

**The educators', learners' and parents' understanding  
regarding inclusion**

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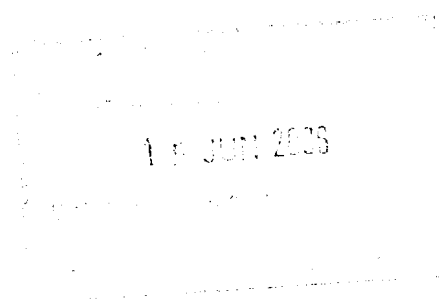
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## SUMMARY

The aims of this study were to investigate learners feelings about their inclusive classrooms; educators' observation, experiences and perceptions concerning the interaction patterns of learners in inclusive classrooms; and parents' experiences and perceptions of inclusive education.

The literature review presented inclusion in education as an event for acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support; accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience; enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners; acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status; acknowledging, in a broader way than formal schooling, that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures; changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners; maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning; and empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning.

The empirical research revealed that the majority of learner participants in this research do not like being in class with different types of learners which could mean that they would not like to be accommodated in a class with learners who are physically challenged; and had seen other learners making fun of their classmates who are physically challenged which could mean that physically unchallenged learners are inclined to deride at learners who are physically different from them because of the failure to celebrate differences. It was interesting to note from the findings of the empirical research that the majority of learners also indicated that they have learned a lot by associating with learners who are physically challenged; they have improved at tolerating

fellow classmates who are physically challenged; and they are more understanding of the behaviours and feelings of the physically challenged learners which could mean that with continuous association of both physically challenged and physically unchallenged learners at the same schools, learners can learn from one another, learn to tolerate differences in physical disposition and develop more understanding of the behaviours and feelings of one another. It is also pleasing to note that the majority of educator participants reported positively about the success of inclusion in their classrooms which bodes well for the success of inclusive education in the South African school system. However, it is worrying to note that the majority of parent participants do not see the value of inclusive education for their children and still believe that their children could benefit from exclusive education which provides separate schools for learners of different abilities.

On the basis of both the findings from the literature review and empirical research methods, recommendations were made.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## ORIENTATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In July 2001, the South African Department of Education officially accepted inclusive education as policy for all schools under its jurisdiction irrespective of talent, disability, socio-economic background, or cultural origin of all learners, thereby establishing the basis for the development of a single inclusive education and training system (Department of Education, 2001). In building an inclusive education and training system, South Africa is guided by a democratic Constitution that provides a special challenge to all South Africans by requiring that they give effect to the fundamental right to basic education for all South Africans. Section 29 (1) of the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996 highlights this fundamental right as follows: 'everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education ...' This means that South Africa constitutionally promotes life-long learning.

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 Sections 9 (3), (4) and (5), which commits the state to non-discrimination. These clauses are particularly important for protecting all learners, whether disabled or not.

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 equity, on redressing past imbalances and on a progressive promotion of the quality of education and training.

In line with its responsibility to develop policy to guide the transformation programme that is necessary to achieve the goals of inclusion at all schooling settings, the Ministry of Education has prepared White Paper 6. White Paper 6 is an inclusive education policy framework which outlines the Ministry of Education's commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in

particular for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate the diversity of learning needs, and those learners who continue to be excluded from it. White Paper 6 presents inclusion as:

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

White Paper 6 also acknowledges that some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of learning support to be able to develop to their full potential. An inclusive schooling system is, therefore, organised so

that it can provide various levels and kinds of support to learners and educators.

It is clear from the foregoing paragraphs that the White Paper outlines how the education and training system must transform itself to contribute to establishing a caring and humane society, and how it must change to accommodate the full range of learning needs and the mechanisms that should be put in place. Particular attention is paid to achieving these objectives through a realistic and effective implementation process that moves responsibly towards the development of a system that accommodates and respects diversity. This process requires a phasing in of strategies that are directed at departmental, institutional, instructional and curriculum transformation. It also requires the vigorous participation of all social partners and communities so that social exclusion and negative stereotyping can be eliminated.

Such a policy was necessary for improving the social development of children with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms, in terms of getting along with others, interacting, seeking assistance and lending assistance, moving from one context to another and asking questions, especially in a country like South Africa which prior to 1994 elections had always been founded on exclusionary separate development of learners of different talents, disabilities, socio-economic background or cultural origin. Because of such a policy, there were schools for Blacks, Coloureds, Indians, Whites, deaf, blind, and so on and classes for mentally intelligent and retarded learners and so on.

In fact, the philosophy and history of education prior to is not a subject for celebration in view of the inherent violation of human rights, as they are known today. This was the period of institutionalisation. Special schools were seen as a solution for learners who deviated from what the society perceived as normal. Children with behavioural problems were regarded as abnormal irrespective of the factors in the child's environment which could have led to his/her behaviour and had to be kept at special schools.

The creation of special education introduced several educational problems such as, to mention but a few, the following:

- Children who qualify for special education have something wrong with them that make it difficult for them to participate in the regular school curriculum; they thus receive a curriculum that is different from that of their peers.
- Children with disabilities and other conditions are labelled and excluded from the mainstream of society. Assessment procedures tend to categorise learners and this has damaging effects on educator and parent expectations and on the learners' self-concept (Ainscow, 1991; Jenkinson, 1997).
- The presence of specialists in special education encourages regular classroom educators to pass on to others responsibility for children they regard as special (Ainscow, 1991).
- Resources that might otherwise be used to provide more flexible and responsive forms of schooling are channelled into separate provision (Ainscow, 1991).
- The emphasis on Individualised Educational Plans and task analysis in special education tends to lower educator expectations of the learners. In addition, task analysis and the associated behavioural teaching strategies introduce disjointed knowledge and skills thus making learning less meaningful to learners (Sebba, Byers and Rose, 1993).

Inclusive schooling, on the other hand, is opposed to the concept and practice of special education. It demands that schools should change in order to be able to meet the learning needs of all children in a given community. It seeks to improve the learning outcomes of learners in academic achievements, social skills and personal development. Clearly this is the purpose of the school development process, which aims to develop schools that are effective for all. Inclusive schools see learners experiencing difficulty in learning as

indicators of the need for transformation (Ainscow, 1991:3). These schools are characterised by (Ainscow, 1991; Hopkins, Ainscow and West, 1994):

- Strong administrative leadership and attention to quality of teaching
- Emphasis on learner acquisition of basic skills
- High expectations for learners and confidence among educators that they can deal with children's individual needs
- Commitment to provide a broad and balanced range of curriculum experiences for all children
- Orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning
- Arrangements for supporting individual members of staff through staff development, using both the workshop and the workplace.
- Frequent monitoring of learner progress

Inclusive schools are thus closely tied with effective teaching.

School development and effective research, which are at the heart of inclusive education, point to the following three important needs:

- First, there is the need for quality educator education involving pre-service training for all educators and staff development in the form of advanced studies, the workshop and the workplace. School heads require additional training in order to play an effective leadership role.
- Second, there is the need for further research, especially school-based inquiry in order to improve practice.
- Lastly, there is also the need to make formal education relevant in content and process to the social and cultural environment of learners.

In the light of the foregoing paragraphs, it is clear that the philosophy and policy of inclusion in South Africa considers that all learners are full members of the school community and are entitled to the opportunities and

responsibilities that are available to all learners in the school. In an inclusive school setting, learners with disabilities are provided specially designed teaching in their least restrictive environment (LRE). LRE varies according to the individual needs and goals of each learner. In order to determine the LRE, the individualized educational program (IEP) committee should first develop the individual goals for the learner, then determine how and where the learner's goals can be met. Research has shown that with the right preparation and support, everyone benefits from an inclusive approach to education.

The questions that now come to mind are:

- How do learners feel about inclusive classrooms?
- What are educators' observations, experiences and perceptions concerning the interaction patterns of learners in inclusive classrooms?
- How do parents experience and perceive inclusive education?

The answers to these questions will highlight the understanding that these parents, learners and educators have regarding the theory and practice of inclusion in education.

## **1.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

The aims of this study were to investigate:

- learners feelings about their inclusive classrooms;
- educators' observation, experiences and perceptions concerning the interaction patterns of learners in inclusive classrooms; and
- parents' experiences and perceptions of inclusive education.

In order to attain these aims, the methodology outlined in 1.3 below was selected.

## **1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of this research entailed the following components:

### **1.3.1 Literature study**

A thorough literature study was done to acquire understanding of inclusion and inclusive education. To achieve this, all the available data bases (both national and international) were consulted during the study, for example, the NEXUS, SABINET – On-line, the EBSCOHost web and various other web-based sources as well as a DIALOG search were conducted to gather data from both national and international studies on the subject. The following key concepts/words were used in the search: inclusion, inclusive education, mainstreaming in education, integration in education, and learners with disabilities.

### **1.3.2 Population**

The study planned five focus group interviews of which only four materialised. The plan was to hold one focus group interview in Sasolburg, Kroonstad, Heilbron, Dennisville and Orangiaville. Each focus group interview was to consist of 15 interviewees (11 learners including those with disabilities and those without, 11 parents including those of learners with disabilities and those without and 2 educators) from each of the mentioned towns), as such a total number of 44 learners (N=44), 8 parents and 8 educators were interviewed. These learners, parents and educators were chosen from four schools in the four towns.

### **1.3.3 Interviews**

Leedy and Olmrod (2001) state that in qualitative studies, the interview format is either open-ended or semi-structured. As such, semi-structured qualitative interviews based on the self-developed interview schedule (see Appendix A for the interview schedule) were conducted in the form of an open-ended format - asking the same set of questions in the same sequence and wording to each group of interviewees in the aforementioned towns. These focus

group interviews in the four towns set grounds for the researcher to gain an understanding of how learners experience and perceive and thereby understanding inclusive education as it is practised at their schools.

#### **1.4 PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter one concerns an orientation to the study, which entailed motivation for the study, research questions, methodology, and a general overview of the study.

In chapters two efforts were made to provide literature review on inclusion and inclusive education.

In chapter three, the qualitative methods and methodology, which were employed to carry out this study were described. Explanation for the actions taken towards answering the research questions of the study (see section 1.1 for the research questions) was given. Other aspects covered in this chapter include: description and construction of the interview schedule, aims of the research design, modus operandi of the focus group interviews, decoding of data, administration procedure of the qualitative methods used, validity and reliability and the interpretation of data.

Chapter four presents the analysis and interpretation of the results of the empirical research.

Chapter five presents summaries, conclusions and recommendations of this research.

#### **1.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the introduction, statement of the problem, aims of the study, methods of research and the way in which this research is structured.

The next chapter discusses, by means of a literature review, the concepts of inclusion and inclusive education.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African democratic state and common citizenship are founded on a Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) based on the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. These values call all South Africans to take up the responsibility and challenge of building a humane and caring society, not for the few, but for all South Africans. In establishing an education and training system for the 21st century, South Africa carries a special responsibility to infuse inclusive human rights values in its education and training system and to ensure that all learners, with and without disabilities, pursue their learning potential to the fullest.

In building an inclusive education and training system, South Africa is guided by a democratic Constitution that provides a special challenge to all South Africans by requiring that they give effect to the fundamental right to basic education for all South Africans. Section 29 (1) highlights this fundamental right as follows:

'everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education ...'

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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 Sections 9 (3), (4) and (5), which commits the state to non-discrimination. These clauses are particularly important for protecting all learners, whether disabled or not.

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 equity, on redressing past imbalances and on a progressive raising of the quality of education and training.

In line with its responsibility to develop policy to guide the transformation programme that is necessary to achieve these goals, the Ministry of Education has prepared White Paper 6. White Paper 6 is an inclusive education policy framework which outlines the Ministry of Education's commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in particular for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate the diversity of learning needs, and those learners who continue to be excluded from it.

The White Paper outlines how the education and training system must transform itself to contribute to establishing a caring and humane society, how it must change to accommodate the full range of learning needs and the mechanisms that should be put in place. Particular attention is paid to achieving these objectives through a realistic and effective implementation process that moves responsibly towards the development of a system that accommodates and respects diversity. This process requires a phasing in of strategies that are directed at departmental, institutional, teaching and curriculum transformation. It also requires the vigorous participation of all social partners and communities so that social exclusion and negative stereotyping can be eliminated.

## **2.2 THE HISTORY OF EXCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY**

The history of disability in the world is not a subject for celebration in view of the inherent violation of human rights, as they are known today. In Europe, for example, people with disabilities (PWDs) were considered to pose a social threat, to contaminate an otherwise pure human species. People with disability were killed and used as objects of entertainment. As such, the society had to be protected from PWDs and the converse was also true, the latter had to be protected from society. Philanthropists found it imperative that

PWDs should be given custodial care. These attitudes led to PWDs being placed in asylums where they were fed and clothed. Asylums were not meant to be educational institutions (Pritchard, 1960; Bender, 1970). Some PWDs, mainly those with physical and intellectual impairments as well as mentally ill persons, were placed in hospitals for custodial care and treatment. This was the period of institutionalisation.

Special schools began to emerge in the 15th Century, starting with those with sensory impairments. Other disability groups were considered for special schools when public schooling were expanded. The emphasis in the early special schools was on vocational skills. Their curriculum was thus different from that in public schools. In addition, these early schools belonged to private philanthropic organisations. Government involvement came in much later.

It was not until the late 1950s that categorisation of people with disabilities into separate groups and institutionalisation began to be questioned. Institutionalisation removed PWDs from the cultural norms of the society to which they rightly belonged. This led to the concept of normalisation, first developed in Scandinavian countries, especially Denmark and Sweden. Wolfensberger (1972: 28) defined normalisation as utilisation of means which are as culturally normative as possible, in order to establish and/or maintain personal behaviours and characteristics which are as culturally normative as possible.

Institutions were considered to be artificial and counter-productive. Transfer from institutions to and integration into, normal community settings required considerable adjustment. Despite the adjustment problem, it was considered necessary to implement normalisation or de-institutionalisation. This process is still going on today, with more and more mentally ill persons being placed in the community, with some support.

In education, normalisation means making maximum use of the regular school system with a minimum resort to separate facilities. It may, therefore, be argued that normalisation gave rise to the concept of integration. However, normalisation did not recognise the existence of a wide range of individual

differences in the society and the diversity of educational, vocational and other opportunities that are available to people in the adult world (Jenkinson, 1997: 12).

Despite the criticisms against normalisation, attempts have been made to defend the placement of children and young people with disabilities in special schools and integrated provision, which are the components of the special education system. It has been argued that regular classroom educators are relieved of the need to devise and implement curricula for learners who appeared unable to learn from normal teaching in the regular class (Jenkinson, 1997:13). However, this argument is in itself excluding in that children with disabilities have to follow a different curriculum from that of the regular school.

The creation of special education introduced several educational problems such as, to mention but a few, the following:

- Children who qualify for special education have something wrong with them that make it difficult for them to participate in the regular school curriculum; they thus receive a curriculum that is different from that of their peers.
- Children with disabilities and other conditions are labelled and excluded from the mainstream of society. Assessment procedures tend to categorise learners and this has damaging effects on educator and parent expectations and on the learners' self-concept (Ainscow, 1991; Jenkinson, 1997).
- Unfair methods of identification and assessment have led to a disproportionate number of learners from ethnic minority groups. For example, in both Europe and North America black, Asian and Latino-American learners are overrepresented in special schools and programme; thus special education is being accused of legalising racial segregation (Jenkinson, 1997; Wang et al., 1990).

- The presence of specialists in special education encourages regular classroom educators to pass on to others responsibility for children they regard as special (Ainscow, 1991).
- Resources that might otherwise be used to provide more flexible and responsive forms of schooling are channelled into separate provision (Ainscow, 1991).
- The emphasis on Individualised Educational Plans and task analysis in special education tends to lower educator expectations of the learners. In addition, task analysis and the associated behavioural teaching strategies introduce disjointed knowledge and skills thus making learning less meaningful to learners (Sebba, Byers and Rose, 1993).

To respond to these apparent weaknesses, integration was seen as a reasonable arrangement. Integration recognises the existence of a continuum of services, from the special school, special class to the regular class with or without support.

Most of the UN declarations have supported special education as a continuum of provision. Indeed, the UN does not provide leadership in specific fields out of context. Policy proposals reflect professional thinking, research and practice at the time. For instance, I would like to argue that policy and legislative developments in the United States and the United Kingdom had the most significant impact on the activities of the UN and its specialised agencies. The passing of PL42-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) with its emphasis on the least restrictive environment in 1975 in the USA and the UK Warnock Report of 1978 and the subsequent 1981 Education Act abolishing disability categories and introducing the term "special educational needs" set the scene and basis for international action. One such action was the endorsement of these developments by the political and professional community in the Sundberg Declaration adopted at the World Conference on Action and Strategies for Prevention, Education and Rehabilitation for Persons with Disabilities held at the Spanish city of Torremolinos in November 1981 (UNESCO, 1981). The emphasis at the

Torremolinos Conference was educational integration, allowing for a continuum from locational, social to functional integration.

Although the terms 'special educational needs' and 'Least Restrictive Environment' call for abandoning categories of disability and associated labels as well as increased provision in the regular class, there has not been agreement in practice at national and local level. For example, in Africa, the 1980s saw the mushrooming of special classes and units in all areas of disability (e.g. physical, sensory, intellectual, emotional and learning difficulties) despite the purported abolition of categories (UNESCO, 1985).

At the same time, in the United States, professional advocacy groups claimed that the legislation did not go far enough. They, therefore, launched the Regular Education Initiative (REI) movement, which called for the merging of special and general education into one single system in which all children attended the regular community school. All special education staff, resources and learners with special needs, they recommended, should be integrated into the regular school (Skrtic, 1991). Some countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, left the debate open, but emphasised on parental choice (Jenkinson, 1997). The United Kingdom, while advocating for education in the regular class, has introduced, through the Code of Practice, assessment procedures, which lead to a child being 'statemented' by the Local Education Authority (LEA). The statement ensures that resources are made available to the child. It is obvious that the concept of increased parental choice and detailed assessment procedures work against the REI movement. Indeed, the practice of exclusion is being endorsed.

Alongside the Regular Education Initiative (REI) another movement was initiated by advocacy groups on severe intellectual impairments, such as The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH), which promoted the rights and well-being of people with severe intellectual disability (Jenkinson, 1997). This is the inclusive schooling movement. Like the REI, it proposes the merging of special and general education, but it goes beyond this. It does not believe in the existence of a continuum of provision, from special school, special class to regular class. There should be only one unified education

system. The proponents of inclusive schooling call for a restructuring of the school to accommodate all learners and advocate radical changes to the curriculum, claiming that current curricula were perpetuating exclusion, dividing those learners who could meet their objectives as they are from those who could not (Ainscow, 1991, 1994; Jenkinson, 1997).

Research on inclusive schooling has focused on school improvement in terms of whole school responses as well as teaching strategies that include all learners (Ainscow, 1991, 1994). In the early 1980s UNESCO carried out a survey on educator education in 14 countries involving all world regions (UNESCO, 1986). The findings showed that regular classroom educators were willing to take on the responsibility for special needs children, but were not confident whether they had the skills to carry out that task. Most educators felt they needed training in the special needs field. These findings suggested the need for in-service training for regular classroom educators, through educator trainers. UNESCO, therefore, set up a project, led by Professor Mel Ainscow, now at the University of Manchester, to develop materials and teaching strategies that would meet the need of educators in inclusive schools. Regional workshops were held for Africa, (Nairobi, Kenya), Asia (Beijing, China), Middle East (Amman, Jordan), Europe (Romania), Latin America (Chile) and North America (Canada). Resource Teams were set up for preparing and trialling materials that had to be culturally relevant. Between 1988 and 1993, the project teams met, trialled the materials and ran workshops. The outcome was the currently widely distributed materials, including the Special Needs in the Classroom: Educators Resources Pack (UNESCO, 1993), Special Needs Classroom A Educator Guide (Ainscow, 1994) and two videos, Inclusive Schools and Training video. These materials have been highly beneficial in improving school practice, giving skills and confidence to regular classroom educators.

The success of these materials and various experiments carried out on inclusive schooling in different parts of the world led UNESCO to convene, with assistance of the government of Spain, the 1994 World Conference at Salamanca. The delegates deliberated on the elimination of exclusive

practices for children and young people with special needs arising from social, economic, psychological and physical conditions. At the end of the conference, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action was unanimously adopted by acclamation (UNESCO, 1994).

The implications for inclusive schooling are wide. Different countries, regional, local communities and professionals are at different levels of conceptualisation. While some are at the inclusive, School for All, stage, others are at the special school stage, and still others somewhere in-between.

The influence of inclusion on the achievement of learners with and those without disabilities; and the way in which inclusion influences attitudes and relationships of educators and learners has been investigated. Several studies have found that learners with mild disabilities who have been included in general education classrooms make better gains than those in pull-out programme or control schools. During the 1992-93 school year, a Montana school district implemented full inclusion of learners with disabilities in one of their elementary schools and more limited inclusion in other interested schools (Fishbaugh & Gum, 1994:56). Identified learners progressed toward IEP goals in all but one or two cases, and phenomenal two to three year gains were realized by several. Achievement test data demonstrated consistent academic gains made by general education learners.

Deno, Maruyama, Espin, and Cohen (1990:153) studied efforts in Minnesota schools to modify general education classrooms in ways that enhance inclusive opportunities for learners with mild disabilities. Learner achievement comparisons in reading revealed that both low-achieving learners and those with mild disabilities did better in integrated programme. Special education learners demonstrated no differences in reading achievement in integrated or resource programme. The special education learners performed relatively poorly in both integrated and resource programme when compared with their low-achieving classmates but had more social success in general education settings.

Jenkins, Jewell, Leicester, O'Connor, Jenkins, and Troutner (1994:355) studied reading achievement in a school that introduced a combination of other changes simultaneously with introducing inclusion and dropping pull-out programme. In comparison to a control school, learners in the inclusive school "demonstrated significantly superior gains on several...scales, including reading vocabulary, total reading, and language, with a marginally significant effect on reading comprehension. These positive effects were spread across all learner types - regular, remedial and special education". In his study (England, 1996:6), achievement test scores in co-taught classrooms (by special and general education educators) were found to have held steady in the first year of a district's inclusion efforts, while learners whose services were delivered in a pull-out model lost ground. Social and behavioural benefits were noted as well.

Slavin (1996:5) has concluded that, for learners with mild-disabilities, powerful prevention and early intervention programme are preferable to later mainstreaming when learners have already fallen behind their peers. Good, intensive, individualized teaching is the key.

For learners with more moderate or severe disabilities, studies have demonstrated that participation in general education environments results in some academic increases and behavioural and social progress. Cole and Meyer (1991:349) studied intellectual and social functioning and learner-environment interaction for learners in 43 different classrooms from 14 schools. No significant differences were found between integrated and segregated learners in the traditional domains of self-help skills, gross and fine motor coordination, communication, and adaptive behaviour. In the functional domain of social competence, however, learners from integrated sites generally progressed (improving their ability to manage their own behaviour in social situations, provide negative feedback to others, etc.). Conversely, learners from segregated sites generally regressed in each of the traditional skill domains and social competence. Contrary to expectations at the initiation of this study, learners in segregated sites did not receive a

greater concentration of special educational resources than those in integrated settings.

Saint-Laurent and Lessard (1991:374) evaluated differences in progress between learners in special classes and those in regular classes. Also, in the special classes, they evaluated learning with a functional curriculum compared to a traditional curriculum. The 41 learners participating in the study were considered moderately intellectually handicapped and were between the ages of six and 10. Results of the study showed that none of the three models resulted in greater academic progress for the learners. However, educators of regular classes reported more behavioural progress among the learners with disabilities placed in their classrooms. Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, and Goetz (1994:212) conducted a comprehensive effort to evaluate different programme placements for learners with severe disabilities. Sixteen elementary learners, eight receiving educational services in regular classrooms and eight in special education classes, participated in the study. Programmes were chosen that met selected criteria for best practices and models for educator training. Findings consistently revealed the superiority of regular class placements over special education classes, including IEPs with more academic objectives, greater social interaction, and less time spent alone! Results of the study, the authors write, "suggest that there are important differences in the quality and curricular content of written educational programme for learners with disabilities who are full-time members of general education classrooms; and there are significant differences in the levels of learner engagement in school activities, the type of activities in which they are engaged, the type and level of participation in integrated school environments, and the degree to which they initiate and engage in social interactions with peers and adults". In an earlier study, Hunt and Farron-Davis (1992:249) found that learners placed in inclusive classes had IEPs that contained more references to best practices than learners in segregated classes, and were less likely to be engaged in isolated activities and more likely to be engaged with other people in the classroom.

A summary of three meta-analyses of effective settings demonstrated a "small-to-moderate beneficial effect of inclusive education on the academic and social outcomes of special needs learners" (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1995:34). Lipsky and Gartner (1995:771), in their annual national study on inclusion, cite numerous schools and districts that report generally positive academic, behavioural, and social outcomes for learners with disabilities, and no reports of negative effects academically.

The fear that inclusion may result in a "watered down" curriculum for learners without disabilities, or that less time will be devoted to learning, is not borne out by the research. None of the studies examining outcomes for learners without disabilities has found any negative impact for learners who are not identified as having disabilities. Fishbaugh and Gum (1994) found that achievement test data demonstrated consistent academic gains by general education learners in inclusive classrooms. Hollowood, Salisbury, Rainforth, and Palombaro (1995:247) found that the quantity and level of time spent on teaching for learners without disabilities was not adversely affected by the presence in class of learners with severe disabilities. In a study of cooperative learning groups (Hunt, Staub, Alwell, & Goetz, 1994:297), learners without disabilities who facilitated interactions of their peers with severe disabilities did not have their level of achievement affected. Standardized test and report card measures used to determine impact revealed no significant negative academic or behavioural effects on classmates who were educated in classes with learners with disabilities in an elementary school of 640 in rural Minnesota (Sharpe, York, & Knight, 1994:285).

Numerous studies have examined various aspects of attitudes and relationships resulting from inclusion. For the most part, these studies document that efforts to include learners with disabilities in the general education classroom have resulted in positive experiences and improved attitudes on the part of learners, both with and without disabilities, and educators alike. Studies by Helmstetter, Peck, and Giangreco (1994:270) and Stainback, Stainback, Moravcek, and Jackson (1992:43) found that learners develop positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities based on the

experience of having disabled learners in their classrooms. Helmstetter, et al. (1994:272) also noted that learner friendships and relationships seem to be enhanced by inclusion, with greater understanding and empathy evidenced. Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, and Peck (1994:319) noted, too, that inclusion facilitated peer friendships. Friendship networks and social relationships were enhanced for learners with severe disabilities placed in general education in Fryxell and Kennedy's (1995:264) study. Both Hall (1994:310) and Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, and Goldberg (1994:328) studied young learners's social relationships. Hall (1994:309) identified reciprocal, positive relationships between learners with disabilities and their classmates. Evans, et al. (1994:309) found that learners who attended classrooms with fully included peers with severe disabilities were able to display sophisticated judgments and suggestions when presented with scenarios of common situations.

Learners with disabilities participating in a learner aide programme experienced increased independence, more socialization opportunities, growth in academic skills, and improved behaviour. The aides without disabilities experienced greater awareness and appreciation for people with disabilities and better self-esteem, and an increase in responsible behaviour (Staub, Spaulding, Peck, Gallucci, & Schwartz, 1996:199).

Educators have positive attitudes or develop them over time, especially when inclusion is accompanied by training, administrative and other support, help in the classroom; and, for some, lowered class size, and use of labeling to obtain special services (Phillips, Alfred, Brulli, & Shank, 1990:183). In one school, reaction of the educators was overwhelmingly positive toward inclusion; the author suggests that inclusion may not have produced new effects but merely amplified attitudes, philosophies, and practices that existed in the school prior to the start of inclusion (Rainforth, 1992:13). Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993:364) studied educators who had a learner identified as having a severe disability in their class for a year. Results indicate that most educators reacted to the initial placement cautiously or negatively, but 17 of the 19 educators "...experienced increased ownership and involvement with the learner with severe disabilities in their classes over

the course of the school year." Educators indicated attitude improvement and a willingness to do this again. They also reported "...that the participation of a learner with severe disabilities in their class had a positive impact on the learner with disabilities, as well as on the learner's classmates."

An attitude survey was conducted with high school staff, learners and their parents in the Chicago School District (Butler-Hayes, 1995:57). Principals were most in agreement with the basic goals of inclusion, followed by special education educators and regular education educators, respectively. An important implication of this study is that more knowledge, exposure, and experience led to greater acceptance of inclusion. Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996:36) surveyed 680 certified special and general education educators and administrators in 32 schools that had experience in providing inclusive educational opportunities for all learners. The professionals surveyed generally believed that educating learners with disabilities in general education classrooms results in positive changes in educators' attitudes and job responsibilities. Also, administrative support and collaboration were powerful predictors of positive attitudes toward full inclusion. In another study, 158 educators in one state returned questionnaires on their perceptions of the supports available to them and needed by them for inclusion (Werts, Wolery, Snyder, & Caldwell, 1996:18). Training was one of the identified needs. Special and general educators reported similar levels of need for resources, but special educators reported greater availability of resources than general educators. Feedback to York, Vandercook, Macdonald, Heise-Neff, and Caughey (1992:249) generally indicated that the inclusion experience was positive for learners and educators.

A synthesis of 18 investigations of general education educators, some teaching in inclusive classrooms and others not, found that about two thirds of them support the concept of mainstreaming/inclusion; half felt mainstreaming/inclusion could provide benefits (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996:63).

## **2.3 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF INCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

This section provides both the clarification of concepts which are used throughout this research (see 2.3.1) and the theoretical framework of inclusion and inclusive education.

### **2.3.1 Inclusion, mainstreaming and integration**

For the purpose of this research, inclusion is defined as providing specially designed teaching and support for learners with special educational needs in the context of regular education settings. It means that all learners in a school's attendance area are full members of that school community and each learner participates equitably in the opportunities and responsibilities of the general education environment. Educators involved in inclusion efforts understand that classrooms are today becoming more and more diverse and that the educator's challenge is to provide teaching that benefits all learners, even though the various learners may derive different benefits (Rogers, 1993:4). In this regard, Hocutt (1996:97) concludes, after looking extensively at the research on placement of learners with disabilities, that teaching and not setting is the key to achievement of success as measured by learner outcomes. Further, she reports that case-by-case approaches are the best way to make decisions about learner teaching and placement. Intensive and reasonably individualized teaching, close cooperation between general and special education educators, and careful, frequent monitoring of learner progress are very important.

In the light of the above-mentioned paragraphs it is clear that past assumptions about special education and general education as separate systems are giving way to a challenge to work together (Moore, 1996).

The definition of inclusion provided above shows that inclusion is different from the past educational practices of integration or mainstreaming. Mainstreaming brought learners with special education needs into general classrooms only when they did not need specially designed teaching when they could keep up with the "mainstream." Integration presumes that

"segregation" exists and learners are with their peers without disabilities part-time. In reality, learners who were integrated part-time were not truly a part of the class and were often involved in activities very different from the other learners in the class. Inclusion, a philosophy of acceptance, belonging and community, also means that general education classes are structured to meet the needs of all the learners in the class. This is accomplished through educational strategies designed for a diverse learner population and collaboration between educators so that specially designed teaching and supplementary aids and services are provided to all learners as needed for effective learning.

Several recent studies have found that inclusion is more effective than either integration or mainstreaming. Ferguson's (1992) project to achieve both social and learning outcomes for learners in general education classrooms resulted in the finding that integration does not work, but inclusion does. Schnorr's (1990) seven month investigation of the way in which a classroom of first graders viewed and interacted with a learner with moderate disabilities who was mainstreamed only on a part-time basis revealed that the part-time learner was considered an "outsider" by the other learners in the class. A study of 16 secondary learners placed in nine Oregon high schools (Hilton & Liberty, 1992) demonstrates that placing learners with severe disabilities in integrated settings does not ensure that either integration or inclusion will take place. In this case, there was little interaction between learners with and without disabilities, educators did not foster integration when opportunities presented themselves, schedules often minimized integration opportunities and learners' records indicated they were not making progress toward independent adult functioning. These studies lend support to the contention that, for successful inclusion to occur, the general education classroom needs to be a place where a range of learner abilities is supported and accepted.

It can be deduced from the foregoing paragraphs that, in education, inclusion is defined as developing children and adolescents so they have opportunity to participate fully in all educational, employment, consumer, recreational, community and domestic activities that typify everyday society.

The key phrase in the above definition is “the opportunity to participate fully” as this implies active involvement and choice by the individual. Also implicit is that inclusion is not simply a deficit model targeted at those groups who are excluded but about the whole community and the benefit derived from valuing diversity.

White Paper 6 distinguishes between mainstreaming and inclusion as follows:

**Table 2.1: Mainstreaming and inclusion**

| <b>'Mainstreaming' or 'Integration'</b>  | <b>'Inclusion'</b>   |
|--|--|
| Mainstreaming is about getting learners to 'fit into' a particular kind of system or integrating them into this existing system.   | Inclusion is about recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities.   |
| 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 programme. | Inclusion is about supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. The focus is on teaching and learning actors, with the emphasis on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners. |
| Mainstreaming and integration focus on changes that need to take place in learners so that they can 'fit in'. Here the focus is on the learner.  | Inclusion focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs.<br><br>The focus is on the adaptation of and support systems available in the class-room.  |

From the foregoing table it can be deduced that inclusion is different from integration or mainstreaming. Mainstreaming and integration are about getting learners to 'fit into' a particular kind of system or integrating them into this existing system; giving extra support so that they can 'fit in' or be integrated into the 'normal' classroom routine and learners are assessed by specialists who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions, such as the placement of learners in programme; and they focus on changes that need to take place in learners so that they can 'fit in' and the focus is on the learner, while inclusion is about recognizing and respecting the differences among all learners and building on similarities; supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. The focus is on teaching and learning actors, with the emphasis on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners; and focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs and the focus is on the adaptation of and support systems available in the classroom (Department of Education, 2001). Traditionally mainstreaming brought learners with special education needs into general classrooms only when they did not need specially designed teaching when they could keep up with the "mainstream." Integration presumes that "segregation" exists and learners are with their peers without disabilities part-time. In reality, learners who were integrated part-time were not truly a part of the class and were often involved in activities very different from the other learners in the class. Inclusion, a philosophy of acceptance, belonging and community, also means that general education classes are structured to meet the needs of all the learners in the class. This is accomplished through educational strategies designed for a diverse learner population and collaboration between educators so that specially designed teaching and supplementary aids and services are provided to all learners as needed for effective learning.

Traditionally, mainstream educators have worked in relative isolation within their own classrooms and have been primarily responsible for being the teaching leader and manager in the classroom. When learners have experienced difficulties, the educator referred the learner to a professional for

assessment and possible placement in a separate educational setting. In a collaborative approach to support, mainstream educators need to be recognised as full partners with professionals, parents and others and will consequently have increased responsibility for coordinating the activities of learners with disabilities (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995: 260).

Several studies have found that inclusion is more effective than either integration or mainstreaming. Ferguson, Meyer, Jeanchild and Zingo's (1992:220) project to achieve both social and learning outcomes for learners in general education classrooms resulted in the finding that "integration doesn't work, but inclusion does." Schnorr's (1990:234) seven month investigation of the way in which a classroom of first graders viewed and interacted with a learner with moderate disabilities who was mainstreamed only on a part-time basis revealed that the part-time learner was considered an "outsider" by the other learners in the class. A study of 16 secondary learners placed in nine Oregon high schools (Hilton & Liberty, 1992:171) demonstrates that placing learners with severe disabilities in integrated settings does not ensure that either integration or inclusion will take place. In this case, there was little interaction between learners with and without disabilities, educators did not foster integration when opportunities presented themselves, schedules often minimized integration opportunities and learners' records indicated they were not making progress toward independent adult functioning. These studies lend support to the contention that, for successful inclusion to occur, the general education classroom needs to be a place where a range of learner abilities is supported and accepted.

The following two key concepts to support the inclusive approach to education can be highlighted:

- Firstly, whilst it is important to identify vulnerable groups and individuals at risk of exclusion, it is equally important not to make qualitative assumptions and distinctions between different groups and individuals. We need to consider all children and young people to be on a continuum of learning.

- The second concept is with regards to the curriculum. With the emphasis on core subjects and school performance there is a danger of perceiving the curriculum as a single entity. However, breadth, balance and relevance is important and that the curriculum provides the framework for learning and is not an end in itself.

These concepts are key to developing sustainable inclusion as it moves the emphasis to quality of provision and learning and away from placement. Therefore, regardless of the setting, inclusion is firmly rooted in school development.

Sustainable inclusion can be achieved by the development and continuing improvement in the quality of leadership, management, teaching and learning in all education and play settings. This needs to be supported through continuous professional development, access to current research and collaborative approaches to development, evaluation and sharing of effective practice.

The inclusive approach to addressing 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 involve identifying and overcoming the causes of learning difficulties. The approach is also consistent with a systemic 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.

Embracing this approach as the basis for establishing an inclusive education and training system does not mean that schools should then proceed to declare it as policy and hope that its implementation will proceed smoothly within all provincial systems and all education and training institutions. Rather, the successful implementation of this policy relies on a substantive understanding of the real experiences and capabilities of school systems and education and training institutions, and the setting of achievable school policy objectives and priorities over time. Successful policy implementation also

relies on the identification of key levers for policy change and innovation within school systems and education and training institutions.

On the basis of the above definition of inclusion, an inclusive education service can be conceptualized as:

- Inclusion is a process by which schools, local authorities and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include pupils;
- With the right training, strategies and support nearly all children with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream schools;
- An inclusive education service offers excellence and choice and incorporates the views of parents and children;
- The interests of pupils must be safeguarded;
- Schools, local education authorities and others should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation;
- All children should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential;
- Mainstream education will not always be right for every child all the time. Equally just because mainstream education may not be right at a particular stage it does not prevent the child from being included successfully at a later stage.

White Paper 6 posits that inclusive education and training:

- Are about acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.
- Are accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience.

- Are about enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.
- Acknowledge and respect differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status.
- Are broader than formal schooling and acknowledge that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures.
- Are about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners.
- Are about maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning.
- Are about empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning.

The most significant conceptual understanding of inclusion is that the development of schooling must be premised on the understanding that:

- All children, youth and even adults attending Adult Basic Education and Training have the potential to learn within all bands of education and they all require support.
- Many learners experience barriers to learning or drop out primarily because of the inability of the system to recognise and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs typically through inaccessible physical plants, curricula, assessment, learning materials and teaching methodologies. The approach advocated in White Paper 6 is fundamentally different from traditional ones that assume that barriers to learning reside primarily within the learner and accordingly, learner support should take the form of specialist, typically medical interventions.

- Establishing an inclusive schooling system requires changes to mainstream education so that learners experiencing barriers to learning can be identified early and appropriate support provided. It also requires changes to special schools and specialised settings so that learners who experience mild to moderate disabilities can be adequately accommodated within mainstream education through appropriate support from district-based support teams including special schools and specialised settings. This requires that the quality of provision of special schools and specialised settings be upgraded so that they can provide a high-quality service for learners with severe and multiple disabilities.

From the definition of inclusion and inclusive education provided above, it is clear that inclusive education is founded on the philosophy that:

- All learners in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other learners, educators, and support staff. This philosophy of inclusion hinges on helping learners and educators become better members of a community by creating new visions for communities and for schools. In fact, inclusion as stated above is about membership and belonging to a community.
- Inclusion involves all kinds of practices that are ultimately practices of good teaching. For example, what good educators do is to think thoughtfully about children and develop ways to reach all of them. Ultimately good teaching becomes a relationship between two people, that is, a learner and educator. Educators get good results because they enter into that relationship.
- Inclusion is providing more options for children as ways to learn. It is structuring schools as communities where all children can learn. This view holds that there is no recipe for becoming an inclusive educator or an inclusive school. It is not a mechanized format.

- Inclusion is based on the belief that people/adults work in inclusive communities, work with people of different races, religions, aspirations, disabilities. In the same vein, children of all ages should learn and grow in environments that resemble the environments that they will eventually work in.
- When good inclusion is in place, the child who needs the inclusion does not stand out. The inclusive curriculum includes:
  - strong parental involvement;
  - learners making choices; and
  - a lot of hands-on and heads-on involvement.
- If schools can be run like businesses or with a factory model, they could automatically exclude about one-third of the people because they do not fit that model. Under the factory model, schools set standards for grade levels and this emphasizes producing a standard product with a focus on mentality. If learners are not up to the standards, then they have to put them aside. But inclusion is not just about 'where' children are educated; it is a philosophy that includes a whole school and it is everyone's responsibility. This can be compared to the one-room school house, as it is the case with South African one educator farm schools, which has multi-grades of 1-8 and one educator. Learners learn from one another, and the educator is expected to teach all learners who entered the class.
- Inclusion is based on the notion that after the child is out of public school, he will be living and working with a diverse population of people. He has to be accepted after he is out of school as much as when he is in school. That is why inclusion is a key while children are still in school.
- Inclusive education means educators working with learners in a social context that is suitable to a diverse population of learners. It also means the educator may need alternative expectations and goals for learners, and it is difficult to get educators to do this.

- Inclusive education operates from the assumption that almost all learners should start in a general classroom, and then, depending on their needs, move into more restrictive environments. Research shows that inclusive education helps the development of all children in different ways. Learners with specific challenges make gains in cognitive and social development and physical motor skills. They do well when the general environment is adjusted to meet their needs. Children with more typical development gain higher levels of tolerance for people with differences. They learn to make the most of whoever they're playing with. When we exclude people, it ultimately costs more than the original effort to include them.
- The philosophy of inclusion hinges on helping learners and educators become better members of a community by creating new visions for communities and for schools (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996: 782). This means that inclusion is about membership and belonging to a community. That is why inclusive curriculum will always include strong parental involvement, learners making choices, and a lot of hands-on and heads-on involvement.
- Inclusion is a key while learners are still in school. According to Stainback and Stainback (1996:54), inclusive educators are aware that when learners will be out of public school, they will be living and working with a diverse population of people. So, they have to be accepted after they are out of school as much as when they are in school. Inclusion therefore involves all kinds of practices that are ultimately practices of good teaching. What good educators do is to think thoughtfully about learners and develop ways to reach all of them. Ultimately good teaching is a relationship between two people; educators get good results because they enter into that relationship. Inclusion is providing more options for learners as ways to learn. It is structuring schools as community where all learners can learn. But there is no recipe for becoming an inclusive educator or an inclusive school. It is not a mechanized format. This implies less whole-class, educator-directed teaching, e.g., lecturing; less learner passivity: sitting, listening, receiving, and absorbing information; less prizing and

rewarding of silence in the classroom; less classroom time devoted to fill-in-the-blank worksheets, dittos, workbooks, and other "seatwork"; less learner time spent reading textbooks and basal readers; less attempt by educators to thinly "cover" large amounts of material in every subject area; less rote memorization of facts and details; less stress on the competition and grades in school; less tracking or leveling learners into "ability groups"; less use of pull-out special programme; and less use of and reliance on standardized tests (Staub, Spaulding, Peck, Gallucci & Schwatz, 1996:197). The emphasis is on more experiential, inductive, hands-on learning; more active learning in the classroom, with all the attendant noise and movement of learners doing, talking, and collaborating; more emphasis on higher-order thinking; learning a field's key concepts and principles; more deep study of a smaller number of topics, so that learners internalize the field's way of inquiry; more time devoted to reading whole, original, real books and nonfiction materials; more responsibility transferred to learners for their work: goal-setting, record-keeping, monitoring, evaluation; more choice for learners; e.g., picking their own books, writing topics, team partners, research projects; more enacting and modeling of the principles of democracy in school; more attention to affective needs and the varying cognitive styles of individual learners; more cooperative, collaborative activity; developing the classroom as an interdependent community; more heterogeneously grouped classrooms where individual needs are met through inherently individualized activities, not segregation of bodies; more delivery of special help to learners in regular classrooms; more varied and cooperative roles for educators, parents, and administrators; and more reliance upon educators' descriptive evaluation of learner growth, including qualitative/anecdotal observation (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993).

- Competent inclusive educators have ability to problem solve, to be able to informally assess the skills a learner needs (rather than relying solely on standardized curriculum); take advantage of learners' individual interests and use their internal motivation for developing needed skills; set high but alternative expectations that are suitable for the learners, this means

developing alternative assessments; make appropriate expectations for each learner, regardless of the learner's capabilities. If educators can do this, it allows all learners to be included in a class and school; determine how to modify assignments for learners; how to design classroom activities with so many levels that all learners have a part. This teaching skill can apply not just at the elementary or secondary level, but at the college level as well. It will mean more activity-based teaching rather than seat-based teaching; learn how to value all kinds of skills that learners bring to a class, not just the academic skills. In doing this, educators will make it explicit that in their classrooms they value all skills, even if that is not a clear value of a whole school; provide daily success for all learners. Educators have to work to counteract the message all learners get when certain learners are continually taken out of class for special work. Other competencies that will help general education educators in an inclusive environment include a realization that every learner in the class is their responsibility. Educators need to find out how to work with each learner rather than assuming someone else will tell them how to educate a learner; knowing a variety of teaching strategies and how to use them effectively. This includes the ability to adapt materials and rewrite objectives for a learner's needs; working as a team with parents and special education educators to learn what skills a learner needs and to provide the best teaching approach; and viewing each learner in the class as an opportunity to become a better educator rather than a problem to be coped with or have someone else fix (Yell & Shriner, 1996:113).

- Inclusive education maximizes individual growth of each learner and builds a sense of community in an educational setting. Learners with special needs are afforded a sense of belonging to the diverse human family; provides a diverse stimulating environment in which to grow and learn; evolves in feelings of being a member of a diverse community; enables development of friendships; provides opportunities to develop neighbourhood friends; enhances self-respect; provides affirmations of individuality; provides peer models; provides opportunities to be educated with same-age peers (Villa & Thousand, 1995:57).

- Villa, Thousand, Meyers & Nevin (1996:36) assert that general education provides opportunities to experience diversity of society on a small scale in a classroom; develops an appreciation that everyone has unique and beautiful characteristics and abilities; develops respect for others with diverse characteristics; develops sensitivity toward others' limitations; develops feelings of empowerment and the ability to make a difference; increases abilities to help and teach all classmates; develops empathetic skills; provides opportunities to vicariously put their feet in another learner's shoes; and enhances appreciation for the diversity of the human family. General education helps educators appreciate the diversity of the human family; helps educators recognize that all learners have strengths; creates an awareness of the importance of direct individualized teaching; increases ways of creatively addressing challenges; teaches collaborative problem solving skills; develops teamwork skills; acquires different ways of perceiving challenges as a result of being on a multi-disciplinary team; enhances accountability skills; and combats monotony (Werts, Wolery, Snyder & Caldwell, 1996:15).
- Society promotes the civil rights of all individuals; supports the social value of equality; teaches socialization and collaborative skills; builds supportiveness and interdependence; maximizes social peace; and provides learners with a miniature model of the democratic process.
- Inclusive education means educators working with learners in a context that is suitable to a diverse population of learners. It also means the educator may need alternative expectations and goals for learners.
- Inclusive education operates from the assumption that almost all learners should start in a general classroom, and then, depending on their needs, move into more restrictive environments. Research shows that inclusive education helps the development of all learners in different ways. Learners with specific challenges make gains in cognitive and social development and physical motor skills. They do well when the general environment is adjusted to meet their needs. Learners with more typical development gain higher levels of tolerance for people with differences. They learn to make

the most of whoever they're playing with. When we exclude people, it ultimately costs more than the original effort to include them.

### **2.3.2 Features of Inclusive Educational Practices**

Some of good and sound inclusive educational practices that can benefit all learners are founded on the following inclusive practices:

- Diversity as the new norm - clearly, the learner population has changed and is continuing to become less and less homogeneous. The educators involved in inclusion efforts understand that classrooms are becoming more and more diverse and that the educator's job is to arrange teaching that benefits all learners-even though the various learners may derive different benefits (Rogers, 1993:4). Past assumptions about special education and general education as separate systems are giving way to a challenge to work together (Moore, 1996:43). Inclusive education views schools as inclusive and they should always look for ways to educate that benefit all learners. In this regard, the Department of Education in South Africa (2001) sees inclusive education and training as acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that they all need social support; accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience; enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners; acknowledging and respect of differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV/AIDS status; are broader than formal schooling and acknowledge that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures; are about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricular and the environment to meet the needs of all learners; are about maximizing the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricular of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning; and are about empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning. This means that in inclusive

educational settings all learners in a school's attendance area are full members of that school community and each learner participates equitably in the opportunities and responsibilities of the general education environment.

- Collaborative teaching arrangements - educators working together not only create more energy around problem-solving and effective strategies, but they also model people skills for learners.
- Flexible school structures - schools need physical arrangements that are adaptable to a variety of learner needs as well as teaching approaches. Scheduling approaches should also reflect a similar flexibility.
- Performance-based and alternative assessments - there are many ways to demonstrate learning, and learner performance expectations should be as individualized as their teaching.

## **2.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AS THE FOUNDATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

The foundation of inclusive education is social constructivism and ecosystems. Inclusion cannot be created simply by the diktat of school administrations; instead, the educators in inclusive schools have to construct the meaning of inclusion for themselves as part of an overall cultural transformation of their schools (Clark, Dyson, Millward & Robson, 1999:161). The social constructivist perspective acknowledges that realities are socially constructed and constituted through language, and that all reality arises through social interaction over time, in other words that people construct their realities as they live them and that there are no essential truths (Freedman and Combs 1996:45).

The cornerstone of inclusive education is the parallel between ecological communities (that is, ecosystems) and learning communities (that is, schools). To understand the theory of ecosystems and apply them to human communities, schools need to learn the principles of ecology, the "language of nature." They need to become ecologically literate. Once they really

understand and implement the principles of ecology, which are interdependence, diversity, partnership, energy flow, flexibility, cycles, co-evolution, and sustainability, they become inclusive communities. In schools and other learning communities, these principles of ecology become principles of education.

The link between ecological communities and human communities exists because both are living systems, and this is where systems thinking come in. The parallel between ecosystems and human communities is not just a metaphor. It is a real connection, because both are living systems. The principles of ecology are the patterns of life. To understand these patterns, to understand living systems, there is a need for a new way of thinking in schools. The fundamental change in schools' way of thinking must be a shift of emphasis from the parts to the whole.

The foregoing paragraphs therefore highlight the foundation of inclusive education as the philosophy and belief that all learners in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community and that educators work in inclusive school communities with people of different races, religions, aspirations, disabilities. In the same vein, learners of all ages should learn and grow in environments that resemble the environments that they will eventually work in. When effective inclusion is in place, the learner who needs the inclusion does not feel excluded. The learner is included in the feeling of belonging among other learners, educators, and support staff.

## **2.5 CURRICULUM AND INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

A broad range of learning needs exists among the learner population at any point in time, and, where these are not met, learners may fail to learn effectively or be excluded from the learning system. In this regard, different learning needs arise from a range of factors, including physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, differences in intellectual ability, particular life experiences or socio-economic deprivation.

Different learning needs may also arise because of:

- Negative attitudes to and stereotyping of differences.
- An inflexible curriculum.
- Inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching.
- Inappropriate communication.
- Inaccessible and unsafe built environments.
- Inappropriate and inadequate support services.
- Inadequate policies and legislation.
- The non-recognition and non-involvement of parents.
- Inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and educators.

One of the most significant barriers to learning for learners in special and 'ordinary' schools is the curriculum. In this case, barriers to learning arise from different aspects of the curriculum, such as:

- The content (i.e. what is taught).
- The language or medium of teaching.
- How the classroom or lecture is organised and managed.
- The methods and processes used in teaching.
- The pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum.
- The learning materials and equipment that is used.
- How learning is assessed.

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. The curriculum must be made more flexible across all bands of education so that it is accessible to all learners, irrespective of their learning needs.

In accepting an inclusive approach to learning, it is essential that parents and educators acknowledge that the learners who are most vulnerable to barriers to learning and exclusion are those who have historically been termed 'learners with special education needs', i.e. learners with disabilities and impairments. Their increased vulnerability arises largely because of the exclusive nature and extent of the educational support that has been provided at schools before White paper 6 was developed in South Africa.

Interventions or strategies at different levels, such as the home, the classroom, the school, the district, the provincial and national departments and systems, will be essential to prevent them from causing learning to be ineffective. Interventions or strategies will also be essential to avoid barriers to learning from contributing to the exclusion of learners from the curriculum and/or from the education and training system.

Classroom educators are primary human resources for achieving the goal of an inclusive education and training system. This means that educators need to improve their skills and knowledge, and develop new ones. Staff development at the school and district level is critical to putting in place successful integrated educational practices. In mainstream education, priorities include multi-level classroom teaching so that educators can prepare main lessons with variations that are responsive to:

- individual learner needs;
- co-operative learning;
- curriculum enrichment; and
- dealing with learners with behavioural problems.

In special schools/resource centres, priorities should include orientation to new roles within district support services of support to neighbourhood schools, and new approaches that focus on problem solving and the development of learners' strengths and competencies rather than focusing on their shortcomings only. In full-service schools, priorities should include orientation to and training in new roles focusing on multi-level classroom teaching, co-operative learning, problem solving and the development of learners' strengths and competencies rather than focusing on their short-comings only.

Management and governance development programme should be revised to incorporate orientation to and training in the management and governance implications of each of the categories of institutions within the inclusive education and training system, viz. special, full-service and mainstream. Training should focus on how to identify and address barriers to learning.

## **2.6 THE INFLUENCE OF INCLUSION ON ATTITUDES AND RELATIONSHIPS**

Numerous studies have examined various aspects of attitudes and relationships resulting from inclusion. For the most part, these studies document that efforts to include learners with disabilities in the general education classroom have resulted in positive experiences and improved attitudes on the part of learners, both with and without disabilities, and educators alike. Studies by Helmstetter, Peck, and Giangreco (1994) and Stainback, Stainback, Moravcek, and Jackson (1992) found that learners develop positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities based on the experience of having disabled learners in their classrooms. Helmstetter, et al. (1994) also noted that learner friendships and relationships seem to be enhanced by inclusion, with greater understanding and empathy evidenced. Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, and Peck (1995) noted, too, that inclusion facilitated peer friendships. Friendship networks and social relationships were enhanced for learners with severe disabilities placed in general education in Fryxell and Kennedy's (1995) study. Both Hall (1994) and Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, and Goldberg (1994) studied young children's social relationships. Hall (1994) identified reciprocal, positive relationships between children with

disabilities and their classmates. Evans, et al. (1994) found that children who attended classrooms with fully included peers with severe disabilities were able to display sophisticated judgments and suggestions when presented with scenarios of common situations.

Learners with disabilities participating in a learner aide programme experienced increased independence, more socialization opportunities, growth in academic skills, and improved behavior. The aides without disabilities experienced greater awareness and appreciation for people with disabilities and better self-esteem, and an increase in responsible behavior (Staub, Spaulding, Peck, Gallucci, & Schwartz, 1996).

Educators have positive attitudes or develop them over time, especially when inclusion is accompanied by training, administrative and other support, help in the classroom; and, for some, lowered class size, and use of labeling to obtain special services (Phillips, Alfred, Brulli, & Shank, 1990). In one school, reaction of the educators was overwhelmingly positive toward inclusion; the author suggests that inclusion may not have produced new effects but merely amplified attitudes, philosophies, and practices that existed in the school prior to the start of inclusion (Rain-forth, 1992). Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993) studied educators who had a learner identified as having a severe disability in their class for a year. Results indicate that most educators reacted to the initial placement cautiously or negatively, but 17 of the 19 educators "...experienced increased ownership and involvement with the learner with severe disabilities in their classes over the course of the school year" (p. 364). Educators indicated attitude improvement and a willingness to do this again. They also reported "...that the participation of a learner with severe disabilities in their class had a positive impact on the child with disabilities, as well as on the child's classmates" (p. 368).

An attitude survey was conducted with high school staff, learners and their parents in the Chicago School District (Butler-Hayes, 1995). Principals were most in agreement with the basic goals of inclusion, followed by special education educators and regular education educators, respectively. An

important implication of this study is that more knowledge, exposure, and experience led to greater acceptance of inclusion. Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) surveyed 680 certified special and general education educators and administrators in 32 schools that had experience in providing inclusive educational opportunities for all children. The professionals surveyed generally believed that educating learners with disabilities in general education classrooms results in positive changes in educators' attitudes and job responsibilities. Also, administrative support and collaboration were powerful predictors of positive attitudes toward full inclusion. In another study, 158 educators in one state returned questionnaires on their perceptions of the supports available to them and needed by them for inclusion (Werts, Wolery, Snyder, & Caldwell, 1996). Training was one of the identified needs. Special and general educators reported similar levels of need for resources, but special educators reported greater availability of resources than general educators. Feedback to York, Vandercook, Macdonald, Heise-Neff, and Caughey (1992) generally indicated that the inclusion experience was positive for learners and educators.

A synthesis of 18 investigations of general education educators, some teaching in inclusive classrooms, others not, found that about two thirds of them support the concept of mainstreaming/inclusion; half felt mainstreaming/inclusion could provide benefits (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

In spite of the the advantages of inclusion mentioned above, there is, however, research that assert that inclusion does not work. Even though the majority of the research available today supports inclusive education, there is a handful of studies that take an alternative position. For the most part, these studies report situations in which learners are placed in general education classrooms without proper supports (Baines, Baines & Masterson, 1994), or they are in regular classrooms but not receiving special education, as defined by law (Zigmond & Baker, 1995). Such studies should definitely raise concerns. It is most inappropriate to "dump" learners in classrooms where educators are unprepared and lack resources to support special education needs in the regular class.

## **2.7 COMPETENCIES NEEDED BY GENERAL EDUCATION EDUCATORS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION EDUCATORS TO BE COMPETENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATORS**

Presented below are the competencies needed by general education educators and special education educators to be competent inclusive educators:

- Ability to solve problems, to be able to informally assess the skills a learner needs (rather than relying solely on standardized curriculum).
- Ability to take advantage of children's individual interests and use their internal motivation for developing needed skills.
- Ability to set high but alternative expectations that are suitable for the learners; this means developing alternative assessments.
- Ability to make appropriate expectations for EACH learner, regardless of the learner's capabilities. If educators can do this, it allows all learners to be included in a class and school.
- Ability to determine how to modify assignments for learners; how to design classroom activities with so many levels that all learners have a part. This teaching skill can apply not just at the elementary or secondary level, but at the college level as well. It will mean more activity-based teaching rather than seat-based teaching.
- Ability to learn how to value all kinds of skills that learners bring to a class, not just the academic skills. In doing this, educators will make it explicit that in their classrooms they value all skills, even if that is not a clear value of a whole school.
- Ability to provide daily success for all learners. Educators have to work to counteract the message all learners get when certain learners are continually taken out of class for special work.

Other competencies that will help general education educators in an inclusive environment include:

- a realization that every child in the class is their responsibility. Educators need to find out how to work with each child rather than assuming someone else will tell them how to educate a child.
- knowing a variety of teaching strategies and how to use them effectively. This includes the ability to adapt materials and rewrite objectives for a child's needs.
- working as a team with parents and special education educators to learn what skills a child needs and to provide the best teaching approach.
- viewing each child in the class as an opportunity to become a better educator rather than a problem to be coped with or have someone else fix.
- flexibility and a high tolerance for ambiguity.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

The foregoing paragraphs highlighted that during the last decades the idea of inclusion has become the most important topic in the field of special and general education. This means that the prevailing paradigm on inclusion and inclusive education advocate for educating learners with disabilities in a regular educational setting along with non-disabled peers (Rizzo, Davis & Toussaint, 1994). The inclusion movement has also been re-inforced by many who believe that separate education is not an equal education and that the setting in which a programme is implemented significantly influences the programme provided for a child (Winnick, 2000). The movement toward inclusion is compatible with the equally strong concept of least restrictive environment, a continuum of alternative environments that is used for the education of an individual with disabilities, ranging from segregated formats to fully integrated placements without modifications that reflect the nature and severity of the disability and the ability of the individual to perform in related sports (Winnick, 1987; Stein & Paciorek, 1994).

The literature review also highlighted that inclusion and inclusive education improves the social development of children with and without disabilities who are educated in inclusive classrooms, in terms of getting along with others, interacting, seeking assistance and lending assistance, moving from one context to another and asking questions (Chesley & Calaluce, 1997; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

The next chapter describes the empirical research methods which were employed to carry out this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of chapter 3 is to outline the empirical research methodology that was applied to practically gather information/data from the parents, learners and educators who participated in this study.

In section 1.3, the methodology of the study was highlighted. In this chapter an outline of what transpired during the implementation of the methodology is given. Also, a report on the precise procedures undertaken in carrying out the study, as well as the shortcomings experienced, during the study are presented.

This chapter therefore presents the reality about methodological aspects and procedures, which prevailed during the course of the study.

#### **3.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

The aim of any research design is to select or choose and utilise the methods and techniques that the researcher considers imperative to yield a better attainment of the aims and objectives of the study being conducted. There are numerous research methods in literature, which researchers employ for specific nature and kind of research to be undertaken (Qualitative Research Consultants Associations, 2003:1; Hoepfl, 1997:1-2). It is difficult to find one single research method being suitable for carrying out every type of research problem at all times. There are clusters of other factors that implicate the choice of research methods for any given research problem such as, to mention only a few:

- the nature and dynamics of the problem being researched;
- costs; and
- time (Oppenheim, 2001:81; Hoepfl, 1997:1-2).

As such, it is mandatory that a specific research problem be solved through relevant research methodology (Qualitative Research Consultants Associations, 2003:1; Hoepfl, 1997:12). For these reasons researchers have to consciously and purposefully select and utilise only those research methods that would permit better, convenient and successful attainment of specific research aims (Hoepfl, 1997:5). This study is not an exception and therefore the research method and techniques considered by the researcher to be relevant are utilised as presented below.

### **3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

This study employed a qualitative research method design. De Bruyn (2003:210), Hoepfl (1997:2-3) and Hughes (2003:23) indicate that qualitative research is a multi-method or mixed-method in nature and focus. It involves an interpretative naturalistic approach to its subject matter. By this statement it implies that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This study, therefore, seeks primary data from people who are directly involved with the subject matter in focus.

The primary sources of data used in this empirical study were learners, parents and educators. These participants were interviewed in their natural settings and the data collected was described and interpreted with the following aims:

- To investigate learners' feelings about their inclusive classrooms;
- To investigate educators' observation, experiences and perceptions concerning the interaction patterns of learners in inclusive classrooms; and
- To investigate parents' experiences and perceptions of inclusive education.

The research method utilised for the collection of data was the interview.

### **3.4 AIMS OF THE INTERVIEW**

The use of interviews in research has been recommended by different authorities in the field including in the works of Mouton (2001:105), Mouton (1998:66, 144-145, 151 & 175), Tight (2003:192) and Oppenheim (2001).

The aim of the interviews was to obtain primary information from a sample of participants who were selected to participate in the study. Due to the nature of the study, the researcher wanted to:

- ask numerous open-ended questions (Nolan & Hoover, 2004:18), or open-ended probes.
- record verbatim the answers given by the respondents.
- accord responders opportunities to say what they think and to do so with great richness and spontaneity.
- generate or attain an improved response rate by interviewees and by so doing enhance the quality of the study. These aspects concur with the advantages of interview schedule stated by Oppenheim, (2001:81) and Sciarra (2004:63).

Furthermore, the researcher wanted to gain first-hand-in-depth information from the participants on the items of the interview schedule (see Appendix A). Not only was the researcher interested in what the 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/picture on the feelings and desires of the participants, which were critical regarding the items of the interview schedule.

### **3.5 CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

The instrument used in this study is an interview schedule (refer to Appendix A). As stated in chapter 1, semi-structured interviews were conducted. To that effect the interview schedule was constructed as described below. Due

to the nature and quality of inputs expected for a study like this one, it was opted that the interviews would be conducted with learners, educators and parents in order to determine their understanding of inclusion in education.

The interview schedule consisted of 33 questions for both learner, educator and parent participants (see Appendix A). These questions were formulated strategically and specifically to address the three research questions posed in sections 1.1 leading to the attainment of the aims of the study stated in 1.2.

The question-distribution per research aims is shown on Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1: Interview items related to specific aim(s) of the study**

| <b>Sections under which the research aims of the study were stated</b>   | <b>Number of interview items per research aim</b> |
|--|---|
| <u>Research aim 1</u> (see paragraph 1.2): To investigate learners' feelings about their inclusive classrooms.   | 11 items  |
| <u>Research aim 2</u> (see paragraph 1.2): To investigate educators' observation, experiences and perceptions concerning the interaction patterns of learners in inclusive classrooms. | 17 items  |
| <u>Research aim 3</u> (see paragraph 1.2): To investigate parents' experiences and perceptions of inclusive education.   | 5 items   |

For the first five questions, learner participants had to fill in a form to indicate their feelings and perceptions of being in an inclusive classroom. This was a necessary action because learners spend all their time in inclusive classrooms and had to indicate how they feel and see being in an inclusive classroom. With the other six items, learner participants gave verbal responses.

Due to the nature of the aims of the study, the interview items on the interview schedule were formulated from the findings of the literature review in chapters one and two. Oppenheim (2001:144-148) contends with regards the validity and reliability of interview questions that questions chosen or formulated by the researcher need to be compared with questions on standardised instruments, which are widely used in the field being researched. Keeping in line with this principle, the researcher surveyed literature for the purpose of identifying any such standardised instrument against the questions of the interview schedule (in Appendix A) with the sole purpose of comparing but to no avail. As such, it is hereby mentioned that to the best of the researcher's knowledge the items of the interview schedule constructed for this study have only been used in this study. That is, the researcher did not find any evidence in the literature at his disposal of these questions being used in other researches.

### **3.6 MODUS OPERANDI OF INTERVIEWS**

Lists of participants were compiled per one school in each of Sasolburg, Kroonstad, Heilbron and Dennisville towns and the first top learners, parents and educators on the list were selected to participate in the study. The researcher requested the schools to provide them with the names of disabled learners in their schools so that they can also be part of the research. They were also part of the research. The researcher obtained the contact details of the participants and contacted them telephonically and to notify them of their selection as well as to request for their participation in the study. The researcher outlined and discussed with each interviewee what expectations s/he was to meet regarding the interviews. On their acceptance to participate in the study as participants, appointments were arranged with them on dates that suited all participants.

After the appointments were made, the interview schedule (see Appendix A) was then sent to the participants via fax with the purpose of affording them an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the content of the interview schedule before the meeting time.

On the appointed date and time, the researcher met with the interviewees and conducted the interview. In many of these cases, both parties met for the first time at each such interview meeting which started with introduction of selves, then the purpose of the interview (repeated). During the interview, the questions on the interview schedule were used as primary questions and depending on the answers of the respondents, follow-up questions were raised by the interviewer. The purpose of the follow-up questions was to gain clarity and more information or understanding on the responses of the subjects on the matter(s) being discussed.

The follow-up questions such as: "motivate your answer" were raised depending on the kinds of responses given by the interviewees. This technically means some interviews lasted longer than others did. The approximate time allocated per interview was one hour.

Though, there is an overriding perception that the presence of recording devices in an interview session may deter respondent(s) from expressing their opinion freely, Gall *et al.* (1996:320) maintain that the interviewer should sufficiently explain the purpose of the recording to the respondent. Consequently, a pocket tape recorder was used to capture the proceedings of the interviews with the interviewees' permission. (The fact that recording devices would be used in the interview was made known to the participants whilst briefing them about the procedure of the interviews.)

At the beginning of the interview session(s), the researcher affirmed the purpose of the interview and gave assurance that all the views gathered from the participants would be respected and treated confidentially. Interviewees were given an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the procedure and conduction of the interviews. After every uncertainty was clarified, then the researcher started asking the questions on the interview schedule in a chronological order from questions 1 to the last. The interview meetings ended with expression of thanks and appreciation for the interviewees' participation and contribution to providing answers to the problem(s) of the study.

### **3.7 DECODING OF THE DATA**

The interview data was recorded on audio-cassettes. As such, the researcher had to make time to:

- play back each tape in chronological manner as the interviews had been conducted;
- listen to all the tapes very carefully; and
- write down the information on the tapes.

The researcher decoded the data by writing verbatim on paper what was contained on the tapes. In order to ensure validity and reliability of the accuracy of the data decoding, the triangulation by person technique was used. The researchers used two colleagues experienced in research and in the field of study to verify the accuracy of data decoding. This was done for the purpose of ensuring that the decoding of data done by the research is valid. Hughes (2003:64-65) and Oppenheim (2001:146-7), among others uphold this research technique in literature.

### **3.8 POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

As stated in section 1.3.2, 15 interviewees (11 learners including those with disabilities and those without, 11 parents including those of learners with disabilities and those without and 2 educators) from Sasolburg, Kroonstad, Heilbron, Dennisville towns participated in the study, as such a total number of 44 learners (N=44), 44 parents and 8 educators were interviewed. These learners, parents and educators were chosen from four schools in the four towns. The selection of the sample was based on the first names on the list of both learners and their parents which was separated into two, that is, a list of learners with disabilities and that of those without. There was also a list of educators. The first top six learners and their parents on the list of non-disabled, five learners and their parents on the list of disabled in rank were selected per schools in each of the selected towns, and the first five educators per school on each of the selected towns. The decision to use the non-

probability sample technique (Leedy, 1997) was motivated by the nature of the study which required people with the real experience of what happens at schools around which the interview questions were based. The researcher believed that such decision would add value to the quality and outcomes of the study.

#### **Why only views of four schools from four towns were used in the study:**

The study intended to use five focus group interviews of which only four materialised. The plan was to hold one focus group interview in Sasolburg, Kroonstad, Heilbron, Dennisville and Orangiaville. However, focus group interviews were only possible in four towns. One school in Orangiaville could not grant the focus group interviews. 6 attempts were made over a period of one and half (1½) months through telephone calls to hold focus group interviews but to no avail. Consequently, due to pressure of the time factor, the researcher had no choice but to leave this school out of the study.

### **3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

The validity of the interview schedule constructed for the study is founded on the basis that the interview questions were raised from the literature review. Another point that affirms the validity of the interview schedule is the fact that the participants of the study are the people who are experiencing the implementation of the inclusive education policy at schools.

To ensure validity of the interpretation of the interview data, the triangulation (O'hanlon, 2003:42, 72, 76-77, 84, 87) by person technique was used. The researcher used two other colleagues that are well experienced in research and the field of study to verify the accuracy of data decoding and interpretation. This was done for the purposes of ensuring that the interpretation of data done by the research is valid. Also, the answers or responses were analysed against data from literature. The limitations of this research method are found in literature (Hughes, 2003:64-65; Oppenheim, 2001:146-7), and the researcher cannot claim that these interpretations were absolute.

The interview schedule was piloted with 5 learners, 2 parents and 2 educators with the following aims (Gall *et al.*, 1996:317):

- To identify possible communication problems and this would lead to rephrasing of the questions where necessary.
- To establish whether or not some of the questions were ambiguous and could lead to different interpretations by different participants.

Based on the results of the pilot study of the interview schedule, questions for parents and learners were rephrased and arrangements were made to interpret questions for parents who do not understand or can express themselves in English.

### **3.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Data was organised question by question according to the question-sequence on the interview schedule. Each question on the interview schedule was analyzed and interpreted.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the research design for the qualitative research was presented. The next chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the results.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of this research were to investigate the:

- learners feelings about their inclusive classrooms;
- educators' observation, experiences and perceptions concerning the interaction patterns of learners in inclusive classrooms; and
- parents' experiences and perceptions of inclusive education.

This chapter contains an analysis of the empirical data received from the interviews conducted with educators serving in schools in the Vaal Triangle area.

#### 4.2 SECTION A: RESPONSES OF LEARNER PARTICIPANTS (N=44) TO A QUESTIONNAIRE

This section contained questions to both disabled and non-disabled learners (N=44) who participated in this research. Learner participants had to fill in a questionnaire where they had to indicate yes, no and maybe to the questions posed. The results are first analysed in a quantitative form and thereafter interpreted.

##### 4.2.1 Analysis

The following table provides a quantitative form of their responses to questions one to five.

**Table 4.1: Responses to items one to five**

| <b>N</b><br><b>%</b> | <b>Item</b>   | <b>Yes</b><br><b>%</b> | <b>No</b><br><b>%</b> | <b>Maybe</b><br><b>%</b> |
|----------------------|---|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 44<br>100%           | 1. I like being in a class with different types of learners   | 11<br>25%              | 33<br>75%             |                          |
| 44<br>100%           | 2. I learned a lot from my association with fellow learners who are physically challenged.              | 30<br>68,2%            | 5<br>11,4%            | 9<br>20,4%               |
| 44<br>100%           | 3. I saw other learners making fun of their classmates who are physically challenged.                   | 31<br>70,5%            | 8<br>18,2%            | 5<br>11,3%               |
| 44<br>100%           | 4. I have improved at tolerating fellow classmates who are physically challenged.                       | 23<br>52,3%            | 12<br>27,3%           | 9<br>20,4%               |
| 44<br>100%           | 5. I am more understanding of the behaviours and feelings of the physically challenged. fellow learners | 30<br>68%              | 3<br>7%               | 11<br>25%                |

#### **4.2.2 Interpretation**

From the above table it can be deduced that the majority of learner participants in this research do not like being in class with different types of learners. This could mean that they would not like to be accommodated in a class with learners who are physically challenged.

The majority of the learners also indicated that they had seen other learners making fun of their classmates who are physically challenged. This could mean that physically challenged learners are inclined to deride at learners who are physically different from them because of the failure to celebrate differences.

It is interesting to note that the majority of learners indicated that:

- they have learned a lot by associating with learners who are physically challenged;
- they have improved at tolerating fellow classmates who are physically challenged; and
- they are more understanding of the behaviours and feelings of the physically challenged learners

This could mean that with continuous association of both physically challenged and physically unchallenged learners at the same schools, learners can learn from one another, learn to tolerate differences in physical disposition and develop more understanding of the behaviours and feelings of one another.

#### **4.3 SECTION B: RESPONSES OF LEARNER PARTICIPANTS (N=44) TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

This section provides responses of learner participants (N=44) to interview questions.

##### **4.3.1 Analysis**

- When learner interviewees were asked if they thought that the idea of all types of children learning in the same class is a good idea, the majority asserted that it is not a good idea because some learners learn slower while others learn faster. The learners who thought that it is a good idea to have all types of children learning in the same class asserted it would give them an opportunity to learn from the mistakes they do and that after all they are human beings learning the same things.
- When learner interviewees were asked about things they like about being in inclusive classrooms, the majority asserted that they learn from one another and get to know each other better and they can also learn different things from learners who are physically challenged. They also asserted

that they gain experience on what other learners feel like when they are sad and that it is not a good idea to tease them.

- When learner interviewees were asked about things they do not like about being in inclusive classrooms. The majority asserted that learners who are physically challenged will distract them if they want to go out of the class. They also indicated that some of the children will have to wait for them when they have finished their work because they are too slow.
- When learner interviewees were asked about what they have learned from being in inclusive class. The majority asserted that they are all equal even if some of them have physical challenges and that as classmates, physically challenged learners should also be treated the same and should not be discriminated against.
- When learner interviewees were asked about how they socially get along with physically challenged learners in their classes, the majority indicated that pretty well because they don't tease people who are disabled and when they work in groups they listen to one another.
- When learner interviewees were asked about ways they could think of to make inclusive learning work, the majority asserted that by being separated so that learners who are very slow can learn at their pace and fast learners should not wait for slow learners. They also thought that it would be a good idea to have two educators in class so that the learners who cannot do their work properly can carry on with another teacher. They also indicated that they should respect one another and the structure of the class should change to accommodate learners who are physically challenged.

#### **4.3.2 Interpretation**

- It is worrying to note that the majority of the learner participants thought that the idea of all types of children learning in the same class is not a good idea and feel that having separate classes could lead to them

learning effectively. This could be an indication that they do not see the value of inclusive education.

- It is pleasing to note that the majority of learner participant see inclusive education as an influential tool that can help learners:
  - learn from one another;
  - get to know each other better;
  - learn different things from learners who are different from them; and
  - gain experience on what other learners feel like when they are sad.

This is an indication that inclusion in education can promote co-operative learning.

#### **4.4 SECTION C: RESPONSES OF EDUCATOR PARTICIPANTS (N=8) TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

This section provides educator participants responses to interview questions

##### **4.4.1 Analysis**

- When educator participants were asked about how often learners with and without disabilities interact with each other. The majority asserted that daily.
- When educator participants were asked about how long do these interactions last. The majority asserted that there is no limit, and as long as they learn together.
- When educator participants were asked about what is the nature of these interactions (e.g. spontaneous, assertive, reciprocal, disciplinary, attention seeking, playful). The majority asserted that it is both assertive and playful as well as attention seeking.

- When educator participants were asked about who is initiating and terminating the interactions. The majority asserted that the learners themselves and sometimes the teachers.
- When educator participants were asked about how many learners without disabilities are interacting with their peers with disabilities and they indicated that the majority of them.
- When educator participants were asked about what events, activities, individuals, objects, and other stimuli seem to promote their interactions, the majority of the educator participants indicated that by playing together and by giving them activities in class where they work in pairs or in groups, and also through sports, arts and culture.
- When educator participants were asked about what events, activities, individuals, objects and other stimuli seem to limit interactions the majority of them indicated that when the learners are busy in class doing the school work there is always the stifling of social interaction.
- When educator participants were asked about what support from other, resources, and training have they received to work successfully as a co-operative teaching team in inclusive classrooms, the majority indicated that they have attended the in-service training courses and the team building workshops.
- When educator participants were asked about whether their schools have a mission statement that clearly articulates the programmes, philosophy and vision for educating all learners in general education classrooms, the majority indicated that they do have.
- When educator participants were asked about whether school and community related groups were involved in developing the programmes, mission and vision statement on inclusive education, the majority indicated that they were.

- When educator participants were asked about whether their schools offer a comprehensive set of referral services to support the learning of all learners in general education settings, the majority indicated that they do.
- When educator participants were asked about whether their schools atmosphere and activities communicate a sense of community where individual differences are valued and everyone is viewed as a contributing member of the school and classroom, the majority indicated that they especially with positive and creative partnership with parents, other community agencies such as Non-Governmental Organizations, educational psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses, medical doctors.
- When educator participants were asked about whether all learners receive assistance to help them make transitions to inclusive classroom settings, the majority indicated that their schools have School Based Support Teams to help learners make transition to inclusive classroom settings.
- When educator participants were asked about whether the progress of all learners is monitored on a continuous basis using a variety of academic, social and behavioural measures, the majority of them indicated that they always refer learners to the District Child Guidance Clinic where the Department of Education's Multidisciplinary Team consisting of medical doctors, educational psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, sociopedagogues, nurses, school guidance teachers, social workers, and academics meet twice a month to:
  - discuss learners special educational needs;
  - redefine psychological, social, biological and medical intervention procedures for learners with special educational needs; and
  - improve psychological and educational services provided to a learner with special educational needs.

- When educator participants were asked about whether learners, staff members, family members, and community members ever collaborate to share resources, make decisions, and solve problems related to the education of learners with special educational needs, the majority indicated that they do work together to solve the problems that they normally have with learners having special educational needs especially on health promotion.
- When educator participants were asked about whether their schools provide the human and material resources, time, support, scheduling arrangements, appropriate class size and composition, and training to successfully educate all learners in general education settings, the majority of them indicated that the Department of Education conducts workshops to train and develop educators on how to succeed in educating learners with special educational needs in general education and classroom settings. They also indicated that their schools provide both human and material resources, time and maximum support for inclusive education at schools.
- When educator participants were asked about whether learners' family and community members are actively involved in all aspects of the educational process of their schools, the majority of them indicated that parents or family members are always involved in aspects of children's psychological and educational assessment such as psychometrics and grading of children for next classes. They further indicated that community members assist with donations.

#### **4.4.2 Interpretation**

It is pleasing to note that the majority of educator participants reported positively about the success of inclusion in their classrooms. This bodes well for the success of inclusive education.

#### **4.5 SECTION D: RESPONSES OF PARENT PARTICIPANTS (N=8) TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

This section provides responses of parent participants to interview questions

#### 4.5.1 Analysis

- When parent participants were asked about whether they think that placing learners with disabilities in general education classrooms with their peers who do not have disabilities is a good idea, the majority indicated that they do not think that it is a good idea because disabled children cannot easily socialize with other children and can easily feel isolated. They may not be able to participate fully in any of the activities of their schools but at the same time it will serve as an advantage to children with abilities to formulate friendship with those who are disabled for social purposes. They also indicated that other learners will also be interrupted because the educator will have to work with slow learners so that they can catch up with the work.
- When parent participants were asked about what things do they like about their children being in an inclusive classroom, the majority indicated that socially it would help their children to develop holistically though they felt that their children could be mentally harassed by being continually referred to as being disabled and thereby being socially labeled and stigmatized. This could create unnecessary competition among abled and disabled learners which can create psychological and educational problems in the development of their children.
- When parent participants were asked about what social concerns do they have about their children being in inclusive classrooms, the majority of them indicated that their children may not be given the full individualized attention like children who are able and they may also not be accepted by their peers. Some activities in class may not be that easy for disabled learners, e.g. changing seats and classrooms.
- When parent participants were asked about how do their children feel about being in an inclusion classroom, the majority of them indicated that they have had cases where children manifested being withdrawn and complaining that other children snubbed them in most educational activities taking in class such as debates, drama, and group activities.

- When parent participants were asked about what school-wide and district-wide inclusion educational practices would they like to see retained and what practices would they like to see revised at their schools, the majority indicated that there must be thorough training of educators. District officials must conduct regular workshops for educators. They also indicated that they feel that it could be well if inclusive education can be made known to parents and community members so that they can socially support educators in implanting the Department of Education's policy on inclusive education. They indicated that awareness campaigns on inclusive education can create an environment in which learners with disabilities can be accepted as normal people in their communities and society. They also felt that the Department of education should employ educational psychologists at schools to advocate in communities about inclusive education.

#### **4.5.2 Interpretation**

It is worrying to note that the majority of parent participants do not see the value of inclusive education for their children and still believe that their children could benefit from exclusive education which provides separate schools for learners of different abilities.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter analysed and interpreted data collected through empirical research. The next chapter deals with conclusions, findings and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents an overview of this research's findings and conclusions from the literature study as well as from the empirical research.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY**

The literature review presented inclusion in education as an event for acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support; accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience; enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners; acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status; acknowledging, in a broader way than formal schooling, that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal modes and structures; changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula and the environment to meet the needs of all learners; maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning; and empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the process of learning (see 1.1).

#### **5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION**

The empirical research revealed that the majority of learner participants in this research:

- do not like being in class with different types of learners which could mean that they would not like to be accommodated in a class with learners who are physically challenged;
- had seen other learners making fun of their classmates who are physically challenged which could mean that physically unchallenged learners are inclined to deride at learners who are physically different from them because of the failure to celebrate differences.

It was interesting to note that the majority of learners also indicated that they have learned a lot by associating with learners who are physically challenged; they have improved at tolerating fellow classmates who are physically challenged; and they are more understanding of the behaviours and feelings of the physically challenged learners which could mean that with continuous association of both physically challenged and physically unchallenged learners at the same schools, learners can learn from one another, learn to tolerate differences in physical disposition and develop more understanding of the behaviours and feelings of one another.

It is pleasing to note that the majority of educator participants reported positively about the success of inclusion in their classrooms which bodes well for the success of inclusive education in the South African school system.

However, it is worrying to note that the majority of parent participants do not see the value of inclusive education for their children and still believe that their children could benefit from exclusive education which provides separate schools for learners of different abilities.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The limitation of this study lies in the fact that it was only conducted at Sasolburg, Kroonstad, Heilbron and Dennisville which are small townships in the Northern part of the Free State Province. There is a need for a broader study, which should target a larger population of the Free State. Such a study could provide a more reliable and valid data on the learners, educators and parents' understanding of inclusion in education or inclusive education.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings of both literature review and empirical research, the following recommendations are made:

### **5.5.1 Recommendations for the practical implementation of findings**

For schools to be able to implement inclusion in education, this research makes the following recommendation:

- Workshops should be organized by the Department of Education and Non-Governmental Organizations to educate parents about the ideals of Inclusive Education. This means that White Paper 6 should be simplified and availed in the language of parents.
- Schools should help learners deal with the social stereotypes they have against learners with disabilities. One important means of helping learners deal with social stereotypes against learners with disabilities is teaching them against the further spread of stigma and discrimination, to reduce these problems, and to change the nature of the social environment in which learners are schooling. Such teaching needs to be undertaken with learners, because learners' bullying or discrimination against their peers can be particularly nasty. Learners themselves need information about disability so that they can understand that learners with disabilities are as human as they are and that they deserve dignity and respect.
- Human disability should also be infused in General Science, Biology and Physiology learning areas so that learners can have a clear understanding of the conditions of people with disabilities and be able to deal with their stereotypes.

### **5.5.2 Recommendation for further research**

There is a need to, on comparable bases, investigate the understanding of learners, educators and parents of inclusion in education. Such a study could shed more light on the nature and extent of inclusive education in South

African schools, and enlighten the nation on the successes of communities in implementing White paper 6 of the Department of Education.

There is also a need to investigate the way in which the Department of Education and Training can cascade the knowledge on inclusion and inclusive education to parents and community members so that parents can have a clear understanding of inclusive education as stated in White Paper 6.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

This research investigated, by means of literature review and empirical research the learners, educators and parents general understanding of inclusion in education. On the basis of both the findings from the literature review and empirical research, recommendations were made in this chapter.

It is hoped that this research will make a contribution in the understanding of South African learners, parents and educators' understanding of the theory and philosophy of inclusion and inclusive education.

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