THE DIFFICULTIES THAT TEACHERS EXPERIENCE RELATED TO TEACHING IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM SETTINGS

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Bella Rakholile, and my father, Samuel Rakholile.

This work is also dedicated to my mother-in-law, Susan Dhlamini, and my family.

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Thanks to the Lord for being with me through this study.

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SUMMARY

In chapter one, the problem question which this study wishes to address, namely whether teachers can deal with the demands made by teaching in an inclusive classroom setting, is highlighted.

Chapter two highlights important aspects regarding inclusive education. The nature of an inclusive classroom, the difficulties teachers can experience when teaching in such a setting, and ways to support teachers teaching in inclusive classroom settings, were explored.

In chapter three, the empirical research design used in the study is discussed. By means of a qualitative study in the form of focus group interviews, the perceptions of teachers regarding teaching in inclusive classroom settings were explored.

The data analysis in chapter four provides the evidence of the difficulties that teachers experience when dealing with teaching in inclusive classroom settings. Among others, some of these difficulties are: illiteracy, dealing with too many slow learners in a class who require time and individual attention, a variety of learning barriers, a lack of parental involvement, a lack of appropriate resources to accommodate learners with special learning needs and a lack of knowledge and skills among teachers to identify learners with special needs and to provide appropriate support to these learners.

Chapter five concludes the study with recommendations on how to support teachers who experience difficulties when teaching in inclusive classrooms.

OPSOMMING

In hoofstuk een word die probleemvraag wat hierdie studie wil aanspreek uitgelig, naamlik om te bepaal of onderwysers die eise wat deur onderrig in inklusiewe klaskamers gestel word, kan hanteer.

Hoofstuk twee spreek belangrike aspekte rakend inklusiewe onderwys aan. Die aard van inklusiewe klaskamers, die probleme wat onderwysers ervaar wanneer daar in inklusiewe klaskamers onderrig word en maniere waarop onderwysers ondersteun kan word tydens onderrig in inklusiewe klaskamers, word toegelig.

In hoofstuk drie word die empiriese navorsingontwerp wat vir die studie gebruik is bespreek. Deur middel van 'n kwalitatiewe studie met behulp van onderhoude wat in fokusgroepe gevoer is, is die persepsies van onderwysers rakende die onderrig in inklusiewe klaskamers vasgestel.

Die data-analise en interpretering in hoofstuk vier verskaf bewyse van die probleme wat onderwysers teenkom wanneer onderrig in inklusiewe klaskamers geskied. Van hierdie probleme behels onder andere die volgende: ongeletterdheid, 'n groot aantal stadige leerders in 'n klas wat baie tyd en individuele aandag verg, 'n groot aantal faktore wat stremmend op leer inwerk, gebrekaanouerbe trokkenheid, onvoldoende leerderondersteuningsmateriaal om in die spesiale behoeftes van leerders te voorsien en 'n gebrek aan kennis en vaardighede by onderwysers om leerders met spesiale leerbehoeftes te identifiseer en gepaste ondersteuning aan te bied.

Hoofstuk 5 sluit die studie af met aanbevelings oor hoe om die probleme wat die onderwysers in inklusiewe klaskamers ervaar, die hoof te bied.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The concept "inclusion" occupies a central place in the education policies of South Africa (SA, 2001:5). It is policy for all learners to receive their educational programmes in a regular classroom (O'Donoghue & Chalmers, 2000:210). Inclusion is about representing the differences among learners and meeting the needs of all learners. The main focus of inclusion is to overcome barriers that prevent learners from being effective in their learning within mainstream education (SA, 2001:17).

International trends and practices have had a profound impact on education in South Africa and have necessitated a move away from the unequal discriminatory provision of special needs of the apartheid era. In addition to the international guidelines, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, provides a binding framework for legislation in education (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:70). This has resulted in the intended inclusion of learners with special education needs in mainstream schools becoming a priority on the agenda of the National Department of Education (DoE). The long term goal of the ministry of education is to gradually establish an inclusive education and training system according to which learners who experience mild to moderate disabilities can be accommodated in mainstream schools. Special schools will be upgraded so that they can provide a high quality service for learners with severe and multiple disabilities and to act as resource schools for mainstream schools (SA, 2001:36).

Even before the Education White Paper 6 (SA, 2001) was issued, a pilot project for inclusion, the "Resource and Teacher Development Project: Towards building an inclusive education and training system" was in place. The project was facilitated by the Danish International Development Aid (DANIDA) and is managed for the Department of Education by the Joint

Education Trust (JET). The overall objective of the project is to support implementation of the government policy on the development of an inclusive education and training system that will benefit learners experiencing barriers to learning and participation. The project emphasizes teacher development through the development of training and resource programmes to enable existing teachers to meet the full range of diverse needs in the learner population.

When talks about inclusion first began, the general public including teachers and parents, expressed anxiety and concerns (SA, 2001:66). Research has shown that these feelings, at least on the part of the teachers, are not peculiar to South Africa. In the United States of America (USA) studies revealed that general education teachers were not supportive of "full inclusion" and teachers who had not been participating in inclusive programmes expressed very strong negative feelings about inclusion, feeling that decision-makers were out of touch with classroom realities (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000:92). Later research showed that, as teachers got more involved in inclusive education, their attitudes also change (Avramidis *et al.*, 2000:132, Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:84).

Research has indicated that teachers often face a number of challenges pertaining to the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in the mainstream schools. These include feeling unprepared to teach learners who experience barriers to learning, lacking the skills in teaming and collaboration, which is imperative in inclusive classrooms (Avramidis *et al.*, 2000:192). Daane, Beirne and Lathan (2000:253) found that teachers who had been involved in inclusive education for two years did not support the view that learners who experience barriers to learning could benefit learners in the general education classroom, that inclusive education increased the instructional load of the teacher and that it created classroom management problems. They also had problems in adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN). Many teachers reported academic and behaviour problems and learners with emotional and

behaviour problems were indicated as causing more concern and stress to the teachers (Avramidis *et al.*, 2000:98).

The findings in the literature are unanimous about the importance of the teacher in successful inclusion initiatives. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes and feelings with regard to what is happening in the classroom are of crucial importance, while Avramidis *et al.* (2000:210) maintain that mainstream teachers should be receptive to the principles and demands of inclusion for it to be effective. A number of studies have been conducted regarding teachers' responses to inclusive education. However, what is absent from the research on inclusion is an acknowledgement of the socially constructed nature of inclusive education, and that teachers' feelings, attitudes and sense of challenge will be simultaneously constructed and restricted by discourses available to them regarding inclusion. The question of interest that arises from the above is: How are teachers dealing with the demands made by teaching in an inclusive classroom setting?

Based on the above-mentioned this study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of an inclusive classroom?
- What are the difficulties that teachers experience when teaching in an inclusive classroom?
- Why do teachers experience difficulties when teaching in an inclusive classroom?
- How can teachers be assisted in dealing with difficulties arising from inclusive classroom settings?

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study is to assist teachers in dealing with the demands made by teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

The overall aim was operationalised as follows:

- by determining the nature of an inclusive classroom by means of a literature study;

- by determining the difficulties that teachers experience when teaching in an inclusive classroom by means of a literature study and focus group interviews;

- by determining why teachers experience these difficulties by means of a literature study and focus group interviews; and

- by suggesting ways of assisting teachers to deal with the difficulties that arise from teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

1.3 METHOD OF RESEARCH

1.3.1 Literature Study

The library at the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, was approached to assist in conducting the research. Both primary and secondary resources were studied in order to gather information on inclusion and the difficulties that teachers experience when teaching in inclusive classrooms. The following key words were utilized to conduct a NEXUS search, as well as an EBSCO-host search: learning barriers; inclusion, mainstreaming, learning difficulties, learning disabilities and learner needs.

1.3.2 Empirical research

A qualitative research design was chosen. A qualitative approach was chosen because it is regarded as most successful when one desires to study any phenomena in its natural setting. It describes and analyses people's actions, beliefs, ideas and perceptions (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 1993:372; Fouche & Delport, 2002:268). In qualitative research, the reseacher is directly involved in the setting and interacts with the people (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:106).

This research therefore focused on a phenomenological study in which a particular phenomenon (inclusive teaching) experienced by teachers was

investigated. A phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand peoples' perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). The main aim of qualitative research is to understand the problem from the research participants' perspective. Qualitative phases of data collection and analyses are interactive research processes; these are not called procedures, but data collection and analysis strategies, techniques that are flexible and dependent on each prior strategy and the data obtained from that strategy. The purpose of qualitative research is to develop a concept or model, describe a situation or process, evaluate a programme, and contribute to large-scale research projects (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 1997:390)

1.3.2.1 Measuring instrument

The measuring instrument used by the researcher was focus group interviews. The researcher is of the opinion that it was a suitable data collection instrument for this study, as it saved time because several participants can be interviewed simultaneously. Furthermore, focus group interviews were chose, as people feel more comfortable talking in a group than alone, and interaction among participants may be more informative than individually conducted interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:146). Focus group interview methodology is more directed at and designed to explore specific topics or issues. Its analysis and interpretation can be very complex. Focus group interviews depend not only on the individuals, but also on the dynamics of the group as a whole (Greeff, 2002:75).

1.3.2.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprised of both primary and secondary teachers from the Sasolburg District in the Free State Department of Education. Due to time and financial constraints, three primary schools and three secondary schools were selected by means of systematic sampling (*cf* 3.4). For the purpose of the interview, the teachers of the primary and secondary schools were clustered into focus groups consisting of between five and seven members each (*cf* 3.4). In total, 36 teachers took part in the focus group interviews.

1.3.2.3 Pilot survey

In order to check whether the interview questions were understandable, a group of teachers (n=40) from the population (who were not part of the sample) were approached to check the questions for clarity and understanding. No problems were determined during this survey.

1.3.2.4 Data analysis

Specific themes which emanated from the interviews were identified. When the researcher analysed the data, it was primarily an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns among the categories. Qualitative analysis is a process of interim discovery analysis, developing coding topics and categories that may initially come from the data, and pattern seeking for plausible explanations (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 1997:390). Qualitative data analysis can assist in organizing numerous data sets and in assembling coded data. Results are presented as a narration of participants' stories or events, a topology, theme analysis, or grounded theory (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 1997:390).

1.3.2.5 Ethical aspects

The Free State Department of Education was approached for permission to conduct research in the sampled schools. The researcher met with the School Management Team (SMT) members of the identified schools to obtain permission for conducting the research at their schools. The teachers at the selected schools were given a choice as to whether they would like to be part of the research or not. It was stressed to all participants that the results would be kept confidential.

1.4 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

The study was feasible because there were sufficient literature sources available on the topic. The research was conducted in the Department of Education, Sasolburg District where the researcher is also involved as an

teacher at one of the schools, thus allowing for easy access to the research participants.

1.5 TERMINOLOGY

A detailed discussion of terminology central to the study will be done in chapter two. In the context of the study the following definitions of the concept will be applied. For the researcher inclusive education refers to learners with or without disabilities who attend the same school. The curriculum is adapted to suit the needs of each learner, irrespective of the learning disability the learner might have.

1.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The research is relevant to the current situation concerning the difficulties that teachers presently experience when faced with teaching in an inclusive classroom setting. The recommendations made can therefore assist teachers in dealing with these difficulties.

1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1: Orientation

Chapter 2: The nature of teaching in inclusive classroom settings

Chapter 3: Empirical research design

Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation

Chapter 5: Findings, conclusions and recommendations

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an orientation to the study with the aim of preparing the reader for the subsequent chapters.

The next chapter will present the literature review on the nature of teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURE OF TEACHING IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM SETTINGS

2.1 INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

Early Childhood Development completes an extraordinary period of seven years of post-apartheid and policy-making and policy-development outlined in Education White Paper 1 on Education and Training that began in the final quarter of 1994 (SA, 2001:4). It is, therefore, another post-apartheid landmark policy paper that cuts our ties with the past and recognizes the vital contribution that our people with disabilities are making and must continue to make, but as part of and not isolated from the flowering of our nation (SA, 2001:4)

The National Education Act, Act 27 of 1996 (SA, 1996b), requires the study of core subjects by all children and prescribes standard assessments at key stages of learners' schooling. The end result has been a slimmed down version of the National Curriculum and increased teacher flexibility in recognition of their responsibilities and superior knowledge of the learners in their classes. Learners who experience barriers to learning had also been the subject of detailed attention, resulting in far-reaching changes in the way they are viewed and educated (Ramjhun, 2002).

The government intends to establish national guidelines for statements of special needs and to speed up the assessment procedures. Special needs will remain one of the few responsibilities left with local authorities if, as the government hopes, grant-maintained schools become the norm. Local authorities will retain responsibility for assessing and issuing statements and will be given a new power to instruct grant-maintained schools to accept learners excluded from other institutions and to name grant-maintained schools on school attendance orders (Sandow, 1994:23).

The government's obligation to provide basic education to all learners and its commitment to the central principles of the constitution are also guided by the recognition that a new unified education and training system must be based on equality of education and training. In line with its responsibility to develop policy to guide the transformation that is necessary to achieve these goals, the Ministry of Education has prepared White Paper 6 for the enlightenment of all our social partners and the wider public. This policy framework outlines the Ministry's commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in particular to those learners who experience learning barriers or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate the diversity of learning needs, or who continue to be excluded from it (SA, 2001).

According to the constitution of South Africa (SA, 1996a), everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult education and further education. Everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at own expense, independent educational institutions that do not discriminate on the basis of race, are registered with the state and maintain standards that are not inferior to those at comparable public educational institutions. The Education Act, Act 27 of 1996 (SA, 1996b) affords all learners the legal right to access to a common curriculum. This important development for learners who experience barriers to learning entails risks as well as opportunities (Beveridge, 1995:1).

The education and training system must transform itself to contribute towards establishing a caring and humane society (SA, 2001:11), it must change to accommodate the full range of learning needs and the mechanisms that should be put in place in order to achieve this ideal. Particular attention should be paid to achieving these objectives through a realistic and effective implementation process that moves responsibility towards the development of a system that accommodates and respects diversity. This process will require a phasing in of strategies that are directed at departmental, institutional, instructional and curriculum transformation. It will also require the vigorous participation of our social partners and our communities so that social exclusion and negative stereotyping can be eliminated. It holds out great hope

that, through the measures that are put forward in this White Paper, thousands of mothers and fathers of some 280, 000 (SA, 2001:4) disabled children who are younger than 18 years and are not at schools or colleges, would be convinced that the haven for these children is not one of isolation in dark backrooms and sheds. Their place is with their peers, at schools, on the playgrounds, on the streets and in places of worship where they can become part of the local community and cultural life, and part of the reconstruction and development of our country. For it is only when these ones among us are a natural and ordinary part of us that we can truly lay claim to the status of cherishing all our children equally (SA, 2001:4).

Our constitution, Act 108 of 1996, founded our democratic state and common citizenship on the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom. These values summon all of us to take up the responsibility and challenge of building a humane and caring society, not for a few, but for all South Africans. In establishing an education and training system for the 21st century, we carry a special responsibility to implement these values and to ensure that all learners, with and without disabilities, pursue their learning potential to the fullest (SA, 1996a).

In building our education and training system, our Constitution provides a special challenge to us by requiring that we give effect to the fundamental right to basic education for all South Africans (SA, 1996a). It commits us to the fundamental right, "that everyone has the right to a basic education", including adult basic education (SA, 1996a).

This fundamental right to basic education is further developed in the Constitution in Section 9 (2), which commits the state to the achievement of equality, and Section 9 (3), (4) and (5), which commits the state to non-discrimination (SA,1996a). These clauses are particularly important for protecting all learners, whether disabled or not.

There is a need for changes to be made to the provision of education and training so that it is responsive and sensitive to the diverse range of learning needs. The importance of providing an effective response to the

unsatisfactory educational experiences of learners with special needs, including those within the mainstream whose educational needs were inadequately accommodated, needs to be addressed (SA, 2001:12).

Inclusion is advocated on the principle that learning disabilities arise from the education system rather than from the learner. Not with standing this approach, it makes use of terms such as *learners with special education needs* and *learners with mild to severe learning difficulties* that are part of the language of the approach that sees learning disabilities as arising from within the learner. The White Paper (SA, 2001) adopts the use of the terminology *barriers to learning and development.* However, the internationally acceptable terms of *disability* and *impairments* will be retained, when referring specifically to those learners whose barriers to learning and development are rooted in organic/medical causes (SA, 1996b:12).

2.2 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

In order to define inclusive education, it is necessary to unravel the concepts "inclusion", "mainstreaming", "barriers to learning" and "learning difficulties".

2.2.1 Inclusion

Inclusion is about recognizing and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities. It is about supporting all learners, teachers and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. It also focuses on the system that prevents it from meeting the full range of learning needs. This focus is on the adaptation of and support system available in the classroom (SA, 1996b).

In the past, regular and special education primarily operated as two separate and distinct enterprises. Today the philosophical and programmatic barriers that once separated these two disciplines are being dismantled. The steady movement of learners with disabilities into less restrictive settings requires regular teachers to teach a significantly more diverse classroom population. This process is commonly referred to as mainstreaming and reflects the least restrictive environment (LRE). To comply with the imperative of serving

learners in the LRE schools across the country, there is an attempt to establish procedures for maintaining at-risk learners and those with disabilities in the regular classroom (Choate, 1993:3).

Learners with disabilities experienced great difficulty in gaining access to education. Very few special schools existed and they were limited to admitting learners according to rigidly applied categories (SA, 1996a:9). Learners who experienced learning difficulties because of severe poverty did not qualify for educational support. The categorization system allowed only those learners with organic, medical disabilities access to support programmes. In an inclusive education and training system, a wider spread of educational support services will be created in line with what learners with disabilities require. This means that learners who require low-intensive support will receive this at ordinary schools (in this type of school there is only catered for learners without barriers) and those requiring moderate support will receive this at full-service schools (schools in which learners with or withou barriers are fulle integrated into the same class) Learners who require high-intensive educational support will continue to receive such support at special schools (schools for learners with physical or mental handicaps) (SA, 1996 a:15).

The term inclusive education has itself come to mean many different things, which can in itself create confusion. "Inclusion" is not a single movement. It is made up of many strong currents of belief, many different local struggles and a myriad forms of practice. The notion of an inclusive society is at the same time difficult to contest in moral terms. Inclusive education is not merely about providing access into mainstream schools for learners who have previously been excluded. It is not about closing down an unacceptable system of segregated provision and dumping those learners in an unchanged mainstream system. Existing school systems in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching expectations and styles, and leadership roles will have to change. This is because inclusive education is about the participation of all learners and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice (Clough & Corbett, 2000:7).

Inclusive education is a human rights issue. Many more learners can be included in the mainstream with benefits to everyone. Inclusive education also means disabled and non-disabled learners together in ordinary schools, colleges and universities, with appropriate networks of support. It also means enabling learners to participate to the best of their abilities whatever their needs (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:6). Inclusivity focuses on the curriculum, teaching support, funding mechanisms and the built environment, because learners, whatever their disability or learning difficulty, have a part to play in society after school. Education is part of and not separate from the rest of learners' lives. Disabled learners can be and are being educated in mainstream schools with appropriate support. All learners have an equal right to membership of the same groups as everybody else. People with disabilities or learning difficulties do not need to be separated or protected (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:6).

There are common themes between the integration of learners with special needs and the integration of racial minorities into mainstream schools. Educational apartheid is no longer accepted. The principle of equal rights has been enshrined in legislation. From this position, the argument progressed to insisting that all learners have a right, on moral and educational grounds, to attend a mainstream school unless all relevant parties agree that it would be in an individual's best interests to be educated in a special school or unit. The informed choice of parents is a key element in the case for allowing special needs children into mainstream education (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:7).

All learners can be regarded as having special needs of some kind during their school careers, and there are few of us who, when looking back at our own time as learners, cannot recollect particular instances where we experienced difficulties in learning or in social contexts. This does not imply, however, that we were necessarily judged by our teachers to be in need of special educational help (Beveridge, 1995:1).

It is clear that some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of support to be able to develop to their full potential. An inclusive

education and training system is organised so that it can provide various levels and kinds of support to learners and teachers (Ramjhun, 2002:21).

Inclusive education is not integration and is not concerned with the assimilation or accommodation of groups or individuals as victims of discrimination within existing socioeconomic conditions and relations (Barton, 1999:57). Inclusive education is not an end in itself, but a means to an end, the creation and maintenance of an inclusive society. The interest is with all citizens, their well-being and security. This is a radical conception. It is ultimately about the transformation of a society and its formal institutional arrangements, such as education. This means change in the values, priorities and policies that support and perpetuate practices of discrimination (Barton, 1999:58).

Inclusive education is the inclusion of learners with special needs in the general education process. This means that the learners with special physical, learning, emotional, mental and sensory needs are taught in the same classes as learners without disabilities. Inclusion is both a concept and a process. Procedurally, it is a replacement of learners with handicaps in the least restrictive environment in which his or her unique needs can be met (Choate, 1993:12).

Inclusion is planning for implementing procedures to effectively integrate learners with handicaps instructionally, socially and temporarily in a meaningful and educationally appropriate manner. For example, some studies suggest that learners with disabilities achieve greater gains, socially as well as academically, in regular rather than in special education programmes. In contrast, some investigations reveal no significant differences in performance as function of the classroom setting and report that the instructional strategies, rather than the setting, affect learner performance. However, others indicate that special education may be superior to regular classroom placement, and the short-term improvements in achievement and self-esteem evidenced by some learners upon entering the mainstream do not always last. There are many possible explanations for the mixed results of

the efficacy of mainstreaming. Firstly, schools and school systems vary in their view of mainstreaming (Choate,1993:13).

White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:16) explains inclusive education and training as follows:

- Acknowledge that all learners and youths can learn and that all learners and youth need support.
- Accept and respect the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and are an ordinary part of our human experience.
- Enable education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.
- Acknowledge and respect differences in all learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status.
- It is broader than formal schooling and acknowledges, that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures.
- It is about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners.
- It is about maximizing the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning.
- It is about empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning.

Most importantly, learners have a right to make their views known. They should be listened to and encouraged to participate in decision-making. Schools are required to maintain a register of all learners experiencing special educational needs and to publish a Special Educational Needs Policy,

detailing the arrangements for learners and the learners' responsibility (Ramjhun, 2002:18).

The special schools will be strengthened rather than abolished. Learners with severe disabilities will be accommodated in these vastly improved special schools, as part of an inclusive system. In this regard, the process of identifying, assessing and enrolling learners at special schools will be overhauled and replaced by structures that acknowledge the central role played by teachers, lecturers and parents. Given the considerable expertise and resources that are invested in special schools, these must also be made available to neighbourhood schools, especially full-service schools and colleges. It is outlined in White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:20) that this can be achieved by making special schools, in an incremental manner, part of district support services where they can become resources for all our schools.

Learners with special educational needs are to be recognized and not to be discriminated against in any way. Schools should be able to demonstrate that no learners have been less favourably treated on the grounds that they may experience special educational needs. They should also be able to admit the majority of children. Refusing to do so will be more difficult to justify, as schools will need to explore all reasonable steps to include learners. The expectation is that it should be very rare indeed for such steps to be exhausted and for the admission of learners experiencing special educational needs to be argued to interfere with the efficient education of other children or to be an inefficient use of resources (Ramjhun, 2002:10). The majority of learners with learning problems should be educated in neighbourhood schools alongside their friends (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:29).

Believing in and supporting a policy of inclusive education are not enough to ensure that such a system will work in practice. Accordingly, it needs to be evaluated carefully what resources are available within a system and how these existing resources and capacities can be strengthened and transformed so that they can contribute to the building of an inclusive system. It needs to be decided on where the immediate priorities lie and mechanisms should be

put in place to address these priorities first (Leadbetter, & Leadbetter, 1993:29).

This approach (to address barriers to learning and exclusion) is consistent with a learner-centred approach to learning and teaching. It recognises that developing learners' strengths and empowering and enabling them to participate actively and critically in the learning process. The approach is also consistent with the systematic and developmental approach to understanding problems and planning action. It is consistent with new international approaches that focus on providing quality education for all learners (Beveridge, 1995:27).

It is this approach that lies at the heart of White Paper 6: a determination to establish an inclusive education and training system as our response to the call to action to establish a caring and humane society, and recognition that, within an education and training system that is engaging in multiple and simultaneous policy priorities, key levers for change should be identified and put into place for successful South African models of inclusion (Beveridge, 1995:27)

2.2.2 Mainstreaming

The National Education Policy Act, Act 27 of 1996 (SA, 1996b), specifies that learners have special educational needs if they have learning difficulties which call for special educational provision to be made for them (SA, 1996b). A learner could however, be described as having or exhibiting learning difficulties because of inappropriate curriculum differentiation and insufficiently adapted teaching. The learner's needs can be best met in a special school or a unit attached to a mainstream school.

Mainstreaming is about getting learners to fit into a particular kind of system or to integrate them into an existing system. Mainstreaming is about giving some learners extra support so that they can fit in or be integrated into the normal classroom routine. Learners are assessed by specialists who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions, such as the placement of learners in programmes (SA, 2001:17).

Mainstream education entails inclusion of handicapped learners at regular schools and in educating them with learners who are not handicapped (Heward & Orlasky, 1980:71; Stephens, Blackhurst & Magliocca, 1998:1). Mainstreaming provides equal education opportunities to handicapped learners by placing them in the educational environment that best fits their needs.

2.2.3 Barriers to learning

Inclusive classrooms are characterized by learners who experience a variety of barriers to learning. In the context of White Paper 6 (SA, 2001) reference is made to the following barriers.

2.2.3.1 Societal barriers

The learning difficulties that can be observed in the classroom are often part of problems that started long before the learners came to school. If the learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds, they sometimes experience problems at school that are the result of problems in their home situations (Winkler, Modise & Dawber, 2002:17). The experiences children have at home and in the classroom affect each other all the time.

Learning difficulties that are caused by a disadvantaged background are very common in South Africa. Here are some general problems that can affect the ways in which learners learn:

- Coming to school hungry
- Experiencing a lot of violence
- Poor discipline at home
- Not understanding the language used in the classroom (Winkler *et al.*, 2002:2)

It has been well documented that learners living in poverty are at high risk of failing at school and in life. Poverty complicates life success and places learners at risk of failure for a variety of complex reasons. Poor nutrition, lack

of health care and low educational achievement perpetuate failure at school (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004:149).

Many learners grow up in environments that are viewed as threatening to their well-being, such as the socio-economic status of a community which can develop barriers to learning. For example, learners may find it impossible to concentrate on school work if they are very hungry or if they are cold. These learners usually dislike school; for them school is humiliating and failure inevitable (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:47)

According to Nieman and Monyai (2006:46), the following can be regarded as societal barriers which impact negatively on teaching and learning:

- Severe poverty.
- Late enrolment.
- Lack of early intervention programmes.
- Abuse, crime and teenage pregnancy.
- Violence in the neighbourhood and at home.
- A lack of basic amenities such as water, electricity and toilets.
- The home language differs from the language of teaching and learning.

2.2.3.2 Pedagogical barriers

According to Choate (1993:26), pedagogical barriers refer to the following: distractibility which interferes with on-task behaviour, insecurity in unstructured or changed learning situations that impedes performance, overcautiousness and distrust which create careful but slow learners, while impulsivity creates fast but careless learners. Low tolerance for frustration causes defeat when facing difficult tasks. Disruptive behaviour interferes with the learners' own performance as well as with others' performance. Group activities overstimulate some learners, while they intimidate others.

Inadequate actualization of the educational structure may cause inappropriate learner behaviour and learning problems, and problems in teaching may also develop when the didactical structures are inadequately actualized (Van Niekerk, 1986:14).

The teachers may also cause problems for the learners when they associate with the learners in an educationally purposeless manner by concentrating on the learners' mental development and neglecting the affective and normative aspects (Van Niekerk, 1986:12). Learners' language could become a barrier to learning. Learners who study through the medium of a language other than their home language struggle to cope with the linguistic demands of academic study.

Nieman and Monyai (2006:46) refer to the following as pedagogical barriers:

- Insufficient support of teachers to assist learners with barriers to learning.
- Inappropriate and unfair assessment procedures.
- An inflexible curriculum.
- Not enough time to complete the curriculum.
- Insufficient learning material and equipment.
- Not addressing the learning styles of learners.
- The language of teaching and learning is not the mother tongue.

2.2.3.3 Systemic barriers

Systemic barriers refer to the following:

- Lack of basic and appropriate teaching and learning support materials.
- Lack of assistive devices for learners with visual and auditive impairments.
- Inadequate facilities at school.

- Overcrowded classrooms (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:46).

2.2.3.4 Medical barriers

2.2.3.4.1 Cerebral palsy

Where learners have more specific physical impairments, their ability to interact with the environment will be limited in some way. However, because of the diversity of such impairments, it is difficult to generalize about the nature of the special needs that are likely to arise. If the impairment is limited to particular muscles or limbs, then learners' needs are primarily likely to be for therapy and care, together with special means of access to the curriculum. By contrast, where there is neurological damage, as for example in cerebral palsy and Spina Befida, this can lead to additional sensory and learning difficulties (Henderson & Sugden, 1991:76).

Cerebral palsy is a disorder of movement and posture. It is a non-progressive disorder caused by damage to the brain either before or during birth, or in early childhood (Engelbrecht & Green, 2003:76; Beveridge, 1995:41). This damage is usually associated with trauma at around the time of birth, such as lack of oxygen to the brain, although less often damage may occur later.

The most common forms of cerebral palsy are spasticity (characterized by stiff movements of the affected limbs) and athetosis (which result in writhing or jerky involuntary movements). The extent and severity of the motor impairments vary widely, as does the degree of any additional difficulty (Beveridge, 1995:42). Vision, hearing and speech can be affected, and there is an increased likelihood of epilepsy. Intellectual functioning may also be impaired, although this is not necessarily the case, and the educational attainments of some learners with cerebral palsy are as high as those of their able bodied contemporaries.

For learners with cerebral palsy, regular physiotherapy and care in seating and feeding are fundamental to well-being and comfort (Bax, 1990:88). Mutual respect between doctors, therapists and parents is also essential, and parents' views and expectations need to be understood. What doctors no

longer seek is to be seen by parents as experts who take over all responsibility for the learner.

One of the largest groups of learners with ambulation problems consists of those with cerebral palsy, which is caused by disease or injury that results in damage to the portion of the brain that controls motor movements. Usually this occurs prior to or during birth (Choate, 1993:89).

Ataxia is a form of cerebral palsy that results in balance problems. Learners with this condition frequently stagger and fall. Rigidity cerebral palsy causes limbs to be rigid and hard to bend. It appears as if they have "lead pipe" stiffness. Tremor cerebral palsy results in small rhythmic movements of the limbs. Most learners with cerebral palsy have more than one type (Choate, 1993:89).

According to Leadbetter and Leadbetter (1993:103) cerebral palsy affects learners mildly and severely. Learners with mild cerebral palsy are not affected intellectually at all and may only be affected in their fine motor skills or gait. More severe cases may fall into one of three classifications, which group learners according to the predominant movement disorder. These are ***spasticity,*** where limb muscles are tight, causing excessive contraction and jerkiness of movement; ***athetosis*** which is characterized by involuntary, purposeless movements and ***ataxia*** which refers to those learners who have little sense of balance and make uncoordinated movements. The learners with cerebral palsy may have associated problems. There may be difficulties with swallowing, which result in drooling and speech disorders, hearing loss or sight defects.

2.2.3.4.2 Spina Befida

Spina Befida is a congenital condition, characterized by a malformation of the vertebrae and spinal cord (Engelbrecht & Green, 2003:78).

Spina Befida is a condition in which damage occurs to the spinal cord during pregnancy. The resulting physical difficulties range from mild to severe. This depends on the location and extent of the damage, for it affects the child's

control of his or her body below that point. As a result, learners with Spina Befida can often have limited or no use of their lower limbs and may be incontinent (Henderson & Sugden, 1991:102). Many may also have hydrocephalus, a build-up of cerebro-spinal fluid in the ventricles of the brain, which if unchecked can lead to further damage, but which is usually controlled by the insertion of a valve or 'shunt' to drain the fluid into the bloodstream. As with cerebral palsy, the full range of cognitive competences among learners is affected by Spina Befida. It has also been suggested that those with hydrocephalus often have additional learning difficulties (Henderson & Sugden, 1991:102).

Every learner with Spina Befida is different. Some might have merely a slight weakness, while others may be severely paralysed in the lower parts of the body. The amount of special care needed to accommodate a child with spina befida in the mainstream class depends on the severity of the disability (Engelbrecht & Green, 2003:78).

2.2.3.4.3 Down's syndrome

Among the majority of learners with persistent and generalized delays in their development for whom specific causes have been identified are those with Down's syndrome which results from a chromosome 21. It is frequently associated with additional difficulties, among which the most common are heart defects and hearing loss (Cunningham, 1998:33). Although those with the syndrome share a number of distinctive physical characteristics, there is a far wider diversity in their development than is sometimes appreciated. In the past, the diagnosis of Down's syndrome was very often taken to imply severe subnormality, but there has been an increasing recognition of individual variation in the nature and extent of educational needs. That is, while some learners do experience severe learning difficulties, the difficulties of others have been assessed as moderate or mild. As a result more learners with Down's syndrome are being educated in ordinary schools.

Early educational intervention may do much to promote the development and learning of these learners (Cunningham, 1998). With appropriate help, some

children with Down's syndrome have acquired reading skills prior to starting school (Buckley, 1985). The cognitive difficulties of children with Down's syndrome are generally reported to lie primarily in consolidating and generalizing their skills, and where this is so, they require carefully planned and structured activities to facilitate their learning (Beveridge, 1995:43).

2.2.3.4.4 Autism

Although the precise causes of this severe and complex syndrome are still unclear, research evidence points to an impairment of cognitive functioning (Frith, 1989:65). Learners with autism are typically described as having difficulties in communication skills and social relationships, and as showing inflexibility in aspects of their behaviour, which may become ritualized into fixed routines. Their speech can be echolalic, and the use of eye contact, gestures or facial expression, as well as the timing of conversational turn-taking, may all be affected (Beveridge, 1995:44). They often demonstrate a rather limited awareness of the intentions or moods of others and appear to have difficulty in making sense of their social environment. There is a wide range of variation among children with autism, and some may demonstrate exceptional skills in a specific area of development, such as in music, art or mathematical calculation. In most cases, though, they have significant and often severe learning difficulties.

2.2.3.4.5 Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a seizure disorder occurring in approximately 0.5 percent of the population, affecting about 1 million individuals (Haslam, 1996:91). A seizure is a chaotic and unregulated electrical brain activity, causing an alteration in consciousness and sometimes uncontrollable movements of the limbs and/or head. A learner who has experienced a single seizure is not considered to have epilepsy. The two main types of seizures, which should be familiar to teachers, are absence seizures and generalized tonic-clonic seizures (Miller & Valman, 1997:63).

Absence seizures (formerly called petit mal) occur most often between ages 5 to 10 years, are more prevalent in girls and last about 10 to 15 seconds

(Traisman, 1999:54). They can occur so frequently that they affect concentration, memory and school performance and may be misdiagnosed as a learner's lack of interest or tendency to daydream. Teachers should be alerted to the following symptoms of absence seizures:

learner stops activity, stares into space, is unaware of surroundings, does not fall down. Learners have no memory of the seizure (Miller & Valman, 1997:64).

Generalized tonic-clonic seizures (Formerly called grand mal seizures) are the most common and the most frightening form of epilepsy, affecting more than 75 percent of learners suffering from epilepsy (Miller & Valman, 1997:74). Often the student can predict that a seizure is about to occur minutes or hours prior to its onset by the warning symptoms, which may include a severe headache, a tired feeling or clouding of the senses (Haslam, 1996:35).

Usually epilepsy is identified before the learners enter schools, and so staff can be alert to the precautions that need to be taken. In the case of learners who have major fits staff should be forewarned and should ensure that they know how to provide or where to seek appropriate assistance. It is relatively easy for teachers to be trained to cope with fits (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:103).

2.2.3.4.6 Asthma

Asthma is one of the most commonly occurring diseases during childhood. There is evidence to suggest that its incidence is increasing, possibly because of the higher levels of environmental pollution. In most learners, asthma appears as laboured, wheezy breathing caused by a temporary spasm of the breathing tubes (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:104). When it is severe, it can be quite distressing to the child. Attacks may be brought on by a number of factors, the most common being allergic reactions. Other causes are viral infections, physical exertion and emotional or psychological upset. Although there is no direct link between asthma and a learner's educational progress, the attacks may cause the learner's health to suffer overall and therefore

performance in school may decline. Frequent or prolonged attacks may result in a high level of absence from school, which may affect the learner's educational progress (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:104).

2.2.3.4.7 Diabetes

Diabetes, known as insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus or juvenile onset diabetes, is a common chronic childhood disorder (Traisman, 1999:34). Each year there are 10 to 15 new cases per 100 000 youth under the age of 20 years. The onset of insulin-dependent diabetes tends to peak during the early school years and again in early adolescence. By the end of high school, one in 500 learners will develop this condition (Daneman & Frank, 1996:72). There is no cure for this life-threatening disorder which can result in acute and chronic complications. However, when diabetes is well controlled, learners can participate in most school activities. Teachers need to be alert regarding the following symptoms, which may indicate that the learners need immediate medical intervention:

- Abdominal pain and vomiting
- Abnormally fast breathing
- Dehydration
- Drowsiness and confusion which, without treatment, may be followed by loss of consciousness and coma (Miller & Valman, 1997:54).

Teachers should be provided with specific information regarding the learners with diabetes. This includes: dietary issues, testing requirements and specific symptoms of this disorder. They may play an important role in early detection, ensuring a safe and supportive classroom environment and helping the learners adjust to diabetes in the school setting (Daneman & Frank, 1996). Academic scheduling, curricular expectations and instructional and testing modifications may be needed to deal with learners who have poor school attendance, frequent hospitalization, or recurrent diabetes-related health issues in the classroom (Spinelli, 2002:55).

2.2.3.4.8 Visual impairment

Learners with visual impairments include the blind and weak-sighted. Teachers should take special note of myopia (near-sightedness) and hyperopia (far-sightedness). Another condition which can occur frequently is albinism. This is caused by a lack of pigment throughout the body and it manifests through an extremely fair skin, fair hair and even eyebrows and eyelashes. The skin and eyes of a learner with albinism is extremely sensitive to light. Albinism is often accompanied by refraction faults such as hyperopia and myopia (Nieman & Monayai, 2006:49).

Learners with visual impairments often bring limited experiences to the learning process. Although some exhibit advanced listening and speaking skills, many require extra concrete experiences, such as auditory and tactile examples, to expand and enrich concepts and vocabularies. The effort and time the learners need to form and decipher print interfere with reading and writing performance. They may make seemingly careless errors because of their reduced vision (Choate, 1993:33). Eye strain often leads to headaches, which can affect concentration and reduce the time available for studying. Learners with visual problems usually have reading problems. They read slowly and with difficulty. They need extra time for tasks and often lack self-confidence. They often feel reluctant to participate in class because they cannot judge when it is a good time to join the conversation (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:50).

Learners with visual problems do not appear to be any different from other learners. Learners with visual problems often lag below the grade level. This includes later entrance to school, excessive absence from school for those who need medical and surgical care, slowness in acquiring information due to the necessity of having to use large-type books or braille, and inappropriate educational programmess. The effect of visual problems on social and emotional adjustments will obviously vary with each individual. Some learners will accept their problems and make an excellent adjustment; others will have difficulty (Stephens, Blackhurst & Magliocca, 1998:51).

2.2.3.4.9 Auditory problems

Learners with a hearing impairment require hearing aids, adequate acoustics in the room and controlled levels of background noise. Their positioning for full class and group activities and the clarity with which their teachers communicate will all affect how successfully they can use their hearing (Beveridge, 1995:38).

A number of different forms of aid may be used which act to amplify those sounds that the learners are capable of hearing. Conventional aids pick up all the sounds within a limited range and amplify most of those that are nearest to the wearer. By construct, radio microphone aids allow for the selective amplification of the voice of the teacher who is wearing a microphone and operate over a much greater distance. In some cases, a 'loop' system may be installed round the perimeter of a room, which enables a better quality of sound to be received by those wearing aids (Webster & Wood, 1989:93). There has been a long-standing debate about which means of communication should be the primary focus in teaching learners with severe hearing impairments. Some favour oral methods, which emphasize the medium of the spoken word, whereas others advocate the use of signing. The major educational disadvantage for children with hearing impairments derives from limitations in their language experiences. The potential affects of unresolved difficulties in this area are wide-ranging, involving personal, social and cognitive aspects of their learning at school (Webster & Wood, 1989:93).

Auditory acuity is the physical response of the ear to sound vibrations. Since the sounds in spoken language have different frequency levels, a learner may hear the sounds in certain syllables of a word clearly, but not others. When hearing is tested, learners' ability to hear is checked across the entire speech frequency range. If learners require more than the normal amount of volume to hear sounds at certain frequencies, they are likely to be experiencing a hearing loss. The most critical frequencies for listening to speech lie in the frequency range between 1,000 and 2,500 Hz, because most word sounds are within this range (Richek, Caldwell, Jennings & Lerner, 2000:42).

Even a moderate or temporary hearing loss can affect learners' ability to learn, especially phonics. When a learner cannot adequately hear speech sounds, the impact on language development and overall communication skills can be profound. A low frequency hearing loss may affect learners' ability to recognize vowel sounds, whereas a high frequency hearing loss may affect learners' consonant sound recognition skills (Richek *et al.*, 2000:45).

Most learners with hearing impairments must surmount at least two barriers: difficulty in learning from information presented orally and limited language ability (Choate, 1993:27). Their hearing problems limit their opportunity to acquire information from oral teaching and discussions. Limited language facility presents a more serious impediment because it may interfere with reading skills and the ability to manipulate concepts and ideas. Whereas hearing learners can glean incidental learning, broaden their experiences, expand their language and reinforce concepts and skills from what they hear, learners with hearing impairments are often denied such opportunities. They must strain to hear, draw from a limited vocabulary to express ideas, monitor their speech, struggle with subtle meanings and reauditorize the word needed to express their ideas. Many hesitate to interact verbally, thereby limiting both improvement and demonstration of achievement. They tend to tire quickly, but they require extended time to master language tasks (Choate, 1993:27).

When learners cannot hear adequately, it can inhibit development in vocabulary, grammar, phonics, ability to follow directions and verbal skills. It can interfere with social skills development and self-image. Hearing loss is most devastating when it occurs during the period of language acquisition from ages 2 to 4 (Spinelli, 2002:111).

According to Spinelli (2002:111), learners may experience numerous types of auditory processing problems. The following are mentioned:

Auditory discrimination problems are apparent when learners are unable to distinguish differences and similarities between sound symbols e.g. confusing toast for coast.

Auditory memory problems are evident when learners have difficulty storing orally presented information in the short-term memory for immediate use or reproduction e.g. difficulty repeating a series of letters, numbers, words, sentences, and so on.

Auditory figure-ground problems are noted when learners are unable to differentiate relevant stimuli (the figure) from irrelevant stimuli (the background, e.g. inability to focus on a specific word on a full page of sentences).

Auditory blending problems are suspected when learners experience difficulty combining separate sounds into a whole, e.g., difficulty blending the individual letter sounds c-a-t into the word cat.

There are approximately 49,000 deaf learners and 328,000 hard learners in our schools. Although many of these learners are educated in special classes and others are in residential schools for the deaf, the trend is for learners with hearing problems to be educated in regular classrooms (Spinelli, 2002:112).

Many hard of hearing learners can function quite adequately in regular classes with assistance of hearing aids. A large number of deaf learners can also be educated in regular classes with the assistance of supportive services. This is particularly true when learners are taught to read lips (speech read) at an early age.

According to Spinelli (2002:114) there are five primary types of hearing loss: conductive, sensorineural, mixed, functional and central.

Conductive hearing is caused by problems with the middle ear. This is the portion of the ear with the tiny bones, which conduct sound waves from the drum to the inner ear. Conductive losses may be the result of blockage of the ear canal by earwax or foreign objects and infection (Spinelli, 2002:114). Fortunately, most forms of conductive hearing loss are temporary and can be cured through medication or surgery.

Sensorineural hearing losses occur in the inner ear and are caused by damage to the cochlea or the auditory nerve that transmits electrical impulses to the brain. Some children inherit these problems; others are born with them as a result of some infection such as German measles contracted by their mothers during the first three months of pregnancy. Frequently they are caused by viral disease. Sensorineural loss can also be caused by some medications, aging and by loud noise. This latter condition is seen frequently among rock musicians who have been exposed for long periods of time to highly amplified sounds. Sensorineural hearing losses are quiet severe and are not medically or surgically treatable (Spinelli, 2002:115).

Mixed hearing losses are a combination of conductive and sensorineural losses.

Functional hearing losses are psychological in origin. There is no physical reason for their existence. Except with adults who may be "faking" a hearing loss in order to gain insurance or disability benefits, functional hearing losses seem to appear most in children between the ages of nine and thirteen (Spinelli, 2002:115). It is not known what causes functional losses, but it is expected that they occur to gain attention, explain poor performance or avoid responsibilities. Some may be precipitated by some sort of emotional or psychological problem.

Central hearing disorders are the result of damage to the brain. Specific causes are hard to pinpoint and treatment is long and difficult (Spinelli, 2002:116).

2.2.4 Learning and language difficulties

Learners with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language (Reid, 1988:30). These may be manifested in disorders like listening, thinking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. They do not include learning problems that are due primarily to visual, hearing or

motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance or to environmental disadvantage (Reid, 1988:30).

Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematics. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions or environmental influences and are not the direct result of those conditions or influences (Reid, 1988:31).

A learner has a learning difficulty if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of learners of the same age; and
- has a disability which either prevents or hinders the learner from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for learners of the same age at schools within the area of the local educational authority.

Learners who cannot spell common words despite repeated instruction and practice usually have serious deficiencies that complicate their ability to learn. Many of these learners also have significant problems in reading and in all the language arts. Both short-term and long-term memory difficulties may be involved. Some learners seem unable to connect letters and sounds meaningfully due to a lack of verbal recognition or language processing. Dyslexic learners experience letter and word reversals that seriously impede their spelling achievement. Learners who cannot spell common words may approach the spelling task haphazardly. They do not use a systematic procedure for learning unknown words, nor are they aware that such procedures exist (Choate, 1993:230).

Some learners with language impairments may also have problems in acquiring literacy skills. The identification of such problems is, of course usually made at schools. Reading difficulty is particularly prevalent among learners with special educational needs, and this is a reflection of the

importance attached to literacy. In many cases, poor progress in reading may be symptomatic of general difficulties in learning, but in others, it may provide evidence of a more specific educational need (Beveridge, 1995:45). That is, some learners experience significant difficulties in their reading, but not in other unrelated areas of their learning. Specific reading difficulty is often referred to as Dyslexia. The Dyslexia Institute (Beveridge, 1995:45) suggests that as many as one in twenty-five children may be affected. According to Beveridge (1995:45), what is not in doubt, however, is that there is a minority of learners whose reading attainments are significantly below the standards they achieve in other areas of learning, and who, like others with more general difficulties, require help and support both to build on their strengths and to meet their particular needs.

Cognitive and language development are interrelated in important ways, and therefore it is not surprising to find that learners with cognitive impairments also typically show delays and in some cases disorders. Such difficulties can also result from sensory impairments and, indeed, temporary language delays are not rare during the early years of childhood (Webster & McConnell, 1987:105). Infrequently, however, specific and longer lasting problems occur, not only in articulation, but also involving impairments in the interpretation of the sounds and grammar of speech or in the communicative functions of language. Where these difficulties are particularly severe, learners tend to receive at least part of their education in separate provision. When it is felt that a learner would benefit more from being taught with peers who are competent language users, they may be placed in an ordinary school context (Webster & McConnell, 1987:105).

There are three types of learning problems linked to language that are encountered in school-age learners. Language problems are those related to the understanding of language (receptive language). If a learner does not understand spoken language that is appropriate for the particular age or intellectual ability level of similar learners, a receptive language problem is present. Expressive language problems are those related to the production of language. Receptive language must be developed in young learners before

they can develop expressive language. It is when the gap between receptive and expressive language becomes great that the learners have an expressive language problem. The third type of language problem exists when a learner has a mixed receptive and expressive language difficulty. This occurs when the learner's receptive language is below intellectual ability level and the expressive language is even lower (Stephens *et al.*, 1998:39).

Learning problems can also be linked to speech problems. There are three primary types of speech problems exhibited by school learners. These are problems of articulation, voice and fluency. Learners with articulation may substitute, omit, distort, or add sounds to words. A number of voice problems can be identified. Some learners have pitch problems in which their voices may be too high, too low, or monotone. While these may not seem too troublesome on the surface, some girls with very low voices and boys with very high voices may be teased by other learners, causing emotional problems. Loudness is another voice problem existing in some learners. Some learners can develop "screamer's nodes" on their vocal cords that result in a harsh sounding voice. Those who speak too softly may create social problems for themselves. The third problem is disfluency, the preferred term for stuttering (Stephens *et al.,* 1998:41). Most learners go through a period where they are somewhat disfluent in their speech production. This development disfluency almost always disappears as children become more proficient in their speech production. Disfluencies that present problems occur when there is a repetition of words, syllables or sounds. Severe disfluencies that exist over long periods of time are very troublesome to learners and are quite difficult to cure. These generally require the services of a speech-language pathologist (Stephens *et al.,* 1998:41).

Many South Africans find it difficult to do well at school. Not all the learners who struggle at school have special educational needs or experience barriers to learning. Learners with special educational needs and learners who experience barriers to learning, imply learners who will not cope with their schoolwork unless they get extra help in the classroom. Some learners, for example, take a long time to do their work and need special encouragement

from teachers to help them complete learning tasks. Learners with special educational needs are often clever, but because they have difficulties with learning, they struggle to do well at school. Some learners have the potential to be good learners even if they struggle in class. They find their schoolwork difficult because they were not well prepared for the demands made on them in school. For one reason or another, they were not able to develop the skills needed in the classroom (Reid, 1988:321)

There are many learners who study through the medium of a language other than their home language. This implies their struggling to cope with the linguistic demands of academic study (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:48). Because English is spoken in so many ways in South Africa, different pronunciations often lead to misunderstanding. This can lead to incorrect spelling and the misinterpretation of contents (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:48).

2.3 DIFFICULTIES THAT TEACHERS EXPERIENCE IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM SETTING

The discussion above indicates that teachers who teach in inclusive classrooms will be faced with a myriad of barriers that, in some form, will affect the teaching and learning in the classroom. In this section, some of these difficulties caused by these barriers, will be highlighted.

2.3.1 Controlling the problem

There is a natural desire among those who teach learners with problems to know why a particular learner is having a problem. The staff of the school can do little to improve the situation and significantly influencing intellectual competence is outside their control. However, parent-teacher co-operation can, to some extent, influence a domestic situation or parental attitudes towards schools (Ainscow & Tweddle, 1998:6). The condition is difficult for one to diagnose reliably. It is not something, which can be rectified surgically and there is no evidence to suggest that learners with minimal cerebral dysfunction should be taught differently from those with it. Even if one were able to confirm that there is a problem, one would still be no better equipped to know how best to help (Ainscow & Tweddle, 1998:6).

2.3.2 Diagnosing the problem

There seems to be a tendency to speculate about factors which are largely beyond teachers' control. If this is true, why do teachers persist in seeking the cause? It is as if there is an implicit assumption that knowledge of the cause will lead directly to an understanding of what to do about it. This kind of approach resembles the medical model of diagnosis and prescription, and may have derived from that source. While it may suit medicine admirably, it seems to lead teachers up a series of blind alleys, and succeeds only in setting questions to which invariably there are no definitive answers and inadvertently focus attention on factors, which are outside teachers' influence (Ainscow & Tweddle, 1998:7).

In all classes there will be learners who learn more slowly than their peer group in most subject areas. There will also be learners who have problems with particular aspects of the curriculum or specific skills. There are no clearly defined procedures for deciding whether a learner has a learning problem or not (Stephens *et al.,* 1998:43).

2.3.3 Rash judgement

Each of us will, at many times in our lives, experience learning difficulties with particular subjects, skills or novel situations. There is an interactional problem between the learner and the learning environment in its broadest sense. It can simply be a lack of essential ability or a short-term individual learning problem. In this situation it would be inappropriate to identify the individual as having learning problems on the basis of initially poor performance. Yet, this is what often happens in parallel classroom situations, where such rash judgments lead to learners being too readily labelled as having learning problems as a result of a weak start with a new teacher or subject (Stephens *et al.,* 1998:39).

It can be illuminating, when trying to conceptualize what is meant by learning problems, to think back to recent situations in which it was found difficult to learn something. It helps to realize that the problem is not always within the learner and that it should not be assumed that certain learners have difficulty in learning all new skills (Stephens *et al.,* 1998:40).

2.3.4 Time

Regular class instruction is done in relation to the specific time and experiences in the regular class. The assumption is that those instructional activities in regular education will be determined by the regular curriculum (Stephens *et al.*, 1998:53). Due to the fact that classrooms are very often overcrowded, it makes it difficult for teachers to find the time to pay attention to individual learners who experience barriers to learning and to adapt the normal curriculum to address barriers to learning.

2.3.5 Adapting the regular curriculum

According to White Paper 6 (SA, 2001:19), one of the most significant and challenging aspects when dealing with learners who experience barriers to learning, is the ability to adapt the regular curriculum for these learners. Teachers who are dealing with learners who are experiencing barriers to learning need to adapt the regular curriculum with regard to the following aspects:

- the content;
- the language or medium of instruction;
- how the classroom is organized and managed;
- the methods used in teaching;
- the pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum;
- the learning materials and equipment that is used; and
- the assessment of learning.

The most important way of addressing barriers arising from the curriculum is to make sure that the process of learning and teaching is flexible enough to accommodate different learning needs and styles (SA, 2001:20).

2.3.6 Assessment

The South African Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) passed Resolution number 7 of 1998 to detail the duties and responsibilities of all teachers. Assessment has been fore-grounded as one of the essential responsibilities of teachers in the new curriculum (Jacobs, Gawe & Vakalisa, 2002:279)

Assessment should be designed to accommodate the needs of learners who experience barriers to learning (SA, 2002:5). Assessment tasks are to be adapted in such a way that the barriers are addressed from an early stage. The provision of alternative assessment is simply to accommodate the functional differences of some learners. The aim of this is to achieve a balance between meeting the individual needs while maintaining assessment validity and reliability (SA, 2002:9).

There are many practical ways in which teachers can adapt the way in which assessment is planned, structured and conducted. Learners should be given sufficient time to demonstrate competency in the assessment task (SA, 2002:8). Learners can be given more time to write and to demonstrate outcomes through all other methods of assessment (SA, 2002:8; Jacobs *et al.*, 2002:280).

Learners can have papers and instructions read to them and they can dictate their answer to a teacher who writes it down to be marked. Learners can also dictate their answers on a cassette. This can assist learners with reading and writing barriers, severe visual barriers and those with physical barriers that affect their hand movements (SA, 2002:9).

Assessment can include a practical component so that learners can demonstrate their competence without having to use language. This is a more suitable assessment of learners' competence if they have language problems (SA, 2002:9).

The logistical arrangement for adapting assessment strategies include the following:

- Audio-taping of assessment tasks
- Enlarging the print of assessment tasks
- Transcribing the assessment tasks into Braille (or appointing someone to do so)
- Supplying helpful devices or special equipment (tape recorders, dictaphones, computers etc.)
- Availability of a separate and suitable venue
- Sign language interpreters (SA, 2002:10,11)

2.4 ASSISTING TEACHERS TO DEAL WITH TEACHING IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM SETTINGS

Studies based on the impact of inclusion on teachers have captured the feelings and behaviour of teachers at different points in their involvement. Resources, time and training emerge as intervening variables in understanding the varying reactions and success of general teachers with inclusion. Teachers who feel adequately supported in their efforts to teach in inclusive classrooms are more likely to report being successful in their efforts (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998:86).

Teachers should draw on their creativity and, most important, learn from one another. New teachers should be encouraged to ask questions, however basic, of more experienced colleagues and to share in the expertise which has been built upon the valuable process of trial and error. Teachers, however rarely, discuss in detail with colleagues how they actually practise their profession. Wheels are perpetually being reinvented, sometimes within the same school, as teachers strive to cope on their own in teaching learners with learning difficulties (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:73).

Knowledge of curriculum is important; ways to modify the curriculum to adapt to the needs of handicapped learners in the regular classroom have to be invented (Stephens *et al.*, 1998:276). The curriculum assists in teaching basic

skills, class management, professional consultation and communication, teacher-parent relationships, learner-learners relationships, exceptional conditions, referral, individual teaching, professional values, specific teaching functions and competencies, and developing orientation strategies for mainstream entry (Stephens *et al.*, 1998:276).

The education department has constructed a social learning curriculum for the mentally retarded (Behr, 1971:28). The impetus for the construction of this curriculum was the realization that 20% to 35% of mentally retarded learners were unable to get employment (Behr, 1971:28). The curriculum is structured to support individualized learning. This approach allows teachers to work with individual learners. Through individual conferencing and mini-lessons, instruction can be targeted to learners with specific needs. To research a social studies topic, learners use all different levels of books and other resources, maps, photographs and computers. To demonstrate what they have learned from this information, learners can write a report, draw a picture, do an oral presentation and produce a video or a tape recording in whatever medium allows the learners to best convey the message (Behr, 1971:28).

The following factors are regarded as important when teaching in inclusive classrooms.

2.4.1 Classroom planning and management

Good classroom planning and management are of the utmost importance to enable teachers to cope with learners who experience learning difficulties. There is a need to analyse the teaching processes more thoroughly and certainly to look at the teaching outcomes in more detail. Examining and implementing teaching styles to suit such learners will undoubtedly improve teaching for all learners. The teacher has to be an expert and to use specialist technical equipment and approaches (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:27).

Mainstream teachers can develop their skills and feel more able to cope with such teaching challenges once they have experimented, tried out their ideas, listened critically to other practitioners and honestly evaluated the outcomes.

New teachers should visit their local special schools and seek advice and ideas on particular problems, approaches and practical solutions. The challenge is to produce a curriculum which is adaptive to the needs and strengths of individual children and also allow for their particular interests and needs (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:28).

Teaching to address the special needs of learners is the ultimate extension of mixed-ability teaching, aiming to remove the need for segregation in a single classroom. To do so, is to extend the concept of normality to cover learners with learning difficulties. It also implies that one should offer an appropriate and challenging learning environment to all learners ensuring that, in particular, learners with learning difficulties make progress (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:29).

Wolfendale (1994:46) advises that one should be cautious in assigning labels to learners. It is more productive to see a learner's educational needs in terms of how well they are being met by the curriculum and adopted teaching approaches.

Learner needs should inform the planning of work so that full account is taken of the learner's knowledge, skills, understanding and behavioural characteristics. Learning can only be effectively supported where a well-planned and constantly evaluated curriculum exists. Needs that will require provision other than that normally available within the mainstream system, should be clearly defined (Wolfendale, 1994:45).

An understanding of where the learners are in terms of their learning is important, as this will determine the experience that the learners need to be offered. Teachers need to discover what the learner already knows and can do, what has been done before, what works well, how to plan for this, what resources will be needed, how to assess learning, how to review the learning to inform the future planning, what to know now about the learners (Hurst, 1991:72). Teachers plan for the arrangement of the learning environment based on this information. Without accurate information about the learners, the curriculum quickly becomes dominated by adult ideas, but with this

information it is possible to construct a learning environment in which individual learners can pursue their own purposes in play, exploration and other ways (Hurst, 1991:74).

The appropriate method of delivery of the curriculum is dependent, however, upon a far broader understanding of learners, namely an understanding of their social and emotional development, their interests and life-style. Records of curriculum subject attainment alone are of limited use to teachers planning future learning programmes, because they do not provide reasons for the level of attainment of a learner nor do they explain problems of attainment (Wolfendale, 1994:47).

Teachers should be alert to those factors within the school which can add to or alleviate the difficulties that learners experience. Teachers are to plan and organize their teaching in a way which is responsive to individual needs. They need to develop different expectations of different learners (Beveridge, 1995:73).

Successful inclusive classrooms do not just happen. They require certain conditions. According to Wade (1999:47) this happens by doing the following:

- Enable learners to discover for themselves.
- Have learners create engaging work with peer groups.
- Ask learners questions.
- Encourage the learners to challenge themselves.
- Encourage critical thinking.
- Provide a variety of examples and experiences.
- Discuss learners' own thinking strategies with them.
- Share the relevance and usefulness of a topic.
- Reflect with the learners.

- Set meaningful and challenging instructional goals.
- Devise ways for learners to transfer knowledge from concrete to more abstract.
- Guide instruction through scaffolding behaviour.
- Allow learners to be actively involved in their own learning.

2.4.2 Administrative support

The administrative responsibility for the education of learners with disabilities and special needs usually rests with the school principal who manages the budget, implements policy, assigns and supervises staff, and ensures that standards of services are met (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:60). Learners with disabilities are included in regular programmes, and to ensure that programmes are provided with the necessary support services, supervision and administration, the role and responsibilities of central office personnel and school principals in their relationship with learners, must be clarified (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:60).

2.4.3 Teacher support

In order for teachers to cope with inclusive classroom settings, Beveridge (1995:105) gives the following advice:

- Take ownership for all the learners in the class.
- Be a model and monitor to other teachers.
- Be open to dialogue, and be willing to ask for help.
- Be a risk taker and support each other as teachers.
- Participate in professional development.
- Work within teams to solve problems.
- Understand and value parental involvement and knowledge.

- Involve learners in supporting one another.
- Believe that learners do have the ability.
- Maintain a balance between home and school.
- Be an orchestrator who coordinates a flexible, connected, caring, safe environment with boundaries.
- Be a leader who demonstrates that all learners belong.

Most schools (excluding school in the South African context) will have a designated member of staff, often referred to as the special needs co-ordinator whose role it is to develop, co-ordinate and review the provision that is made (Beveridge, 1995:108). The role will be designed with two aims in mind: not only to arrange and monitor interventions for those pupils who experience learning difficulties, but also to prevent such difficulties from arising unnecessarily (Beveridge, 1995:108). Designated staff members will usually be expected to co-ordinate the identification and assessment of learners with special educational needs, develop appropriate resource materials, help colleagues plan specific teaching programmes and evaluate their effectiveness, oversee the monitoring of the learners' progress, and liase and consult with school staff, support agencies and the learners' parents. The task will also include a general briefing to raise colleagues' awareness of special educational needs and to work with them to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all learners, to contribute to the development of the school's assessment and recording system, and to identify appropriate organizational strategies, timetabling arrangement and resources, to meet the full range of learners' needs (Beveridge, 1995:108). Furthermore, they have to understand and support staff members because it is generally accepted that all teachers experience problems at some time or another. Support teachers at special schools can be invaluable sources of inspiration and ideas, who can also liaise with teachers at other schools. Schools that have welcomed the concept of teacher self-support groups, can gradually build a repertoire of approaches which work for them in the sense that they suit their natural style

and achieve progress with most learners (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:64).

2.4.4 Learner\Peer Support

According to Boyham (1992:47), learners themselves can be a source of support in an inclusive classroom. They should remember to treat others as they would want to be treated, and offer support to oneanother. They should welcome new learners into their classroom by introducing them to their friends and find things to do with their friends that will include the new learners. As connected observers, learners can guide teachers to find solutions to problems.

2.4.5 Family\Parent Support

The family of a learner with special educational needs can also assist in his/her education.

Boyham (1992:45) indicates the following:

- Support teachers by participating in decision-making on how to support the future of the child.
- Involve the child with special needs in and out of school.
- Help bridge the relationship outside of school, be an active parent in all school activities, not just those your child is involved in.
- Be patient and understanding- it takes time to change and tob e committed to open, honest, positive dialogue.
- Promote inclusion on a high level by modelling inclusion in community life. Model the kind of guidance, acceptance, protection and love for your own child on others.

Parents can be partners who can support and extend the educational effort of teachers, learners and the community. They can explain the expectations of

the school to their son/daughter and can help explain their son/daughter to the school (Boyham, 1992:45).

It seems clear that less direct forms of parental support are likely to remain as a significant influence on learning throughout a child's schooling. Children's learning or behavioural difficulties at school are frequently ascribed in part, if not primarily, to their home circumstances, and schools may more readily view parents as part of the problem rather than as a potential source of support in promoting their children's progress. Parental interest, support and encouragement of learning can be crucial factors in children's progress at school (Mortimore & Blackstone, 1982:15).

Active collaboration can be seen as the major way in which parents can be involved in their children's education. Where parents and teachers work together with a positive focus on learners' learning and development, this can do much to enhance home-school relationships (Beveridge, 1995:116). Parents should be seen as key participants in the assessment and decision-making about provision to meet their children's educational needs. Special educational needs can best be met where teachers and parents aim to establish a relationship of reciprocal support (Beveridge, 1995:116).

Parents can provide valuable support in the classroom, helping learners to practise skills that need to be reinforced. Obviously, such additional input needs to be managed by the teachers and used in moderation if the classroom is not to become swamped. Parents can spend time reading to and with their children, not only to reinforce teaching methods, but also to share in the fun that books can bring to a child. Parents can ask how they can work with their children at home to assist the teachers (Solity & Bull, 1987:61).

Parents are required to gather detailed information about their child through structured observation. During the week, parents record the child's progress on a daily basis (Ainscow & Tweddle, 1988:190). Parents need to have continuous involvement and input into all aspects of the special education process (Choate, 1993:7).

According to Gous and Mfazwe (1998:50) parents can also be of assistance to the class teachers in the following ways:

- Their knowledge of their child is invaluable when teachers draw up a suitable school or class programme.
- They can be involved in their child's assessment and should be consulted at every level.
- They can be included in their child's education by teaching them how to reinforce skills learnt at school.

2.4.6 Curriculum Support

Early fears that a minority of learners would automatically be exempted from the National Curriculum emphasized a continuum between ordinary and special educational provision. It is essential that the full range of individual needs be taken into account when drawing up the curriculum plans and that the implementation of these plans should be sufficiently flexible to allow maximum participation by all learners. Within the official documentation concerning curriculum plans, the needs of learners with difficulties are primarily restricted to access for those with physical or sensory impairments (Beveridge, 1995:28).

The task group of the National Curriculum on special educational needs has provided advice to schools on wider aspects of the implementation of the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum may be formally modified or even not applied, for individual learners who have special educational needs. Exceptions can be made to any or all of the requirements of the National Curriculum by adapting schemes of work and using appropriate teaching and curriculum planning strategies (Beveridge, 1995:29).

The National Curriculum encourages teachers to share their experience with colleagues, and to decide how best to cope with its demands (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:37).

There is still work to be done in South Africa on whether one particular pedagogy is more sensitive than others. The National Curriculum Statement assumes the use of a wider repertoire than that of chalk and talk. Much more work is needed both on analysing existing teaching practices and modelling alternative teaching approaches on teachers (Chisholm, 2002).

2.4.7 Advisory and support services

The aim of this service should be to develop the general quality of special educational provision by giving advice and support to teachers, and to help individual learners by working with their teachers to overcome learning and behavioural difficulties (Moses, Hegarty & Jowett, 1998:216). The advisory services work with groups of schools, giving support in the identification of special educational needs and in appropriate methods to meet those needs, as well as providing advice on links with other professionals. They will also work with groups of schools, providing advice and support to the children, their parents and their teachers (Moses *et al.*, 1998:216).

2.4.8 Social support services

Social service departments should be involved more extensively with families and wider neighbourhood networks. They can provide information to schools, which is vital in meeting special educational needs, and may in addition help to promote liaison with homes and the local community (Beveridge, 1995:112). Social service departments have a responsibility to inform and consult with School Based Support Teams (SBST's) if they have any concerns about the educational welfare of a learner. They also have duties regarding the provision of services for those learners, to provide care or supervise activities outside school hours and during the school holidays (Beveridge, 1995:112).

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the concept inclusion, highlighted the difficulties teachers experience when teaching in inclusive classrooms and suggested ways in which the difficulties can be dealt with.

The following chapter focuses on the empirical research design of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology that was applied in this research. It focuses on the aims of the study, the research design which includes instruments, population and sample, validity and reliability, the method of data collection, pilot testing of the interview schedule, administration procedures of the data collection instrument and the methodology for the analysis and interpretation of data. Each of these aspects will be explained in the subsequent sections.

3.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study is to assist teachers in dealing with the demands made by teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

The overall aim was operationalized as follows:

- by determining the nature of an inclusive classroom by means of a literature study;
- by determining the difficulties that teachers experience when teaching in an inclusive classroom by means of a literature study and focus group interviews;
- to determining why teachers experience these difficulties by means of a literature study and focus group interviews; and
- by suggesting ways in how to assist teachers to deal with the difficulties that arise from teaching in an inclusive classroom setting.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Aims of the research design

The aim of any research design is to select and utilise the methods and techniques that the researcher considers imperative for achieving the aims and objectives of the study. There are several research methods cited in literature which researchers employ for the specific kind of research to be undertaken (Eisner, 1998; Moss, 1996; Wolcott, 1994). It is difficult to find one single research method which is suitable for carrying out every type of research problem at all times. According to Creswell (2003:16), there are clusters of other factors that implicate the choice of research methods for any given research problem, such as the nature and dynamics of the problem being researched, costs and time. As such, it is mandatory that a specific research problem be solved through a relevant research methodology (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004:29). For these reasons researchers must consciously and purposefully select and utilize only those research methods that would permit a better, convenient and successful attainment of the specific research aims (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:32). This study is not an exception and therefore the research method and techniques, considered by the researcher to be relevant, are presented in the section that follows.

3.3.2 Design type

A qualitative research design was used in this study. Qualitative researchers believe there isn't necessarily a single ultimate truth to be discovered. There may be multiple perspectives held by different individuals with each of these perspectives having equal validity or truth (Creswell, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Qualitative research is based on a naturalistic, phenomenological philosophy that views reality as multilayered, interactive and shared social experience interpreted by individuals. Depending on its use, researchers plan the study by deciding which and how many people will be studied and how, when and where they will be studied. Qualitative research presents facts in a narration with words and is more concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives.

Qualitative research was chosen, as it would enable the researcher to gain insight into the reality of the difficulties that teachers experience in inclusive classrooms and to determine the causes of the difficulties by means of personal perception and viewpoints.

As the researcher wanted to understand an experience from the participants' point of view, a phenomenological study was chosen for this research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:144). The researcher wanted to understand the perceptions and perspectives of teachers regarding a particular situation, namely teaching in an inclusive classroom setting.

3.3.3 Validation of the research design

Validity addresses the following questions: Do researchers actually observe what they think they observe? Do researchers actually hear the meanings that they think they hear? Validity refers to the extent to which the explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:404). The validity of the research is supported by the fact that the research took place in a real-life setting. This is seen to be more valid in the sense that it yields results with broader applicability to other real-world contexts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:99). The researcher is of the opinion that the results obtained from this research could bear relevance to other contexts where inclusive education is practiced. The researcher also seeked the opinion of colleagues in the field to determine whether they agree or disagree with the conclusions made by the researcher. The conclusions of the study were also taken to the research particiapants to determine if they agree with the outcomes of the study.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

As stated in section 1.3.2.2, both primary and secondary teachers from the Sasolburg district in the Free State Department of Education, participated in the study. By means of systematic sampling three primary and three secondary schools were chosen for the research. The six schools were selected according to a particular interval. The names of all the schools in the population were scrambled and it was decided that the first three schools on

the list of primary and secondary schools respectively (N=438) would be selected at intervals of ten. This type of sampling was chosen on the basis that the individual units (various schools) within the population may be similar with respect to the characteristics of inclusive education (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:204). In each of the chosen schools, six willing teachers who could relate to the topic were requested to become part of the research. Thirty six teachers ultimately took part in the research (*cf* 4.2.1).

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

3.5.1 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews are group interviews. Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic (Greeff, 2002:305; Krueger, 1998:36). The researcher asks focused questions in order to encourage discussion and expression of differing opinions and points of view. These interviews are conducted several times with different individuals so that the researcher can identify trends in the perceptions and opinions expressed, which are revealed through careful, systematic analysis (Bim, Hague & Vangelder, 1990:89). The researcher creates a tolerant environment in the focus group that encourages participants to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns, without pressurizing participants to vote or reach consensus (Krueger & Casey, 2000:4; Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999:4).

The aim of the interviews was to obtain primary information from the subjects who were selected to participate in the study regarding teaching in inclusive classroom settings. Due to the nature of the study, the researcher asked numerous open-ended questions. The answers given by the respondents were recorded verbatim by means of a tape-recorder.

Furthermore, the researcher wanted to gain first-hand in-depth information from the research participants in order to understand their everyday experience regarding teaching in inclusive classroom settings. The researcher was not only interested in what the research participants had to say, but also in how and why they said it. Such depth of involvement and

observation was required to enable the researcher to form a holistic view on the feelings and desires of the research participants, which were critical regarding the items of the interview schedule.

3.5.2 Reasons for using focus group interviews

The researcher used focus group interviews for the following reasons as indicated by Greeff (2002:306):

- Data can be collected within limited time.
- Ideas, views and perceptions of participants can be verified and synthesized through the discussions.
- Focus group interviews provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of participants.
- The role of the interviewer is confined to that of initiating discussion, rather than playing the directive role. In this way, participants take the major responsibility for stating their views and drawing out the views of others in the group.
- The interactions that take place in focus group interviews stimulate participants to state feelings, perceptions and beliefs that they would probably not express if interviewed individually.

3.5.3 Planning the focus group interview

Focus group interviews need careful planning with respect to participants, the environment and questions to be asked (Greeff, 2002:309). Using a multifaceted approach and well-thought-out questions, which are primarily open-ended, allows the participants freedom to respond from a variety of perspectives. There are four basic steps for conducting focus group interviews – planning, recruiting and conducting the group, as well as analysing and reporting (Morgan & Krueger, 1998:12). If possible, and if permission is obtained from the participants, the researcher should record interviews on tape or video (Smit, 1995:17).

Before conducting the interviews the researcher obtained permission from the Department of Education and the School Management Teams (SMT). Schools selected were given a programme with the dates and times the interviews would take place, together with the letter defining the purpose of the research project.

3.5.4 Participants

It is important for the researcher to create conditions for easy productive conversation and to ensure that participants are comfortable talking to one another. They also serve the researcher's goal (Kingry, Tiedje & Friedman, 1990:124). Therefore it was necessary for the researcher to see to the right group composition of each focus group. This would generate free-flowing discussions that contain useful data. In this case, all the participants in the various focus groups were colleagues who were well acquainted with one another, and participants were selected on the basis of their willingness as wel las on the basis of the fact they they work in inclusive classroom setting son a daily basis. The researcher was of the opinion that this would make it easier for them to discuss a problem which was similar in their working circumstances.

3.5.5 Number of focus groups

Focus groups usually include six to ten participants. This group size allows for everyone to participate while a range of responses is being elicited (Morgan & Krueger, 1998:71).

For this reason, six focus groups were identified with five to seven interviewees (depending on the school) each (*cf* 4.2.1). Each member had a chance to respond to the various questions asked.

3.5.6 Group facilitation

In focus groups, the facilitator can either be an experienced person in conducting a research or the researcher him/herself. The facilitator should be comfortable and familiar with group processes. The facilitator should possess

a curiosity about the topic and the participants. The group facilitator should be skilled in group processes, and feel comfortable and familiar with this process. The expression of different opinions should be encouraged and group members should be helped to be more specific in their responses. The reasons underlying particular viewpoints should also be explored (Kingry *et al.*, 1990:125). The focus group should emphasize the information the researcher wishes to obtain, rather than be driven by the needs of group members (Cohen & Garrett, 1999:361).

The researcher was the facilitator during the interview. The first interview was difficult for the researcher, because it was her first time conducting an interview. During the second and following interviews, the researcher was familiar with the interview process and no problems were encountered. The researcher succeeded in encouraging the participants to express their views, as well as to supply reasons for their responses.

3.5.7 Developing the questions for the focus group

Kingry *et al.* (1990:124) suggest that questions should be based on a review of the literature. When developing the questions, "Why?" questions should be avoided and questions should be kept simple. Caution should be taken not to give examples (Morgan & Krueger, 1998:31-35).

Concerning the reliability of the questions asked during the interview, a number of aspects were considered. Questions were formulated on the basis of the literature review. The questions were pre-tested by the researcher and the supervisor, as well as during a pilot study to check for clarity and understanding (*cf* 1.3, 2.3,3.6).

The researcher asked questions in a conversational manner. Questions were limited to a single dimension and the language was familiar to the participants.

3.5.8 Conducting focus group interviews

When conducting focus groups, the researcher has to be relaxed, in control, friendly, having fun and getting participants to tell everything about

themselves. According to Morgan and Krueger (1998:15-20) the guiding principles of facilitation are as follows:

- Be interested in the participants and show positive regard.
- Be a facilitator, not a participant.
- Be ready to hear unpleasant views.
- Accept that you cannot facilitate all groups.

Before the researcher conducts the group, he/she needs to be prepared mentally. The risk of unexpected pressures that might limit concentration should be minimized. The researcher must be familiar with the questioning route and be ready to listen and think. Ensure that equipment is in working order and available, and that the interview room is ready (Morgan & Krueger, 1998:15-28).

In a brief time the facilitator should create a thoughtful, tolerant atmosphere, provide the ground rules and set the tone of the discussion (Morgan & Krueger, 1998: 15-28). It is important to make all group members feel that their contributions are valued and that there are no wrong answers (Kingry *et al.*, 1990:124). At the end of the session it is helpful if the facilitator summarizes the main points of view briefly, seeks verification and expresses gratitude for participation (Nyamathi & Shuler, 1990:1285).

Before conducting the interviews the researcher made sure that the tape recorder was working and in a good condition. The researcher welcomed the participants and told them about the purpose of the interview. Permission was requested from the participants to tape their responses. The participants were informed that no responses would be taken for granted and that each response was worthwhile to the researcher. At the end of the interview, the researcher summarized the focal points that emerged from the discussion, and thanked the participants. During the interview, the researcher made field notes of non-verbal behaviour, as this could be supportive of the verbal comments regarding the topic.

3.5.9 Field notes

Field notes were taken by the researcher during the focus group sessions. Specific attention was paid to non-verbal behaviour such as eye-contact, posture and gestures. This could provide very supportive information regarding the dispositions and attitudes of the participants regarding the topic.

3.5.10 Analysing the data

The analysis and interpretation of focus group data can be very complex (Greeff, 2002:318). The aim of analysis is to look for trends and patterns among various focus groups. In analysing the data, the researcher should consider the words, context, internal consistency, frequency of comments, extensiveness of comments, specificity of comments, what was not said, as well as finding the "big idea" (Morgan & Krueger, 1998:31). The dynamics of the group as a whole should also be taken into account. Drawing together and comparing discussions of similar themes and how these relate to the variation between individuals and between groups is very important (Greeff, 2002:319)

Due to the fact that focus group interviews were held separately at the schools, the data was captured and presented verbatim in table format according to the respective interviews (*cf* 4.2.2). From the table, themes were developed. As such, the data collected was decoded, analysed and interpreted.

Furthermore, data was organized question by question according to the question-sequence on the interview schedule. For every question on the interview schedule, the views of all participants were presented in table form for the purposes of analysis and interpretation.

3.5.11 Strength and weaknesses of the focus group interview

The strength of focus groups is the ability to produce concentrated amounts of data on precisely the topic of interest. The comparisons the participants make between one another's experiences and opinions are valuable sources of

information (Morgan & Krueger, 1998:13, 15). The group helps to uncover a dynamic emotional process; focus groups create a fuller, deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Kingry *et al.*, 1990:125).

The weakness of focus groups is that they can be quite costly and require researchers who are skilled in group processes. Bias may be a problem. Findings can also not automatically be projected onto the population at large (Nyamathi & Shuler, 1990:1284).

3.6 PILOT STUDY

In order to check whether the interview questions were understandable, a group of teachers (n=40) from the population, who were not part of the research group, were approached to check the questions for clarity and understanding. No problems were determined during this survey.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research design for the study was presented.

The next chapter will focus on the data analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the analysis and interpretations of the perceptions and views expressed by the interviewees who participated in the research during the focus group interviews.

Biographic information followed by the responses to the interviews (*cf* 4.2.2) data and the analysis and interpretation of the data based on the interview responses and field notes, (*cf* 4.3) are provided.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

4.2.1 Biographic information

The following responses were received regarding the biographic information of the responses.

Table 4.1: Gender of respondents

	Male	Female	Total
Focus group 1	0	5	5
Focus group 2	2	4	6
Focus group 3	3	3	6
Focus group 4	4	1	5
Focus group 5	0	7	7
Focus group 6	2	5	7
Total	11	25	36

This data is presented graphically in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents

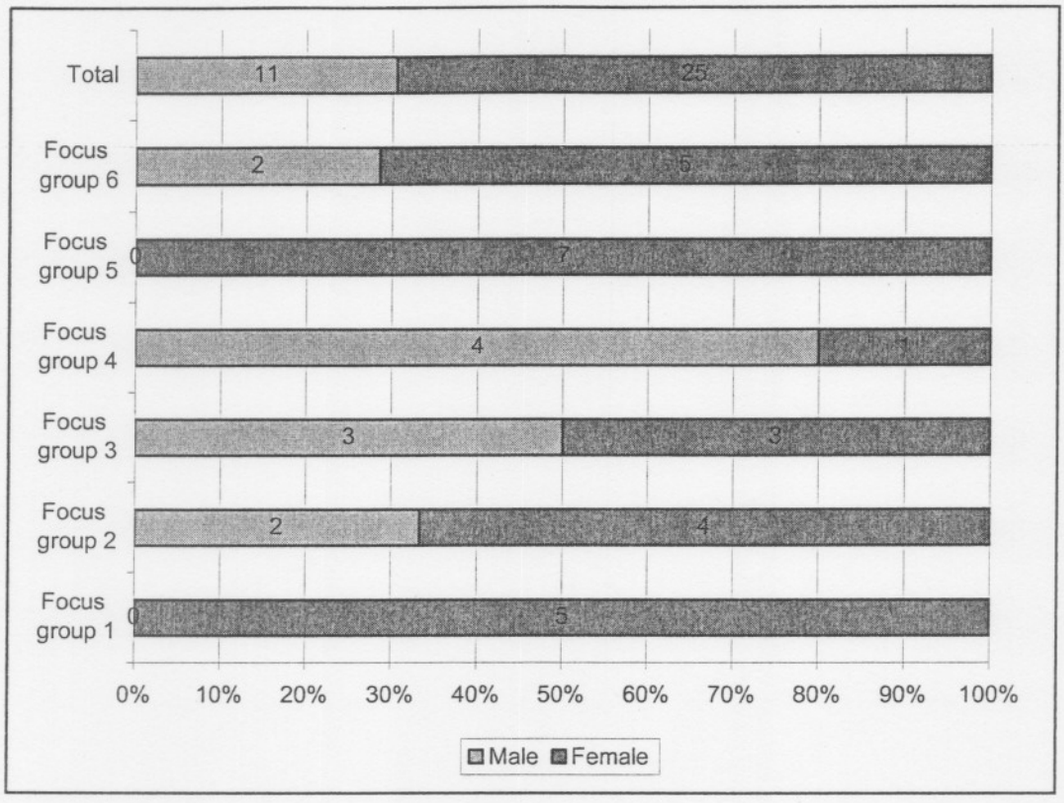
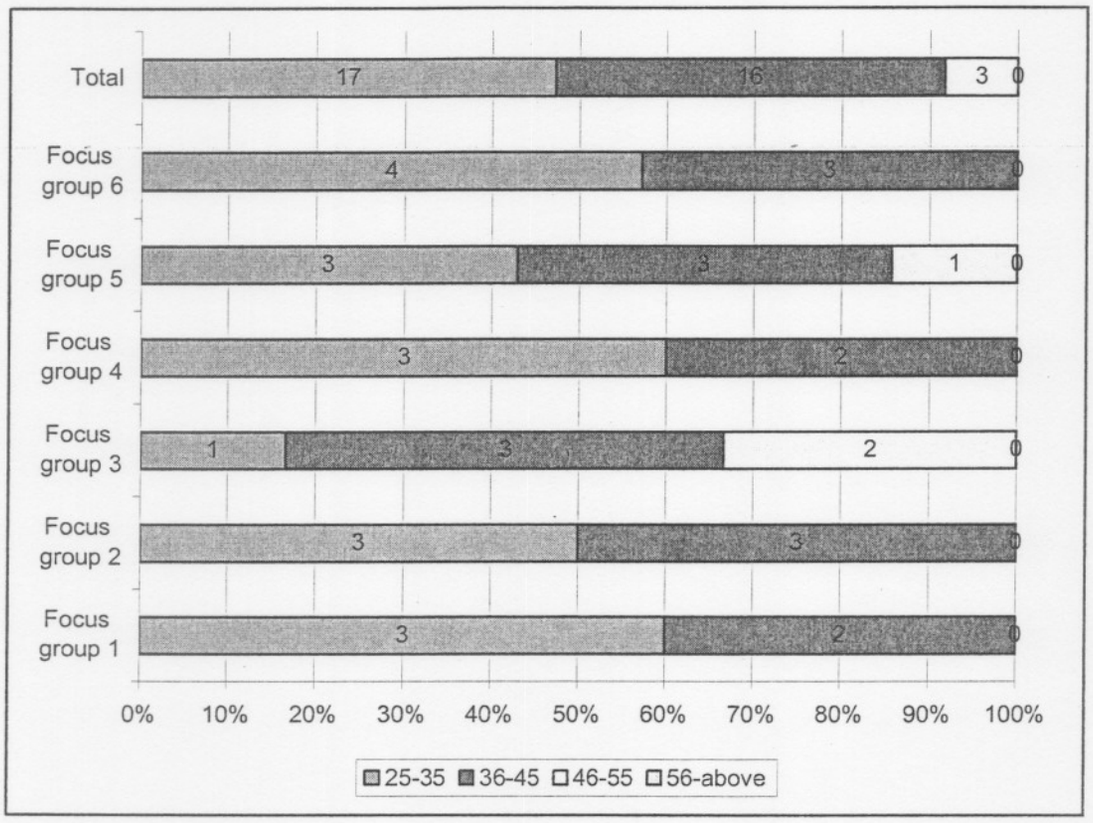


Table 4.1 indicates that the majority of teachers, who took part in the research, were females.

Table 4.2: Age of respondents

	25-35	36-45	46-55	56-above	Total
Focus group 1	3	2	0	0	5
Focus group 2	3	3	0	0	6
Focus group 3	1	3	2	0	6
Focus group 4	3	2	0	0	5
Focus group 5	3	3	1	0	7
Focus group 6	4	3	0	0	7
Total	17	16	3	0	36

Figure 4.2 Age of respondents

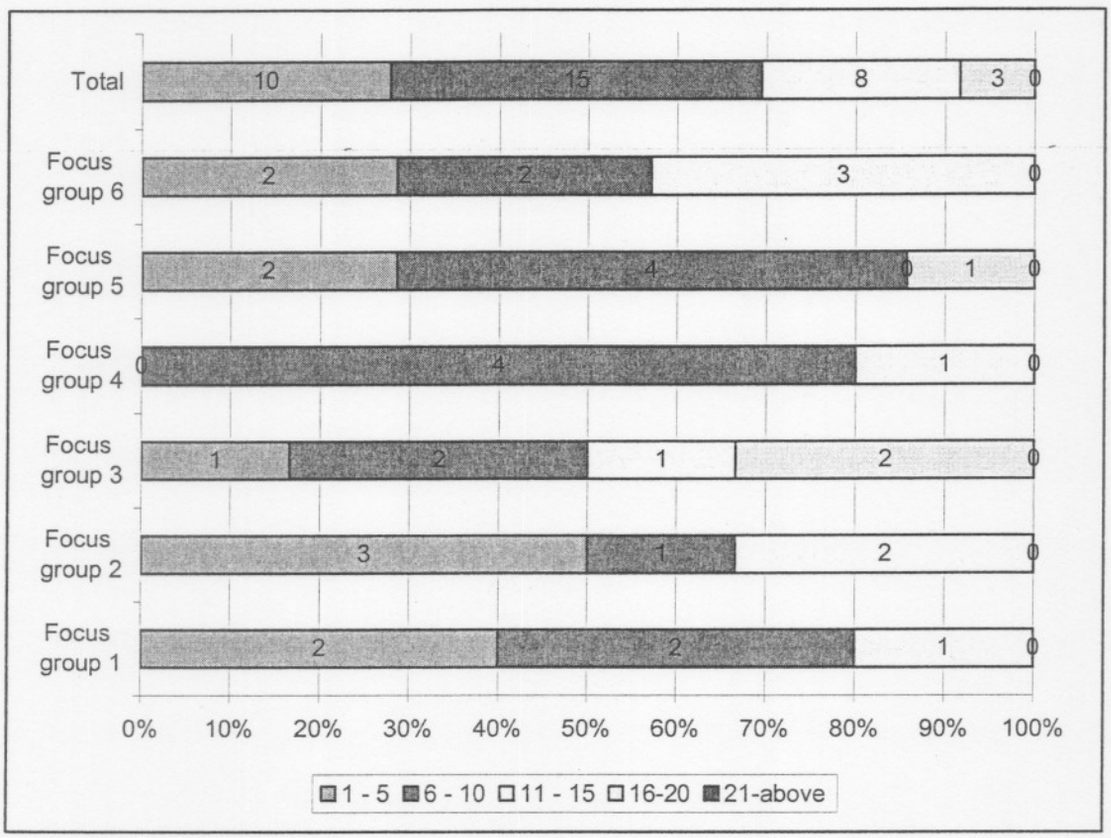


The majority of teachers who took part in the research are teachers between 25 and 45 years of age.

Table 4.3: Experience of respondents

	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-above	Total
Focus group 1	2	2	1	0	0	5
Focus group 2	3	1	2	0	0	6
Focus group 3	1	2	1	2	0	6
Focus group 4	0	4	1	0	0	5
Focus group 5	2	4	0	1	0	7
Focus group 6	2	2	3	0	0	7
Total	10	15	8	3	0	36

Figure 4.3 Experience of respondents

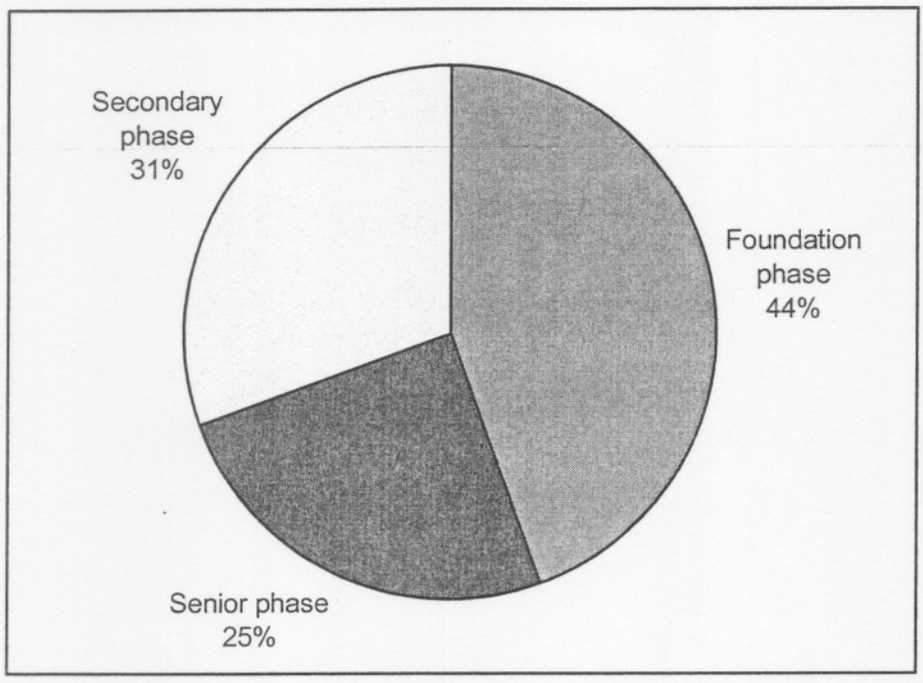


The majority of teachers who took part in the research do not have more than ten years of experience. Bearing in mind that inclusive education is fairly new in the South African education scenario, it is evident that these teachers do not have experience in dealing with inclusive classroom settings.

Table 4.4: Phase in which respondents teach

	Foundation phase	Senior phase	Secondary phase	Total
Focus group 1	5	0	0	5
Focus group 2	0	0	6	6
Focus group 3	0	6	0	6
Focus group 4	0	0	5	5
Focus group 5	7	0	0	7
Focus group 6	4	3	0	7
Total	16	9	11	36

Figure 4.4 Phase in which respondents teach

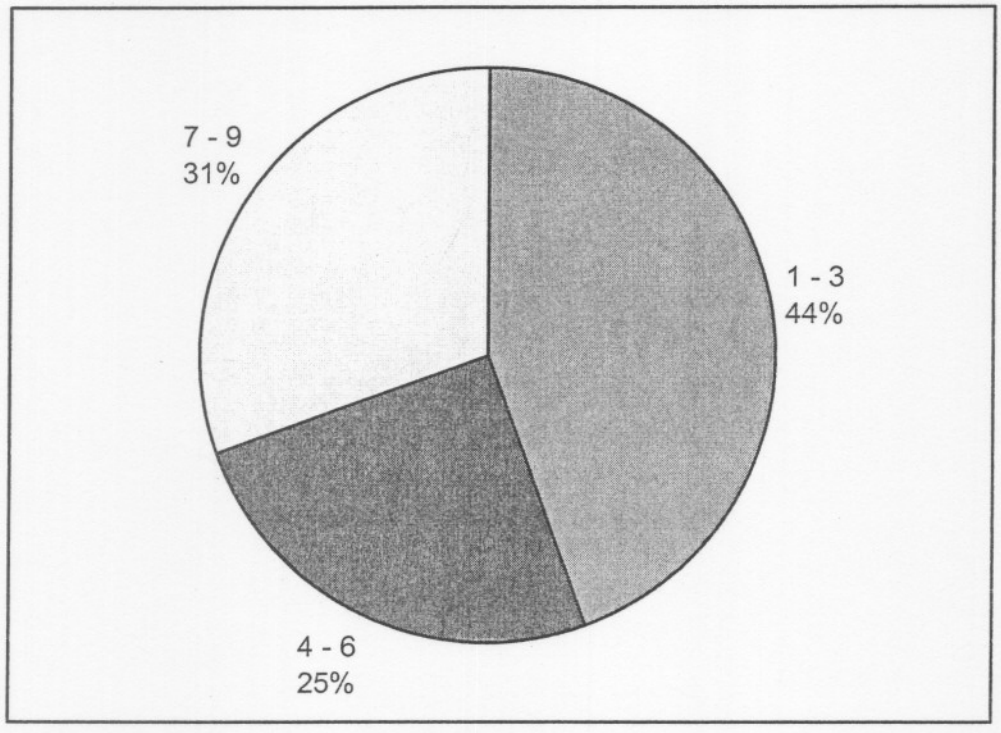


The majority of teachers who took part in the research are teachers from the Foundation phase

Table 4.5: Grade in which respondents teach

	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	Total
Focus group 1	5	0	0	0	5
Focus group 2	0	0	6	0	6
Focus group 3	0	6	0	0	6
Focus group 4	0	0	5	0	5
Focus group 5	7	0	0	0	7
Focus group 6	4	3	0	0	7
Total	16	9	11	0	36

Figure 4.5 Grade in which respondents teach



Corresponding with the phase of the teachers, the majority of teachers teach Grades 1-3.

4.2.2 Responses to the interviews

During the interview the participants they didn't all reply to some of the questions, the numbers explain how many responses were give to the questions posed to the different focus groups.

4.2.2.1 Question 1: What do you understand under the term inclusion?

Focus group 1:	1. It is the way to help learners with problems to meet their needs. 2. It is where all learners are accommodated together with their barriers. 3. It is to include all learners with or without disability in a mainstream, irrespective of norms or religion. 4. It is where we combine all learners with learning problems in the same class. 5. It is to include all learners in a class regardless their ability or their disability
Focus group 2:	1. It is where we bring learners with different learning problems together in the same class, regardless of their level of understanding. 2. It is to combine learners together without discriminating against them because of their disability. 3. It is when we educate learners together; it could be learners with learning problems. 4. Inclusive education is where we combine all learners without discriminating against them on the basis of their culture, norms or religion. 5. It is to include learners with different disabilities in mainstream education. 6. It is to include all learners in the same school with or without disabilities.

Focus group 3:	1. Inclusive education is a transformation of education where we include all learners with learning barriers irrespective of what barriers they have in mainstream education. 2. It is where we include all learners in a class regardless of their culture and the language they use. It is also where we put all learners regardless of their ability or disability in the same class.
Focus group 4:	1. Inclusive education is where we include all the learners - it could be in education, without looking at their language or their colour, and irrespective of their disabilities. 2. Inclusive education is to include all learners in mainstream education. 3. Inclusive education is a programme where we include all learners without discriminating against them. 4. Inclusive education is where we include all learners with different problems to stop labelling them.
Focus group 5:	1. It is to include learners with disabilities in mainstream education and include them in the same class with learners without disabilities. 2. It is where we put all learners regardless of culture, age, gender, religion, ability or disability in the same class. 3. Learners with special learning needs are grouped together with learners who have no special needs.

Focus group 6:	1. It is to include every learner with or without disabilities, regardless of culture, religion and gender in a class. 2. It is to accommodate all learners of different cultures, race, colour and disabilities together. 3. It is to accommodate all learners irrespective of their disabilities. 4. It is where we get along with learners having different problems e.g. slow learners or learners who cannot cope with their work, including poverty or lack of parental love. 5. It is to accommodate all learners, slow learners or best achievers and those who are physically disabled.

4.2.2.2 Question 2: Describe the nature of your classroom: number of learners, types of learners and barriers to learning

Focus group 1:	1. It is a large class of 42 with different problems and learning barriers – medical and societal. Some learners have visual impairments while others have auditory impairments. 2. It is a class of 40 learners; they have learning and reading problems. They come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. 3. There are 38 learners in my class. A lot of them have concentration problems and cannot read or write properly. They have poor socio-economic backgrounds. 4. There are 31 learners in my class, 16 are high achievers 15 are slow learners. 5. There are 43 learners. It is an class of average performance.

Focus group 2:	1. There are 39 learners in my class who are willing to work. They come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Some come to school hungry. This affects their concentration and motivation. 2. It is a large group of 46, it is difficult for me to attend to them by giving extra work to those who have special needs like spelling problems and reading problems. They have different needs and come from different backgrounds. 3. It is a class of 39, it has space to move around but there is a shortage of materials and resources to provide for the learners with special needs. 4. There are 36 Grade 8 learners in my class. They have different problems. Some have behavioural problems, some have visual impairment and a lot of them have difficulty understanding language. 5. There are 32 Grade 9 learners in my class. They are very disruptive. I do not know what the cause of this is. I am not able to diagnose the problem. 6. There are 34 Grade 9 learners in my class. They have academic and behavioural problems.

Focus group 3:	1. My class has 34 learners, 24 boys and 10 girls, of different ages. Most of them are above the age of the other learners. They don't belong in this class. 2. There are 30 learners. Some learners can read while others cannot. 3. There are 29 learners, they have writing problems. They mix words and they don't use commas, full stops etc. where necessary. 4. There are 55 learners, I have a problem of space, and I cannott move freely in class because of the small space and over crowdedness. The learners have many problems: concentration, poor language ability and visual impairment. I cannot deal with all these problems in my class. 5. My class is overcrowded, I cannot attend to all learners with problems individually, and I don't have learning material and resources to help or assist them. 6. In my class learners lack discipline and they misbehave. This is due to the poor socio-economic backgrounds of these learners. They are not disciplined at home and they disturb the class for the other learners. This also causes them to lack perseverance.

Focus group 4:	1. My class has average learners and it is a small group of 31. 2. My class has learners with physical disabilities and hearing problems. There are 36 learners in my class. 2. In my class there are some learners, who are bullies and these problems seems to be from home. They take out their frustration on other children. 4. I'm a Grade 8 teacher. My learners are unable to read. This problem is because learners are promoted from the primary school to the next grades even if they cannot read. Parents have been called to discuss how to deal with the problems, but without success
Focus group 5:	1. I am a Grade 1 teacher with 42 learners. The problem is that the class is small I can't move around. 2. I am a Grade1 teacher, with 30 learners. There is no space to move around, to play, build puzzles or to do Grade1 activities. The class is not too big. The problem is space. 3. I have noticed learners with visual impairment in my class. They cannot copy from the blackboard and are very slow. I do not have time to deal with their problems. My class is very big (52 learners). I do not have the time to pay individual attention to the learners. I have also noticed that there are learners with auditory impairments. I do not have the knowledge to know how to deal with these learners. I cannot adapt the curriculum for them.

Focus group 6:	1. There are 32 learners in my class, classified as under achievers or slow learners. Some cannot read or write, others cannot recognise letters of the alphabet. I do not know how to remedy the problem. I do not know how to plan my lessons so that I can accommodate these needs that the learners have. 2. There are 40 learners and their barriers differ, some have writing or discipline problems, others cannot concentrate. 3. There are 31 learners their barriers differ; some don't know how to write and others struggle with calculations. 4. There are 40 learners and their barriers differ. Some leave out vowels in words and others do not finish their work, they like to play. I do not know how to help the learners who have the language disability. 5. There are 32 learners some are slow and some are high achievers. They have a problem of recognising letters of the alphabet and they lack concentration. Some cannot copy from the board. 6. There are 30 learners and their barriers differ. Some cannot concentrate and they are disruptive. 7. There are 40 learners. A few of them are average achievers, but the majority of them have writing and reading problems. This influences their academic performance. I do not know how to help these learners. 8. There are 40 learners in class. They are all high achievers. There are no learners with barriers in my class. The only problem is that their pace is slow.

4.2.2.3 Question 3: Explain the problems encountered during teaching in inclusive classrooms.

Focus group 1:	1. The problems I experience is that the learners are slow and they don't complete their work. Because of the large group I cannot meet their needs. If I do attend to those with problems the others play. 2. In my class learners struggle to write or copy from the board. They have visual problems and physical disabilities. 3. The problem is that I teach different learners with different problems. Some are quick to learn or quick to understand, while others are slow. Some of the children are unable to form words out of phonics. When I'm busy with learners with problems some are playing because they get bored even when there is work to do. 4. The problem that I encounter in my class is the problems of learners who cannot finish their work. They lack concentration and their parents are also not involved. 5. These learners have different problems some can read, some not; others cannot write. Some lack self-confidence. Some learners are very undisciplined.
Focus group 2:	1. I don't have a problem with discipline. My learners are from primary schools and still have discipline. The problem they are encountering is when they have to answer questions in English. It seems to be me that they read but they don't understand what they are reading. When the parents could be actively involved in using English with their children this will help, as it will be easier for them to understand. As I am a Science

	teacher there are no facilities to use when we have to do experiments. 2. The problem that I experience is that our learners don't have discipline. They dodge classes, they don't do their homework, and they also have language problems. They can't read properly. Parents are not actively involved. It seems to me that they are afraid of their children. We also lack resources and facilities at our school. 3. Problems that I encounter in my class are that these learners have a problem with spelling and reading. The parents think that their children are grown up and they are able to make decisions on their own. Parents start to relax and they are not helping their children. 4. My problem involves assessing learners with special needs. I do not know how to do this. I also have problems in planning my teaching so that it suits all the needs that learners have.
Focus group 3:	1. I have problems with planning and managing the different problems in my class. 2. I am in need of support regarding planning lessons for learners with special needs. I do not know how to adapt the curriculum. 3. I need advice on how to identify learning problems and how to remedy them. 4. Parents need to be more involved and assist teachers in dealing with the needs of their children. 5. I am unprepared to deal with learning problems in my class. I lack the knowledge and skills on how to deal

	with these problems. 6. I do not have enough knowledge to know how I can adapt or modify the curriculum so that I can support learners with learning needs.
Focus group 4:	1. Our learners are unable to read and write, they also lack moral support from their parents. The learners don't do their work even when they have homework, they don't bother themselves with it, and they are stubborn. They are too grown up for the grade. 2. The problem we encounter is socio-economical problems, the learners are far from facilities and we struggle to have sponsors or donations because the community is isolated. 3. In my class the problem is that most of the learners are not staying with their parents, they come to school just because they have to. They don't have a reason for coming to school. 4. I also have many learners with visual and auditory problems. I do not have the time to deal with their problems as there is too much work to be done. The class is also very big. If I attend to problems the other learners become noisy and I have discipline problems.
Focus group 5:	1. The problem is that learners lack concentration, some because of family problems, and others because of hunger. 2. There is overcrowding that makes it difficult for me to see what the problems are that the learners have. I am also not able to focus on learners who are not able to

	perform and in need of individual assistance. 3. The problem in my class is that we don't have enough resources to support learners who are in need of special attention. 4. The problem is that we don't have knowledge and resources on how to deal with these learners with barriers. 5. We have a problem of hunger and poverty because of unemployment. The learners lack concentration, motivation and discipline. There is lack of parental involvement. 6. There is good progress in my class even when parents are not actively involved. 7. We are having a problem of facilities e.g. when we have to do experiments we don't have facilities to perform that experiment, we also don't have libraries to assist learners with reading problems. 8. The problem in my class is discipline and parental involvement. Learners come from deprived backgrounds and lack support and discipline.
Focus group 6:	1. There is a problem with discipline and language; the learners struggle with second language (English). Parental involvement is a problem; they don't participate. 2. I struggle with discipline, the learners don't want to listen and they are too playful. There is no problem with parental involvement; I also don't have problems with language. 3. My learners are disciplined, but there are a few who

	lack discipline. I don't have a problem with language. Most of the parents are not involved, and we have a shortage of resources. The resources that we have sometimes we don't know how and where to use them. 4. Assessment of learners with special needs is a problem, as we don't know what to assess and how to assess is. 5. There is a problem because of overcrowding and repeaters in a class. There is no time to pay attention to the repeaters to help them overcome their problems. 6. There is no problem with language as the learners are using their home language at school. 7. Most of the learners are disciplined and the parents are involved in their children's work. We do not have sufficient support and resources to assist learners with special needs. We become confused about what type of assessment to use for learners with special needs. 8. Assessment of learners with special needs is problematic. We need training on how to do this. There is co-operation between parents and teachers, but there is shortage of resource to support the learners with special needs, and that makes it difficult to teach these learners. 9. My learners need to be disciplined most of the time, there is no problem with language. As teachers we don't know how and what to assess when faced with learners with special needs. 10. There is parental involvement. The parents assist us in dealing because I use to call them and discuss their children's work with them, there are resources but they are not enough for Grade1 as they learn through play.

	We also have a problem with assessment we don't know what we are suppose to assess.

4.2.2.4 Question 4: Explain the problems encountered during teaching in inclusive classrooms.

Focus group 1:	1. The advantage in my class is, that I ask learners who are high achievers to assist others and they are able to do so. 2. Parents are involved in their children's work. 3. The advantage in my class is that my learners are willing to learn and work, especially when they can support each other.
Focus group 2:	1. The advantage in my class is that my learners attend classes and are willing to learn from their peers. 2. In my class learners are willing to learn from their peers. 3. My learners most of them are involved in extra-mural activities.
Focus group 3:	1. The advantage that I have is that my class has space; I'm able to move around. 2. The learners in my class are able to assist each other.
Focus group 4:	1. Inclusive classrooms are enriching because learners bring different contributions that relate to their culture, abilities etc. Values such as respect and appreciation for one another are also promoted.
Focus group 5:	1. There is improvement from the learners with learning problems when they work together with the high achievers.
Focus group 6:	1. In my class I have a number of high achievers; they don't have a problem with reading or spelling. I ask

	these learners to assist those who experience problems with reading and spelling. This seems to be very successful. 2. There are learners with problems who are able to do what I want them to do, through my support and their parents' support. 3. As I have a normal class, I'm able to attend or control them all. They are cooperative learners. 4. My learners are able to follow instructions; my class is a small class I'm able to move around. 5. The advantage in my class is that parents are involved, and learners show progress on what I've taught. That makes me happy. 6. My learners are willing to learn despite some barriers. If they don't know or understand they ask. I often use the high achievers to assist the learners with problems. The parents are supportive.

4.2.2.5 Question 5: What do you think will assist you to deal with the difficulties and problems you have mentioned?

Focus group 1:	1. If parents could be 100% involved in their children's work. 2. If I could change my planning so that it accommodates all learners. 3. If I can reduce the work load in my class, I can pay more attention to problems. 4. If I can use group work more than individual work. High achievers need to support the low achievers. 5. If I as a teacher can help them with the problems and

	stop to be lazy and attend to them (the learners with problems).
Focus group 2:	1. If the department could stop this thing of promoting learners or stop this of saying a child should be in a phase for how many years, these learners would not have a problem of reading or writing when they come to secondary school. 2. If the department could intervene with positive attitudes and assist us with training on how to deal with barriers to learning we will be able to do our level best. We also need skills and resources to help learners with barriers to learning. 3. Involvement of the department will help, and if parents can come to school to ask about their children's performance, this can assist us in dealing with problems much better. 4. If our class could stop to be overcrowded, we will be able to do it.
Focus group 3:	1. If we could call the department to come and help us in dealing with learners with problems. 2. If we can improve our knowledge on how to help learners with problems, and put what we have studied into practice; this will help a lot. 3. If we can call parents to be involved this will help a lot. 4. In-service training will help, and if teachers with remedial or inclusive education can be the ones dealing with learners who experience barriers to learning. 5. If there could be a remedial class at our school, for the teacher to deal with those children, by so doing it will be easier for teacher to see where the child needs help,

	and the teacher will be able to deal with that problem.
Focus group 4:	1. Intervention of the department can be helpful. 2. Support from the department and other teachers will help. Teachers should assist one another in planning for the teaching of learners with barriers to learning. 3. If primary schools could stop promoting learners who have problems. 4. If the department can stop pressurising teachers on how to teach and stop delaying with help needed. 5. If the Department could stop to pressure the primary schools by saying they have to promote learners, and the other thing is if the parents can help.
Focus group 5:	1. If the department could be involved, as we have problems in dealing with learners with barriers to learning. 2. If there could be specialists dealing with learners who experience barriers to learning.
Focus group 6:	1. More resources to adapt our teaching in order to address some of the barriers to learning. 2. What will help is to look at real motives for learners who misbehave and try to help, and come with strategies to get them to be involved in learning. 3. If we could have lots of books and if we could encourage our learners to go to the libraries and by also encouraging parents to be actively involved in their children's work. 4. If we could have developmental sessions at our school once or twice a month to discuss the problems that we are encountering and the methods of dealing with those

	learners. 5. If we could have lots of books, teaching aids or anything that will help, and encourage our learners to read, it could be magazines. By also giving them a lot of work to do and ask them to help each other. 6. If the department could give us the facilities or resources to deal with learners who experience barriers, and if the department could stop to give us a lot of administrative work and assessment to do, and if they could change their attitudes towards us and support us.

4.2.2.6 Question 6: Do you think inclusive education can be successful?

Focus group 1:	1. It will be successful, but not for learners with mental problems, only for learners with physical and learning disabilities. 2. Yes, it will work because we are having learners with physical disability and we are still coping. 3. It will be successful but only if the equipment can be improved and if we could get the skills. 4. If the school or teachers can identify what the learners are capable of or can do and focus on those skills and not only on academic performance.
Focus group 2:	1. Yes, it could be successful if relevant, trained teachers could handle it. 2. Yes, if we could be trained, and supplied with materials and resources relevant for inclusive education. 3. Yes, if we could work together with the department and parents.

	4. Yes, it will be successful if we are trained properly. 5. Yes, it will work, we don't have a problem to deal with those learners, and we only need support, assistance and guidance. 6. Yes, it will work if we as teachers can work as a team. We need to plan together and decide together how we can adapt the normal curriculum.
Focus group 3:	1. It can be successful if all teachers were trained. 2. It can be successful if teachers can change their attitudes. 3. It can be successful if teachers with skills can deal with it. 4. It can work if teamwork can be put into practice.
Focus group 4:	1. It can be successful if we can get help and have teachers who can deal with it, as it will be difficult for we know nothing about inclusive education.
Focus group 5:	1. It cannot be successful, because it is going to take us time to learn. 2. It can be successful if only specialists can deal with it. 3. It can be successful if we can look at the different skills learners have and focus on that. 4. Yes it will work, but not for all the learners like learners with mental problems, and if we could have therapists at our school. 5. We need to be reskilled on how to deal with those learners.
Focus group 6:	1. Yes, it will be successful, as it will give all learners a chance to learn, especially for those who are disabled

	and this will make them to be encouraged. 2. Yes, if there is equipment to use, but excluding learners with mental disabilities. 3. Yes, only if we are trained to deal with inclusion. 4. Yes, we are already having a physical disabled child, and the only thing is if there could be a suitable environment for those learners like toilets to accommodate them. 5. Yes, if it will accommodate learners with different skills not focus on academic, and through department intervention. 6. Yes, the department has introduced SBST's (School Based Support Teams) and the team explain how to deal with those learners, and they also encourage teachers to work as a team.

4.2.3 Themes emerging from the interviews

The data analysis is based on different themes emanating from the data from the various groups. Themes that emanated form the various questions will be dealt with separately. Themes were identified based on the basis of the frequancy with which they were adressed by the research participants.

4.2.3.1 Question 1: What do you understand under the term inclusion?

The following themes emerged:

4.2.3.1.1 Mainstreaming

The research revealed that teachers see inclusion as mainstreaming. This implies including all learners in normal schools, irrespective of their ability or disability, in order to stop labelling learners.

4.2.3.1.2 Multiculturalism

Inclusive education is seen as a system through which multiculturalism can be promoted. This implies including all learners in the same class irrespective of race, religion and culture.

4.2.3.1.3 Accommodation

Accommodation is seen as combining all learners to be taught together, irrespective of the various barriers they have, and regardless of gender, age or language disability.

4.2.3.2 Question 2: Describe the nature of your classroom: How many learners do you have? What types of learners do you have? What barriers do the learners have?

The following themes emerged.

4.2.3.2.1 Overcrowdedness

Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to move around and interact with learners individually. This also causes disciplinary problems.

4.2.3.2.2 Large classes

Teachers struggle to cope with large classes as they have large numbers of learners, each with different barriers. This makes it difficult for teachers to find time to address the barriers of individual learners.

4.2.3.2.3 A variety of barriers to learning

The responses revealed that teachers are faced with a broad spectrum of barriers to learning. These include the following:

- Systemic barriers: There is a lack of basic and appropriate teaching and learning material, inadequate facilities and overcrowded classrooms,

- Social barriers: Severe poverty was identified as a major problem. Furthermore it was indicated that the home language of many of the learners differs form the language of teaching and learning (English).

- Pedagogical barriers: Teachers lack support to assist learners with barriers and have inadequate knowledge on how to adapt assessment procedures and the curriculum for learners with barriers.

- Medical barriers: It appears as if the major medical problems which the learners who took part in the study experience are visual impairment and auditory impairment.

4.2.3.3 Question 3: Explain the problems encountered during teaching in inclusive classrooms

The following problems were highlighted.

4.2.3.3.1 Slow learners

A major problem for teachers is the large number of slow learners in the classrooms. As time is limited and the curriculum needs to be completed, teachers feel that they cannot pay attention to these learners. If they do pay attention, the other learners become bored and disruptive.

4.2.3.3.2 Poor English ability

Teachers found that learners find it difficult to express themselves freely in English, because it is not their mother tongue. This also results in problems with understanding verbal explanations and spelling.

4.2.3.3.3 Illiteracy

Some learners are unable to read and write, while others struggle to write or copy from the board. These are mainly the learners with visual and auditory impairments.

4.2.3.3.4 Socio-economic problems

Some learners in class are unable to complete their work as they don't concentrate on what they are doing. This relates to the poor socio-economic circumstances of the learners who come to school hungry.

4.2.3.3.5 Parental involvement and care

The research revealed that most parents of children with barriers to learning do not take part in their children's education. Parents could be a source of support to teachers if they work together with the teachers in assisting the learner to deal with the barrier/barriers to learning.

4.2.3.3.6 Inadequate resources

Inadequate facilities and resources make it difficult for teachers to address barriers to learning. This implies, among other things the provision of special devices for those with visual and auditory impairments.

4.2.3.3.7 Difficulty in assessing learners

Teachers also find it difficult to assess learners who experience barriers to learning. They do not know what to assess or how to assess learners. They do not have access to alternative methods of assessment such as braille, audio cassettes, etc..

4.2.3.3.8 Too many barriers to learning

Teachers are faced with a myriad of barriers to learning. These include systemic, socio-economic, pedagogical and medical barriers (*cf* 4.2.3). The problem is that teachers do not have adequate knowledge and skills to identify these barriers nor to address them.

4.2.3.4 Question 4: Explain the advantages of teaching in inclusive classrooms

The responses revealed that teachers could not come up with a number of advantages that this approach to teaching has. Only the following aspects were mentioned:

4.2.3.4.1 Cooperative learning

Teachers use high achievement learners to assist slow learners. This increases the willingness of learners to learn from one another. It saves time and enables teachers to attend to more learner problems in class.

4.2.3.4.2 Enrichment

Having learners from different cultures, ages and abilities in one class becomes an enriching experience for all. Values such as respect and appreciation for one another are also promoted.

4.2.3.5 Question 5.: What do you think will assist you to deal with the problems you have mentioned?

The following were suggested in order to deal with teaching in inclusive classrooms.

4.2.3.5.1 Departmental support

Teachers believe that only academically deserving learners are taken into consideration. They would appreciate it if the department could provide the necessary and required facilities and resources. The research found that there is little interaction between teachers and departmental officials and that teachers lack the necessary skills due to a lack of departmental support.

4.2.3.5.2 Change of promotional policies

Teachers think that primary schools must stop promoting learners who have problems. The problems should be dealt with before the learners are promoted. The policy of promoting learners should be revised.

4.2.3.5.3 Teacher support

The research revealed that if teachers themselves could change their planning, reduce the work of learners in class, use flash cards or supporting material for struggling learners, give learners extra work to do at home, this would help learners who pose a problem. Teachers need to support one another in planning the teaching of learners with barriers.

4.2.3.6 Question 6: Do you think inclusive education will be successful?

The research revealed that teachers think that inclusive education will be successful only if the department could intervene and address all the problems mentioned. Furthermore, teachers indicated the following as being crucial to the successful implementation of teaching in inclusive classroom settings:

4.2.3.6.1 Skilled teachers

The research revealed that, if teachers can be trained to deal with inclusive education it could be successful.

4.2.3.6.2 Improvement of resources

The research found that schools need to improve their resources to be able to accommodate different learners with different barriers.

4.2.3.6.3 Team work

The research revealed that teachers are of the opinion that inclusive education will be successful if they can work together as a team when dealing with it; planning together for the teaching of these learners and exchanging ideas on how to adapt the normal teaching curriculum.

4.3 INTERPRETING THE FIELD NOTES

During the interviews the researcher made field notes regarding the facial expressions and attitudes of the teachers during the discussion. Although

teachers find it difficult to deal with inclusive teaching, they are not negative towards the idea. They do however need a lot of support in the form of training and resource provision at the various schools in order to deal with the situation effectively (*cf* 4.2.2.6). At no point during the discussions did teachers' facial expressions or attitudes prove any negativity towards the idea of inclusive teaching. The researcher watched the group dynamics among the participants through the interview, and couldn't dectect any negative attitude. It appeared as if all the participants agreed to the fact that teaching in inclusive classroom settings do bring along problems and challenges. They were however convinced of the advantages of inclusive education if support structures for teachers are in place.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed and interpreted the data received from six focus group interviews. Themes were identified from the responses and were used in the interpretation of data.

The next chapter deals with the findings, conclusions and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher endeavours to revisit the aims of the study in order to ascertain whether they have been achieved. Some problem questions were posed in the opening chapter of this study, and these needed to be answered as the study unfolded.

The researcher's task in this chapter is to check whether the literature review and the focus group interviews contributed to answering the problem questions on which the study were based.

The layout of this chapter is as follows:

- Overview of the study
- Findings from the literature review
- Findings from the empirical research
- Conclusions in relation to the aims of the study
- Recommendations

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This section intends to provide a brief overview of all the previous chapters of this study. The purpose of this exercise is to focus the reader's mind on the important aspects of each chapter so that the findings and the recommendations create a meaningful link.

5.2.1 Chapter one

The purpose of this chapter was to orientate the reader to the following:

- The problem statement, which is whether teachers are dealing with the demands made by teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

- The aim of the study, namely to assist teachers to deal with the demands made by teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

- The design of the research, namely a qualitative design which utilized focus group interviews with teachers from the Sasolburg District in the Free State Department of Education. The purpose of the interviews was to gauge teachers' feelings and perceptions regarding teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

5.2.2 Chapter two

This chapter delved deep into literature pertaining to the nature of inclusive teaching (*cf* 2.2). A variety of barriers present in inclusive classrooms were explored (*cf* 2.2.3). Attention was also paid to the difficulties that teachers experience when teaching in an inclusive classroom setting. Among others, diagnosing and controlling problems, time constraints, adopting the regular curriculum and assessment practices to address the barriers to learning were indicated as problematic (*cf* 2.3). Furthermore, ways are suggested on how to assist teachers who teach in inclusive classroom settings. These include, *inter alia,* the following: proper classroom planning and management and administrative support to teachers regarding training in how to deal with barriers to learning (*cf* 2.4).

5.2.3 Chapter three

This chapter highlighted the research and the research methodology. A detailed explanation regarding the utilization of focus group interviews during the study was given (*cf 3.5).*

5.2.4 Chapter four

The data collected by means of the focus group interviews was analysed and interpreted in this chapter. The data revealed that teachers do experience a number of difficulties when teaching in inclusive classroom settings (*cf* 4.2.2).

5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Findings which were obtained from the literature review will be related to the aims of the study and the various questions posed during the research.

5.3.1 What is inclusion?

Inclusive education is a human rights issue. Many more children could be included in the mainstream with benefits to everyone. Inclusive education means disabled and non-disabled children and young people learning together in ordinary pre-school, schools, colleges and universities, with appropriate networks of support (*cf* 2.2.1). It also means enabling learners to participate to the best of their ability whatever their needs (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:6). Curriculum, teaching support, funding mechanisms and the constructed environment should be inclusive because children, whatever their disability or learning difficulties, have a part to play in society after school. Education is part of, not separate from, the rest of learners' lives. Disabled learners can and should be educated at mainstream schools with appropriate support. All learners have an equal right to membership of the same groups as everybody else. Learners with disabilities or learning difficulties do not need to be separated or protected (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:6). Inclusive education is characterized by learners who experience a variety of barriers to learning, which include systemic, socio-economic, pedagogical and medical barriers (*cf* 2.2.3).

5.3.2 What are the difficulties that teachers experiences in inclusive classroom settings?

Teachers are faced with a variety of barriers in their classrooms (*cf* 2.2.3). A lack of knowledge and skills concerning how to identify and provide support to the learners experiencing these barriers, leave teachers unable to deal with the situation (*cf* 2.3.2, 2.3.2). Apart from this, teachers also do not find enough time to deal with learner problems on an individual basis (*cf* 2.3.4). Another difficulty is posed by the fact that teachers have to adapt the normal curriculum and assessment strategies to meet the needs of the learners who

are experiencing barriers to learning (*cf 2.3.5*). A lack of knowledge and support about how to achieve this also leaves teachers frustrated.

5.3.3 Why do teachers experience difficulties when teaching in inclusive classroom settings?

Teachers experience problems in dealing with inclusive classroom settings due to a lack of support in planning and managing an inclusive classroom (*cf* 2.4.1), a lack of knowledge of how to adapt the normal curriculum and assessment procedures for learners who experience barriers to learning (*cf* 2.4.6) and a lack of knowledge and skills in how to identify and deal with barriers to learning in a classroom (*cf* 2.3).

How can teachers be assisted to deal with teaching in inclusive classroom settings?

In order to deal with the demands made by inclusive classrooms, teachers should draw on their creativity and, most importantly, learn from one another. New teachers should be encouraged to ask questions, however basic, of more experienced colleagues and to share in the expertise, which has been built upon the valuable process of trial and error. It is our experience that teachers rarely discuss with colleagues in detail how they actually practise their profession. Wheels are perpetually being reinvented, sometimes within the same school, as teachers strive to cope on their own with teaching learners with learning difficulties (Leadbetter & Leadbetter, 1993:73).

Good classroom planning and management are of the utmost importance to enable teachers to deal with learning difficulties effectively (*cf* 2.4.1). This implies support and training at Departmental level on how to identify special needs and how to apply appropriate methods to meet those needs (*cf* 2.4.7). Parental support can also assist teachers in their task when dealing with barriers to learning. Parents can assist teachers by focusing on the problems of their children and dealing with these at home (*cf* 2.4.5).

5.3.4 How can teachers be assisted to deal with teaching in inclusive classroom settings?

The literature revealed that aspects such as classroom planning and management (*cf* 2.4.1) and support from parents and the Department of Education to assist teachers in dealing with barriers to learning are of utmost importance (*cf* 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.4.5). Teachers also need support to adapt the normal curriculum to accommodate the needs of all learners who experience barriers to learning.

5.4 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The following findings are derived from the empirical research and linked to the aims of the study:

5.4.1 What is inclusion?

The research revealed that teachers understand the meaning of inclusive education:

- That learners with different learning problems are placed in the same class to meet their needs; and
- That learners with different learning barriers, different cultures, religions and norms are placed in mainstream education (*cf* 2.2.1).

5.4.2 What are the difficulties that teachers experience in inclusive classroom settings?

It is also evident from the research that inclusive classrooms bring along problems.

There are problems of space and overcrowdedness. Because of this, teachers are unable to attend to individual learners. In the same class, there are learners with different problems (*cf* 2.3.2). There are also no materials and resources to cater for different learners and their needs. Teachers do not have skills to deal with the learners in class and this makes it difficult for them to be able to assess the learners (*cf* 2.4.4).

5.4.3 Why do teachers experience difficulties when teaching in inclusive classroom settings?

Teachers feel that the lack of resources when dealing with inclusive education, a lack of support from other teachers and unqualified teachers make it difficult for them to deal with learners with barriers to learning (*cf* 4.2.2). It is also indicated that difficulties are experienced due to, among others, a lack of knowledge and skills in how to plan for and manage an inclusive classroom setting, a lack of support at Departmental level in the form of training to equip teachers in dealing with learning barriers and how to adapt assessment procedures and the curriculum to accommodate the variety of needs in the classroom (*cf* 2.4, 4.2.3.5).

5.4.4 How can teachers be assisted to deal with teaching in inclusive classroom settings?

In order to deal with inclusive classroom settings teachers indicated the following aspects.

Support from the Department regarding training in how to handle learning barriers and the provision of necessary resources to deal with barriers to learning, is of the utmost importance. More parental involvement can reduce the burden of teachers in dealing with barriers to learning. Teachers should also support one another, share ideas and plan together for the teaching and assessment of learners with barriers to learning.

Although teachers feel that inclusive education makes a lot of demands on them, they feel that this approach can be successful, if the department, teachers and parents work together, and if qualified teachers can handle it.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS IN RELATION TO THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

At the start of the research, the researcher posed a few questions that the research wished to explore. It is necessary to determine whether answers to these questions were obtained. It is evident that the answers obtained during

the research are supportive of what the literature reveals on teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

5.5.1 What is the nature of an inclusive classroom?

The research revealed that the nature of an inclusive classroom could be described as follows: learners with different barriers to learning are placed in the same class. The class becomes overcrowded and teachers are not able to give each learner the necessary attention and assistance. The answer obtained during the research is supported by the literature review as well as the empirical study (*cf* 2.2.3, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 5.3).

5.5.2 What are the difficulties that teachers experience when teaching in an inclusive classroom setting?

Teachers are faced with a myriad of barriers to learning in their classrooms (*cf* 2.2.3. 4.2.2, 4.2.3). The problems that teachers experience relate to learners who are unable to read, learners who are slow and don't complete their work in time, undisciplined learners and learners with visual and auditory impairments Furthermore, while teachers are busy paying attention to learners with problems, others are playing around. Classrooms are also overcrowded, leaving no time to the teachers to pay attention to those learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. Parents do not give their full support in assisting learners with problems either (*cf* 2.2.3.1).

Another problem encountered is a language problem. Learners have problems with English, as it is their second language (and even third language in some cases), thus finding it difficult to understand it, as they don't use it at home. Teachers do not know how to assess or deal with learners with different disabilities, and they have problems with equipment and resources to use in class to meet the needs of the learners (*cf* 2.2.3.2).

5.5.3 Why do teachers experience difficulties when teaching in inclusive classroom settings?

The research indicated that teachers experience problems because they don't get support from the department, parents and other teachers. The heavy workload contributes to the fact that they cannot pay proper attention to learners with difficulties (*cf* 4.2.3). This corresponds well with the evidence in the literature review (*cf* 2.3.1).

5.5.4 How can teachers be assisted to deal with the difficulties when teaching in inclusive classroom settings?

It appears as if sustained support from the department, parents and other teachers can assist them in dealing with learners with problems. If there could be clear guidelines on how to assess or teach these learners and if resources could be made available to the schools, the difficulties that emanate from teaching in inclusive classrooms could be addressed (*cf* 2.3.6, 4.2.2, 4.2.3).

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to assist teachers in dealing with the demands made by teaching in inclusive classroom settings, the following recommendations are made.

5.6.1 The nature of inclusion

All learners should attend the same school, regardless of their disabilities. Teachers should realize that all children have to enjoy a full and decent education irrespective of their ability status in order to unfold their latent potentialities fully (*cf* 2.2.2).

Since no two people are the same, inclusion should cater for various learners with their various disabilities. Inclusion is designed to protect each learner against discrimination, as stated in the constitution of South Africa.

5.6.2 The difficulties that teachers experience when teaching in inclusive classroom settings

Teachers experience difficulties because of lack of support and encouragement from the Department of Education, from society and from other teachers. Some teachers and parents do not know what is required from them when dealing with inclusion and this leads to their being afraid of being involved in these learners' education. Teachers' lack of confidence leads to their experiencing difficulties. Teachers need to be exposed to living with disabled learners to make it simple to interact and handle handicapped learners.

Teachers need enough time to deal with each child individually, as every learner deserves to get the same attention from the teachers, and they need time to deal with all learners who need that little extra attention, especially the disadvantaged ones. Teachers need to be trained in how to deal with inclusion. They lack the skill of presenting the content to accommodate both advantaged and disadvantaged children.

5.6.3 Why do teachers experience difficulties when teaching in inclusive classroom settings?

Teachers experience difficulties because they are not thoroughly trained and knowledgeable in how to identify learners with barriers and how to deal with these problems (*cf 4.2.2*). Teachers need to become knowledgeable in how to adapt the curriculum and assessment strategies to assist the learners who are experiencing barriers to learning (*cf* 4.2.2)

5.6.4 How can teachers be assisted to deal with teaching in inclusive classroom setting?

Teachers should be trained to implement inclusion in their classrooms. They also need support and assistance in the form of in-service training or workshops so that they can meet learners' needs (*cf* 2.4).

There should be adequate resources at schools to assist teachers to cater for the different needs of learners. Resources used at schools should be designed to cater for learners both with and without disabilities in the classroom. Learner numbers should be kept to a minimum so that learners can be given individual attention (*cf* 2.4).

For mainstream education to be successful, the following, according to Kotze (1981:9), should be considered:

- Teachers who educate learners with barriers should have sufficient knowledge of the implications that each type of disability has for a particular learner's learning.

- School buildings and classrooms should be designed and equipped in such a way that they harmonize with the personal and didactical needs of the learners they are to accommodate.

- Teaching methods should be selected to meet the demands of each learner's disability. The general classroom organization will have to be modified to meet the needs of each learner.

- Special attention will have to be given to the forming of correct relationships between learners with barriers and learners without barriers.

- The traditional size of the class will have to be adjusted considerably. Smaller classes are essential.

The key to reducing barriers to learning lies in a strengthened education support service. These services will have to support the learning and teaching process by addressing learner, teacher and institutional needs.

5.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following are suggestions for further research in this field:

The questions utilized in this research limited the entire scope to the difficulties that the teachers experience in the classroom. Other research may

explore aspects such as the advantages of inclusive classroom settings for teaching and learning.

As the research has been conducted in the Free State province only, further research can be done in other provinces to obtain a clearer picture of the teaching taking place in inclusive classrooms.

Research on how to deal with different barriers that learners experience in inclusive classrooms is also needed. This will explain what is really needed when dealing with a specific barrier in inclusive classrooms.

It would be interesting to establish whether teachers in township schools have different experiences than teachers in ex-model C schools regarding the teaching in inclusive classroom settings.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The internal validity of the research is questionable because the researcher did not use multiple sources of data to support the outcome of the research. Triangulation could have increased the validity of the data collected. The researcher utilized teachers from one province only. This could affect the generalizability of the results obtained.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The South African education system is moving away from "specialized teaching" in "special contexts". New legislation makes provision for learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream education. What is needed is that teachers come to understand the wide range of barriers experienced by learners in their classes. They need to understand that poverty, a content-based curriculum, the expectation that everyone learns in the same way, the lack of a reading culture, and the fact that many learners have to learn in a language which is not their home language, need to be addressed by the way they mediate learning, plan activities and assess learner performance. It is the system that needs to be adapted to accommodate the learner and not the

learner who needs to change in order to fit the system (Nieman & Monyai, 2006:44).

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ADDENDUM A

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

FREE STATE PROVINCE

Enquiries : Ms Gabrone MMA
Reference no : 15/4/1/60-2005

Tel :(051) 404 8638
Fax :(051) 447 7313

2005-06-25

Ms M.E Rakholiie
128 Refengkhotso
Deneysville
1932

Dear Ms Rakholiie

REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1. This letter is in reply to your application for the registration of your research project.

2. Research topic: **The difficulties that teachers experience due to teaching in inclusive classrooms.**

3 Your research project has been registered with the Free State Education Department and you may conduct research in the Free State Department of Education under the following conditions:

   3.1 Educators and learners, participate voluntarily in the project.
   3.2 The names of all schools, educators, and learners involved remain confidential.
   3.3 The questionnaires are completed and the interviews are conducted outside normal tuition time
   3.4 This letter is shown to all participating persons.

4 You are requested to donate a report on this study to the Free State Department of Education. It will be placed in the Education Library Bloemfontein. It will be appreciated if you would also bring a summary of the report on a computer disc, so that it may be placed on the website of the Department

5 Once your project is complete, you may be invited to present your findings to the relevant persons in the FS Department of Education. This will increase the possibility of implementing your findings wherever possible.

6 You are requested to confirm acceptance of the above conditions in writing to

The Head: Education, for attention: DIRECTOR : QUALITY ASSURANCE
Room 138, Sytreis Building
Private Bag X20565, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9300

We wish you every success with your research

Yours sincerely

ADO MOLOABI
ACTING DIRECTOR : QUALITY ASSURANCE

ADDENDUM B

LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that the undersigned has done the language editing for the following student:

SURNAME and INITIALS: Rakholila, M. E.

DEGREE: M. Ed.

D. Kocks **Date:** 11 Nov. 2006

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