

EXPLORING A RURAL COMMUNITY'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

BY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to actively engage with members of the rural community to establish how they understand the implementation of inclusive education in their community and how they perceive their role in the implementation process as it unfolds in their communities. The researcher acknowledges that inclusive education has been widely researched in South Africa. A number of studies focused on the parents' role, teachers' attitudes, addressing barriers to learning, people living with disabilities and the implementation of the policy on inclusive education. However, very limited research has been conducted on the community's perceptions and its role towards the implementation process.

A qualitative phenomenological design was followed to obtain an in-depth understanding of members' experiences regarding the implementation of inclusive education. Participants in this study were from a marginalised rural community (characterized by the lack of access to resources and service delivery) in the Ehlanzeni region in Mpumalanga. The participants were purposively selected by employing the snowball sampling technique to ensure the inclusion of community members who represent the voices of the community. Data collection involved a six hour work session with 58 participants and six semi structured individual interviews with five members who attended the work session and the sixth, who did not, to crystallise the themes that emerged in the work session.

Findings in this study revealed that the community understands inclusive education as creating spaces for all to learn, a project that involves the whole community and the facilitation of collaboration between stakeholders. They perceive the role that they could play in the implementation of inclusive education as accepting responsibility to include all members of the community, supporting those who care for people with disabilities, changing infrastructure to accommodate disability in communities and challenging the unequal distribution of resources.

Conclusions drawn from the study suggest that inclusive education is a continuous and ongoing process that requires the development of collaborative relationships and support for all role players in enhancing the inclusion process. It is recommended that the Department of Education involve all stakeholders from different sectors at all levels to facilitate the implementation of inclusion in their communities.

Key concepts: inclusive education, inclusion, rural community and collaboration.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBO - Community Based Organisation

CDW - Community Development Workers

DBST - District Based Support Team

DoE - Department of Education

DPSA - Disabled People of South Africa

EFA - Education for All

ESS - Education Support Services

FET - Further Education and Training

GET - General Education and Training

HIV / AIDS - Human Immune Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

IBST - Institutional Based Support Team

INSET - In-service Training

LTSM - Learner Teacher Support Material

MEC -Member of Executive Council

NCESS - National Committee on Education Support Services

NCSNET - National Commission on Special Needs in Education

NGO - Non Governmental Organisation

NRF- National Research Fund

NWU - North West University

RSA - Republic of South Africa

SABC - South African Broadcasting Commission

SASA - South African Schools Act

SBST - School Based Support Team

SGB - School Governing Body

SIAS - Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

SMT - School Management Team

SNE - Special Needs Education

UNESCO - United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

WHO - World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the inclusive education system is one of the outcomes of the political changes that South Africa has experienced since 1994. The adoption of the *Education White Paper 6 Special needs education; Building and inclusive education and training system* (Department of Education (DoE), 2001) has been facilitating the implementation process over the past 16 years, since 1996 to 2012. The implementation of inclusive education is part of the wider human, political and ethical effort of securing a better life for all and can therefore not be separated from the community, since the values, perceptions and actions of the members of the community will impact on the implementation of inclusive education (Engelbrecht, 2003:3). The role that the community plays in the implementation process is determined by the norms and values of the community which are reflected in the school, and those of the school are reflected in the community.

The role of the community in the implementation of inclusive education is emphasized in the policy documents on special needs and inclusive education in South Africa, (e.g. The Education White Paper 1, 1995; Guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive Education, DoE, 2002; Consultative Paper no.1 on Special Needs Education (SNE), 1999; Education White Paper 6, 2001). Various studies conducted over this period of time also refer to the important role that the community plays in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa (Engelbrecht & Green, 2009; Hall, 2002; Hay, 2003; Swart & Oswald, 2008; Van Rooney & Le Grange, 2003; Walton, Nell & Hugo, 2003). However, many challenges still exist regarding our understanding of the role of communities in the implementation of inclusive education, as indicated in the work of Lazarus (2006) and Prew (2009).

1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In South Africa the implementation of inclusive education started in 1996 with the appointment of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS, DoE, 1997) that investigated special needs education with the purpose of outlining guidelines for providing quality education for all in South Africa (Naicker in Engelbrecht., Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht., 1999:12). The document guided the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. The strategies outlined in the document have made provision for a longitudinal roll-out plan over a period of twenty years.

The intention of the process of implementing inclusive education has been to develop an education system in which all learners are provided the opportunity to develop their full potential, irrespective of the barriers to learning they experience. The inclusive education system stipulates that learners with special needs and barriers to learning can be placed either in ordinary schools, full service schools or resource centres (formerly known as special schools) based on the level of support that these learners may need (DoE, 2002:5; Landsberg, 2005: 44).

In the NCESS and NCSNET (DoE, 1997) documents, community resources are clearly identified as an integral part of the inclusive education system. Hay (2003:136) also emphasizes the importance of involving all systems that impact on barriers to learning and development. Consequently, education professionals as well as members of the local rural community should embrace the notion that the interdependence between schools and communities in which these schools are situated, is critical for the successful implementation of inclusive education. According to Van Rooyen (2003:153) and Todd (2007:19) successful interdependence requires positive and creative partnerships between schools and members of the communities in which the schools are situated, through active collaboration and the development of networks (Engelbrecht & Hall, 1999:233).

Collaboration refers to a creative partnership between all role players, in which all members are of equal importance and are expected to continuously contribute towards the achievement of a shared goal (Swart, Engelbrecht, Elof & Pettipher, 2004:104). Networking implies the dialogue between the two systems and involves openness to each other, exchange of ideas and practices that lead towards the alignment of services along a continuum at all levels of the system. In the inclusive education context, networking entails elements of collaboration, interaction, connection, giving and receiving support and sharing resources and ideas (Bezzina, 2006:254)

In the rural community in which the researcher lives and works as a teacher, the implementation of inclusive education according to the Education White Paper 6 of 2001 (DoE, 2001) involved the conversion of a special school to a resource centre and eight primary schools to full service schools. Yet, in formal and informal conversations with members of the community, including professionals and parents, they reported that they had not been involved in the processes through collaboration and networking. The members of the community furthermore reported a lack of understanding as to why some learners are placed in resource centres and full service schools while others remain in mainstream or ordinary schools. They also expressed concerns about the integration of what they referred to as 'normal' learners and learners with disabilities. In this study the current position of the community regarding the implementation of inclusive education has been problematized in view of the evidence in the literature that the community can be a valuable source of support for educators in the implementation of inclusive education when deep relationships between the school and its community in developing contexts are forged (Prew, 2009:846).

However, despite the emphasis on the engagement between the schools and the communities in the shift towards community educational psychology (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller, 2009; Pillay, 2007), knowledge regarding communities' understanding of inclusive education and the possible role that communities can play in the implementation of inclusive education in rural communities is limited.

The main focus of research on the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa has been on policy issues (Engelbrecht, Green & Naicker, 2001:171), the role of educators (Eloff & Kriel, 2005; Engelbrecht, 2003; Magare, Kitching & Roos, 2010; Swart & Oswald, 2008) and the role of parents (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Petipher, & Oswald, 2004, Viljoen, Naude & Neveling, 2012) in the implementation process. Yet the importance of the engagement between the school and the community is strongly emphasized in the new developments towards community educational psychology (Pillay & Waslielewski, 2007).

The study intends to address this gap in the knowledge regarding the implementation of inclusive education from an eco-systemic perspective. The eco-systemic perspective, according to Du Toit and Forlin (2009:650), was developed by Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, (2002), based on the original constructs of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory of development and adapted to explain the interaction between the school system and other systems within the social context. The eco-systemic approach supports a rights-based perspective rather than a medical or charity-based perspective to the implementation of inclusive education, as a movement that is intended to facilitate equal access to education for all.

1.2. PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the development of a collaborative engagement of the community and schools in a support network that can contribute to the effective implementation of inclusive education in rural communities where resources are often limited.

The aim of the study was to actively engage with the members of a rural community in an effort to establish their understanding of the implementation of inclusive education and their perception of their role in the implementation of inclusive education in their community.

To reach the aim of the study the following research questions were posed:

- (a) How do the members of the rural community understand the implementation of inclusive education in the community?
- (b) What role can the community play in enhancing the implementation of inclusive education?

1.3. EMPIRICAL STUDY

1.3.1. Literature study

The following databases were consulted during the preparation of the proposal as well as the entire report: Ebsco Host: Academic Search Complete, Eric, Medline, PsycInfo, JSTOR, Google search engine, Sae Publications, PsySSA website, HRSA website. The key words used for the literature search were: inclusive education; inclusion; rural community; community partnerships; community psychology; community networks; community roles; full-service schools; resource centres.

1.3.2. Research design

Research design is the plan that includes strategies of inquiry and specific methods followed by the researcher when the research was conducted. It is generally a 'blueprint' of how the researcher intends conducting the research (Mouton, 2008:55).

A qualitative phenomenological design, as described by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:139) attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation or experiences related to the phenomenon investigated. In this study, the qualitative phenomenological design has enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of

community members' experiences regarding the implementation of inclusive education and the role of the community in the implementation of inclusive education. The purpose of phenomenology according to Creswell (2008:58) is to reduce individual experiences and focus on the collective experience of participants. The design therefore allowed the researcher to explore the various dimensions of a community's involvement in the implementation of inclusive education.

1.3.2.1. Research methodology

Phenomenological inquiry was used allowing the researcher to explore the meaning-making and understanding that takes place in the everyday world of the members of the community in which she lives and works as indicated by Butler-Kisber (2010:155).

1.3.2.2. Selection of participants

Creswell (2008:61), states that data need to be collected from people who have experience of a specific phenomenon studied. The participants for this study was therefore purposively selected from various sectors of the community, as indicated in (Table 3.4.1(a) chapter 3). Their selection was based on the duration and nature of their involvement in the rural community where the research was conducted, namely the Nkomazi municipality, Ehlanzeni region in the Mpumalanga province, to ensure that they could represent the voice of the community (Mertens, 2010:154) in this study.

A total of 58 members from the community were involved in the research. All 58 members participated in a work session. Six participants also took part in individual interviews following the work session, except one who did not attend the work session (Table 3.4.1(b) in chapter 3). The criteria for the inclusion of participants were as follows:

- Live in the region for more than 10 years, and have regular interaction with people who live with disabilities or experience barriers to learning in various social settings in these rural communities.
- Are capable of communicating in English (read and write). However, SiSwati and Tsonga were allowed to accommodate those experiencing difficulties in the English language.

The researcher approached the members of the community who adhered to the criteria and invited them to participate in the work-session, to find out if they could be willing to take part in the work session, as recommended by Matthews and Ross (2010: 243).

The researcher engaged in discussions with all members prior to their involvement regarding the purpose of the research and enquired from them whether they would be willing to participate in the study. It was also explained that letters of consent would be signed by each participant before commencing the process as evidence that members have given voluntary consent for participation.

1.3.2.3. Data collection

The data for the study were collected by conducting an interactive work session that involved 58 purposively selected members of the community. The use of work session was based on the assumption that members of the community as social actors are capable of reflecting on their social situation and monitoring interaction as it happens. The interactive work session was furthermore conducted to enable a large group of the community to take part in the research, as suggested by Martin (2006).

The interactive work session's nominal group technique (Macphail, 2001; Orla, McIntosh & Worth, 1996; Williams, 2005) was used to allow participants to first reflect on their own views regarding the implementation of inclusive education before entering into a group discussion. Each participant was asked to write down his/her understanding of inclusive education at that stage in time. The group members were then invited to share their understanding with the other members of the group. Each group was then asked to discuss their various understandings and try to collate these understandings into a coherent presentation of their collective viewpoints. A research assistant was appointed to assist the researcher with scribing during the work session. Video recordings of the work session were done by a professional photographer to ensure that all actions and voices were well captured as they unfolded during the work session. The individual interviews were audio taped.

The data collected in the work session were crystallised by conducting semi-structured individual interviews with six members of the community. The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted by the researcher using open-ended questions.

According to Matthews and Ross (2010:221) semi-structured interviews attempt to understand the world from the participants' point of view regarding the research topic and his/her experiences and attitudes. The questions related to what the participants have

experienced in terms of the implementation of inclusive education in the particular contexts where they work were explored. The researcher also used this opportunity to crystallise the data obtained in the workshops as suggested by Maree (2007:81) who asserts that crystallization provides a complex and deeper understanding of phenomenon by enabling an infinite variety of dimensions. The aim was to evoke in-depth expression of ideas that could contribute to a clearer understanding of the data, as suggested by Gay and Airasian, (2000: 221).

During data collection the researcher as the main instrument in the research process (Janesick in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:393) continuously bracketed her own experiences in relation to the phenomenon as suggested by Butler-Kisber (2010:53) by discussing her own experiences regarding the implementation of inclusive education with the supervisor and colleagues who were not involved in the research.

1.3. 2. 4. Data analysis

The transcribed data were categorised into different themes and sub-themes relating to the members' understanding regarding the implementation of inclusive education and the role played by community members in facilitating the process. Participants' responses provided during interviews were analysed, using thematic analysis by working through and coding the data, followed by the consolidation of the codes into themes relating to the research questions as indicated by King and Horrocks (2010:150). In the process, the researcher continuously accounted for her position and experiences in the community (Henning, 2007: 55).

1.4. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the following core criteria were followed, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Stringer & Genat, 2004:50).

To ensure credibility, audit trails were kept and rich thick descriptions of the data were made to enable readers to share the experiences of the participants. The findings obtained in the work sessions were crystallised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Ellingson, 2008), by using semi-structured individual interviews, following the work sessions. Member checking was applied

to ensure the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the findings back to selected participants to determine whether the findings were accurate (Creswell, 2008:267).

The findings of this study are not directly transferable to other contexts, since it is not the explicit aim of a qualitative study to generalise the findings (Henning, 2007). The intention was to describe the communities' experiences in such a way that other researchers might recognise similarities within their contexts. The dependability of the study was influenced by the inductive nature of the study. It may therefore not be possible to guarantee similar findings in other contexts. The researcher however provided extensive descriptions of the research procedures (see Chapter 3 par. 3.5. in this research report) followed in this study to ensure that the research can be repeated in different contexts.

To ensure confirmability, the researcher continuously reflected on her own biases towards the implementation of inclusive education as well as on her own experiences of living with a brother who was mentally retarded. In addition she relied on the supervisor and critical friends to act as auditors to ensure that the interpretations were supported by the data. To ensure authenticity, all the viewpoints were carefully considered in the analysis of the data as suggested by Mertens (2005:260) and a range of different perspectives and contributions from the various groups in the work sessions and the interviews were included. Data sources obtained from the work session included documents in the form of five (5) posters, thirty two (32) individually written responses in A4 papers from participants, transcripts from the work session's open discussions and six (6) transcripts from the semi-structured interviews.

1. 5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE STUDY

Ethics in research ensure that the participants are treated with respect and that their dignity is valued. The following ethical issues were considered significant in this study: Permission for conducting the research, informed consent, confidentiality, and the researcher-participant relationship and the limitations of the research.

Permission to conduct the research: Approval to conduct the research was sought from the North West University ethics review committee, during which a proposal was submitted regarding methods, procedures and tools to be used in the research. Permission was obtained from Ehlanzeni district Education Department in Mpumalanga, in which a detailed explanation of the purpose for the research was submitted in writing. Those letters were followed by personal appointments with the circuit managers to explain in person the

research purpose and provide clarity where necessary. Permission was granted in writing before the actual commencement of the research process.

Informed consent: Prior to the research, participants were informed verbally and in writing regarding the purpose of the research as well as possible risks and benefits of participating in the research. Possible risks include unforeseen circumstances like stormy weather on the day of the work session, participants' illness, family commitments, etc, that may hinder attendance and participation, that the researcher may not hold the participant accountable but requested that she ought to be informed. The benefits for participating in the study are that members would gain more information on inclusive education and their role in supporting people living with disabilities in their communities. The researcher conducted home visits to fifteen (15) the prospective participants from different sectors to explain the research purpose and to alleviate any fears participants could experience regarding their consent to participate. The researcher also made it clear that participation is voluntary; no one is compelled by any circumstances to participate and that there are no negative consequences for refusing to participate (King & Horrocks, 2010:76).

The researcher always ensured adherence to the ethics for research to safeguard her against any risks that may arise in the process.

Confidentiality and anonymity: All participants in the study were assured that pseudo names would be used in the reports and transcripts to assure anonymity. Numbers were used for identifying respondents to protect their identity during the interviews and in their written responses. The tape recordings, DVDs and transcripts would be kept in a safe place to prevent access by unauthorized people. These data sources will only be used for research purposes (Burton & Bartlet, 2009:33-34; Creswell, 2008:225). The participants were duly informed that the research outcomes may only be made available to participants upon request whilst the full research report shall be submitted to North-West University to be stored in its archives.

Protection from physical and psychological harm: The researcher was also cautious of topics that would stir up feelings and thoughts of discomfort long after she has moved on. She clarified explicitly the understanding of main issues in the study and frequently checked the participants' willingness to participate during the interviews. This crucial ethical concern was also borne in mind to avoid providing advice or counselling during the interview process as advised by Ritchie and Lewis (2003:68). For this reason, the participants were involved in deciding the most convenient venues for the interviews to enhance comfort.

The researcher-participant relationship: The researcher's obligation to honour ethical commitments and agreements rests in honesty and openness to enhance healthy researcher-participant relationships. Personal questions were avoided to ensure respect of participants' dignity and privacy as suggested by Gay *et al.*, (2000:21).

1.6. KEY CONSTRUCTS

The following key constructs were used in the study; **inclusion, inclusive education, implementation of inclusive education and rural community. For the purpose of clarity in this study, these constructs are defined as follows:**

Inclusion can be broadly defined as providing support to the diverse needs of everyone regardless of gender, race, and language, ability, or disability status so that everybody can have equal access to education (Landsberg *et al.*, 2008:4). The basic philosophical assumption in inclusion is that all learners should be educated to their maximum potential by bringing together resources, facilities, support services and assistance needed by each learner so that he/she will not have to leave the classroom environment to a separate setting, the so called 'special classroom.'

Literature sources emphasize inclusion as a process of creating a learning environment free of barriers to learning whereby different types of gifts and abilities are catered for and opportunities are provided for everyone to succeed. As a process, inclusion is not about a place or curriculum, but about accepting and valuing human dignity by supporting all children and their families to participate successfully in the programmes of their choice (Evans, 2007: 6; Allen & Schwartz, 2001:3; Prinsloo, 2001:4).

Inclusive education refers to the type of education based on the policy principle of inclusion ensuring that the full variety of learners' educational needs are optimally accommodated and included in a **single education system** (Donald *et al.*, 2002:23). In the light of this construct, meeting the needs of the child by rendering support in the environment in which he lives forms the basis of the education system, rather than removing or excluding the child to suit the needs of the system. The basis for understanding inclusive education rests on the understanding that education should strive to include everyone with or without disabilities, without excluding any part of the community, to enable everyone to participate meaningfully in the inclusion process.

Implementation of inclusive education: The Collins concise dictionary defines the concept 'implementation' as putting into action or carrying out a plan to achieve a specific

purpose (Sinclair, 2004:731). Considering this definition, the implementation of inclusive education can be defined as the process of putting into practice all the principles of including learners with diverse needs in ordinary schools as articulated in the policies and guideline documents outlining the implementation of the inclusive education process. This process entails providing resources, facilities and infrastructure to enhance care and support for all people of all ages living with any barriers or disabilities.

A rural community is the type of community in the countryside characterized by an indigenous lifestyle such as subsistence farming, traditions and cultural values to which the people attach certain meanings. People in these communities still struggle to make ends meet. Farming is mostly practised merely to support families rather than making profit. Most rural communities are often located in marginalized settings which is evident in poor sanitation and lack of infrastructure, poor access to basic services (electricity, water, transport, shelter and nutrition)

1.7. STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

Chapter 1: Orientation, problem statement and overview of design - provides an introduction to the research, an overview of the problem statement and the research purpose and aims. Definition of concepts related to inclusive education and inclusion for the purpose of clarifying interpretations in this study.

Chapter 2: The implementation of inclusive education provides constructs, processes and challenges experienced regarding the implementation of inclusive education. A brief historical background on inclusive education in the South African context is also presented.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology will outline the qualitative research design, procedures and ethical considerations employed in the entire research process.

Chapter 4: Report and discussion of findings will focus on reporting the findings obtained from the interviews, reflections on the views of community members regarding inclusion and interactions with co-members experiencing barriers to learning. An in-depth discussion and interpretation of the findings towards an understanding of the rural community's experiences regarding the implementation of inclusive education is also presented.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations will provide conclusions and implications of the study. Recommendations will be given in the form of guidelines regarding the rural community's understanding and their role in the implementation of inclusive education.

1.8. SUMMARY

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the research as planned by describing the rationale of the study, the research question and problem statement. The key constructs were defined in order to facilitate understanding of these constructs for the purpose of this study. The structure of the report is presented. The following chapter presents the implementation of inclusive education as it progressed in different eras of transformation globally and nationally.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a conceptual framework for the study is presented. The focus then shifts to the collaboration with the community in the implementation of inclusive education. The construct inclusion and inclusive education will then be briefly described, followed by a description of the process of implementing inclusive education globally and locally with specific reference to policy documents (i.e. Assessment guidelines for inclusion, DoE, 2002a; Guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education, DoE, 2002b & 2005; Education White Paper 6 Special needs education; Building and inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001) and literature that address the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2006; Engelbrecht & Green, 2009; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001; Walton, Nel *et al.*, 2009; Wildman & Nomdo, 2007).

2.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study is informed by the ecological-systems theory that is a blend of ecological theory that emphasises the interdependence between organisms and their environment, and systems theory that understands different levels and groupings of the social context as systems. The theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) focuses on the relationships of systems in an individual's environment and is described as a socio-cultural view of development. Five environmental systems, also known as layers, ranging from very specific inputs of interactions in the social context to a very broad input from culture, constitute the environment that influences us (Donald *et al.*, 2010:40; Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Firstly, the *Micro-systems* as settings in which an individual develops and functions, also known as person factors. These systems include family, peer group, school or community. It is important to note that there are direct interactions between the individual and these settings and that the systems are actively constructed in the process of interaction. The relationships within these systems have a cyclical impact on each other. Secondly, the *Meso-system* where the different micro-systems, such as the family, peer groups, classrooms and church, interact. Thirdly, the *Exo-system* described as the social settings

that influence the immediate context of the person. The exo-system does not have a direct role in a particular micro-system, but influences the immediate context of the person in an indirect way. Fourthly, the attitudes as well as ideologies of the individual's culture manifest themselves in the *Macro-system*, which includes cultural values, customs and laws. Finally, the *Chrono-system* is the layer that encompasses the dimension of time, with regard to the individual's environment. This element might be external events such as the timing of death of a parent or internal events such as physiological changes that take place over time. Thus this layer is defined as changes in a person's environment over time (Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002), adapted Bronfenbrenner's theory for application in educational contexts to facilitate a more comprehensive approach to the facilitation of support for learners with special needs (Swart, Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 2004) from an eco-systemic perspective. The eco-systemic perspective view schools as systems made up of different sub-systems such as teachers, learners and other staff members. Schools as systems in turn interact with other systems such as families, schools, churches, NGO's, Government departments and other institutions. These systems and subsystems are mutually interdependent on each other for survival and shape and limit each other (Donald, *et al.*, 2002:45). The systems are therefore considered to be mutually interrelated components rather than single entities (Prins & Van Niekerk, 2009:45). The eco-systemic approach furthermore indicates that the implementation of inclusive education cannot take place in isolation, but through collaboration and networking between all the systems in which learners experiencing barriers to learning are involved, as these systems are.

The implementation of inclusive education cannot be separated from the role of the surrounding rural communities. There must be a continuous interaction between all these components in the implementation of inclusive education. The approach emphasizes the interaction between an individual and systems within the social contexts and asserts that the social issues in society must be addressed alongside the barriers to learning. Thus schools, classrooms and families should be understood as systems that interact with one another within the broader social context (Landsberg *et al.*, 2008:8 -10).

According to Hay (2003:135) the eco-systemic perspective facilitated a shift away from focusing on the individual, intrinsic problems experienced by learners, to a broader assessment of all systems impacting on barriers to learning and development, including the family, the school and even aspects of community functioning. However, due to the historical origins of psychology, certain beliefs and practices within these systems might constrain the implementation of inclusive education, since the focus is still mainly on the problems

experienced by individuals in the system, while the contribution of the community is not sufficiently addressed.

Communities, according to Nelson & Prilletensky, (2010), fulfil the human needs for support and connection. Based on the ecological systems perspective, Walton *et al.*, (2009) argue for a community psychology approach to addressing the challenges of inclusive education. The field of community psychology is described by Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) as a *pragmatic reaction against the limitations of a problem-orientated and individual-centred traditional psychology* (p.123). In South Africa, due to the socio-political situation, the development of community psychology was part of the broader social resistance movement. The concept community therefore has positive connotations and a sense of community is perceived as something that should be pursued and supported (Yen, 2007:52). The approaches developed by South African community psychologists (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001; Lazarus, 2007; Visser, 2007), emphasise concepts such as dialogue, conscientisation, community participation and empowerment.

The recognition and application of community psychology values and principles can therefore be valuable in the facilitation of community involvement in the implementation of inclusive education. The application of these values and principles, as described by Visser (2009:10-11) in the implementation of inclusive education in a holds that:

-  Shared emotional connections and feelings of belonging should be facilitated for people living with disabilities and barriers to learning through the facilitation of a sense of community in schools as well as in the whole community.
-  The enhancement of active participation of community members who have barriers to learning by empowering them to gain control over their own affairs by participating in community activities. Members should not wait for outsiders to bring projects, but be educated to initiate their own activities that are accessible to all members of the community, such that no-one feels isolated. In this way every member shall be assertive and committed to lend a hand.
-  Respect for diversity and human dignity by not attempting to change individuals or groups to fit in with the norms and values of others, but rather to empower them to maintain their distinctiveness and take responsible decisions about their own lives. This means that we should not dictate to people with disabilities, but allow them to voice how they feel. Hence the motto “nothing about us without us”.



Social justice, which refers to the fair and equitable allocation of power and resources to all people, and in particular those people with disabilities who are excluded from participation, should be maintained.

The application of a community psychology perspective in school contexts, according to Dunbar-Krige and Henning (2010), holds that the shared discursive practice of community psychology should be applied in school contexts to ensure that, the ecology metaphor is used aptly and the strengths of a community and the agency of its members are elicited.

In view of the above arguments, it is necessary to deliberate on the current situation regarding the involvement of the community in the implementation of inclusive education and the implications of facilitating collaboration with rural communities in an African context.

2.3. COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The facilitation of collaboration between schools and communities is in line with the guidelines provided by Education White Paper 6 Special needs education; Building and inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001). The policy clearly indicates that to effectively implement inclusive education in South Africa, it is critically important to take into account the unique context of the communities in which schools are situated, when planning and developing inclusive education programmes. According to Gregory, (2001:475 & 479) such collaborative efforts are rooted in the principles of community psychology and entail the interaction, connection, giving and receiving of support and the sharing of resources and ideas amongst members of the community to promote the implementation process.

However, according to Prew (2009:824), the collaborative efforts, as indicated in the application of the whole-school approach, are interpreted in the West to be inclusive of all those stakeholders who work in the school, and does not consider the broader school community. Du Toit and Forlin (2010:659), also state that specific contextual influences are often analysed and understood by the teachers, and collaborative relationships are formed with parents, while relationships with the community and various stakeholder groups in the community is neglected.

The importance of engaging with all the various stakeholder groups in the community in the implementation of inclusive education is emphasised by Stone (1993:45) who found that school-community collaboration must be customized to local needs and must draw upon local resources, in the case of this study, a rural community.

The work of Mahlomaholo (2012) makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the role of the rural community in inclusive education as part of the co-construction of sustainable learning environments. Applying community cultural wealth theory, the research suggests that rural communities might have a way of making sense of the world and find ways of responding to them adequately. Mahlomaholo (2012) clearly defines the rural community from an asset-based perspective, showing how resourceful rural environments can be. The research furthermore indicates that *where deep relationships between the school and its community are forged, the knock-on benefits can be huge* (p.103). One of these benefits will be a gradual increase in parental and community involvement in the school, including involvement in the pedagogical process.

Kisanji (1999), based on his work in Kenya, argues that indigenous education in African societies reflects certain content and process areas that may be characterised as inclusive, for example, the role of the extended family in childcare and/or child minding and the role that grandparents and siblings play in caring and educating children. Child-to-child learning opportunities are also common experiences in African families and communities.

In line with this argument, Hay (2003:136-137), emphasizes that the success of inclusive education in South Africa will largely depend on the establishment of Education Support Services (ESS) and the realization of the paradigm shift in all the people's minds from the Eurocentric perspective with a strong individual focused ethos, to the Afro-centric approach, focusing more on group well-being than on individuals. He further asserts that support rendered by staff members should depend on the philosophy of 'Ubuntu' to create partnerships through which support is rendered to all systems. The spirit of 'Ubuntu' is realized through the communal bond between the members of the community and enables them to engage in community activities that promote inclusive education. Inclusive education then becomes the responsibility of the entire community.

It is therefore evident that collaboration with the community in the implementation of inclusive education necessitates an understanding of indigenous knowledge regarding education. Owour (2007) who did research on the integration of indigenous knowledge in the Kenyan formal education system argues that the perception that indigenous knowledge merely refers to historical and ancient practices of the African, is problematic. Indigenous knowledge rather encompass: *"the complex set of activities, values, beliefs and practices that has evolved cumulatively over time and is active among communities and groups who are its practitioners. It remains so as long as the groups and communities who are its practitioners are committed to sustaining, creatively developing, and extending its potential enrichment within a specific setting"* (p.23).

According to Owour (2007:21), indigenous people are therefore better able to identify their needs than outsiders. In the South African context, Education White Paper 6 Special needs education; Building and inclusive education and training system (DoE, 2001) and the Conceptual and Operational Guidelines developed from this policy commits the South African government to the development of a holistic, integrated and community-based approach to support, that involves the local people. At both institutional and district levels, the challenge of developing a community-based support system, according to Lazarus (2006:522-523) holds that partnerships with relevant professional support services, as well as community members, should specifically draw on indigenous knowledge to understand and address the challenges relating to the implementation of inclusive education.

Drawing on the community psychology perspective, community cultural wealth theory and an understanding of indigenous knowledge systems, it seems evident that, when people are prompted in an appropriate way rural communities might have a way to solve their own problems in their own way and take responsibility to confront real obstacles and barriers to promote the implementation of inclusive education through the engagement of various stakeholders and the development of partnerships. However, the collaboration between the community and schools in the implementation of inclusive education, need to involve an on-going process of strengthening relationships between the members of a community who are directly involved in schools and members who are not directly involved in the implementation of inclusive education, with particular emphasis on the indigenous knowledge systems that inform the implementation process in a particular context, as argued by Owour (2007).

In view of the important role that collaboration with communities has in the implementation of inclusive education , the education system in South Africa needs to seriously attend to ways that translate theory into practice in order to bridge the gap between the idealism expressed in the policy documents and realities of the education system that influence the responsiveness of schools and communities to inclusive education, as suggested in the research literature (Swart & Oswald, 2008: 91; Prinsloo, 2001:2 & 6; Walton *et al.*, 2009:01).

Whilst South Africa is highly commended for formulating a number of policies and guidelines regulating inclusive education, including inter alia the *White Paper 1 on Education and Training in a democratic South Africa (1995)*; *South Africa Constitution on Human Rights (1996)*; *SASA 84 of 1996*; *The NCESS and NCSNET reports (1997)*; *Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (2001)* and the *Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education (2002)*, the education system still needs to change the way in which schools and communities respond to inclusive education by translating the current policies into action through the implementation process. In so doing, the vision of the

Education White Paper 6 shall become a reality. Achieving this requires all stakeholders to work together; none should assume a passive role, particularly at provincial, district, circuit, school and community levels.

In the next section the implementation of inclusive education as a process that developed over the past twelve years is discussed with specific emphasis on the shift that took place from the previous dispensation that focused mainly on what Prilleltensky (2005) refers to as the ameliorative approach that focus on problems to the transformative approach that emphasizes the involvement and role of the community in a community-based inclusive education system.

2. 4. INCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusion as a construct originated in the field of disability studies. The labeling of people with disabilities was contested by parents and advocates of people with disabilities. They suggest that communities need to change and become more welcoming and hospitable to people with disabilities.

According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010:137) the principle of inclusion goes beyond accommodating people with disabilities but also involves a variety of groups that have previously been subjected to social exclusion. It is a process of increasing participation of learners in mainstream centres of learning and reducing exclusion from the curriculum cultures and communities (Nind, Rix, Sheehy & Simmons, 2003:253). Inclusion in education therefore implies providing support to the needs of everyone, regardless of gender, ability, and language or disability status, to have access to education (Landsberg *et al.*, 2008: 4). Rose and Bornman (2010:260) argue that the focus of inclusion in education contexts should not only be on special needs and disabilities but also include the removal of opportunity and access barriers that hinder participation.

Inclusive education should not be perceived as an option for education, but rather a strategy to enhance democracy and social justice in the community by involving all learners with disabilities and not merely making special arrangements for a selected few. Therefore, there is a dire need for restructuring the system to provide education for all (Engelbrecht in Engelbrecht., Green *et al.*, 1999:5). These authors consider the challenge for education authorities to conceptualise, develop, implement and fund a system that is flexible enough to provide for the needs of all learners.

Therefore, inclusive education is not about a place, instructional strategy or curriculum, but belonging, being valued and having choices, as Allen and Schwartz assert that children with special needs need to attend preschool, childcare and recreational programmes with their typically developing peers. The community's role in this respect is to learn to accept all children and their families' differences and support their participation in the programmes; to be sensitive and respect different cultural values, beliefs and practices to promote optimal child development. Education should be accepted as a right, not a privilege, and needs to take place in the least restrictive environment (Allen & Schwartz: 2001:3).

2. 5. THE EMERGENCE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

As history unfolded, a number of international declarations have asserted that education is a basic human right, not a privilege for a few. The declarations include inter alia: The Charter of the United Nations (1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), Dyson and Forlin (in Engelbrecht, Green, *et al.*, 2001:29). The declarations guided the way towards the emergence of inclusive education in the 1960s with the aim of providing education to learners with and without disabilities. Western countries such as the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Spain and Italy took the lead in the 1970s by introducing mainstreaming and integration policies. Educational leaders who became involved in the education of learners with disabilities were mainly influenced by advances in medicine and clinical psychology that suggested that people with disabilities were categorized according to their disabilities rather than according to their needs and abilities. Special schools were established for each individual category of disability as it was accepted that each group of disabilities had their own particular characteristics and that their learning difficulties were directly related to their specific deficits (Engelbrecht, Kriegler & Booysen, 1996: 6).

Although the introduction of special needs education intended to support individuals with disabilities, the practice actually contributed to the exclusion of those individuals from mainstream educational society owing to the belief that learners with disabilities were *"inadequate human beings who were not fit to be included....."*. The learners with disabilities were assessed and labelled by medical experts and leaders in education with the purpose of being moved to be "fixed" so that the child would later on be capable of fitting in again and if not, remain in special education (Landsberg *et al.*, 2008:8).

The problem with the special needs approach, also referred to as the medical approach, is that learners with disabilities were seen as patients who needed special care. They were

therefore removed from their families to be placed in special schools to receive treatment that would correct the innate pathology without consideration for their psycho-social wellbeing. The way in which these children were treated is seen as a violation of their human rights because of the way in which they were denied the spaces to develop their potential in social contexts familiar to them (Farrel, 2004:71; Mitchel, 2004:237 & 241).

The children as well as their families were socially and psychologically affected by the segregation. The children also experienced isolation from society and peers, as they were treated as different when they return to their communities after being absent for a while. The placement of learners with special education needs in special schools therefore often worsened the problem instead of solving it, and needed attention.

The education system was then restructured in a way that provided normalized learning experiences for children with disabilities to the maximum extent possible. According to Dyson & Forlin (in Engelbrecht, Green, *et al.*, 2001:28) normalization implies the *“physical and social integration of a developmentally disabled individual in the mainstream of the community.”* The notion of normalization was however criticized for expecting the child to fit into the normal group rather than adapting the curriculum to provide sufficient support for the learners who experience barriers to learning. The notion that individuals with disabilities must adapt to fit into society, once again facilitated the marginalization of individuals with disabilities. It was therefore imperative to adopt a more *“holistic, ecological perspective of individuals with disabilities”* that replaced the normalization approach.

In 1989 the human rights of people with disabilities were reaffirmed by article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to make primary education compulsory and available, free to **all** and encouraged the development of secondary and vocational education making it accessible to every child as stated in the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:16). The declaration was followed by two world conferences that enhanced the implementation of the inclusive education movement across the globe.

In 1990, the World Conference in Thailand launched the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) which propagated access to education for all children, youth and adults by promoting equity to the under-served groups of girls and women (‘United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation’ UNESCO, 2001:17). The vision also emphasized enhancing the environment for learning by ensuring that learners receive nutrition, healthcare, general physical and emotional support they need to benefit from education, and strengthening partnerships amongst all sub-sectors, governments, non-government organizations, private sectors, religious groups, local communities, families and teachers (Education White Paper 6, DoE, 2001:18). In other words, basic education is not simply

about making schools available for those who are already able to access them, but being proactive in identifying the barriers some groups are experiencing in attempt to access educational opportunities and make resources available to the community that will overcome the barriers.

The Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education was held in Spain, 1994 where 92 countries and 25 international organizations met and adopted a different approach viewing 'differences' as 'normal' with an attempt to develop education systems which could respond effectively to diversity. The focus of the conference was that *"every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and therefore, education systems and programmes should be designed and implemented, taking into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs into account"* (UNESCO, 1994:viii).

In the researcher's view, the conference launched the most radical approach to inclusive education because of its emphasis on diversity regarding the child's unique learning needs. If teachers, parents and educationalists can understand and respond effectively to diversity, we can be sure of an inclusive society in which each one would be accepted and responded to as per one's unique needs, rather than wanting them to change in order to fit the status quo in any given learning environment. The approach is about developing an inclusive education system whereby schools should be capable of educating all children in their communities. The conference emphasized the accommodation of all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions, including children with disabilities, the gifted, street and working, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (Booth & Lynch, 2003:4; Evans, 2007:9; Dyson & Forlin, in Engelbrecht, Green, *et al.*, 2001: 32; UNESCO, 1994:6).

The implementation of inclusive education gained momentum globally after the Salamanca conference. The importance of this movement was confirmed at the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000, when the progress made regarding Education for All was reviewed. Similarly to all the former conferences reports, the 21st century resolutions reaffirmed that:

"Education is a fundamental Human Right - a key to sustainable development, peace and stability within and among countries, thus, an indispensable means for effective participation in societies and economies of the 21st century" (World Education Forum, 2000).

Critically important in this study is the understanding that schools do not function in isolation, but are influenced by economic, political and social developments. What happens in schools is a reflection of the development and changes in the society. For inclusive education to be

successful, it must take into account the needs of the poor, disadvantaged, including working and non-working children, remote dwellers and nomads, ethnic and linguistic minorities, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with learning needs (World Education Forum, 2000:19).

2.6. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA.

According to Donald *et al.*, (2002: 281 & 288) South Africa, as a developing country, is estimated to have a much higher rate of learners with disabilities estimated to be at 18% of the school going - age population as compared to 10% in the most developed countries like USA, partly because of the high poverty rate that places our society at a social disadvantage. Learners from vulnerable backgrounds are therefore predisposed to greater risk for the development of physical, sensory, neurological, emotional and cognitive disabilities. However, this does not necessarily mean that disabilities and barriers are only caused by poverty, but rather that the social conditions affect how the conditions are being maintained and addressed, since the situation might not be the same with developed countries.

The section below explores the progress of education from special needs towards inclusive education as it progressed through the three eras of transformation in South Africa, namely: The previous dispensation (apartheid era), the transformation stage and the democratic dispensation (post-apartheid era). The system of education during the apartheid era was based on racial discrimination and also emphasized special needs education but democratic the dispensation since 1994, brought in a number of changes including inclusive education instead of special needs education. Therefore, this means that education is always strongly influenced by the politics taking place at any particular stage or era.

2.6.1. THE PREVIOUS DISPENSATION (APARTHEID ERA)

During the apartheid era, learners who experienced barriers to learning and different forms of disabilities were placed in special schools in which they were further grouped into special classes, e.g. class of the blind, deaf, emotionally dysfunctional, physically challenged, etc. depending which category the individual was classified in. Such placement was regarded as the best way of providing support by then. Even so, there were special schools for whites and non-whites implying that even special needs education provision during those times was influenced by racial discrimination, as it was the case in ordinary schools. The education

policies promoted segregated education in terms of the so-called four races, namely; blacks, whites, coloureds and Indians.

Research has indicated that by 1994, the apartheid government was spending much more on the education of a white child than a black child, and at the height of apartheid this was twelve (12) times as much. White children were given more years of schooling, had smaller classes in better provisioned schools, were taught by better trained and better qualified teachers and had lower failure and repetition rates. In contrast, the schools' register of needs completed by the new government in 1996 showed the deprivation of the majority of black schools: 24% without water within walking distance, 13% had no learning material, 83% no library facilities, 6% poor conditions not suitable for education at all, 11% in serious need of repairs, particularly in rural areas (Daniels & Garnier, 2000:161).

There were also large discrepancies between the different education departments as far as access to special schools, the classification criteria for admission and the financial support allocated to the special schools were concerned (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2004:234; Engelbrecht & Green, 2009: 53). On the one hand, well-resourced special schools were mainly accessible for white learners whilst on the other hand admission to under-resourced schools for non-white learners with disabilities was limited by very strict admission criteria. This resulted in only 20% of non-white learners with disabilities being accommodated in special schools. Based on the statistics provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicating that between 2,2% and 2,6% of learners in any school system can be identified as impaired or disabled, this means that out of 400 000 learners with impairments or disabilities, only 64 200 were accommodated in 380 special schools, while the 335 800 are out school youth with disabilities who did not have access to special education in the previous system and could be unaccounted for (Education White Paper 6, DOE, 2001:9).

2. 5. 2. THE TRANSFORMATION STAGE (1994 - 2001)

The political changes which South Africa went through around 1994 therefore compelled those responsible to change the practice of special needs education to address the inequalities in education. The idea of introducing inclusive education therefore coincides with the political changes in South Africa in 1994 as a way to provide equal opportunities for those children who had been disadvantaged in the previous dispensation. In 1994, the first democratically elected government came to power and brought about radical changes that affected the political, economic and social sectors of South Africa (Lomofsky & Lazarus,

2001:307). The segregated education departments were united into a single National Department of Education and new policies and legislations were introduced.

In 1996, the new Constitution and the Bill of Rights were introduced. Access to education thus became a human rights issue to maintain social justice. The right of all individuals to be protected against discrimination, particularly in the field of education was clearly articulated by the Constitution ('Republic of South Africa' RSA, 1996:29) stating that "*all learners have a right to basic education including adult basic education and further education.*" Based on the values of human dignity, human rights, equality and freedom (RSA Constitution, Section (a) 1996), the State has the obligation to develop an education system based on equality, redress of past imbalances while progressively promoting quality education **for all** (DoE, 2001:11).

Transformation in educational policies included the South African Schools' Act 84 of 1996 (6) which states that schools should admit all learners and fulfill their specific educational needs without discriminating against the learner in any way. Parents were acknowledged as stakeholders in education who should have the right of choice of placement for children with special needs (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:309).

The development of the inclusive education policy in South Africa can hence be traced back to October 1996 with the appointment of two commissions, the NCSNET and the NCESS that investigated special needs education with the purpose of providing guidelines and making recommendations on all aspects of the support services for the future of inclusive education in South Africa (Education White Paper 6, DoE, 2001:5). The appointed National Commission on Special Needs in Education (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) presented their joint report of the findings to the then Minister of Education in November 1997 which was published by the Department of Education in February 1998, and indicated that specialised education and support had been given only to a small percentage of learners in special schools and that the support was provided on a racial basis. Most of the learners had been '*mainstreamed*' by default and the curriculum had literally failed to respond positively to the needs of those learners, which consequently resulted in high percentages of drop-outs and failures.

The report also recommended that the Education and Training system should promote quality education for all, overcome barriers to learning and foster the development of and support centres of learning that would allow all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of the society (DoE, 2001:4). This would be made possible by fostering the development of inclusion, thus, a shift from 'special needs' to accepting the learners as they

are, rather than attempting to change them to suit the curriculum needs. The Commission recommended the concept 'barriers to learning, in the place of 'special needs education' (Engelbrecht & Green, 2009:54).

By accepting that all learners can learn, it was also concluded that they need support, so educational structures, systems, and methods need to be developed in a manner that they will meet the needs of all learners. The only way to change attitudes, behaviours, teaching strategies, curricula and the environment to meet learners' needs is by acknowledging and respecting individual differences in learners based on age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV or socio-economic status. Inclusion should not only occur in schools but also in homes and communities within formal and informal settings (Dyson in Daniels & Garnier, 2000:59).

By 1999, the Education Ministry published a consultative paper no.1 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education System which advocates inclusion, based on the principle that learning disabilities arise from the Education system rather than the learner (DoE, 2005).

2.6.3. THE CURRENT DISPENSATION (POST- APARTHEID ERA, 2001- 2012)

The introduction of the *Education White Paper 6, Special Needs Education - Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* in 2001 paved way for the successful implementation of inclusive education in South Africa through a single integrated education system. The document defines inclusive education as "*acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and need support.*" The emphasis is on enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the diverse needs of all learners. We all need to acknowledge and respect differences in all learners regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases as stated by Artiles and Kozleski (2007:354).

The White Paper 6 (2001) outlines the improvement of special schools and their conversion to resource centres, able to provide specialised professional support to the neighbourhood schools as a key strategy for establishing an inclusive education system in South Africa. Another key strategy identified in 2001 was the restructuring of the process of identifying, assessing and supporting learners who experience barriers to learning. Specific attention was given to the key role played by education support systems previously known as School-

Based Support Teams (SBSTs) which are now called Institution Based Support Teams (IBSTs) and District-Based support teams (DBST), teachers and parents in the effective implementation of inclusive education in full service schools and ordinary schools (DoE, 2001:29).

Several initiatives were utilized to facilitate the implementation of the Education White Paper 6 policy document on inclusive education. Advocating campaigns were, and still are, being held to raise awareness throughout South Africa by means of the media. The South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) in particular and the press media have been a powerful tool, engaging people and organizations in information sharing talk shows regarding acceptance, caring and support for people living with disabilities. Much emphasis has been placed on the Department of Education's initiative to mobilize out of school going children and youth with disabilities into the school system. These initiatives are applauded as a step ahead in promoting awareness and acceptance in our society. However, much still needs to be done to reach out directly to the grassroots structures to promote maximum participation, since not all citizens can access the media.

Two national pilot projects were conducted in 2002-2003, namely the SCOPE and DANIDA projects which were internationally funded in several provinces in the country i.e. KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, North West, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga, aimed at the professional development through in-service training programmes for teachers. One or two representative teachers were selected from schools for training to be able to disseminate their newly developed competencies and knowledge to their colleagues after training in their specific schools (Engelbrecht, 2006:257). The lesson learned from the projects is that all learners can learn and will succeed, though not necessarily at the same time, and also that learning can occur in different ways. Learners know what to learn and why they learn, and take responsibility for their learning, though there are still some challenges (Vayrynen, 2003: 40).

One other project related to the '*Index for Inclusion*' and funded by UNESCO was conducted in three schools in the Western Cape (2005) to explore possibilities of minimizing barriers to inclusion and increase the involvement of all learners in collaboration with academics. Findings revealed the importance of taking into account the unique school context when planning and developing inclusive education strategies (Engelbrecht, 2006: 258)

Recent policy documents guiding educators on the practical implementation of inclusive education regarding classroom strategies include the *Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes*, *Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive*

Education, Full Service Schools and District-Based support teams and the Guidelines to Ensure Quality Education and Support : Special Schools as Resource Centres (DoE, 2005).

By 2005, the Department of Education had started with the conversion of thirty specially selected primary schools, one in each district to become “full service schools” to meet needs for learners who experience barriers to learning. The main purpose of this pilot project was to inform future inclusive models, training and empowerment of educators to identify and assess learners who require additional support, and intervene positively by providing sustained support (Pillay & Terlizzi, 2009:492).

Support teams are still established to date in schools constituting teachers, learners, parents, healthcare workers, religious leaders, social workers and people with expertise and interest in addressing barriers to learning. Membership of the teams is determined by the needs of that particular school.

In 2008, the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) was launched, providing strategies for implementing collaborative working relationships with parents and learners, aimed at improving quality education in South Africa by including learners and parents in the process of assessment. Consequently, there was a shift from viewing the problem as intrinsic within the learner to accepting him/her as an individual with possibilities (Landsberg *et al.*, 2008:45 & 228; Pillay *et al.*, 2009:492).

At the time of this research, the Department of Education emphasized enhancing the care and support programmes to be fully functional in schools. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are called upon to work in collaboration with educators and learners in schools through involving all community members to play an active role in ensuring that inclusive education is made a reality. All government Departments have committed themselves to working together to accept and support all people living with disabilities indiscriminately. Thus, the need is being addressed to re-structure all facilities and infrastructures in communities, recreational areas, transport systems and working places to remove barriers of any form in order to accommodate all forms of disabilities. Service delivery is the main talk of the day. Teachers are also encouraged to participate in in-service training (INSET) programmes related to inclusive education.

2.7. ESTABLISHING PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ADAPTIVE ENVIRONMENTS.

Inclusive education implies creating favourable psychosocial environments in which all individuals are able to be accommodated regardless of their disability status. The South

African public facilities like community halls, recreational centres, some schools, clinics, hospitals, and police stations, public transport systems (buses and taxis) still face a challenge of eradicating physical barriers in order to create ample physical space for accessibility, mobility, assistive devices usage and making people's presence interestingly challenging. The physical layout of every public facility is a pre-requisite to inclusion, for example, widening doors, making them easy to open from a sitting position, modifying the height of tables and counters, stages for performances, as well as adapting the outside yard (Loreman *et al.*, 2005:178-180).

Currently, very few public institutions have heeded the call to create inclusive environments. Notwithstanding that some are still in the process of modifications and such institutions are applauded for their attempts to being responsive.

Regarding the situation in some schools, creating conducive learning environment depends on the teacher's creative ability to improvise and manipulate the currently unfavourable conditions. For this reason, the Department of Education has taken upon itself to workshop teachers to adapt to the status quo, but apparently such workshops are short lived and the need for re-training is crucial. Below is a comment cited from Engelbrecht *et al.*, (2009:630) by one teacher support team leader revealing that more time and patience is needed to instill the culture of accepting and understanding change.

"I think inclusive education is the right way to go and the White Paper 6 is realistic when it says the process of infusing inclusive education is a 20 year term. I am convinced this is not an easy process. This does not imply we don't want to change. We really do. We are committed to quality education. I do not think one week of training does justice to educators. Remember, we are coming from somewhere. We were trained before. It took us three years to understand pedagogy and assessment and some of us have taught for more than fifteen years".

2.8. SUMMARY

This chapter presented a description of inclusion and inclusive education as intertwined concepts for elaboration and clarity in the research discussion. The literature review has helped to outline the historical development of inclusive education as it progressed in various stages nationally and internationally, as well as to reveal the successes and failures of special needs education, inclusion and inclusive education in different eras. Attempts were also made to provide the South African context of inclusive education as it progressed

through different eras. The importance of politics may not be overlooked in understanding inclusive education since it forms the basis for current implementation strategies at all levels of the community. For this reason, the next chapter presents research methodology, techniques and procedures that have been followed in collecting data for the topic under study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology that were selected for this study. The research paradigm and approach applied in this study are presented. The context in which the research took place is described. An overview of the procedures is given. This is followed by an explanation of the methodology applied in this study with specific reference to the participants, the data collection process, the data analysis process and the trustworthiness of the study. Finally the ethical considerations as applied in this study are discussed.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research is always based on a specific paradigm, which, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:157), is a basic set of beliefs that guides actions and deals with the first principles of research. The research in this study was performed within an interpretative paradigm which considers people as social actors who construct knowledge by sharing and negotiating meanings. The emphasis of this paradigm is on experience and interpretation and seeks to understand the meaning of the participants' understanding of situations. In this study the interpretive paradigm will guide the researcher to obtain data on the understanding of members of the rural communities regarding the implementation of inclusive education. Fundamental assumptions of the interpretive paradigm according to Garrick (as cited in Henning, 2007:21) that apply to the study are that individuals are not passive recipients of social, political and historical affairs, but have the inner capabilities to form their own perceptions about the state of affairs. He further asserts that the world is made up of multifaceted realities that are studied as a whole, therefore, interacting factors, events and process can be explained in the context in which the experiences occur. It is impossible to completely separate the researcher from what is being investigated.

The aim of the inquiry in this study is to develop an understanding of a specific rural community's understanding of the implementation process and not to generalize about communities' understanding; values of the researcher and the community members who participate might influence the framing, focus and conducting of the study. The interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to discover multiple perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education in the rural community and is therefore well suited to give voice to the community members. This paradigm also allows the researcher who is a member of the community to take an insider perspective in the research process.

Although this study applied a phenomenological research design, the principles of Participatory Action Research also informed the way in which the researcher perceived the participants as equal partners in the research process and empowered them to act in their own interest (De Vos, 2005:412). During the research process the researcher therefore did not only act as an expert who shared her skills. She also considered herself as the co-learner who benefited from the group members' skills and knowledge. She therefore opened up communicative spaces for the participants to ensure that they felt comfortable to collaborate in the process and share their authentic views on the phenomenon as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2005:578).

Through the collaborative partnership with members of the community, the researcher was enabled to question her own assumptions and prepared to change the way she conceptualizes the implementation of inclusive education in the social context in which she lives and works. In the process she also facilitated a long term relationship with the community through the members with whom she interacted, as proposed by Seedat, Duncan and Lazarus (2003).

3.3. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The researcher clearly understands that in qualitative research, the setting is unique in its own mix of people and contextual factors. The context of the study is therefore described to provide a clearer understanding of the participants within their social setting as suggested by Gay and Airasian (2000:140).

The Nkomazi district municipality is a typical deep rural community made up of a number of villages located in the far countryside between the borders of Swaziland and Mozambique. The communities are located approximately 60km away from the nearest town. Given the

long distance to travel, many kids hardly taste urban or town life, except for a lucky few whose parents are able to pay for them to undertake educational trips which expose them to a bit of town life.

People still travel long distances to access certain services in town. Most roads are still gravelled, with few tarred roads under construction in most villages; thus transport availability in the vicinity is still problematic. Taxi drivers complain about the condition of the roads, which is worse during rainy days. For this reason, transport was arranged to a neutral venue for all participants to and from the workshop.

The socio-economic status of the people can be described as relatively low, since most people around this area still practice subsistence farming, both crop and livestock, in order to support their families. For this reason, they depend on rainfall to grow their plants. Only a few enjoy the benefits of service delivery, whilst most still fetch wood and water from afar in order to provide for domestic needs. Basic service delivery is still a big challenge, particularly water supply and sanitation, and consequently hygiene problems are often experienced in some areas.

Access to clinics and the hospital is quite reasonable. However, the challenge is that most clinics do not operate 24 hours a day to cater for emergencies. Most of them are closed during weekends. Community members therefore have to travel quite a distance when they experience emergencies particularly during the night and weekends. In some areas located in farms, mobile clinics are made available during specific days.

The schools around these communities are characterized by lack of resources such as libraries, laboratories, computer centres and media centres. This impacts negatively on the learners' academic performance. Most schools in the vicinity have been declared no-fee schools since parents cannot afford to pay school funds. The rate of learner pregnancy is very high. In 2011, at one of the principals' meetings, the Mpumalanga Department of Education declared that out of ten high school girls' learners in the Nkomazi region, eight would fall pregnant annually. One suspects that this might be due to the high unemployment rate resulting in many young girls becoming vulnerable to the so-called sugar daddies. The eHlanzeni district alone, which comprises five circuits, reported 1452 cases of learners who fell pregnant between the periods January to October 2012. Of these 1452 cases, 430 cases belong to the three circuits under study, namely Lubombo with 122, Nkomazi East with 142 and Nkomazi West with 166 (Mpumalanga DOE, Ehlanzeni district, October 2012).

These high figures further suggest that most youngsters engage in unprotected sex predisposing them to the high incidences of HIV/AIDS infections resulting in high death rate, orphanage and child headed families (since most of them are teenage parents), despite the campaigns and programmes advocated by the local municipality. This is partly ascribed to the high influx from the two neighbouring countries. Most families are headed by single parents, thus most of them do not have Identity documents and find it difficult to access basic services provided by the government, including social and care grants.

The lifestyle in these villages is still dominated by a set of beliefs and traditions to which the people ascribe. A strong communal spirit and sense of belonging still exists. Neighbours play an important role in caring for each other, sharing ideas, resources, traditions and customs. The sharing of resources can be ascribed to the spirit of Ubuntu that the people of this community have.

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A qualitative phenomenological design was applied in this study to enable the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge about a rural community's understanding regarding the implementation of inclusive education. The design was chosen to allow the researcher to explore a wide variety of dimensions in social reality, including perceptions and experiences of the research participants pertaining to social processes as they unfold in their institutions. In this research, the design has enabled the researcher to explore various perceptions and understanding of inclusive education as it unfolds in the participants' rural community.

3.4.1. Selection of participants

The participants for this study were drawn from the population in the Nkomazi municipality, Ehlanzeni region in the Mpumalanga province. The participants were purposively selected based on their involvement in the rural community and the particular characteristics that enabled them to provide relevant and detailed information on the phenomenon (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:79). A heterogeneous sample was selected to include a wide variety of cases that could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, as suggested by Patton (in Voce 2005:1) that applying diverse approaches to qualitative enquiry enhances the quality of research.

While careful considerations were taken to involve stakeholders from different sectors, yet the researcher does not claim that the selected participants were representative of the total population in the area under study. The main purpose was to involve members who interact with diverse people in various social settings, including people living with disabilities. It was envisaged that the members would share their experiences encountered daily from the communities in which they live and work, e.g. clinics, homes, schools, offices, social gatherings, streets, market places, etc.

The table below indicates the various groups that participated in the work-sessions.

Number of participants	Participants' occupation	Gender		Age group	Organisation
		M	F		
15	Teachers	02	13	28-55	Dept. of Education
08	SGB members	02	06	35-45	Dept. of Education
02	Pastors	02	-	30-45	Ministers of Religion
02	Professional Nurses	-	02	50-55	Dept. of Health
04	People with disabilities	02	02	21-35	DPSA (Disability People of South Africa)
01	Social worker	-	01	30-35	Dept. of Social Development
03	Community development workers	01	02	25-35	Dept. of Social Development
06	Home based-care workers	-	06	30-35	Non-Governmental Organisation
01	Support staff	-	01	40-45	Dept. of Health (clinic)
14	Unemployed	04	10	30-35	Community members
02	Parents	-	02	45-55	Parents of children living with disability

Table 3.4.1. (a) Participants at the workshop session.

Out of the fifteen teachers, six came from ordinary public schools, two came from the local resource centre (special school) and seven came from full-service schools in the neighbourhood. The purpose of involving teachers from the full-service schools and the resource centre was to create an opportunity for them to share their experiences and observations regarding teaching learners with and without disabilities in the same class. This also created an opportunity for the researcher and all the educators to learn from each other as they shared their views on how they perceive the implementation of inclusive education and the role of community members in facilitating inclusion.

Six participants were purposively selected based on their experience in working with people with disabilities and learners experiencing barriers and their input in the work-session. These participants included a teacher in a resource centre, a former special school learner, a member of the DPSA, (all three are living with disabilities), a secondary school mainstream teacher, a primary school mainstream teacher and a social worker.

The table below indicates the age, gender and affiliation of the participants.

Number of participants	Participants' occupation	Gender		Age group	Organisation
		M	F		
01	Resource centre teacher with disability	-	F	40-45	Department of Education
01	Former special school learner with disability	-	F	21-35	—
01	Member of organisation	M	-	21-35	DPSA
01	Secondary school teacher		F	40-45	Department of Education

01	Primary school teacher	-	F	40-45	Department of Education
01	Social worker	-	F	30-35	Dept. of Social Development

Table 3.4.1. (b) Participants for the individual interviews.

3.4.2. DATA COLLECTION

3. 4. 2. 1. Interactive work sessions

The data collection methods used in this study were drawn from the qualitative approaches. A work session was held that involved 58 participants from different sectors of the community (see Table 3.4.1(a) above). Nominal group technique (Orla *et al.*, 1996) was applied to share their experiences regarding the implementation of inclusive education. Martin (2006), states that large group processes are increasingly used to promote the active engagement of all participants in sharing their individual experiences and generating a more collective understanding of their experiences.

The work session was divided into two parts. The first part involved group discussions amongst members in attendance and a presentation by the facilitator. The second part was based on semi-structured open group discussions. The main focus of the workshop was on exploring community members' perceptions and the extent of readiness regarding the implementation of inclusive education in their communities.

The participants were asked to reflect on and write a brief response to the question: "*Explain how you understand the implementation of inclusive education?*" Participants who were not capable of writing were urged to share their opinions verbally to members next to them to be captured in writing on A4 papers, which were collected by the research assistant to read through and make a summary of what was captured in those individual responses.

The participants were then divided into five groups and were each provided with a flipchart page and asked to compile an integrated presentation of the various understandings of the implementation of inclusive education in their groups. The five flipcharts were then displayed on the wall and each group was invited to do a presentation on their understanding of the implementation of inclusive education, each group was represented by one group representative.

Following the five presentations, a summary of the feedback obtained from the written responses was given by the research assistant (qualified teacher, employed as a curriculum implementer for Mathematics in the General Education Band (GET) senior phase in the Ehlanzeni district) regarding the participants' views on the implementation of inclusive education as it unfolds in their community. Participants were given a chance to reflect on their individual and group responses in an open session, and they were asked to assist the researcher to obtain clarity in understanding how they perceive the implementation of inclusive education. The activity was conducted in order to give a chance to individual participants to provide an in-depth description and responses related to the topic, what they felt could have been left out in the group discussions or what they felt needed more emphasis.

In wrapping up the first session of the workshop the researcher, who is a qualified educator and vice-principal of a school, gave a short presentation on the implementation of inclusive education as outlined in the Education White Paper 6. The intention of the presentation was to orientate the participants on the implementation of inclusive education, before asking them to identify the possible roles of the community in the implementation of inclusive education.

After the presentation, the second session resumed in which the participants were asked to go back into their groups and discussed the possible roles of the community in the implementation of inclusive education.

3.4.2.2. Semi-structured individual interviews

In this study, semi-structured individual interviews were considered to be appropriate because they allowed the researcher to follow up ideas, probe responses and clarify motives and feelings that could not be easily observed. The researcher was able to pursue specific issues of interest that might be considered critical in the research process.

According to Carlson (2010:1104), semi-structured interviews are the type of interviews researchers use to obtain an understanding of the participants' point of view regarding a situation. The interview process involves learning about the participants' views, experiences and meanings they attach to their life world. It is a method which attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view.

The researcher based the interview on the themes that were identified in the workshops regarding the two main categories, namely the community's understanding of the implementation of inclusive education and the role of the community in the implementation of inclusive education. Prompts relating to these main questions were used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

3.4.2.3. Data analysis

The three data sets (the work session, semi-structured interviews and the group discussions), obtained in this study were analysed using global analysis that according to Henning (2007:109) involves a holistic reading of the entire text to get a global impression of the content, in this case, the data obtained from the work session and the semi-structured interviews. After having obtained an overview of the phenomenon, (namely, the implementation of inclusive education in a rural community), the data were transcribed verbatim before the coding process began. Themes analyses based on an interpretive reading of the text as described by Cresswell (2008:252) were conducted to identify themes relating to the research questions as outlined by King and Horrocks (2010:150). During this stage the researcher closely read each transcript, highlighted and labelled concepts and categorized themes that emerged from the data. As questions and responses were formulated, the researcher always accounted for her position and experiences in the community; it relates to the topic under study (Henning, 2007:55). The research questions were always kept in mind at all times.

The participants' responses on their understanding of inclusive education, how they experienced and perceived the implementation process as it unfolds in their community, were the focus for data analysis. Their views on the importance of the Education White Paper 6 in inclusive education implementation were also expressed. All the conversations with the participants were audio-taped and the handwritten transcripts of the participants' words were compiled and typed while translating some expressions from vernacular to English.

The next stage of analysis involved editing and amending the transcriptions by listening and re-playing the audio recordings in order to ensure accuracy. The typed transcripts were sent to the research assistant for checking and editing for accuracy. Two months after the interviews, transcripts compilation and feedback from interviewees and work session participants, the process of analysis resumed.

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews followed a phenomenological approach which according to Flick (2006:300-307) involves thematic codes (open coding and axial coding) in which the central themes and sub-themes were compiled. The details in the transcribed texts were read line by line and word by word through the paragraphs to ensure that important details were not missed. The main idea was to break down the contents in the text to develop themes within the two main categories indicated by the questions that was posed in this study.

A detailed report outlining the outcomes of the workshop, and the identified themes was compiled and shared with thirty participants who previously attended the work session. They were requested to read through and provide additional inputs, comments and ideas to ensure that all the details discussed were correctly captured as a true reflection of what transpired at the workshop. However, only eight participants responded to the request in writing. Twelve participants gave oral feedback telephonically and during informal encounters when making follow-ups. Both groups confirmed that the data represented the voice of the participants as expressed in the work sessions. The other ten members did not respond at all.

3.5. Research procedures

The research procedure for this study was as follows:

- **Permission was obtained from the Department of Education's three circuits** located in the Ehlanzeni district namely, Nkomazi East, Lubombo and Nkomazi West circuits after sending letters to the Circuit managers requesting permission to conduct the research. The purpose of the research was explicitly outlined in the letters.
- **Participants were selected purposively** by recruiting members from the local communities who have interest and experience in inclusive education including teachers, SGB members, nurses, social workers, community development workers, ministers of religion, home-based care workers, members who belong to the organization for people living with disabilities, support staff in clinics as well as non-employed members of the community.

- **The interactive work session was conducted at a neutral venue** to ease participants from the transport constraints. Due to the demographics of the region, transport was organized to get the participants to the venue where the work session was held. The work session took place in a recreational hall located at the hospital approximately 25 kilometers from surrounding communities. A preliminary data analysis was conducted to identify themes that could be further explored during the individual interviews, to obtain a more-in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Six semi-structured individual interviews were conducted, two weeks after the workshop. The interviews in this phase focused mainly on exploring an in-depth description of the interviewees' experiences regarding the implementation of inclusive education in their communities.

3.6. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The aim of a rigorous study is to convince the readers that the study is worth taking note of and that the findings represent reality (Lennie, 2006:28). To ensure the rigour of this study the researcher strived to meet the core criteria for rigorous qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Stringer & Genat, 2004:50-52; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:9).

Credibility was ensured by keeping a clear audit trail that included field notes, raw data, data analysis and interpretations. Rich, thick descriptions that made it possible for readers to share the experiences of the participants were provided. Member checking was applied to ensure the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the findings back to selected participants to determine whether they thought the findings were accurate (Creswell, 2008: 266).

Transferability is not intended in this study since it is an inductive qualitative study. The onus for transferability rather lies with the readers and other researchers who recognise similarities with other contexts. Thick descriptions of the research design and the findings were provided to facilitate such judgements about possible transferability.

Dependability refers to the degree of consistency with regard to the measuring instrument and the possibility that the same results may be obtained (Shenton, 2004:71). Due to the inductive, naturalistic nature of the research conducted in this study suggested by Lincoln

and Guba (in Creswell and Miller, 2000:126), it may not be possible to guarantee similar findings in other contexts. However, the researcher provided extensive descriptions of the research context, procedures and methodology followed in this study to ensure that the research can be repeated in different contexts.

Confirmability was ensured by continuously reflecting on the researcher's position as a member of the community who is also involved in the inclusive education system as a teacher and vice-principal. Particular attention was given to the way in which these experiences shaped the interpretation of the data in this study. The researcher had regular reflexive discussions with the supervisor to ensure that her interpretations were supported by the data. Extensive direct quotations were also included in the reporting of the findings to enable other researchers to acquire insight into the logic employed to interpret the raw data.

Authenticity of the study involved the provision of a balanced view of the various perspectives from participants. In this study the analysed data and the interpretations were taken back to the participants so that they could confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. This was done through conducting a follow-up semi-focus group discussion held after the work session, sending the transcripts to some of the participants and providing complete feedback regarding what transpired at the work session. The participants were requested to confirm if the themes captured were accurate by making comments and inputs to the feedback. During this stage the viewpoints were carefully considered in the analysis of the data to ensure authenticity (Creswell & Miller, 2000:127; Mertens, 2010:260).

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE STUDY

Ethics in research ensure that the participants are treated with respect and that their dignity is valued. Permission was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University to conduct the research. The ethics number for this study is NWU-00082-12-A 2.

Permission was also obtained from the Ehlanzeni district Education Department in Mpumalanga, Nkomazi West, Nkomazi East, and Lubombo circuit managers respectively, during which a detailed explanation of the purpose for the research was submitted in writing. Permission was granted before the actual commencement, (Addendum D).

Operating from a position of respect for people and their knowledge and experience, the researcher did the following to ensure that the ethical principles were adhered to:

Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. The purpose of the research as well as possible risks and benefits for participating in the research was explained verbally, prior to their engagement with the research (Gay & Airasian, 2000:94; King & Horrocks:76). It was only after all the explanations had been given that the participants were requested to sign the letters of consent made available in their preferred language to ease understanding before the work session and the interviews commenced during their respective dates, (See attached addendum, B1, B2 & B3).

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudo-names in the transcripts to conceal the participants' identity, and assigning numbers to each respondent during the interviews and work session. Numbers were also used in the research report to protect their identity, for example; (R1, R2, R3, for respondents during the interviews and P1, P2, P3, P4, P20, 32, etc, for participants during the work session). The tape recordings, DVDs and transcripts were kept in a safe place to prevent access by unauthorized people. These data sources will only be used for research purposes. Research outcomes may only be made available to participants upon request whilst the full research report shall be submitted to the North-West University as a dissertation to meet the requirements of the MEd. Degree.

Care was taken to ensure that no physical or psychological harm was done to any participant during the research process by consulting colleagues who formed part of the community of practice about the methodology and the research process (Burton & Bartlet, 2009:34). The researcher also assured those participants who were not comfortable answering the questions that they could withdraw from the research at any time without being punished or penalised in any way.

3.6. SUMMARY

This chapter has described the methods employed in the collection and analysis of data, whilst careful consideration was taken not to divert from the research purpose and aims of the study. A brief discussion of ethics and credibility for the study was presented. The next chapter four presents a descriptive report of the data collected from a variety of sources and the discussion of findings on how the community under study perceive the implementation of

inclusive education and the role of the community in facilitating the whole process. Subsequently coded themes and sub-themes are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4. 1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings of the study is presented and discussed, in response to the research questions that guided the research process, namely

- (a) How do the members of the rural community understand the implementation of inclusive education in the community?
- (b) What role can the community play in enhancing the implementation of inclusive education?

The findings of the study will be discussed with reference to two main themes relating to the questions namely: The community's understanding of the implementation of inclusive education and the role of the community in the implementation of inclusive education. The table below presents an overview of the main themes and the sub-themes identified in this study.

THEME 1. The community's understanding of the implementation of inclusive education	THEME 2. The role of the community in the implementation of inclusive education
Sub-theme 1.1. Inclusive education as an on-going process of creating space for all to learn. Sub-theme 1.2. Inclusive education as a process that involves the whole community. Sub-theme 1.3. Inclusive education as an interactive process of collaboration between stakeholders.	Sub-theme 2.1. Accept responsibility to include all members. Sub-theme 2.2. Support those who care for people with disabilities. Sub-theme 2.3. Change infrastructure to accommodate people with disabilities. Sub-theme 2.4. Challenge the unequal distribution of resources.

The following codes will be used to identify the data source in this discussion:

GW = Group in work sessions (1-5)

WA= Written assignments (1-32)

IV = Semi-structured Individual Interviews (1-6)

4.2. THEME1: THE COMMUNITY'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The community's understanding of the implementation of inclusive education is discussed with reference to **three sub-themes** that indicate how the members of the rural community, selected as a case study, understand the implementation of inclusive education.

4.2.1. Sub-theme 1.1.

Inclusive education as an on-going process of creating spaces for all to learn

The members of the rural community who participated in this research clearly understood the implementation of inclusive education as a process that is intended to transform education through the inclusion of people irrespective of the affiliations, hence creating spaces for all learners to participate in education. The following statements by the participants best describe this understanding:

"Inclusion is the process itself and....., it's just that Education was the first one to come up with a process to review or transform", IV respondent #1 with disability, teacher in a resource centre.

".....a process of including everyone irrespective of gender, race, cultural background and disability to achieve one common goal of education", WA participant #10.

".....the process whereby people are educated to include the excluded in the mainstream", WA participant #32.

The community's understanding of the implementation of inclusive education as **creating spaces for all to learn** clearly resonates with the social justice perspective on inclusive education which forms the basis of the implementation of inclusive education as argued by Engelbrecht, Oswald and Forlin, (2006:121) that inclusion implies an education system that is inherently capable of meeting diverse needs of learners and the right of equal access to education for all (EFA) without discriminating in any way, thus preventing learner breakdown and exclusion (RSA, 1994).

Creating spaces for all learners according to the participants furthermore implies **an on-going process** that is not facilitated as a means to an end, but rather as a way to ensure that all people, irrespective of preferences, race and ability, get an opportunity to further their education.

“Let it be an on-going process - not a means to an end or once off thing”, GW participant #5, educator in a mainstream school, also a parent to a child with physical disability.

Ainscow (2005:118) defines inclusion as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity and learning how to live with differences. The search is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers, and thus involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice.

As an on-going process, inclusive education calls for the presence, participation and achievement of all learners. “Presence” here is concerned with where children are educated, while “participation” relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves to achieve outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results. Thus a call is made for active participation of all role players to ensure the implementation process affirmed by Gibson (2006:321-322) who challenges the culture of silence. He asserts that the process of implementing inclusion requires society to break the silence and engage the previously disadvantaged, and involve learner participation in decision making (wherever possible and appropriate) so that we know what they think they do when they learn and also what they think are the reasons for learning or not learning.

The participants in particular, emphasised the placement of learners in schools as part of this on-going process of creating spaces for all learners. The role that full-service schools can play in creating spaces for all to learn was acknowledged by the participants, yet they cautioned that schools should not be considered as the only option to create space for those learners experiencing barriers. They emphasised that educators in mainstream schools should also be empowered to provide care and support for learners experiencing barriers.

“Even so, it is also said that we should not depend on full service schools only, even mainstream schools are encouraged not to deny children admission on the basis of barriers. If the child has already been admitted, we can’t turn him away, but need to start empowering educators on how to provide care and support to learners experiencing barriers”, IV respondent #1, with disability, teacher at resource centre.

Another viewpoint expressed by the participants was that full service schools and special schools might encourage the exclusion and labelling of learners experiencing barriers in their communities. These participants suggested that full service schools should only be recommended for mild cases, whilst severe cases should be referred to resource centres. The statements by two participants confirm these concerns and suggestions:

"If the learners go to special schools, they become excluded from the community since they rarely come home. By the time the child visits home, his peers are not used to him, thus find them calling him by names like "Lesichwala salapha kasibanibani" which means "that handicap for that family" but if the child attends the local school he enjoys staying with the family and get used to friends without becoming a stranger in the neighbourhood," GW participant #2, educator in a full service school.

Whilst participants in the study strongly support inclusion of learners experiencing barriers in full service and mainstream schools, they also indicated that special schools (resource centres) still have an important role to play in this on-going process to facilitate learning for all, as stated below:

".....if the barriers are severe, the learners are referred to the special school, but if mild to moderate, the department officials themselves should come and assist how to support the learners," IV respondent #1, with disability, teacher at resource centre.

The same idea was emphasized by one group of participants at the work session who indicated that resource centres will continue to play an important part to support specific cases, as highlighted in the following:

"So, what we need to understand very well is that there are children with disabilities who can cope in the mainstream school, and some who can be referred to the special school for a short period, aimed at equipping them with a particular skill which the child may need, thereafter, they may need to go back to the mainstream school", GW participant.

According to the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, the implementation of inclusive education is not blindly accepted by the members of the rural community. A concern was expressed regarding practices of inclusion that might do more harm than good. These concerns refer very specifically to the placement of learners who are not supposed to be in special schools and the harm that can be associated with such placements. Literature supports the idea that certain learning needs may require specialised equipment and support for which mainstream classroom teachers can never provide a full substitute. Ainscow and Cesar (2006), for example indicate that the organisations for the Deaf recommended that they be educated separately to guarantee the right to education in the sign language and access to deaf culture which could inconvenience the non- deaf individuals if placed in the same class. Concurrently, Eleweke and Rodda (2002) recommend that special instructions should be made available when needed to meet specific needs of learners.

Two participants who previously attended former special schools, one of whom was a local resource teacher and the other one an x-special school learner, (not a teacher) seemed to be sceptical about the inclusion of learners with disabilities in one class. They argued that the inclusion of a learner with various barriers in an ordinary classroom might be problematic, considering how the fellow classmates may view the needs of the learner with special needs in their classroom. They stated:

"If they can be mixed in one class, the barriers should be looked into thoroughly, it cannot be possible to put together a learner who has intellectual impairment, for instance, together with the learner without any barrier, and definitely it won't work. You find that there are learners who are blind, mixed with the other learners with hearing impairment; these machines are so noisy that the other learners might be disturbed. The environment is not going to be friendly to the other group," IV respondent # 1, with disability, teacher at resource centre.

"Yes. I think it's possible, but the type of barrier should be looked into, whether that child can be accommodated in that school, because you may find others complaining about the state of the child, sometimes finding it difficult to help him. So, it could be that the other learners who are able may not understand disability, thus might complain that, "Ah naye lona siloku simphusha nje" meaning "Ah, look at this one, we are tired of pushing him in his/her wheelchair? So, they might end up rushing for their own work in classes, even teachers, only to find that you are left outside", IV respondent #2 with disability, former special school learner.

However, one of the participants who was a member of Disabled People of South Africa (DPSA) argued that the implementation of inclusive education as a process of creating space for learning may be accompanied by placement problems. His argument involves the concern that learners are admitted to schools without consideration of their needs. He insisted that the needs have to be taken into consideration during the admission process. He stated:

"I think it will always depend on the form of disability whether it can be accommodated in that school, and whether the school environment has been changed to meet the needs of the particular learner, if so, the learner can be admitted. Like our school here, we have a learner using the walking stick. She does not have any intellectual impairment, she is progressing very well. So, there is no reason of taking her away from her family because she is coping at school", IV participant #3, DPSA member.

In terms of how these spaces should be created the professionals in the community supported the implementation of inclusion in mainstream education wherever practically possible.

Given the history of inclusive education and the teaching profession in South Africa, it is not surprising that some have reacted with scepticism to the proposal for full inclusion of learners with disabilities in ordinary schools. Their argument is based on the following motivations. Firstly, they encourage the placement of children experiencing barriers in mainstream schools to avoid isolating/separating these children from the familiarity of their home conditions. Secondly, children with disabilities are gradually admitted in regular schools, with the hope that labelling and stigmatization would fade with time as they learn to play alongside their peers without disabilities. It is a different situation if these children only visit their families once or twice a year. They ultimately become strangers in the midst of their own people.

Therefore the same members seemed willing to accept that referrals to full-service schools and resource centres need to be made when it is not possible to deal with the particular barriers in a mainstream context. From the participants' willingness to accept referrals, it is evident that the community clearly understands that mainstream schools are part of the inclusive education project geared towards providing care and support for learners experiencing barriers and learning difficulties. It is also interesting to note that these suggestions were raised by the members as evidence that the rural community under study does not merely accept what is imposed to them by the researcher. They were evoked and encouraged to ask questions, and ultimately provided answers themselves.

The community's understanding of the implementation of inclusive education is in line with White Paper 6 which states that learners who require low-intensive support should be catered for in ordinary schools, whilst moderate cases should be referred to full-service schools. Learners who require high-intensive educational support should continue to receive support in special schools (DoE, 2001:15).

The role of educators in the on-going process of creating spaces for all learners was emphasised by the participants who are in professional services, (i.e. one social worker and one teacher from the local resource centre). They were of the opinion that teachers' attitudes and their ability to accept and accommodate learners experiencing barriers or disabilities in their classes play an important role in the implementation of inclusive education and require having an empathetic understanding as stated below:

"It's okay, but it will depend on the teacher's interest because some are willing to communicate with the people living with disabilities, whilst others may not be willing, because other people when they look at people with disabilities, they think they are useless, you see. So, in such instances it can be difficult to work with such a person because they may undermine them. The most important thing here is the interest", IV respondent # 3, DPSA member.

The community under study also warned against placement due to lack of training for educators in mainstream schools. This concern resonates with what has been found in research conducted by Loreman (2007) regarding the need for teacher training; he found that many teachers feel inadequately trained to meet the demands of an inclusive class. He therefore recommended teacher training and provision of resources as one of the seven pillars in support of inclusion, in which university or school partnership arrangements are established on site to provide in-service training for teachers in inclusive education. The partnership focuses on providing leadership and other forms of assistance through university colleagues who deliver course content after instructional hours at school. This kind of approach seemingly addresses the need for relevant training to the educational context in which the teachers were working (Loreman, 2007:33).

Literature indicates that one of the greatest problems facing the new education dispensation in Southern Africa is the necessity of training teachers to think and work in a new frame of reference, as stated below:

"A disturbing number of teachers in South Africa are confused and insecure because of a series of radical changes that have transformed their working environment. They are not acquainted with the principles of outcomes based education; they find it difficult to seek and find their own learning material (relevant to each child's culture, interest and level of development); they struggle to involve parents and communities in the learning process; they feel themselves inadequate in person and in training to deal with so much diversity amongst the large number of learners in their classrooms; and they suffer a lack of self-respect and self-assurance because of the labels of laziness....." (Prinsloo, 2001:345).

4.2.2. Sub-theme 1.2.

Inclusive education as a process that involves the whole community

The data obtained from the work session indicated that the participants perceived the implementation of inclusive education as a process that involves more than merely facilitating inclusion of all learners in schools. Participants in the group work session in particular, emphasised that inclusion should be understood as a something that comes from the community, since the people involved in the implementation process come from the community. Participants described the understanding of the implementation of inclusion as a community process that entails the interactive engagement between schools, families and communities, as indicated in the following statements:

"I think to stress that inclusion should stretch further than the school situation, because when you talk about inclusion now, then people think, oh!! They are talking to teachers. Unless we review the meaning of the word itself, it can help us extend the involvement of these other people, and move away from the school and start thinking where does the child come from before he comes to school, he comes from the family, and where does the family come from, it comes from a group of families in the community", IV respondent #1, with disability, teacher at resource centre.

"As a teacher, I am from the community, as I go to school, I will know because I am from the community and the school is part of the community", IV respondent #4, teacher at a mainstream school.

"Everything we do, e.g. teaching, projects in our community, and other community activities like in sports. We must include all people, even people with disabilities", WA participant # 17.

An implication of understanding inclusive education as a process that involved the whole community, according to one participant was that members of the community should refrain from being judgemental towards people with disabilities and rather acknowledge them as persons with capabilities:

"Yes, they might be unable to do some things but they are able to do others. Being mentally impaired does not automatically mean mentally ill. You can send such a person to a shop, and still buy the right thing. Such a person is not mentally ill, but may find that he/she is below average", GW, participant.

“Let us involve every person in all community activities, whether sports or any kind of activity. Like when we elect committees, DO’NT LOOK AROUND FIRST AND JUDGE ME. Look at my potential, raise your hand and elect me”, GW presenter #5.

Understanding the implementation of inclusive education as a process that involve the whole community, implies that inclusive education is perceived as a way to promote the inclusion of all people in community based activities to enhance their sense of belonging and community. Muthukrishna and Sader, (2004) describe the sense of belonging from a community psychology viewpoint as social cohesion, bonding and mutual support that connect people who share similar demographic characteristics, values and norms that guide their social interaction on a daily basis. The social cohesion and bonding create a secure attachment critical for promoting a sense of agency and the belief that one’s actions can make a difference and encourage interventions in the community.

Research has shown that when community partners experience a secure attachment with one another, they can easily take risks, assume responsibility and help one another in problematic situations (Gregory, 2001:479; Rappaport, Alegria & Mulvaney-Day, 2008: 694). As attachments grow, so does trust and dependence on one another. This principle is invaluable in developing community partnerships geared towards care and support for people experiencing barriers to learning disabilities in our communities. The social networks help community members to confront real obstacles inherent in the lives of people, including personal problems and disability.

Facilitating the process of inclusion in the community as a whole was furthermore perceived by participants from the work session and the interviews as the sharing of skills, knowledge and talents through involvement in a variety of activities presented at skills oriented community centres/ projects to be accessed by all people, despite their diversity of needs. Group #1 at the work session stressed the importance of sharing skills and knowledge as one form of empowering community members, including local community churches, to care and support people with disabilities by stating that:

“Therefore, we need to provide knowledge and train people skills to survive. Particularly, we black Africans think that knowledge should be provided to the ‘normal’ persons only, which should not be the case.....” GW presenter #1.

The same idea of developing skills centres to empower people by sharing skills shared during the individual interviews and in their written responses (9 # WA). Participants stated :

"Okay ... there is a skill I have learnt at school, which I need to practise or use, So, I wish we can establish a centre where our skills can be nurtured. (Establishment of skills oriented community centres) You may find that, I am not the only one. I wish we may come together and establish a project where we can teach each other what we know, instead of keeping the skill for myself, so that people can also regard us as people as much as we regard them as people. It does not mean that I have a different kind of blood (blue) and others have red blood. We are all the same; the only difference is our diverse needs", IV participant # 2.

"..... Education that gives us knowledge in human kind and include all things, and it is shared amongst us. I think it's about teaching other people skills", WA participant #20 and #21.

A case shared by a professional nurse who could not help a patient who is deaf, suggest the need for skills to facilitate inclusion and support people with disabilities.

"Take for instance, I am a nurse, that patient comes to consult, needs help, should explain how he/she feels or what is wrong. As a nurse, instead of responding positively to his/her need, I can't, but have to rely on the one accompanying the patient, who may sometimes not explain or interpret correctly because he/she does not understand the sign language. At the end of the day the patient comes out unsatisfactorily treated because of communication breakdown..... I suggest that lessons on sign language be introduced to health-care practitioners to break the communication gap in sign language", GW participant, professional nurse.

The community in the study perceives the success of the implementation process as embedded in the development of community based projects, that is, taking teaching and learning out of school and bringing it closer to the community to enhance public participation of everyone in community activities, such as sports, culture, music, dance, religion, etc. Thus, it implies a shift of focus from learners to learning centres to create inclusive cultures, policies and practices at all levels of the education system. According to this perspective, inclusion of any group of learners cannot proceed very far without developing the capacity of learning centres to respond to diversity (Savollinen, Kokkala & Alasuutari, 2000:18)

4.2.3. Sub-theme 1.3.

Inclusive education as an interactive process of collaboration between stakeholders

Six participants in their written responses (6 #WA) presented an understanding of the implementation of inclusion as an interactive process of collaboration between stakeholders that integrates the various systems to function as a whole, in which all people from different sectors work together to meet the diverse needs of community members.

According to participants, the facilitation of inclusion needs to involve stakeholders from various government departments and sectors including Education, Health, Social Development, Justice Department, Public Works, the religious sector, Department of Arts and Culture, Agriculture, private sector, etc. The collaboration between these sectors will in their view ensure that the right to inclusion is protected in the community as well as the child's family, as stated below:

"Kuhlangana kwalemikhakha lehlukene, labafundzile, labangafundzanga, bonesi, ma-Social worker naboThishela. Kungabikho longenalungelo emphakatsini naselubanjiswaneni, kantsi nakulabo labakhubatekile kuze kungabi nalabangehandle. Wonkhe umuntfu akhululeke"

"Working together of different sectors / stakeholders, including the educated and non-educated, nurses, social workers and teachers, without depriving anyone their rights in the community, and those with disabilities to ensure that no one is excluded, such that everyone is free," WA participant #26 (Translation).

"Imfundvo lehlanganisa bonkhe bantfu ngekwhlukana kwemikhakha, bonesi, bothishela, lokhubatekile, njalonjalo". The type of education bringing people together, teachers, nurses, disabled etc", WA participant #15 (Translation).

'Inhlanganyela yemfundvo lefaka yonkhe imikhakha nebulili bonkhe, e.g. Temphilo, tangaphandle, tebalimi netemfundvo". The type of education involving all sectors regardless of gender, health condition, agriculture or farming circumstances", WA participant #11.

The responses stressed the importance of working together in an effort to bridge the gap between full service and resource schools to strengthen collaboration as stated in the Education White Paper 6 policy that inclusion is acknowledging that a barrier is a need that must be met, not used for describing the individual.

The case, discussed by a primary school teacher in the mainstream school, participant #6, during the semi-structured interviews, illustrates that the lack of interaction between the Health and the Education department led to a learner dropping out of school because she

failed to get the assistance she needed. From this case we learn that it is important to work together to promote inclusion:

“There was another case in my class where a parent brought a child with speech impairment. When I tried to ask few questions, he could not answer anything. When I asked the parent what was wrong? Did they send him to the doctor for consultation, the parent said she did, but the doctor believed the child will be able to speak one day. The parent frequently took him to the hospital for check up. When I made follow-ups, the parent said the doctor said the child must be brought to the mainstream school but no direction was given to us on how to help him. Days went by until the child could no longer come to school”, IV, respondent #6, primary school teacher from a mainstream school.

In the above case study, the doctor was correct from his medical perspective but, what was supposed to have happened to this child is that after the medical diagnosis was conducted, the social conditions had to be assessed too, and then they (school, through the IBST members and the doctor) should have come up with intervention strategies to assist the learner. Sometimes, a combination of the two models works well depending on the diagnosed problems.

The understanding of the implementation of inclusive education as a collaborative endeavour that integrates the various systems to function as a whole logically follows the community's understanding of inclusive education as part of developing an inclusive community. The findings emphasise the crucial role that can be played by various sectors in promoting inclusion in rural communities. This implies that the public sectors should not be seen as fragmented parts in the community, but as a system linked to all other sectors, families, homes, schools, hospitals, institutions, communities and public settings. If all these sectors can come together and work in collaboration, they will complement each other to the benefit of all communities and the entire society. Literature on collaboration supports that accepting inclusion as a collective project can ensure that the entire school community assumes responsibility for the learning and progress of each and every student. Collaborative work among teachers, between teachers and parents, between teachers and specialists, and among students, is necessary in order to achieve learning and participation of all students (Nind, Rix, *et al.*, 2003:135; Savollinan *et al.*, 2000: 50).

4.3. THEME 2: THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The role of the community in implementing inclusive education is viewed by participants as accepting the responsibility to include all members, supporting those who care for people with disabilities, changing infrastructure to accommodate people with disabilities and challenging the unequal distribution of resources.

4.3.1. Sub-theme 2.1.

Accepting responsibility to include all

Participants in this study indicated that they have observed a tendency among community members to selfishly focus only on their own feelings about the inclusion of people without considering what it might do to those people who are excluded. One participant, (with physical disability) who previously attended special school shared her experience in this regard. She stated:

“You know what I think is that all people must be taught that people like us are there in this world, and they will always be there as we see them and meet them in our daily lives, and it’s not that people don’t understand, it’s just that people, you know, have their own problems like ignorance. It’s like, they tell themselves that, they are able to walk and talk, why they should understand somebody else who is unable. It’s just that some people are selfish; they think only ‘them’ are important”, IV respondent #2 with disability.

According to the participants in this study, some members of their community seem to have the perception that people with disabilities are incapable of achieving anything. Such perceptions may be uncovered through social participation in community activities as stated in the following excerpts:

“.....because other people when they look at people with disabilities, they think they are useless, you see. So, in such instances, it can be difficult to work with such a person because they may undermine them”, IV participant #3, DPSA member.

“.....people with disabilities are regarded as if they don’t know anything, can’t think for themselves, and also not thought well of by family members. They are never given a chance to express their feelings, likes and dislikes by those staying with them, the mentally disturbed or intellectually impaired in particular. Also, never given a chance to make choices, they have to accept everything and anything, whether they like or want certain food types or no”, GW presenter #3.

Data obtained from the work session and the semi-structured interviews revealed that an awareness of the implementation of inclusive education might facilitate the acceptance of responsibility to care for people who live with disabilities. Participants argued that in the very act of being aware of such needs will facilitate the acceptance of the responsibility to care for people, as one group representative reported:

"Firstly, we have mentioned that one cannot be able to play a role without being made aware. Hence, we said the community must be made aware first, that there is inclusive education, and then it will be able to play a role. We say therefore "Ayihlome ihlasele" which means "Like warriors, let's go all out" The community shall have played a role by going all out because everyone shall feel welcomed and comfortable to play a role in that community", GW presenter # 5.

The participants insisted that members of the community therefore have to be made aware of the strengths of people in their community who are excluded based on their disabilities or barriers to learning. The community needs to be educated to value these people and engage with them in sensitive ways.

The statements below support the importance of creating such awareness:

"Just think, what will people think, and to my surprise people have not taken note that at times we, people with disabilities may have good things better than they do", IV respondent #2, former special school learner.

"I think our communities are lacking when it comes to that, they are not aware, or they are not even sure whether they are aware. Even if they are aware, they are not sure what to do. I think the best thing we can do is to make them aware and make follow-ups on what should be done", IV respondent # 4, an educator in a mainstream school.

Members furthermore repeatedly emphasized that families play an important role in facilitating a positive attitude to enhance the implementation process as indicated in the following statement:

"....This happens because family members have certain attitudes towards people with disabilities. We have focused our attention on families and homes in particular, because we believe inclusion must start at home before extending to the community. Attitudes normally lead to discrimination in the sense that the child must be isolated, not need to associate or socialize with other people. Instead, you find others shut in behind closed doors or treated unequally from others", GW presenter # 3.

The concern raised about the overemphasis of support for learners with physical disabilities at the expense of those who have intellectual impairments, also reflects lack of understanding that all people, regardless of their disabilities, need to be included. The participant who is a social worker in particular expressed concern about the exclusion of people with mental retardation. She stated:

"I wish we can also talk about the mentally retarded too because we have them in our communities. They must also get the help they need, should not be left outside", GW participant #7, social worker.

"Thus we need to intervene early to any form of intellectual impairment before the situation can get worse, because it always start somewhere. Some can be given therapy, depending on their condition. Some conditions can be stabilized till the person gets better", GW participant #7, social worker.

It is envisaged that community participation in awareness programmes might create an opportunity to educate members to be able to accept the responsibility to develop an inclusive ethos in their community. The suggestion by Kisanji (1998:59), to use local language that is more familiar to the indigenous African practices to create an awareness of the practice of inclusive education, should be seriously considered. Community members should be encouraged to engage in more cultural activities dominant in their neighbourhood by communicating through the home language that they understand best to facilitate awareness and change their attitudes. The excerpt from the author's work demonstrates the power of indigenous customary education in promoting inclusive learning in natural environments and community settings in which people interact.

"I grew up partially sighted and underwent this kind of education before..... It was great fun herding cattle in the bush, making snares for small animals, identifying plants and animals, practising wrestling and complex dances, swimming, gathering wild fruits, cooking, milking, naming and counting our herds:hearing, visually, physically and intellectually impaired young people in the community (p.59).

4.3.2. Sub-theme 2.2.

Supporting parents and caregivers of people with disabilities

Participants from the five groups at the work session emphasized the importance of supporting parents, families, relatives and friends of people with disabilities in the community, based on their experiences of the way in which families who have children with disabilities are perceived in the community. Families with children who have disabilities are

often excluded due to the perception that they are cursed which lead to blame and self-blame. One group gave the following feedback regarding the position of parents who have children with disabilities:

“The first thing we looked at is blame. In some families, when a child with disability is born, he/she is normally regarded as a curse, thinking that probably there is something bad which the parents have done which led to the disability in the home”, GW presenter #3.

Consequently families tend to hide their children and in the process exclude them from receiving proper education.

“..... in many instances, it is the parents who hide their children. So, they must be empowered”, GW, Participant 5, professional nurse.

In his discussion on seven pillars of support to inclusive education, Loreman (2007:30) argues that *“parents are one of those pillars who are not just part of the wider community, but rather form the ‘core’ of school community along with educators and students”*. It can thus be suggested that without the co-operation and help of parents in communities, very little can be accomplished.

Loreman (2007) emphasizes the important role that parents play in the lives of their children, firstly by assisting them to make decisions based on their experience, secondly by teaching them about life and thirdly by advocating on their behalf. It is probably with these roles in mind that the participants suggested that teachers as members of the rural community can play an important role in the empowerment of parents as significant role players in inclusive education.

Participants therefore suggested that teachers need to include topics related to inclusion during parents’ meetings in which parents can be allowed to air their views, express their thoughts and feelings and also share experiences and challenges with regard to caring for their children, as stated below:

“To the community we can say, teachers should explain to parents during parents’ meetings regarding inclusive education and disabilities. Like some parents don’t even know about minor problems like hard of hearing, they only think the child is stubborn, whereas, if we can talk about it the parent will know that it is a disability that needs attention. Particularly because teachers have been taught regarding symptoms guiding them”, GW participant #1.

They also suggested that health professionals must provide parental support from the child's birth, and consistent follow-up by interacting with the parents when they visit the clinics of hospitals. The social worker remarked:

"..... Parents in particular, must be educated, because everybody has been born in a family by parents. Professionals and experts should teach those parents because all the children are born in clinics / hospitals. Even if, they can be born at homes but finally, they are taken to clinics where they have regular contact with nurses as professionals for medical care. During these contacts and visits, lessons and workshops should be provided on how to handle a child with disability. Also, need to educate parents of children with disabilities to accept them unconditionally from birth".

4.3.3. Sub-theme 2.3.

Adapt and improve infrastructures to accommodate people with disabilities

Findings in this study have revealed that the existing structures in homes and community buildings do not accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. Participants therefore suggested that the community should transform the environment to accommodate those who have disabilities. The following statements were made:

"I would like to support regarding the point of us parents living with a child with disabilities. As you can see my child with whom I am now. She has a physical disability, but the way I have built my house (Pause) You find us building upstairs ----- I don't mean that I have built one, but there are steps and 'stoeps' which make it difficult even for me to help her move with ease, ... because of the nature of my building. Thus, I have to lift her up and it's very difficult in such instances, since she is using a wheelchair. Such things - it means we, as parents need to be called and taught how to make a home environment welcoming", GW participant # 4; parent to a child with disability.

"What we have realized is that our schools have not been upgraded with ramps to accommodate people with disabilities, such that others are unable to access certain classrooms with ease. Even some of our community churches are not accessible, such that you find others with difficult mobility sitting outside, just because cannot gain entrance to the church-building", GW presenter #1.

Not only homes need transformation, but also public institutions. Schools, churches, community halls, clinics, market places and community facilities like old aged homes, sports

grounds, etc. must be welcoming in all respects to accommodate any form of disability. The following examples were cited by members as structures which people find difficult to access with ease in communities, hence denying them the benefits of social services:

“.....Transformation of the environment including all structures as mentioned by other groups. We are saying; Let it start from the home environment, to accommodate the child from his childhood in the way we build our houses. The home environment must allow access of mobility in all rooms and the home yard without any difficulty. The child must be taught even to operate a TV on his/her own, just like others”, GW #3, presenter.

“My view is that when community leaders build structures, they must make them inclusive regardless whether there are people with disabilities or not. Let them think that any time in future a person experiencing barriers may come even if he does not belong to that community. When that time comes, the person must find a welcoming environment not stairs or steps which will be hard to access. Let's say a physically challenged DJ is invited for entertainment, the environment must be accessible. Apart from that, one day we will have the aged people who will find it difficult to climb stairs”, GW participant #1, educator.

Members also raised the need to transform recreational facilities and the public transport systems to accommodate people experiencing mobility difficulties. They cited that, as members of the community who have needs to be fulfilled, they do wish to visit places without any hassles, but the current transport system complicates their lives. The two case studies below were used to express the concern:

“We need to involve people with disabilities in sports activities because, in most cases, we leave them out concluding that they cannot cope because of their disability status....., resources or facilities must be made accessible to every person with disabilities, like putting ramps in our churches, shops and schools to ease mobility. Take for example, I can be able to play in any playground but somebody experiencing difficult mobility may find it difficult if the playground surface is not well levelled (with weed, grass / stones”, GW presenter # 4.

“Currently, our wheelchairs are not technologically advanced (automatic) to access the steps in the taxis.....whereas that person is a community member who needs to move from point A to point B. He needs to go to places like plaza or elsewhere. Instead, they find themselves confined at home, denying them a chance to socialize as we do and provide moral, support. The national MEC for public transport, Sbu Ndebele is busy upgrading the transport system, but nothing is said regarding upgrading the transport system to become inclusive. It is even better with the train because it is accessible, particularly if it stopped at its platform”, GW presenter #2.

One participant discussed enhancing community skills by referring to the need for churches to transform and include sign language interpreters during their services to accommodate people experiencing hearing problems. In her view, the inability to accommodate deaf people ultimately encourages exclusion of those individuals who so wish to experience some spiritual upliftment in their lives. She stated that:

"Isn't, we do have our deaf people in the community, with whom we stay and do everything with them, we chat with them, we watch TV and do everything with them, but there is one point in which they are not covered, when we come to the issue of the church. There are those who so wish to go to church, they are discouraged because when they reach there, they don't understand a thing, they don't hear a thing, so they are still excluded in that extent. So, there is a very big challenge regarding that, a very big challenge for our churches to do something as far as deaf people are concerned. They are very much left behind, hence, they seem like people who don't understand what is going on, maybe as far as the Word of God is concerned but it's not a matter of not understanding, but what do we do about it", IV respondent #1, with disability, a resource school teacher.

Evidently the infrastructure in the community where the research took place is not sufficiently supportive to people who have disabilities. In some communities there are no such facilities at all. The public transport system in rural areas does not accommodate different forms of disabilities. People using wheelchairs and other assistive devices still struggle to board buses and taxis because of the way they are made. Most church structures still leave much to be desired in that the deaf community, the blind and in some instances the physically challenged cannot access the structures, and thus they suffer exclusion.

What is significant is that The Education White Paper 6 policy document clearly indicates the importance of making the physical environments barrier-free to ensure accessibility to all learners. However, despite the rural communities understanding of their role in providing the necessary infrastructure to enhance the implementation of inclusive education, it seems as if these undertakings are still not in place in most rural schools. This finding might suggest that even though the community might display a positive attitude towards inclusive education, they do not necessarily act upon the challenges.

4.3.4. Sub-theme 2.4.

Challenge the limited access to opportunities in rural areas

Concern about the limited access to opportunities was perceived by the participants involved in the study. They regard the current state of affairs as a barrier to the facilitation of a more inclusive community. It was noted with great concern that urban areas seem to be advantaged at the expense of rural areas. The participants referred to the limited access of people with disabilities to public transport, jobs, social facilities / services and lack of access to information in the form of print media (for the visually impaired) and religious and cultural activities. The following statements confirm these concerns:

“What I have noticed are the difficulties in accessing transport, especially buses in our area. I have noted that in some urban areas people using wheelchairs access buses very easy, the entrance simply slides up easily without any hassle, but it’s not happening around our area. To crown it all, they are also provided with free tickets to board buses and trains but it’s not happening around our place. Here, at Nkomazi municipality we are still lagging behind”, IV respondent #3, DPSA member.

The government is blamed for the lack of access to job opportunities as they fail to provide devices such as Braille to members of the community in need. Currently, it is only a limited number of organizations that are trying to provide assistance to the visually impaired, much still needs to be done, as one participant shared her experience that:

“The Braille is only accessible to the companies or organizations who give them directly to the people. We have the South African Council for the blind, is an organization for blind people. So, they do have their own magazines sometimes, where they try to compile some information, the Braille trumpet, and a magazine for the youth. They just highlight issues from other papers and put them together, and there is this ‘Ifama’ from the South African Council for the blind too. It can also consist of articles from other newspapers papers, like if there is an interesting article from Sunday times and other issues or success stories about blind people”, IV respondent #1, teacher at resource centre.

“I think it would be a smaller percentage of people with disabilities who can access services easily. I think this can be evident in rural areas where technology has not yet much improved. For instance, when you talk about services, there are things like newspapers; our people cannot read print media. Therefore, cannot read newspapers, but have to rely on other people. It is so difficult for one person to read the whole paper for somebody. So, they don’t get the information the way they could if they were reading for themselves. That’s why

you find that at the end of the day; they cannot access jobs in one way or another, because in order for one to get a job, one needs to apply. So, where do you get information from the media if you cannot read? You can hear about it, long after the closing date has lapsed”, IV respondent #1, teacher at resource centre.

In strengthening the government's responsibility to improve service delivery to communities, the Department of Education is challenged to take a leading role in ensuring that user-friendly learning environments are created, not only in schools but in the community as well. Such initiatives will ensure that no school denies admission to learners with mild disabilities in the mainstream; as is evident in the following case shared during interviews that, regardless of the Education White paper 6, some learners are still denied access to inclusive education.

“... My friend who was attending in a normal school once told me that she was turned away because of her disability. They said, they could not admit her because the school was not conducive for her because of some stairs. What concerns me is that this thing happened during this era where the issue of inclusion was already in place. This makes us feel isolated, as if we don't belong. I asked myself why, because the place was supposed to be changed / upgraded in order to accommodate everybody irrespective of disability status”, IV respondent #2, former special school learner.

A deep concern regarding the slow pace at which government responds to problems in schools that need support was raised by two participants at the work session who stated:

“... ... problem is, even if you can report, they take these reports to stay with them in their offices without coming back to say what should be done. We have such learners in my school, but the department does not come. I have children who were assessed in the year 2010; we were promised that they will be referred in July 2011.... Till now (at the time of research May 2011) the department has not shown up. Parents are asking what to do now?” GW participant, full service school teacher.

“What I can recommend is that the DoE needs to support all full service schools in every respect, like in our school we have learners who are visually impaired thus need extra material / facilities to support their learning and such materials are not yet available. Currently, the supplied learning materials do not support inclusion - it only caters for the mainstream learners”, GW participant, full service school teacher.

“Personally, I think only if the teacher has been trained to have empathic understanding regarding the condition of that particular learner so that he/she can respond positively to the

need of that learner, thus can be included. The teachers should strive to put himself in the shoes of that learner so that he can view the world in the eyes of that learner”, IV respondent #5, social worker.

“Each school should have trained teachers who will in turn train others on how to live with people having disabilities. Particularly we need such teachers because; we have a problem here in Nkomazi municipality” GW presenter #1.

“I think if the department can use people like us, people who are willing, without being pushed to do things, for a start, use people who have that understanding of people with disabilities. In that way we shall go a step further, and therefore workshop the rest of the people, but at first, they should start with those who are willing,” IV respondent #4, mainstream school teacher.

The government’s strategy for funding public institutions and its various departments has a bearing on the distribution of resources to communities. Although evidence suggests that the majority of children and young people with disabilities live in rural areas, few existing special education facilities are concentrated in urban areas (Beloin & Peterson, 2000:16).

Consequently, children with special needs in rural areas remain at home because of inaccessibility due to cost and distance. In an investigation regarding problems of inclusion in the West African country of Nigeria by Anumonye (in Eleweke & Rodda, 2002:116), data indicated that the required educational materials were not provided or were inadequate in irregular schools where students with special needs were being integrated. The data also indicated that there were no personnel in most institutions to provide important advisory services that would assist teachers of learners with special needs in public schools. Clearly, the inadequate facilities, absence of support services, large class sizes and poor infrastructure are some of the obstacles to achieving meaningful inclusion in developing countries like South Africa (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002:116; Muthukrishna, 2001).

Urban settlements seem to receive a better share than rural areas. This can be seen through the fact that stadiums, libraries, golf courses, tennis courts, cinemas and well- resourced schools are all centred in towns, making it easier to meet the diverse needs of the people around these areas. Poor schools, poor roads and lack of recreational facilities are witnessed in many rural settings, thus making it quite impossible to meet the needs of the people. Without resources in communities it is quite difficult or even impossible to implement inclusive education. The community’s role therefore, is to challenge the government to ensure that resources are distributed in such a manner that all citizens in the country enjoy equal benefits.

4.4. INTEGRATED DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from the study regarding the communities understanding of the implementation of inclusive education indicate that members of the rural community share the common understanding that the implementation of inclusive education is cyclic process that involves the collaboration between the schools and the rural community as part of the same ecosystem. The collaborative effort according to them should be aimed at creating spaces to accommodate people across the various divides such as gender, age and disability, to facilitate. Community members had different views on how these spaces may be created to make them more accessible for all, yet they seem to agree that the inclusive education as a process is embedded in the community as a whole.

From their understanding of inclusive education as a process that is embedded in the community, they also challenged exclusive practices, in particular those practices regarding the exclusion of people with disabilities. The rural community of community members as a driving force behind supporting disability, thus creating a very strong link between inclusive education and social justice. From the social justice perspective, no learner may be denied access to any school on any grounds, including disability, language or learning difficulty. The perspective is in agreement with literature which defines inclusive education within the South African context framed within a human rights approach of transforming the human values of integration into the immediate rights of excluded learners (RSA,1996:14). Inclusive education, as defined in Education White Paper 6, is based on the ideal of freedom and equality, as described by the Constitution, and is seen as a single system of education dedicated to ensuring that all individuals are enabled to become competent citizens in a changing and diverse society” (Engelbrecht, 2006:256).

Based on their understanding that the implementation of inclusive education is broader than the school contexts, members of the rural community suggest their willingness to accept responsibility for creating opportunities for the facilitation of opportunities for all the members to develop their potential as part of the process of implementing inclusive education. The need for the implementation of inclusive education to be extended to include skills centres for those members who are not in school, were strongly emphasised. The Department of Education is criticised for not providing the necessary support to include all the members of the community who need education. The communities and their cultures are viewed as mutually sustaining components within and outside schools. It is therefore more sensible to see inclusion in terms of an area within which the schools are located (in this case a rural setting) so as to be able to raise questions about what it means to be part of the community.

The members of the community suggested the need to establish community projects that will encourage community members to share skills and knowledge to empower each other. Such projects will bring all people together, whether they are experiencing disabilities or not. In this way, an inclusive community will be born and facilitated by the members themselves instead of confining it to schools. In this regard, the findings resonate with the work of Booth and Lynch (2003:03) that refer to inclusion as a comprehensive community education process linked to a moral and political movement for developing a universal education system based on the process of putting the values of equality, entitlement, participation and respect for diversity.

However, despite the strong emphasis on collaboration, the findings revealed that gaps still exist between the various sectors that need to be bridged to optimize the collaboration to create a more inclusive society that involves the community as a whole in the implementation process. The isolation of schools into silos of mainstream, full-service and special schools, apparently contributed to the problems perceived regarding the collaboration across boundaries.

The findings of the study regarding the role of the rural community in the implementation of inclusive education indicate that, in line with the principles of community psychology, members of the community seem to accept responsibility for the facilitation of the process of inclusion, instead of waiting for the government to facilitate the process. Evidently the rural community takes responsibility for those people who do not necessarily have a voice in the community. However, according to the participants, some members of this particular rural community still hold misconceptions about disability that needs to be addressed. They therefore question the power of the initial awareness campaigns that was launched to facilitate an understanding of inclusive education in communities. The campaigns were apparently based on the Eurocentric conceptions of inclusive education and suggest that the emphasis be shifted towards the strengths of those who are excluded in an effort to challenge discriminatory behaviour.

The rural community also challenges practices based on Eurocentric perspectives that excluded people with disabilities by perceiving them merely as individuals with problems, instead of perceiving them as part of a community and equipped with specific strengths that could facilitate their inclusion in education. The participating community members in particular study took an empathetic stance towards parents and caregivers of children with disabilities as they indicated that they identify with the position in which these people find themselves regarding cultural beliefs about their children's disabilities. They emphasise the

importance of appreciating what these parents do for their children and suggest that teachers and health professionals in particular support these parents and caregivers.

On a practical level the members of this community acknowledge the need for proper infrastructure in the implementation of inclusive education. According to this community inclusion must begin at home before going out to the community or the school. Their view of inclusive education as embedded in the larger inclusive movement, resonates with their recommendation that homes, community structures like halls, playgrounds, clinics, hospitals, police stations, banks, schools, churches, market places and transport systems, need to be made more accessible to all community members who are experiencing barriers or disability of any kind. They furthermore emphasise that even the houses in the community need to conform to the requirements of accessibility whether there is someone in the family with disability or not.

4.5. SUMMARY

In this chapter the findings of the study was discussed. The participants' voices were foregrounded followed by references to relevant literature. In the integrated presentation of the findings, the researcher linked the various themes and subtheme to present an overall representation of findings regarding the rural communities understanding and role of the implementation of inclusive education. The next chapter presents conclusions and recommendations regarding how the community members involved in this study perceive the implementation of inclusive education, and their role in facilitating the whole process.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents conclusions drawn from the research that was conducted with the aim of describing how the members of a rural community understand the implementation of inclusive education eleven years into the implementation and how they perceive their role in view of this understanding of the implementation process.

The conclusions are followed by recommendations regarding the facilitation of rural communities' involvement in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa based on the findings of this study.

5.2. CONCLUSIONS

5.2.1. Conclusions regarding the way in which the rural community understand inclusive education

Firstly the rural community seems to be open and accepting of the implementation of inclusive education, since they understand the implementation of inclusive education as a process that is embedded in their own community practices that is based on their indigenous principles, as indicated by Owour (2007).

Due to their indigenous perspective they do not necessarily accept all the current practices relating to the implementation of inclusive education in their community, since they might have their own ideas as to how the implementation can be facilitated. The way in which schools are distancing themselves from the community and even from each other based on their focus in the implementation process, is clearly not acceptable to the community members. They also critiqued the training of teachers and the random placement of learners in full service schools and resources centres. This critique, although not explicitly stated, might be based on the need for an acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge perspectives

that value the role of the community and a focus on the strengths rather than on deficits, as suggested in the transformative approaches in community

Secondly, the study revealed that the implementation of inclusive education is understood by the community as an instrumental in the co-construction of a more inclusive community. In the context of this study strong emphasis was specifically placed on equipping people with disabilities with necessary skills and teaching each other communication and survival skills beyond the classroom context through the establishment of community learning centres.

Thirdly, with regards to the role of the Department of Education in the implementation of inclusive education, the conclusion is that the rural community is not sufficiently involved in the current process. A possible reason might be that the Department of Education does not share the understanding of the community that implementation of inclusive education is embedded in the larger community project. If they do share this perspective, they seem to lack the capability to involve the community as an equal partner, despite the many deliberations on the role of the communities in the initial policy initiatives.

5.2.2. Conclusions regarding the role of the community in the implementation of inclusive education

Firstly, it can be concluded that the participating members of the rural community acknowledge that they have to accept responsibility for the inclusion of all the members of the community. Accordingly, they indicated that there are still many misconceptions about disability that needs to be challenged.

Secondly the rural community indicated that they have to be willing to support parents and caregivers of people who live with disabilities. The participating community members took an empathetic stance towards parents and caregivers of children with disabilities as they indicated that they identify with the position in which these people find themselves regarding cultural beliefs about their children's disabilities. They emphasise the importance of appreciating what these parents do for their children and suggest that teachers and health professionals in particular support these parents and caregivers.

Thirdly, the findings suggest that the rural community might be willing to get involved in the provision of proper infrastructure for the implementation of inclusive education.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made in this study are based on the assumption that implementation of inclusive education is valuable in the establishment of an inclusive society.

5.3.1. Recommendations to the Department of Education

The study confirms that the implementation of inclusive education should involve close collaboration with all the various stakeholders in the community. In view of this outcome, the researcher recommends that the Department of Education needs to develop strategies to actively involve members of rural communities more actively in the implementation of inclusive education.

Community members, not only teachers, who are passionate about promoting inclusive education, should be recruited to get involved with community projects aimed at providing opportunities for education to all members of the community, but in particular to those members who have disabilities.

Although it appears to be the responsibility of the Department of Education as custodian of inclusive education (through its policies) to advocate the ways in which inclusion can be implemented and to monitor and evaluate inclusive practices in schools, stakeholders at different levels are prepared to take the responsibility to ensure that inclusion is practised in the communities in which they live. Such collaboration will address the lack of commitment in everyone involved and ensure sustainability of inclusive practices. This bottom-up approach to implementation was also valued by participants in chapter 4, that apart from departmental sectors, community political leaders are also involved.

It is specifically recommended that the Department of Education in collaboration with all stakeholders create formal and informal community channels that involve community development workers (CDW's), village chiefs (indunas), councillors and church ministers, through which people will express their views and concerns regarding inclusive education. Inclusive education requires the government in collaboration with all departments to invest in those assets that enable members of the society to expand their roles in terms of promoting inclusive cultural practices.

While participants constantly maintained that most community members are aware of the existence of inclusive education, they equally raised the question of how they can be able to implement inclusion without the necessary resources at hand. Therefore, participants in the

study indicated the need to provide adequate resources and facilities not only in schools, but to the communities as well, because all role players are born and bred in communities even before going to school or elsewhere.

5.3. 2. Recommendations to rural communities

Communities are called upon to use the members' existing indigenous knowledge to teach each other more about respecting the rights and dignity of people living with disabilities. Kisanji (1998) calls this type of education "indigenous customary education" whereby customs and values play an integral part in cascading information regarding providing support and respecting the rights of people living with disabilities. As Africans, we need to admit that we have lost track of the spirit of Ubuntu and consider learning practices from other African countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, LeSotho and Zimbabwe who still practise indigenous education successfully. Education programmes in these countries are considered the concern for the overall community's responsibility for cultural and socio-economic development.

Based on the position that the rural community in this study has taken towards the implementation of inclusive education and the community cultural wealth that is present in rural communities, it is recommended that consultations with rural communities are held to guide them to more actively embrace and apply their cultural participate in the education of their children, both inside and outside of the school context.

5.3.3. Recommendations for further research

The rural communities' understanding of the implementation of inclusive education as creating spaces for all to learn as an on-going process that involves the whole community in a collaborative effort, might be significant in terms of the development of more inclusive communities. It is therefore recommended that further research is conducted to explore in more depth how various rural communities in South Africa understand the implementation of inclusive education and perceive their role in the process.

A further recommendation regarding research involves the possible development of a strategy for the involvement of rural communities, to establish how the Department of Education can aptly involve rural communities in the implementation of inclusive education to address the challenges posed by limited infrastructure and resources.

5.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in a rural community where the researcher has lived and worked for many years and although she took specific precautions to bracket her own experiences, the findings might still reflect some of her own assumptions and frustrations.

Due to the restrictions posed by the socio-economic problems, experiences and the distances between villages, the researcher applied a research method that could involve as many participants as possible at one occasion. The limitations of this method might have restrained the collection of in-depth rich data. Therefore, the work session was video-recorded and interviews were audio-taped, and an assistant was used to make sure that all the data were properly captured.

To follow up on the work sessions the researcher interviewed six members of the group. In retrospect, however like to recommend that researchers who work in rural communities might have to consider using other methods of data collection such as photos, natural observations and written assignments to get a more vivid picture of the experiences of the participants.

5.5. END NOTE

I would like to conclude by sharing a personal experience, as an educator and a sister to a family member who experienced exclusion throughout his childhood in his community due to severe mental retardation.

Born in 1984 with a speech defect, the boy was admitted at a special school in 1995, at the age of eleven, in Limpopo after being denied several admissions in nearby schools due to language barriers and the then racial discrimination that loomed our country during that era. That school was not helpful to him; he thus was further placed in another school in Mpumalanga from 1997 till 2003. Then he was declared an adult no longer allowed to be at school. For this reason, he was forced to go home, yet he (and the family too) were still interested in his schooling. What a painful experience!!! ... Not only for himself, but the whole family.

During the period he went home, you could really feel the sense of loneliness and exclusion he always endured, and the longing to go back to the school in which he was learning. He finds it difficult to cope in the family and the community environment because he lost the

familiarity of the home setting throughout his childhood. Gradually, the family is trying to help, but it is hard due to lack of empowerment to intervene positively. With nothing to do at home while others go to school, the exclusion haunts his emotional state and the family and the community in particular, still have negative attitudes towards him and lack skills to respond positively in his life.

The hardships experienced by the boy and other individuals in similar circumstances in our communities are an outcry to the whole South African society to heed the call for inclusive education and support for people living with disabilities. It is hoped that further research will focus on more positive ways through which departments will collaborate directly with the public to speed up the implementation process through community based initiatives at grassroots level. The introduction of the Education White Paper 6 on inclusive education remains the key and the sole hope for creating an inclusive society, provided the value of community involvement is recognised by all those who facilitate the implementation of inclusive education, both nationally and internationally.

Perhaps the time has come to reflect on our past African indigenous practices in which knowledge was passed from one generation to the next by allowing our grandmothers and grandfathers to take a leading role in teaching the values of human dignity and respect for all individuals. Those moments when children used to sit around the evening fire listening to the wisdom of the greybeards is dearly missed in our communities and rob us valuable information on life's experiences and our heritage. The community must create informal opportunities for learning through story telling, folksongs and engagement in indigenous games like 'umrabaraba,' 'ingendo,' 'intjuba' etc. so that people can unleash their potential and learn to appreciate each other's talents whether with or without disabilities. These games can be extended beyond family settings to schools, churches, village streets, market places and other social settings where the community members gather for different purposes. The department of Education may also consider recognizing the above mentioned activities to be part of the curriculum to strengthen inclusive education in rural communities by inviting the elderly to share their expertise with teachers and learners in schools. Learners experiencing barriers to learning, (those who cannot cope academically in particular), can benefit greatly through this collaborative engagement rather than expecting them to perform academically.

How I wish that all people realize that we need each other for survival, because nothing can be achieved alone, we need to work together. Let us all adopt the motto for people living with disabilities "nothing about us without us".

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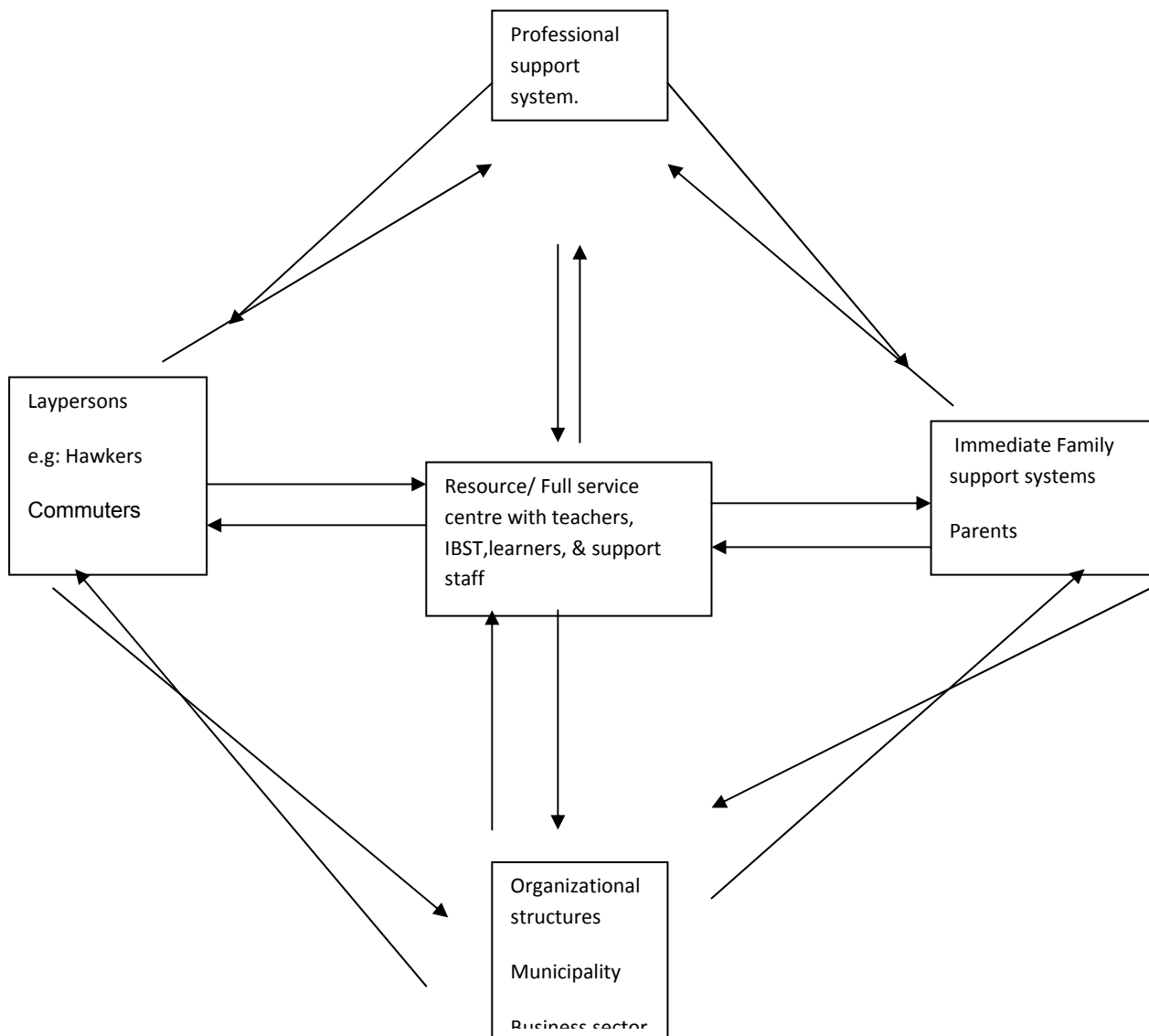
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ADDENDUM A: GRID FOR THE SELECTION OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN A LOCAL RURAL SETTING.

RURAL COMMUNITY

RURAL COMMUNITY



RURAL COMMUNITY

ADDENDUM B1: CONSENT FORM- 07/05/2011

RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE: EXPLORING A RURAL COMMUNITY'S EXPERIENCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.

Dear Participant

This research attempts to investigate the extent in which the rural community understands the implementation of inclusive education in the community and their involvement in the inclusion process. Therefore, your views and responses to the questions will contribute to the understanding (not of the researcher only, but the rural community as a whole) whether all members of the community, with or without disabilities and parents thereof, are ready to implement inclusion in and out of the school environment. We all live closer if not with people experiencing different forms of disabilities and relate with them in our daily contacts, thus your opinion is of value.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO EXPRESS YOUR PERSONAL OPINIONS TO ANY QUESTIONS RAISED IN THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW. KINDLY NOTE THE FOLLOWING.

1. There are no correct or incorrect answers, only your views are being valued.
2. Your participation remains anonymous and all responses will be handled with strictest confidentiality thus you are free to air your personal view even if not asked by the facilitator.
3. Participation is undertaken voluntarily upon researcher's request.
4. Findings from the project will be used only for professional purposes and the summary of findings will be freely available upon request.
5. Kindly note that our conversation will be video-taped.

THANK YOU FOR DEDICATING YOUR VALUABLE TIME DURING THIS ENCOUNTER. YOUR PARTICIPATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHER PEOPLE.

Facilitator: Mahlalela TN (013 7824280/ 082 437 1440) Participant _____

ADDENDUM B2: LIFOMU LESIVUMELWANO-07/05/2011

INGCIKITSI YELUCWANINGO: NGABE UMPHAKATSI UKULUNGELE YINI KWEMUKELA IMFUNDVO YAWONKHE-WONKHE NGISHO NALABAKHUBATEKILE.

Lilunga lelitsandzekako

Ngitsandza kukwemukela kulolucwaningo lolubaluleke kangaka, lapho sidzingidza khona kutsi umphakatsi wakitsi ukulungele kanganani kwemukela imfundvo yawonkhewokhe ngisho nalokhubatekile etikolweni temiphakatsi kanye nekuphilisana nabo bonkhe labakhubatekile emphakatsini lesihlala kuwo. Uyacelwa kutsi ubeke luvo lwakho nemibono yakho kulemibuto lelandzelako. Kutimbhandzakanya kwakho kulolucwaningo kutawusita onkh 'emalunga emphakatsi (ngaphandle kwalomcwaningi walesihloko kuphela) kucondza kahle tindlela letingasetjentiswa kuciniseka kutsi onkh'emalunga emphakatsi ayakwemukela yini kufundza nekuhlalisana nalabakhubatekile ndzawonye, etikolweni nasetinkhundleni temiphakatsi. Ikakhulu ngoba sihlala siphindze sichumane nabo malanga onkhe ekuphileni kwetfu, siyabadzinga kantsi nabo futsi bayasidzinga, nobe ngabe bakhubateke ngaluphi luhlobo. Ngalesizatfu siyayihlonipha imibono yakho, ibalulekile.

TIVELE UKHULULEKILE KUPHENDVULA LEMIBUTO LELANDZELAKO NEKUBEKA IMIBONO YAKHO. CAPHELA LETIMPHAWU LETILANDZELAKO:

1. Tonkhe timphendvulo tibalulekile, temukelekile, sidzinga kuphela luvo lwakho.
2. Asikho sidzingo sekwatisa ligama lakho, ngaloko ukhululekile kuveta imiva yakho nanobe ungabutwanga ngumcwaningi, ingce-nje nawubona kutsi leliphuzu lolibekako litawucacisa lokutsite kulolucwaningo.
3. Umcwaningi kumele acocisane nawe ngaphandle kwekukuphokelela.
4. Imiphumela yalolucwaningo lutawutfolwa kuphela ngulofake ligalelo nangabe afake sicelo.
5. Yonkhe inkhulumiswano yetfu itawube itfwetjulwa ngemishini.

NGIYABONGA SIKHATSI LONGINIKETE SONA, NGIYETSEMBA KUTAWULETSA UMEHLUKO ETIMPHILWENI TEMALUNGA EMPHAKATSI.

Umchubihlelo: Mahlalela T.N. (013 7824280/ 082 4371440) Lilunga: -----

ADDENDUM B3: TRANSLATED VERSION OF THE CONSENT FORM. (XITSONGA)

FOMO YANTWANANO

NHLOKOMHAKA YA VULAVISISI: XANA TIKO RI TI LULAMISERILE KU AMUKELA DYONDZO YA MANI NA NA MANI?

Xirho lexirhandzekaka

Ndzi rhandza ku ku amukela eka vulavisisi bya nkoka swonghasi, laha hi lavisisaka ku ti lulamisela ka tiko ku a mukela dyondzo ya mani na mani ku katsa vatsoniwa. Laha hi languta kuhanyisana eswikolweni na le makaya. Mavonelo na matitwelo eka swivutiso swi ta hoxa xandla eka ku twisisa ku ri swirho hinkwaso swa tiko ku ngari vatsoniwa ntsena kambe eka hinkwavo ku katsa na vatswari, ku kamba loko va tilulamiserile ku tirhisa dyondzo yahinkweni. Ha twisisa leswaku hi hanyisana na vatsoniwa masiku hinkwawo, va hi dinga tani hi laha hi va dingaka. Hi swona mavonelo ya wena ya na nkoka.

NTSHUXEKA, U HUMESA MAVONELA YA WENA EKA SWIVUTISO LESWI LANDZELAKA. TEKELA ENHLOKWENI LESWILANDZELAKA.

1. Tinhlamulo hinkwato ti amukelekile, xa nkoka l mavonelo ya wena.
2. Mbulavurisano lowu i xihundla, ku hava xidingo xa vito ra wena.
3. Mbulavuriso wu ta humelela hikwalaho ka mpfumelelo ya wena.
4. Mbuyelo wa projekte wu ta tirhiseriwa nkongomelo wa dyondzo ntsena, na swona nkomiso wa mbuyelo wu ta kumeka loko u wu lava.
5. Swi tivi leswaku mbulavurisano wu ta kandziyisiwa.

NDZA KU KHENSA KU VA UTINYIKETILE KU HLAMULA SWIVUTISO HINKWASWO. KUHOXA KA WENA XANDLA KU TATISA KU NCINCA EVUTON'WINI BYA VA'NWANA

ADDENDUM C: PROGRAMME FOR THE WORK SESSION.

Date: 07 May 2011

Time: 09H30 to 13H00

Venue: Tonga Hospital Recreational Hall

THEME: THE ROLE OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE-EDUCATION.

1st SESSION: 09H30-11H50

1.1. Welcoming, Introductions & setting Ground rules (9H30-09H45)

1.2. Activity: “Your understanding of the concept inclusive education”(9H45-10H00)

1.2.1. Reflections on feedback responses: (10H05-10H30) All Participants.

1.2.2. Commissions: Mahlalela LO (Research Assistant :10H35-11H00)

1.2.3. Feedback / Reporting: Groups reps. (11H05-11H30)

1.3. Presentation: Research Facilitator, Mahlalela TN: (11H35-11H55)

1.3.1. Inclusive Education / Inclusion & the EWP6

1.3.2. SEN Vs Barriers to learning

BREAK (11H55- 12H10) BREAK (11H55-12H10) BREAK (11H55-12H10)

2ND SESSION – (12H10-13H00)

2.1. Open discussions: All participants (12H10-12H40)

2.1.1. The role of the community in implementing inclusive education

2.1.2. Are all community members ready? What can be done /

recommendations

2.2. Wrapping up: Facilitator: (Mahlalela TN: 12H45-12H50)

2.3. Vote of thanks: Participants’ rep. (12H50-12H55)

2.4. Closure: 13H00

ADDENDUM D1: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION.

P.O. Box 36

Masibekela

1342

07 February 2011

The Regional Director: Mr Lushaba M.J.

Mpumalanga Department of Education

Ehlanzeni Region

Private Bag x 1014

KaNyamazane

1214

Sir / Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE CIRCUIT.

I would like to request permission to conduct a research in inclusive education for the purpose of meeting the requirements in my Masters Degree in Educational Psychology, registered with North- West University, Potchefstroom campus.

The title of my research is **“Exploring a rural community’s experience in understanding the implementation of inclusive education”** I wish to draw participants from the Nkomazi area within eHlanzeni region. As a school based educator, I am interested in exploring the extent in which the local rural community understands the implementation of inclusive education, their experiences and their involvement in the inclusion process as it unfolds in their local community.

I believe that through this research, I will contribute meaningfully in helping community members realise the need to promote inclusive education and provide support to the local full service schools and resource centres. This undertaking is also a response to the National Department's call in the Education White Paper 6 of July 2001 which calls for every member of the society to be responsive to the needs of all learners experiencing disabilities or barriers to learning.

Your positive response to my request will be highly appreciated in endeavour to promote quality education for **all** South African citizens.

Attached is an outline for my research plan.

Yours faithfully

Thembelihe Nancy Mahlalela (Miss)

Cell no: 082 437 1440 / Work Tel. no: 013 7835122

ADDENDUM D2.

P.O. BOX 36

Masibekela

1342

07 February 2011

The Circuit Manager: Mr. O.A. Bhiya

Nkomazi West circuit

Private Bag x 4001

KwaLugedlane

1341

Sir / Madam

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Attached is an outline for my research plan.

Yours faithfully

Thembelihe Nancy Mahlalela (Miss)

Cell no: 082 437 1440 / Work Tel. no: 013 7835122

ADDENDUM E1

MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Magisela Building
TONGA



Private Bag X4051
Kwalungedane, 1341
Tel: (013) 789 3151
Fax: (013) 789 3029

NKOMAZI WEST CIRCUIT OFFICE

Lefofo Letseleane

Uninyango Wefundo

Departement van Ouderwys

Uninyango Wesemfundo

ENQ: MR O.A. BHIYA/ bwp

TO : PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS
EDUCATORS
PARENTS
NKOMAZI WEST CIRCUIT

FROM : THE CIRCUIT MANAGER
NKOMAZI WEST CIRCUIT

DATE : 16 MARCH 2011

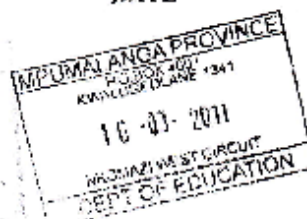
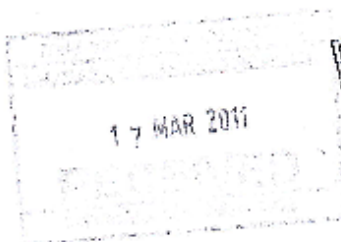
SUBJECT : PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS: MISS
T.N MAHLALELA

1. Miss Mahlalela T.N has been given permission to visit schools within Nkomazi West Circuit and conduct research towards her Masters Degree in Education Psychology which she registered with the North West University in Potchefstroom.
2. Kindly give her access to interview Educators, Parents and Principals whichever is applicable.

Your support for her programme will be appreciated


CIRCUIT MANAGER
MR O.A. BHIYA

16-03-2011
DATE



ADDENDUM E2

MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Stand No. 179
Hoyi Trust
HOYI



P.O. Box 1142
Kwalagedare, 1341
Tel: (013) 762 0073
Fax: (013) 762 0260

LUBOMBO CIRCUIT OFFICE

Litlike Letemfundya

Umyango Wefundo

Departement van Onderwys

Umyango Wezemfundo

Enq: Ngcane BR
Tel: 013 7820073

To: Mahlalela, NT

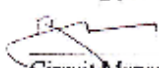
From: Mr. Ngcane BR
Circuit Manager of Lubombo

Date: 07-04-2011

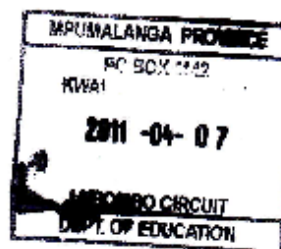
SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH FOR A MASTER'S DEGREE

1. The Circuit has the pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct a research for a master's degree in the circuit has been accepted on condition that:-
 - The rights of all people who will be involved in the process will be respected, protected and not violated
2. The circuit is looking forward for a successful undertaking which will at the end of the day benefit the department and the circuit in particular

Wishing you everything of the best


Circuit Manager

07/04/11
Date



ADDENDUM E 3
MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Stand No. 179
Hoyl Trust
HOYI



Private Bag X4043
KwaGaleitane 1341
Tel: (013) 782 0210
Fax: (013) 782 0068

NKOMAZI EAST CIRCUIT OFFICE

Litiko Letemfundvo

Umyango Wefundo

Departement van Onderwys

Umyango Wezemfundo

Enquiries: Shabangu P.

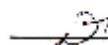
TO : Mahlalela TN

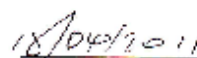
FROM : Nkomazi East Circuit Circuit Manager

DATE : 18/04/2011

SUBJECT: APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING A RESEARCH IN THE CIRCUIT

1. The Circuit acknowledges receipt of your request to conduct a research on the role of communities in the implementation of inclusive education within the circuit.
2. Please note and be advised that your request has been approved and communicated to the principals of the school you will be visiting i.e. Mgubho, Ingwenyama and Khulamshika.
3. For any other logistical arrangement please communicate with:
 - ❖ Dladla AT : Cell No. 082 425 1130 (Mgubho)
 - ❖ Khoza Marody : Cell No. 072 104 8572 (Ingwenyama)
 - ❖ Sibande SS : Cell No. 082 089 7885 (Khulamshika)
4. Do not hesitate to contact our office if you urgently need our assistance.
5. Hoping you will find the above in order.


CIRCUIT MANAGER


DATE

ADDENDUM F

CERTIFICATE

Issued on 6 November 2012 by

H C Sieberhagen

Translator and Editor

SATI no 1001489

TEL 018 2994554

Vertaler en Redigeerder

SAT nr 1001489

082 3359846

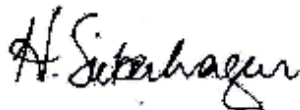
I hereby declare that I have edited the language of the
following dissertation submitted by ms T.N. Mahlalela

EXPLORING A RURAL COMMUNITY'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree

Master of Education in Educational Psychology
at the

Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University.



H C Sieberhagen

SATI number 1001489

ID 4504190077086

Hettie.Sieberhagen@nwu.ac.za

