

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MAINSTREAM
EDUCATORS' RELUCTANCE TO TEACH INCLUDED
LEARNERS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

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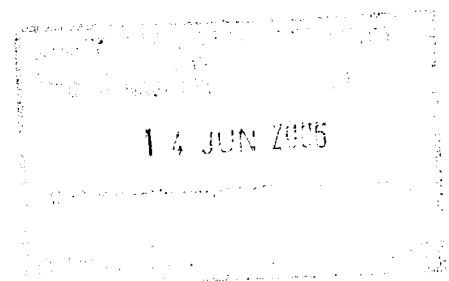
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my two sons: O’Nalerona and Ga-Opalelwe, both with learning difficulties. To all African learners with specific learning difficulties who have been included in mainstream schools without special attention being given to them. May God bless you.

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled: Factors contributing to mainstream educators' reluctance to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties is my own work. It is submitted for the Magister Educationis degree to the North-West University, Vanderbijlpark. It has not been submitted elsewhere.

Name

Date

SUMMARY

Many learners in South Africa experience special learning needs. Learners are more inclined to experience problems in learning due to poverty, underdevelopment, lack of access to basic services and parental unemployment (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:311).

The two main types of special learning needs are learning disabilities and learning difficulties. In this study, the focus is on learning difficulties. Learners with learning difficulties show a discrepancy between intelligence and performance. They may score high on IQ tests but perform poorly in class activities. Educators identify learners with specific learning difficulties in class when a learner is unable to read, write, spell words correctly, manipulate numbers, and has emotional and communication difficulties. Learning difficulties can be addressed should a learner be identified early and effective remedial intervention be administered.

In the past learners with special learning needs were excluded from the mainstream schools and accommodated in special schools where resources such as psychologists, remedial, occupational and speech therapists were made available. The introduction of inclusive education made it possible for learners with special learning needs to be accommodated in mainstream schools.

Mainstream educators are expected to support inclusive education with little knowledge and experience in teaching learners with and without special learning needs in one class. Many mainstream educators are reluctant to teach learners with learning difficulties. This study was undertaken to determine why this should be so.

A survey of 180 mainstream educators teaching included learners suggests that educators may be reluctant because of incomplete knowledge regarding learners with learning difficulties, negative attitudes to such learners and negative perception of inclusion.

Concepts:

- Inclusion
- Special learning needs
- Specific learning difficulties
- Learning disabilities
- Mainstream

OPSOMMING

Baie leerders in Suid-Afrika ervaar spesiale leerbehoefte. Leerders neig meer daartoe om leerprobleme te ervaar as gevolg van armoede, onderontwikkeling, gebrek aan toegang tot basiese dienste en hul ouers se werkloosheid (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 311).

Die twee belangrikste tipes spesiale leerbehoefte is leergestremdheid en leerprobleme. In hierdie studie val die fokus op leerprobleme. By leerders met leerprobleme is daar 'n wanverhouding tussen intelligensie en prestasie. Hulle presteer dalk hoog in IK-toetse, maar swak in klasaktiwiteite. Opvoeders identifiseer leerders met spesifieke leerprobleme in die klas wanneer hulle nie in staat is om te kan lees, skryf, woorde korrek te spel of syfers te verwerk nie en emosionele en kommunikasieprobleme het. Leerprobleme kan aangespreek word indien 'n leerder vroeg geïdentifiseer en effektiewe remediërende ingryping toegepas word.

In die verlede is leerders met spesiale leerbehoefte nie in hoofstroomskole ingesluit nie, maar in spesiale skole waar hulpbronne soos sielkundiges, remediërende, arbeids- en spraakterapeute beskikbaar gestel is. Die toevoeging van inklusiewe onderwys het dit moontlik gemaak dat leerders met spesiale leerbehoefte in hoofstroomskole geakkommodeer kan word.

Daar word van hoofstroomopvoeders verwag dat hulle inklusiewe onderwys sal ondersteun met min kennis en ervaring in die onderrig van leerders met en sonder spesiale leerbehoefte in een klas. Baie hoofstroomopvoeders is onwillig om leerders met leerprobleme te onderrig. Hierdie studie is onderneem om te bepaal waarom dit so is.

'n Oorsig oor 180 hoofstroom opvoeders wat inklusiewe leerders onderrig, suggereer dat opvoeders dalk onwillig is vanweë onvolledige kennis van leerders met leerprobleme, negatiewe houdings teenoor sulke leerders en 'n negatiewe persepsie van inklusiwiteit.

Hoof trekke:

- Inklusie
- Speciale leerbehoeftes
- Spesifieke leerprobleme
- Leergestremdheid
- Hoofstroom

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (SA, 2001:17) the Ministry of Education acknowledges that a broad range of learning needs exists among learners at any point in time. Many learners with learning needs come from previously disadvantaged communities. Poverty, underdevelopment, lack of access to basic services, and unemployment were found to be key barriers to learning and development in previously disadvantaged communities (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:311). Many South African learners experience learning difficulties as a consequence of this reality. Mainstream educators have to find a way with little or no knowledge and skills, to effectively include learners with learning needs in their classrooms (Mda & Mothata, 2000:126).

When learners with learning difficulties are included in mainstream classes, the successful inclusion of such learners depends largely on educators' training, the quality of support such educators receive, how confident educators feel about teaching learners with special learning needs and finally, educator attitude and beliefs regarding learners with special learning needs (Sadler, 2005:148). In this researcher's experience, mainstream educators are frequently unwilling to accommodate included learners with learning difficulties. Literature concurs: learners with learning difficulties are largely ignored (Naiker, 1999:78, Nkabinde, 1997:78).

It is for this reason that this study aims to research which factors contribute to the apparent unwillingness of mainstream educators to teach included learners with learning difficulties.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

After the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa many changes occurred in the Department of Education. There was a shift from a teacher-centred

approach to a learner-centred approach and the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Coupled with OBE was the introduction of inclusive education in South Africa. An inclusive education policy was developed in order to address barriers to learning without exclusion of learners with special learning needs from the mainstream as well as providing quality education for all.

Special learning needs refer to either general or specific problems with learning and include both learning difficulties and learning disabilities. In most developed countries the number of learners with special learning needs is estimated at around 10% of the school going population. In South Africa the estimate is thought to be higher because of widely spread social disadvantage, which increases the risk of development of special learning needs. Furthermore, when social disadvantage is widespread, the chances for timely, meaningful intervention are lessened and so learning needs remain prevalent (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2004:281-282).

From the perspective of inclusive education, special needs originate from the difficulties or barriers encountered by a learner in interacting with his surroundings and the inability of the system to adapt in order to accommodate the learner (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:306). Inclusion is more than placing learners with special educational needs in the mainstream. In order for the education system to adapt, educators must buy into and support the policy of inclusion. In this researcher's experience, educators do not always do this.

Mainstreaming, on the other hand, refers to the integration of learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms (Davies & Green, 1998:97). With the introduction of mainstreaming learners with special needs were integrated into the system of education without changing the curriculum. Inclusion as opposed to mainstreaming has a flexible curriculum, which is responsive to the diverse needs of all learners in the school (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:312). In other words, special learning needs are accommodated.

Following the publication of White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (SA, 2001) inclusive education has become a policy at this time and educators are

expected to give inclusion their full support. To support the inclusion of learners with special learning needs, educators have to be sensitive, not only to particular needs of the learner, but also to their own attitudes and feelings (Lomofsky, Roberts, & Mvambi, 2004:71). Such sensitivity is fueled by perception.

Perception refers to how people see or understand the meaning of things around them (Donald *et al.*, 2004:53). Educators will attach positive meaning to the special learning needs of the learners in class if they have positive perception of learners. If educators perceive needy learners negatively, they will probably behave negatively towards such learners, as perception is the basis for behaviour (Purkey & Novac, 1996:23). Learners with special learning needs are often ignored and attention is only given to average or above average learners who manage to complete class activities within a given time. To Naicker (1999:78) learners with special needs remain the most neglected group and their susceptibility will continue as long as negative perceptions are in place.

Poor perception as well as negative and unhelpful attitudes towards learners with special learning needs are evident at all levels, including administrators, educators, parents and the public at large (Nkabinde, 1997:78). Attitudes refer to the way people think about someone or something. It is therefore important for educators to change their attitudes and beliefs towards learners with special learning needs, as they are the ones responsible for what is happening in the school and classroom (Lomofsky *et al.*, 2004:70). For inclusive education to be successful, the Department of Education relies upon the full commitment and dedication of educators. If educators understand the ideals of inclusive education, learners with mild and moderate learning problems will be successful in diverse classrooms and thus, they can become genuine members of the learning population (Sanacore, 1997:2).

Educating learners with special learning needs has not been and is still not an easy task for educators. Learners with special learning needs require a great deal of effort on the part of an educator. Educators are faced with the enormous task of promoting the potential of learners by motivating them to

learn in a challenging and stimulating environment and by providing guidance in which they can unlock their talents (Nkabinde, 1997:34). Because of this, educators without skills to empower learners with special learning needs experience themselves as redundant or incompetent. Many despair and dislike learners with special learning needs even more.

Educators at schools often view learners with special learning needs as being lazy or stupid. Mainstream educators make the mistake of labelling learners as lazy, inattentive and stupid because a learner is unable to read, write, or perform well on class activities (Rutkowski, 1998:1). Thus both current literature (Bouwer & du Toit, 2000; Naiker, 1999; Nkabinde, 1997) and the researcher's experience, suggest that mainstream educators are reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties. This raises the following research question:

Which factors contribute to mainstream educators being reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties despite the policy of inclusion?

This problem leads to the following additional research questions:

- What are specific learning difficulties?
- What does inclusion entail?
- Does the knowledge, which mainstream educators have of learning difficulties, make them reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties?
- Does perception of the policy of inclusion make mainstream educators reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties?
- What are mainstream educators' attitudes towards included learners with learning difficulties and does their attitude make them reluctant to teach learners with learning difficulties?
- What guidelines do mainstream educators need to understand and support included learners with learning difficulties?

1.3 AIMS

The overall aim of this study is to ascertain what factors contribute to mainstream educators being reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties despite the policy of inclusion.

The overall aim can be operationalised as follows:

- to define and describe specific learning difficulties;
- to research the background and scope of inclusion;
- to determine whether mainstream educators' knowledge of specific learning difficulties contributes to their reluctance to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties;
- to determine whether mainstream educators' perception of inclusion contributes to their reluctance to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties;
- to determine whether mainstream educators' attitudes towards included learners with specific learning difficulties contribute to their reluctance to teach these learners; and
- to provide guidelines for mainstream educators concerning teaching included learners with specific learning difficulties.

1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

The research is divided into a literature study and empirical research.

1.4.1 Literature study

Primary and secondary literature sources, as well the Internet will be studied to gather information on the nature and scope of special learning needs and inclusion.

The following table provides a summary of the principal sources covered in the literature study.

Table 1.1: Summary of literature study

THEME	SOURCES
<p>Learning disabilities</p> <p>Learning difficulties</p> <p>Causes of learning difficulties</p>	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atkinson, Wilhite, Frey, & Williams, 2002. • Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2004. • Gous & Mfazwe, 2002. • Kapp, 2003. • Kruger & Adams, 2002. • Lerner, 2003. • Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001. • Lorenz, 1998. • Maree, 1996. • Smith, 1998. • Winkler, Modise, & Dawber, 2003.
<p>Definition of inclusion</p> <p>Reaction to inclusion in South Africa</p>	<p>Amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belknap, Roberts & Nyewe, 2004. • Bothma, Gravette, & Swart, 2000 • Bouwer & du Toit, 2000. • Cheminias, 2002. • Dei, James, James-Wilson, Karumanchery & Zine, 2000. • Engelbrecht, Swart & Eloff, 2001. • Farrel & Ainscow, 2002. • Hay, 2003. • Hay, & Beyers, 2000. • Hay, Smith, & Paulsen, 2001. • Hegarty & Alur, 2003. • Lorenz, 2002. • Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 2002. • Wood, 2002.

1.4.2 Empirical research

Empirical research will be conducted in two phases:

- Phase 1: a pilot study will be conducted to pretest the questionnaire to be used in the survey; and
- Phase 2: survey research, to determine what factors contribute to mainstream educators' reluctance to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties.

1.4.2.1 Research design

A descriptive research design using survey research will be conducted. According to Fink (1995b:1) surveys are systems used in collecting data on a broad range of subjects of interest. People in different situations may behave in a way that a researcher may find interesting and want to know more about. In this study the researcher wishes to understand why educators are reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties.

When conducting a survey, a researcher poses a series of questions to willing participants, summarizes their responses with percentages and then draws a conclusion from the responses of the sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 183). In this research factors, which could contribute to educator's unwillingness to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties, will be surveyed.

1.4.2.2 Population and sample

The population is all mainstream educators working with included learners who have specific learning difficulties. However, given logistical restraints, the researcher will delimit the sample to mainstream educators in the Sedibeng East district who teach included learners with specific learning difficulties. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:207) when a population is small the whole population is used as a sample. According to Dr M. Nel, First Education Specialist in Gauteng Sedibeng East District, there are 180 mainstream educators involved in the teaching of learners who are being included in the mainstream and have specific learning difficulties. Therefore questionnaires will be sent to all 180 educators.

A purposive sample will therefore be used. The researcher will hand-deliver the questionnaires to educators in the Sedibeng East District who are teaching included learners who have learning difficulties.

1.4.2.3 Measuring instrument

A closed questionnaire with a 4- point scale constructed on the basis of a preceding literature study and extensive dialogue with mainstream educators, who have included learners with learning difficulties, will be used. Three categories of questions will be formulated. The first category will seek to determine the knowledge of educators on specific learning difficulties, the second will be on mainstream educators' attitudes towards included learners with specific learning difficulties and the last category will be on mainstream educators' perception towards inclusion. Forty five questions will be formulated.

1.4.2.4 Statistical techniques

The questionnaires will be statistically analysed by the statistical services of the University of North West Vaal Triangle Faculty. Inferential and descriptive techniques will be used to determine which factors contribute to mainstream educators being reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties despite the policy of inclusion.

1.4.2.5 Ethical aspects

There are ethical aspects that need to be considered before conducting any empirical research. The reason is to protect the rights of both the social community and the professional integrity of the research community (Freed-Taylor, 1994: 2).

The right to privacy, protection from harm, informed consent, and honesty with colleagues, internal review boards, professional codes of ethics, ethical codes of research, and sensitivity to cultural social differences require ethical consideration. This will be discussed in chapter four (c.f. 4.4.3.5).

1.4.2.6 Data collection procedure

Permission was requested from the Gauteng Department of Education Sedibeng East district to distribute questionnaires. Mainstream educators will be the target group for the researcher and the principals of mainstream schools where learners with specific learning difficulties are included will be visited in order to build relationships as well as to motivate them and their staff to participate in the research.

1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.5.1 Special learning needs

Special learning needs refers to difficulty in learning, which calls for special care and support throughout schooling (Winkler *et al.*, 2004:2). Special needs include specific learning difficulties and learning disabilities.

1.5.2 Learning difficulty

A learning difficulty relates to a discrepancy between a learner's potential and his output in class. Some learners score highly on IQ tests but perform poorly in class activities (Lerner, 2003:485). Such learners experience a learning difficulty, which cannot be explained by a physical, sensory, or neurological condition.

1.5.3 Learning disability

A learning disability is a difficulty in learning caused by a physical condition. The conditions may result from physical, sensory and/or neurological problems (Donald *et al.*, 2004:282).

1.5.4 Inclusion

Inclusion refers to the accommodation of learners with special learning needs in the mainstream without discrimination (Farrel & Ainscow, 2002: 3).

1.5.5 Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming refers to the assimilation or integration of learners with special learning needs into the existing education system (Hegarty & Alur, 2003: 80).

1.5.6 Barrier to learning

“Barrier to learning refers to any factor, either internal or external to the learner, which causes a hindrance or barrier to a learner’s ability to benefit from schooling” (Donald *et al.*, 2004:4). Barriers to learning exist among learners at any time and they may cause a delay in learning if they are not recognised and remedial intervention administered.

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 2 Special learning needs

In this chapter, learning disabilities, difficulties and barriers to learning will be discussed. The impact of learning difficulties on learning will also be discussed.

Chapter 3 Inclusion

In this chapter, inclusion will be discussed with the emphasis on the reaction of mainstream educators towards inclusion.

Chapter 4 Empirical research

This chapter discusses the research design, which governs this study.

Chapter 5 Summary of research findings

After the collection of data, the data will be analysed and interpreted to ascertain which factors contribute to mainstream educators being unwilling to teach included learners with learning difficulties. This chapter provides the results of this analysis.

Chapter 6 Recommendations and Summary

In this chapter, guidelines for mainstream educators concerning supporting included learners with specific learning difficulties will be provided. The chapter also summarises the study.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of what the whole research entails. The following chapter focuses on special learning needs where a distinction between learning disabilities and specific learning difficulties will be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will be devoted to a literature review of special learning needs. A distinction will be made between learning disabilities and difficulties. Types of learning disabilities and difficulties as well as the causes of learning difficulties and their impact on learning will be discussed. The emphasis of this chapter is on learning difficulties, as this is the focus of this study. Brief information will be provided on disabilities for the sake of completeness.

2.2 THE CONTEXT OF SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Before discussing learning disabilities and difficulties, it is important to comment broadly on the origin of special needs in South Africa.

The origin of diverse learning needs in South Africa is seen to consist of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors include barriers resulting from physical, cognitive, sensory, development and learning impairments or handicaps (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:18). Extrinsic factors include:

- socio-economic deprivation;
- inaccessible and unsafe constructed environments;
- negative attitudes towards diversity / labelling of diversity;
- rigid curriculum;
- inappropriate language of learning and teaching;
- inappropriate or inadequate support services;
- lack of policy;
- insufficient parental recognition / support; and

- inadequately trained education personnel (SA, 2001:7; Swart & Pettipher, 2005:18).

According to Donald *et al.* (2004: 31) the aforementioned barriers can be grouped into factors relating to contextual disadvantage, social and interpersonal problems and difficulties in learning.

Contextual disadvantage includes socio-economic deprivation and language issues amongst others and relates to both social and educational contexts. In order to overcome such barriers, the emphasis must be on promoting healthy social and economic realities.

Social and interpersonal problems include prejudice, inadequate parental support and so on and are powerfully subversive of optimal learning. For example, poor teaching and inadequate teaching resources sabotage learning (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:311). Such problems relate to all levels of social context and in order to promote learning, the healthy development of the learner as a whole is paramount.

The third grouping, namely difficulties in learning, refers to more intrinsic (e.g. specific reading difficulty) factors but cannot be absolutely separated from the learner's context (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 311). For example, in case of poverty learners may not receive adequate nutrition or medical care, which can foster and sustain learning difficulties. The third grouping forms the focus of this chapter.

In a context such as the one described, special learning needs arise frequently. Special learning needs can be divided into learning disabilities and learning difficulties. This will be discussed next.

2.3 LEARNING DISABILITIES

2.3.1 Definition of learning disability

A learning disability is a difficulty in learning caused by a physical condition. According to Donald *et al.* (2004:282), disabilities refer generally to conditions that have some apparent specific physical basis. These include conditions

resulting from physical, sensory and neurological problems. A visually impaired, physically disabled or a mentally handicapped person can be easily identified.

2.3.2 Types of learning disabilities

A brief overview of the various types of learning disabilities, namely physical, sensory, neurological, mental handicap and chronic diseases will be provided below.

2.3.2.1 Physical disabilities

Physical disabilities include disorders of the skeleton, joints, muscles, or health conditions that impede with the learner's educational progress (Kruger & Adams, 2002:253). Typically, such disabilities also affect mobility and the use of hands and in so doing learning is hampered.

- **Disability affecting mobility**

Disability ranges from the loss of a limb or limbs to conditions where the muscles are affected so that the person cannot effectively control body position or movement (Donald *et al.*, 2004:319). Some walk with the help of a stick or sticks or use a walker to help them move around. Intellectual ability is not necessarily affected and such learners can be accommodated in regular classrooms.

- **Disability affecting the use of hands**

Such disabilities may range from inability to use hands, like loss of both arms, to more small disabilities that affect co-ordination of different degrees (Donald *et al.*, 2004:319). At school hands are used to write and draw and an inability to use hands impedes a learner's scholastic achievement. They can also be accommodated in regular classrooms; as such learners' intellectual ability is not necessary impaired.

2.3.2.2 Sensory disability

A learner is said to have a sensory disability if he is unable to utilize his primary auditory and visual channels.

- **Visual disabilities**

The ability to see is affected or hindered or it can be totally lacking when a learner has a visual disability (Kapp, 2003:352). With the help of eyeglasses or contact lenses these learners can be taught in regular classrooms. Learners whose ability to see is lacking use braille or computers as a means of learning. Apart from their visual disability, which has to be accommodated academically and socially, such learners have needs and abilities like other learners (Donald *et al.*, 2004:321).

- **Hearing disabilities**

Any degree of hearing loss in a learner can affect the process of language development (Donald *et al.*, 2004:321). Language development is essential in learning at school and at home. If a learner's language is not fully developed, it affects most of the learner's academic performance. Hard of hearing learners can be accommodated in regular classes should they be given a hearing aid to assist them.

2.3.2.3 Neurological disability

As the term "neurological" implies disability in this area has to do with the physical functioning of the brain and nervous system (Donald *et al.*, 2004:324). There are many types of neurological disabilities. Cerebral palsy and epilepsy, will be discussed as they are perhaps most common among learners.

- **Cerebral palsy**

This is a condition that relates to the functioning of the central nervous system. Areas of the central nervous system that control physical movement and co-ordination are affected. Difficulties of concentration,

perception, memory, language, and conceptual development may be associated with the condition (Donald *et al.*, 2004:324).

- **Epilepsy**

Epilepsy is the result of an abnormal discharge of electronic signals that are part of the functioning of the brain (Donald *et al.*, 2004: 325). The electrical imbalance gives rise to abnormal behaviour, jerking-type movements called seizures and sometimes, even a loss of consciousness (Gous & Mfazwe, 2002:23). There are minor and major seizures.

Epilepsy is a condition that cannot be cured but can be controlled by an intake of medication that suppresses the seizures (Kapp, 2003:267). Epileptic learners typically miss out on schoolwork and learning is then affected.

2.3.2.4 Mental handicap

Mental handicap refers to a wide range of difficulties related to intellectual functioning (Donald *et al.*, 2004: 27). A learner with mental handicap is slow and has a limited capacity to learn. Mental handicap may range from mild, where a child can be accommodated in the regular classroom and can learn basic scholastic skills, to moderate, where a child tends to function socially, emotionally, and cognitively like a much younger child to severe mental handicap, where they need total support throughout their lives. To be mainstreamed, these learners require additional support.

2.3.2.5 Chronic and infectious diseases

Chronically ill learners are not physically disabled, but their physical condition affects their learning. The three main features of chronic illness are that medical intervention is necessary; the illness often does not respond to treatment; and loss of health affects the sick person's ability to cope with everyday events including learning (Gous & Mfazwe, 2002:39).

Chronic diseases include malnutrition and under nutrition, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, chronic respiratory infections, chronic otitis media, allergies and

asthma and parasite infections. A brief discussion of these diseases, which prevent learners from benefiting optimally from schooling, will follow.

- **Malnutrition and under nutrition**

Malnutrition and under nutrition affects learning negatively. Malnutrition is unbalanced nutrition. On the other hand, under nutrition, means insufficient nutrition where a learner takes in too few nutrients. Our bodies need proteins, minerals, and vitamins to grow and develop well. Cognitive development can be affected when a learner is under or malnourished. Lack of these essential nutrients lead to malnutrition, which results in illnesses such as kwashiorkor and others. Protein-energy malnutrition occurs when the intake of protein and energy-giving foods is less than the quantity required for growth and the maintenance of health (Kapp, 2003:162). In South Africa it is quite common amongst school going learners because of socio economic factors including unemployment and lack of education.

- **HIV/AIDS**

HIV/AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease, which affects the immune system of the body. The person affected is vulnerable to killer diseases. Disease like Tuberculosis and Pneumonia are common to people who are HIV positive. Many learners infected with HIV tend to drop out of school or are frequently absent and miss out on important tasks (Donald *et al.*, 2004: 335). Furthermore, learners who are affected (parents or caregivers are HIV positive) also show high slow destruction and absenteeism rates. When they do attend school, they are tired and cannot benefit optimally.

- **Tuberculosis**

Tuberculosis is a chronic, debilitating disease that affects mainly the lungs but may also harm other organs of the body (Donald *et al.*, 2002:335). The learners cough up sputum, which often contains blood at an early stage (Kapp, 2003: 158). It is not only infectious but also curable. A person can be cured with proper intake of medication. Within a few days after treatment has commenced, this highly contagious illness is virtually no longer contagious

(Kapp, 2003: 159). Students who have TB suffer from continual coughing, are lacking in energy and are often feverish and school performance is largely affected (Donald *et al.*, 2004: 335).

- **Chronic respiratory infections**

A learner suffering from this disease has difficulty in breathing. If left untreated, schoolwork will suffer. A learner with this condition will tend to cough a lot and will continually struggle to breathe causing fatigue and concentration difficulty at school (Donald *et al.*, 2004: 335).

- **Chronic otitis media (middle –ear infection)**

This infection of the middle ear is not only painful to the child concerned but also affects hearing (Donald *et al.*, 2004: 335). It is characterized by a feeling of blockage in the ear (Kapp, 2003: 168). Hearing and listening in class are the most important conditions that can either promote a learner's learning or create problems. Chronic untreated otitis media may destroy parts of the eardrum and lead to complete hearing loss leading to learning difficulties (Kapp, 2003:168).

- **Allergies and Asthma**

Allergies and Asthma are detrimental to learning. Asthma is a chronic illness of the bronchus or trachea. The learner has difficulty in breathing during the attacks of reversible narrowing of the air passage in reaction to various stimuli (Kapp, 2003:172). Learners who are asthmatic may lose concentration and hearing which affects their general school performance. They are frequently anxious, which also compounds learning. Allergies affect learner's concentration, hearing, attention and school performance (Donald *et al.*, 2004:336).

- **Parasite infection**

In most parts of Southern Africa people use water from the dams for their cooking, washing, drinking and swimming. People (especially children) get worms, bilharzia and other parasite infections from dirty water and inadequate

sanitation. Various worms and other parasite infections are especially common among children in contexts of poverty where clean and adequate sanitation is not available (Donald *et al.*, 2004:336). Their resultant ill health causes absenteeism and prevents them from learning optimally.

In short, all children affected by these diseases are ill, prone to absence and/or poor concentration and consequently their work at school will also be affected.

2.3.3 Conclusion

It is clear from the above that learning disabilities have a strong physical component. This is not equally true of learning difficulties.

2.4 LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

2.4.1 Definition

Learning difficulties relate to a discrepancy between a learners' potential and his outputs in class. Children who are assessed as having specific learning difficulties display an uneven pattern of academic strengths and weakness (Moss, 1995:132). For example a child may be a good public speaker but display a weakness in writing down his ideas on paper. Others may display difficulty in literacy but can be very good in manipulating numbers (Lerner, 2003:501).

Learners with learning difficulties are usually identified after they have started mainstream school because they fail to make expected progress in literacy and numeracy. They have problems in writing, reading, spelling or manipulating numbers. A learning difficulty is a condition that can be managed should a person be identified early on and effective remedial intervention take place.

A profile of a typical learner with learning difficulties will be provided below.

2.4.2 A profile of the typical learner with learning difficulties

There are many different symptoms of learning difficulties that can be distinguished. Every learner has his own grouping of symptoms, which differ from others in nature, category and degree (Maree, 1996:126). The following are common symptoms of learning difficulties.

- **Discrepancy between intelligence and performance**

Intelligence refers to the learner's potential to learn and performance refers to the learner's present achievement. Discrepancy refers to the difference between the achievement and the potential for learning (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank & Smith, 2004:105). Learners with learning difficulty may have high IQ's but perform poorly on activities assigned to them.

- **Distractibility and attention deficit**

Attention refers to the ability to select from many competing stimuli that surrounds us at the same time. Learners with learning difficulty are easily distracted by noise, motion, light and or colour in the classroom. Because they are easily distracted, racing from one idea or interest to another they may produce work that is sloppy and carelessly performed (Lerner, 2003:247). They usually work for a brief period on activities but do not complete them.

In a classroom an educator has to guide learners through certain activities before they can start completing them. A good example is an assessment of listening skills. Here learners are required to listen attentively so that they can be able to answer questions asked. A learner with attention difficulties will find it difficult to answer all questions because of short attention span. According to Lerner (2003:247) these learners impart the impression that they are not listening or have not heard what they have been told.

- **Hyperactivity**

Learners with hyperactivity are described as impulsive, driven, are unable to sit still, talk extremely loudly and have difficulty playing silently (Turnbull *et al.*, 2004:165). They are unable to sit quietly in their desks without moving from

one table to another in a class disrupting the whole class. Bender (1992:162) argues that hyperactive learners can be constantly moving, but still pay attention to the topic. Sometimes when they are asked questions, their answers are correct. They are very distracting and can easily create disruption during the lesson.

- **Poor motor coordination**

These learners have problems with gross motor movement (movement of the larger muscles of the body) and fine motor movement (movement of small muscles of the body). Learners with gross motor problems avoid taking part in sport because of their difficulty in throwing, kicking and catching the ball. They appear clumsy, often bump into objects and are unable to identify body parts (Bigge, Stump, Spanga & Silberman, 1999:223).

Learners with problems with motor movements will have difficulty in performing tasks that necessitate the use of hands and fingers like fastening buttons, drawing, colouring and writing, activities needed everyday in a classroom (Lerner, 2003:251).

- **Perceptual abnormalities**

Perception refers to the brain being able to interpret information sent to it by five senses. Disorders in this category will lead to a learner being unable to make sufficient sense of, or remember what he has seen or heard causing learning difficulties (Donald *et al.*, 2004:66).

- **Difficulty with self-regulated, self-motivated activities**

Learners with learning difficulties have problems with self-regulated and self-motivated activities because of their experience of many years of repeated failure (Lerner, 2003:292). They are afraid to initiate an activity.

- **Immature social skills**

Social maturity refers to the ability to take personal and social responsibility. Individuals with learning difficulties struggle to perceive themselves in relation

to others' behaviour and to events and circumstances that involve others (Lerner, 2003:549). This makes school harder for them.

- **Disorganised approach to learning**

These learners are unable to complete assigned activities successfully. They frequently struggle to commence activities. Time is spent on producing work that is poor and meaningless to the assigned activities (Moss, 1995:187).

2.4.3 Types of specific learning difficulties

There are five common forms of specific learning difficulties, which can be identified in a learner. They involve specific:

1. oral and written language,
2. reading,
3. spelling,
4. mathematical, and
5. emotional difficulties (Donald *et al.*, 2002:341).

Below is a discussion of each one of these difficulties.

2.4.3.1 Specific reading difficulty

2.4.3.1.1 Definition

Reading difficulty is a term used to describe learners who are unable to read at a level equal to their intellectual capability. Children learn to read and write in order to master all academic subjects. For learning and teaching to take place, all learners should acquire basic skills in reading. Since reading is a basic tool for all academic subjects, failure in school can be traced to inadequate reading skills (Lerner, 2003:397).

Typically, a reader with poor reading skills has the following characteristics:

General matters:

- a learner points to a word when reading;
- the book is too close or far away from the face;
- reading is avoided;
- the learner is not relaxed when reading;
- the learner fidgets a lot;
- one eye is closed when reading;
- the head turns noticeably when reading.

Reading aloud problems:

- reads slowly and word for word;
- reads very hurriedly;
- ignores punctuation;
- struggles with the pronunciation of words;
- inserts words;
- omits words;
- sounds out unfamiliar words;
- guesses at unfamiliar words;
- reverses words;
- reverses parts of words;
- reads hesitantly;
- repeats words;

Reading comprehension:

- facts are not remembered;
- a learner is unable to draw a conclusion;
- metaphorical language cannot be interpreted;
- the understanding of the meaning of the words is poor;
- the answers are not straight and to the point.

Reading aloud problems:

- reads slowly and word for word;
- reads very hurriedly;
- ignores punctuation;
- struggles with the pronunciation of words;
- inserts words;
- omits words;
- sounds out unfamiliar words;
- guesses at unfamiliar words;
- reverses words;
- reverses parts of words;
- reads hesitantly;
- repeats words;
- repeats parts of sentences.

It is clear from the above discussion that proper identification of learners with reading difficulty is important for providing specialized approaches to instruction and intervention.

2.4.3.1.2 Factors causing poor reading

Many factors contribute to poor reading. These include: visual processing, oral language, word attack skills, metacognition, letter identification, reading comprehension and word recognition. A brief discussion of these causes will follow.

▪ Visual processing problems

This is the ability to process what is being read so that it makes sense to the learner. Learners with visual processing problems have difficulty in the following areas:

- Visual discrimination problems, which is the ability to differentiate one object from another in one's environment. If a learner cannot tell the difference between the number 6 and 9 and the letter b and d or the word sun and sum, the learner has a problem with visual discrimination (Winkler *et al.*, 2003:68).
- Visual closure problem. To help learners with reading, remedial educators often give a learner words omitting one letter or two. For example a learner will be given an incomplete word like this one "_pple" to fill in a missing letter. Learners with reading difficulties will struggle to figure out the missing letter and will not grasp the concept (Lerner, 2000:271), because they cannot complete a picture/word without having seen the whole image (Spinelli, 2002: 212).
- Poor sequential skills. Learners with reading problems have difficulty remembering and producing sequences of items they have seen. They confuse spelling of words and struggle in seeing patterns and perseverate (Winkler *et al.*, 2003:70). Learners with

poor sequential skills may even struggle to read from left to right and top to bottom (Spinelli, 2002: 212).

- Poor visual memory. Learners are unable to recall from visual cues where he stopped in a book when reading (Winkler *et al.*, 2003:69). Therefore they will find comprehension tests difficult because they cannot remember what they have read.
- Figure-ground perception problems. This means that it is difficult to focus on an object without its background interfering with perception. This makes it hard to pick out the main idea from the paragraph or sentences or to keep place when reading or copying from the board (Winkler *et al.*, 2003: 69).

▪ **Verbal language delay**

Verbal language difficulty refers to deficiencies in semantic, syntactic and phonological components of language. Oral language, reading and writing are interrelated. Competency in oral language provides a basis for reading and writing. A delay in oral language is often correlated with learning difficulties (Lerner, 2003:351). The learner must first understand words (vocabulary) in order to acquire a reading skill. Vocabulary deficits in a learner may be the cause of reading difficulty (Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling & Scanlon, 2004:11). Limited vocabulary could have an impact on the learner's ability to acquire fluency in word recognition even if the learner has enough phonological decoding skill (Vellutino *et al.*, 2004:11).

▪ **Inadequate word attack skills**

Word attack skills facilitate the phonetic analysis of words. With word attack skills learners are able to make proper phonetic associations, break down words phonetically and recognize component words using the phonic rule method. The phonic rule method helps learners not only with spelling of words but also with reading (Groff, 2001:297). Without this skill, reading problems for struggling readers may arise. Word attack skills are especially important to

pronounce words that are not in the learner's sight vocabulary (Spinelli, 2002: 202).

- **Lack of metacognitive skills**

Metacognition refers to the ability to manage understanding and reasoning while reading for different purposes and applying knowledge of strategies for learning from a text (Bouwer & Guldenpfenning, 1999:93). The learner who has acquired this skill is able to differentiate, when reading, between reading a novel, newspaper, and or studying for an exam. This is different with learners having reading difficulties. They are unable to apply different reading strategies for different purposes of reading. Metacognitive skills are also central to comprehension (Spinelli, 2002: 202).

- **Letter identification**

To be able to identify letters, a learner should learn both the names (alphabet) and the sound of letters (phonics). Vellutino *et al.* (2004:4) pointed out that the learners should acquire knowledge, understanding and the functional use of the alphabetic principle to help them acquire proficiency in reading. Not only the knowledge, understanding and the functional use of letters of the alphabet can help with proficiency but also as Adams (1995:62) points out that the rate with which learners can name individual letters. Without this skill, reading problems may arise. Learners should be able to match and identify upper and lower case letters individually and in context (Spinelli, 2002: 201).

- **Reading comprehension**

When reading a text, a reader must be able to understand and make meaning of what he is reading about. Such comprehension of written material is a basic skill that influences successful learning. Learners with learning difficulties struggle with reading comprehension (Bender, 1992:199). In order to learn successfully, comprehension skills must be well developed because learning of all subjects at school depends on it.

Memory is important to comprehension, because learners need to retain details of what was read. Often learners with learning difficulties have a poor working memory and so comprehension is obscured (Spinelli, 2002: 203).

Learners with learning difficulties avoid reading passages given in a classroom because they take time reading and read without understanding. Bender (1992:201) argues that these learners are less likely to recall the main idea and will be unable to draw appropriate conclusions from the text.

Educators, especially language ones, use oral reading to help learners to be fluent readers in their lessons. Learners with learning difficulties struggle to read aloud fluently and when asked to comprehend what they are reading they experience difficulties. They have trouble identifying the main idea or question, sorting relevant information from irrelevant and following the series or action within the story problem (Gurganus & Del Mastro, 1998:2).

▪ **Word recognition**

Word recognition skill enables readers to recognize words and consequently decipher meaning (Lerner, 2003:407). Without word recognition, a learner will be unable to make sense and meaning of what he is reading about. Two-word recognition strategies discussed here, are phonics and sight words.

Phonics refers to the visual shapes and order of letters in written words and their relationship to sound in spoken words (Donald *et al.*, 2004: 342) A learner must be able to recognize the shape of a letter and relate it to a sound. Normally a learner with a reading problem will reverse letters and words when reading. For example “b” will be confused with the letter “d”; “was” can be recognized as “saw”. This will impact on his ability to recognise the sound accurately. Learners need to be able to identify the sounds of individual letters and groups of letters (Spinelli, 2002: 201-202).

In short learners with reading difficulties lack phonological awareness. Their lack of phonological awareness and their inability to pair letters and sounds make the task of “breaking the code” difficult thus creating obstacles for acquiring reading skills (Lerner, 2003:408).

Sight words are words we recognize instantly without hesitation for further analysis (Lerner, 2003:410). They are used mainly to help learners to be fluent readers. Educators use sight words lists to help learners with reading difficulties (Bender, 1992:194). If a learner has difficulty recognizing a word it is likely that the learner will have difficulty remembering and understanding the meaning of that word when appearing in a sentence. Sight words learners have learnt before should be instantly recognized as they see them, but words they have not read before may be difficult to pronounce (Cunningham, 1998:5).

2.4.3.1.3 Special reading problems

Types of reading problems usually encountered by learners with reading difficulty include reversals of letters, finger pointing, lip moving disfluent oral reading and poor silent reading. Below is a discussion of these reading problems (Lerner, 2003:447).

- **Reversals**

Words or letters are sometimes reversed when learners first start reading because of lack of experience but as the habit of reading becomes familiar this tendency decreases. Learners with reading problems will continue to struggle long after other children have acquired the skill. Learners normally reverse letters that are different in direction only. E.g. letter “p” is confused with the letter “q”. The word quad can be read as pad. This problem impacts heavily on learning because what is being read does not make sense to the reader (Lerner, 2000:447). Reversals are not limited to letters. Words can be reversed too. For example, pit for tip or top for pot.

- **Finger pointing and lip movement**

Finger pointing and lip movement are common problems when learners first start reading but as they acquire reading experience, the problem decreases. Struggling readers will continue to have this problem even when they are adults. This affects learning because both habits inhibit comprehension and reading speed (Lerner, 2003:448).

- **Disfluent oral reading**

Learners with reading difficulty hate reading and have problems with memory and understanding what they read. When reading aloud generally, these learners read word for word without understanding the meaning of the words, paragraph or the whole passage (Bigge *et al.*, 1999:389). They find it difficult to pick up key words in a sentence and key sentences in a paragraph and they are normally unsure of the sounds and letters of the words. Learners with reading difficulties struggle to read silently and are even more disfluent when reading orally or aloud. When reading aloud, poor readers are often interrupted by their educators, discouraging oral reading fluency (Lerner, 2003:448).

- **Inability to read silently**

Oral reading skill should be developed before a learner can be engaged in silent reading. Silent reading is needed when studying for exams or reading a novel, newspaper or magazines. Learners, especially at secondary schools, are required to read, comprehend and retain large amounts of information (Lerner, 2003:449). Those who have reading problems will struggle to understand what they are reading because they are unable to read silently.

2.4.3.2 Specific co-ordination and writing difficulty

Through essays, letters and assignments learners are taught how to express their ideas in writing. Writing includes spelling and printing of letters. Gurganus and Del Mastro (1998:2) assert that learners with writing difficulty cannot adequately express their thoughts in writing, have trouble using written language as a tool for organization or memory and often avoid writing altogether.

2.4.3.2.1 Writing skill

All learners struggle with writing when they first begin to write. If a learner shows signs of writing difficulty the problem will continue long after other learners have mastered the skill. It is through writing, that we are able to

integrate previous learning and experiences in listening, speaking and reading (Lerner, 2003:457; Bigge *et al.*, 1999:188). Information that we heard or read cannot be easily forgotten if we write it down. Without this skill it will be difficult for a learner to progress, as writing is important in learning.

Writing skill is more than just the mechanics of writing. Several writing-related abilities are linked to written expression. These include reading and spelling skills, the ability to speak the language, knowledge of written language rules and cognitive organising and planning skills. If any of these skills is lacking, written communication is difficult (Lerner, 2003: 57).

2.4.3.2.2 Handwriting

Handwriting affects written expression (Lerner, 2003:457). MacArthur (1999:171) refers to handwriting, capitalisation and punctuation as mechanical aspects of writing. He further states that errors made by learners distract readers from the message that the writer is trying to convey making the message incomprehensible.

Learners are given handwriting lessons during the Foundation Phase. Educators help them to write the alphabet in a specific way. A learner's handwriting is usually evaluated by comparing his writing to the standard examples contained in the Department of Education's syllabus and guide for handwriting (Kapp, 2003:93). They are taught to start at a specific corner and to continue to write towards a specific direction.

Learners with learning difficulties often demonstrate problems in the earliest writing tasks, involving copying letters and words, as well as incorrect production of written letters in the first grade (Bender, 1992:206).

The manner in which a learner holds a pen also contributes to handwriting. If fine motor skills are not well developed, a learner with learning difficulties will struggle to write the correct form of an alphabet. Learners with handwriting problems may be unable to efficiently execute the motor movements required to write or copy written letters or form, they may be unable to transfer the input of visual information to the output of fine motor movement; or they may be

poor in other visual-motor functions and in activities requiring motor and spatial judgements (Lerner, 2003:484).

2.4.3.3 Specific spelling difficulty

Spelling is more than reading, because spelling must often be done without peripheral clues (such as context, for example) (Lerner, 2003:474).

2.4.3.3.1 Definition

Spelling is the skill of putting letters together accurately to form a word (Winkler *et al.*, 2003:97). This is necessary for comprehensible written communication. In order to spell, learners need to:

- think of the sounds that make up a word;
- remember the letters that constitute these sounds; and
- put the letters together to form a word (Winkler *et al.*, 2003:97).

What makes English spelling so difficult is that there is no uniform correspondence between how words sound (phonemes) and their written form (graphemes) (Lerner, 2003:473; Spinelli, 2002: 330). For example, “receipt” provides no phonetic clue to its spelling as it has silent letters and “rough” is not phonetic because groups of letters constitute the sound. This and the inability to remember or recognize the sound or shape of a word lead to spelling errors.

Typical spelling errors include the following (Kapp, 2003:94):

- Addition of unnecessary letters (comming for coming);
- Omission of letters (becose for because);
- Substitution of letters (reed instead of read);
- Reversals of vowels, consonants and syllables (dig for big/ saet for seat/ owt for two);

- Phonetic spelling errors (nife instead of knife);
- Inaccurate pronunciation (shooga instead of sugar);
- Reflection of a dialect (favor instead of favour);
- Reversals of a word (bron instead of born);
- Consonant sequence reversals (prosecces instead of processes); and
- Faulty association of sound with a certain way of writing (o/ou spelling of four).

2.4.3.3.2 Problems related to spelling

Learning how to spell a word is a mutual venture between a learner and an educator. Kapp (2003:94) noted that if during a lesson an educator does not fully teach learners how to spell words or does not take into consideration curriculum design for spelling and does not guide the learner through the spelling lesson, that learner will have difficulty spelling words correctly. If the learner on the other hand does not pay attention during the lesson and is not committed, his learning to spell correctly will be inadequate. Absenteeism and changing of school (especially during the year) create gaps in the learner's store of knowledge.

There are also deficiencies within a learner that cause poor spelling such as physical disabilities, sensory problems, motor activity, sensory-motor coordination, poor perceptual skills, language deficiencies and behavioural problems (Kapp, 2003:94).

Phonics relates to the sounds associated with letters. If a learner cannot relate a letter to its sound, he will not be able to decode words or "Break the code" (Lerner, 2003:408). When a learner has grasped phonics, he can detect the sounds in a word.

When a learner has inadequate phonological awareness, he cannot make spelling-to-sound linkages' (Lerner, 2003:476). Auditory perceptual problems

will make it almost impossible to understand sounds and acquire phonic skills (Donald *et al.*, 2004:344).

Because English contains words that are phonetically irregular, learners cannot always rely on the sound of the word to spell correctly. Words such as sun/son; two/too/to and so on sound the same, but are spelled differently. In such instances the learner needs to have memorized the word and should be able to retrieve the word from memory without the assistance of visual clues (Donald *et al.*, 2004:344; Lerner, 2003, 2003:476). This means that learners with visual perceptual problems and /or visual memory problems will experience spelling difficulties (Donald *et al.*, 2002:344). Learners who struggle to recall letter sequences in words will rely primarily on the way the word sounds leading to phonetic spelling (Spinelli, 2002: 334).

2.4.3.4 Specific mathematical difficulty

Two of the Learning Areas offered in the Foundation Phase are literacy and numeracy; and life skills. Learners must first master the basics of reading, writing, spelling and numeracy to make progress in their learning. Learners identified with learning difficulties can also struggle to acquire the basic skills in mathematics. The acquisition of mathematics skill is often delayed (Smith, 1998:122).

There are several factors, which impede the learning of mathematics, thus affecting the development of mathematical understanding (Allsopp, Lovin, Green & Savage-Davis, 2003:1). Amongst others are factors that restrict the learning of mathematics and factors that are related to teaching, as discussed below.

2.4.3.4.1 Faulty learning

Mathematics, like other disciplines, has unique terminology or concepts. A learner must be able to master them before attempting to solve any problem. If a concept is unfamiliar to a learner, or does not make sense, it is simply ignored. Maree (1996:432) argues that children very often fail to master mathematics that makes no sense to them and consequently learn concepts

or procedures only in part or not at all. In such instances they are overly dependent on their educator and develop learned helplessness (Spinelli, 2002: 383). Mathematics has a step-by-step procedure of solving problems. Ignoring information that does not make sense will result in wrong procedures.

2.4.3.4.2 Beliefs that hamper learning

Maree (1996:434) pointed out that the way in which mathematics is taught could affect how learners view the subject and themselves as learners. Learners who struggle believe that their skills will remain inadequate and this sabotages motivation to try. Whatever learners believe has a huge impact on their approach and performance in the subject (Maree, 1996:434).

When learners repeatedly struggle in maths, they may become anxious and believe their inadequacy in maths is permanent. Their attitude colours their learning and commitment to maths negatively (Spinelli, 2002: 383).

2.4.3.4.3 Mathematics anxiety

Anxiety refers to the state of panic, helplessness, mental paralysis and disorganization that some people experience when they are called upon to solve a problem of a mathematical nature (Maree, 1996:434). Learners with learning difficulties do not like to be called upon to solve problems because they fear that they are going to get the sums all wrong. Thus anxiety may stem from fear of failure and loss of self-esteem (Lerner, 2003:489). Anxious learners can then develop negative attitudes towards learning mathematics especially in high schools.

2.4.3.4.4 Formal teaching

Many educators who offer mathematics at schools often have difficulty explaining the steps in problem solving making it very difficult for learners to understand. They focus on drilling and memorization. Donald *et al.* (2004:344) argue that many students have difficulties in mathematics simply as a result of poor teaching.

In the instruction of mathematics it is important that the teacher should take into account the heterogeneity of the pupils regarding mathematical ability and level of mastery (Kapp, 2003:101). Educators often make mistakes of using the same methods for all learners despite their level of intelligence. This often affects the learner's achievement and can create learning problems for learners.

If the teacher himself does not possess the required subject knowledge and subject didactical expertise and proficiency, he will not be able to present the mathematics lesson with the necessary interest, dedication and enthusiasm, and will also not be able to anticipate learning problems that may develop (Kapp, 2003: 101). Some educators do not allow learners to ask questions during the lesson for clarity and better understanding because of their lack of subject knowledge. This too may cause mathematical learning difficulty.

Furthermore, for maths learning to be effective, educators need to allow sufficient time for a skill to be practised, before moving on to the successive skill. Educators must provide many good examples and ample opportunity to master learning (Spinelli, 2002: 384).

2.4.3.4.5 Language concept

Learning mathematics depends on the mastery of language concepts. If the learner's reading skill and oral language is well developed, he will have little or no difficulty in understanding mathematical concepts and vice-versa.

A reading problem may be the reason why a learner who achieves excellently in tests that do not require a high degree of reading skill (e.g. calculations, simplification of expressions, solving of equations, etc.), achieves poorly when it comes to word sums that have to be read and interpreted carefully without any errors (Kapp, 2003:100). Without comprehension of language, achievement in mathematics is difficult.

2.4.3.4.6 Visual perception

Learners with specific mathematics difficulty may have difficulty with activities requiring visual-motor and visual-perceptual abilities (Lerner, 2000: 486). They experience difficulties when they have to copy numbers and may write them between the lines. Some children are unable to see objects in groups (or sets) - an ability needed to identify the number of objects quickly.

The inability to visually perceive a geometric shape as a complete and integrated entity is a visual- perceptual difficulty (Lerner, 2000:487). Learners with this problem often find the learning of geometry difficult and educators with little or no knowledge of this problem are unable to help them figure out the answers to the mathematical problem.

Miller and Mercer (1997:50) mentioned the following characteristics of learners with visual-spatial deficits:

- they lose their place on the work sheet;
- they experience difficulty in differentiating numbers eg. 6 and 9, and 2 and 5;
- they write between lines;
- they show difficulty relating to directional aspects of maths, that is problems requiring up-down, left-right and aligning of numbers; and
- they have difficulty using the number line.

2.4.3.4.7 Attention

Learning mathematics requires full attention from the learner as maths involves step-by-step solving of a problem. Students with attention problems either 'miss' important information as it is presented during instruction, or they do not attend in a meaningful way to essential cues when solving a problem (Allsopp *et al.*, 2003: 1). A learner who is unable to concentrate and pay attention will most probably run into difficulties somewhere along the way. Mathematics requires learners to write, think, do, make representations, draw

sketches, use their imaginations - in other words, to be actively focussed (Maree, 1996:438). If a learner has difficulty in sustaining attention, that means he will miss out on important steps in solving the problem.

2.4.3.4.8 Memory problems

Basic elementary mathematical processes of addition, multiplication, subtraction and division are stored in the long-term memory. Children are taught these basics at home long before they enter school. Learners should be able to retrieve this necessary information from the memory when solving problems. Learners who have memory problems often have difficulty retrieving the necessary information accurately or efficiently even though they have successfully stored the information at one time (Allsopp *et al.*, 2003:2).

Memory problems encountered by learners with mathematics difficulty includes:

- learners are unable to retain math facts or new information;
- learners forget steps in an algorithm;
- learners perform poorly on review lessons or mixed probes;
- learners have difficulty telling time; and
- learners have difficulty solving multi-step word problems (Miller & Mercer, 1997: 50).

2.4.3.4.9 Lack of mathematics learning strategies

Some mathematical difficulties can be attributed to the learner's lack of appropriate strategies for attacking and solving maths problems (Lerner, 2003:506). Learners need to know how to tackle a problem. Those who have learning strategies will successfully solve a problem using a variety of strategies. Learners with learning difficulties wait for an educator to give instruction on how to solve a problem. Learners who have metacognitive deficits may not even be aware that others are using strategies to successfully complete the task at hand (Allsopp *et al.*, 2003:2).

At primary school level, learners can usually cope with most mathematical problems by simply memorizing rules and strategies, but when they get to secondary school, they suddenly discover that this is no longer sufficient (Maree, 1996:434). They must be able to use their own metacognitive strategies to solve problems.

Mathematics, unlike most other subjects, does not offer learners the opportunity to start from scratch at the beginning of every New Year (Maree, 1996: 434). A learner must store all information taught in previous years to carry it to the next grade. Inability to do so affects the ability to determine a strategy for solving a maths problem.

2.4.3.4.10 Expectations with regard to achievement in mathematics

Parents expect their children to do mathematics even though they experience difficulties. Maree (1996:435) contends that what the parents expect from their child can have a significant consequence on the child's mathematical performance. Furthermore, they indicate that the way learners evaluate themselves is also determined by the way in which they are being evaluated by others, for instance their friends, parents and teachers. These expectations and evaluations in turn lead to poor self-perceptions of their performance in mathematics (Montague, 1997:3).

2.4.3.4.11 Information processing problems

Maths problems can be caused or aggravated by difficulty with processing information (Spinelli, 2002: 385-386). Examples of such processing problems include attention deficits, auditory processing deficits, memory problems, difficulty shifting between mathematical processes, poor mathematical reasoning, spatial disorganisation, poor number formation, inattention to visual detail and motor problems.

2.4.4 Communication difficulties

Language is essential for development, thinking, and human relationships. Language, whether verbal or sign, is used to communicate with others.

Lerner (2003:352) states that language is an integrated system, and many areas of learning depend upon the mastery of language. Therefore language forms the foundation for acquiring the basic skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking.

In communication two people are involved, i.e. the sender and the receiver of a message. The sender must be able to explain exactly what he intends so that the message is loud and clear to the receiver. Likewise the receiver must listen attentively to be able to interpret the message received correctly. Learners have to develop competence in each of these elements, and their interrelationships in order to understand and use language effectively (Donald *et al.*, 2004:346). Communication difficulty can be divided into the following categories: Language development and speech production.

2.4.4.1 Difficulties in language development

Language development refers to the current functional stage of a first language at a level appropriate to a child's age. In other words, language development is commensurate with age. For example, most 6 year olds can follow one instruction containing age-appropriate language. One would not expect a 3 year old to have the language skills of a 6 year old. Language develops from birth and continues throughout a person's life span (Winkler *et al.*, 2003:73).

Lerner (2003:368) distinguishes between oral receptive language disorders and oral expressive language disorders:

- A learner finds it difficult to understand words when reading or listening to a speaker due to an oral receptive language problem. Learners with a receptive language disorder often find it difficult to understand words when they appear in a sentence (Lerner, 2003:368). For example the meaning of the word "practice" may be simple when the word is not in a sentence, but becomes difficult when used in a sentence. They may not understand a word when the context in which the word is used, changes. Receptive language problems impacts on:

- the comprehension of words;
 - carrying out instructions;
 - understanding class discussion; and
 - retaining information (Kapp, 2003:405).
- On the other hand, a learner may be unable to express himself clearly to the receiver of the message due to a disorder in oral expressive language. Expressive language problems entail difficulty in talking and can relate to word-finding problems or difficulty in making the appropriate sounds to form the necessary words. Learners with expressive language problems may also struggle to form full sentences. Expressive language problems are not related to any muscular paralysis, which might prevent speech (Lerner, 2003:369).

2.4.4.2 Difficulties in speech production

Expressive language is a process of producing spoken language (Lerner, 2003:369). There are children who are unable to produce spoken language due to articulation problems or a hearing disability. Lerner (2003:369) mentions that learners with oral expressive language disorders can understand speech and language produced by others, they do not have a muscular paralysis that prevents them from talking, and do well on non- verbal tasks. Oral expressive language problems result in difficulties in articulation and fluency.

Articulation means the correct pronunciation of sounds, syllables or words, or making speech sounds adequately. Learners with oral expressive language disorder are unable to express their thoughts with ease because their articulators are not well developed or are immature. Examples of articulation problems include:

- substitutions: replacing a letter sound with another;
- distortion: pronouncing letters incorrectly; and

- additions: adding extra sounds (Spinelli, 2002: 287).

Being fluent means using words readily. Some children find it difficult to speak fluently and therefore repeat syllables, which impede the smooth flow of communication. Fluency disorder results in stuttering, which blocks the smooth transition from one syllable to the next (Unger, 1998:176).

Donald *et al.* (2004:348) indicate that children may mispronounce particular sounds and stumble or stutter in their process of learning to speak fluently in the normal course of development. This shows that a learner has difficulty in producing speech and therefore attention should be given to him by a speech therapist to deal with the problem.

2.4.5 Emotional difficulties

Learners with emotional difficulties possess the academic potential to succeed in school but their emotional and behavioural problems impede their performance when compared with same-age and same-grade peers (Atkinson, *et al.*, 2002:3). Because they are unhappy, they find it very difficult to learn (Winkler *et al.*, 2003:110).

Donald *et al.* (2004:350) classify the nature and causes of the most common emotional difficulties into two categories: stress reaction and problems of socialization.

2.4.5.1 Stress reaction

Stress refers to emotions or feelings of worry caused by difficult situations. These feelings may arise when the learner feels threatened, inadequate, lonely, afraid, insecure, guilty, frustrated, conflicted, and angry (Donald *et al.*, 2004:351). Below is a discussion of factors that cause these feelings.

2.4.5.1.1 Family factors

Emotional disturbances are often traced to the child's educational situation at home (Kapp, 2003:115). In South Africa, a spirit of Ubuntu that is self-actualisation through others is traditionally taught in African culture but has

often broken down in the process of urbanization. In some families there are factors that hinder this philosophy of life thereby creating behavioural difficulties for a growing child. Such factors include: alcohol abuse and alcoholism in the home, shamelessness, an incomplete family, unemployment, crime and poor housing conditions (Kapp (2003:114).

The family should provide security, love and protection for its members. Parents and children should be able to communicate with one another without fear of being criticized or judged. However, if the communication is disturbed, for whatever reason, the learner's personality development is also disturbed (Kapp, 2003:115). It is therefore the responsibility of the parents to create a climate of mutual respect and understanding in their homes for healthy relationships.

2.4.5.1.2 School factors

The learner with problem behaviour creates problems for educators as well as for classmates to accept him (Kapp, 2003:117). Sometimes the learner may be disruptive so that it is difficult for his educator to continue with the lesson.

The conduct of his classmates and especially that of his educator may aggravate or improve his problems (Kapp, 2003:117). If an educator in the class makes fun of the answers a child gives, causing the class to laugh, that learner's behaviour will be unlikely to improve. On the other hand an educator may use words that are encouraging to motivate the learner to participate in order to help him to improve his behaviour.

The way in which discipline is maintained at school, and specifically in the classroom, often arouses the learner's resistance and dissatisfaction (Kapp, 2003:117). In some schools educators use point systems to discipline learners. Points are taken for not doing homework or breaking the laws of the school. If a parent did not sign the books of a child, the child at school loses some points; even though the work is done and completed. This causes frustration and anger from the learner.

2.4.5.1.3 Depression

Depression among learners is a problem that may have serious consequences (Donald *et al.*, 2004:351). Educators and parents with no knowledge may make a mistake of ignoring these children and as a result a child may feel worthless, unwanted or suicidal.

Among the many manifestations of depression are concentration problems, lack of motivation, negative self-concept, extreme feelings of guilt, sleeping and eating disturbances, poor school achievement, thoughts of suicide and even attempts a suicide, especially if such thoughts are linked with feelings of helplessness (Kapp, 2003:118).

2.4.5.2 Problems of socialization

Socialization refers to the skills involved in social problem solving and positive social relationships. In a study conducted by Gadeyne, Ghesquiere and Onghena (2004:517) learners with specific learning difficulties appeared to be at risk of problems with social interaction. A brief discussion of elements of problems of socialization will follow.

2.4.5.2.1 Aggression

Anxiety and the example of others (the authority figure at home or other identification figures) may contribute to aggression (Kapp, 2003:118). Learners do not want to be compared with other learners. This is a mistake that parents and educators often make when trying to instil a better behaviour.

Aggressive learners don't seem to have a conscience about hurting others even if they realize that that person is unhappy. They are so overwhelmed with resentment and anger that this matters less than the need to 'get back at the world' (Donald *et al.*, 2002:352).

2.4.5.2.2 Negativism

Negativism manifests in non-cooperative behaviour. The learner refuses to carry out instructions or requests, or simply ignores them (Kapp, 2003:119).

They may refuse to take out their books, pick up the papers or answering the questions.

2.4.5.2.3 Juvenile delinquency and misconduct

Crime, misconduct or deviant behaviour (theft, burglary, assault, vandalism, sexual promiscuity, the use and distribution of drugs, truancy, etc.) is often an expression of the emotionally disturbed learner's inner conflict. (Kapp, 2003:119). As it was mentioned earlier that the family should provide security for its members, a learner who does not feel safe and happy in his home often resorts to these kinds of behaviours. They conform to peer-group or sub-culture norms but often come into conflict with the school, law, or other broader social norms (Donald *et al.*, 2004:352).

2.4.5.2.4 Passive learners

Passive learners do not have the ability to start or initiate an activity on their own. Instead of trying to solve a problem, they tend to wait passively until the teacher directs them and tells them what to do (Lerner, 2003:288). For example at the beginning of a new period, educators expect that learners have their books ready to continue with a lesson. Others will do so, but those with a problem will wait for a direction from an educator.

2.4.5.2.5 Poor self-concept

Self-concept may be explained as the way one looks at himself. Learners with learning difficulties expect to fail in demanding tasks, do not believe in their personal control and try to avoid tasks presented to them and show low achievement (Onatsu-Arvilommi, Nurmi & Aunola, 2002:510). They have little confidence in their ability to learn and achieve (Lerner, 2003:290). These learners have experienced failure over the years and therefore become frustrated when they have to start working on the same activities without any achievement.

Bender (1992:144) argues that learners with learning difficulties face numerous situations in which they feel less than adequate especially when

confronted with academic tasks in school. Furthermore he distinguishes between two types of self-concept namely, global self-concept and school specific self-concept. A learner can sing beautifully and be praised by everybody but can be unable to perform well at school when presented with academic tasks.

2.4.5.2.6 Inept social skills

During adolescence friendship is very important in that teens want to belong to a certain group and be recognized as important and worthwhile. Lerner (2003:290) indicates that during adolescent years, friendships and peer approval are important and problems with social skills create another impediment for an adolescent with emotional difficulties.

2.4.5.2.7 Lack of motivation

There are two types of motivations that are important in every learner's life. They are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic comes from within an individual, while extrinsic, results from external factors such as the environment. Learners with emotional difficulties lack intrinsic motivation because they are demotivated by their repeated failure to achieve the learning task and therefore have no desire to continue working. While motivation for schoolwork is a common concern among all educators, it is a particular problem for learners who have repeatedly failed to successfully complete a particular learning task (Bender, 1992:178). Even when these learners do experience success they do not believe that they were responsible for the achievements (Lerner, 2003:290). They attribute their success to luck. Lorenz (1998:16) points out that many pupils are poorly motivated and feel that success is beyond their reach.

2.5 THE IMPACT OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES ON LEARNING

Learners with learning difficulties will often have scattered profiles of learning, that is to say that they may have considerable ability in certain areas but find others very hard (DfES, 2004:1). They may be able to speak but unable to write or present their ideas on paper.

They are likely to take different lengths of time to gain certain skills (DfES, 2004: 1). In most cases they have to have more exposure to learning activities than learners who have no learning difficulties. Therefore, spending a little individual time with a learner with learning difficulties on how to do things more effectively may make a considerable difference in their performance (Donald *et al.*, 2004:305).

Learners with learning difficulties often take time reading and understanding/comprehending texts presented to them. Struggling readers need more opportunities to read texts at appropriate levels of difficulty and to apply their skills and strategies in meaningful literacy activities that lead them to be successful and more self-sufficient (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002:3). Without these opportunities reading will have no meaning to them. Lerner (2003:421) points out that poor readers do not get pleasure from reading, or engage in the reading needed to build fluency. Therefore it is too difficult for them to build a vocabulary in a language. This makes learning a vicious cycle of failure.

Learners who are poor readers often respond negatively to narrative materials and have to be strongly encouraged to read stories (Lerner, 2003:421). Narrative materials build up a plot that the reader must follow. If a child cannot read narrative material, reading will be boring because they will be unable to follow the story (Lerner, 2003:421). Learners are often assigned to read textbooks independently without supervision or help from the educator (Lerner, 2003:421). Textbooks form part of teaching and learning. If a learner cannot comprehend what he is reading about it will be difficult for him to work independently and to study effectively.

All subjects at school depend on the mastery of literacy skills. It is the responsibility of the language teacher to teach these basic literacy skills so that learning of contextual subjects is easy and more understandable. Learners with specific reading and spelling problems struggle to master contextual subjects too.

Many learners with difficulties experience difficulty with sight word vocabulary and, therefore, lack fluency to understand and master texts (Bigge *et al.*, 1999:388). Opportunities for gainful employment decrease for learners with learning difficulties who are poor in reading and in overall educational achievement (Lerner, 2003:497).

Emotional difficulty affects learners' academic performance because of their inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and educators. These learners are not easily accepted into the class society (Kapp, 2003:117). Poor academic performance causes emotional difficulty, and such difficulty frequently persists into adulthood (Theron, 2004: 318).

2.6 CONCLUSION

We live in a changing and democratic world where the system of education is changing from time to time. The South African government introduced an inclusive education and training system where learners of different needs will be accommodated in one school. All learners have the right to education and learners with specific learning needs should, where possible and with the appropriate support, be educated along with others in the mainstream school according to the regular curriculum (Donald *et al.*, 2004:295).

In this chapter a distinction was drawn between learning disabilities and difficulties. Learning disabilities include sensory, physical, and mental handicaps and chronic diseases. On the other hand learning difficulty has to do with problems of language, reading, spelling, maths, communication and emotional difficulties. They all have a negative impact on learning. Learners with learning difficulties need remedial teaching in order to progress well at school.

Many learners experience difficulties in learning due to poor teaching, lack of resources, large number of learners in the classroom, unfavourable learning environments and discrimination from the community, from educators and from their peers (Bouwer & Guldenpfenning, 1999:100).

Educators in mainstream schools have little or no knowledge on how to treat and teach these learners. Human resource development and training in a school should include education and training opportunities for all members of the school community, especially, but not only, the teaching staff (Donald *et al.*, 2004:150). If educators are trained on how to teach learners with special learning needs, all learners' needs may be met and the attitudes of learners with special learning needs towards learning will change.

In conclusion all learners can learn despite their disabilities and difficulties. Winkler, Modise & Dawber (2002:118) argue that every learner has a story and educators can help if they can find out about their stories when they have to teach learners with special learning needs. Unfortunately not all educators perceive learners with special educational needs as responsible, valuable and able as will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

INCLUSION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Learners with special educational needs are more and more going to become part of the mainstream school – White Paper 6 (SA, 2001) argues for the inclusion of these learners. In this chapter the focus will be on inclusive education. The first part of the chapter will focus on inclusion generally. The latter half will scrutinise inclusion in South Africa.

3.2 INCLUSION DEFINED

Every learner with or without special needs has the right to learn where he wishes (Naiker, 2004:14). Including learners with special needs in the mainstream (i.e. regular schooling) would require a change in the school setting, curricula and attitudes of the community, learners and educators. The school or the community should welcome these learners as full members of the group and value them for the contribution they make for inclusion to be effective (Farrel & Ainscow, 2002: 3). Therefore, inclusion would mean accommodating learners with special educational needs in mainstream schools without discrimination.

A school is regarded as being inclusive if every learner is able to identify and connect with school's social environment, culture and organisational life (Dei *et al.*, 2000: 13). Learners should feel that they belong to, are welcomed by and are actively involved in a mainstream school community.

Inclusion must not be confused with integration. During the 1980's the terms integration or mainstreaming were used to refer to the placement of learners with special needs in the mainstream schools (Farell & Ainscow, 2002:2). With integration or mainstreaming the focus is on an individual learner or a small group of learners and there is no change in the school setting and curriculum. Individuals with special needs are assimilated into the present

forms of education whereas with inclusion the curriculum is adapted to meet the demands of all learners (Hegarty & Alur, 2003:80).

The table below gives a clear distinction between mainstreaming and inclusion.

Mainstream / Integration	Inclusion
1 Learners are assimilated or integrated into the existing education system.	1. Inclusion is about building on similarities, and about recognition of and respect for the differences among all learners.
2 Some learners are given extra support so that it is easy to be integrated into the classroom routine. These learners are assessed by specialists who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions, such as placement of learners in programmes.	2. Learners, educators and the system are supported so that the full range of learning needs can be met. The focus is on learners and educators and the emphasis is on the development of good teaching strategies that will benefit all learners.
3 The focus is on the changes that need to take place in a learner so that the learner can be integrated. The learner is the point of departure.	3. The focus is on overcoming barriers that prevent education systems from meeting special learning needs as well as the adaptation of support systems available in the classrooms.

**Table 2: Difference between mainstreaming and inclusion
Adapted from White Paper 6 (S A, 2001:17)**

If learners are assimilated into the mainstream schools without a change in curriculum, stigma and barriers to learning will continue. Learners with special needs must be given a chance to participate fully in the extra-curricular and academic curriculum of the school to truly remove stigma and barriers to

learning (Lorenz, 2002:4). Thus it will be proper to define inclusive education as a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of all learners (Naiker, 2004:19).

There are four important elements of inclusion:

- **The inclusive school is community based**

Every learner from the community, despite their educational needs, is welcomed without discrimination (Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 2002:14). The school should also create links with the community in order to meet the community's needs. The community must feel free to make suggestions and the school on the other hand must be willing to consider the suggestions made by the community. If the school is not willing to occasionally implement proposals made by the community, it shows that they care little about the community they serve (Dei *et al.*, 2000:21).

- **The inclusive school is barrier free**

The school buildings, facilities, and grounds should be built in such a way that they are accessible to everybody (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:14). Physical facilities would also include equipment and technology that would assist the learner with special educational needs. Academically, the curriculum is adapted to accommodate all learners and is designed in such a way that it prepares the learner for a future career (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:14).

- **The inclusive school promotes collaboration**

The inclusive school co-operates with other schools to promote development of both learners and educators (Thomas *et al.*, 2002: 14). By interacting, educators with divergent expertise can work together to generate creative solutions to problems experienced (Wood, 2002:172). In other words, schools can learn from one another in an attempt to minimise barriers to learning and maximise inclusion.

■ **The inclusive school promotes equality**

The inclusive school sees all learners as equal (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:14). Learners with special needs have rights and responsibilities like any other learner. Equality will ensure that learners with special needs are not diagnosed or labelled through a procedure designed especially for them (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:65) meaning that they are not exposed to any procedure which will stigmatize them.

Inclusion is a worldwide movement and not limited to South Africa only (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:4).

3.3 RATIONALE FOR INCLUSION WORLDWIDE

Both developed and developing countries have adapted inclusive education systems. There are many reasons why it was so important for countries to introduce inclusive education. With inclusive education learners with special needs will be able to:

- have their special educational needs met in the mainstream school;
- enrol in regular classrooms;
- get the opportunity to go to their neighbourhood schools;
- have access to quality education;
- enjoy improved social development and academic outcomes;
- see disability as a social and not as a medical issue; and
- create opportunities for forming friendships with peers without disabilities (Government of India DoE, 2004:2-3).

Cheminias (2002a: 47) delineated the following cultures that will be created by inclusive education:

Inclusive education will make it possible for the community to:

- make everyone feel more welcome;
- encourage learners to help each other;
- encourage strengthening of staff collaboration;
- improve mutual respect between learners and educators;
- strengthen partnerships between educators and parents;
- foster educator/district support teams with closer working relationships; and
- increase local community involvement with the school.

Inclusive values will be established in order to:

- raise expectations for all learners ;
- ensure that all learners are equally valued;
- ensure that all share a common inclusion philosophy;
- heighten educator/learner's inclusion role;
- enable educators to remove all barriers to learning; and
- minimise discriminatory practices.

Thus inclusion will free learners from discrimination and provide them with equal educational opportunities to learn what all learners are expected to learn (TASH, 2002:1). In so doing educators and communities are empowered too.

3.3.1 History of inclusion worldwide

During the 17th century, people with disabilities were not recognised as people with rights who could make any contribution to their country's economic development. In Europe the first formal effort to educate and rehabilitate people with disabilities existed in the 1600's (Wood, 2002:129). Thereafter countries like the United States of America and others around the world

followed. Nevertheless, the emphasis remained on individualism and competition, until the last decade of the 20th century (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:8).

Moral arguments and empirical evidence towards the end of the 20th century reached an agreement, which viewed inclusion as a suitable philosophy and relevant framework for restructuring education (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:4). The focus shifted because of changes in society celebrating acceptance of all stakeholders or an inclusive society (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 8).

In June 1994 more than 300 participants from 92 governments and 25 international organisations met in Salamanca with one objective in mind: education for all. The main objective was to promote inclusive education, which would enable local schools to serve and accommodate learners with special needs. The Salamanca Statement placed an emphasis on inclusive education (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002: 6). Schools had to ensure that they aligned themselves with the principle, policy and practice of inclusive education as set out in the Salamanca Statement.

In essence, schools needed to achieve the following:

- commitment to genuine respect for all people;
- doing away with prejudice;
- using human resources to the collective benefit of all; and
- developing a flexible curriculum that would address the different needs of all learners (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 8).

Like any other system, inclusive education has both advantages and disadvantages. A discussion of these follows.

3.4 ADVANTAGES OF INCLUSION

Inclusion holds advantages for all education stakeholders.

3.4.1 Parents of learners with special educational needs

Lorenz (2002:14) points out that inclusive education gives an opportunity to parents to choose a local school for their children. Before inclusion parents of learners with special educational needs had no choice but to send their children to schools that offer special education. Many of these special schools were far from their homes and children were accommodated in hostels.

By attending a local school, parents of learners with special educational needs are able to work in partnership with the school and will be involved in discussions concerning their child's educational programme (Lorenz, 2002:12). When learners are excluded and accommodated in separate systems, authorities will dictate education of learners with special needs and parents will never be involved.

It is important to parents of learners with special educational needs that their child will get an opportunity to mix with other children without disabilities or learning difficulties (Donald *et al.*, 2004:299). In so doing opportunities to form friendships with local children are created – parents are reassured by this.

3.4.2 Learners with special educational needs

In an inclusive setting, learners with special educational needs are afforded the opportunity to experience life as it is with its eclectic mix of people. In this way, a learner will be prepared for the demands of the regular work environment and the reality of adult life after leaving school (Wood, 2002:190).

Labels will be reduced in inclusive schools (Wood, 2002:190). Learners with special needs who are in inclusive settings do not face the stigma of being excluded.

To Donald *et al.* (2004:299) the learner with special learning needs will be challenged by the regular curriculum and will be able to meet normal life expectations. The learner will learn how to behave appropriately in different situations and also to be independent.

Hegarty & Alur (2003:121) argue that the self-esteem, confidence and social skills of learners with special learning needs will be enhanced in inclusive settings. They will be able to take initiatives in activities that are offered in the schools.

3.4.3 Support service personnel (SSP)

To enable learners with special educational needs to reach their potential, the support service personnel (SSP) help them to learn alongside their peers without special learning needs by facilitating participation and learning, building confidence, self-esteem and independence (Cheminias, 2002a: 21). With the help of SSP these learners are able to make independent decisions and are not afraid to take up new challenges. The development of appropriate support programmes can be challenging and stimulating for SSP.

Another advantage of inclusion for SSP is that they become more involved with the curriculum making it easy for them to help both educators and learners (Lorenz, 2002: 74). The school is able to respond to a learner's diversity because of the contribution made by SSP (Cheminias, 2002a: 21).

3.4.4 Mainstream educators

Opportunities to work in collaboration with other educators as well as special school educators will be created (Gardner, 2002: 5). Mainstream educators will plan, review and teach in partnership with educators who have divergent expertise.

Mainstream educators get an opportunity to develop long-term partnerships with SSP and enjoy support across the whole class (Lorenz, 2002: 74). While the SSP is busy helping learners with special needs with learning, an educator continues to facilitate learning for the rest of the class.

3.4.5 Learners without special educational needs

Not only learners with learning disabilities and difficulties benefit from inclusive settings. Learners without special learning needs also benefit from this type of education system. They learn to accept individual differences, to be comfortable with learners with difficulties, become helpful, acquire leadership and their self-esteem is also improved (Palaestra, 1999b: 1)

3.4.6 Parents of learners without special educational needs

To the parent of a learner without special educational needs inclusion means that their child can learn respect for differences (Donald *et al.*, 2004:299). As parents, they may feel more satisfied because their children have this opportunity to learn interpersonal respect.

3.5 DISADVANTAGES OF INCLUSION

In the previous section, advantages for the parent of a learner with special needs, the learner with special needs, mainstream educators, support service personnel and learners without special needs were mentioned. There are also disadvantages, which Donald *et al.* (2004: 299) prefer to call challenges to be faced in inclusion. These challenges include:

3.5.1 Parents of learners with special educational needs

Parents of learners with special educational needs fear that mainstream schools lack special resources and facilities that will help their children to develop their full potential (Donald *et al.*, 2004:299). Facilities like hearing aids, Braille, walkers and so on are not readily available for learners with disabilities in mainstream schools. Thus the disadvantage for such parents is that they may experience anxiety in this regard.

3.5.2 Learners with special educational needs

The learner, according to Lorenz (2002:74) can find himself in a situation where he has to relate to too many people. The number of learners in a class in inclusive settings is much bigger than in special schools. The learner has to

cope with a regular curriculum, unequal competition and teasing (Donald *et al.*, 2004:299). Learners without disabilities are quick to make fun of learners who struggle to learn at their pace.

3.5.3 Mainstream educators

For the mainstream educator, lack of training in special education can inhibit the successful operation of the system (Donald *et al.*, 2004:299). Educators need certain skills in order to give necessary support and guidance to both learners with and without special learning needs. Staff development with a view to improved inclusive teaching practices should ideally occur on an on-going basis within the school context and not be limited to random workshops (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:20).

Educators will be expected to spend some additional time with a learner with special learning needs to make a learner understand the content of a learning area. The workload of educators may be increased and therefore they may have a fear of not coping (Donald *et al.*, 2004:299).

Mainstream educators may make invalid assumptions about the SSP working solely with a particular learner who has special educational needs. They do not think that the SSP is there to support them with regard to the whole class (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:29).

When accommodating learners with special needs, mainstream educators will be required to plan for the particular learner and to differentiate the curriculum (Lorenz, 2002:74). These requirements can cause stress because of lack of expertise on the side of the educator.

The mainstream school will find the change very difficult, especially when they have to make alterations to teaching and learning practices in the classroom (Mda & Mothata 2000:126). Teaching may be too slow in order to accommodate all learners.

researcher's and her colleagues' opinion this was inadequate. If inclusion is inadequately introduced to educators, they may be hostile towards the idea.

All of these changes cost money. The amount of time available to introduce inclusion to educators by Inclusion Project Staff is limited (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:121). Time is an important factor and it is needed for the better understanding of these systems. In South Africa, this researcher has experienced inadequate training. Another challenge to inclusion is physical limitations in mainstream schools, which can impede the full inclusion of learners if they are not adequately resolved prior to and during a learner's attendance at a school (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:122). Physical buildings can serve as an obstacle to inclusion. For example, schools may lack ramps or may have inadequate access to educational adaptations such as technology/ computers to assist learners with special learning needs.

Shortage of human resources is also a disadvantage. The department has to employ more SSP and educators in these schools to make the transition easier.

3.6 INCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has a history of segregated education systems. Specialized education for learners with special learning needs reflected the unfairness and inequality associated with segregation: education and support services for African learners were grossly inferior. Mainly white learners (and Indian learners to a lesser extent) were supported in special schools. Thus South Africa has a history of learners being excluded on the grounds of race and special educational needs (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:15-16).

It was only during 1960 that laws for special schools were offered and established for non-white learners and according to separate departments of education. The following laws were passed:

- 1964 Bantu Special Education Act;

- 1963 Coloured Persons Education Act; and
- 1965 Indian Education Act (du Toit, 1996: 11).

The above-mentioned laws paved the way for the changes in special and inclusive education in South Africa. During 1990 South Africa went through political changes. Constitution, Legislature, and Policies changed to accommodate every citizen. In 1994 the new government changed the education system, which involved the drafting of policies and putting practices in place that would redress the past inequalities and to create equal opportunities for all learners, especially learners who experienced severe forms of discrimination and exclusion (Mda & Mothata, 2000: 15).

In the following year, 1995, the White Paper on Education and Training was promulgated as the first policy document in restructuring education. Special education also received attention. Mainstreaming of learners with special learning needs was considered as a long-term goal (du Toit, 1996: 14), thereby doing away with exclusionary practices.

This was followed in 1996 by the South African Schools Act and the White Paper on an integrated National Disability Strategy in 1997. In so doing a legislative paradigm shift towards inclusion was facilitated and the notion that society and schools must change to accommodate diverse needs emphasized (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:16).

In 1997 the National Commission on Special Educational Needs and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services was established. Both of these bodies issued reports outlining the nature and extent of barriers to learning for South African learners and introduced more respectful and politically correct terminology for such learners (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:17). These reports led to an understanding that the education system needed to be restructured to address a diverse range of learner needs. Such restructuring would need to acknowledge the following barriers to learning in South Africa:

- Socio-economic deprivation

- Impairment-induced barriers (including amongst others, learning impairments)
- Negative attitudes towards diversity / labeling of diversity
- Rigid curriculum
- Inappropriate language policies
- Inappropriate or inadequate support services
- Lack of policy
- Insufficient parental recognition / support (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:18).

In July 2001, the aforementioned led to the formulation of Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system. This document focused on all the changes necessary to achieve an education system which could be truly responsive to learner diversity and in so doing provided a framework for inclusion in South Africa (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:18). The framework includes a time frame culminating in 2021(SA, 2001:42-43) and a feasible funding strategy specific to South Africa's fiscal reality (SA, 2001:36-44).

In the White Paper on Education (SA, 2001:18) it is emphasized that classroom educators are primarily accountable for the success of inclusion. To this end, educators require support and retraining, including in-service training, collaboration and staff development (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:18).

3.6.1 Rationale for inclusion in South Africa

The reasons why South Africa introduced inclusive education were not only based on human rights only but were also political. These reasons include:

- South Africa wanted to free itself from the isolation of the apartheid era and align itself with international trends (Hay & Beyers, 2000:1). Education during apartheid was not only segregated along racial lines but also in ability and disability. There were segregated special schools for

learners with special learning needs. Schools that served white learners were well resourced and while there were a few schools for African learners about 80% were underdeveloped (SA, 2001:9). Therefore inclusion seemed to be a perfect solution to redress inequalities which existed in education (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:307). All learners who were previously excluded from mainstream schools or were previously disadvantaged could now enjoy the services offered by support educators.

- Inclusion in South Africa was introduced to protect Human Rights. The new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, Section 29, Subsection 1 states that:

“everyone has that right to basic education including adult and further education.”

This law simply means that every learner despite their disabilities or difficulties will now have equal opportunities to basic and quality education. Learners will no more be denied admission to a school because of disabilities or difficulties.

- Before democracy, South Africa had 17 departments of education and the introduction of inclusive education fitted well with the new policy of a unitary education system (Hay & Beyers, 2000:1). The concern was inclusive education for all learners at all schools.

3.7 PREREQUISITES FOR INCLUSION TO SUCCEED

For inclusive education to succeed the government needs to make a practical plan that would amongst others include provision of a flexible curriculum, adequate funds, development of learning institutions, integrated and community based support systems, three tier support system and human resources. The prerequisites for successful inclusion will be discussed below.

3.7.1 Provision of flexible curriculum

A flexible curriculum is needed in order to respond to the diverse needs of learner's diverse potential (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:312). A rigid curriculum will disadvantage learners with special educational needs in that it will be time bound. In the White Paper 6 on Special Educational Needs, (SA, 2001:20) the Ministry asserts that a flexible curriculum across all bands of education be accessible to all learners, irrespective of the learner's learning needs. Flexibility in a curriculum means that all aspects of the curriculum need to be developed to ensure that the diverse needs of the learners are addressed (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 2004:51). The aspects referred to here are the planning, preparing and delivering of the content to the learners. If content and approach in the curriculum is flexible, the curriculum will be valuable and applicable to the diverse range of needs found in an Inclusive classroom (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:45). Thus, for the curriculum to be truly flexible, the following must be adjusted according to the learner needs:

- the content;
- the medium of instruction;
- classroom organization;
- teaching methods;
- the pace of teaching;
- learning materials; and
- assessment of learning (SA, 2001:19).

When planning a lesson and activities it is also important that educators use different resources to teach all learners in their classrooms successfully. Differentiation of learning activities will help an educator to meet the learning needs of all learners in their classes (Cowne, 2003:59).

In South Africa Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE, replaced by RNCS) seem to be suitable vehicles for the implementation of

inclusive education (Naicker, 2004:21). OBE is concerned with the achievement of critical outcomes. An educator plans and prepares the activities in such a manner that they cater for the diverse needs of each and every learner in the class. In an OBE class activities are learner centered and the learner can take his own time in achieving the outcomes. OBE is not based on time or the passing and failing of grades (Naicker, 2004:21). All learners can perform and achieve successfully and at different rates.

3.7.2 Provision of funds

Finance plays an integral part in any education system. Inclusive education requires adequate and appropriate funding that relates to the support needed and not merely to learner categories (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 313). All learners must be supported in an Inclusive classroom regardless of their abilities or disabilities and this requires sufficient funding for support.

In White Paper 6 on Special Educational Needs (SA, 2001: 36-44) a funding strategy is outlined. The projected funding caters for a 20-year developmental period for inclusion in South Africa. For the interim (i.e. the initial eight years) a three-pronged approach is suggested which includes new conditional government grants, provincial funding and donor funds (SA, 2001:43).

3.7.3 Development of learning institutions

Because learning needs amongst learners vary, learning institutions should be developed and equipped in such a way that they are accessible to all learners. The inclusive school needs to look at its psychosocial and physical environment to be able to accommodate all learners.

3.7.3.1 The psychosocial environment

The psychosocial environment of the school refers to the culture and ethos, which reflects norms, values and attitudes of the school. When formulating the policy of the school, educators, the school management team (SMT) and school governing body (SGB) must ensure that the culture and ethos reflecting norms, values, attitudes, human relations and the way in which the

school is managed exemplify the principles of inclusion (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:48). It is the duty of the SGB and SMT to see to it that fair inclusive policies are being implemented and no one is discriminated against. Policies in inclusive schools make known what the school considers important and should represent the perceptions of the community (Cowne, 2003:100). It is therefore important that when drafting the policy the school should engage all stakeholders.

In the policies of the school, sections on prejudice and practices relating to gender, social class, race and special learning needs should be clearly described as they can act as a barriers to inclusion (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:49). In this way the school shall have created a culture that values all learners for what they can achieve and not describe learners in negative terms for what they are unable to do.

The other important aspect in building the psychosocial environment of inclusive schools is human relations. The relationships between the stakeholders (parents, learners, educators) in the school and especially between the educators themselves should be developed in such a manner that they do not act as a barrier to teaching and learning in inclusive schools. Good and healthy relationships amongst educators are important not only in developing a healthy teaching and learning environment for inclusion but also as a model for learners (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:49). Normally learners learn by imitating what their educators do.

In addition to the development of healthy relationships, the challenge of developing a democratic style of leadership and management (which reflects principles of diversity and social integration in inclusive schools) exists (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:49). The SGB and SMT again have the responsibility to ensure that everyone within the school community feels valuable as the success of the school depends on their commitment.

3.7.3.2 The physical environment

The physical environment includes the buildings, space in the classrooms, school grounds, safe and healthy surroundings as well as equipment used by

both learners and educators. The physical environment of the inclusive school should be able to accommodate diverse needs of not only learners and educators but also parents, officials of the department and other stakeholders. School buildings must be built in such a way that they are accessible to all stakeholders. Toilets, entrances, service points (including telephones) must be taken care of as they can act as a barrier or an opportunity for inclusion for learning and development in inclusive schools (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:50).

The space in the classrooms should be organized in a way that it allows everyone to be independent and free. Preferably, the space in classrooms should not be restricted- tables and chairs must be grouped to accommodate flexibility and co-operative learning (Thomas *et al.*, 2000:61). Classrooms should also have adequate ventilation, lighting and heating as well as comfortable furniture.

If inclusive teaching and learning is to occur, the school should create a safe and healthy physical environment for learners and educators. The physical environment of inclusive schools should be prepared in such a way that both educators and learners feel invited and at ease (Purkey & Novack, 1996:63). The environment should be clean, comfortable and safe for all learners and educators.

A policy that ensures the development of an inclusive physical environment, addressing problems of vandalism, violence, and cleanliness should be drawn by leaders and managers of the school (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004: 50). Leaders and managers have to make sure that both learners and educators respect the rules.

Equipment available in the school also contributes to the successful implementation of inclusion. The availability of computer technology is essential to compensate for disabilities (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker, & Engelbrecht, 1999:72). In the White Paper on Special Needs Education (SA, 2001:33) mention is made of the need for progressive provision of materials and equipment to facilitate access.

The school has to make sure that the environment is barrier free to be able to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners.

3.7.4 Development of an integrated and community based support system

For inclusive education to succeed, the school must develop good community relationships. Relationships must be formed between the school, parents, non-government organizations and neighbouring schools, which offer special education to learners (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:55). Relationships formed with expertise of special schools will ensure collaboration and development of educators in the mainstream school (ref to 3.7.5). In fact the support engendered by relationships with all stakeholders is the cornerstone for the success of inclusion (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:19).

Collaboration must be framed by the following understanding:

- it is voluntary;
- it requires parity or equality amongst those collaborating;
- it is built on mutual goals;
- it involves shared responsibility;
- it involves shared resources; and
- it involves shared accountability for outcomes (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:19).

3.7.4.1 Relationships with parents

Inclusive schools can make use of the knowledge and expertise of parents or care givers in order to increase trust and confidence and also to support inclusive learning opportunities of a learner (Cheminias, 2002b:23). Parents can best describe the level and extent of the learner difficulty to the educator and how best the school can handle emotional difficulties, which may arise for the learner. It is imperative that the parents and caregivers be allowed to

3.5.4 Support service personnel (SSP)

The SSP in mainstream classrooms may be prevented from making suggestions about suitable ways of working because of mainstream educators who feel that they are inefficient and lack confidence in what they do (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:29). Prevention from making suggestions would make it difficult for SSP to help learners in need.

The presence of SSP can be a barrier between a learner and an educator (Lorenz, 2002:74). The learner can recognise SSP as the only people who can help in overcoming his disabilities or difficulties.

Because the SSP has to introduce preventive and curative measures, the job can be very stressful and demanding (Donald *et al.*, 2004:299). For them to cope with the work, they need to train the mainstream educator and enhance skills for accommodating special learning needs so that educators can be able to help the learner.

3.5.5 Parents of a learner without special educational needs

Parents of learners without special educational needs have a fear of disruption and drop in academic standards (Donald *et al.*, 2004:299). An educator will have to concentrate exclusively on the learner with special educational needs at some stage leaving the rest of the class unattended. Thus parents fear that learners without special educational needs will be neglected.

3.5.6 Other disadvantages

Apart from the disadvantages mentioned above, inclusion has a financial implication as a disadvantage. There are serious difficulties concerning funding the integrated placements posed by the movement of individuals from special schools (Thomas *et al.*, 2002:121). Changes with regard to the training of the staff, buildings, learning material, special resources and facilities have to be made.

support educators at school. Research has shown that parental involvement in helping learners to read produces remarkable improvements in reading ability (Thomas *et al.*, 2000:33). Learners whose parents are not involved lack many learning skills needed in mastering activities at school.

Furthermore when involving parents in the process of identifying barriers to learning and development and also in developing plans of action to address these barriers, parents feel comfortable with the way teaching and learning is organized (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:55). Parental involvement will also help to further acquire and develop new skills and understanding in supporting their children.

3.7.4.2 Community resources

There are non-governmental organizations (NGO's) with expertise that can provide valuable information and resources concerning aspects relating to diversity or addressing barriers to learning and development (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:56). NGO's can help the school to achieve psychosocial changes necessary for inclusion to succeed.

Mainstream schools and educators can also seek help from neighbouring schools and learning institutions that have experience and have developed competencies in addressing special educational needs (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:57). By seeking help from other institutions, mainstream schools will be able to reduce stress experienced by educators and create a positive attitude among the educators. In order for educators to learn from their colleagues who have experience in teaching learners with special needs, time must be allocated for educators to work in teams and support each other (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:20).

3.7.5 Development of "three tier" Support System

Ideally, support teams should consist of three levels of support. Institutionally or school based support teams consisting of educators should be formed and developed to assist in identifying and addressing barriers to learning (Lomosfsky & Lazarus, 2001: 313). For support teams at school level to be

effective, they must see themselves as members of the team offering support across the whole class and not to a designated learner only (Lorenz, 2002: 98).

The second level of support teams should be established and developed at district level. The team should include a psychologist, remedial therapist, occupational therapist as well as speech therapist. The establishment of district support teams will ensure that school based support teams are provided with facilities, resources and equipment that will enable them to assist learners in need of help (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 313).

The third level of support teams should be established and developed at provincial and national administration level to understand and act upon the challenges of addressing barriers to learning and participation in order to promote effective teaching and learning (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:313). The challenge facing provincial and national support teams is to identify or assess strategies and plan courses of action to address barriers to learning. They need to identify factors of the school life that sabotage inclusion and those that enhance inclusion so that they can be able to plan strategies to successfully address the challenges (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:53).

In the White Paper on Special Needs Education, the strengthening of education support services is emphasized as fundamental to the success of inclusion (SA, 2001:28-30). A district based support team, consisting of staff from district, regional and head offices and from special schools will be established to support educators. Institutional teams from further and higher education institutions, in conjunction with community expertise, will provide further support.

In the White Paper (SA, 2001:29) plans to convert special schools into resource centers are outlined. The rationale for this is the provision of specialized professional support.

3.7.6 Human resources development

Human resources must be developed for inclusion to succeed. Educators and school based support teams should be adequately prepared and developed for the purpose of providing effective and inclusive teaching and learning (Lazarus *et al.*, 2004:65). The department depends on the educators to successfully implement inclusive education. Pre- and in-service training for an educator is essential for those who will be directly involved with learners with special needs. Educators require a shared common framework and adequate skills to implement inclusion (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:20).

3.7.7 Plan for transition

For the government/department of education to easily move towards a realization of a vision of inclusive education, a practical plan should be developed and implemented (Lomofonsky & Lazarus, 2000:313). Factors that will affect transition include financial human and material resources. These are prerequisites in planning transition and should be given attention.

A structure of the key aspects(i.e. school culture, leadership and management and external context) of an inclusive school follows (Please refer to Figure 3.1 on the next page).

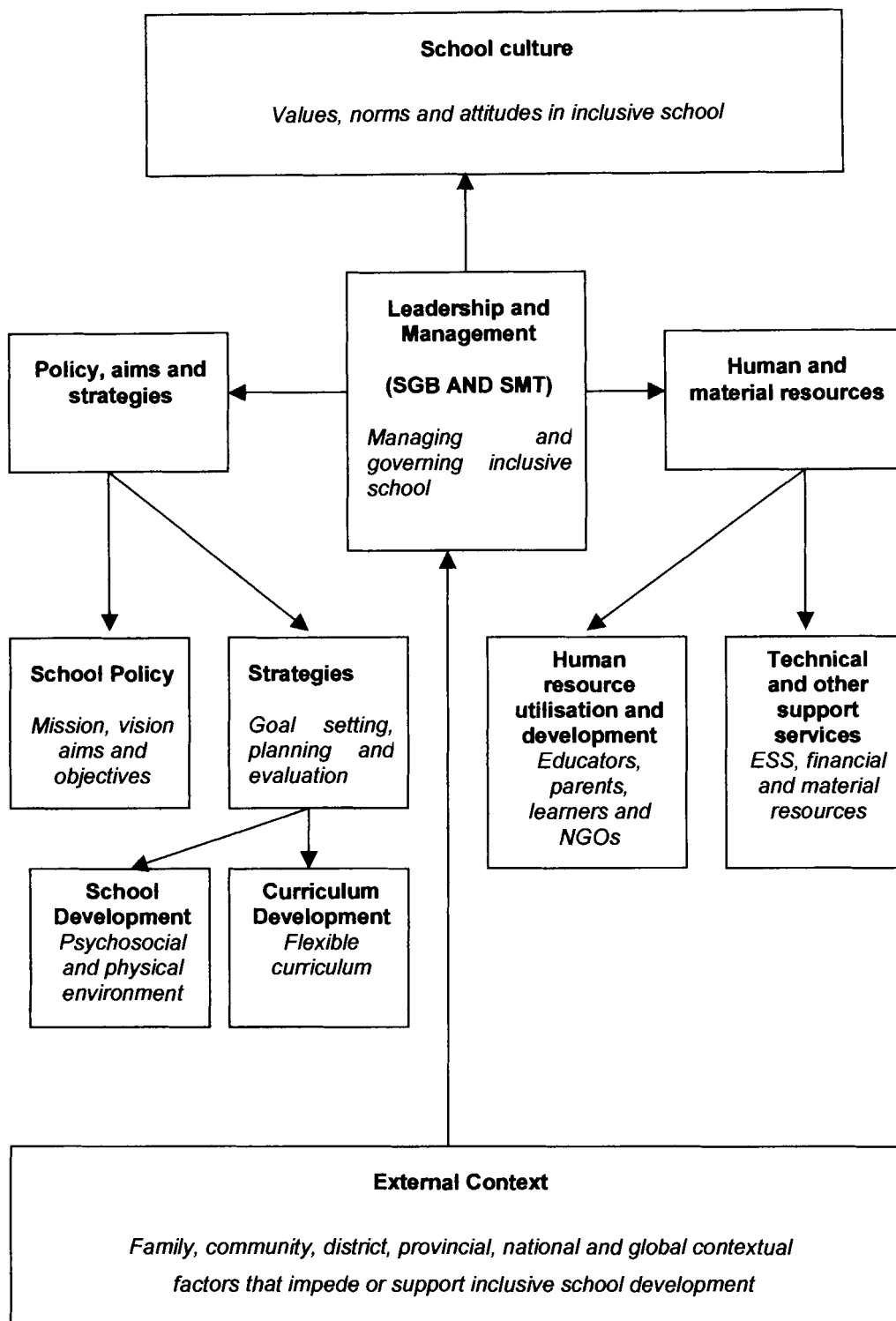


Figure 3.1: Key aspects of inclusive schools (Lazarus et al., 2004:63)

The model is explained below:

3.7.8 Model for building an inclusive school

3.7.8.1 School culture

Values, norms and attitudes within inclusive schools should reflect equality and equity. This is important because attitudes and values are translated into actions and teaching practices (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:20). This means that if inclusion is to succeed, the school's culture must reflect commitment to inclusion. This means that anyone, regardless of gender, ability, language or disability may belong to and participate in the school (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:4).

3.7.8.2 Leadership and management

SMT and SGB should be competent to manage diversity in inclusive schools. The department of education should ensure that the SMT and SGB are well developed and supported throughout the process of inclusion. The school principal and management are responsible for setting the tone of the school as an inclusive, non-discriminatory institution (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:19).

3.7.8.3 Policy

The school policy must have clear guidelines on discrimination, harassment and procedures for solutions. Mission, vision, aims and objectives should include elements that would enable the school community to become more inclusive. Inclusion is based on democratic principles, which inform vision (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:19).

3.7.8.4 Strategies (school development)

The school development plan must include aspects that facilitate the development of an inclusive teaching and learning environment. For example, the school structures and procedures should be in line with the school's aims to be inclusive. School based support teams should be formed to assist in identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development.

3.7.8.5 Strategies (curriculum development)

A flexible curriculum, one that can be responsive to a full range of diverse needs, should be developed and implemented.

3.7.8.6 Human resource utilization and development

The following should be taken into consideration when developing and utilizing human resources in inclusive schools.

- Stakeholders should be prepared before implementing inclusive education. The school should use competencies of all stakeholders optimally.
- School based support teams should be established in order to assist in identifying and supporting learners who need support.
- District-based support teams should be available to support educators at school level.
- The learning environment should be conducive enough to allow good relationships between the stakeholders. In other words, partnerships with the community (including neighbouring schools, universities, and special schools), will be an advantage (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:20).

3.7.8.7 Technical and other support services

Funds, equipment, human and material resources to be used must be controlled and managed in a manner that enables the school to pursue its goal of building and developing an inclusive school.

Learners who need additional support should be assisted so that they can participate fully in the learning process.

3.7.8.8 External context

External factors such as the family, community, district, provincial, national and global context can impede or support inclusive school development. There are experts in the above-mentioned structures that can offer their

ongoing help in order to promote inclusive education. Families can make sure that they support the school by helping their children with activities given as homework by educators at home.

3.8 REACTION TO INCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The following section documents the reaction to inclusion in South Africa. While the researcher is familiar with her colleagues' generally negative response to inclusion, it was difficult to find literature documenting the reaction of stakeholders to inclusion in South Africa. The reaction of all stakeholders is discussed below.

3.8.1 Educator reaction

Educators' reactions have generally been documented as negative and can be grouped as follows:

3.8.1.1 Inadequate preparation and training/human resources development

Human resources development is essential in implementation of inclusion. Educators are the driving force behind the success of inclusion. Lack of skills, preparation and experience are key factors educators associated with inclusion. This argument is supported by Hay *et al.* (2001:214) who pointed out that educators feel that effective pre-service and in-service training is essential for successful implementation of inclusion. Educators feel that pre-service training did not adequately prepare them for inclusive teaching and that in-service training is inadequate in meeting their needs (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff & Pettipher, 2002:183). Without effective and appropriate training, educators may experience stress and become negative or demotivated. Significantly in a 2005 study conducted on educator attrition, educators who are considering changing professions cite job stress, resulting from education transformation as a contributing factor (Hall, Altman, Nkomo, Peltzer & Zuma, 2005:20).

One rural educator pointed out that she would like to support inclusion but does not possess the skill and also does not know where to begin in order to address the learners' educational needs (Green, Forrester, Mvambi, Janse van Vuuren & du Toit, 2004: 132). It is for this reason that mainstream educators should be properly trained and prepared for the transformation to take place. Training of educators is also needed in helping educators on how to identify and address special educational needs.

Educators also highlighted a lack of experience. Educators feel that they have lack of experience in dealing with learners with special learning needs and that inclusion is consequently difficult and tiresome (Hay *et al.*, 2001:217). Experience generates positive attitudes towards change. Due to inadequate human resource development, educators expressed a feeling of no confidence in their ability to teach learners with special learning needs. They feel that learners with special learning needs would be best served in special or remedial schools where there are facilities and resources (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:201).

Educators in research conducted by Engelbrecht *et al.* (2001:259) indicated that there is a low level of support from the district as well as lack of collaboration across areas of expertise especially from special school educators. Educators in special schools are better equipped and developed in dealing with learners with special needs. To be able to focus on the positive aspect of change, educators need support from other stakeholders like parents, district and non-governmental organizations (Lomofsky *et al.*, 2004: 70). It is also important for educators to be skilled in collaboration for them to be able to foster effective implementation of inclusive education (Swart *et al.*, 2002:184). Educators reported feeling unprepared to teach learners with learning difficulties and they reported inadequate experience with regard to teamwork and collaboration (Ramokhoase, 2005:37).

3.8.1.2 Negative attitudes

Educators exhibit negative attitudes when they have to accommodate learners with special learning needs in their classes. In one study conducted educators

experienced stress when they had to deal with a learner with Down's Syndrome (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2001:258). Educators are unable to meet educational and behavioural needs of learners with Downs Syndrome and it is difficult to manage the whole class because of disruptions.

Another stressful factor for educators is that parents do not have an understanding of their child's capabilities and they are not willing to co-operate with educators and to also come to terms with the situation (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2001:258). Many parents do not want to accept that their children have disabilities and therefore do not want to cooperate believing that their children are as capable as other children. The stress which educators experience in this regard makes them negative towards teaching such learners.

In mainstream schools, educators face daily problems of having to discipline learners in general. Thus they feel overwhelmed when they have to include learners with special educational needs in their classrooms (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:203). To include learners with special educational needs without necessary preparation would create more stress for educators.

The other factor, which caused negative educator attitude, is the introduction of new policies and legislation without changing the education set-up and consulting people who are the driving force behind the implementation of inclusion. Educators in Gauteng are of the opinion that they are obliged to implement policies of the government about which they were not consulted (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:203). This view is supported by Swart *et al.* (2002:186) because educators feel obligated to make changes when they have not had full participation in policy decision-making.

Mainstream educators believe that inclusion is about the placement of learners with special learning needs in mainstream classes without any change in curriculum. Inadequate distribution of information led to rejection as well as negative attitudes towards the policy (Swart *et al.*, 2002:183).

Another concern, which led to negative attitudes towards inclusion, is the connection between OBE and inclusion. Educators are concerned with how to adopt the OBE curriculum to suit the needs of the learners with special

learning needs (Swart *et al.*, 2002:183). It is for this reason that ongoing training to facilitate the effective implementation of inclusive education should be given attention. If this is neglected, educators will continue to feel negative and as if inclusion is not suited to their classroom reality (Ramokhoase, 2005:37).

Stress is also caused when educators have to deal with learners with cognitive disabilities rather than those with physical disabilities (Hay *et al.*, 2001:214). Learners with cognitive disabilities require more effort on the part of the educator. In the response of educators to challenges of inclusion, an educator pointed out that she feels annoyed when teaching a learner with cognitive disability because learners are unable or seldom remember what they have been told (Green *et al.*, 2004:132). Having to repeat a lesson is time consuming and unfair to learners without special needs. To many educators intelligence is viewed as fixed and unmodifiable and therefore they have limited expectations about learners' capacity and potential for learning and are pessimistic about their progress (Lomofsky *et al.*, 2004:70). Hence it is stressful for them to include learners with cognitive disability in their classes.

3.8.1.3 Lack of resources

For inclusive education to be successful, human, material and financial resources are essential. Human resources would include psychologists, speech, occupational and remedial therapists. Material resources will be buildings and equipment such as Braille, walkers, hearing aids, computers and many more. Psychologists and therapists would be needed to deal with or pay special attention to problems of specific learning difficulties. Educators indicated that schools do not have facilities and equipment needed to help or educate learners with special educational needs (Bothma *et al.*, 2000: 202).

Schools will need finances to be upgraded and that can be costly. Inadequate provision of facilities and infrastructure and assistive devices such as Braille, walkers, hearing aids and many more can act as a barrier to teaching and learning (Hay *et al.*, 2001:214). This aspect is also supported by Swart *et al.*,

(2002: 184) who pointed out that insufficient facilities, infrastructure and assistive devices are directly related to poverty and unemployment. Other factors, which also relate directly to funding, are the provision of basic services and resources. Many schools still appear to have lack of basic resources such as water, electricity and toilets (Swart *et al.*, 2002:184).

Many schools in Gauteng still have high educator-learner ratios. Large class size and shortage of manpower were reported by educators to be a factor which might impede the smooth implementation of inclusion (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:203).

3.8.1.4 Fear of change

Change is challenging and may be perceived as either a threat or an opportunity (Lomofsky *et al.*, 2004:70). If educators are to perceive inclusion as an opportunity, developers of inclusion must slowly introduce the idea to them. Change is also associated with loss, apprehension and struggle to do things (Swart *et al.*, 2002:186). Because successful implementation of inclusive education depends on educators, the developers of inclusive education should consider change from the educators' point of view.

Due to lack of training, managing diversity may be a threat to many educators. Many educators in one study expressed a feeling of inability to manage diversity on their own which leads to fear and hopelessness and referring learners for assessment, diagnosis and placement in special schools (Swart *et al.*, 2002:183).

In a study conducted in Gauteng, educators voiced fear of changing their tried and tested methods of teaching to accommodate learners with special learning needs (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:203). When presenting a lesson to learners, educators have their own special way of knowing the type of method to be used so that they are able to reach their goals with ease. This will change when learners with special educational needs are included.

Educators fear that inclusion will affect emotional development of learners with special educational needs. Learners with special learning needs may be

denied the benefit of intensive and individualized attention (Turnbull *et al.*, 2004: 68).

Educators also fear that other learners without special educational needs will be neglected because of the time spent on learners with special learning needs (Bothma *et al.*, 2000: 203). Learning is still seen as a process, which is time bound, by many educators in the mainstream. In inclusive settings other learners are on occasional basis going to help learners with special learning needs and educators feel that these will place a burden on learners without special needs (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:203).

Due to the time spent on learners with special learning needs, standards of education would drop. Educators still view education or learning as a process whereby rigid standards and time are set and that a learner should achieve or master a required lesson or curriculum at a certain point or time (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:202). In such instances, educators seem to ignore the spirit of OBE.

The other important factor mentioned by educators in a study conducted by Bothma *et al.* (2000:202) on Gauteng educators' perception on inclusion is self-esteem. Educators fear that learners in the mainstream schools would tease and label learners with special learning needs, which will result in the latter being unable to develop self-esteem. They therefore fear that change will harm learners.

Educators expressed a feeling of no confidence in understanding the nature of the learners' difficulties (Bouwer & du Toit, 2000:241). They are unsure of their competences in meeting the demands of diversity on their own and therefore fear the inclusion of learners with special educational needs. Consequently, they do not welcome change in the form of included learners.

3.8.1.5 Positive reaction

Not all educators perceive inclusion negatively. There are a number of case studies on individual responses to the challenges of inclusion conducted by Green *et al.* (2004:127) in different South African schools which show that

some educators are willing to try to include and educate the learner with special learning needs.

An educator from a primary school historically catering for African learners has a positive view on inclusion. She personally thinks that all learners have the right to be included in the mainstream school (Green *et al.*, 2004: 136). In her response to some questions asked on discipline, she remarked that learners can be easily disciplined by setting simple rules and being consistent in order to help them learn social skills. The rules set by educators help not only with learners with special learning needs but with the rest of the class too.

When responding to a question about activities that the learner must be given, she feels that she can try by adapting a number of activities and also involving other learners without special learning needs in order to make progress (Green *et al.*, 2004:138). Sometimes learners understand better when other learners are explaining activities.

The other factor reported in this study, which makes it easier for mainstream educators to include learners with special educational needs in their classes, is the presence of a facilitator or support service personnel. Facilitators make the inclusion of learners with special educational needs possible because they have knowledge, skills and experience in working with such learners (Green *et al.*, 2004:140).

3.8.2 Learner reaction

A study which was conducted by de Andrade and Ross (1999:332) to investigate the attitudes of a group of high school learners attending a school for the deaf towards educational inclusion revealed that learners lacked knowledge and were not informed regarding inclusion to be able to make informed decisions. Communication, social and general attitudes towards educational inclusion were targeted amongst other factors.

3.8.2.1 Communication

There is a lack of confidence in communication because learners with hearing disability felt that they are not comfortable and relaxed in communicating with hearing learners and educators (de Andrade & Ross, 1999:332). Educators and learners in mainstream schools do not know and understand sign language used by learners with hearing disability.

3.8.2.2 Social interaction

In this category it has been found that learners with hearing disability had a feeling of loneliness caused by isolation (de Andrade & Ross, 1999:332). They also indicated that they are unsure of their behaviour in social interaction and are afraid that hearing learners would perceive and react to them as deaf learners. Labels and stigma play an important part in a learner's development of self-esteem and confidence.

3.8.2.3 Self-concept

Concerning self-concept researchers found that learners with hearing disability see themselves the same as other learners but feel nervous because they think that able learners will tease and ridicule them (de Andrade & Ross, 1999:332).

3.8.2.4 Classroom support

Learners with hearing disability indicated that sign language is their first language and for them to learn successfully, an interpreter or facilitator would be needed to help them learn (de Andrade & Ross, 1999:332).

There is inadequate research on South Africa learner reaction to date, however overseas researchers suggest that learners generally react as follows to inclusion:

3.8.2.4.1 Social interaction

It has been found that learners without special educational needs display discriminatory behaviour towards learners with special learning needs. Wood

(2002:221) pointed out that learners with special learning needs are discriminated against because of their lack of social skills.

One learner expressed his frustration by saying that learners in mainstream schools make fun of them and even call them names (Farrel & Ainscow, 2002:206). This particular learner's experience of inclusion is frightening and if behaviour of mainstream learners does not change, inclusion is impossible.

Learners with special needs also reported prejudice. Lack of knowledge, awareness and also fear of differences from both learners with and without special educational needs were reported to be strong factors that affected smooth implementation of inclusion (Grewal, Joy, Lewis, Swales & Woodfield, 2002: 4).

3.8.2.4.2 Classroom support

In an inclusive setting, there are support educators who give support and full attention to designated learners. However, it has been found that many learners with special needs do not want their problems to be known to the rest of the class through the support educator spending too much time with them (Farrel & Ainscow, 2002: 48).

It has also been found that many learners with special learning needs drop out of school when exposed to inclusive settings (Hegarty & Alur, 2003:135). Dropping out of school may be caused by repeated failure over the years or by educators in mainstream schools who do not seem to be concerned or try to find reasons and solutions to the problems of learners who are in need of help.

Learners with special learning needs feel isolated and neglected by an educator who has no previous contact with these learners (Hegarty & Alur, 2003:135). Learners become demotivated to participate and master classroom activities.

Learners with special educational needs also mentioned that educators in mainstream schools often do not wait for them to complete the task written on

the board (Hegarty & Alur, 2003:135). They were often left behind while the rest of the class continued with other activities.

3.8.2.4.3 Self-concept

Learners with special educational needs reported that being disabled as a child has affected their childhood years and self-image. Self-image plays a vital role in shaping a person's identity (Grewal *et al.*, 2002:5).

3.8.3 Parent reaction

An interview was conducted by Belknap, *et al.* (2004:117) to investigate the reaction of parents of learners with disabilities who are presently attending mainstream schools. The findings were as follows:

3.8.3.1 Stress

One parent saw inclusion as creating stress for learners, parents and educators and the school at large (Belknap *et al.*, 2004:117). To eliminate stress, schools should see inclusion as a process and they need to grow towards it taking one step at a time.

At times many educators make mistakes of judging a learner against a background or experience of another learner with the same disability. Parents feel that educators should focus on a learner as an individual and not see a disability first (Belknap *et al.*, 2004:181).

Choosing an appropriate school with adequate resources for a learner can also be stressful for parents. One parent pointed out in an interview that parents should first assess both academic and physical accessibility of a school when deciding on a placement (Belknap *et al.*, 2004:183). If a school does not have appropriate equipment, it will be difficult for an educator to help a learner with special needs to learn.

Reporting to parents was also highlighted in this interview. Parents feel that educators should be honest at all times when reporting (Belknap *et al.*, 2004:183). Positive reporting will ease the tension of parents while on the

other hand negative reporting will make it possible for parents to help a learner at home.

3.8.3.2 Preparation and training

In mainstream schools learners and educators are being prepared before admitting learners with special educational needs but it was reported that although they are being accepted, learners without disability treat learners with disability like a small child (Belknap *et al.*, 2004:181). Parents are concerned that without adequate preparation, their children will be victimised.

One parent in these interviews felt that educators should be flexible in their approach to teaching learners with special needs. Rigid approach to content can inhibit collaboration amongst educators themselves and learners with special needs (Belknap *et al.*, 2004: 178).

3.8.4 Support service reaction

An extensive literature search was conducted and no South African data on support service personnel's reaction to inclusion is available. However, international data could be found and it suggests the following about the reaction of support service personnel to inclusion:

The Education Support Service (ESS) team helps in making inclusion a reality for learners and parents who were excluded from the regular school system. They have to work hand-in-hand with regular education in support of a needy learner. However, Cheminias (2002:22) noted that educators in mainstream schools tend to leave the support of learners with special educational needs in the hands of a support educator, thus leaving the support educator with frustration.

Like mainstream educators, the educator supporters feel that training is essential in order to help them meet the needs of learners with disabilities and difficulties that they are helping (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002:46). Training will help in making their responsibilities and roles clear to everyone involved.

ESS in schools experience different conditions of service from educators, in that they have to work during break and lunch time (Lorenz, 1999:10). They hardly have contact with the mainstream educators to plan and discuss the progress of the learners.

Previously the work of ESS was restricted to helping learners in special schools, but these roles in inclusive settings have changed and they felt that it is too much work for them. Their workload has increased because they have to plan to help all learners and educators and others require more individualized attention (Hay, 2003:136).

Because there is no available South African data on support service personnel's reaction to inclusion, this could be a worthwhile avenue of further research.

3.9 CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is clear that inclusive education has long been in the minds of people, but they did not have the strategy to implement it. The process of integration was introduced by the developers of inclusion who later realized that learners were only assimilated into the system without any change in the curriculum (Hegarty *et al.*, 2003:80). Inclusion on the other hand, considers how a school can be reorganized in order to react positively to all learners as individuals (Hegarty *et al.*, 2003:80).

To Pearpoint and Forest (2002:1) inclusion implies learning to live with and caring for one another. Learners get the opportunities of appreciating, understanding, and respecting unique differences among them when living with one another.

An inclusive education system has advantages and disadvantages for educators, support educators, parents as well as learners. One of the advantages of inclusion is that friendships and relationships are being enhanced (Moore, Gilbreath, the Alaska 2000 Design Team & Maiur, 2002:14). These relationships are not only created between learners but also

between learner /educator, learner/ support educator, educator and support educator and most importantly the parent and the whole school community.

The South African Policy on Special Needs Education outlined in White Paper 6 (SA, 2001) gives a perspective on the planning, introduction and training in inclusive education. However there are challenges within the present education system that need attention before realizing the ideals of inclusion. South Africa has to deal with the problem of including not only learners with disability and difficulty but also learners with barriers caused by emotional, and economic deprivation (Prinsloo, 2001:245).

Educators believe that effective implementation of inclusive education depends on high quality professional preparation of educators at pre- and in-service levels so that they are better equipped in meeting the diverse needs of learners in the classroom (Hay *et al.*, 2001:214).

To make inclusive education a reality, learners, educators, and parents have to change their attitudes and beliefs about learners with learning disabilities and difficulties.

In the following chapter, the design of the study to assess educator attitudes and beliefs will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Many educators in South Africa's mainstream schools do not possess the skills to educate learners with special educational needs. Educators expressed feelings of no confidence as far as understanding the nature of their learners' difficulties as well as adapting instructions, activities or material in the learners' support (Bouwer & du Toit, 2000:241). This chapter focuses on the research design used to ascertain what factors contribute to mainstream educators being reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties despite the policy of inclusion.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The following questions directed this study:

- What are specific learning difficulties?
- What does inclusion entail?
- Does the knowledge, which mainstream educators have of learning difficulties, make them reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties?
- Does perception of the policy of inclusion make mainstream educators reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties?
- What are mainstream educators' attitudes towards included learners with learning difficulties and does their attitude make them reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties?
- What guidelines do mainstream educators need to understand and support included learners with learning difficulties?

4.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study is to ascertain what factors contribute to mainstream educators being reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties despite the policy of inclusion.

The overall aim can be operationalized as follows:

- to define and describe specific learning difficulties;
- to research the background and scope of inclusion;
- to determine whether mainstream educators' knowledge of specific learning difficulties contributes to their reluctance to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties;
- to determine whether mainstream educators' perception of inclusion contributes to their reluctance to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties;
- to determine whether mainstream educators' attitudes towards included learners with specific learning difficulties contributes to their reluctance to teach these learners; and
- to provide guidelines for mainstream educators concerning teaching included learners with specific learning difficulties.

4.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

The research is divided into a literature study and empirical research.

4.4.1 Literature study

A thorough literature study was conducted on:

- special learning needs, including learning difficulties and learning disabilities; and
- inclusion.

4.4.2 Empirical research

Empirical research will be conducted in two phases:

- Phase 1: a pilot study to pretest the questionnaire to be used in the survey will be conducted,
- Phase 2: survey research, to determine what factors contribute to mainstream educators being reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties.

4.4.3 Survey using questionnaires

A descriptive research design using survey research will be conducted. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:183) a survey refers to the acquisition of information about people's characteristics, opinions, attitudes, perceptions, or experiences by asking questions and analyzing data. In survey research questions are administered to a sample of respondents selected from a specific population (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky, 2001:265). A survey can be completed by using questionnaires, face-to-face interviews or telephonic interviews. In this study a survey using questionnaires was conducted to study the factors contributing to mainstream educators' unwillingness to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties.

4.4.3.1 Measuring instrument

A closed questionnaire with a 4-point scale constructed on the basis of the preceding literature study and extensive dialogue with mainstream educators who have included learners with learning difficulties, will be used. Three categories of questions will be formulated. The first category has 15 questions and will seek to determine the knowledge of educators on specific learning difficulties. The second category, also with 15 questions, will be on mainstream educators' attitudes towards included learners with special learning difficulties and the last category (15 questions) will be on mainstream educators' perception towards inclusion. All in all 45 questions will be formulated. The questionnaire is included as addendum A.

4.4.3.1.1 Questionnaire as a research instrument

For the purpose of this study a closed questionnaire will be used. This type of a questionnaire has advantages and disadvantages which will be discussed below.

a) Advantages of closed questionnaires

The following advantages are noted:

A closed questionnaire:

- is easy to read and consumes less time to complete;
- is easy to standardize;
- produces standardized information that can be statistically analysed;
- has answers that have a chance of being reliable and consistent;
- comparisons of answers can be done more easily;
- has a high response rate and less missing data;
- has a substantial amount of information about a subject and response options that are well-known;
- yields results that can become available fairly quickly;
- has questions that have understandable meaning; and
- has questions that can be answered within the same framework (Fink, 1995a:33; Evalued, 2004:4).

b) Disadvantages of closed questionnaires

Disadvantages include:

- respondents may be easily led by the questions;
- important information may be missed;

- they are not suitable to investigate long and complex issues; and
- respondents may misunderstand questions because of poor design and ambiguous language (Fink, 1995a:33; Evaluated, 2004:2-4).

4.4.3.1.2 Design of questionnaire

When designing a questionnaire, the covering letter, questions, and pre-test of the questionnaire should be taken into consideration.

a) Covering letter

A covering letter is an important part of a questionnaire and should be carefully and thoughtfully composed as it helps in setting the scene for what is to come (Salkind, 2000: 140). It is important to clarify the purpose of the survey in the covering letter for the respondents to be willing to participate.

The purpose of covering letter is to:

- motivate potential respondents;
- invite respondents to co-operate;
- stress the concerns of the person receiving the letter;
- give people a reason to want to respond; and
- establish a sense of authority (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 193; Salkind, 2000: 140).

It is also important to offer to make known the results of the survey because of the time spent by the respondents in completing questionnaires (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:193). This is done mainly to motivate and increase the response rate of participants.

In this research, the covering letter explained the rationale for the research and requested educators to participate by completing the questions honestly. The researcher offered to share research results, once obtained.

b) The questions

Survey questions should be written in such a way that they elicit intended information (Schwarz, 1997:31). Questions should be straightforward so that respondents are able to comprehend and answer what they are asked to. Meaning ambiguity should be avoided.

Closed-ended questions will be used to gather data for the purpose of this study. A 4-point scale will be used where respondents have to choose from “strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree”.

c) Pretest

It is essential that the questionnaire be pre-tested using a smaller number of respondents before being distributed to respondents. By so doing the researcher will be able to uncover many problems that are likely to go unnoticed (Schwarz, 1997:35). In pre-testing the questionnaire the respondents are able to help the researcher to restructure the questions to gain more clarity. Twenty educators from the Sedibeng East district in Gauteng province will be asked to participate to pre-test the questionnaire.

Educators will be chosen on the following grounds:

- they have included learners with specific learning difficulties in their classes;
- they have basic knowledge of inclusive education; and
- they are not geographically far from the researcher.

Selected respondents will be asked to make amendments so that the questions are unambiguous. The questionnaire will be amended accordingly.

4.4.3.1.3 Distribution of questionnaire

There are several methods to deliver questionnaires to respondents. Questionnaires can be delivered by mail, telephone and also by hand. For the

purpose of this study questionnaires will be delivered by hand because the area to be covered is not far from where the researcher lives.

Hand delivered questionnaires have advantages as well as disadvantages that are worth mentioning.

a) Advantages of hand delivered questionnaires

Advantages include:

- saving time;
- increased response rate;
- respondents can complete questionnaires in their own time;
- respondents are not bothered at an inconvenient time;
- difficulty with questions can be clarified on return of researcher;
- no personal contacts with respondents, which may influence response negatively or positively;
- the researcher's knowledge of the area under study is improved;
- the relationship with the respondents is improved; and
- the cost of the study is reduced (Brownell, & Naik, 2001:1).

b) Disadvantages of hand-delivered questionnaires

These include:

- the researcher will only be able to reach a small geographical area per occasion because of double trip that have to be undertaken;
- the questionnaire can either be lost or not completed by respondents;

- there are contextual factors like illiteracy, visual competency, writing competency which may hinder the successful completion of a questionnaire (Delpont, 2002:174).

4.4.3.2 Population and sampling

The population is all mainstream educators working with included learners who have specific learning difficulties. However, given logistical restraints, the researcher will delimit the sample to mainstream educators in Sedibeng East district who teach included learners with specific learning difficulties. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:207) when a population is small (i.e less than 500) the whole population is used as a sample. When the population is close to 500, 50% can be used. According to Dr M. Nel, First Education Specialist in Gauteng Sedibeng East District there are 180 mainstream educators involved in the teaching of learners who are being included in the mainstream and have learning difficulties. The questionnaire will be delivered to all 180 educators. A purposive sample will therefore be used.

4.4.3.3 Procedure

Permission was requested from Gauteng Department of Education Sedibeng East district to distribute questionnaires. Mainstream educators will be the target group for the researcher and the principals of the schools will be visited in order to build relationships as well as to motivate them and their staff to participate in the research. Educators were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire before being collected.

4.4.3.4 Statistical techniques

The questionnaires will be statistically analysed by the statistical services at the University of North West Vaal Triangle Faculty. Inferential and descriptive techniques will be used. The program to be used will be Statistica.

4.4.3.5 Ethical aspects

There are ethical aspects that need to be considered before conducting any empirical research. This is done to protect the rights of both the social community and of the professional integrity of the research community (Freed-Taylor, 1994: 2).

Ethical issues include:

- **The right to privacy**

Confidentiality is a vital component in any research study conducted. The rights of participants to privacy should be respected (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 107). Participants should never know about other participants' responses because it might influence the research findings in a negative or positive way.

- **Protection from harm**

Participants should never be exposed to unnecessary physical or psychological harm (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 101). It is the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that participants are aware of what is expected from them before they participate.

- **Informed consent**

Participants should be informed about the nature of the study and must also be given a choice to participate (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 101). A researcher should make sure that participants are aware of the risk involved should the research include risks (Salkind, 2000:38).

- **Honesty with professional colleagues**

The findings of the survey should be completely, widely and objectively reported without misrepresenting information on methodologies employed allowing research work to be assessed by colleagues (Freed-Taylor, 1994:3).

- **Sensitivity to cultural and social differences**

Individuals have different cultural and social backgrounds. Therefore the researcher needs to be sensitive to and mindful of social and cultural differences and to consider conflicting interests (Freed-Taylor, 1994:3).

- **Internal review boards**

Before attempting human research, proposals should be reviewed and scrutinised by the review boards (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:102). The proposal governing this study was accepted by North West University's board.

4.4.3.6 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are two important concepts, which need to be taken into consideration when collecting data. There is a relationship between the two concepts. According to Salkind (2000:117) a "test can be reliable without being valid but it cannot be valid without being reliable".

The two concepts mentioned above are explained below.

4.4.3.6.1 Validity

If the questionnaire measures what it should measure, then the test is valid (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:28). Validity can be either external or internal. External validity is concerned with generalization of results (Writing Center Navigator, 2004:1) while on the other hand internal validity is concerned with the ability of the test to draw accurate conclusions about cause-and-effect and other relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:97).

- **Measurement of validity**

Inter-item correlation was used to measure validity and the average was .052438. This suggests that the questionnaire has average validity.

4.4.3.6.2 Reliability

The test is said to be reliable if it continues to yield consistent results (Department of Psychology, 2004:1). There are different forms of reliability in different situations namely interrater reliability, internal consistency, equivalent forms, and test-retest.

- **Measurement of reliability**

To make sure that the test is reliable, Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 will be used (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000:662). "Cronbach's alpha refers to an index of reliability related to variation accounted for by the true score of the underlying construct" (Reynaldo & Santos, 1999:1). The results of the tests show that the questionnaire is reliable because Cronbach's alpha value is .694636.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the empirical research design. The method of research together with measuring instrument, population and sampling, procedures, statistical techniques, ethical aspects of research, and validity and reliability of the measuring instrument were explained.

The focus of the next chapter will be on the interpretation of data collected evaluating the perceptions of mainstream educators towards included learners with specific learning difficulties.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim in this chapter is to report on data gathered about the factors that might make mainstream educators reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties. The new law of education (inclusion) requires that all learners with or without special learning needs should be accommodated in mainstream classes. "Learners with special educational needs have the right to equal access to education at all levels in a single inclusive education system that is responsive to diverse needs of all learners" (Naiker, 2004:2).

This chapter be will divided into three discussions, namely, mainstream educators' knowledge of learning difficulties, their attitudes towards included learners with learning difficulties, and their perception towards inclusion.

The data is generated from the returned questionnaire. One hundred and eighty (180) questionnaires were sent to mainstream educators where learners with learning difficulties were included and only 161 were returned. The responses do not add up to 100% every time because there were blank responses to each question. Respondents will be referred to as educators.

5.2 KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTY

5.2.1 Introduction

In this section, statements 1-15 will be analysed. The statements focus on the knowledge of educators regarding specific learning difficulties. Educators were asked to strongly disagree/ disagree/ agree/ strongly agree with each statement.

5.2.2 Difference between learning difficulties and learning disability

Statement 1: Learning disability is not the same as learning difficulty

Graphic summary of responses:

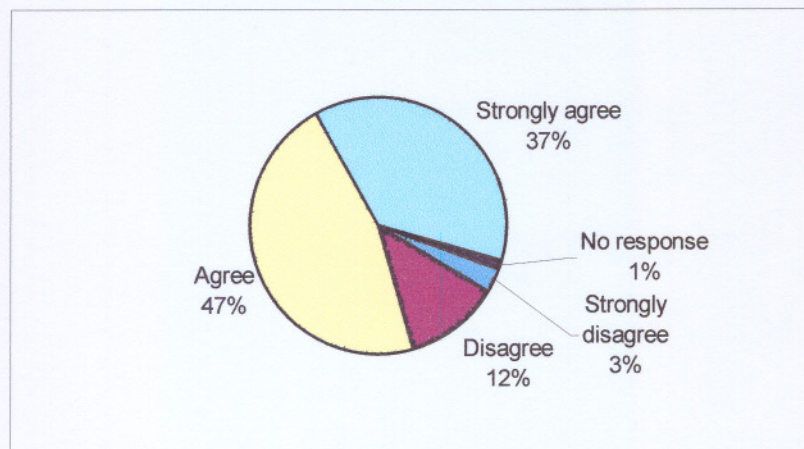


Figure 5.1: Difference between learning disabilities and learning difficulties

Conclusions

- 3% (5 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 12% (19 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 47% (75 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 37% (60 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

From the above findings it is clear that majority of educators (84%), understand that learning disabilities and learning difficulties are not synonymous. This suggests knowledge of special learning needs.

5.2.3 Causes of learning difficulties

Statements 2, 4 and 7 will be discussed in conjunction with each other as they are dealing with causes of learning difficulties.

Statement 2: Learning difficulties are relative to the social contexts in which they arise and are maintained.

Statement 4: Learning difficulties can be caused by inherent factors and/or neurological factors and/or educational factors.

Statement 7: Learning difficulties can be caused by external factors.

Graphic summary of responses:

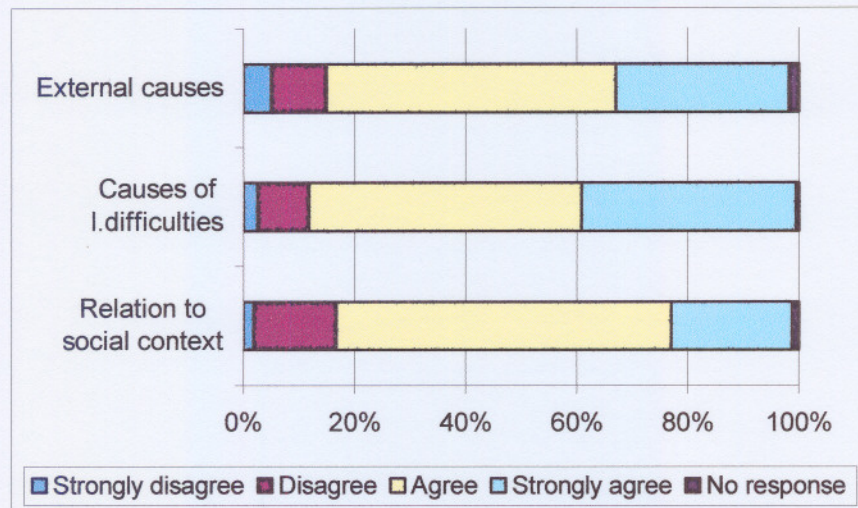


Figure 5.2: Causes of learning difficulties

Conclusions

- **Social context**

- 2% (3 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 15% (24 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 60% (97 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 22% (35 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

- **Inherent, neurological and educational factors**

- 3% (4 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 9% (15 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 49% (79 out of 161) of the educators agree

- 39% (62 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

● **External factors**

- 5% (8 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 10% (16 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 52% (84 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 31% (50 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The above statements reflect understanding of the causes of learning difficulties. From the responses, it is clear that the educators in this sample have adequate understanding of the causes of learning difficulties: 82% understand that inherent neurological and educational factors can be causes and 83% agreed that external factors contribute.

5.2.4 Scholastic performance

These statements deal with the performance of learners with learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties.

Statement 3: Learners with a learning difficulty perform more poorly in scholastic tasks than would be expected from their overall level of measured intelligence.

Statement 5: Learners with a special learning difficulty have problems with reading and/or writing and/or spelling and/or mathematics and/or language.

Graphic summary of responses:

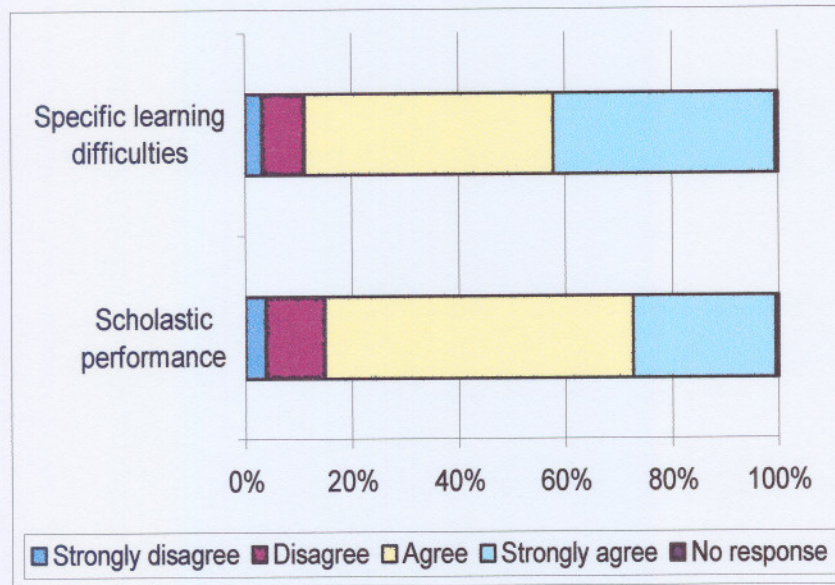


Figure 5.3: Scholastic performance and specific learning difficulties of learners

Conclusion

- **Scholastic performance of learners**
 - 4% (6 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 11% (18 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 58% (93 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 27% (43 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of the educators in this sample indicated that learners with learning difficulties do perform more poorly in scholastic tasks than would be expected of their overall level of measured intelligence. Learners with learning difficulties have an average or above average measured intelligence but demonstrate low academic achievement in one or more learning areas. Educators' knowledge of learning difficulties reflects current literature (Lerner, 2003: 12) that learners with learning difficulties display a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more area of learning.

- **Specific learning difficulties**

- 3% (5 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 8% (13 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 47% (75 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 42% (67 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

It is clear from the above analysis that the majority of the educators in this sample (89%) are aware of specific learning difficulties. This suggests that most educators in this sample understand how learning difficulties are manifested in class work.

5.2.5 Profile of learners with learning difficulties

Statement 6: Learners with learning difficulties have a disorganised approach to learning.

Statement 13: Learners with a learning difficulty are frequently inattentive, restless and/or impulsive.

Statement 14: Learners with a learning difficulty frequently have memory problems and struggle to remember what they have learnt.

Graphic summary of responses:

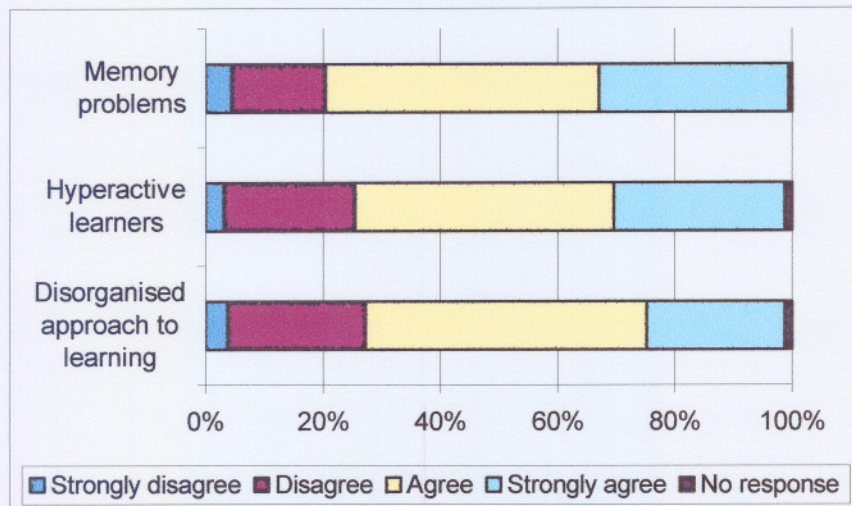


Figure 5.4: Profile of learners with learning difficulties

Conclusion

- **Disorganised approached to learning**

- 4% (6 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 24% (38 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 48% (77 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 24% (38 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree

Out of 161 educators in this sample 115 (72%) indicated that learners with learning difficulties have a disorganised approach to learning. Educators' knowledge of learning difficulties is supported by literature (Lerner, 2003: 208) that learners with learning difficulties lack the skills to direct their own learning. What is of concern is that a quarter of this sample is unaware that learners with learning difficulties have a disorganized approach to learning. It is important for educators to have awareness of a disorganised approached because they will need to accommodate this in their planning and teaching.

- **Inattentive behaviour**

- 3% (5 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 22% (36 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 44% (71 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 29% (47 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

From the above analysis it appears that majority of educators, (73%), understand that learning difficulty is frequently accompanied by an attention deficit as documented in literature (Lerner, 2003: 221). Again a quarter of this sample is inadequately informed that inattentive behaviour is associated with learning difficulties.

- **Memory problems**

- 4% (7 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 16% (26 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 47% (75 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 32% (52 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of educators in this sample (70%) support the statement that learners with learning difficulties have memory problems and that they struggle to remember what they have learnt. In research conducted by Green *et al.*, (2004:132) one educator indicated that it becomes annoying when learners with a learning difficulty struggle to remember what she taught them. It is therefore important that educators understand that poor memory is associated with learning difficulties. Lack of such knowledge might lead to frustration and annoyance with learners.

5.2.6 Over-reliant learners

Statement 9: Learners with learning difficulties are often over reliant on educators or peers.

Graphic summary of responses:

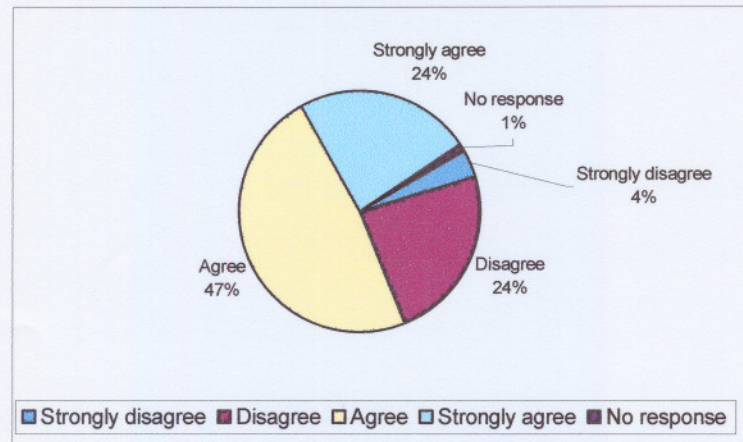


Figure 5.5: Over-reliance of learners on educators or peers

Conclusion

- 4% (6 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagrees
- 24% (38 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 47% (75 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 24% (38 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

From the findings more than 50% of the educators indicated that learners with learning difficulties rely heavily on educators and other learners without learning difficulties for their learning. Sometimes educators do encourage learners to help one another to make learning easier. As a result, educators are not unwilling to teach learners with learning difficulties due to their lack of knowledge of such learners' dependence.

5.2.7 Communication, emotional and behavioural problems

Statement 10: Learners who cannot communicate effectively develop learning difficulties.

Statement 11: Learners with emotional and behavioural problems possess the intellectual potential to succeed in school but their problems impede their performance.

Graphic summary of responses:

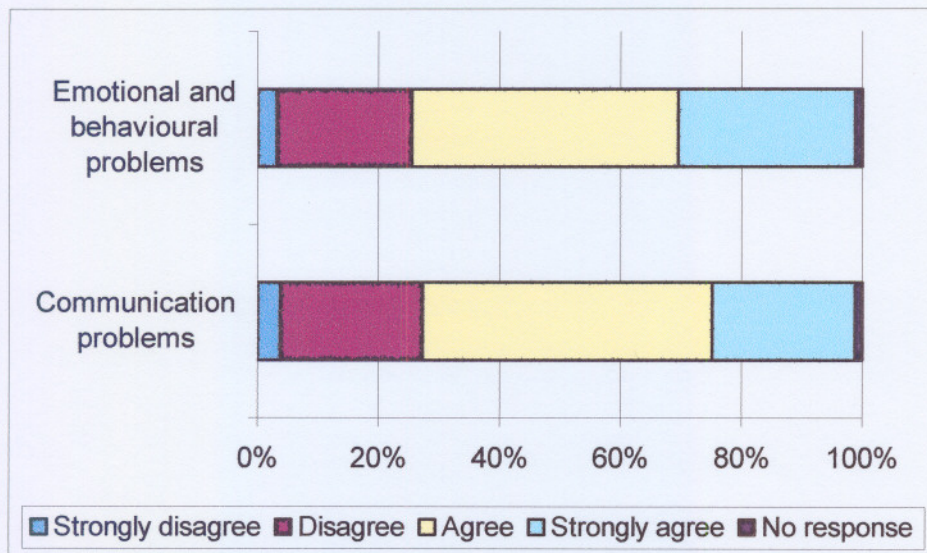


Figure 5.6: Problems experienced by learners with learning difficulties

Conclusion

- **Communication problem**
 - 5% (8 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 27% (44 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 47% (76 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 20% (32 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

From the above findings it is clear that the majority of educators in this sample (67%) believe that learners, who struggle to communicate effectively, frequently experience learning difficulties. This suggests that educators understand that effective communication is a vital part of the process of education and therefore learners who cannot communicate well will not succeed (Donald *et al.*, 2002: 346). However almost one third of the respondents lack this knowledge.

- **Emotional and behavioural problems**

- 3% (4 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 11% (18 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 57% (91 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 29% (47 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of educators in this sample (86%) believe that learners with behavioural and emotional difficulties have the potential to succeed in school but their behavioural and emotional difficulty impedes their performance. This implies that educators are aware of the impact of behavioural and emotional difficulty on learning.

5.2.8 Impact of learning difficulties on learning

Statement 8: Learning difficulty can be addressed should a learner be identified early and effective remedial intervention take place.

Statement 12: Learning difficulties have a negative impact on learning as a whole.

Statement 15: Learners with a learning difficulty have a profile of strengths and weaknesses.

Graphic summary of responses:

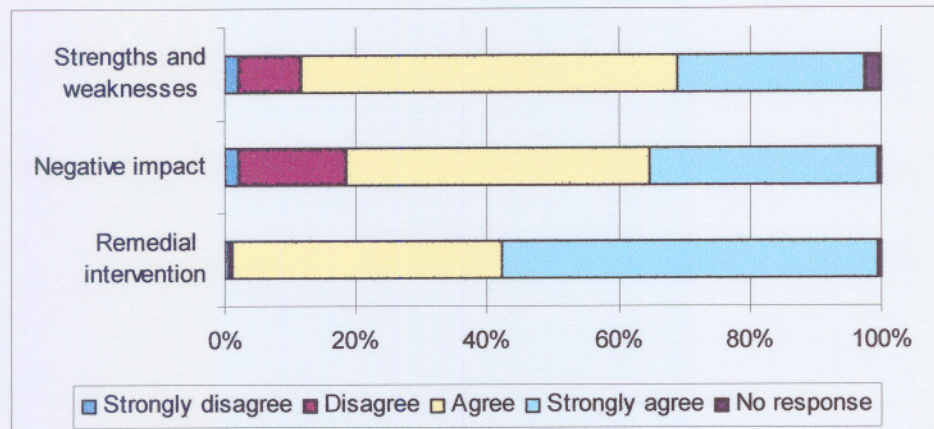


Figure 5.7: Impact of learning difficulties on learning

Conclusions

- **Remedial intervention**
 - 1% (1 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagrees
 - 1% (1 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 41% (66 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 57% (92 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

An overwhelming majority of educators in this sample (98%) believe that learners should be given effective remedial intervention at an early age in order to address the problem. Remediation can be effective if a learner gets remedial help at an early stage of learning (Donald *et al.*, 2002: 304). This knowledge is positive as it suggests that educators understand intervention is necessary.

- **Negative impact on learning**
 - 2% (3 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 17% (27 out of 161) of the educators disagree

- 46% (74 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 35% (56 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of educators in this sample (81%) believe that learning difficulties have a negative impact on learning. A learner with learning difficulty will probably take a longer period to achieve the learning outcomes than a learner without learning difficulty and the educators in this sample appear to understand this. Knowing this should help educators to have realistic expectations for learners with learning difficulties.

- **Strengths and weaknesses**

- 2% (3 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 10% (16 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 57% (92 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 29% (46 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

From the above analysis the majority of educators indicated that they are aware of the fact that learners with learning difficulties have a profile of strength and weaknesses. This suggests an understanding of specific learning difficulties. If educators understand that learners with learning difficulties have both strengths and weaknesses, they can use learners' strengths to remediate weaknesses.

5.2.9 Overall conclusion regarding knowledge of specific learning difficulties

The results from the above data show that educators in this sample have general knowledge and understanding of specific learning difficulties. As their knowledge appears to be sufficient, inadequate knowledge cannot account for their unwillingness to teach previously disadvantaged learners with learning difficulties. It must be noted, though, that at least a quarter of this sample has inadequate knowledge regarding attention deficit disorder, disorganised learning styles and poor memory, which are frequently associated with

learning difficulties and almost one third are unaware that communication problems cause learning difficulties. This inadequate knowledge could make it frustrating for them to teach learners with learning difficulties.

5.3 ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUDED LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

5.3.1 Introduction

In this section statements 16-30 will be analysed. The statements focus on the attitude of mainstream educators towards included learners with learning difficulties. Educators were asked to strongly disagree/ disagree/ agree/ strongly agree with each statement.

5.3.2 Typical labels of included learners with learning difficulties

Statement 16: Included learners with learning difficulties are lazy.

Statement 17: Included learners with learning difficulties are stupid.

Statement 19: Included learners with learning difficulties are ineducable.

Graphic summary of responses:

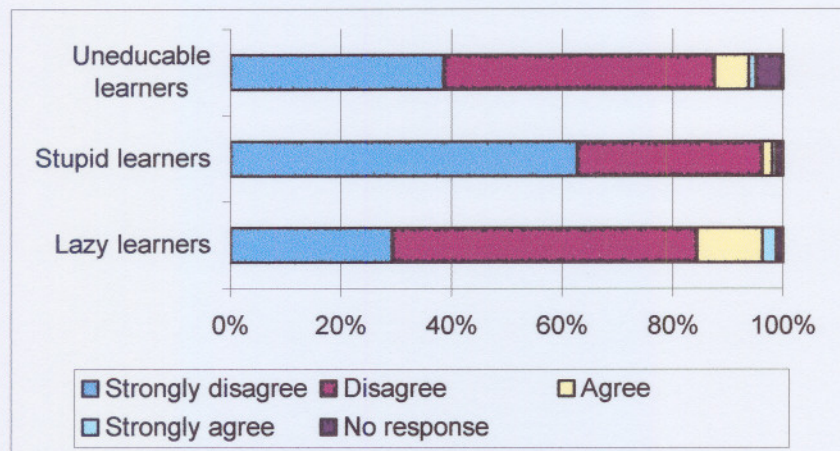


Figure 5.8: Typical labels of included learners with learning difficulties

Conclusion

- **Lazy learners**

- 29% (47 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 55% (89 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 12% (19 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 2% (4 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

- **Stupid learners**

- 63% (101 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 35% (54 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- .6% (1 out of 161) of the educators agree
- .6% (1 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

- **Ineducable learners**

- 39% (62 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 49% (79 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 6% (10 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 1% (2 out of 161) of the educators strongly agrees

From the above analysis, the majority of educators in this sample (84%) believe that included learners with learning difficulties are not lazy, while 98% believe that they are not stupid, and 88% of the educators believe that they are not ineducable. The above data suggests that educators understand that having difficulties in learning does not necessarily mean that a learner is lazy, stupid or ineducable. The conclusion can be drawn that educators are not unwilling to teach included learners with learning difficulties because they do not believe the negative labels used for these learners.

5.3.3 Learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream

Statement 18: Learners with learning difficulties do not belong in the mainstream.

Statement 20: Included learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream should be taught separately.

Statement 24: It is not my responsibility to teach a learner with learning difficulty.

Graphic summary of responses:

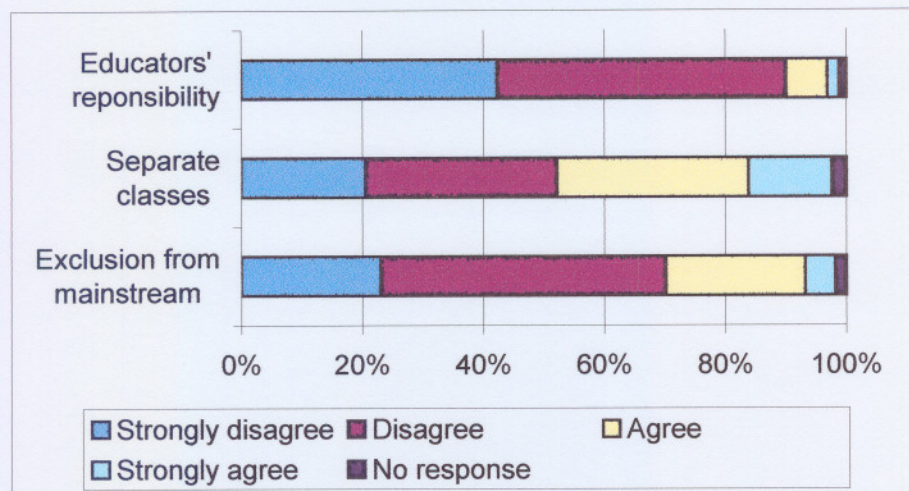


Figure 5.9: Learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream

Conclusion

- **Exclusion from mainstream**
 - 21% (33 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 32% (51 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 32% (51 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 13.7% (22 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Educators' response to this statement in this sample is fairly evenly divided. Fifty three percent disagree that learners with learning difficulties should be excluded from the mainstream. On the other hand, an average of 45% agrees with the statement. This indicates that some educators have a negative attitude towards accommodating learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream. These attitudes could inhibit the educator from trying to teach such learners. Given the policy of inclusion, educators will need to change their attitudes because they will have to include learners with learning difficulties in their planning and teaching. If educators do not believe learners with learning difficulties belong in the mainstream, their attitude to teaching these learners will be negative.

- **Separate classes in mainstream**

- 23% (37 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 47% (76 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 23% (37 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 5% (8 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree

An overwhelming majority of educators (70%) in this sample believe that included learners with learning difficulties should not be taught in separate classes in mainstream. This suggests that educators are willing to accommodate and teach learners with learning difficulties. However, almost a third (28%) of this sample indicated that separate classes for learners with learning difficulties are necessary and will benefit both educators and learners.

It must be noted that there is a discrepancy between educator response to statement 18 and 20. The response could possibly be explained by suggesting that educators in this sample were more inclined to believe that learners with learning difficulty do not belong in the mainstream (statement 18) but that if they must be accommodated in the mainstream, fewer educators believe they should be accommodated in separate classes.

- **Special learners as mainstream educator's responsibility**

- 43% (69 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 47% (76 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 7% (12 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 1% (2 out of 161) of the educators strongly agrees

An overwhelming majority of educators in this sample (90%) believe that they do have a responsibility of teaching included learners with learning difficulties. This reflects a willingness to teach learners with learning difficulties. It does however, conflict with their response to statement 18. These conflicting statements could suggest that educators' attitude towards included learners with learning difficulties is still variable and that they need to be assisted towards a positive, stable attitude.

5.3.4 Intelligence of learners

Statement 22: Intelligence is fixed and unmodifiable and therefore included learners with learning difficulties cannot progress academically.

Statement 30: Learners with learning difficulties should preferably not undergo formal education.

Graphic summary of responses:

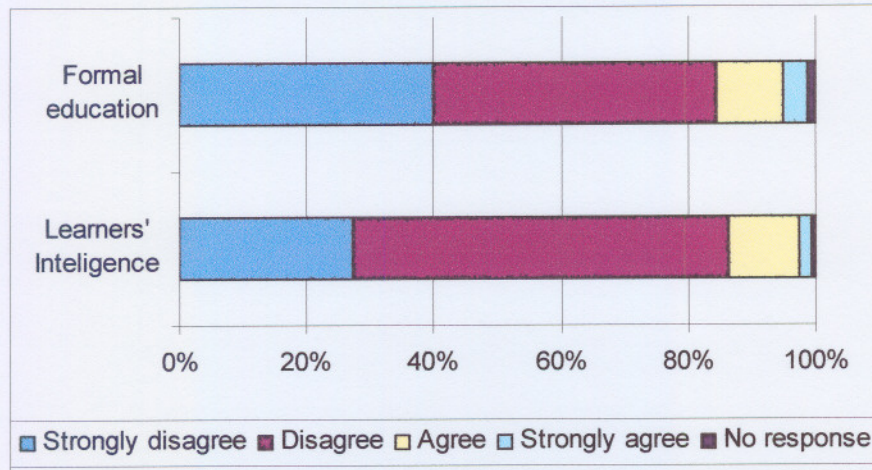


Figure 5.10: Learners' intelligence

Conclusion

- **Learners' intelligence**

- 27% (44 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 59% (95 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 11% (18 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 2% (3 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of educators in this sample (86%) believe that intelligence is not fixed and can be modified. In this regard they understand accurately as intelligence can be changed and modified to enable each learner to learn (Engelbrecht, 2004:70). This suggests that educators are prepared to teach learners with learning difficulties and that teaching can change learners' intelligence. Therefore, they are not unwilling to teach included learners with learning difficulties because they believe these learners are intellectually incapable.

- **Formal education**

- 40% (64 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 45% (72 out of 161) of the educators disagree

- 11% (17 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 4% (6 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of educators in this sample (85%) do not believe that learners with learning difficulties should not undergo formal teaching. In the new curriculum learners' potentials are assessed on a continuous basis and not evaluated like before. Learners are being encouraged to work at their pace and are also being given expanded opportunities to achieve "Critical and developmental outcomes" (Vermeulen, 2002: 16). This suggests that educators believe that learners with learning difficulties have the right to learn formally.

5.3.5 Effort of teaching learners with learning difficulties

Statement 21: It is much easier to teach a learner with a physical disability than a learner with a learning difficulty.

Statement 25: It is time consuming to teach an included learner with learning difficulty.

Statement 29: It is unrewarding to teach included learners with learning difficulty because they produce work that is sloppy.

Graphic summary of responses:

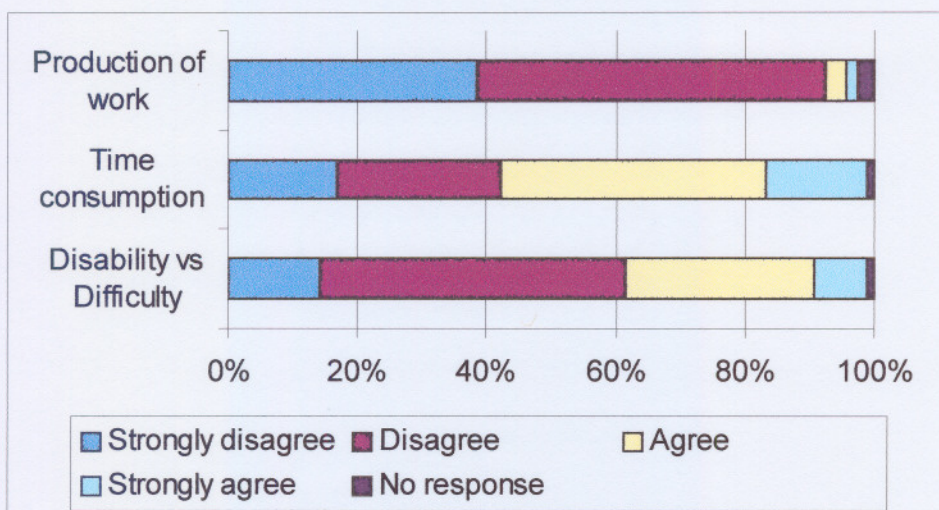


Figure 5.11: Effort of teaching learners with learning difficulties

Conclusion

- **Physical disability vs. learning difficulty**

- 14% (23 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 47% (76 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 29% (47 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 8 % (13 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Ninety-nine out of one hundred and sixty one of the educators (61%) in this sample believe that it is not easier to teach included learners with physical disability than a learner with learning difficulty. In other words, educators feel that learners with learning difficulties are more easily taught than those with physical disabilities. The above data indicates that educators are not unwilling to teach learners with learning difficulties. It must be noted, however, that 37% show reluctance to teach learners with learning difficulties; therefore they need to be assisted to change their attitude as they are going to include both sets of learners in their planning and teaching. Whilst both graphs (difficulty and disability) require adapted teaching and learning, those with learning difficulties are not as reliant on technology or teaching aids. Learners with learning difficulties depend more on the educator for support.

- **Time consumption**

- 17% (27 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 26% (41 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 41% (66 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 16% (25 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of educators in this sample (57%) agree that it time consuming to teach learners with learning difficulties. This is accurate and is reflected by

current literature on the attitudes of primary school teachers towards inclusion, that learners without learning difficulty would be neglected because of time and effort consumed by the learners with learning difficulties in the class (Bothma *et al.*, 2000: 202). It could therefore be that educators are reluctant to teach learners with learning difficulties because it will take much of their time. Educators may be unaware that the present curriculum is designed to suit all learners and that learning is centred on the learner and not the educator. The learner may take his own time to achieve the learning outcomes.

- **Production of work**

- 39% (62 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 54% (87 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 3% (5 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 2% (3 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

An overwhelming majority of educators, an average of 93%, are of the opinion that it is rewarding to teach learners with learning difficulties. Therefore the assumption that educators are unwilling to teach learners with learning difficulties because it unrewarding is not true.

5.3.6 Treatment of included learners with learning difficulties

Statement 23: The only way to cope in class where a learner with learning difficulty is included is to give him small unimportant tasks that will keep him busy so that he does not bother other learners.

Statement 28: It is acceptable to make fun of included learners with a learning difficulty in class.

Graphic summary of responses:

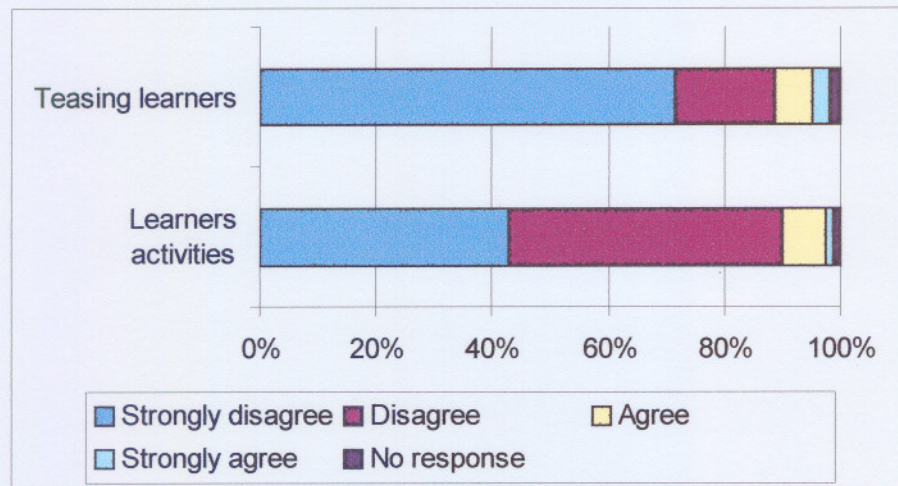


Figure 5.12: Treatment of included learners with learning difficulties

Conclusion

- **Teasing learners**

- 71% (115 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 17% (28 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 6% (10 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 3% (5 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

An overwhelming majority of educators in this sample (88%) indicated that it is not acceptable to make fun out of included learners with learning difficulties. If educators feel that it is not acceptable to make fun out of learners with learning difficulties in their classes, it shows that they are aware of the learners' emotional development and the right to be treated with dignity and respect. "The human foundation of inclusive education which suggests that a learner should be able to choose his classroom and school of preference and that adequate support should be provided in a chosen classroom" (Hay, 2003: 135). It would seem that the educators in this sample are respectful of the rights of learners with learning difficulties to choose to be in the mainstream.

- **Learner's activities**

- 42% (68 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 47% (77 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 6% (11 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 2% (3 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Most educators (89%) in this sample do not believe that giving small and unimportant tasks to included learners will make teaching and learning easier in the classrooms. This is supported by literature that included learners with learning difficulties should also be given equal opportunities to learn along with their peers without learning difficulties and to develop to their fullest potential (Dyson & Forlin, 2004: 30). The data suggests that educators understand that included learners with learning difficulties must be given equal opportunities in the classroom.

5.3.7 Standard of education

Statement 26: The standard of education could drop due to time spent on included learners with learning difficulty.

Statement 27: Included learners with learning difficulties should not be promoted until they have mastered the year's curriculum.

Graphic summary of responses:

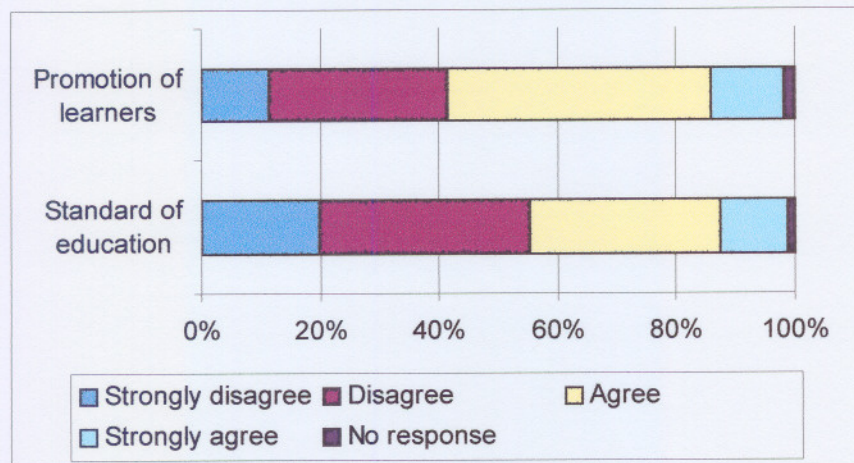


Figure 5.13: Standard of education

Conclusion

- **Promotion of learners**

- 11% (18 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 30% (49 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 44% (71 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 12% (20 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Fifty six percent of the educators in this sample agree with the statement that learners with learning difficulties should be retained in a grade until they have mastered a year's curriculum. This indicates that educators may be reluctant to promote included learners with learning difficulties because they believe that for a learner to achieve, the learner should master a year's curriculum. The latter is difficult for included learners with learning difficulties. If such attitudes prevail amongst educators, the smooth implementation of inclusion could be inhibited.

- **Standard of education**

- 20% (32 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree

- 35% (57 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 32% (52 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 11% (18 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Educators' response to this statement is fairly evenly divided. Fifty five percent of the educators in this sample disagree with the statement. This reflects accurate understanding: the standard of education should not drop because each learner is treated as an individual and because the curriculum needs to be adapted to the learner and not vice-versa (Lomofsky *et al.*, 2004: 76). Education is no more viewed as a process where rigid standards are set and learners are expected to pass at the end of the year (Naiker, 2004: 21). Each learner learns at his own pace. It is also important to note that 43% of the educators in this sample indicated that the standard of education could drop due to time spent on learners with learning difficulties. This suggests educators may be reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties because they fear that the standard of education will drop.

5.3.8 Overall conclusion regarding attitude towards included learners with learning difficulties

From the aforementioned data, it can be assumed that educators are not unwilling to teach included learners with learning difficulties because of negative attitudes relating to a belief that such learners are lazy, stupid and ineducable; should be taught in separate classes; are not the responsibility of mainstream educators; do not deserve formal education; are more difficult to educate than learners with physical disability, produce sloppy work or may be ridiculed or fobbed off with unimportant scholastic tasks.

However, it is clear that at least one third of the educators or more in this sample believe that learners with learning difficulties do not belong in the mainstream, are time-consuming to teach, may cause the standard of education to deteriorate and should not be promoted until they have mastered the year's curriculum. These beliefs could colour educator attitude and make them less willing to teach learners with learning difficulties.

5.4 PERCEPTION ON INCLUSION

5.4.1 Introduction

Statements 31 to 45 will be analysed in this section. The statements focus on the perception of educators towards inclusion. Educators were asked to strongly disagree/ disagree/ agree/ strongly agree with each statement.

5.4.2 Understanding the concept of inclusion

Statement 31: Inclusion refers to the accommodation of learners with specific learning difficulties in the mainstream without discrimination.

Statement 40: Inclusion means adjusting the curriculum to suit the learner with learning difficulties. This is a reasonable expectation.

Graphic summary of responses:

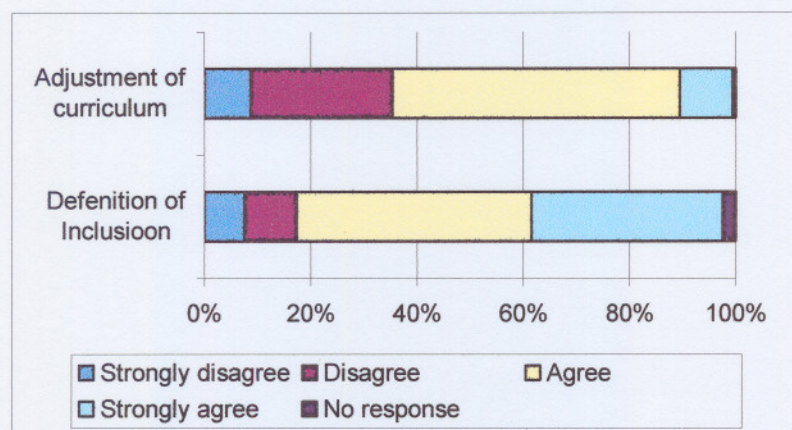


Figure 5.14: Understanding the concept of inclusion

Conclusion

- **Definition of inclusion**
 - 8% (12 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree

- 10% (16 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 44% (71 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 36% (58 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree
- **Adjustment of curriculum**
 - 9% (14 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 27% (43 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 54% (87 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 10% (16 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Regarding the definition of Inclusion, the majority of educators (80%) in this sample agreed with the definition, suggesting that they are fully aware of this element of inclusion. Sixty four percent of the educators in this sample are aware that the curriculum should be adjusted in order that diverse needs of every learner are addressed and find this reasonable. This suggests that most educators in this sample understand the concept of inclusion and are willing to make changes to accommodate inclusion. However, 18% of this sample disagreed with the definition of inclusion and 36% (at least a third) do not agree that the curriculum should be adjusted to suit the learner. This is worrying as inclusion is based on learner-centredness. If educators' focus is on the curriculum, they (educators) will be reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties.

5.4.3 Acceptance of inclusion

Statement 32: The policy of inclusion makes sense to me.

Statement 33: Included learners with learning difficulties are welcome in my class.

Graphic summary of responses:

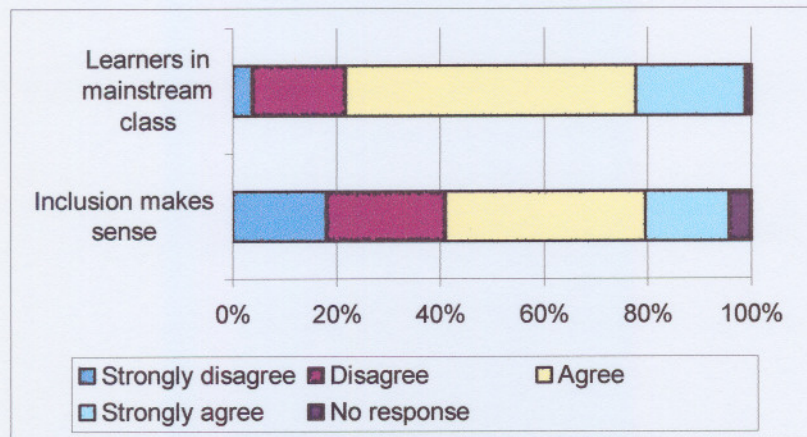


Figure 5.15: Acceptance of inclusion

Conclusions

- **Policy of inclusion**

- 18% (29 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 23% (37 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 39% (62 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 16% (26 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

From the above data, 55% of the educators in this sample indicated that the policy of inclusion makes sense. Educators understand the rationale behind the policy of inclusion, so they should support its implementation. It must be noted however, that 41% of the educators in this sample do not agree with the statement. Education regarding the policy of inclusion is needed if it is to proceed and succeed. If educators do not believe that the policy of inclusion makes sense, it will be hard for them to start practising inclusion in their classrooms. Educators need full information and clarity about the policy of inclusion to be able to implement and support the policy. This is well supported by literature that there is inadequate dissemination of information to educators (Swart *et al.*, 2002: 183).

- **Welcoming of learners in mainstream**

- 4% (6 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 18% (29 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 56% (90 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 21% (34 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Seventy-seven percent of the educators in this sample indicated that they do welcome learners with learning difficulties in their classrooms. The response to this statement contradicts statement 18. Therefore, although they say learners are welcome in their classes, they do not believe these learners belong in the mainstream in the first place. The belief that mainstream educators welcome learners with learning difficulties in their classes indicates that educators accept the implementation of the policy of inclusion.

5.4.4 Adequate training

Statement 34: Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties cannot succeed because educators lack training in special learning needs.

Statement 37: Educators in special schools are better equipped and developed in dealing with learners with learning difficulties.

Statement 45: Mainstream educators feel competent to teach learners with and without learning difficulties in one class.

Graphic summary of responses:

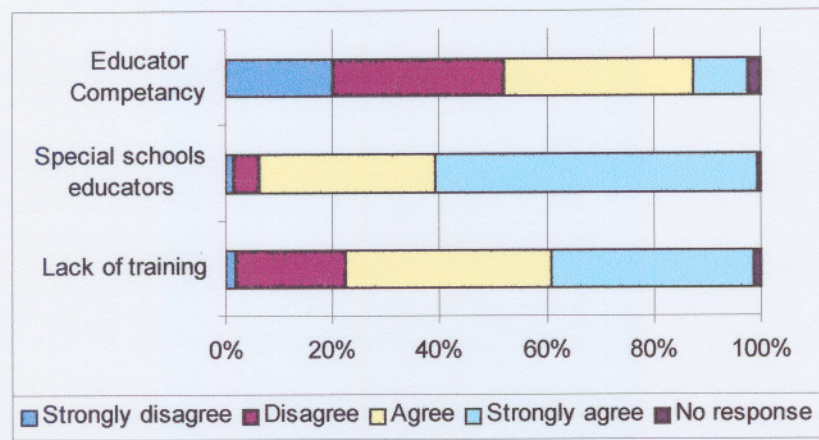


Figure 5.16: Adequate training

Conclusion

- **Lack of training**
 - 2% (3 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 21% (33 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 39% (62 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 38% (61 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of educators (77%) in this sample indicated that inclusion could not succeed due to lack of educator training in special education. The implementation of inclusive education depends on high quality of educator preparation at pre- and in-service training to enable educators to meet the needs of a diverse population in one class (Hay *et al.*, 2001: 214). Lack of training in special education contributes to a negative perception of inclusion. If educators possess inadequate skills or knowledge to address diversity, they will view inclusion negatively (Swart *et al.*, 2002: 183). The response from the educators in this sample reflects what literature has noted. Therefore, the findings suggest rejection of inclusion because of perceived professional inadequacy.

- **Special schools educators**

- 1% (2 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagrees
- 5% (8 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 33% (53 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 60% (97 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

An issue that seemed to be of a concern to most educators is human resource development in special schools. As noted in literature (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:202), an overwhelming majority of the educators in this sample (93%) are of the opinion that educators in special schools are better qualified to attend to the needs of learners with learning difficulties. Educators in this sample may therefore be less willing to teach learners with learning difficulties, as they believe that educators in special schools will do a better job. The findings suggest that educators may be reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties because of the belief that mainstream educators are not as competent as special school educators.

- **Incompetent educators**

- 20% (32 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 32% (52 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 35% (57 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 10% (16 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

More than half of the educators (52%) in this sample indicated that they feel incompetent regarding the teaching of learners with and without learning difficulties in one class. Inclusive education depends on the competence and positive attitudes of educators. Therefore if educators feel incompetent to handle the demands of diversity, the smooth implementation of inclusion will be hindered and educators may be reluctant to teach learners with learning difficulties. Due to the feeling of incompetence, "educators experience a

sense of powerlessness and a sense of not being in control of the situation” (Prinsloo, 2001:345). However, 45% of the educators feel competent to teach learners with diverse needs in one class. In this case educators show a sense of professional efficacy, which will make them more willing to teach included learners with learning difficulties.

5.4.5 Adequate facilities

Statement 35: Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties cannot succeed because mainstream classes are too big.

Statement 36: Learners with learning difficulties would be best served in special and remedial schools where special facilities are available.

Graphic summary of responses:

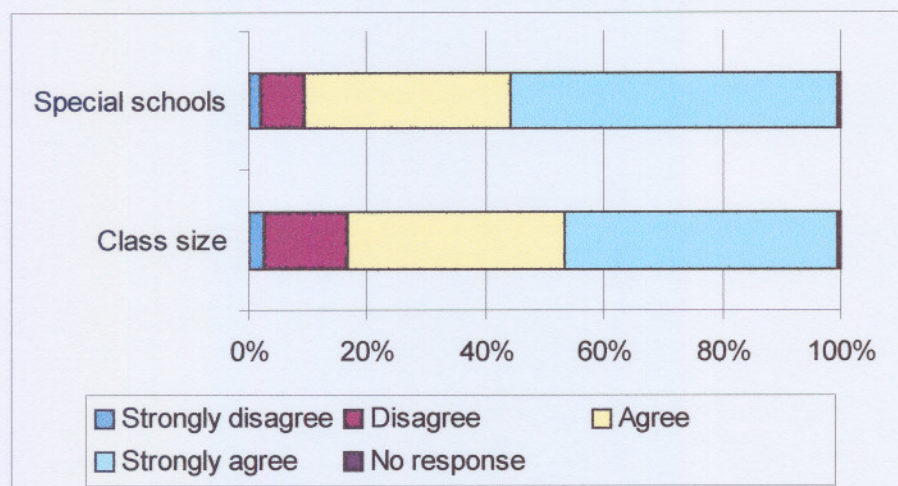


Figure 5.17: Adequate facilities

Conclusion

- **Class size**
 - 5% (4 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 14% (23 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 37% (59 out of 161) of the educators agree

- 46% (74 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

It is clear from the findings that educators (83%) in this sample feel that the number of learners in a classroom contributes to ineffective implementation of inclusion. A learner with a learning difficulty requires more attention - this is doubly difficult when the number of learners prescribed by the Department of Education is too big for educators to handle (Bothma *et al.*, 2000: 203). The findings call for intervention programmes in order to help educators to cope with large classes and inclusion. Both are realities that will not go away. When educators believe that classroom size interferes with the inclusion of learners with learning difficulties, they may well be reluctant to teach these learners.

Learners in special schools

- 2% (3 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 7.5% (12 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 35% (56 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 55% (89 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

An overwhelming majority of educators (90%) in this sample believe that learners with learning difficulties will be best served in special schools where special facilities are available. In special schools there are adequate human and specialised material resources to address the needs of special learners. In research conducted by Bothma *et al.*, (2000: 202) educators also feel that occupational and emotional therapy received by learners with learning difficulties is not so intensive and effective as it would be in remedial and special schools. It is clear that educators have reservations about inclusion. This may make them reluctant to teach learners with learning difficulties.

5.4.6 Collaboration

Statement 38: Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties is manageable because mainstream educators can liaise with district support teams.

Statement 39: Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties can succeed because mainstream educators can collaborate with special school educators.

Graphic summary of responses:

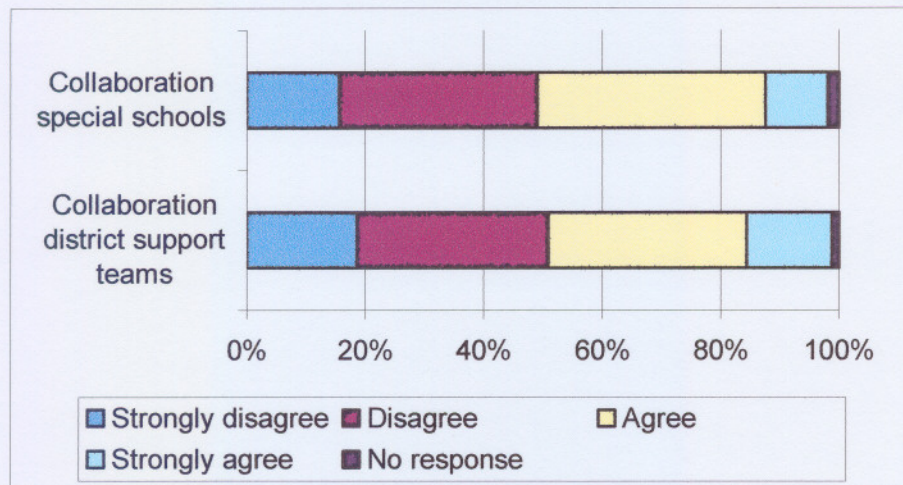


Figure 5.18: Collaboration

Conclusion

- **Collaboration with district-based support teams**
 - 19% (30 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 32% (52 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 33% (54 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 14% (23 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

From the above data, it is evident that 47% of the educators in this sample believe that inclusion can succeed if there is collaboration between mainstream educators and district-support teams. However, 51% do not believe that. Just over half of the educators have doubts about coping with inclusion even when there is support from the district-based support teams. It is clear that educators are sceptical regardless of support. This scepticism

may contribute to educators being loath to teach included learners with learning difficulties.

- **Collaboration with special schools educators**

- 16% (25 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
- 34% (54 out of 161) of the educators disagree
- 39% (62 out of 161) of the educators agree
- 10% (17 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Fifty percent of the educators in this sample indicated that inclusion could succeed if there were collaboration between special schools educators and mainstream educators. Educators acknowledge that collaboration with special schools is necessary for inclusion to succeed (Swart *et al.*, 2002: 184). On the other hand 49% disagree. Perhaps educators do not know how collaboration could assist in promoting inclusive education. Therefore skills in collaboration are required for inclusive education to succeed (Swart *et al.*, 2002: 184). The responses to the above two statements indicate that educators are wary of inclusion, despite possible support for their teaching of included learners.

5.4.7 Impact of inclusion

Statement 43: It is unfair on mainstream learners without learning difficulties to include learners with learning difficulties.

Statement 44: Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties is stressful to mainstream educators.

Graphic summary of responses:

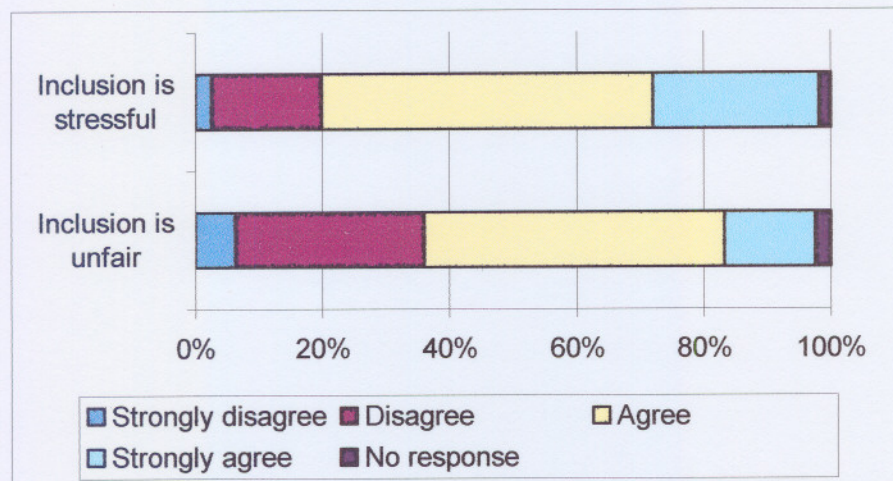


Figure 5.19: Impact of inclusion

Conclusion

- **Inclusion unfair on other mainstream learners**
 - 6% (10 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 30% (48 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 47% (76 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 14% (23 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

Ninety-nine out of 161 of the educators (61%) in this sample indicated that inclusion is unfair on mainstream learners without learning difficulties. This is also supported by the investigations conducted by Bothma *et al.* (2000:202) where educators were concerned about the impact of inclusion on learners without learning difficulties. Educators indicated that inclusion would disadvantage learners without learning difficulties due to time spent on learners with learning difficulties. Educators question inclusion due to its impact on learners without learning difficulties. In this sample, most educators dislike inclusion for the same reason and this may make them negatively disposed to teaching learners with learning difficulties.

- **Inclusion is stressful**
 - 3% (4 out of 161) of the educators strongly disagree
 - 17% (28 out of 161) of the educators disagree
 - 52% (84 out of 161) of the educators agree
 - 26% (42 out of 161) of the educators strongly agree

The majority of educators (78%) in this sample consider inclusion as being stressful. Associated with lack of training, poor resources and doubtful collaboration is stress. Educators' responses suggest that educators have misgivings about inclusion because of its impact on them. This corroborates what is currently documented in literature (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2001:259), and could explain why educators may be unwilling to teach learners with learning difficulties.

5.4.8 Overall conclusion regarding educator perception of inclusion

In trying to understand the data above it can be concluded that mainstream educators have a general understanding of the concept of inclusion as well as the rationale behind its implementation. It can also be assumed that educators in this sample are more inclined to accept inclusion when there is support from the district-based support teams and special school educators. Nevertheless, even in the presence of support, at least half of the educators in this sample are sceptical.

The issues that seemed to be of concern to educators in this sample were lack of training for educators, class size, belief in exclusion, belief that mainstream educators are not competent, the negative impact of inclusion on both learners without learning difficulties and educators in the mainstream. These beliefs could inhibit educators from supporting inclusion and make them averse to teaching learners with learning difficulties. It is therefore important that strategies that would help educators to change their perception should be put in place.

5.5 SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS

In this chapter, the knowledge of mainstream educators of learning difficulties, mainstream educators' attitude towards included learners with learning difficulties as well as their perception of inclusion was discussed.

According to the responses, mainstream educators seem to have some knowledge of learning difficulties. Based on this questionnaire, educators seem to have a general understanding of learning difficulties and therefore inadequate knowledge cannot be cited as the reason why educators are unwilling to teach included learners with special learning difficulties.

Nevertheless, at least 25% of the educators in this sample indicated lack of knowledge concerning the following aspects:

- educators are unaware that attention deficit disorder is associated with learning difficulties;
- educators are also unaware that poor memory is associated with learning difficulties;
- educators are unaware that learners with learning difficulties have a disorganized approach to learning, and
- some educators are unaware that communication difficulties can lead to learning difficulties.

Regarding mainstream educators' attitude towards learners with learning difficulties, it can be deduced that certain negative attitudes could be contributing to educators' reluctance to teach learners with learning difficulties.

These include:

- learners with learning difficulties should be accommodated in separate schools or separate classes when included in the mainstream;
- it is time-consuming teaching included learners with learning difficulties;

- fear for the standard of education if learners with learning difficulties are to be included; and
- conditional promotion: (educators still believe that learners must master the curriculum rather than adjusting the curriculum to the learners).

Regarding mainstream educators' perception towards inclusion, it can be deduced that certain negative perceptions could prejudice educators against teaching included learners with learning difficulties. These negative perceptions include:

- training: lack of training in special education contributes to negative perceptions towards inclusion;
- class size: large number of learners in the classes contributes to ineffective implementation of inclusion;
- special or remedial schools: mainstream educators have reservations about inclusion because of a belief that special schools are better equipped than mainstream schools for this purpose;
- support and collaboration with district-based support teams and special schools educators: mainstream educators seem not to be convinced that support and collaboration would assist in the implementation of inclusion; and
- negative impact: educators reported stress when they have to include learners with learning difficulties. They also fear that inclusion would disadvantage learners without learning difficulties.

Therefore, this study sheds some light on the factors which make educators disinclined to teach learners with learning difficulties from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.

Although educators have some knowledge of learners with learning difficulties, educators' knowledge of these learners is not comprehensive enough. Their attitude is influenced by past practices (eg. separate classes for

learners with specific learning difficulties) and their perception of inclusion is coloured by practicalities (eg. large classes) and doubts (eg. special schools are better equipped/ liaison with support teams schools will not make a difference). In this light educators require guidelines.

5.6 GUIDELINES

In the following table (Table 5.1), the conclusions of the study are matched with recommendations to address the impact of educator knowledge, perception and attitude of educator willingness to teach included learners with learning difficulties.

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Inadequate knowledge regarding: attention deficit and learning difficulties; poor memory and learning difficulties; disorganised learning styles and learning difficulties; and communication problems with learning difficulties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-service training targeting these issues is needed. • Teacher training must be adjusted to include these issues. • A manual must be produced for educators to refer to and deal with these issues. The manual must include notes on the correlation between specific learning difficulties and attention deficit, poor memory and disorganised learning styles. • The manual must contain practical strategies for classroom educators on dealing with attention deficit, poor memory and disorganised learning. • Educators can be provided with lists of recommended reading to address the above issues. E.g. For classroom management of learning impairment, educators can read pp.372-375 of Landsberg's (2005) "Addressing Barriers to Learning". Or, for educational adaptations, educators can be referred to pp 239-253 of Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow's (2000) "Educating Exceptional Children". • Experienced educators and therapists who have worked extensively with learners with attention deficit can be invited to mentor mainstream educators.
<p>Educators want learners with specific learning difficulties to be accommodated in separate classes or even</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retraining educators regarding the essence of inclusion is necessary (i.e. including all learners in one class). • Encourage educators to use flexi-time to assist learners with learning difficulties. Repetition of

<p>separate schools.</p>	<p>learners with learning difficulties. Repetition of activities for learners with learning difficulties can be dealt with during this time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that educators would prefer to accommodate learners with specific learning difficulties in separate classes because they fear for the standard of education generally and because they feel incompetent to cope. Provide educators with coping skills in this regard. • One such coping skill is to urge educators to use a buddy-system. Educators can pair learners so that a learner with specific learning difficulties is “buddied” by a learner without difficulties (Kirk, Gallagher & Anastasiow, 2000: 197-198). The buddy facilitates part of the learning, thereby allowing the educator time to address other learners’ needs.
<p>It is time-consuming teaching learners with learning difficulties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that it is time- consuming to teach learners with specific learning difficulties. • Provide educators with time-saving devices in this regard. E.g. Provide references to ready-made materials and remedial or enrichment programmes (such as Nel, 2003). • Encourage educators to use co-operative learning, as this is constructive in terms of time and learning experience (Nel, 2003: 90). • Time management skills should be taught.
<p>Fear for standards of education if learners with learning difficulties are to be included.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators who have this fear have perhaps not understood the essence of Outcomes Based Education. Retraining in this regard is recommended
<p>Educators still believe that learners must master the curriculum rather than adjusting the curriculum to the learners before learners can be promoted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators require in-service training regarding the notion of a flexible curriculum. • Encourage school-based support teams to retrain educators with regard to adjusting the curriculum to suit the learner. • Extra classes for learners with learning difficulties should be considered. • When planning for a lesson, extension and enrichment opportunities should be taken into consideration to allow learners with learning difficulties to repeat activities in varied ways. • Encourage educators to make use of peer tutors: peer tutors who have no learning difficulties and provide additional help to their peers who have learning difficulties (Kirk <i>et al.</i>, 2000:65). • It may be necessary to provide an individual

	<p>learning support programme for the learner with specific learning difficulties. To achieve this, educators need to be trained or assisted to do the following (Landsberg, 2005: 75):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess the learner; • formulate learner-specific outcomes; • select appropriate sections of the curriculum; • choose learning support methods and approaches; and • assess the learner's progress regularly.
<p>Lack of training in special education contributes to negative perception towards inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- and constant in-service training programmes in special education are needed for mainstream educators to deal with learners with learning difficulties. • Where possible, such training must be on-the-job support, meaning that educators experienced in educating learners with specific learning difficulties collaborate with inexperienced educators within the reality of their classroom on a regular basis (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 16). • Mentors for educators without experience in teaching learners with specific learning difficulties should be made available.
<p>Large number of learners in class contributes to ineffective implementation of inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the reality of the difficulty of teaching large classes (Nel, 2003: 130), but also provide educators with strategies for coping with this reality. • One such strategy is to use co-operative learning, which allows learners to be grouped. It is important to note that cooperative learning also fosters improved attitudes of both educators and peers towards learners with specific learning difficulties (Landsberg, 2005: 71). • It is also important to provide educators with training regarding group work and cooperative learning – such activities need to be carefully planned and executed in an organised manner to be truly effective.
<p>Mainstream educators have reservations about inclusion because of a belief that special schools are better equipped than mainstream schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the contents of White Paper 6 with educators, specifically with regard to the upgrading of special schools towards their designated role of resource centers in the district support system (SA, 2001:21). • Empower educators by creating opportunities for collaboration between staff of special and mainstream schools. • Where possible, encourage staff at special

	<p>schools to mentor inexperienced mainstream staff that experience inefficacy with regard to teaching learners with specific learning difficulties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage staff at special schools to workshop inexperienced mainstream staff that experience inefficacy with regard to teaching learners with specific learning difficulties. ● Encourage educators to further their education in the field of learner support so that they may feel better equipped to meet the challenge of educating learners with specific learning difficulties.
<p>Support and collaboration with district-based support teams and special schools educators: mainstream educators seem not to be convinced that support and collaboration would assist in the implementation of inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunities to collaborate must be planned. ● It is important that such opportunities are not isolated or single incidents. ● Regular visits by mainstream educators to special schools to get first hand information on how to teach learners with learning difficulties is necessary. ● District based teams should be invited to the school on a regular basis to assist with learning. ● Arrange conferences and/or colloquiums for educators where the focus is on the classroom management of learning difficulties. At such conferences educators will receive new knowledge and be able to meet other educators faced with the same challenges or experienced in dealing with the challenge of educating learners with specific learning difficulties. In this way support groups and support networks facilitating collaboration can be formed.
<p>Inclusion has a negative impact on educators and learners without learning difficulties. Educators reported stress when they have to include learners with learning difficulties. They also fear that inclusion would disadvantage learners without learning difficulties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acknowledge that stress and fear are related to inadequate resources and training. For this reason, regular in-service training is necessary. ● Encourage cooperative learning as this facilitates positive classroom relations among educators and learners with difficulties and learners without difficulties (Landsberg, 2005:71). ● Encourage educators to work from a strength- or asset-based approach as this encourages every learner to grow to the best of his ability because it is believed that every learner has the potential to grow (Bouwer, 2005:51). If educators work from this approach, they will be

	<p>less concerned about the possible negative impact of including learners with specific learning difficulties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors for educators without experience in teaching learners with specific learning difficulties should be made available as this may help to curb potential stress. • Encourage educators to form support networks that include community stakeholders (such as educational psychologists, remedial practitioners and so on) as extensive support will buffer educator stress. • Encourage educators to involve the parents of learners with specific learning difficulties, as this will provide indirect support for the educator. • Remind educators to treat each learner as an individual – if this is done, each learner's needs will be met and so neither learners with nor learners without difficulties will be negatively impacted on.
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Table 5.1: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.7 CONCLUSION

From the aforementioned, it can be understood why mainstream educators are reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties. Understanding is not enough, however. For the sake of learners with learning difficulties and for the sake of educators teaching them, a concerted effort must be made to empower educators to the point where they feel enthusiastic about teaching included learners with learning difficulties.

In the next chapter, recommendations and limitations for the study will be provided.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The education of included learners with learning difficulties has resulted in difficulties for mainstream educators. Learners are still being referred to professionals who are trained to deal with the problems of such learners. It is commonly held that mainstream educators would prefer not to teach these learners because they believe that teaching learners with learning difficulties is a matter of choice (Bothma *et al.*, 2000:203). To understand why this is so, this study was undertaken.

This chapter provides the summary of the findings of this study as well as conclusions deduced from the study. Limitations, contributions, as well as recommendations for further study will be provided in this chapter.

6.2 AIMS GOVERNING THIS STUDY

The overall aim of this study was to ascertain what factors contribute to mainstream educators being reluctant to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties despite the policy of inclusion.

The following table summarizes the aims of the study and the achievements thereof:

AIMS	ACHIEVEMENTS
To conduct a literature study on special learning needs (learning disabilities and specific learning difficulties), and inclusion.	An intensive literature study was conducted into the two types of special learning needs (c.f. chapter 2) as well as inclusion (c.f. chapter 3).
To determine whether mainstream educators' knowledge of specific learning difficulties contributes to their reluctance to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties.	A closed questionnaire was hand delivered to mainstream educators (c.f. addendum A). An 89.4% response rate was achieved. The responses suggest that insufficient educator knowledge may contribute to their reluctance to teach included learners with learning difficulties (c. f. 5.2.9).
To determine whether mainstream educators' attitude to included learners with learning difficulties contribute to their reluctance to teach these learners.	The responses from the returned questionnaires indicate negative educator attitudes (c.f. 5.3.8), which may contribute to their reluctance to teach included learners with learning difficulties.
To determine whether mainstream educators' perception of inclusion contributes to their reluctance to teach included learners with specific learning difficulties.	The responses from the returned questionnaires suggest negative perceptions of inclusion (c.f. 5.4.8) which probably make educators hesitant to teach included learners with learning difficulties.
To provide guidelines for mainstream educators that will help in the teaching of included learners.	Recommendations were developed to help mainstream educators to deal with included learners in their classes (c.f. 5.6.)

Table 6.1: Aims governing the study

From the above it is clear that the aims targeted were achieved.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE LITERATURE

The following conclusions were drawn from the literature:

<p>Two types of special learning needs were identified as learning disabilities and specific learning difficulties. The context of special learning needs was discussed (c.f. 2.2) broadly as consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.</p>	
<p>Types of learning disabilities</p>	<p>The following were identified as types of learning disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ physical disabilities (disability affecting the mobility and the use of hands) (c.f. 2.3.2.1) ○ sensory disability (disability affecting vision and hearing)(c.f. 2.3.2.2) ○ neurological disability (functioning of the brain and nervous system) (c.f. 2.3.2.3) ○ mental handicap. (c.f. 2.3.2.4) ○ chronic and infectious diseases. (c.f. 2.3.2.5)
<p>Specific learning difficulties</p>	<p>A profile of a typical learner with learning difficulties was discussed. (c.f. 2.4.2)</p> <p>Types of specific learning difficulties were identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ specific reading difficulty (c.f. 2.4.3.1) ○ written language difficulty c.f. (2.4.3.2) ○ spelling difficulty (c.f. 2.4.3.3) ○ mathematics difficulty (c.f. 2.4.3.4) ○ communication difficulty (c.f. 2.4.4) ○ emotional difficulty (c.f. 2.4.5) <p>The origin of these learning difficulties was discussed. From the discussion, it is clear that in-depth knowledge of learning difficulties is necessary to teach learners with learning difficulties competently.</p>

The impact of learning difficulties on learning	Reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, communication and emotional development are basic learning skills needed by a learner. Learning depends on the mastery of these basic skills. Lack of such skills leads to learning difficulties, which in turn impact negatively on learning and adult functioning (c. f. 2.6).
Inclusion	Inclusion refers to the accommodation of all learners in mainstream schools without discrimination (c.f. 3.2). Inclusion is a worldwide movement, which has both advantages and challenges for all education stakeholders (c.f. 3.3; 3.4 and 3.5).
Reaction to inclusion in South Africa	The reaction to inclusion in South Africa was documented (c.f. 3.8) with regard to educators, learners, parents and SSP. In general, the reaction suggests that inclusion is regarded with reservations.

Table 6.2: Conclusions from the literature study

From the literature study it can be concluded that specific learning difficulties have a negative impact on learning as a whole and therefore it is difficult for mainstream educators to accommodate learners with specific learning difficulties in their classes.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The empirical study addressed three issues:

- mainstream educators' knowledge of specific learning difficulties;
- mainstream educators' attitudes towards included learners with learning difficulties ; and
- mainstream educators' perception of inclusion.

From the empirical study, the following emerged regarding educators' knowledge of learning difficulties:

- Some educators (a quarter of this sample) are unaware of the fact that learners with specific learning difficulties have a disorganised approach to learning. Educators must understand that if learners have a disorganised approach to learning, learning could be affected.
- A significant number of educators in this sample are also unaware that attention deficit disorder is associated with learning.
- A significant number of educators in this sample are unaware that poor memory and/or communication problems are associated with learning difficulties.
- Inadequate knowledge would lead to some educators experiencing problems when they have to teach learners with learning difficulties.

From the empirical study the following emerged regarding educators' attitudes towards included learners with learning difficulties:

- a quarter of educators in this sample are of the opinion that learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools should be accommodated in a separate class and almost half suggested that such learners should be excluded from the mainstream;
- a significant number of educators in this sample reported that it is time consuming to teach included learners with learning difficulties;
- a significant number of educators in this sample reported that the standard of education could drop due to time spent on included learners with learning difficulties; and
- a significant number of educators in this sample are of the opinion that learners with learning difficulties should be retained until they have mastered a year's curriculum; and

From the empirical study the following emerged regarding educators' perception towards inclusion:

- a significant number of educators in this sample were concerned about their lack of training regarding special learning needs;
- the number of learners in mainstream classes makes it difficult to teach included learners with learning difficulties;
- a significant number of educators in this sample believe that special schools or remedial schools have better facilities as well as human resources to address the needs of learners with learning difficulties;
- a significant number of educators in this sample seem to have doubts as far as support and collaboration with district-based support teams and special schools educators is concerned;
- a significant number of educators in this sample are concerned about the negative impact of inclusion on learners without learning difficulties; and
- a significant number of educators in this sample reported experiencing stress when they have to include learners with learning difficulties.

6.5 SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATORS

Guidelines that will assist mainstream educators to teach learners with and without learning difficulties in one class were formulated. (c.f. 5.6). These guidelines suggest practical empowerment of educators.

The study has some limitations that will be discussed next.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations are noted:

- the questionnaire was distributed to only 180 mainstream educators who included learners with learning difficulties in their classes. The size of the sample is small and so no generalizations can be made from the study;

- mainstream educators who participated in this study come from one district. This means that one cannot assume the same for all districts; and
- the study was limited to mainstream educators' perceptions towards included learners with specific learning difficulties only. Therefore it is not possible to generalise the results of this study to all educators and all learners with special learning needs.

6.7 CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THE STUDY

The study makes the following contributions:

- it sheds light on mainstream educators' reluctance to teach included learners with learning difficulties despite a policy of inclusion;
- guidelines are provided to empower educators teaching included learners with learning difficulties; and
- the guidelines are practical and tailored to the factors which appear to make mainstream educators reluctant to teach included learners with learning difficulties.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The inclusion of learners with learning difficulties is a complex phenomenon. Therefore it is hoped that this study will motivate other researchers to conduct further studies, such as:

- perceptions of included learners with specific learning difficulties towards inclusion;
- perceptions of support service personnel towards inclusion;
- the impact of inclusion on parents of learners with special learning needs; and

- the development a programme that will assist the Department of Education to empower mainstream educators to be able to deal with diverse needs of learners in the mainstream schools.

6.9 CONCLUSION

The education of learners with specific learning difficulties has not been an easy task for educators in mainstream schools. Included learners with learning difficulties have learning problems that need intensive intervention and mainstream educators have inadequate knowledge and skills in dealing with such problems.

Inclusive education is a reality not only in South Africa but also in the whole world. Educators with little knowledge have to support learners with learning difficulties in their classes without discrimination. It is therefore important for educators to change their attitudes towards learners with specific learning difficulties as well as inclusion as they are going to accommodate and teach all learners in one class. It is also important that educators of included learners be practically and continuously empowered to meet the challenges of inclusion. It is hoped that this study will go a long way in providing empowerment for mainstream educators teaching included learners with learning difficulties.

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ADDENDUM A

QUESTIONNAIRE

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS

Your help in completing this questionnaire will be appreciated.

In answering the following questionnaire, please try to be objective as possible, as the aim is to gather information about how you feel about including learners with specific learning difficulties in mainstream schools.

Section A: knowledge of specific learning difficulties

		Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly
1.	A learning disability is not the same as a learning difficulty.	1	2	4	5

2.	Learning difficulties are relative to the social contexts in which they arise and are maintained.	1	2	4	5
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3.	Learners with a learning difficulty perform more poorly in scholastic tasks than would be expected from their overall level of measured intelligence.	1	2	4	5
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4.	Learning difficulties can be caused by inherent factors and/or neurological factors and/or educational factors.	1	2	4	5
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5.	Learners with a specific learning difficulty have problems with reading and/or writing and/or spelling and/or mathematics and/or language.	1	2	4	5
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6.	Learners with learning difficulties have a disorganised approach to learning.	1	2	4	5
----	---	---	---	---	---

7.	Learning difficulties can be caused by external factors.	1	2	4	5
----	--	---	---	---	---

8.	Learning difficulty can be addressed should a learner be identified early and effective remedial intervention take place.	1	2	4	5
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9.	Learners with learning difficulties are often over reliant on educators or peers.	1	2	4	5
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10.	Learners who cannot communicate effectively develop learning difficulties.	1	2	4	5
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11.	Learners with emotional and behavioural problems possess the intellectual potential to succeed in schools but their problems impede their performance.	1	2	4	5
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12	Learning difficulties have a negative impact on learning as a whole.	1	2	4	5
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13.	Learners with a learning difficulty are frequently inattentive, restless and/or impulsive.	1	2	4	5
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14.	Learners with a learning difficulty frequently have memory problems and struggle to remember what they have learnt.	1	2	4	5
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15.	Learners with a learning difficulty have a profile of strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	4	5
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Section B: Attitudes towards previously disadvantaged learners with learning difficulties

		Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly
16.	Included learners with learning difficulties are lazy.	1	2	4	5

17.	Included learners with learning difficulties are stupid.	1	2	4	5
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18.	Learners with learning difficulties do not belong in the mainstream.	1	2	4	5
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19.	Included learners with learning difficulties are uneducable.	1	2	4	5
-----	--	---	---	---	---

20.	Included learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream should be taught separately.	1	2	4	5
-----	---	---	---	---	---

21.	It is much easier to teach a learner with a physical disability than a learner with a learning difficulty.	1	2	4	5
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22.	Intelligence is fixed and unmodifiable and therefore included learners with learning difficulties cannot progress academically.	1	2	4	5
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23.	The only way to cope in class where a learner with learning difficulty is included is to give him small unimportant tasks that will keep him busy so that he does not bother other learners.	1	2	4	5
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24.	It is not my responsibility to teach a learner with learning difficulty.	1	2	4	5
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25.	It is time consuming to teach an included learner with learning difficulty.	1	2	4	5
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26.	The standard of education could drop due to time spent on included learners with learning difficulty.	1	2	4	5
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27.	Included learners with learning difficulties should not be promoted until they have mastered the year's curriculum.	1	2	4	5
-----	---	---	---	---	---

28.	It is acceptable to make fun of included learners with a learning difficulty in class.	1	2	4	5
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29.	It is unrewarding to teach included learners with learning difficulty because they produce work that is sloppy.	1	2	4	5
-----	---	---	---	---	---

30.	Learners with learning difficulties should preferably not undergo formal education.	1	2	4	5
-----	---	---	---	---	---

Section C: Perception on inclusion

		Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly
31.	Inclusion refers to the accommodation of learners with specific learning difficulties in mainstream without discrimination.	1	2	4	5

32.	The policy of inclusion makes sense to me.	1	2	4	5
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33.	Included learners with learning difficulties are welcome in my class.	1	2	4	5
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34.	Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties cannot succeed because educators lack training in special learning needs.	1	2	4	5
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35.	Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties cannot succeed because mainstream classes are too big.	1	2	4	5
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36.	Learners with learning difficulties would be best served in special and remedial schools where special facilities are available.	1	2	4	5
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37.	Educators in special schools are better equipped and developed in dealing with learners with learning difficulties.	1	2	4	5
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38.	Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties is manageable because mainstream educators can liaise with district support teams.	1	2	4	5
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39.	Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties can succeed because mainstream educators can collaborate with special school educators.	1	2	4	5
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40.	Inclusion means adjusting the curriculum to suit the learner with learning difficulties. This is a reasonable expectation.	1	2	4	5
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41.	Learners with learning difficulties should not be in a mainstream school.	1	2	4	5
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42.	Learners with learning difficulties in a mainstream school must be grouped into a special class in that mainstream school.	1	2	4	5
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43.	It is unfair on mainstream learners without learning difficulties to include learners with learning difficulties.	1	2	4	5
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44.	Inclusion of learners with learning difficulties is stressful to mainstream educators.	1	2	4	5
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45.	Mainstream educators feel competent to teach learners with and without learning difficulties in one class.	1	2	4	5
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ADDENDUM B

P.O. Box 715

Vereeniging

1930

03 March 2005

The Educator

Inclusive education is policy and mainstream educators are expected to support it despite inadequate knowledge of teaching learners with specific learning difficulties in their classes.

This questionnaire is aimed at investigating the factors which contribute to mainstream educators' reluctance to teach previously disadvantaged learners with specific learning difficulties.

This questionnaire is confidential and your responses will be anonymous. Please try to be as objective as possible when answering. The research results will be sent to your school once obtained.

Your help in completing this questionnaire will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in anticipation.

S.M. Dinkebogile