find out some of the problems that might cause the Resource Centres' inefficiency. Table 6.6 below presents data on the Resource Centres.

Table 6.6 Data on the Resource Centres

Questions	Agree		Disagree		NR	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. There is a Resource Centre in the district.	61	80.2	11	14.4	4	5.3
2. The Resource Centre is well equipped.	47	61.9	24	31.6	5	6.6
3. The Resource Centre is within easy reach of schools in the district.	28	36.9	43	56.6	5	6.6
4. The staff at the Resource Centre are well trained, professional people.	53	69.7	18	23.7	5	6.6

Question 1: There is a Resource Centre in the district.

In the past, provision of support services was done in Guidance Clinics with limited professional staff, and there were very few of these clinics in each province. When the role of education support services changed into DBSTs, Resource Centres were established and integrated with DBSTs with the intention of providing support to schools. I hold the view that there is a problem in the implementation of this change. To find out more about the problem, I asked whether the Resource Centres are available in all districts. Data from the table indicate that 80.2% of the participants agreed that Resource Centres are available in their districts while 14.4% disagreed and 5.3% did not respond. The responses to this item indicate that some of the districts might have no Resource Centres and that in those districts that have Resource Centres, some of the

DBST members might not even be aware of its existence, as it may not function well. In it should be noted that problem related to this shortage was existing in the past (Engelbrecht, 2008:19; Hay 2003:129; NEPI, 1992:4). In this regard five Child Guidance Clinics in the Free State Province were strategically located and served only White learners within the province. After 1994 this clinics became even less able to serve learners experiencing barriers to learning including the majority of African learners. These clinics were not accessible to many African learners' schools. This assertion is supported by the interviews. For example, participants F3 commented: *"No! They did not cover all learners from all schools because of their strategic location. These clinics were part of the apartheid education system and they were able to provide support easily to learners in model C schools rather than the rural and disadvantaged school"*. F5 also stated: *"Not all learners got support. Very few of them, those who were lucky enough managed to enjoy the privilege from the clinics. One of the main reasons was that clinics were very few within the province as compared against the number of schools, and also its staff members were very few and cannot manage to attend many learners in short time"*. It should be noted that some of responses from DBST members below confirm the 14.4% of participants who disagreed to the above question.

"In our district we struggle as there is no Resource Centre. We usually refer our learners to the Resource Centre at another district of which it brings frustrations to us as well as the involved learners." - DD

"Our learners are placed in the waiting list of Resource Centre from another district because we do not have one. In many occasion seems preference is given to learners from their own district before they can placed or admit others. That is fairly disadvantage learners from our district" - DE

"Honestly speaking we do not have Resource Centre in our district but communication between us and personnel from other districts is excellent and this makes our work simpler. We are able to refer learners to Resource Centre from their own district even though many students are not accommodated" - DF

Therefore I concluded that certain district does not have Resource Centres. In this regard, unavailability of Resource Centre at district is a serious problem brought about by the changed role of the DBST in the sense that it will be difficult for the DBST members to implement their roles as suggested in White Paper 6. Firstly, within the province, the education districts that do not have Resource Centres are disadvantaged compared to the one that has, and it might be assumed that DBST members from such districts are not getting adequate training and support like their colleagues from districts having Resource Centres. Secondly, schools and learners experiencing barriers to learning in such districts are completely disadvantaged regarding access to learner support as their admission application to Resource Centres has to go through a longer process. At times they have to wait before being admitted until other learners from the district having Resource Centres are admitted. It can be assumed that there is no effective provisioning of education support services by the Resource Centre, especially, in that district indicated as having no Resource Centre. This supports my argument that there are problems regarding the implementation of the changed role of the DBST.

Another problem concerning the implementation of the changed role of the DBST might be caused by the idea that Resource Centres are not functional in some districts even though they are there. This is also confirmed by 14.4% of participants who disagreed on question 1 and also comments from interview participants such as:

“The Resource Centre in our district is not effectively proving support to full service schools and other mainstream schools”. – DC

“Communication between Resource Centre and DBST is not effective. This is even worse with the full service and mainstream schools”. – DK

“The Resource Centre in our district is only effective on assisting learners already in it but not for those in full service schools”. - DG

Therefore I conclude that the DBST members are struggling to implement their changed roles as the Resource Centres that are available in some districts are not effective in providing support to schools and learners experiencing barriers to learning due to the

above discussion. Having Resource Centres is supposed to be a good way of providing support to both teachers and learners experiencing barriers to learning at full-service and ordinary schools (cf. 3.3.1). Ordinary schools in this research refer to those schools that are not yet converted into full-service schools.

Question 2: The Resource Centre is well equipped.

Asked whether Resource Centres are well equipped, 61.9% of the participants agreed, while just below half (31.6%) disagreed. Participant DF mentioned: *“Resources are there but not accessible. In fact they are there (it likes they are meant) for those learners already in Resource Centre but not for those who are at mainstreams. IT equipments (e.g. computers, telephone lines, data projectors) are much inadequate at Resource Centre and that hinder the effective functioning of this centre”*. DL also stated: *“The resources at our two Resource Centres are not adequate but if one of them were granted only to work with blinds and deaf they can be adequate since it has more resources of those special needs as it was previously being a school for blinds and deaf. Inadequate classrooms at Resource Centres are another problem”*. This was still the same situation in the past as indicated by F1: *“In terms of human resource Child Guidance Clinics were under staffed. Like I said, they were five in Free State and each one of them was staffed by on average 13 people including the head of Child Guidance Clinic of which was not enough. In terms of equipment we were highly resourced but most of the tests were of the old versions and not relevant to the African children. This makes me to believe that resources were enough but not for groups of African learners”*. F2 also highlighted: *“We had smaller numbers of human resource, in the White department we had 70 000 learners in the Free State with the five Child Guidance Clinics. The ratio was actually very low. Initially equipments were enough as was for only White learners but after we have been mandated to serve African learners, we realized that resources were no longer enough”*. It is encouraging that the majority of the participants agreed with the statement, while it is also worrisome that a few of them disagreed. This signals a lower level of support provision because of inadequate resources. Lack of equipment at Resource Centres minimizes the opportunity of DBST members to function effectively as they are integrated into this team and as a result, the

DBST members cannot provide specialized professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to schools as stated in White Paper 6. Failure to provide the above-mentioned, implies that their changed role is inefficiently implemented. Literature indicates that the availability of resources have a great influence on the provision of education support services. The Resource Centres and/ or the DBSTs should develop some means to accumulate as many resources as they can by establishing networks with governmental departments and organizations within the communities. They should develop certain competencies to utilize them (*cf.* 2.2.2).

Question 3: The Resource Centre is within easy reach of schools in the district.

It has been mentioned earlier (see Question 1) that the provision of support services in the past was done by Child Guidance Clinics of which there were very limited in each province. The indication is that these clinics were not accessible to all learners as it may be far away from some of the schools. Responses to the question of whether the Resource Centres are within easy reach of schools in the districts, indicated that the majority of participants (56.6%) disagreed, while 36.9% agreed and 6.6% did not respond. This might be an indication of existing Resource Centres being far away from the schools they serve and implies that the majority of schools far away from Resource Centres are not benefitting, since they are unable to access the resources at Resource Centres. In the past, schools were not relying on a separate entity, namely a Child Guidance Clinic for provisioning of support as they were not involved. Only principals, remedial or special class teachers and the involved learners were relying on the then professional support members from the clinic. The problem was that these clinics were situated far away from many schools. F2 remarked *"We had many people attending the clinic. We started to render services to all schools but much more in indirect manner, through training of teachers and courses offered at universities in Free State province. Before 1993 the Child Guidance Clinics were not really accessible to all learners"*. F5 also indicated: *"it was allowed for all learners from different schools to be referred but strategic location of the clinics made it too difficult for some of them to attend as they have to travel some more than 50 km to the clinic. In this way, it is clear that Child Guidance Clinics were not accessible to most of the learners"*. Another response is from

F3: *“Even though any learner from any school could be referred, the thing is not all of them will get support because of contextual problems that includes language, distance to clinic, culture and standardization of tests. Some of these contextual factors made it too difficult for some learners to access the Child Guidance Clinic”.*

DBST members interviewed also mentioned that Resource Centres are far away from majority of schools they serve and as a result such schools are not benefitting much. According to them this is very serious as it impedes their functioning. DA: *“We have two Resource Centres in our district but some schools are far away from them as they are located in the centre of the district. It means some learners have to travel for more than 50 kilometres to reach the centre”.* DH also cited: *“My concern is for those schools that are at the periphery of the district. They cannot access the Resource Centre. For your information we have many schools located at the periphery of our district”.* DJ explains: *“This is a contextual problem. Ehh!! The department were supposed to think of decentralising these Resource Centres within the district. Schools in towns far away from district as well as the rural schools are not having access to Resource Centres”.* As the role changed, schools are now involved and it becomes a problem when schools are far away from Resource Centres. It is in this situation that Resource Centres and DBST members are visiting remote schools after a long time and, in some instances, they spend less time at such schools as they aim to cover many schools within limited time. This might lead to the poor provisioning of education support to such schools. On the other hand, some learners from schools far away from Resource Centres find it difficult to attend, as the Resource Centre is not accessible to them, and the DBST members just forget about them as they have already been referred to the Resource Centres. This point to those learners who are supposed to be admitted to Resource Centres, but are not staying in hostels, thus the ones who have to travel to a Resource Centre daily. Regarding the above, it is one of the factors that give me the impression that DBST members are experiencing difficulties to implement their changed role.

Question 4: The staff at the Resource Centre are well trained, professional people.

69.7% of the participants are of the opinion that the staff at Resource Centres are well trained, professional people, while 23.7% disagree with the statement and 6.6% did not respond to the question. Roleplayers in DBSTs, such as support personnel, curriculum specialists, management specialists, administrative experts, government professionals and community role players (*cf.* 3.2) should be trained for specialized education and education support services, as expected by the Department of Education (*cf.* 2.3.1). As a result, they should be competent regarding a range of skills and experiences that are relevant to address barriers to learning and to fulfil their other changed role. Looking back to responses noted in table 6.4, one may realize that the majority of participants have professional qualifications, but the concern is about those who have only academic qualifications without any professional qualification. The indication is that some DBST members may be excellent in their specific areas as it is their specialization, but they lack knowledge regarding education support services as well as policies in the education fraternity. As a result, the provision of support services might be hampered.

Table 6.6 on previous pages indicates that most of the DBST members are well trained and professional. As a result, they are able to share resources between schools and other sites of learning, and also utilize professional support services at all schools (*cf.* 3.2). It is acceptable that a small percentage (23.7%) of participants feel that there is no professionalism among members. However, professionalism is emphasized in White Paper 6 as a prerequisite for proper service delivery. For instance, White Paper 6 emphasizes the following: professional capacity of all teachers (p. 49), professional support for neighbourhood schools (p. 7), professional support services (p. 8), professional support concerning the curriculum (p. 21), a professional development programme (p. 28) and specialized professional support (p. 29), to name just a few. Therefore it can be perceived that this small percentage indicated that the provision of support services is hindered here and there. Lack of professionalism of the DBST members may create a gap between DBSTs and schools, as well as between Resource

Centres and schools, and once this gap is created it will be difficult for them to implement their expected changed role. The ultimate results in Learner Support will be untrained teachers, lack of support to schools, unprofessional support services and unprofessional support for the curriculum. All of these will have a negative impact on the provisioning of education support services, and regarding the DBST members, it will reflect their incapacity to fulfil their changed role.

6.4.4.2 Availability of infrastructure

The term infrastructure is clarified in 6.5.2 of this chapter. Infrastructure is the basis for the consistent provisioning of support by DBSTs, which in turn creates the condition for the reduction of barriers to learning at schools. Infrastructure has to meet the true needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning and can be more successfully used with the active participation of DBST members. It is my opinion that if infrastructure is not meeting the needs of the DBST members and learners experiencing barriers to learning, there will be a problem with the implementation of the changed role of the DBST members. In the same respect, I am doubtful that in the past infrastructure was available to enhance the provisioning of education support services and in case it was available, was professionals from clinics used them effectively to provide support. Infrastructure was adequate in Child Guidance Clinics even though human resources were a problem. In some clinics there were about four psychologists and in another was only two, the evidence was from the following responses. F5 cited: *“All Child Guidance Clinics in the province were highly resourced and equally so. The reason for this is because they were basically belonging to the Whites education department in the first place. The problem was that they were under staff. They had to increase number of staff and also of clinics. Like I said there were five clinics in Free State province, each one of them was staffed by on average 13 people including the head of Child Guidance Clinic”*. F1 also mentioned: *“Very interesting!! They were smaller, very resourced, having very good tests. Some of the tests were old and very few of those tests could be used with African children because they were developed outside the country, in the Europe and USA. In terms of staffing, all clinics were understaffed and majority of members in all of them were Whites. You can think for yourself how many schools in*

this province that were supposed to be attended by this limited staff members of Child Guidance Clinic". F3 explained "As far as I remember all Child Guidance Clinics were under staffed. On average there were about 13 members plus the head of the clinic and out of that number majority was Whites. These made it difficult for the clinic to provide support to majority of learners, especially from rural and disadvantaged schools".

Table 6.7 Availability of infrastructures

Questions	Agree		Disagree		NR	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
5. Enough transport is available for professional staff from DBST to visit schools.	22	29.0	52	68.4	2	2.6
6. Transport is available for learners who need support services to the Resource Centre.	9	13.1	63	82.9	3	3.9
7. The facilities and infrastructure are adequate for the provisioning of education support services at district level.	21	27.6	53	69.7	2	2.6
8. There are enough human resources in education support services at district level.	10	13.1	64	84.2	2	2.6
9. There are administrative support staff members who could assist in keeping a record of learner needs, support given and progression.	30	39.5	44	57.9	2	2.6

Question 5: Enough transport is available for professional staff from DBST to visit schools.

Availability of transport for both professional staff and learners who need support services is seen as the most important part of infrastructure that will help the DBST members to implement their changed role without encountering any difficulties. It is the vision of White Paper 6 that DBST members should support schools and learners experiencing barriers to learning, and this can only be attained when DBST members are able to visit schools frequently and provide professional support. Therefore lack of transport will make it difficult for the DBST members to implement their changed role. Data from the table indicates that only 29.0% of the participants agreed that enough transport is available for professional staff from DBSTs to visit schools, while 68.4% disagreed with the statement. Responses from interviews also confirmed that there is no enough transport for DBST members to visit schools.

“The ideal is to make regular visit to schools and also learners be able to access education at Resource Centres. This is not successful because of lack of transport. All of us are struggling to get to schools and it is worse on the side of learners experiencing barriers to learning, they cannot even to rich Resource Centres” – DF

“On the side of the DBST members, transport is much a problem. About four LSFs have to share one car to do their jobs. That means one car for four LSFs is used to meet all the demands of their jobs” - DB

“Serious scarce resources are transport, accommodation, funds, and fewer classes at Resource Centres for various disabilities. – DJ

Responses as discussed above show a negative sign. This supports the perception that those members are unable to carry out their mandate as they cannot visit schools and, as a result, learners experiencing barriers to learning will not get the necessary support. It should be noted that DBST members are not regularly visiting schools and in instances where they manage, they visit many schools on one trip. This was also the same case like in the past. Majority of former professionals also confirmed that transport

for staff was a huge problem. F4 commented: *“Transport for members to attend schools was a huge problem. At times we were fighting over it and sometimes three members shared one car as long as they will be able to attend their schools”*. F1 also indicated: *“As members we had our own transport but at times we used to fight over it. I remember we used to share a car. There were always issues around for transport”*. This finding also supports the idea that inadequate transport makes it difficult for DBST members to implement their changed role.

Question 6: Transport is available for learners who need support services to the resource centre.

On whether transport is available for learners who need support services to get to the Resource Centre, a small number of the participants (13.1%) agreed, while the majority (82.9%) disagreed. This pinpoints the challenge regarding learners who are supposed to be transported from different schools to Resource Centre in order to access the services. This also affects learners who are expected to travel to Resource Centres daily because of not being accommodated in hostels due to certain reasons, like unavailability of space in hostels, parents not having enough money to pay the fees, etc.. The following remarks are an indication that transport for learners who need support services to the resource centre is the problem:

“It is by means of transport that DBST members enable learners experiencing barriers to reach the Resource Centres. Most of the them are struggling to access support at Resource Centres since the transport system which is available is either physically inaccessible or unwilling to transport them” - DK

“Transport within the Resource Centres is ok! Because it caters the needs of the school but for outside learners experiencing barriers to learning is not available. Surprisingly, Resource Centres have many vehicles but they are used for only internal affairs. Then, learners experiencing barriers to learning that are not within the Resource Centres are not benefiting”. – DA.

“There are no transports that take learners experiencing barriers to learning from home to school. That is the responsibility of the parents. If the parent cannot afford, it means the future of her child will be doomed”. – DB

“Transport of learners from home to school and back is also another problem because parents are unable to pay for it. Lucky are for those who their families afford to pay for hostels in Resource Centres”. – DD

“Resources such as transport, accommodation/hostels, office equipments and finance are highly scarce”. – DI

It has also indicated that in the past learners experiencing barriers to learning were also struggled with transport to access the services from Child Guidance Clinics. Remark from F4: *“Transport for learners coming to clinic was a serious problem. In most of the cases we were relying on schools to provide transport for learners but at times schools were unable”*. F1 also indicated: *“Transport for learners coming to clinic was problem. Think of the children who have to travel about over 150 km to access the resources in Child Guidance Clinic. Most of them dropped out”*. The 13.1% of participants that indicated that transport was available for learners may be referring to the transport used only for Resource Centre activities by staff members. It is based on the above conditions that I assume that there is a problem concerning the implementation of the changed role of the DBSTs. This is motivated by the fact that responses to questions 4 and 5 revealed that transport are a barrier to both learners and DBST members.

Question 7: The facilities and infrastructures are adequate for the provisioning of education support services at district level.

Regarding this question, which relates to adequate facilities and infrastructure, I believe that it points to the possibility of problems with the implementation of the changed role of the DBSTs. Availability of adequate facilities should enable the DBST members to execute their tasks without struggling. In this respect, I found that less than half (27.6%) of the participants believe that facilities and infrastructure are adequate for the provisioning of education support services at district level (question 7), while the

majority (69.7%) disagree. According to the DoE (1997a:71), all education departments must ensure adequate provisioning of equipment and learning materials. This seems to be a problem at district offices and at the majority of schools. In turn, the problem also affects the implementation of the changing role of the DBSTs. The response indicates clearly that inadequate equipment hinders the provision of support at district level. For instance, DA commented: *“I must tell you, IT equipments, such as computers, telephone, data projector to mention the few, are very limited and this hinder our communication with Provincial and schools, and also reduces our progress in work”* and DG stated similarly: *“No! The resources are very limited due to a limited budget. The highly lacked resources at district and schools are assistive devices and IT equipment.”* This is possible because in some districts there are two Resource Centres that are not equally equipped. One may have more resources for specific disabilities, while the other may lack such resources. This depends on the nature of the centre. For instance, DB indicated: *“The resources at Resource Centres are not adequate but according to me, if Resource Centre A were granted only to work with blind and deaf, the resources can be adequate since it has more of these kind of special needs because it was previously being a school for blind and deaf”*. DH also indicated: *“Resources are not adequate. There are demographic disparities. Some of the districts are more resourced and poor for others”*.

The recommendation from the National Department of Education is that all the education departments must improve the physical condition of all centres of learning, such as properly sized classrooms, water supplies, toilets, and barrier free access to the building (DoE, 1997a:71). The purpose of this is to accommodate all learners irrespective of disability. In most of the institutions this has not yet been achieved and learners are unable to access schools as required. Failure of the learners to access buildings as required is an indication of failure of the DBST members to implement their changed role. The evidence is in the following responses, for instance:

Inadequate classrooms at Resource Centres are another problem. In schools the situation is worse, some of the classrooms are not accessible, for instance, classes in first and second floors. My colleagues will tell you that offices for DBST members are

problem. You will find that two members have to share office with all equipments in it. You can imagine how two people work in a small office like this. – DL

Physical resources are there but not enough. For example, small classrooms, small hostels, in some schools there are only one tap shared by all learners. On the side of us, there are shortages of offices. - DC

Working in you office alone is just an ideal. Here we share offices and all equipments in it. We must give each other a chance to use for example computer and after that another one will use it. With respect to Resource Centres, the major problem is that it accommodate small number of learners experiencing barriers to learning due to fewer classrooms further hostels are fewer as a result majority of learners experiencing barriers to learning from surrounding are not accommodated. – DI

Looking to the past with regard to infrastructures, it was noted that the Child Guidance Clinics were highly resourced and this allowed them to provide support efficiently. The slight problem was that tests used were not suitable for the African children. Only three respondents touched on this point. For instance, F2 commented: *“Child Guidance Clinics were highly resources. You can see its physical infrastructures were meant to be Child Guidance Clinic. The physical buildings of most of the clinics were so excellent. Members were effectively providing support to learners using their offices. Different tests were administered to diagnose children. The only problem was that they were not suitable for the Black children”*. F5 cited: *“All Child Guidance Clinics in the province were highly resources and equally so. The reason for this is because they were basically belonging to the Whites education department in the first place. Enough resources for all staff members to perform their roles at offices were available even though most of the tests administered were outdated”*.

However, the negative responses shown in the above paragraphs may imply that DBSTs are not rendering support to schools effectively because of inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and at those schools where they do, the provision of support services is minimal. Furthermore, it gives an impression that members of the DBST struggle to visit and communicate with schools. It seems as if the support staffs are unable to

exercise their expertise as they are not able to pool the limited resources in order to make optimum use of them as expected (*cf.* 3.2). This might be another signal that there are problems in the implementation of the changing role of the DBSTs. However, 27.6% indicated that the available facilities and infrastructure enable members of the DBST to provide support where it is needed. This might be at the same districts. This concurs with the South African Schools Act (SASA) section 5 (1), which states that schools are encouraged to make their facilities accessible to learners who are in need of them and also to make necessary arrangements if the school cannot meet the needs of such learners (*cf.* 2.3.2.3).

Question 8: There are enough human resources in education support services at district level.

This question relates to human resources. In the past professional staffs were very limited in all Child Guidance Clinics and as a result they were unable to provide adequate support to all learners. This was evident from the following responses:

“Ehh!! They will never be enough but the Whites Education Department operated very much like the developed first world setup” – F2

“Child Guidance Clinics were under staff. They had to increase number of staff and also of clinics. Each one of them was staffed by on average 13 people including the head of Child Guidance Clinic” – F1

“In terms of staffing, all clinics were understaffed and majority of members in all of them were Whites. You can think for yourself how many schools in this province that were supposed to be attended by this limited staff members of Child Guidance Clinic”. – F5

“As far as I remember all Child Guidance Clinics were under staffed. On average there were about 13 members plus the head of the clinic and out of that number majority was Whites. These made it difficult for the clinic to provide support to majority of learners, especially from rural and disadvantaged schools”. – F3

In regard to DBSTs, its structure as proposed in White Paper 6 is aimed at providing support from district level to school level irrespective of the location of schools. One way to have such structure is by having more human resources. Human resources seem to be another problem at district offices and at schools. Thus this problem prevails in all facets of support services and hinders the smooth implementation of the changing role of DBSTs. The maximum participation of DBSTs is expected to support schools, but this is impossible when there is a shortage of human resources at district offices. Furthermore, the utilization and development of human resources at schools can be regarded as the most important facet of a school. The majority of schools in poverty-stricken areas are under-resourced in terms of both physical and human resources, which leads to poor teaching and learning. Lack of human resource in support services will make it difficult for DBST members to fulfil their changed roles. Therefore I tested sufficiency of human resources in education support services at district level. On whether there are enough human resources in education support services at district level (question 8), less than half of the participants (13.1%) agreed, while the majority of participants (84.2%) disagreed. Also the following responses confirmed the above statistics:

Human resources are inadequate because you may find that in one district there maybe two Social workers, two Psychologists, and few Learning Support facilitators. Therefore it becomes difficult for us to reach all learners from different schools. I believe that the DoE have to maximize human resources in order to accommodate all learners. – DA

Resources are not enough, especially human resources at districts and schools. It has been promised that pool of posts will be advertised as recommended in White Paper 6 but up to now there is nothing. We really have a huge workload as one have to attend many schools. – DC

Our members are trying by all means to provide resources that are available at Resource Centres to schools, but because of inadequate human resources we can not cover all schools in our districts. It likes we are thinly spread over our district. – DF

Human resources are scarce even though White Paper 6 promised the improvement on this. Teachers at schools, especially those specializing with learner support, are inadequate. On our side there is a huge shortage and this has negative impact in support services at districts and schools. - DH

I'm working under pressure and there are so many cases I have to attend to. We are only two in this district, just imagine how many schools referring cases to us and we are expected to address them. It could be easier for us if more posts can be advertised and we could work effectively. - K

This is a crucial finding as it affects the success of the implementation of White Paper 6 aimed at creating positive learning conditions for learners who experience barriers to learning. This further negates the opinion of White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:41) proposing that a pool of posts for the DBSTs will be created. The issue may also be related to the reluctance of the National Department of Education to supply more human resources to the DBSTs. Therefore the finding indicates that the structure of DBSTs is not as proposed by White Paper 6 and this leads to the available human resources being overburdened. The result is, the hindering of service provision as members may be unable to fulfil their changed roles.

Question 9: There are administrative support staff members who could assist in keeping a record of learner needs, support given and progression.

In connection with the above, I hold the view that proper administration within the DBSTs will help the teams to determine and attain their objectives without any struggle. This entails that within each DBST there should be administrative support staff that will take care of any administrative requirements. Then in the absence of such members, the teams are unable to implement their changed role as the administration part is ineffective. In response to whether there are administrative support staff members who could assist in record keeping of learner needs, support given and progression, less than half (39.5%) of the participants agreed and 57.9% disagreed. These responses show the inappropriateness of administrative practices in offices of DBST members. The negative responses to this question may suggest that information of learners

referred to DBSTs is not kept safe and can thus be accessible to any person in the district. Besides, each member of staff can keep it at any place without the knowledge of the senior manager of the team and at times the information may be misplaced. The implication is that inadequate support might be given to such learners, as some DBST members might assist without adequate information. Furthermore, it might be that members of DBSTs do not know whether learners, who were previously referred to them, as well as those in Resource Centres, are making progress or not. It simply means that they might find it difficult to follow up the progress of learners after assisting them and just leave everything to SBTs and Resource Centres, regardless of whether learners make progress or not. This is another reflection that the changed role is not being fulfilled.

6.4.4.3 Data on communication and co-operation both at district and at national level

I am of the opinion that communication and co-operation both at district- and at national levels can determine the success of the implementation of the changed role of the DBSTs. In order for the DBSTs to provide effective support to learners experiencing barriers to learning, both communication and co-operation are very important at district, provincial and national levels and failure of that may mean that the members of the DBSTs will not be able to implement their changed role. I used questions on table 6.8 below to depict data with regard to communication and co-operation both at district and at national levels.

Table 6.8 Data on communication and co-operation both at district and national levels

Questions	Agree		Disagree		NR	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
10. There is co-operation between the support staff members.	57	75	17	22.3	2	2.6
11. The DBST get adequate support from the National Department of Education.	18	23.6	58	76.3	0	0

Question 10: There is cooperation between the support staff members.

The information in the table can be interpreted as indicating that DBST members are working together when addressing barriers to learning (75%) with the intention of achieving a common aim. It can be assumed that professionals at districts level offering education support services usually work as a team with the common aim of meeting the needs of the clients, they exercise their expertise to diagnose the problem and design the programme to meet the learner's needs (2.5.2.). This is confirmed by accession from DE: *"My role now is broadening because now I'm able to network. I work with relevant stakeholders when addressing the problem"*. DH also stated: *"My colleagues are highly cooperative when addressing the problem. We usually work together and when need be, we consult some external agencies"*. Team work was also best strategy implemented in the past by Child Guidance Clinic. The Child Guidance Clinics was functioned as multidisciplinary teams. All of the five participants mentioned that they were multidisciplinary with various professionals having different expertise. For

instance, F1 indicated: “... we functioned as multidisciplinary team made up of psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, special education advisors, subject advisors and of course remedial education advisors. All members were cooperating when addressing problems”. F2 also indicated: “We had five Child Guidance Clinics in the Free State. Each of them was function as a multidisciplinary team, in the sense like auxiliary services”. F3 cited “Child Guidance Clinics was a multidisciplinary team. In our province, Free State, we had 5 of them. Members appointed in these teams were psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, special education advisors, subject advisors, remedial education advisors, and if lucky, occupational therapists. They were all professionals and respecting each other. Cooperation amongst us was the order of the day”. Lastly, F5 stated: “Furthermore, there was excellent co-operation and communication. They were up to date about the happenings in all Child Guidance Clinics. Maybe one of the reasons was because they were very scarce in each province, so, it was easy to manage them”. This is a positive sign indicating that the implementation of the changed role of the DBST should be easier when there is a co-operation between the support staff members.

Question 11: The DBST get adequate support from the National Department of Education.

Adequate support from the National Department of Education to the provincial level and DBSTs is regarded as the most important tool for the implementation of the changed role since the implementation of the changed role is a process. Support can be given in many ways, such as providing adequate resources, training, monitoring and supervision. In this regard, less than half (23.6%) of the participants believe that the DBST get adequate support from the National Department of Education, while the majority (76.3%) disagree. During interviews, DE stated: “... surprisingly, National Department of Education is forcing the implementation of White Paper 6 but does not show support. Now this implementation seems to be the baby of DBSTs that is expected to perform its role without resources. Ehh!! at Provincial level, we usually get enough support from personnel at provincial level but it seems National level does not show enough support to provincial level.” DB also explained: “Emm, I believe that our

role has changed but the implementation of inclusive education is not successful and this failure is pointed to the National Department of Education. It does not provide provincial level with enough support and this in turn affects us at district level. For instance, schools are not having equal resources and national level seem not monitoring the provincial level on how they utilize their budget. Schools such as former model C are resourceful while rural and historically disadvantaged schools are still lacking resources. Now how can DBSTs be successful in provision of support in conditions like this? What surprises me is the willingness of Provincial level to support us. They go all out to see that we are implementing inclusive education without struggling much” DL emphasised: “The relations between districts and National Department of Education are not conducive because of poor communication between provincial level and national level; there is an existing gap between the two. National Department of Education gives us training through Provincial level after some times and we are expected to deliver regardless of the inadequate support we get from them. Comparably, the relations between Provincial level and DBST are admirable. Personnel from Provincial level are frequently meeting us and they are prepared to help us wherever we have problems especially on implementation of White Paper 6”. However, in the past there were strong relations between the Child Guidance Clinics and the National Department of Education. The National Department of Education highly supported clinics and made sure they had resources until the clinics were phased out. The following responses show what values the National Department of Education had:

“Yes, it was supporting the Child Guidance Clinics, especially in the old White education department. Even after the merging of different education department there was a support. The National Department of Education was always allocating budgets to the clinics even though it was very small to sustain effective functioning” – F2

“The National Department of Education was giving clinics the necessary support. This shows that they did realize the importance of support services to all learners experiencing barriers to learning” – F4

“I could say yes, there was such a support. Even though the National Department of Education provide budget for Child Guidance Clinics, they never complained but the problem was staffs because they could not employ enough human resources”. – F1

“National communicated with us through provinces and then provinces communicated with us through districts. There was lot of inputs from National maybe because clinics were manageable in terms of their numbers in each province. Further, officials from national were closely monitoring the progress of the clinics without compromising”. – F5

“The support was there even though they failed to increase number of clinics in each province and also did not employ enough human resources to provide support services. Budget was allocated to clinics and transport even though inadequate was also available” – F3.

From the above responses it is clear that there is inadequate support from the side of the National Department of Education to the DBSTs while the provincial level is highly supportive to them. This concurs with the responses in 6.4.2.3 above. It would seem participants would prefer to have direct liaison with the national level. It may be that it takes a long time for policy issues from the national level to reach the DBSTs. It must be mentioned, however, that the role of supporting the DBSTs, is the responsibility of the provincial level.

In this question, the negative response points to the possibility that the provision of education support is now the responsibility of DBSTs alone, as the National Department is just drafting the policies and neglect monitoring and giving support on provincial and district levels. Lack of support from the National Department of Education to provincial level may aggravate to DBSTs’ failure in implementing the changed role as proposed in White Paper 6. Policies on education support services are in place and the National Department has to see to it that provincial level is facilitating the perfect implementation without any deviations. It is assumed that the National Department should provide policies and funding to the Provincial Department so that DBSTs can perform their roles effectively. Furthermore, the National Department should monitor provincial and district levels to ensure effective provisioning of support services. However, response to

question 11 reflects that this is not happening. DBST members may be demotivated when there is inadequate support from the National Department, which deepens the gap between them and people at National level. This gap might lead to the poor service delivery and encourages the poor implementation of the changed role of the DBSTs.

6.4.4.4 Inclusion

The proper implementation of the changed role of the DBST can also be seen by the success of inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning into mainstream schools as well as the proper placement of them in special schools, currently converted to Resource Centres. This may imply that mainstream schools should be able to accommodate and provide adequate support to all learners, irrespective of their disabilities; and Resource Centres should also be able to support other schools and be accessible to all learners who need their services. In so doing, the DBST can easily fulfil their changed role. It is well known that there was no inclusion in the past, but learners experiencing barriers to learning were placed in special schools. The problem was that the majority of learners were wrongly placed in special schools and became frustrated, and ending up in dropping out. Inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning at mainstream schools is the vision of the South African education system. This means development of education to ensure that the system becomes more responsive to the diverse needs of all learners. Inclusion does not mean dumping students with disabilities into mainstream schools without support for teachers or learners. In table 6.9, data on inclusion is depicted.

Table 6.9 Data on Inclusion

Questions	Agree		Disagree		NR	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
12. Learners who experience barriers to learning and development are always included at mainstream schools.	37	48.7	39	51.3	0	0
13. Learners with special educational needs are still at special schools.	51	67.1	25	32.9	0	0

Question 12: Learners who experience barriers to learning and development are always included at mainstream schools.

Just below half (48.7%) of the participants agreed, while 51.3% disagreed. These negative responses suggest that the majority of learners experiencing barriers to learning are still not in mainstream schools nor at Resource Centres. The implication is that huge numbers of learners with barriers to learning cannot be accommodated in Resource Centres due to limited space, and possibly they are sitting at home as they cannot access the education support at schools or Resource Centres. This negates the intention for inclusion which is aimed at including all disabled and gifted learners, street children and working learners, learners from remote populations, learners from cultural minorities, as well as learners from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (*cf.* 2.4.1). Once learners are unable to access the educational support, the question could be: What are DBST members doing to ensure that educational support is

provided to schools and learners experiencing barriers to learning? This may expose the idea that DBST members are failing to implement their roles as they cannot address problems at schools, hence some learners drop out and prefer to stay at home. Interviews confirmed the above assertion that learners are still categorised and placed in separate but limited educational settings, causing them to leave school if they are not accommodated. This was evident in responses such as:

“Before the introduction of White Paper 6, individual clinical approach was practiced. Learners experiencing barriers to learning were labelled and placed in special schools without given an opportunity to learn in the mainstream. After the introduction of White Paper 6 things are done differently. Learners experiencing barriers to learning are now getting continuous support from teachers and DBST members and they consider all the environments that surround the learner when providing support. In this way, most of them are getting support from full service and mainstream schools”. – DC.

“We were more individualistic in the sense that the problems were seen as within the learners not in the system, hence we placed them in special schools. At times, some of these learners were placed in special schools by default and they became more frustrated as they don’t belong there. Currently, our approach is more ecosystemic in the sense that we believe that the problems are not within the learners but within the systems in which learner find themselves in. We therefore address problems in the systems and subsystems and at the end of the day the learner get help without being admitted to Resource Centres”. - DD

“Provision of support services was more individualistic and did not encourage inclusion. Err... currently things are much different, the DBSTs are more advanced to focus on inclusion and to help learners, more important, this is done by identifying and addressing all barriers”. – DG

It was not good in the past because learners experiencing barriers to learning were considered having problems without looking at the course. That means our view to learners was that learners have problems and we did not consider other parts of the system in the lives of learners. Since our role changed, we are now employing the

ecosystemic approach when identifying and addressing barriers to learning. The entire system and sub-systems in the environment of the learner are thoroughly checked to identify barriers and once problem identified is then addressed immediately by the involved role players. - DK.

In this regard a notable finding regarding the changed role is that in the past the provision of support services was more aligned to a medical model which was individualistic and curative, whereas currently the education policies in learner support encourages an ecosystemic approach. In this medical model problem, needs and syndromes were identified in an individual (*cf.* 2.4.3.1.1) and, as a result, learners who experience barriers to learning were labelled. After being labelled, some of them were then wrongly placed at segregated special schools. Since the introduction of White Paper 6, learners experiencing barriers to learning are now included in mainstream education with support from their teachers and DBST members. Currently, teachers and DBST members use the ecosystemic approach when providing support. Thus they consider all the environments that surround the learner when providing support.

In line with above opinions from the participants, I noted that they all completely reject the old medical model in favour of the new ecosystemic approach and this may affect the implementation of their changed role. My opinion is that the DBST members should not completely get rid of the medical model as it is also necessary in learner support. For instance, in a case of a learner with epilepsy, teachers have to respect the prescription or treatment for these learners as they may sometimes take it during school hours and teachers should ensure with care that such learners take the medication. Thus both the medical and the ecosystemic way of supporting such learners should be applicable. This may also minimize failure of implementing the changed role.

It is expected that DBST members should be able to identify and address barriers to learning, and support schools to accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning. In so doing, the implementation of their changed role should be possible.

Question 13: Learners with special educational needs are still at special schools.

About 67.1% of the participants agreed and 32.9% disagreed to the statement in question 13. This indicates that Resource Centres are accommodating learners with barriers to learning even though they are not accessible to all learners, and facilities and infrastructure are very limited, as shown in 6.4.2.2 above. As they are not accessible, the possibility is that few learners experiencing barriers to learning are accommodated and the provisioning of support may be inadequate as they all lack resources. Accommodation of only a few learners at Resource Centres and inadequate provision of support may be the signal that the Resource Centres and DBST members are struggling to implement their changed role.

6.4.4.5 Professionalism of DBST members

Professionalism is one of the qualities of DBST members that can contribute to the success or failure of the implementation of the changed role. This may be manifested in many ways as they play out their roles. For instance, it may be shown by demonstrating sufficient knowledge, being well trained, recognition by the community, interaction with parents and teachers, networking and co-operating with colleagues. It is expected that the DBST members have the above-mentioned skills as they perform their roles and that should influence the successful implementation of their changed role. The opposite is that, should they not possess the above-mentioned skill, they will be regarded as incompetent, and that could cause difficulties in the implementation of their changed role. In Table 6.10, data on professionalism of DBST members is depicted.

Table 6.10 Data on professionalism of DBST members

Questions	Agree		Disagree		NR	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
14. DBST staff members received adequate training from the Department of Education.	26	34.2	50	65.8	0	0
15. The DBST is highly recognized by community Members.	29	38.1	46	60.5	1	1.3
16. DBST staff members always involve parents when they identify and address barriers to learning and development.	66	86.9	10	13.2	0	0
17. The DBST is ready for addressing barriers to learning and development.	50	65.8	26	34.2	0	0
18. DBST staff members meet the ILST members frequently.	64	84.2	12	15.8	0	0
19. The DBST is able to get the community to support learners at school.	50	65.8	26	34.2	0	0
20. The DBST instills cultures that promote learner support at schools.	58	76.4	18	23.7	0	0
21. The team is able to provide enough education support to schools at rural and historically disadvantaged areas.	38	50.0	38	50.0	0	0
22. Providers of education support services at district level are working as a team around common issues.	51	67.1	25	32.9	0	0

Question 14: DBST staff members received adequate training from the Department of Education.

In this question, far below half (34.2 %) of the participants agreed and 65.8% disagreed. Feedback from interviews disagreed with the above statistics to this question. It

indicates that the DBST members received adequate training from the Department of Education. This is shown from the following comments:

“For the implementation of inclusive education system, the Department is trying but there are some few stumbling blocks that need to be addressed. DoE provides us with adequate training and this occurs frequently”. - DE

“Training from DoE is enough but things are not well implemented as expected because of the problems caused by inadequate human resources”. - DC

“Honestly speaking we are well trained and all members in our sub-directorate understand inclusive education very well. The problem I see is that members from other sub-directorates do not understand it clearly. They know that they must collaborate but not know how. I recommend that if it can be well advocated in DoE for different sections not schools”. - DH

“Now there are more and more workshops conducted by DoE from the provincial level but the implementation of inclusion is not well implemented, that is failing”. - DK

“There is a great change because at the past there was no advocacy of inclusive education but now we advocate it more to different stakeholders”. - DD

“According to me the support from DoE is adequate. The problem is the implementation of inclusive education especially at schools level”. - DC

With regard to the responses from questionnaires and interviews, there is a mix response. The cause might be members understood training differently as it expected to meet their different demands. For instance, one may be of the opinion that they must get training on how to adapt curriculum to meet the needs of learners and others may expect to be trained on how to involve other stakeholders in the process of learner support. However, it is interesting to see that there is a negative response exposing that, even though DBST members are trying to carry out their roles efficiently, they are not well trained by the National Department of Education. Training should include training on how to behave in a professional manner when dealing with parents of

learners experiencing barriers to learning, which is another quality that the DBST members should possess. In the past, professionals in support services were not seriously interacting with parents, but only with the principal and the affected learner, except in extreme situations where the principal invited parents of the involved learner. In actual fact, this was done mainly to the parents of African children. Comments from F1 confirmed: *“White, Coloured and Indian parents were involved because they had education but when it comes to African children, the problem was sometimes we recommend things that they did not understand at all. For example how did you tell or explain “autism, epilepsy, etc.” to a parent who did not acquire knowledge to school. So, parents were there, willingly to support their children but they couldn’t because of lack of education”*. Also F5 clarify: *“The policy by then was encouraging parental involvement but because of some limitations, it was not possible for the certain group of parents. Therefore policy was not flexible to accommodate parents of African learners”*.

This may imply that as they were less concerned with the parents, they were not trained well to address parents of the involved learner professionally. As the role changed, parental involvement in learner support is encouraged and DBST members have to interact with them frequently. To perform this role, they should be trained how to behave professionally when dealing with parents of the learners experiencing barriers to learning. The problem might be that the majority of parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning (as DJ explained: *“It is a policy for us to demand parents of the child referred to us to take part. The major challenge was at times they (parents) did not pitch and the common reason for them was that they did not believe in kind of support provided by the DBSTs. Policy is adamant for parental involvement”*) do not come when invited by the DBST members, due to various reasons, and this discourages the DBST members to provide adequate support effectively. This can be used as a reason why members of DBST are anxious to fulfil their changed role.

Question 15: DBST is highly recognized by the community members.

In the past, the community was not really involved in provisioning education support services, except that some professionals within the clinics were voluntarily doing consultation. The above statement is confirmed by the following comments:

“Remember that we were using the medical model that focuses on the weaknesses the child had so that we can prescribe. The model was about diagnosing a problem that seems within the child. So, communities were not optimally involved because we were not using the ecological approach which came with the White Paper 6”. – F2

“There were resources that drawn from the communities but the policy at that time did not encourage that although we did use some of the members from NGOs. But it was not documented. Policy was a medical model but we did cross those borders”. – F3

“I can say it was involved even not like as recently suggested in WP 6. We had very good liaison with private support people. For example, Psychiatrist at mines and NGOs around the community in which Child Guidance Clinic is located. We were also collaborated with school nurses from the health department but frustrations were still there. Collaboration was not standardized across the country even at the province. The cause failure to collaboration was that the policy was silent about community involvement” – F4

As the role in education support services changed, the community are now involved and stakeholders within the community are given power to support schools in the vicinity. It is expected that the community will provide resources to neighbouring schools and it is the responsibility of the DBST members to extract such resources from the community. On whether DBST is highly recognized by community members (question 15), about 38.1% of the participants agreed, while above half (60.5%) disagreed. The negative responses might reflect that most of the community members do not know of the existence of the DBST in education and those who do know, are not really interested in its role in education. This is brought by perceptions such as DB shows: *“I think very few members of community are knowledgeable about the structure known as DBST at DoE.*

Perhaps those who know are ones whom their children were involved in the support process in one way or another". DL also expressed: "Yes, I think DBSTs is known by community but is not highly recognised. Thus our roles are not visible as such in communities, except in communities where schools are effective". This can be seen as suggesting that DBST members might find it difficult to access resources within the community as proposed by White Paper 6 (cf. 3.3.1 and 3.10) and, in so doing, it may indicate that there is difficulty to implement their changed role.

Question 16: DBST staff members always involve parents when they identify and address barriers to learning and development.

As indicated earlier, parental involvement is the most important aspect in learner support. Previously, parents were not actively involved in education and things were done between the professional support staff and the principal or remedial teacher (*c.f.* question 14 above). Presently, parents, including those of learners experiencing barriers to learning, have a say in the education of their children. This makes it easier for the DBST members to obtain information about learners involved. Regarding parental involvement in the identification of and addressing barriers to learning, it has been noted that far more than half (86.9%) of the participants agreed that DBST members always involve parents when they identify and address barriers to learning, while 13.2% disagreed. Statistics for this question has been confirmed by responses from interviews that DBST members always work together with parents. DE exclaim: *"... that is done by all of us. The policy binds us to involve parents during the entire process in learner support. I've also realised that it is important in the sense that parents provide us with rich information, particularly that of his/her children. At times we also offer training to parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning".* Also DL explains: *"Now we make use of school committees such as ILSTs, parents, community members, NGOs and other professionals from different department. In so doing we work like a system when helping learners, if one stakeholder cannot do the task, it is obvious that the learner would not get support or help".* The proper way of providing support to learners who experience barriers to learning is through parental involvement, since parents have

detailed information about their children and they have to decide whether they accept or decline the type of support offered to them (*cf.* 4.2).

Question 17: DBST is ready for addressing barriers to learning and development.

I perceived readiness of the DBST members to address barriers to learning as another aspect of professionalism. On question 17, more than half of the participants (65.8%) agreed that DBSTs are ready to address barriers to learning, whereas less than half of them (34.2%) disagreed. In this regard, I doubt the reliability of the responses, as it has been indicated in questions 14 and 15 that the DBST members not receive adequate training from the Department of Education and most of the community members do not know of its existence. One may believe that the readiness of the DBSTs to address barriers to learning should also be shown by competent members who had adequate training and who have good relations with the communities so that they can easily access resources.

Question 18: The DBST staff members meet the ILSTs members frequently.

I highly valued the frequent meeting of stakeholders in learner support. It is expected that DBST members should visit schools frequently to capacitate teachers and to provide interventions to learners experiencing barriers to learning. Frequent visits to schools show that the DBST members realize the importance of the effect of this on the implementation of their changed roles. A high number of participants (84.2%) agreed that the DBST members meet the ILST members frequently and a low number (15.8%) disagreed. DK stated: *“SBSTs are totally dysfunctional. We provide continuous training to them but there are no changes on how they have to help such learners”*. Further than that, DF uttered: *“Learners are referred to us by support teams at school levels and I know they are able to do so as I continually capacitate them. I frequently meet them especially those from active schools”*. Again DD said: *“I’m still conducting regular workshops to educators about inclusive education, learners are still referred to us, and some are still placed in Resource Centres”*. This positive response negates the findings of question 5. Again I doubt the reliability of the responses to this question, as it has been mentioned earlier on that the majority of DBST members agree that there is not

enough transport for professional staff from DBSTs to visit schools. It can be reasoned that lack of transport for professional staff from DBSTs negatively influences the DBST members' visits to schools and as a result, they do not meet the ILST members frequently. Therefore, it can be concluded that one of the major problems for the DBSTs to implement the changed role effectively is inadequate transport.

Question 19: The DBST is able to get the community to support learners at schools.

DBST members have to act professionally when interacting with the community so that the community can put all its trust in them. On whether the DBST is able to obtain community support for learners at schools, around 65.8% of the participants agreed and 34.2% disagreed. The finding concerning this question contradicts question 15 in the sense that most of the participants (60.5%) indicate that the community does not recognize DBSTs, while in question 19 (65.8%) they report that DBSTs access community and society support easily for learners at schools. This contradiction may be an indication that DBST members are not sure of their relations with the community and, as a result, this may hamper their implementation of the changed role. It might be that there is not sufficient communication between the DBSTs and communities, and that hampers the effective provisioning of learner support. Poor relations will make it difficult for the DBSTs to extract resources from the community as this, as one of their roles and resulting in failure, could make it difficult for them. On the other hand, structures within the communities will be discouraged to provide support to schools and the result is that learners who are in need of that support will suffer the consequences. The above discussed issues may be interpreted as pointing to the fact that the DBST members are not able to implement their changed role effectively.

There is a history on failure of collaboration and this is visible from the literature (*c.f.* Landsberg, 2009:65; NEPI, 1992:4). Interviews with former professionals support this view. For example participants F2 said:

“We really collaborated least with other governmental departments and organizations within the community. It was very rear whereby professionals from Child Guidance

Clinics asked some help from external people or organization. I'm not sure of the then policy, whether it was encouraging community involvement or not but the thing is, Child Guidance Clinics were independent from other Education department and so we were doing things on our own without consulting outside".

The failure of collaboration was probably influenced by the medical model that was in use. For example, participants F1 said:

"Remember we were using medical model. The model was about diagnosing a problem that seems within the child. So, communities were not optimally involved because we were not using ecological approach which came with White Paper 6. At times resources were taken from the community but the policy at that time did not encourage that although we used some of the members from NGOs".

This quotation shows that the medical model was used by a team of experts of which their role was diagnose and prescribes programmes to support learners with barriers to learning. They collaborated less with the community. According to White Paper 6, there should be collaboration as F4 indicated:

"I can say it was involved even not like as recently suggested by White Paper 6. This community involvement was differing from clinic to clinic; it was depend on the eagerness of the professionals from it to consult the community for resources. But in our case, we used to consult community even though it disappointed us by not giving much as expected".

One participant, F3 stated that in his clinic, collaboration was possible as they collaborated with specialist from mines and NGOs.

"In our case, we had very good liaison with private support people. For example, psychiatrist at mines and NGOs around the community in which Child Guidance Clinic is located. We were also collaborated with school nurses from the Health department but frustrations were still there. Honestly, collaboration was not standardized across the country even within the province". – F3

This participant remarked that collaboration was not uniform across the province. It is important to also note that there were only two clinics that were situated in mining towns in the Free State. That means these two clinics were in more industrial areas that had specialists. Therefore the geographical location was hampered collaboration.

Question 20: DBST Instils cultures that promote learner support at schools.

A high number of respondents (76.4%) agreed and a sizable number (23.7%) disagreed. This large margin between the responses indicates that disability awareness and advocacy on inclusive education is still continuing at districts and schools, as suggested by Muthukrishna (2008:49). DC stated: *“There is a great change. We advocate inclusive education to all different stakeholders. We went to an extent of inviting some external agencies such as companies, business people, NGOs, to name the few”*. In this regard, I realize that disability awareness and advocacy on inclusive education is not a problem at districts and schools, but the problem is vested in the practical implementation of the policy of inclusive education. DBST members seem to understand what is required for inclusive education, but for various reasons they are unable to implement policies as stated. DF stated: *‘everything suggested from White Paper 6 is done. I even believe that planning to advocacy on inclusive education is well done and it is still continuing but implementation of inclusive education seems failing’*. The implication is that the chances are better for the DBST to succeed in its mission of including all learners in mainstream schools only if they can implement the inclusive education policy well.

Question 21: The team is able to provide enough education support to schools at rural and historically disadvantaged areas.

In the past, rural schools were not enjoying much of the benefits enjoyed by other schools in education support services. The same happened to other public schools that were discriminated against the model-C schools. F1 elaborated: *“As far as I remember all Child Guidance Clinics were under staffed. This made it difficult for the clinic to provide support to majority of learners, especially from rural and disadvantaged schools. By then, we relied on either parents or schools to brought learners to clinic and you can*

think for yourself how learners from rural areas will access the Child Guidance Clinic. In that way they were marginalized in support services". This seems a continuing problem as participants DI stated: *"Lack of transport for all of us made it difficult to provide support to majority of learners, especially from rural and disadvantaged schools"* Policies on inclusive education do not discriminate all schools; instead they try to promote those schools that were disadvantaged to be equal to their counterparts.

From the responses, it is noted that half of the participants (50.0%) agree that the team is able to provide enough education support to schools at rural and historically disadvantaged areas, while another half (50.0%) disagree. This is an important aspect in learner support, since most rural schools, if not all, are hardly supported by the education support services (*cf.* 2.5.3.8). Furthermore, this finding indicates that the provision of education support services is not balanced across various education districts and in some there has been no meaningful support for a considerable time, specifically in rural and historically disadvantaged areas (*cf.* 3.5). The fact that half of the participants agree with the statement indicates a potential for the DBSTs to provide services at rural and disadvantaged schools, and the fact that half of the participants disagree, indicates the challenge awaiting the DBSTs to attempt effective education support services in this type of school.

Question 22: Providers of education support services at district level are working as a team around common issues.

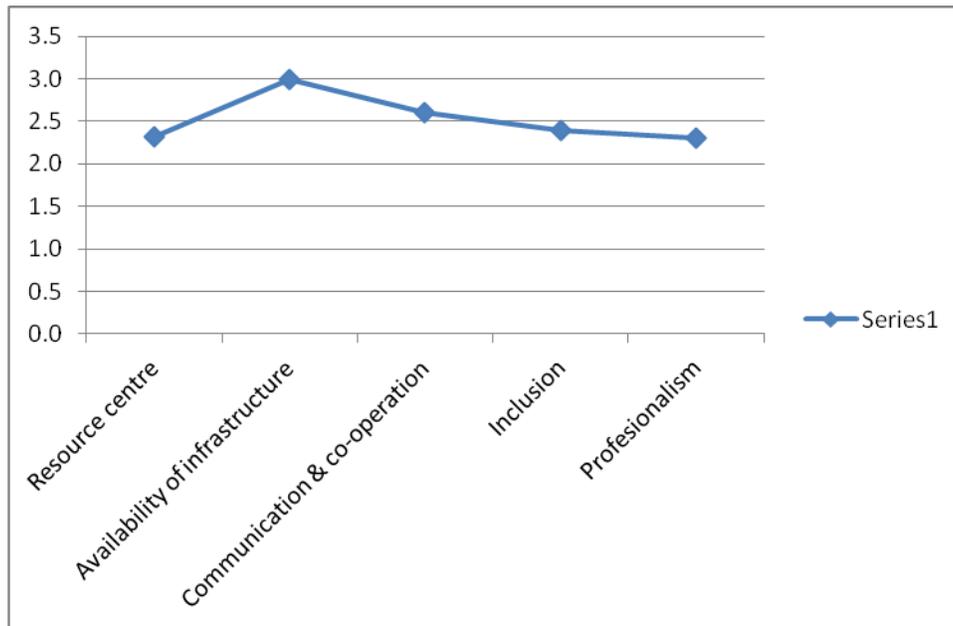
Working as a team around common issues is one of the elements in professionalism that can be considered by the DBST members when implementing the changed role. Team work is meaningful to the DBSTs as they function in a multi-disciplinary way. On whether providers of education support services at district level are working as a team around common issues, just above half (67.1%) of the participants agreed and 39.2% disagreed. The responses in this question concurred with that in question 10. It means that DBST members communicate and cooperate to each other when providing support services. These responses are indicative of the prevailing assumption that communication and sharing of ideas across the directorate of inclusive education are

adequate and effective. This condition can be utilized to maximum efficiency as far as the roles of the DBSTs are concerned.

Most of the negative responses may entail challenges for performing their changed roles consistently and effectively and in most instances data from interviews confirmed.

6.4.4.6 Ranking of themes

Graph 6.1 Data on ranking of themes



For the purpose of analysis, the above graph shows ranking of themes as determined by the number of participants who either “agreed” or “disagreed” in each theme. In this graph, the highest point indicates that the majority of responses “disagreed” on that particular theme and the lowest point indicate that the majority of responses “agreed” on that particular theme. For instance, availability of infrastructure has a mean of 3.0 and that of professionalism is 2.3. Thus on availability of infrastructure (3.0) participants in most of the questions under this theme disagreed to questions while on professionalism (2.3) participants in most of questions under this theme agreed to the questions. The indication is that the basic facilities and services needed for the functioning of DBSTs are highly inadequate, but the professionalism of DBST members is seen as prevailing

in districts. This may imply that DBST members might be able to perform their changed role because of their professionalism even though they do not have resources.

Communication and co-operation from the DBST members is another weakness with a mean of 2.6, followed by inclusion with a mean of 2.4. Therefore it shows that DBST members are unable to communicate and co-operate effectively with other stakeholders in the support services. Moreover, inclusion is a problem in education support services because of unavailable resources, poor communication and co-operation of DBSTs, as well as inaccessible Resource Centres.

It has been mentioned earlier on in this chapter that questions 23 to 27 were open-ended questions and I selected commonly used terminology to identify themes for analysis. The responses to these questions are now given attention.

6.4.5 Data analysis for questions 23 to 28

In order to give more clarity regarding the identified themes (question 23 – 28), I now gives a brief clarification of each.

Assistive devices : Such as hearing aids, crutches, etc..

Behavioural and social problems: I distinguished between

behavioural and social problems. This is based on the fact that there are learners who do not have any problems socializing and who do very well at sports. These learners are very popular for different reasons, but are not interested in academic performance and sometimes act as the clowns in class, disrupting the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, there are learners who do exceptionally well on the academic side, are well-behaved in class, but have problems socializing.

- Braille equipment : Includes computers with braille keyboards, books printed in braille, etc.
- Clinics : This is under the Department of Health and district officials refer learners for medication.
- Community : Refers to structures such as churches, NGOs, social workers, medical staff at clinics and SAPS members.
- Computers : Includes laptops, personal computers and Braille computers
- Diverse education backlog : This is a concept which a number of participants used. It became clear that they were referring to previous disadvantaged learners. This concept may be seen as including a variety of things such as learners in need of remedial therapy, learners with cognitive barriers, learners with ADD, etc.. I base this on the example of one participant who stated that some learners do not listen in class, which might point to the fact that the learner might have a concentration problem and might suffer from Attention Deficiency Disorder.
- Drivers : Drivers are necessary, especially for assisting with the transportation of physically disabled learners. A social worker or psychologist will,

for example, not be able to transport a Grade 11 or 12 learner who is in a wheelchair and must literally be assisted to get into a vehicle.

- Hostels : Hostels are seen as important especially for learners who live far from Resource Centres and whose parents do not have their own transport. Even if own or public transport is available, it might still be problematic to get physically disabled learners to and from school.
- Infrastructure : The basic facilities and services needed for the functioning of the DBSTs, such as human resources, drivers, transport, water, electricity, telephone, buildings, vehicles, etc..
- LTSM : Learning and Teaching Support Materials
- People in leadership positions : This will include people in leadership positions on district, provincial, as well as on national levels of leadership.
- Therapist : Used as general name for the profession and includes speech therapists, physiotherapists, etc..
- Transport : Includes not only cars, but also minibuses which will be very useful for transportation of physically disabled learners.

Workshops : This points to mechanical workshops. If a District has such a workshop, it just makes the process of maintaining the vehicles in a roadworthy condition so much easier.

Furthermore, the five education districts from which data were collected through the questionnaire, are identified in the study as “M”, “T”, “L”, “F”, and “X” for ethical reasons and the purpose of confidentiality. This was done deliberately to distinguish a set of data from each district so that I can understand them better.

Question 23: Please name very briefly what resources are available at the Resource Centres.

Response:

	EDUCATION DISTRICTS				
	M	T	L	F	X
Therapists	3	2	2	-	-
Drivers	3	-	-	-	-
Computers	7	14	4	14	-
LTSM for learners experiencing barriers	10	11	5	4	-
Transport	4	5	1	-	-
Social Workers	2	1	3	-	-
Psychologists	2	-	-	-	-
Braille support equipment	1	13	1	5	-
Assistive devices	2	3	1	-	-
Toys	2	-	-	-	-
Wheel chairs	-	1	-	-	-
Learning Support Facilitators	-	1	-	-	-
Clinics	-	2	-	-	-
Remedial Educationists	-	1	3	-	-
Hostels	-	3	-	-	-
Ramps	-	5	-	-	-
Psychometrists	-	-	1	-	-
Councillors	-	-	1	-	-

This question was aimed at determining whether resources that will help the Resource Centres and DBST members to provide adequate support to schools are available. I assumed that these resources are also vital in determining success on the implementation of the changed role of the DBSTs. Thus, in absence of these resources, the DBSTs will not be able to implement their roles effectively as determined by White Paper 6. The above table shows that most districts have human resources such as Therapists and Social Workers. What needs to be taken into account is the number of

learners in need of support. It might be that the number of learners exceeds the capacity of the Therapists and Social Workers. There are just too many learners for the limited staff to ensure efficient implementation of the changed role. From their responses it has been noted that they have not categorized therapists, since there are many fields of therapy, calling for Speech Therapists and Physio Therapists, to mention a few.

Furthermore, transport appears as another resource that the Resource Centres have to provide adequately to schools. It is interesting to note that drivers are highly considered in other districts such as district M. It came to my attention that drivers are assisting in transporting the disabled learners from one point to another. It further seems that transport for the DBST members is not a problem to districts M and T since some participants mentioned it as a resource. In district L, only one respondent mentioned transport as a resource and in the remaining district there is nothing about transport. This indicates that at district F, X and perhaps L, transport in their Resource Centres is minimal, if not at all and this may cause difficulty for them to implement their changed role effectively.

With regard to physical resources, the Resource Centres in districts M, T, L and F are all equipped with computers, LTSM and braille support equipment. The same districts except F have also indicated the availability of assistive devices for learners with special educational needs. Two participants in district T mention a clinic as a resource. It has been discovered that the Resource Centre in this district has collaborated with the Department of Health for the provisioning of medicines. This might be a strong point for the implementation of the changed role. Keeping in mind the general well-known poor state of clinics in the country, makes the “clinics as resources” questionable. This fact will indeed affect the efficient implementation of the changed role.

Question 24: What kind of special educational needs are catered for at mainstream schools? Please collaborate.

Response:

	EDUCATION DISTRICTS				
	M	T	L	F	X
Remedial needs	4	-	-	-	-
Behavioural needs	2	-	-	-	2
Epilepsy	-	-	-	-	-
Visual-impairedness	-	8	-	-	1
Hearing disability	-	10	1	-	1
Physical disability	8	10	2	-	-
Dyslexia	2	-	1	-	-
Social problems	2	-	-	-	1
Cognitive barriers	2	-	1	-	2
Attention Deficiency Disorder	2	-	1	-	-
Mild to moderate educational needs	-	10	8	-	1
Diverse educational backlogs	-	2	1	-	-
Muteness	-	1	-	-	-
Speech disability (stutters)	-	1	-	-	-
Mildly mentally handicapped	-	-	2	6	-

With this question I was trying to determine different kinds of special educational needs that are catered for at mainstream schools and it was expected from the participants to collaborate with information. It seems that people have different perceptions about the level of severity of special educational needs. Some participants responded to this by just saying “mild disabilities” and did not elaborate as was asked.

This might point to a lack of knowledge about learner disabilities being the cause of wrong perceptions about the impact of certain disabilities on learner performance. Refer specifically to the point on Human Resources plus the fact that only 18.5% of the participants having a Masters degree in Learner Support it leaves us with great concern about the extend of the knowledge of DBST as well as ILST members about emotional-, physical-, mental and intellectual disabilities and the real impact thereof on learners. Nowadays more and more attention is given in the media and medical world about aspects such as Bipolar Disorder and its impact on learners. Yet when talking to educators in general as well as people who claim to be involved in providing learner support, a severe lack of knowledge is evident. It comes out clearly that the focus up to now was on mild physical disabilities.

Different special educational needs that are catered for at mainstream schools have been mentioned by all districts, as seen in the above table. In district M it is notable that physical disability is regarded as the most special educational need accommodated in the mainstream, followed by remedial needs and then the following were seen as the least catered for in mainstream: behavioural needs, dyslexia, social problems, cognitive barriers and Attention Deficiency Disorder. In district T, hearing disability, physical disability and mild to moderate educational needs are commonly accommodated at mainstream schools, since about ten participants in each category have mentioned them. In the same district, visual impairedness, diverse educational backlog, muteness and speech disability (stuttering) are further accommodated. The table shows that in district L, mild to moderate educational needs are commonly accommodated, followed by physical disability and mild mental handicaps, and lastly hearing disability, dyslexia,

cognitive barriers, attention deficiency disorder and diverse educational needs. Not much has been mentioned by district F concerning this question except the six respondents who mentioned that mild mentally handicapped are also accommodated at their mainstream schools. District X shows that behavioural problems and cognitive barriers are commonly accommodated in their mainstream schools, followed by visual impairedness, hearing disability, social problems and diverse educational backlogs. From the above, I concluded that it seems that ranges of special educational needs are accommodated at mainstream schools even though not equally in all districts. It shows that in some districts they are able to implement their roles regarding catering of special educational needs at mainstream schools, while at others they may struggle.

Question 25: What kind of special needs can, in your opinion, not be accommodated in an inclusive school setting? Please motivate your answer.

Response:

	EDUCATION DISTRICTS				
	M	T	L	F	X
Severe mental handicaps	4	6	9	1	2
Autistic problems	4	-	3	-	1
Physical disabilities	3	-	6	-	-
Cognitive disabilities	3	-	1	1	-
Blind children	9	12	3	11	4
Hearing disabilities	8	12	3	8	3
Highly intelligent children	-	4	-	-	-
Behavioural problems	-	-	-	-	1

I hold the view that not all the special educational needs can be accommodated at mainstream schools, irrespective of the resourcefulness of the school. In this question, I

was investigating kinds of special needs not accommodated in an inclusive school setting.

In all districts it has been mentioned that severe mental handicaps, blindness and hearing disabilities are not accommodated at inclusive school settings. Three districts, namely M, L, and X have also mentioned autism as another kind of special need that cannot be accommodated at inclusive school settings. It is furthermore the view of districts M and L that physical disabilities may not be accommodated, while certain respondents in district X state that behavioural problems are not accommodated. It is believed that learners with serious behavioural problems are referred to other centres for rehabilitation. In conclusion, I decided that in most districts, if not in all, members are aware of the kind of disabilities that may not be accommodated in an inclusive school setting. It comes out clearly that personal perceptions, ways of thinking and tackling problems plays an important role in whether the changed role as prescribed in education policies, is efficiently implemented or not.

Question 26: Describe the organization of the management of most DBSTs.**Response:**

	EDUCATION DISTRICTS				
	M	T	L	F	X
Respondent completely misinterpreted the question	1	4	1	-	1
No response	2	7	1	-	-
Management is well organized.	9	6	3	-	6
Management is fairly well organized.	5	2	1	5	2
Management is poorly organized.	-	-	7	11	2

In this section I was testing how organized the management of the DBST in the directorate of Inclusive Education is. I believe that it will be difficult for the DBSTs experiencing disorganized management, to implement the changed role. It seems as if participants did not understand what was meant with the concept “management”. According to the given responses, I was forced to analyse the answers as shown in the above table. About seven participants from districts M, T, L and X have completely misinterpreted the question and ten participants from districts M, T and L were unable to answer the question. In districts M, T, and X a high number of participants indicated that their managements are well organized, scoring nine, six and six participants respectively. In districts L and F, many participants indicated that their managements

are poorly organized, with seven and eleven participants. Since participants have different opinions, some from all districts have mentioned that their managements are fairly well organized, especially in districts M and F. Therefore it is concluded that management from the majority of districts are making it easier for DBST members to implement the changed role while others in a few districts are not.

Question 27: What are possible shortcomings regarding the DBST's function and management?

Responses:

	EDUCATION DISTRICTS				
	M	T	L	F	X
Lack of transport	1	6	-	-	2
Lack of interdepartmental collaboration	6	8	5	2	3
Lack of communication/ meetings	10	12	4	-	-
Lack of human resources	2	2	2	-	2
Lack of financial resources	-	3	-	5	1
Lack of physical resources	2	3	4	6	2
Lack of commitment of DBST members	1	3	3	13	2
Lack of training	-	-	1	-	1
No response	2	-	1	-	-

This question was asked to find out what the shortcomings of the DBST are with regard to its function and management. Furthermore, it helps me to know and understand some of the major problems that may hinder the DBST members in the implementation of their changed role. In the view of the participants, the above shortcomings were common in all districts. Most participants in districts M and T mentioned that lack of communication or meeting among members, as well as lack of interdepartmental collaboration in their district, seems to be a major problem. This implies that there is no proper communication when they address barriers to learning, and the team leader does not convene enough meetings as there should be. This also relates to lack of interdepartmental collaboration since it is expected from the DBST to collaborate with other governmental departments as well as NGOs in order to address barriers to learning properly. Equal numbers of participants in all districts except F regarded lack of human resources in their districts as another problem. In district F it is noticeable by the high number (thirteen) of the participants who maintain, that many DBST members lack commitment to their jobs. This is also applicable in other remaining districts, namely M, T, L and X by one, three, three and two participants respectively. In conclusion, I believe that the above highlighted shortcomings are some of the problems that prove that DBST members are encountering difficulties with the implementation of the changed role.

Question 28: Make suggestions for improving the role of the DBST.**Response:**

	EDUCATION DISTRICTS				
	M	T	L	F	X
More human resources	4	-	3	-	3
Make transport available	5	-	-	-	1
Better cooperation between stakeholders	5	11	9	11	5
Regular meetings	6	10	4	5	5
Action plan/ Clear programme of action	2	2	1	-	4
More commitment from people in leadership positions	4	5	4	4	2
Make more resources available	-	2	-	4	2
No response	2	-	-	-	1

In this question I aimed at getting opinions of participants on how to improve on the implementation of the changed role of the DBST. Many suggestions were made by

participants per district as shown in the above table. In districts M and T many participants believe that regular meetings for the members will improve the implementation of their changed role. Another reasonable number of participants in the same districts and also in L, F and X state that better cooperation between stakeholders will improve the implementation. In actual fact, according to the table, it is clear that regular meetings, better cooperation between stakeholders, more commitment from people in leadership positions, action plans/ clear programmes of action, more human resources and availability of transport, in the same order, are the most important suggestions for improving the implementation of the changed role of the DBST.

6.5 FINDINGS UNIQUE TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The following is the summary of unique findings emerged from the qualitative data:

- There is a belief that direct and indirect support is needed in provision of education support services. This finding emerged from the respond as indicated by DB: “...*generally both direct and indirect service delivery approach is only the best way of providing services. These approaches help us to provide services in a larger scale*”. It seems the DBST members benefited from these approaches as they managed to help individuals as well as group of learners, teachers and parents.
- The indirect service delivery approach is dominant. Thus many of the DBST members employed this approach as it helps them to provide services under the extreme challenges that hamper the implementation of their roles. The following remark from participants DE confirmed this finding: “... *that is done by all of us. But one approach is dominant over the other. For instance, the indirect approach is used often as we offer training to teachers and sometimes we empower parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning*”.
- The direct service delivery approach is usable to individual learners. Learners with barriers to learning are also attended individually by the DBST members to address some of the barriers that hinder the effective learning. This finding is

brought by comment from DG: *“... the direct approach is practiced when intervention is done to individual learners experiencing barriers to learning and is mostly practised by social workers, psychologists to mention the few”*.

- Direct and indirect service delivery approaches are now practiced in the context of inclusive education as indicated by DK: *“... in the past there was a section of special needs at district that works with learners experiencing barriers to learning and now, in the DBSTs everybody have to play his/her role. For example, human resource unit has to ensure that schools has enough teachers and materials are adequate at schools, management unit has to ensure that schools are managed properly to accommodate diversity”*. DL also explains: *“... err, now we make use of school committees such as ILSTs, parents, community members, NGOs and other professionals from different department. In so doing we work like a system when helping learners, if one stakeholder can not do the task, it is obvious that the learner would not get support or help”*.
- Teachers and schools are uncertain about giving support. In most of the responses, it was noted that the majority of learners experiencing barriers to learning are at mainstream schools as recommended by White Paper 6, but the problem is that they lack support and this withholds them from coping in their education. The lack of support may be attributed to poor functioning of ILSTs and lack of resources to name a few. This finding is confirmed by DF: *“I can tell you that many learners experiencing barriers to learning are not looked after and lucky are those who admitted in special schools. Teachers are uncertain on what they suppose to do with them and ILSTs are not functional as well”*.
- Lack of co-operation between schools and DBST. Some of the participants shown that DBST members are struggling to meet the ILST members and in some of the schools they are not welcomed during their visits. The following responses qualify this finding:

“Besides, most schools are not cooperating well with the DBSTs”. - DH

“Really there is poor interaction of DBSTs with some schools. During some of our visits to schools, the SMTs are not recognising us as officials. They hardly give us time to discuss issues that affects learners at schools”. - DJ

- Support given to learners experiencing barriers to learning is minimal. Even though DBSTs capacitate ILST members on identification and addressing barriers to learning, it seems teachers are not providing quality and adequate support to these learners. DK confirmed this finding by saying: *“Learners are not given the support they deserve. Minimal support is provided to some of the learners experiencing barriers to learning but not in all schools as this depends on the effectiveness of the school”*.

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, data analysis from the questionnaires and interviews was presented. Firstly, the general conditions of the participants were indicated by their demographic profile. This shed light on possible reasons for the status of DBSTs in education districts.

Secondly, the current situation of the DBSTs in terms of their functions was assessed and also shed light on the provisioning of education support services by DBSTs to schools. The status of Resource Centres was then discussed. From the questionnaires it was clear that Resource Centres are not accessible to most of the learners and the availability of infrastructures at district level in the directorate of inclusive education is minimal in terms of the responses.

Thirdly, the interviews indicated that DBST members have different perceptions regarding their changed role. Most of them agree that there is a problem with the implementation of this changed role. Inadequate infrastructures seem to be a major cause in this regard.

The next chapter presents the proposed model for the DBSTs to implement the changed role.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A PROPOSED MODEL FOR THE DBSTs TO IMPLEMENT THEIR CHANGED ROLE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis of the data collected in chapter 6 and the background of the literature study in chapters two, three, four and five led to the conclusion that the failure of the implementation of the changed role of DBSTs is a serious concern in education support services. The findings show that White paper 6 provided a framework for establishing an inclusive education and training system and place the DBSTs at the heart of education support services but there are shortcomings that require a comprehensive model of rendering educational support services. In line with the above, it is important to suggest a proposed model as solution that could be used by the sub-directorate of inclusive education in the Free State Education Department to implement the changed role.

This chapter sets out to propose a model that could be seen as a solution to the problem investigated in this study. For the benefit of this study, the concept “model” will now be discussed.

7.2 THE CONCEPT “MODEL”

According to Nadler (1989:140), a model is a representation of reality so that sense can be made out of the world around us. Jonker (1994:208) adds that a model can be seen as a supportive construction for research, meaning that, a model is not more than a partial representation of a given phenomenon, but rather presents the phenomenon of which it is a model (Mouton & Marais, 1990:140). Jonker (1994:207) points out that a model indicates the relationships that exist between the components that are researched. A model can be differentiated by its functions and content. For instance, with regard to its functions, it can be seen as constructive, psychological, organizational, normative and illustrative devices; and maps, graphs and scale representations of real-world situations are regarded as the contents of the models. From the viewpoint of Mouton and Marais (1990:144), a model supplies the figures and means to make

predictions, but the model still does not supply the total explanation of the phenomenon. Therefore a model lends itself to more refinement and re-development.

Mouton & Marais (1990:144) mentioned that most models have certain common characteristics, namely:

- Models identify central problems or questions regarding the phenomenon to be investigated.
- Models limit, isolate, simplify and systematize the domain of research.
- Models provide a new language within which the phenomenon can be discussed.
- Models provide explanation sketches and resources for making predictions.

Nadler (1989:5) postulates that a good model can help the user to understand what is actually a complicated process. Models highlights certain aspects of a complex process and offer a simplistic representation of the aspects covered (Jansen & Steynberg, 1991:9). In line with the above opinions, one may realize that models generally emphasize aspects to present a particular purpose.

7.3 ADVANTAGES OF MODELS

Nadler (1989:5) came up with the following advantages of the use of models that should be considered by a researcher:

- Research results can be presented in text form within a specific framework.
- The meaningfulness of the research results can be presented and evaluated within a specific framework.
- The problem that has been researched can be presented in a reduced and summarized form.
- The gap between the theory and the empirical research can be closed.

- What is known through research and observation can be integrated.
- Observation can be guided.

Even though good models help the user to understand better what the complicated process looks like, there are also limitations or disadvantages to them. These will be given attention.

7.4 DISADVANTAGES OF MODELS

The following disadvantages of the use of models should be considered by researchers (Nadler, 1989:6-7):

- Models can only represent reality and should thus not be confused with reality.
- In reducing a complex process to a one-dimensional representation, information can be lost.
- The utility of models depends on the user's own understanding of reality.
- Feedback in an open model is not automatic.
- The closed model gives few options for the user's own interpretation.

I noted these disadvantages and assumes that the study does not regard this proposed model as the only possible solution to the problem researched. It is taken as just one possibility for implementing the changed role of the DBSTs at Free State Department of Education. As both the advantages and disadvantages have been explored, the attention will be on designing a model.

7.5 MODEL DESIGN

According to Vermaak (1999:208) a model focuses on a certain aspect of reality, a variation of models can be applicable in building one specific model. According to Nadler (1989:5), it is important to identify a number of questions that should be considered in the choice of a model, namely:

- What is its purpose?
- Does the model indicate what to look for?
- For what kind of learning is it appropriate?
- Does it help the user to anticipate what he/she will find?
- Does it provide alternatives?

The application value of the specific model will usually guide the designing of a model. For the benefit of this study, the researcher discussed two kinds of models, namely, closed and open models.

7.6 TYPES OF MODELS

Nadler (1994:8) mentions two types namely models as the closed model and the open model. The two types of models are given attention below.

7.6.1 The closed model

This model assumes that every input in the design procedure is identifiable and controllable. All variables in the closed model are inclusive. Therefore it builds all the possible variables into the model. Nadler (1989:6) agrees that anything that has an impact on the design process of this model should have been identified and integrated.

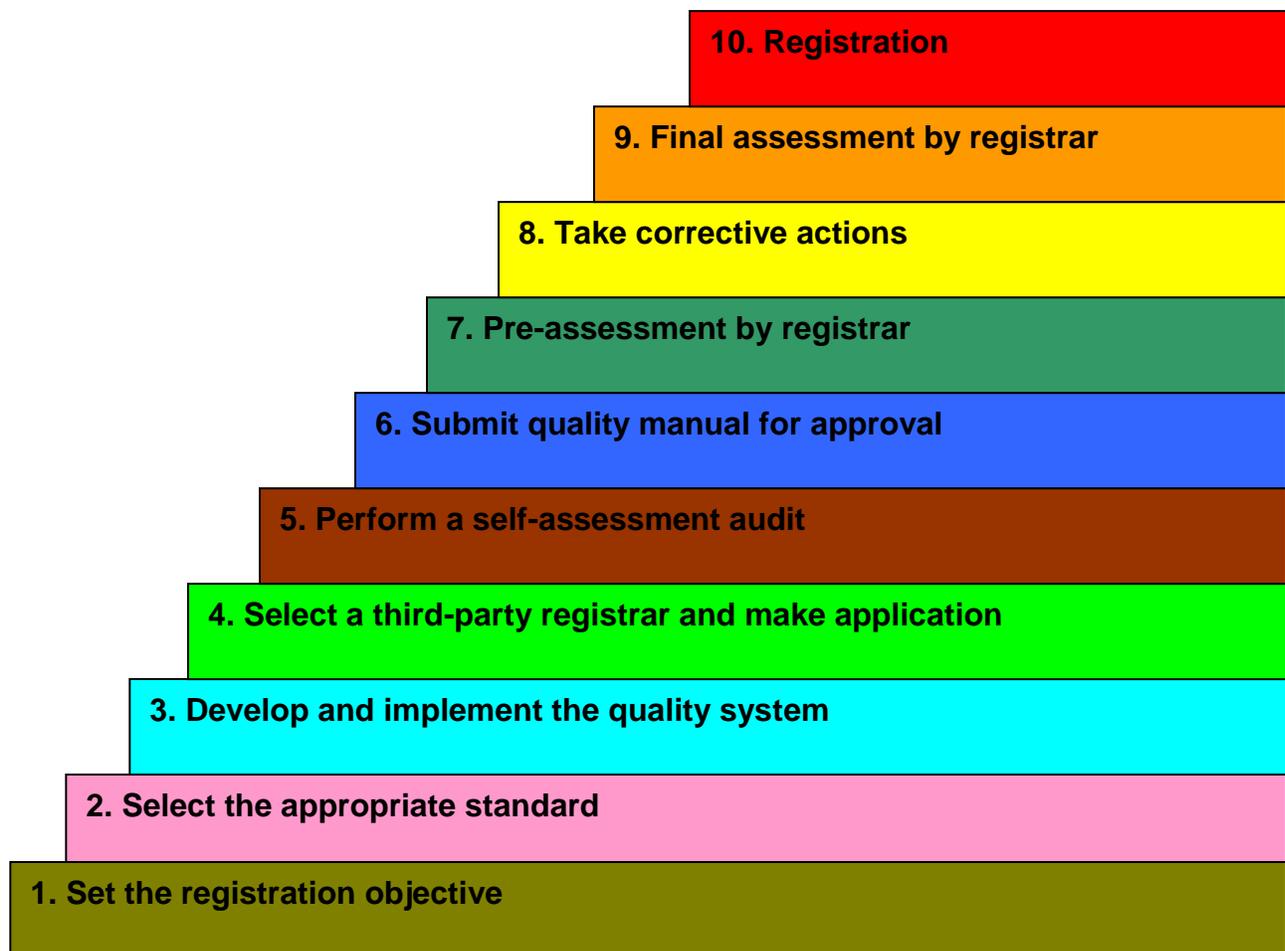
The closed model is predictive as its interactions are meant to be used exactly as designed. That means the designer knows that the conclusions and outcomes are predetermined. In this regard, Nadler (1994:8) emphasizes that the designer has limited options. The implication is that if the designer deviates from the model, the outcomes cannot be achieved. In this study The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9000 is taken as an example of the closed model.

The origin of ISO 9000 is in manufacturing settings. The purpose of this model was to improve the performances of the organizations by presenting a quality management framework. Harding, Tesolowski & Simmons (2000:32) cite that this model aims to

increase the monitoring of activities in an organization and advance internal communication within the organization further.

Even though the model originated in industry, Evans and Lindsay (2002:315) show its relevance in education as it has been implemented by educational institutions in countries such as USA, Canada, Singapore, UK, Switzerland, and Australia. Figure 7.1 below depicts the linear movement in a closed model in ISO 9000.

Figure 7.1: Ten basic steps to ISO registration (Craig, 1994:20)



Evans and Lindsay (2002:315) came up with the following reasons for the implementation of ISO 9000 in educational institutions:

- To make education more efficient and improve overall performance

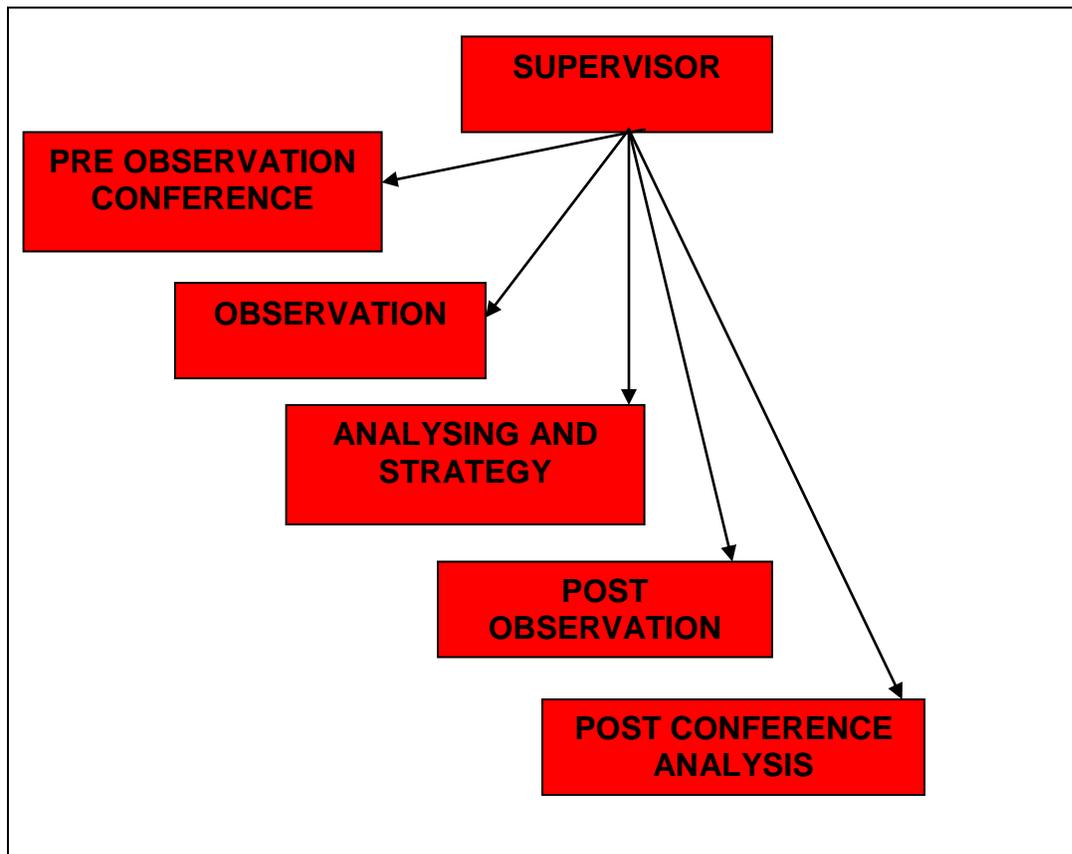
- To promote collaboration and partnerships with business and industry and to prepare learners better for the workplace
- To provide a framework and structure to help improve customer service
- To improve business processes through documentation to reduce the internal cost of doing business and communicating with customers
- To bring better management practices to providers.

7.6.2 The open model

The outside factors have an impact on the design process of an open model. Nadler (1994) argues that the model builder should accept the fact that some external forces may be beyond the scope of the model when creating an open model, but that such factors must be considered in the design process.

From the viewpoint of Nadler (1989:6), an open model provides the designer with possible courses of action and anticipation of outcomes. This model is descriptive and endeavours to describe what will happen if the model is used. Feedback in an open model is not automatic, but the assumption is made that the user will recognize the need for feedback (Nadler, 1989:6). Figure 7.2 depicts a simple example of an open model known as the clinical supervision model.

Figure 7.2: The clinical Supervision Model (Goldhammer, 1980:37)



The focus of the clinical supervision model is on the improvement of instruction and a close collegial relationship between the educator and supervisor is its main feature. Goldhammer (1980:37) confirms that this is an open model since its effectiveness suits educators who are committed to instructional improvement, but lack technical skills.

The clinical supervision model developed by Goldhammer and his colleagues has five steps, namely:

- The pre-observation conference where the supervisor establishes rapport with the educator and obtains information about the planned lesson
- The observation where the supervisor collects data on the area of focus agreed upon during the pre-observation conference

- The analysis and strategy phase where the supervisor analyses observation data, organizes it and plans the post-observation conference
- The post-observation conference where the supervisor and educator discuss the observation relative to the agreed upon area of focus
- The post-conference analysis where the supervisor reviews the supervisory process (Goldhammer, 1980:33).

Olivia (1993:499) mentions that the criticism of this model is that it is time-consuming. Furthermore, according to this model, supervisors are required to be highly trained in instruction.

7.7 A PROPOSED MODEL FOR THE DBSTs TO IMPLEMENT THE CHANGED ROLE

In the proposed model, the researcher suggests an *ecosystemic approach* (cf. Chapter 4) and involvement of all community structures in the environment of learners experiencing barriers to learning. In this way, all problems emanating from the immediate environment of the learners will be easily identified and addressed. Thus problems that might emanate from interaction between factors in his/her maturing biology, immediate family or community environment and societal landscape will be attended to. This also takes into consideration the importance of the family-school relationship and the mutual responsibility for children's learning and development. Therefore, the researcher suggests that all stakeholders in learner support, such as DBST members, community members and parents, to name the few, be more involved and accept more responsibility for these learners. Our society tends to focus on people with serious physical disabilities, but does not give enough support specifically to learners experiencing barriers to learning due to other factors than a physical disability.

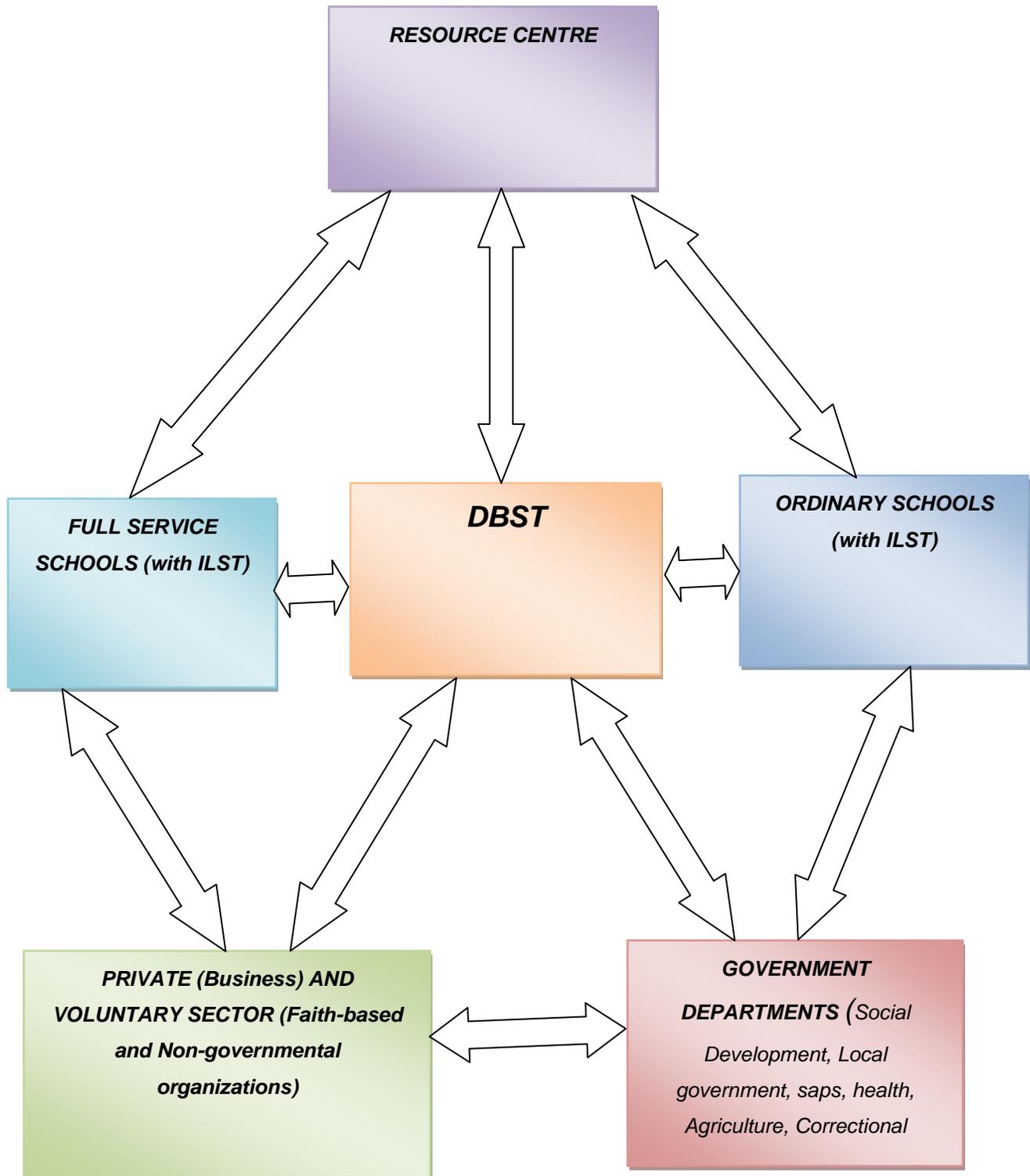
In the proposed model, leadership of the team together with the coordinators are the backbone for the success of the implementation of this model, as well as for the proper service delivery in learner support. This model is based on an approach that focuses on an internal process that may be used to facilitate and manage the implementation of the

changed role of DBSTs. The proposed model can be implemented at district levels to ensure that:

- The vision, mission and goals of the DBSTs are considered, known and supported by all stakeholders.
- The way in which provision of education support services will be done is well implemented and clearly communicated to everyone.
- The mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation are in place.
- Ways of correcting deviations from the set plan are agreed and communicated.
- Responsibility for tasks is clear.

Figure 7.3 below represents an outline of the proposed model for the DBSTs to implement the changed role.

Figure 7.3: Outline of the proposed model for the DBST to implement the changed role



7.7.1 DBST

Members of the DBST have to fulfil their roles to develop schools, teachers and learners. In order for the DBST members to accomplish the aim of development of schools, they should take into consideration the issue of community involvement. This will ease their job, as they will be able to draw the broad range of expertise from various community resources. Figure 7.3 illustrates the importance which the DBST members attach to their interaction with schools, teachers, learners, government department and faith-based and non-governmental organisations.

According to the Education White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:47), the primary function of the DBSTs is to evaluate and, through supporting teaching, build the capacity of schools, early childhood and basic adult education, plus training centres, to recognize and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs. The DBSTs should develop effective curricular and supportive teaching and learning environments at schools. Schools need to grow and must have ongoing support to identify and address barriers to learning and development. The ideal is that the DBST should encourage and make schools operate within a disability framework. It is also suggested that members of this team should not only visit schools regularly, but ensure that learners experiencing barriers to learning are getting adequate support at schools. In order for schools to provide support services effectively, a post could be created for a teacher who will work only on support services at a school and liaise effectively with the DBST.

The training and re-orientation of all teachers to support learners is another role of the DBSTs. The DBST members should capacitate teachers so that the full range of learning will be met. The focus will be on teaching and learning factors and emphasis will be placed on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners (DoE, 2005b:14-15). Thus the focus should be on the development of appropriate teaching strategies that are informed by the diverse learning needs of the learners and will be of benefit to all learners and teachers. In order that education support services can be effective at schools, the DBST should provide teachers with ongoing support for them to respond appropriately to learners' needs.

The interaction of the DBST with learners is of the utmost importance in learner support. Most learners in need of support services are tolerated at schools although teachers are not very competent at providing support and the DBST members usually prefer the indirect service delivery approach. The excessive use of this approach causes DBST members to assist only a sizeable number of learners experiencing barriers to learning and those who are lucky will be referred to Resource Centres. It is suggested that the direct service delivery approach be used more often than the indirect service delivery approach and referrals of learners should also be done in such a way that the majority of learners experiencing barriers to learning access services from DBSTs. The implication is that DBST members are expected to provide more direct learning support to learners with special educational needs. Furthermore, DBST members should have access to peers of the learners referred to them with the intention of gathering more information and providing peer-support.

Community involvement is the most important aspect of learner support since learning also occurs in the home and community. Furthermore, available resources from the community should not be a waste, but be meaningfully used to benefit learners who are in need of them. The only way to access these resources is to have a system of education that considers a community-based approach. Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht (2008:52) confirm that the community-based approach is a central feature of the support system envisaged for South Africa. The DoE (2005b:17) further explained that the Department of Education is committed to developing a community-based approach to education support and this means that the natural support systems at and outside schools and other education institutions need to be identified and included in the provision of support. The importance of community involvement in learner support is to draw on the broad range of expertise from various community resources. The DBST should also establish and maintain support networks for schools with outside agencies such as NGOs and the health department for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. Community members such as church leaders, traditional healers, business man and retired professionals should be provided with continuous training to facilitate their inclusion in the process of support.

7.7.2 RESOURCE CENTRE

White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:38) proposes a mix of institutional structures of district support systems incorporating special schools as Resource Centres to meet the challenges of provision within an inclusive system. The staff of the Resource Centres will be incorporated into the DBST to serve neighbouring schools and utilize community resources to attain its goals. The collaboration of Resource Centres with DBSTs should not be only for a few members of the DBSTs that placed learners experiencing barriers to learning directly into this centre. For instance, the Learning Support Facilitator (LSF) or psychologist should be able to visit Resource Centres and assess the progress of the admitted learners. Thus Resource Centres will be accessible to all DBST members. This may help the DBST members to realize whether the recommended placement is appropriate for that particular learner. The records or assessments of learners at Resource Centres should be open to all DBST members. Furthermore, the management team of Resource Centres should work closely with the leadership of the DBST to avoid confusion that may be brought about by referrals and placements. In so doing, regular reports that will reveal the effective functioning of the Resource Centres will be presented to the leadership of the DBST.

The Resource Centres can create the condition for inclusion through school-based change and improvement (DoE, 2005b:19). The implication is that these centres may attach themselves to schools with the intention of supporting learners, teachers, parents and the community. Resource Centres as part of the district support services should provide resources equally to all schools and be accessible to all learners. Like the DBST members, staff from Resource Centres should also be able to visit neighbouring schools to capacitate teachers at mainstream schools. Because many neighbouring schools fall under the jurisdiction of Resource Centres, the capacitation of teachers from mainstream schools may be done in the form of clusters. That is: mainstream schools may be clustered and communal workshops will then be conducted by teachers from the Resource Centre. The staff from Resource Centres must provide specialized professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to mainstream teachers.

The involvement of the community in education support services should be strengthened by the Resource Centres. In this regard, the Resource Centres will coordinate the useful resources from the community for optimum use. In this way, all the resources from the community will be utilized to develop and support education support services at schools. The community should also have access to the Resource Centres. For instance, buildings such as halls, classes and many more may be available for community use. This may be done under the supervision of the management of Resource Centres to keep them in good conditions. Furthermore, the Resource Centres should foster collaborative ways of interaction between schools and the community.

7.7.3 FULL SERVICE AND NEIGHBOURING SCHOOLS

The White Paper indicates that Full Service schools will be established as an integral part of the envisaged inclusive education system. Full service schools should provide educational support services to learners who are in need of medium intensity support while ordinary schools are responsible for support to learners who require low- intensity support. In full-service schools, priorities could include orientation to and training in new roles, focusing on multi-level classroom instruction, co-operative learning, problem solving and the development of learners' strengths and competencies rather than on their shortcomings only (SA, 2001:19). Both full service and ordinary schools will receive support from the DBSTs.

As mentioned in White Paper 6, both the full service and ordinary schools should have the ILSTs that will facilitate the provision of education support services to learners, parents and teachers. There should be regular support for the ILSTs and coordination of learner support activities at school and between the ILST and the DBST. To facilitate this, a teacher appointed for this purpose at school level, should continuously liaise with the DBST as illustrated in Figure 7.3.

This structure will assist the DBSTs to continuously provide communication and support as well as to monitor and evaluate learner support at schools. This structure will also facilitate the timely implementation of learner support activities as they cascade from the

national level. This is because the DBST Coordinator will be in regular contact with the provincial and national level coordinators.

7.7.4 PRIVATE, PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The effective collaboration is the corner stone in learner support in the context of the envisaged inclusive education system. Therefore, forming partnerships with government departments and faith-based and non-governmental organization is pivotal to the successful functioning of educational support structures. Collaboration is therefore, an intentional and ongoing process that requires effort on every stakeholder's part (Swart & Phasha, 2009:234). Holistic and integrated support as proposed by the White Paper (2001) can only be possible if individual schools (including Full service/Resource centers), the private, public and voluntary sector intentionally collaborate.

7.8 STRENGTH OF THE PROPOSED MODEL

The following are the strengths of this proposed model:

- The leadership's existing knowledge and experience are recognized to boost the functioning of the support services.
- The proposed model suggests a hands-on training experience for the leadership of the DBSTs.
- The model focuses on a well planned process that is aimed at transformation of the DBSTs. This is brought about by the fact that the proposed model is a long-term strategy.
- The proposed model is simple and does not need resources that will be difficult to find. It usually emphasizes the use of available resources and the further accumulation of new resources.
- The strength of this model is located in the rapid flow of information from the national level, provincial level, the DBST and the ILST.

7.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE PROPOSED MODEL

The proposed model requires full commitment from all involved, starting from the NDoE down to the districts. This is so because the coordinators of the teams will expect maximum participation from national to provincial and district levels. Furthermore, the leader's duties should be delegated to a subordinate in his/her absence.

The proposed model also has financial implications which require budgets to be increased. Again the strategy may be seen to rely on the solving of the problems at the sub-directorate of inclusive education only and does not emphasize on the functioning of the whole DBST. However, the model might be suitable for only big districts with available resources but if the circumstances of the smallest disadvantaged district are considered, the proposed model is worthless.

The model may be seen as being too simplistic. This is applicable when care is not taken to gain insight into the values and benefits of equipping DBSTs to be effective competitors.

7.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to propose a model for the implementation of the changing role of DBSTs that can be used by education districts at Free State Department of Education. The definition of a model and advantages and disadvantages of models were discussed. Two types of models were discussed with the intention to borrow some of their perceptions to design the proposed model. Attention was also paid to the strengths and limitations of the proposed model. The proposed model focuses on bringing coordination, leadership and administrative staff support to the DBSTs so that the provision of education support services becomes effective and accessible to all learners.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARIES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary of the study. The focus is on important aspects that were found in the literature study regarding the changing role of district-based education support services in establishing inclusive school settings. This chapter also presents findings of the empirical study regarding the current provision of education support by the DBSTs in the Free State Department of Education. Finally, recommendations based on the research findings are presented.

8.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter One presented the background and rationale for the study. The research aim and objectives were outlined. The chapter presented an overview of the research design and methodology, the significance, feasibility and the theoretical underpinning of the study.

Chapter Two presented a literature review of general perspectives on the origin and the role of provisioning assistance by support services in education. In this chapter, the history of South African education support services prior to 1994 presented organizational structure (2.2.1), provision of education support services (2.2.2) and provision of available resources (2.2.3).

The South African education support services after 1994 (2.3), which came up with many changes in education support services, are described and espoused as suggested by the NCSNET/NCESS (2.3.1). Policies forcing changes in the education system to accommodate all learners (2.3.2) were revisited. The new inclusive education system in South Africa (2.4) and the education support services at school and district levels (2.5) were also discussed.

Chapter Three presented the perspectives on DBSTs and ILSTs in South Africa in general and specifically in Free State. Role players in the DBSTs (3.2) and other

education institutions working together with DBSTs (3.3) were explored in depth. The functions and roles of the DBSTs and the existing educational support at district level (3.4) were given attention. The nature of ILST (3.5), policies giving birth to the ILST (3.6), the origin of ILST (3.7), structures of the ILST (3.8), building networks in the ILST (3.9), the establishment of ILSTs (3.10), the effective role of ILSTs at schools and the benefit of working in ILSTs (3.14) were also explored. The pre-referral intervention system (3.15) and the kind of support that the ILST should get from the DBST (3.17) were discussed in detail.

Chapter Four presented an ecosystemic approach to learner support. In this regard, the ecological theory (4.2) and the systems forming part of the environments (4.3) were looked at in detail. The discussion of Epstein's model of human development (4.4) was presented with aspects including help or hindering of development through the environment (4.4.1), the ecology of the child (4.4.2), the ecology of the family (4.4.3), and the developmental perspectives of the ecological model (4.4.4). The last discussion in this chapter was based on the course of child development: Risk and protective factors.

Chapter Five outlined the empirical research design and methodology. The problem statement (5.2) and the aim of the study were first explained (5.3). The research design, including a literature review (5.4.1) and empirical study (5.4.2), was also explained. The quantitative data collection procedure (5.4.2.1), designing of a questionnaire (5.4.2.1.1) as well as the reliability and validity (5.4.2.1.2) was discussed. The qualitative data collection procedure (5.4.2.2), interviews (5.4.2.2.1), trustworthiness in qualitative research (5.4.2.2.2), population and sampling (5.4.2.3), was then presented. Lastly, data analysis (5.5) and ethical aspects (5.6) were explained.

Chapter Six presented the data analysis and interpretation. In this regard, the data analysis for the questionnaire (6.4) was firstly presented under the demographic data of the participants (6.4.1) and secondly, analysis of data on the current situation about the provisioning support services at district level (6.4.2) was discussed.

Chapter Seven proposes a model for the DBSTs to implement the changed roles in the Free State Department of Education. The concept “model” was clarified and advantages and disadvantages of models were also explained. This was followed by the model design and the types of models. The proposed model for the DBSTs to implement the changed roles was discussed. Finally the strengths and limitations of the proposed model were presented.

Chapter Eight concludes the study by presenting the summary, findings and recommendations. The next section presents the findings from literature and empirical research with regard to research aims, so as to indicate how each aim was realized.

8.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The research findings from literature and empirical research presented in this section relate to the research aims as stated in Chapter One.

8.3.1 Findings from research aim #1: the changed role of DBSTs after White Paper 6

The literature review on the changed role of the DBSTs revealed the following:

- The South African education support services prior to 1994 were more aligned to the individualistic clinical approach whereby the deficit of the learners was not seen to be in the education system, but within themselves (see 2.2). Thus learners were seen as having problems within themselves and not with the system. During interviews, some of the participants confirmed that before the introduction of White Paper 6 the individual clinical approach was practiced (see Question 12).
- Furthermore, it was noted that DBSTs did not exist before 2001 and by that time the support services was fragmented and not well co-ordinated. This fragmentation and the lack of co-ordination of the education support services were seen in the following:

- Different education support services were managed by racially segregated education departments and service provision was characterized by glaring inequalities and inconsistency, a lack of co-ordination and a lack of national focus and clarity on the nature of support services (2.2.1). It was further discovered that the decent provision of support services was for those education departments serving advantaged learners, while support services for learners from other population groups were inadequate or non-existent. This finding was also confirmed by participants as they indicated that Child Guidance Clinics were strategically located to serve White learners and Black learners were predominantly getting inadequate support services (*cf.* Question 1).
 - The provision of support services in education was minimal and unequally provided to different race groups (2.2.2). The limited resources were disproportionately distributed across different departments, causing the more privileged sector of society to receive the best services, and the most disadvantaged sectors had little or no access to any support services. In Question 7, these findings were clearly supported by expressions of participants during interviews.
 - Bias of the education departments in provision of available resources was also visible (2.2.3). More resources were allocated to White schools and few were shared with Black education.
- The publication of White Paper 6 brought the changed roles of education support services with the introduction of DBSTs. The members of these teams should provide resources at schools and surrounding communities that could meet challenges and they also had to help with advice and interventions. The primary function of these DBSTs was to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications (2.5.2). Participants also show that the DBST members are fully aware of their changed roles as mentioned in White Paper 6. This is supported by their explanations as stated in Question 10.

- The Resource Centres as part of the DBSTs through integration as stated in White Paper 6 have two primary aims, namely: to provide improved educational services to their targeted learner populations, and to provide specialized professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to designated full-service and other neighbourhood schools (3.3.1).
- The DBSTs are central to service delivery since their primary function is to evaluate and, through supportive teaching, build the capacity of all education institutions to recognize and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs (3.4). Furthermore, the collaboration of the formal and informal support in the community with all education institutions and any other government departments is the priority of the DBSTs. Responses from Questions 10, 14, 15 and 16 support this finding as they (DBST members) are aware of the importance of involving all stakeholders when addressing barriers.
- Even though the DBST members fulfilled some of their roles, they lacked the competency required, including a range of skills and experiences such as highly specialized skills practised by people with specialist training and generic skills that are relevant to addressing barriers to learning (3.5).
- The coordinated professional support services that draw on expertise in further and higher education and local communities, targeting special schools, full-service schools, primary schools and other educational institutions, should have been carried out more easily than in the past (3.4). In this regard, the fact is that DBST members encounter difficulty in successfully fulfilling their changed role with regard to learner support. Thus, the role changed from non-existing to existing, but is still not being successfully carried out. For instance, the failure of the DBSTs to perform their role may be caused by the inadequate support from the National Department (see. Question 11). This supports the view of the researcher that there are problems that exist with the implementation of the changed role. Most of the participants confirmed that there were problems on

implementation of the changed roles. They mentioned many barriers that hindered the service delivery, for instance in Questions 2, 7, 11, 12 and 20 to mention the few.

8.3.2 Findings from research aim # 2: whether infrastructures are available to support the changing role

Generally, it was found that infrastructures display real and strong prospects for service delivery in education support services. This is based on the fact that responses indicated remarkable frequency counts with regard to “disagree” on all questions related to the availability of infrastructure.

On whether infrastructure is available to support the changed role, the following findings were made:

- **Transport**

The DBST members’ responses mainly indicated that problems concerning transport prevail at the district offices. The fact that, in this item, frequency counts were 68.4% for “disagree”, indicates that there is not enough transport for professional staff from the DBST to visit schools. This can reveal that there is no regular visit to schools from the side of DBST members, and provision of education support services to schools is poor. It was also noted that transport is not available for learners who need support services to the Resource Centres. This is confirmed by 82.9% of the responses that “disagreed” with this item (*cf.* Question 6). It has been found that learners experiencing barriers to learning who are expected to travel daily to the Resource Centres and those who are supposed to be transported from schools to Resource Centres to access the services do not have transport at all. During interviews most of the responses indicated that transport is a serious problem in education support services. The issue of transport has been confirmed by expressions indicated in Questions 5, 6 and 21.

- **Facilities and infrastructure**

With regard to facilities and other infrastructure, the researcher found that there are inadequate facilities and infrastructures for the provisioning of the education support services at district level. This is also indicated by 69.7% of the responses that “disagreed” with the item (see Table 6.7). The shortage of facilities and infrastructures causes the DBST members not to render adequate support to schools, and where they exist, rendering of support services is minimal. During interviews most of the participants claimed that shortage of facilities and poor infrastructures are the problems for most of the DBST members (*cf.* Questions 7).

- **Human resources**

A lack of human resources has been marked as another problem that makes the implementation of the changed role more difficult. 84.2% of the responses “disagreed” that there is enough human resources at district level. Furthermore, some of participants explained that shortage of human resources is a serious problem and also the available human resources are also overburden by workload (see Question 8). The available human resources show that they are overburdened by their work load and, as a result, little attention is given to schools and learners who need support. Furthermore, it has been noted that in the DBSTs there is no administrative support staff members who assist in keeping records of learners’ needs, support given and progression.

The analysis of the data on ranking themes also indicated that indeed the availability of infrastructures is very troublesome for the DBST members to perform their changed role. This is based on the mean of 3.0 (*cf.* graph 6.1) which indicates that the highest number of responses “disagreed” with the item.

The responses from the interviews also justify that inadequate infrastructure is a serious challenge to them as they are unable to perform their duties because of it (*cf.* Question 7). They mentioned that some of the infrastructures that hamper their provision of

education support services are shortage of transport, equipment, buildings and human resources.

8.3.3 Findings from research aim # 3: the elements that hamper the provision of support by the DBSTs

On the elements that hamper the provision of support by the DBSTs, the following findings were made:

- DBST members' responses mainly indicated that there is an existing gap between the National Department of Education, provincial level and DBSTs. This is brought about by the frequency counts of 76.3% that "disagreed" that the DBST get adequate support from the National Department of Education. Feedback from the interviews also highlighted the issue of support from the National Department of Education (*cf.* Questions 8 and 11). All the participants indicated that this kind of support is inadequate (*cf.* Question 8). This may be because it takes long for policy matters from the NDoE to reach the district level, which impacts the effectiveness of the implementation of the White Paper 6 and education policy with regard to inclusion.
- Some of the responses in question 26 show that in some districts the organization and the management of most DBSTs by DCES in the directorate of inclusive education was poor. This focused the attention of the researcher on the fact that leadership in this directorate is not functioning well.

8.3.4 Findings from research aim # 4: measures that can be taken to ensure that the changing role can be carried out and implemented successfully

Regarding the measures that can be taken to ensure that the changing role can be carried out and implemented successfully, the participants came up with some suggestions (*cf.* Question 28):

- More human resources

- Make transport available
- Better cooperation between stakeholders
- Regular meetings
- Clear programme of action
- More commitment from people in leadership positions
- Make more physical resources available
- Improve communication between the National Department of Education and the directorate of inclusive education at provincial and district level.

8.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS UNIQUE TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The following is the summary of unique findings emerged from the qualitative data:

- There is a belief that direct and indirect support is needed in provision of education support services. The DBST members benefited from these approaches as they managed to help individuals as well as group of learners, teachers and parents.
- The indirect service delivery approach is dominant. Thus many of the DBST members employed this approach as it helps them to provide services under the extreme challenges that hamper the implementation of their roles.
- The direct service delivery approach is usable to individual learners. Learners with barriers to learning are also attended individually by the DBST members to address some of the barriers that hinder the effective learning.
- Direct and indirect service delivery approaches are now practiced in the context of inclusive education.

- Teachers and schools are uncertain about giving support. In most of the responses, it was noted that the majority of learners experiencing barriers to learning are at mainstream schools as recommended by White Paper 6, but the problem is that they lack support and this withholds them from coping in their education. The lack of support may be attributed to poor functioning of ILSTs and lack of resources to name a few.
- Lack of co-operation between schools and DBST. Some of the participants shown that DBST members are struggling to meet the ILST members and in some of the schools they are not welcomed during their visits.
- Support given to learners experiencing barriers to learning is minimal. Even though DBSTs capacitate ILST members on identification and addressing barriers to learning, it seems teachers are not providing quality and adequate support to these learners.

8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigates the changing role of district-based education support services in establishing an inclusive school in the Free State Department of Education. Based on the findings of this research regarding problems encountered with regard to effective implementation of the changed role of DBSTs, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations:

- The findings show that there was no effective coordination and that communication was poor. Efforts should be made by the National Department of Education to support the DBSTs at district level through building the capacity of the provincial coordinators, so as to strengthen the communication and support they render to DBSTs. The support and communication provided by the province needs to be strengthened.
- The processes of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the White Paper 6 needs to be strengthened. The process of implementing White Paper 6

from districts, provincial to National level should be closely monitored and continuous evaluation be done for further improvements.

- The White Paper 6 encourages collaboration between private sector, public sector and communities. The findings also indicated that collaboration was not happening. Therefore, I recommend that focus should be on advocacy on disability and inclusive education and collaboration since the Department of Education does not have all the expertise needed to support learners with barriers to learning. Since interaction of stakeholders is a problem, the teams should be assisted in their effort to interact with all the stakeholders.
- Literature shows that infrastructure (transport, water, electricity, telephone, buildings, vehicles, etc.) needs to improve. Attention should be given to infrastructure for the implementation of learner support programmes.
- Interviews showed that there is an existing conflict between DBSTs and schools. Since the DBST are distrusted in schools, the DECS or leaders of DBSTs need to pay attention to harmonising relations between schools and DBSTs as far as learner support is concerned.
- Findings indicated that DBSTs are poorly organized. Development in this regard would enhance and strengthen leadership in learner support.
- It is clear from the findings that some district did not have Resource Centres. Resource Centres should be accessible to all learners experiencing barriers to learning. There is a need for Resource Centres to be increased and strengthened. All districts should have full-service schools so as to accommodate learners with mild to moderate support needs. All Resource Centres must also be equally equipped to avoid demographic disparities claimed by the participants and should be located within reach of all learners experiencing barriers to learning.

- The SBSTs as they were constituted used designated teachers as a coordinators as required by the White Paper 6. The findings showed that those teachers were generally overloaded with work and as such, saw their involvement in SBSTs as add-on tasks. I recommend that more teachers specializing with Life Orientation, Life Skills and Inclusive Education be employed.

8.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this research can be generalized only to the five education districts in the Free State Province. Districts in other provinces may have other contextual factors that differ from those in other districts in the country.

It seems as if participants in the research understood the concept “resources” differently. For example, some see a therapist as a Human Resource who could assist learners with special needs, while others do not regard Human Resources as part of “resources”. The researcher base this observation on the fact that, in the same district, some participants answered “none” when asked what resources they have, while others specified therapists and social workers. Unfortunately this problem did not feature in the pilot study.

8.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Considering the changing role of DBSTs and findings of the empirical study, it would be important and interesting to conduct research into the following:

- The influence of resources on the provisioning of education support services at district level.
- Research could be undertaken to investigate the collaboration of DBSTs with other stakeholders in education support services.
- Research on network of support rendering for learners who experience barriers to learning within the education district could be undertaken.

- Research could be undertaken to investigate the effective role of learning support educators in the Resource Centres as part of the DBSTs in providing support to learners who experience barriers to learning.
- Research could also be undertaken to investigate the possible causes of mismanagement of DBSTs by leadership.

8.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the synopsis of the entire study in terms of findings and recommendations, as well as limitations of the study and areas for further research. The entire study investigated the changing role of district-based education support services in establishing an inclusive school setting. From the literature review it was clear that this phenomenon has received little or no attention in education. The changing role was suggested in White Paper 6 while its practical implementation was ignored. These research findings prove that DBSTs are experiencing difficulties in implementing the changed role.

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ANNEXURE A

Permission to conduct research

ANNEXURE B

**Notification to all districts in Free State Department of Education to
conduct an intended research**

ANNEXURE C
Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

TOPIC: The changing role of district-based education support services in establishing the inclusive school settings: an ecosystemic approach

This questionnaire must be completed by members of district-based support teams only. Kindly answer the questions by marking a cross (X) in the appropriate block.

SECTION A

A1	Your age	20 – 30 years	31 – 40 years	41 – 50 years	50 and older
A2	Your experience in support services	1 – 3 years	4 – 8 years	9 – 15 years	16 years and more
A3	Your qualifications	Diploma	Degree	Hons Bed	Masters and Doctorate
A4	Professional qualification	Yes	No		
A5	Please specify professional qualification				

SECTION B

Read each of the following statements and indicate your opinion by marking a cross (X) in the appropriate block.

		Fully agree	Agree	Disagree	Completely disagree
1.	There is a resource centre in the district.				
2.	The resource centre is well equipped.				
3.	The resource centre is within easy reach of schools in the district.				
4.	The staff at the resource centre are well trained, professional people.				
5.	Enough transport is available for professional staff from DBST to visit schools.				
6.	Transport is available for learners who need support services to the resource centre.				
7.	The facilities and infrastructures are adequate for the provisioning of education support services at district level.				
8.	There are enough human resources in education support services at district level.				
9.	There are administrative support staff members who could assist in record keeping of learner needs, support given, and progression.				

10.	There is cooperation between the support staff members.				
11.	The DBST get adequate support from the National Department of Education.				
12.	Learners who experience barriers to learning and development are always included at mainstream schools.				
13.	Learners with special educational needs are still at special schools.				
14.	DBST staff members received adequate training from the Department of Education.				
15.	DBST is highly recognized by community members.				
16.	DBST staff members always involve parents when they identify and address barriers to learning and development.				
17.	DBST is ready for addressing barriers to learning and development.				
18.	The DBST staff members meet the ILSTs members frequently.				
19.	DBST is able to obtain community help to support learners at schools.				
20.	DBST instills cultures that promote learner support at schools.				
21.	The team is able to provide enough education support to schools at rural and historically disadvantaged areas.				
22.	Providers of education support services at district level are working as a team around common issues.				

23. Please name very briefly what resources are available at the resource centres

24. What kind of special educational needs are accommodated at mainstream schools? Please collaborate.

25. What kind of special needs can, according to your opinion, not be accommodated in an inclusive school setting? Please motivate your opinion.

26. Describe the organization of the management of most DBSTs.

27. What are possible shortcomings regarding its function and management?

28. Give suggestions for improving the role of DBSTs.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND WILLINGNESS TO PARTAKE IN THIS RESEARCH!!

ANNEXURE D

Interview guide for DBST members

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DBST MEMBERS

1. How long have you been working with learners with special needs?
2. What was your role in the past regarding learners experiencing barriers to learning who were not accommodated at special schools?
3. How do you perceive your changed role with regard to the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in the mainstream?
4. According to your perception, how did the role of the DBST change over the last couple of years?
5. Are the available resources at your Resource Centre adequate to enable you to carry out the expected duties according to Education Policies regarding Learner Support?

ANNEXURE E

Form for informed consent for DBST members

RESEARCH PROJECT

Form for Informed Consent for DBST Members

Part 1

As part of my studies for the PhD degree at the University of North-West (Vaal Campus) I have to complete a research project for which I need your assistance. The research consists of the following:

The changing role of district-based education support services in establishing inclusive school settings

All I am asking of you is:

To complete a questionnaire

Part 2

It is important that you also read and understand the following general principles:

1. Participation in the research is completely voluntary and no pressure, however subtle, may be placed on you to take part.
2. It is possible that you may not derive any benefit personally from your participation in the research, although the knowledge that may be gained by means of the project may benefit other persons or communities.
3. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time, without stating reasons, and you will in no way be harmed by so doing. You may also request that your data no longer be used in the research.
4. You will be given access to your own data upon request.
5. You are encouraged to ask me any questions you may have regarding the research and the related procedures at any stage. I will gladly answer your questions.
6. If you are a minor, the written consent of your parent or legal guardian is required before you participate in this research, as well as (in writing if possible) your voluntary assent to take part – no coercion may be placed on you.
7. The project objectives are always secondary to your well-being and actions taken will always place your interests above those of the project.
8. Should you at any time feel uncomfortable with the questions you have to answer, whether in an interview or in the completion of a questionnaire, please inform the DCES immediately. Nobody will blame you in any way for withdrawing from participating.

Title of the research project:

The changing role of district-based education support services in establishing inclusive school settings: An ecosystem approach

I, the undersigned

Full names & Surname

have read the preceding premises in connection with the project, as explained in **Part 1** and **Part 2** of this informed consent form, and have also heard the oral version thereof and I declare that I understand it. I was given the opportunity to discuss relevant aspects of the project with the researcher and I hereby declare that I am taking part in the project voluntarily.

Signature: Date:

ANNEXURE F

Interview guide for former professionals from Child Guidance Clinic

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FORMER PROFESSIONALS FROM CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC

1. How the Education Support Services was provided by:
 - a. Child Guidance Clinic?
 - b. Principal?
2. How did they handle the whole process of support?
3. How did they handle children that have problems?
4. Were professionals in Child Guidance Clinic enough to provide support?
5. Were child Guidance Clinic accessible to all learners?
6. Who in the school handle the process of the support system?
7. Was infrastructure available to enhance the provision of the school support system?
8. Does the National Department of Education support the Child Guidance Clinic?
9. Does the National Department of Education co-operate and communicate with the Child Guidance Clinic?
10. Were parents involved in the learner's support?
11. Was community involved in learner support?