

# **EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

by

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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The crest of the University of Stellenbosch is centered behind the text. It features a shield with a blue background, a red and white patterned top section, and a central figure holding a staff. The motto 'Pectora concordant caltus recti' is inscribed on a banner below the shield.

**Supervisor: Dr R Newmark**

**April 2004**

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my work and that I have not previously submitted it at any university.

J.M. Nekhumbe

April 2004

## SUMMARY

This study focuses on the perceptions of a selected primary school's educators concerning the implementation of inclusive education. Since the coming to power of the first truly democratically elected government in South Africa, many changes have taken place. The foundation for these changes is laid by a new constitution. Clauses in the Constitution that have important implications for education and for the concept of inclusion embraced in this study, are those that contain principles of basic rights, equality and non-discrimination (National Department of Education 1997:41-42). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) states that the aim of the Constitution is to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.

In the learning process, the educator plays a pivotal role, and if he/she does not function effectively, it could form a barrier to learning. International literature has affirmed that a public school should admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way. From the above literature, the educators' perceptions should be enhanced.

As the implementation of the inclusive education policy is inevitable, it is of utmost importance to determine the perceptions of educators of this policy, in order to facilitate the successful implementation of the policy. The goal of this study is to gain an understanding of the educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education.

In order to achieve this goal, a focus group interview was conducted with educators at a selected primary school in the Limpopo Province Region Three. Five main patterns of concern emerged from the data, namely flexibility in curriculum, the needs of on-going training, the reduction of educator-pupil ratio and site improvement.



## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie fokus op die persepsies van 'n selekteerde groep onderwysers aan 'n primêre skool rakende die implimentering van inklusiewe onderwys. Sedert die verkiesing van die eerste ware demokraties verkose regering in Suid-Afrika, het vele veranderinge plaasgevind. Die grondslag vir hierdie veranderinge is neergelê deur die Grondwet. Klousules binne die Grondwet wat belangrike gevolge vir onderwys asook vir die konsep van inklusie is vervat in hierdie studie. Dit behels die beginsels van basiese regte, gelykheid en nie-diskriminasie (Nasionale Departement van Onderwys 1997: 41-42). Die Grondwet van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika (Akte 108 van 1996) vermeld dat die doel van die Grondwet is om die verdeeldheid van die verlede te genees en om 'n gemeenskap daar te stel wat gebaseer is op demokratiese waardes, sosiale geregtigheid en fundamentele menseregte.

Die onderwyser speel binne die leerproses 'n sentrale rol. Indien die onderwyser nie effektief funksioneer nie, kan dit 'n struikelblok tot leer wees. Internasionale literatuur beaam dat 'n publieke skool leerders moet toelaat en hul opvoedkundige behoeftes moet dien sonder diskriminasie van enige aard. Vanuit bogenoemde literatuur behoort onderwysers se persepsies versterk te word.

Die implimentering van inklusiewe onderwys is onafwendbaar. Dit is van kardinale belang om die persepsies van onderwysers ten opsigte van hierdie beleid te bepaal. Dit is nodig om die suksesvolle implimentering van die beleid te fasiliteer. Die doel van hierdie studie poog om begrip te bekom rakende onderwysers se persepsies insake die implimentering van inklusiewe onderwys.

Om hierdie doel te bereik is 'n fokusgroeponderhoud gevoer met onderwysers aan 'n geselekteerde primêre skool in die Limpopo Provinsie Distrik Drie. Vyf patrone van bekommernis het in die data te voorskyn gekom. Die patrone was die buigsamheid van die kurrikulum, die behoefte vir voortdurende opleiding, die vermindering van die onderwyser-leerder verhoudings en omgewingsverbetering.



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# CHAPTER ONE

## CONTEXTUALIZATION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to contextualise this study, chapter one will present the orientation of the study and an elaboration of the rationale for undertaking it. Thereafter the research question will be formulated together with the aims of the proposed study. This will be followed by a brief exposition of the research design and methods to be employed to achieve the set goals. In conclusion, the research methodology will be outlined.

### 1.2 CONTEXT AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The National Disability Strategy, as cited by White Paper 6 (2001:10) condemns the segregation of persons with disabilities from the mainstream of society. It further emphasizes the need to include persons with disabilities in the workplace, social environment, political sphere and sport arenas (Education White Paper 6 2001:10). The reason for this study on the inclusion of learners with special education needs at this specific primary school is to determine what the educators' perceptions at this school are in order to improve their teaching methods, behaviour, changing attitudes and environment in addressing the different needs of learners in an inclusive environment.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996:6) protects the rights of ALL children, including learners with special educational needs. This includes the right to a basic education. Learners should not be devalued or discriminated against by being excluded because they may have some form of disability, as The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) Section 29(1) emphasizes that everyone has the right to basic education. It is of the utmost importance for learners to receive an appropriate education that



is consistent with their needs in the restrictive environment, that is, to be educated in the mainstream along with others.

Fully inclusive education is inevitable, as is self-evident in the Education White Paper 6 (2001:11) which outlines the policy framework. Particular attention is given to the situation of learners who experience barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate the diversity of learning needs. This is implied, so it doesn't have to be stated explicitly. The problem that now faces educators of the primary school of this study, is that educators have not been trained to cope with the large variety of learners that will now enter their classrooms. Educators in public schools have to implement this new policy of inclusion. This implies that educators will be in need of ongoing training to gain the new skills necessary to cope with learners of varying abilities and with different needs. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:18) states that classroom educators will be the primary resource for achieving the goal of an inclusive education and training system.

The challenge that now faces education in this country is how to implement inclusion successfully. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992:3) state that the outstanding issue would be of managing the process of implementation with appropriate sensitivity. The fact that the curriculum should be adapted to the children's needs is stressed in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) which states that education and the curriculum play an important role in developing the full potential of each learner. Learners with special educational needs should receive additional instructional support in the regular curriculum. Curriculum content should enable children to develop and acquire knowledge through normal instructions.

Overcoming barriers to learning and development in inclusive education is a complicated task. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:28) points out that the physical environment of most ordinary schools and learning settings is not barrier-free and even where this is the case, accessibility has not been planned.



Learners with special educational needs are no longer regarded to be the responsibility of a particular person outside the school (such as remedial educator or special educator) only, but of all people involved at every ordinary school. Educators should share the responsibility. This can be achieved by working as a team because as a support team educators can become beacons of the evolving inclusive education system (Education White Paper 6 2001:23). The support that the educator receives, could include physical and material resources from the team which could be used to manage, deliver and support a learner's inclusive education.

All learners should be taught to respect each other. The attitude of those who are able must be positive and should show a willingness to help where necessary. Co-operation with the special school in the area can be of great value to educators, as a special school can be converted into a resource centre so that it can provide specialized professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to neighbourhood schools (Education White Paper 6 2001:29).

In this study it is stressed that when children with learning disabilities are placed in a regular classroom, collaboration between the regular educator and the special education educator is vital to the well-being of the children.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The concept for this study originated as a result of informal discussion with my colleagues on how the efficiency of the educational service could be enhanced, now that they were practising inclusion.

In order to plan strategies to implement the policy on inclusive education, it was necessary to determine the perceptions of educators on the implementation of inclusive education.

The research problem for this study may be formulated as follows: **What are a selected primary schools' educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education?**



## **1.4 THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

In view of the above-mentioned problem statement, the aim of this study is to describe the primary school educators' perceptions in the Limpopo Province Region Three on the implementation of inclusive education.

The focus falls on establishing what the perceptions of educators who have been trained to teach in 'ordinary' schools are of inclusive education. In this study, interpretative and reflective procedures will be applied to data gathered through focus group interviews in order to arrive at a conclusion.

The sub-aims are:

- to determine the needs of the selected primary school educators in the Limpopo Province Region Three in view of the implementation of inclusive education;
- to indicate the selected primary school educators' concerns about educational support.

## **1.5 DEFINITION OF CENTRAL CONCEPTS**

The central concepts of this study are clarified in the following sections:

### **1.5.1 The Philosophy of Inclusion**

The Education White Paper 6 (2001:17) maintains that inclusion is about recognizing and respecting the difference among all learners and building on the similarities. This will equip all learners for life as part of the community and will help develop their potential. The aim of this study is to focus on inclusion.

### **1.5.2 Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education differs from separate education in special schools. Engelbrecht (1999:58) indicates that in inclusive education all children, regardless of differences, have the opportunity to learn with and from each other. In inclusive settings differences are valued but the focus is on the similarities that are common to all children. Inclusive education, according to the National Department of Education (1997:vi) is education that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners



irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning style and language. This implies that the classroom environment is reorganized to fit the learning needs of all children.

### **1.5.3 Learners with special educational needs (LSEN)**

According to the Gauteng Department of Education (1996:1) learners with special educational needs include learners with learning difficulties, visual, hearing, mental, physical, emotional and behavioural impairments, the gifted, learners who are poor, learners who come from different cultural backgrounds, learners who were politically disadvantaged and learners who speak a different language to that of the specific school.

For the purpose of this study inclusion will be used and in accepting this inclusive approach. Learners who are most vulnerable to barriers to learning and exclusion in South Africa are those who have historically been termed "learners with special education needs". Their increased vulnerability has arisen largely because of the historical nature and extent of the educational support provided (Education White Paper 6 2001:7).

### **1.5.4 Ordinary school**

The concept "ordinary school" will refer to the traditional state or private schools that catered to the majority of the school-going population. In accordance with the previous education policy these schools excluded children with special needs. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:18) states that learners who are most vulnerable to barriers to learning and exclusion in South Africa are those who have special educational needs. Because of the new democratic educational policy, these children have a right to a basic education. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:12) acknowledged the importance of providing an effective response to the unsatisfactory educational experiences of learners with special educational needs, including those within the mainstream whose educational needs were inadequately accommodated.



## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

The research design and method used will now briefly be discussed. A detailed discussion thereof will be given in chapter three.

### **1.6.1 The research design**

As the study is about educators and their perceptions and is intended to arrive at a deeper understanding of these perceptions, a qualitative research design has been selected. The participants in this study will comprise of a sample of educators in a selected primary school in the Limpopo Province Region Three. This school is in the process of implementing inclusion of learners in mainstream classes. It has learners with special educational needs. According to Merriam (1998:17) the aim of the qualitative research is to gain insight into the meanings that the participants give to their reality.

### **1.6.2 Data collection methods**

Firstly a literature review was conducted in order to define the research problem more clearly, and to develop a framework of reference with which to interpret the findings (Merriam 1988:63). This was followed by the focus group interview with educators at the primary school in the Limpopo Province area. Field notes were taken as part of this process.

### **1.6.3 Data analysis**

Data were analyzed according to methods described in Maykut and Morehouse (1994:124-148) as well as by Miles and Huberman (1994:58). In this study the data reduction process was achieved by clustering, conceptualizing and dendrogramming. The focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim and the categories that emerged were reduced to the final themes. The aim of this data analysis was to identify patterns and draw conclusions in order to ultimately understand the educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education.

## **1.7 THE STRUCTURE AND SEQUENCE OF THE STUDY**

A brief outline of the course of the study as set out in the research document follows.



As an introduction to the focus and context of the study, chapter one gives a detailed background as well as the researcher's perspective and presuppositions. The chapter also covers the research question, aims and objectives of the study, including an explanation of the research methodology.

Chapter two comprises a literature review where the background and developments in inclusive education are discussed.

In chapter three, a detailed discussion of the research design and methods of data analysis are presented. Issues of validity and reliability are also addressed.

Chapter four contains a data display of both raw and processed data. A detailed analysis of the data will be provided.

In chapter five an account or a report based on the processed data and findings is given and recommendations made.

## **1.8 PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES**

According to Creswell (1994:147) the researcher needs to state his/her biases, values and judgements. For the purpose of this study, the focus is placed on the educators' perceptions in this environment, that is, the ordinary educators' perceptions of educating the learners with special educational needs in an ordinary school environment.

For my experience as an educator I am acutely aware of the importance of including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classes. I also believe that all learners can learn and succeed in their own way, and that all learners have a right to quality education.

Educators that I came into contact with in the disadvantaged schools manifested a diversity of barriers to learning and development but had no educational support accessible to them. I perceived that those educators had a negative attitude towards teaching at that time, and that this attitude had a negative influence on the classroom environment. Educators working in ordinary schools have only been trained to work with children of more or less similar ability. Wade and Moore (1992:2) state that ordinary school educators,

who are unfamiliar with children with disabilities, generally demonstrate resistance to the inclusion of such children into their classrooms.

I am therefore interested in investigating the educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education as an agent of change. It is my opinion that the attitude of educators who have not yet been exposed to learners with special educational needs or who have not received adequate skills training to cope with learners with special educational needs, will affect the way in which they approach and accept the new inclusive education policy. The complexities of change are acknowledged.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has focused on the orientation of the study. The background of the problem and the research problem as well as the aims of the study, have been outlined. A definition of central concepts has been presented, followed by an exposition of the research design as well as the research methods selected.



# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I review literature consulted in order to gain greater insight into the proposed field of study. The concept of moving towards inclusive schooling will be discussed in detail, looking at the philosophy that inclusion is based on. Educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education will then be defined in great detail with specific reference to the South African context. Barriers in inclusive education will also be looked at as the classroom environment should be recognized to fit the learning needs of all learners.

### 2.2 THE MOVE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING

According to Engelbrecht (1999:16) the move towards educating learners with special needs in mainstream schools has gone through the following stages:

#### 2.2.1 Mainstreaming

Elsewhere in the world, learners with difficulties in learning were taken out of special schools and placed in the mainstream schools, especially in the United State of America and Canada. In the mainstream option a learner with special educational needs was placed in a regular mainstream class, and it was accepted that the learners would adapt to the demands of the class with the support of a educator or a special assistant. Mainstreaming turned out to be a failure and people referred to it as "main dumping", when learners were left to battle on their own without the support of educators and classmates (Engelbrecht 1999:16).

#### 2.2.2 Integration

Integration focuses on an individual or small group of learners for whom the work is adapted in class, different tasks are devised, and where possible, support is provided (Engelbrecht 1999:16). Integration does not alter the way





in which the curriculum is presented and organized for all learners. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:6) state that integration is reconstructed as inclusion which is both educational and more broadly social in its scope. Integration saw placement in the mainstream as depending on the balance of advantage for particular learners thereby also underlining differences. Dyson (1997b:27) maintains that significant instruction time in separate settings still exists.

### **2.2.3 Inclusive education**

Inclusion emerged as a sequence of international discussions on how best to respond to learners experiencing difficulties in schools. In South Africa the move towards inclusive education has been initiated. This was based on a fundamental belief in the rights of all citizens, entrenched in the Bill of Rights. This bill protects the rights of all people in principle, "including learners with special educational needs, against discrimination" (Department of Education 1996:2).

The Education White Paper 6 (2001:6) defines inclusive education as:

- Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support;
- Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases; and
- Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.

Inclusion, in practice, is the educational process by which all students, including the learners with special educational needs are educated together (even if the curricular outcomes and needs for learners with special educational needs differ from those of their classmates), with sufficient support, in age - appropriate, ordinary education programmes in their neighbourhood schools (Department of Education 1996:2). Inclusion is characterized by a sense of belonging. All learners are to be included in the mainstream classes by means of reorganization and teaching techniques,



such as co-operative learning. Inclusive education gives children the realistic opportunity to learn from experience, to respect and accept people of varying abilities, by means of social interaction with one another.

## **2.3 THE PHILOSOPHY OF INCLUSION**

According to Guetzloe (1994:29-32) "Inclusion should be defined as a philosophical position, attitude and value statement rather than a point on the continuum of educational services." Inclusion should therefore meet the educational needs of all learners.

A broader definition is given in Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:6). They describe inclusion as "a shared value which promotes a single system of education dedicated to ensuring that all learners are empowered to become caring, competent and contributing citizens in an inclusive, changing and diverse society". In November 1996 Act No. 84 of 1996: South African School's Act, 1996 was passed which states that public schools must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way (South African Schools Act 1996:6).

The underlying philosophy of inclusion is a belief in the inherent right of all persons to participate meaningfully in their societies (Du Toit 1996:7). Children can learn new skills through imitation. When these children with disabilities are with peers they can learn new social and real life skills that will equip them to live in the communities.

## **2.4 WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?**

Inclusive education is a process by which a school attempts to respond to all learners as individuals by reconsidering its learning provision. Through this process the school builds its capacity to accept all learners from the local community who wish to attend and in so doing, reduces the need to exclude learners (Sebba & Ainscow 1996:5-8). Inclusive education differs from separate education in special schools. It is where all children, regardless of differences have the opportunity to learn with and from each other. Engelbrecht (1999:19) states that "inclusive education can be a system of



education that is responsive of the diverse needs of learners". In inclusive settings differences are valued but the focus is on similarities which are common to all children.

UNESCO (1994:17) indicates that all children should be accommodated in ordinary schools, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. An inclusive school defines differences as an ordinary part of human experience, to be valued and organized for. For Barton (1997:234) "inclusive education is about listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering all members and about celebrating 'difference' in dignified ways." In settings like these the modelling provided by peers reduces the amount of input required by the class educator.

According to NCSNET/NCESS (1997) inclusion means the participation of people with disabilities in all-day activities, which include activities at home, at work and in communities. In so doing, families will feel less isolated from the rest of the community. Families can develop relationships with other families who can provide them with support. They can enjoy having their children at home during their school years instead of having to send their children away to special schools or hostels.

Inclusion involves a process of reform and restructuring of the school as a whole, with the aim of ensuring that all learners can have access to the whole range of educational and social opportunities offered by the school (Mittler 2000:2). This includes the curriculum on offer, the assessment, recording and reporting of learners' achievements, decisions that are taken on the grouping of learners within schools or classrooms, pedagogy and classroom practice, sport and leisure and recreational opportunities. Mittler (2000:3) indicates that inclusion is based on a value system that welcomes and celebrates diversity arising from gender, nationality, race, language of origin, social background, level of educational achievement or disability. All educators are responsible for the education of all children. According to Wolak, York and Corbin (1992:26-28) "learners with disabilities in inclusive pilot programs learned more academic and functional skills in a shorter period of time than when they were in separate classrooms". Inclusive education has a range of benefits and many recipients of those benefits.



## **2.5 THE VALUE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The South African Federal Council on Disability (SAFCD 1995:1) called for the development of a single inclusive education system for South Africa in the following way:

Learners with special educational needs have a right to equal access to education at all levels in a single inclusive educational system that is responsive to the diverse needs of all learners, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning, as well as different language needs in the case of deaf learners where their first language is sign language and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, technical strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities.

Every person shall have the right to basic education and to equal access to educational institutions (The South African Constitution 1996:19). Learners with disability are to be educated with their non-disabled peers in circumstances that are unlimited and they will learn to do things easily, having the same specified relationship to each other. According to the Salamanca Statement, "Inclusive education is the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving true education for all" (The Salamanca Statement 1994:6).

Therefore learning communities should accept diversity and appreciate and respond to the diverse needs of its members, as entrenched in the Constitution of South Africa (1996:14) and proposed by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994:viii). In South Africa inclusive education is not only economically and educationally viable, but in the long term it will hopefully help to reconcile the South African Society, to become a society that accepts, cherishes and respects differences.

## **2.6 EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Mitter (2000:134) states that educators need opportunities to reflect on changes that touch on their values and beliefs as well as their daily professional practice. As educators' opinions have not been considered during



the process of change. Educators need to change their attitudes concerning the segregation of learners with special needs. Eichinger, Rizzo and Sirotinik (1991:121) indicate that because of an increasingly diverse population of learners within our public schools, it is imperative that educators be prepared to meet the needs of all learners. The discussion policy document of inclusion implied a paradigm shift, both for the purpose of education and for society in general (Department of Education 1996:1). Within the literature on perceptions of inclusion, some researchers mention the following negative perceptions:

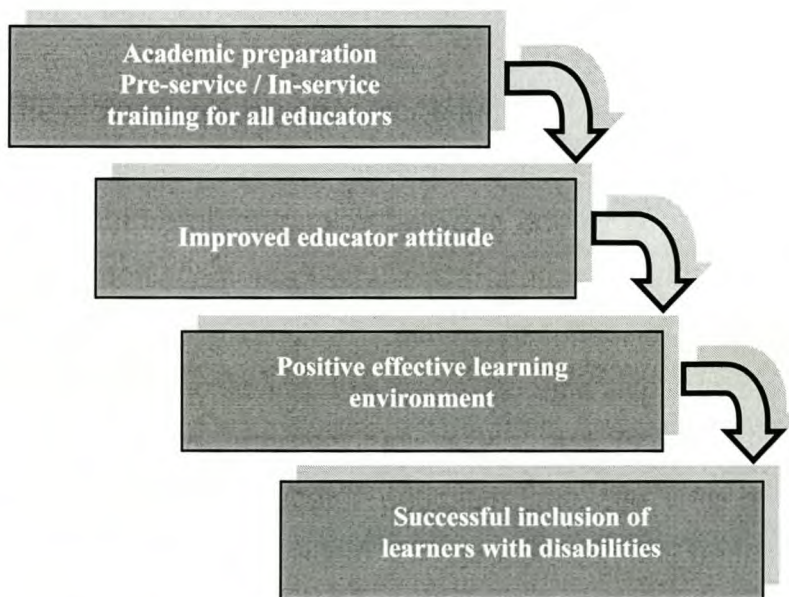
- Educators believe that learners with special educational needs to be receiving adequate support within the regular classroom environment (Vlachou & Barton 1994:107).
- Some educators feel overwhelmed and frustrated at having to deal with various other professionals as goals and agendas set for specific learners with special educational needs were not always congruent to them (Giangreco, Edelman, Macfarland & Luiselli 1997:330).
- Educators sometimes feel threatened if they are faced with too many diverse needs in their classroom at one time (Scruggs & Mastropierie 1996:65).

It is important to have ongoing training programmes to promote the positive attitudes of general education educators towards inclusion. Hayes and Gunn (1988:32) maintain that educators feel inadequate and threatened due to lack of experience and training in coping with learners with special educational needs. It is important that inclusion is not seen as just another innovation. Departmental heads at schools should involve their staff in discussion and should listen to educators' concerns. Most educators support the principle of inclusion but have doubts about whether it would work in their school. The educators emphasize academic performance at the cost of education and holistic human development. Educators feel there is no consistent approach to value education. Their poor self-esteem is not value driven. Schechtman and Or (1996:138) aver that educators feel resistant to the objectionable way in which the inclusion policy was imposed to them, where they were forced to



make changes, causing a detrimental effect on their self-esteem and job satisfaction.

It has become increasingly important for educators to be prepared to meet the needs of all learners. Educators' views of learners are a strong force in determining the nature of interaction between educators and learners and as a result learners' achievements (Schulz, Carpenter & Turnbull 1991:413). The Education White Paper 6 (2001:18) states that classroom educators are a primary resource for achieving the goals of inclusive education and that educators will need to improve their skills and knowledge. Figure 2.1 illustrates that continuing educator education may facilitate the successful inclusion of learners with disability in the classroom. It has been adapted from a diagram supplied by Eichinger, Rizzo and Sirotinik (1991:22).



**Figure 2.1:** Continuing educator education as a means to facilitate successful inclusion of learners with disabilities in classroom (Eichinger, Rizzo & Sirotinik 1991:22).

It is imperative to prepare educators to support the principle of the inclusion of learners with special needs and equip them with instructional strategies to use in teaching learners with special needs. Idol (1997:388) believes that educators must be supported in a variety of ways if they are to react favourably to inclusion. Learners with special needs will enjoy meaningful



community membership, exposure to talented educators, new social relationships with the same age peers and quality programmes delivered in the general educational classroom. Salend (1984:409-416) states that "general education educators need training directed at enhancing educator attitudes towards inclusion and focusing on the acquisition of the skill or competencies needed to implement inclusion successfully".

## **2.7 BARRIERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

The Education White Paper 6 (2001:18) acknowledges that the learners who are most vulnerable to barriers to learning and exclusion in South Africa are those who have historically been termed "learners with special education needs", that is, learners with disabilities and impairments. This means that educators will need to improve their skills and knowledge, and develop new ones. It is essential to identify barriers to learning operative within the educators. Mittler (2000:136) identifies the following barriers within educators:

### **2.7.1 Priority of training**

In mainstream schools in order to improve, change, or even illuminate educators' perceptions about including learners with special educational needs, all educators need to be adequately trained, because one of the greatest barriers to school inclusion is the lack of adequate preparation and training of general educators. Through a long-range in-service training agenda, a community and its educators can "gear up" to create quality inclusive learning environments. Engelbrecht (1999:49) asserts that educators are most probably unable to handle learners with diverse needs efficiently unless they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to do so. Educators are not trained in identifying and assisting learners with special needs. Links between ordinary and special schools are limited or non-existent. Educators are disadvantaged by the poor quality of their training (National Education Policy Investigation 1993). According to Mittler (2000:153) educators insist that there was no reference to parents and families in their initial training and that there are few opportunities to attend courses or training.



It is not just a matter of training in the conventional sense, but of educators having opportunities to heighten their self-awareness and to think about their attitudes to families, how they perceive them and relate to them and to consider whether there may be alternative approaches for them as individuals and for the schools and services in which they work.

### **2.7.2 Negative attitudes towards inclusion**

Bruno, Gerard and Tracy (1996:304) aver that in order to improve, change or even eliminate educators' negative perceptions, the training of all educators is essential. Within the literature on attitudes towards inclusion the following researchers ascribe educators' negative attitudes to various reasons:

- Lack of knowledge, lack of experience, and lack of training in teaching learners with disabilities appear as a major contribution of negative attitudes (Salend 1984:409-416);
- International research suggests that educators with little experience of people with disabilities have negative attitudes to inclusion (Mittler 1995:105-108);
- Educators are resistant to change – they find it threatening to have to change the proven teaching methods to accommodate learners with special educational needs (Margolis & McGettigan 1988:15);
- Educators feel resistant to the objectionable way that the inclusion policy was imposed on them, where they were forced to make changes, causing a detrimental affect on educators' self-esteem and job satisfaction (Vlachou & Barton 1994:106);
- Educators see learners with special educational needs as an additional burden (Galloway & Goodwin 1993:124);
- Some educators feeling overwhelmed and frustrated at having to deal with various other professionals, where communication was often problematic in the team, and goals and agendas set for specific learners with special educational needs were not always congruent amongst all the team members (Giangreco, Edelman, Macfarland & Luiselli 1997:330).



Educators have to be empowered to become change-agents in areas where change is necessary (Committee for Educators Education Policy 1994:5). Therapeutic techniques should be applied in order to challenge the existing beliefs and negative attitudes in educators.

### **2.7.3 Lack of understanding regarding inclusion**

Forlin (1997:26) asserts that most educators are aware of their inability to teach learners with special needs. Bradley and West (1994:117) also indicate that educators consider themselves as having been inadequately trained. Their knowledge about inclusive education is poor. They have no skills and confidence to handle diverse needs effectively. They feel they are unable to meet the demands of inclusive education.

Educators feel inadequate and threatened due to lack of experience and training in coping with learners with special educational needs (Hayes & Gunn 1988:32). They find themselves unable to educate learners with special needs in mainstream classes because they do not have equipment, skills or knowledge. Educators should know more about the social behaviour and development of learners with special educational needs. Ainscow (1991:9) mentions the following features that can contribute to the effectiveness of a school:

- confidence amongst staff that they can deal with children's individual needs;
- a sense of optimism that all pupils can succeed; and
- arrangements for supporting individual members of staff.

### **2.7.4 Insufficient resources**

In rural areas where needs appear to be greatest, the provision is limited or non-existent. There are no services. According to the Education White Paper 6 (2001:28) the physical environment of most ordinary schools and learning settings is not barrier-free; and even where this is the case, accessibility has not been planned. Sufficient space, as well as flexibility of space regarding tables, chairs and other equipments, is required.



Donald (1991:38-44) asserts that the services and resources for black learners are vastly inadequate and even non-existent in some areas. There has been little commitment to providing services for learners with special needs. This includes structural barriers in the built environment, such as flights of stairs, inaccessible toilets, inaccessible service points like telephones, inaccessible entrances, and problematic interior design, like fixed seats, or inadequate floor space (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht 1999:50). Education and training should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning with resources to enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society. The National Disability Strategy, as cited by the Education White Paper 6 (2001:10) states that "it emphasizes the need for including persons with disabilities in the workplace, social environment, political sphere and sports arenas". It also maintains that the recent resources within the system will be evaluated and the existing resources and capacities will be strengthened and transformed so that resources can contribute to the building of an inclusive system (Education White Paper 6 2001:16).

#### **2.7.5 Lack of consultation**

According to Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:3) the principal resources required for inclusive approaches are the time, energy and skills of regular educators. Consultation is when one person helps another in changing the performance or behaviour of another person. As educators, this consultation will be of necessity but educators are not asking advice or opinion from others close to them. They are afraid of being humiliated. Without consultation, educators will not help one another and they will also not get help from others. They will also not help each other with resources. The development of collaborative relationships among educators so that expertise may be shared is crucial to successfully meeting the diverse needs of all learners in inclusive education settings (Thousand & Vanilla 1990). According to Engelbrecht (1999:165) valuable information regarding adaptations to existing buildings, buses and infrastructure for learners with special educational needs can also be obtained through collaboration and



consultation. Educators at many schools unable to visit special schools, to observe and gain practical hands-on experiences from their colleagues because of a lack of consultation. Because of the lack of partnerships, small schools are unable to access resources. Evans, Lunt, Wedell and Dyson (1999:22) however state that the sharing of resources and expertise across schools would be one way of reducing some of the inequalities.

## **2.8 MANAGING CHANGE**

Inclusive education is not just for a few learners; it is about all learners. Mittler (2000:177) maintains that inclusive education involves not only the culture and organization of the school, but also for others who are isolated but who may be joining the school at some time in the future. Inclusive education is not about the placement of individual children but about creating an environment where all learners can enjoy access and success in the curriculum and become full and valued members of the school and local community.

The following can manage change in inclusive education:

### **2.8.1 Home-school links**

The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, Section 5 supports the optimal involvement of parents in the education of their children. Parents must be involved in the process of identifying barriers to learning and development and also in developing plans of action to address the barriers. The school should involve parents for the effective development of an inclusive school. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:56) maintain that a close partnership between school and parents enables parents to further develop their own skills and understanding in supporting their children through the schooling process. Parents' involvement is important in order to help their children with specific work at home and in monitoring their children's progress. The closer the parent is to the education of the child's, the greater the impact on the child development and educational achievement (Fullan 1991:227).

The values and norms of the school that have to reflect the principle of inclusion need to be developed within the family. Mittler (2000:151) indicates that creating new ways of bringing educators and parents into a better



working relationship is important, as both the children, parents and educators would benefit. It could also make an impact on children's learning and promote social as well as school inclusion. By involving parents on school governing bodies they can develop local school policy and the school can be governed in such a way that the principles of inclusion are developed.

The National Parent-Educator Association (PTA) has developed the following National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement (1998:5) to increase awareness of effective practices and to promote meaningful family participation:

- Communicating: Communication between home and school is regular, two way, and meaningful.
- Parenting: Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- Student learning: Families play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Volunteering: Families are welcome in schools and their support and assistance are sought.
- School decision making and advocacy: Families are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Collaborating with community: Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.

### **2.8.2 Schools in partnership**

Mittler (2000:178) indicates that no school is an island and no school can succeed without developing networks of partnerships with its community, with its parents, past present and future, and with other schools and other agencies. This partnership could include identifying what resources are available in terms of the needs of the school. In rural areas, the school is at the heart of the community. Adults learn alongside their children, the buildings are in continuous use, and the staff of the school are valued for their knowledge and experience as well as for helping the children of the community, to learn and develop. Negotiating an acceptable partnership agreement with the community is important. Parents should become more



supportive of schools and schools can be more understanding of the difficulties that parents face. A close relationship between parents, learners and community will foster inclusive education. For the school, strengthening community action and participation would mean developing stronger links with the local community (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht 1999:62).

### **2.8.3 On-going training as a support service**

Educators should be empowered to work effectively in inclusive schools. The provision of support is the key to progress. According to Engelbrecht (114:47) "institutions will need to provide training courses that will empower educators to provide quality programmes for including learners with an intellectual, physical, sensory or emotional disability or cultural disadvantages, within regular classrooms". This training will need to redress the previous educational disadvantage of excluding learners with special needs. Idol (1997:388) believes that educators must be supported in a variety of ways if they are to react favourably to inclusion. An integral part of offering support to educators is to make a conscious effort to build truly professional educators. This means that the entire staff needs to receive on-going training in how to work in collaborative and collegial teams (Idol 1997:389).

Adelman (1996:441) has the following to say about team collaboration:

"A team formed by representatives from participating centre of learning whose function is to co-ordinate and integrate programmes serving various centres of learning, identify and meet common needs and create links and collaborations among the centres and community agencies."

Through workshops and seminars educators can gain insight into the developments concerning inclusive education. By offering educators, learners and parents a service and support, this can lead them to discuss and assist one another in preparation and presentation of lessons.

Van der Westhuizen (1999) stresses that the educator has to remain a student because if he/she falls behind, he/she will not be an effective educator. Changes in educator training should, therefore, respond to the needs of all learners within the context. Educators should become effectively equipped by the moral soundness or excellence of their basic training. This



will ensure that they move forward in all related fields, and serve all learners entrusted to their care to the best of their ability. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:18) indicates that classroom educators will be the primary source for achieving an inclusive education and training system in order to improve their skills and knowledge, and also to develop new ones.

## **2.9 SUPPORT STRUCTURES**

The provision of a support system is the key to progress. In such a support system the role of the educators in the process and of peer support among learner is paramount. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:53) state that sharing human and material resources between schools and other sites of learning is also an important aspect of community support.

The following can serve as support services:

### **2.9.1 Collaboration**

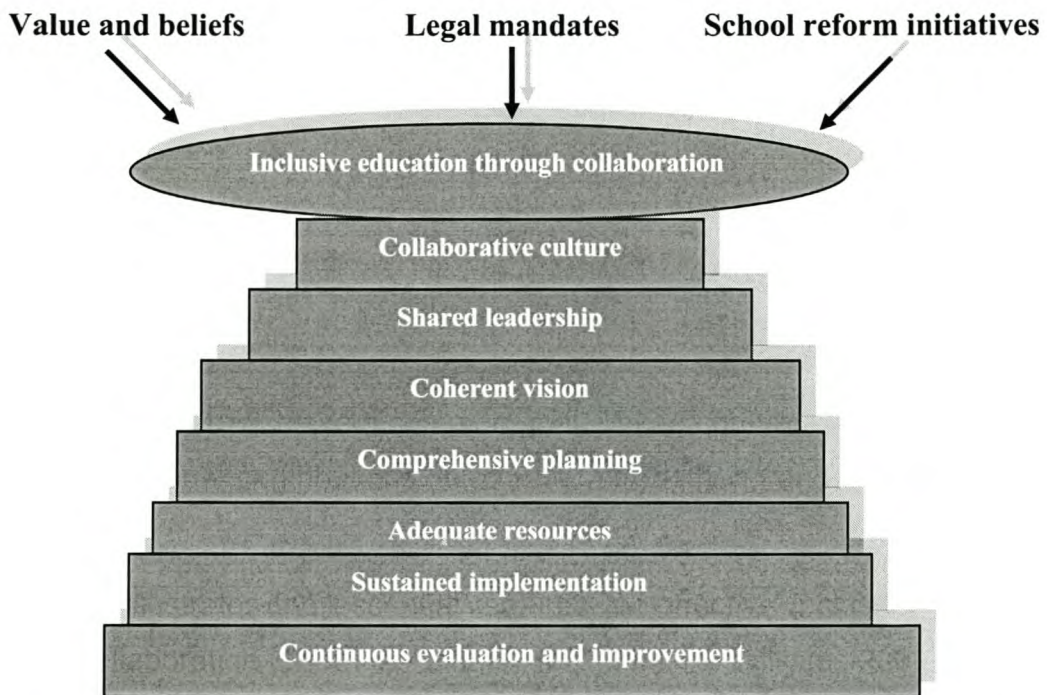
Collaboration is a style professionals choose to use in order to accomplish a goal they share (Cook & Friend 1993:421-444). Collaboration is to labour together or work jointly. Collaboration can offer more immediate availability of other educators to verify perceptions, to problem-solve collectively, and to apply several teaching and learning styles to the issues. Cook and Friend (1993:421-444) further state that collaboration in inclusive education offers the opportunity for capitalizing on the diverse and specialized knowledge of educators and enables schools to provide quality-learning support for all their learners. Educators working in collaborative teams can accomplish much more than individuals on their own. The implementation of inclusion will require close collaboration of educators as they need to adapt curricula. In this regard Campher (1997: 56) states that a collaborative team can bring about changes to the curriculum and create a positive and caring educational environment. For a team to collaborate effectively, educators must possess and implement small group interpersonal skills such as group communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution.

Friend and Cook (1996: 445) also state that effective collaboration is based on the ongoing participation of two or more individuals who are committed to



working together to achieve a common goal. These contributors bring different skills and unique contributions to create, strengthen, and maintain these relationships.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the essential features for effective inclusive education through collaboration (Thomas, Korinek, Mclaughlin & Williams 2000:27).

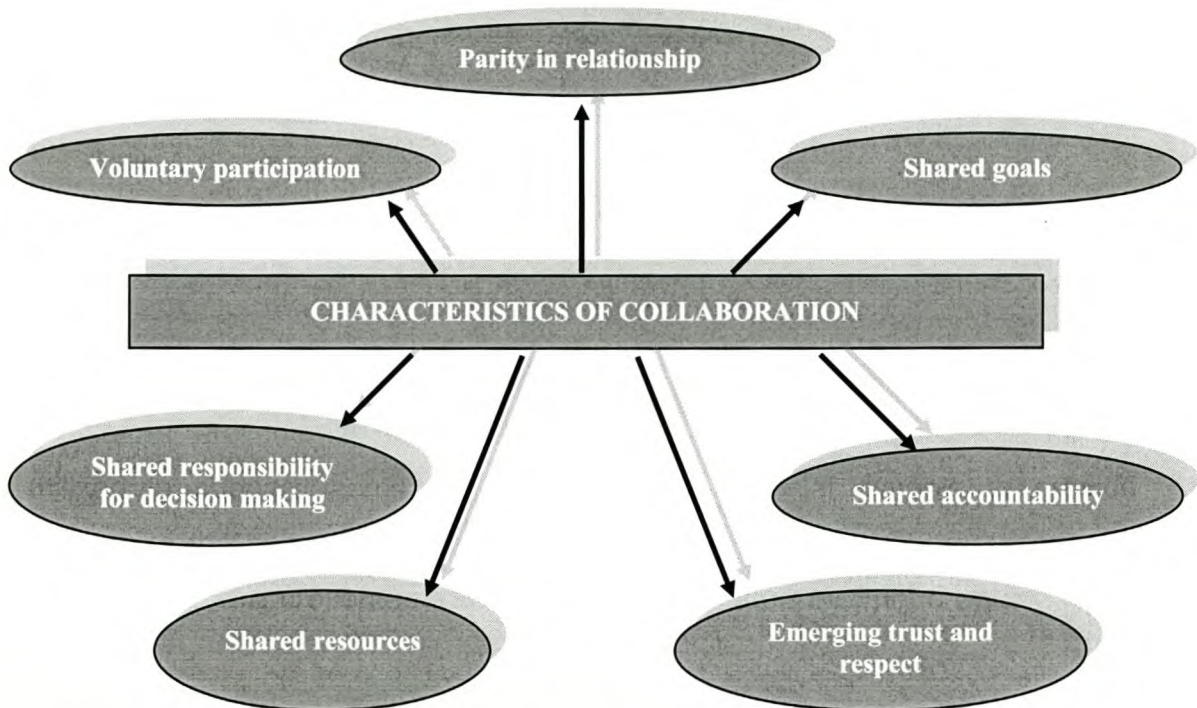


**Figure 2.2:** Essential features for effective inclusive education (Thomas, Korinek, Mclaughlin & Williams 2000:27).

The above diagram indicates that collaborative functions fall into the domain of communication and collaborative planning, and include exchanging and sharing information, joint responsibility and accountability, thus creating positive interdependence and making unique contributions. The team consists of a group of people, each of whom possesses particular expertise. Each member is responsible for making individual decisions, but together they hold a common vision. They meet regularly to communicate, collaborate and consolidate knowledge, from which plans are made, actions determined and future decisions influenced. Resources are also shared (Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin & Williams 2000:27).



Educators are themselves existing educational resources that could be utilized in support teams in mainstream and special schools to provide support to the school as a whole in an empowering way. Characteristics of collaboration are presented in figure 2.3 as illustrated by Friend and Bursuck (1999:72).



**Figure 2.3:** Characteristics of collaboration (Friend & Bursuck 1999:72)

Friend and Bursuck (1999:72) aver that educators should work collaboratively with other colleagues and that contributions are worthwhile. In such a situation, they are available when they are required to share knowledge, resources and plan their instruction jointly. When, as individuals, taking part in activities with others, they form the basis of decision making about the activities they are taking. It is increasingly difficult for one educator to keep up with all the advancements in knowledge and processes. Teams of educators can energize and inform each other in dozens of ways. Collaboration is based on the belief in the value of shared decision making, trust and respect among participants (Friend & Bursuck 1999:72).



### **2.9.2 Peer tutoring**

Charlton (1998:50-53) emphasizes the fact that peer tutoring produces the intended result in teaching or reading, provided the tutor is properly prepared and supported and the learner is willing to accept such help. Children can educate other children and they can learn from doing so. Put simply, all school systems are full of learners and all classes are rich in learners, no matter what other resources they may lack (Winter 2000:24-28). Peer tutoring can be a focus area for building acceptance, understanding and friendships between learners. Children with disabilities are socially active to a greater extent and engage in positive interaction with peers more frequently when they are enrolled in inclusive programmes. They have more positive social interaction and also engage in higher level play (Beckman & Kohl, 1987).

Thomas, Korinek, Mclaughlin and Williams (2000:790) state that peer coaching for educators is another professional support structure. Colleagues may either volunteer or be assigned to work together. They can share similar professional roles, responsibilities and professional status. They can facilitate collaboration necessary for positive change by breaking down the isolation of educators and instil a climate of trust and collegiality.

### **2.9.3 The sense of ownership**

Guetzloe (1994:29) maintains that fostering a sense of "ownership" that is vital to the success of inclusive education, requires the commitment and collaboration of all individuals and agencies that will work with learners with special needs and their families. The most important planning that needs to be done is to establish a number of committees and teams to assist in the process. The Department of National Education (1998:36) states that such teams should contain the minimum competencies required to ensure that the needs of all learners are met. Representatives of all institutions, organizations, agencies and groups that may be affected by the inclusion should be invited to help. Such representatives should include parents, educators, administrators, health professionals, members of community organizations and individuals in the business community. All planning groups should include individuals who possess considerable knowledge about



learners with disabilities, the needs of their families, and the services available in the school and community (Guetzloe 1994:30).

This will require an enormous amount of collaboration among regular and special educators, parents, administrators, and others who may be involved. Educators and specialists working together should cultivate inclusive communities (Mittler 2000:39). School leadership should recognize and appreciate the value of teamwork. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:158) assert that collaboration in inclusive education offers the opportunity for capitalizing on the diverse and specialized knowledge of educators and enables schools to provide quality learning support for all their learners.

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the move towards inclusive schooling, the philosophy of inclusion, the notion of inclusive education, the value of inclusive education in South Africa, the attitudes and sentiments of educators towards integration, barriers in inclusive education and the way in which to manage change have been discussed. The support services in inclusive education have been defined and discussed. Collaboration between educators, learners and parents, peer tutoring and the sense of ownership are essential in breaking down barriers. Through this literature review, educators could be assisted in implementing inclusive education effectively. It is clear that educators need skills training and experience in working with learners with special educational needs and that working in teams has benefits for the individual and the school as a whole. Time and support are crucial elements in the process. In the following chapter, the research design for this study will be discussed.

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research design that has been selected as a means of investigating the educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education. Mouton (2001:74) states that the research design is a plan or blueprint of how a researcher intends to conduct the problem. It addresses the planning of scientific inquiry – designing a strategy for finding out something. Leedy (1997:93) describes it "as the complete strategy attack on the central research problem".

### 3.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Merriam (1988:6) research design is a plan for assembling, organizing, and integrating information and its results in a specific end product. "The selection of a particular design is determined by how the problem is shaped, by the questions it raises, and by the type of end product desired" (Merriam 1988:6).

The research design of this study may be described as follows:

#### 3.2.1 Characteristics of the research design

The research design of this study may be described as qualitative. Qualitative research, according to Merriam (1998:5), "is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible". In this study a systematic and subjective "from the inside" approach is used in order to determine the needs of inclusive educators towards inclusive education. Furthermore, the researcher may be considered to be an important research instrument, who as participator may give his/her perceptions of the context and is responsive to the context (Merriam 1988:19).



Qualitative researchers always attempt to study human action from the insider's perspective (Mouton 2001:53). Data in the form of words are gathered and used to convey what is learned about a particular phenomenon rather than numbers or figures. I felt that this approach would best meet my aim for this study of gaining understanding of and insight into educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education. This may influence how inclusive education will be implemented in their school. Mouton (2001:270) supports this notion by stating that "qualitative research design refers to that generic research approach in social research according to which research takes as its departure point the insider perspective on social action". This would include observational methods.

### **3.2.2 Context of the research**

Miles and Huberman (1994:10) state that human behaviour always occurs "in specific situations within a social and historical context, which deeply influences how they are interpreted by both insiders and the researcher as outsider". They also believe that each circumstance has a remarkable situation consisting of a related time, geographical setting, and social and historical situation – all of which impact on both the participants and the observer (Miles & Huberman 1994:10).

The site chosen for the study was in the rural area in the Limpopo Province, Vuwani District in Region Three of the Limpopo Department of Education in South Africa. The selected school is a primary school, which caters for learners from Grade 1 to Grade 6. There are 722 learners and 18 educators at this school. The educator-pupil ratio is 1:40. All learners at the school (with or without disabilities and learning difficulties), are housed at the same school in an inclusive classroom setting. As mentioned the school is in a rural area. The participants stated that the area was characterized by a high level of illiteracy among parents which resulted in many of the learners being admitted to the centres of learning without having received any stimulation and preparation for school. It is important to remember that the Education White Paper 6 (2001:11) states that "the education policy will systematically move away from using segregation according to categories of disabilities as an organizing principle for institutions". I have chosen this site of study because



the school has disabled children in its mainstream classrooms. As the learners come from poor socio-economic conditions, health problems among learners are also rife.

### **3.2.3 Problem and purpose**

As mentioned in chapter one, the aim of this study is to gain insight into the perceptions of educators about the implementation of inclusive education.

After the April 1994 election in South Africa many fundamental changes became evident in the South African lifestyle. Amongst these were the changes in the education policy. The move towards inclusive education is in accordance with an international trend towards inclusion. This principle is furthermore entrenched in the constitution, in the Bill of Rights, which ensures equal opportunities for all (The Constitution 1996:7).

Inclusion in South Africa is no longer a possibility, but a certainty. The South African Schools Act of 1996 establishes the right of equal access to basic and quality education for all learners without discrimination (Government Gazette 15 November 1996:6).

The purpose of the research was twofold:

- to understand the perceptions of educators on the implementation of inclusive education; and
- to inform research on training programmes for the implementation of inclusive education.

### **3.2.4 Research methodology**

Mouton (2001:75) states that "research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used", while Mason (1996:36) maintains that qualitative research implies more than data collection.

This study consists of a case study. Merriam (1998:27) defines a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit". Wolcott, as cited by Merriam (1998:27), also regards a case study as an end-product of field-oriented research.



This study was implemented at the selected primary school as described in the context of the research. Merriam (1998:27) views the case as a thing, a single entity, an unit around which there are boundaries. The participants stated that they had to do subject teaching in a rotation system. Miles and Huberman (1994:25) regard the case as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context". The participants commented that they had a physically disabled learner in the classroom. This child used a wheelchair. There were also two children with hearing difficulties who used hearing aids. They had been placed in the mainstream because of the school's commitment to the policy of inclusion.

Learners came from the local community where most of their parents struggled to survive financially as they were unemployed and illiterate. As stated "the case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing" (Stake 1995:2). In this study, children with disabilities found it difficult to master learning tasks which most other children in the class could manage. This gave rise to underachievement, which often caused other learners to tease them in a destructive way. The educators were all qualified, but in most cases their initial training had been inadequate and there was currently no in-service support at the time.

The study entailed interviewing the educators about their perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education at their school.

#### **3.2.4.1 Sampling**

According to Merriam (1998:65) a sample within the case needs to be selected either before the data collection begins or while the data are being gathered. I aimed at using purposeful sampling in my study. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that "one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one learns the most" (Merriam 1998:61).

The sample in this study was selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- participants who worked in the same school; and
- participants who were educators.



The sample consisted of 18 staff members of the selected school. I selected this particular school as it was in the process of implementing inclusion of learners in mainstream classes. A focus group interview was held at the school to collect data. According to Panyan, Hillman and Ligget (1997:37-46), a focus group interview involves several individuals from a specific group responding to a set of questions designed to reveal and explore in depth a wide range of beliefs and experiences concerning the programme being examined. The participants were reassured that they were under no obligation to participate and that participation was voluntary.

Though their average years of experience was above 18 years, the average involvement in the process of inclusion was approximately 18 months. The participants accepted that these children who were disabled would cope well because the children's intelligence quotient seemed to be normal.

#### **3.2.4.2 *Methods of data collection***

A variety of methods were used to collect data. They will be briefly described in this section.

- **Literature review**

Merriam (1998:55) defines the literature review as a written essay that combines and critical analysis and research on a particular topic. The literature review form a vital components of the research process. According to Silverman (1993:1) the aim of the literature review is:

"... to provide a set of explanatory concepts. These concepts offer ways of looking at the world which are essential in defining the research problem ... without a theory, there is nothing to research".

The purpose of the literature review is therefore to provide a basis and a background for the study. As noted in chapter two inclusive education constitutes a relatively new field. The study seeks to indicate that training should acknowledge the educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, the literature review also served as a framework of reference whilst the data were being collected, processed and interpreted to form the database for analysis (Merriam 1998:111).



Participants of the focus group interview were given an undertaking that their names would not be disclosed. Participation was voluntary and the outcomes of the study would be discussed with them before publication.

### **3.3.2 Focus group interview**

Morgan (1997:8–10) describes focus group discussions as follows:

"The main advantage of the focus group in comparison to participant observation is the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time based on the researcher's ability to assemble and direct focus groups".

A focus group interview was conducted with the selected primary school educators in order to determine what their perceptions were in implementing inclusive education. I interviewed them as one focus group. My role as a researcher was to facilitate or be a moderator. I introduced the topic in the form of a question and encouraged the participation and opinions of all members in an unbiased manner. Mouton (2001:289) indicates that asking questions and noting answers is a natural process for us all, and it seems simple enough to add it to your "bag of tricks" as a researcher.

The content of the interview was transcribed verbatim and formed the starting point for the analysis of the data of this research. Mouton (2001:292) states that group discussion provides direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences.

A description of the participants is presented in chapter four, section 4.2.

The questions that were put to the participants in the focus groups were:

1. What is your perception of the implementation of inclusive education?
2. How do educators view disablement?
3. Have you received the resources and training to implement inclusion effectively?
4. What things have hindered the success of inclusion in your school?
5. What can be done to have good inclusion [inclusive] education?
6. How will the classroom educator's role change [in the event of inclusive education being fully implemented]?

7. How have you managed to deal with the changes?

8. How do you deal with problems that arise?

I felt that these questions would give me a good understanding of the perceptions of these educators regarding the implementation of inclusive education at their school. I encouraged communication, reflected and asked probing questions in order to gain more knowledge and to clarify information where necessary, as the interviews provided educators with the opportunity to offer in-depth and direct first-person descriptions and stories.

### **3.3.3 Field notes**

The written accounts of the observations constitute field notes (Merriam 1998:104). Field notes based on observation were made during the focus discussion or shortly after. According to Merriam (1998:106) field notes include the following:

- verbal descriptions of the settings, the people, the activities;
- direct quotations or at least the substance of what people said;
- the observer's comments – put in the margins or in the running narrative. Observer's comments can include the researcher's feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, and working hypotheses.

Field notes form a supportive source of data and need to be analysed and are useful for later data interpretation (Merriam 1998:106). I made use of field notes throughout the project in this study and this was used as background data.

Bailey (1989:250) lists five components of field notes:

- Running description;
- Previously forgotten happenings that are now recalled;
- Analytical ideas and inferences;
- Personal impression and feelings; and
- Notes for further information.



### **3.4 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

A description given in Bodgen and Biklen (1998:57) states that data analysis is a:

"... process of systematically searching and arranging the interviews, transcript of field notes and other material to increase your own understanding of them and enable you to present what you have discovered to others".

Mouton (2000:490) refers to qualitative data analysis as all forms of analysis of data that were collected using qualitative techniques, regardless of the paradigm used to govern the research.

According to Merriam (1998:178):

"Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning".

It allows the researcher to produce conclusions and generalization that are congruent.

Miles and Huberman (1994:10) define qualitative data analysis as a process consisting of three phases: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing or verification. These three processes are in constant interaction and are interwoven before, during and after data collection. The aim of data analysis in this study was to find meaningful shared themes in different people's descriptions of a common experience. Before the process of analysis could begin, the data from the focus group interview were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed (see Section 4:3). The respondents involved were indicated in codes by means of the following letters: E1, E2, E3, etc. The letter Q has been used to indicate questions asked by the researcher.

#### **3.4.1 Data reduction**

As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994:10) "The data reduction encompasses selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming of data." In this study the transcribed data were repeatedly read. Units of meaning were identified and copied onto cards verbatim. "Categories of

meaning were arrived at through grouping those units that had the same meaning and assigning a word or phrase that reflected the essence of the unit's meaning written beneath, while the location of the data was indicated on the margin of the transcript" (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:129). (See 4.3 and 4.4.)

### **3.4.2 Clustering and conceptualization**

Miles and Huberman (1994:249) describe clustering as a means of achieving something employed to see whether it is effective and of understanding a phenomenon better by grouping objects that have similar patterns and characteristics. They further state that clustering may be viewed as a method of moving to high levels of abstraction. This reduction method of grouping aims at assessing which things are alike and need to be grouped, and which need to be left out.

The process of clustering in this study was achieved in the following way according to the guidelines supplied by Miles and Huberman (1994:249):

- The data obtained from the focus group interview were transcribed.
- The transcribed data were read several times in order to form a broad and holistic picture.
- The main ideas and themes were recorded.
- Semantic units were identified and indicated on the particular data source.
- Semantic units were then grouped together in categories.
- Dendrograms of the main categories and semantic units were then drawn to arrive at a deeper analysis of meanings and themes.

This is illustrated in Annexure E.

All of the above process is the main focus of chapter four.



## **3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Concerning qualitative research Maxwell (1996:87) states that validity refers to the credibility of a description and interpretation, whereas Mason (1996:145) maintains that qualitative data is judged through the validating of data and the accuracy of method (reliability).

Merriam (1998:198–199) refers to the importance of maintaining a scientific ethos and spirit in all forms of research in order to produce valid and reliable information in an ethical manner. She also states that the researcher's results are trustworthy when there has been some accounting for their validity and reliability. The methods that were employed in this study will now briefly be discussed.

### **3.5.1 Internal validity**

"Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality" (Merriam 1998:201). The meaning of reality is crucial in this context. The researcher has to capture and portray the reality of the world as it appears to the people in it. Hysamen (1998:209) stresses that the researcher should be careful throughout not to make conclusions which are not justified by the study. He further states that by the internal validity of a conclusion ascribing changes in the dependent variable to the independent variable is the degree to which changes are indeed due to the latter rather than to other explanations.

A restriction of population and internal validity of the results due to shortcomings in the sampling procedure, the assignment to the samples or the inadequate control of nuisance variables, or anything which possibly may have influenced the results, should be mentioned (Hysamen 1998:209).

The following methods were suggested by Merriam (1998:204), to ensure internal validity of this study.

#### **3.5.1.1 *Triangulation***

Mouton (2000:277) maintains that triangulation is the best way to elicit the various and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the context of a study to collect information about different events and relationships from



different points of view. This entails collecting information from a diverse range of individuals using multiple data collection methods.

Data relevant to this study were generated by means of transcribing the focus group interview, with accompanying field notes. This means asking different questions, seeking different sources and using different methods. As directed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:26-148) these transcriptions were first analysed. I identified semantic units of meaning and consequently patterns in the collected data by means of the constant comparative method. The data were then analysed by an independent coder.

#### **3.5.1.2 *Audit trail***

Goetz and LeCompte (1984 as cited by Merriam 1988:173) state that the researcher should present his/her methods in such detail "that other researchers can use the original report as an operating manual by which to replicate the study". Therefore, detailed descriptions of how data were collected, categories were derived and findings were arrived at for in this study presented in chapter four.

#### **3.5.1.3 *Researcher's position***

At the outset of this study (see chapter one), I discussed my beliefs, values and biases contributing to the credibility and validity of these findings, as recommended by Leedy (1997:168), the assumptions and theory on which the study was based were discussed in chapter two. The basis for selection of the participants in the focus group interview and description of them, and the social context from which the data were collected were discussed in chapter three.

#### **3.5.2 *External validity***

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Merriam 1998:207). According to Leedy (1997:41), external validity is concerned with the generalization of the conclusions reached through observation of a sample to the universe.

Merriam (1998 as cited by Creswell 1994:158) states that the "intent of qualitative research is not to generalize findings, but to form a unique



interpretation of events". On the other hand, Miles and Huberman (1994:279) state that "one should however be aware that the general resides in the specific, and what one learns from a specific situation is transferable to other situations, determined by the degree of similarity or goodness of fit between the two contexts".

In order to facilitate the transferability the following strategy was employed, as suggested by Merriam (1998:211):

- Provision of thick, rich descriptions, "so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgement" (Merriam 1998:211).
- Description of how typical certain perceptions identified were in comparison to the perceptions in the study, so that the reader could make comparison with their own situations (LeCompte & Preissle 1993 as cited by Merriam 1998:211).

### **3.5.3 Reliability**

Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time (Mouton 2000:119).

Hammersley (as cited by Silverman 1993:145) describes reliability in qualitative research as "... the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions". In this study my assumptions were presented and different methods were used to generate data, thereby ensuring that the data derived were trustworthy. Therefore the same methods employed to ensure internal validity consequently ensure reliability.

## **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Most authors who discuss qualitative research design address the importance of ethical considerations (Cresswell 1994:165). Thus the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of informants. The methods employed to control the ethical standards of this study will now be briefly discussed.

### **3.6.1 Confidentiality and anonymity**

The participants of the focus group interview were given an undertaking that, in order to protect their privacy, their names would not be disclosed. They were further ensured that the field notes would be destroyed once information had been examined and the research completed.

### **3.6.2 Voluntary participation**

The participants were reassured that they were under no obligation to participate and could leave the focus group at any time they pleased, should they feel uncomfortable. The research objectives were articulated verbally so that they clearly understood how the data would be used. The procedure, time requirements and type of participation expected were also explained to them at the outset of the focus group interview (Creswell 1994:165).

### **3.6.3 Feedback**

An agreement between me and the participants in the focus group was also reached that the outcomes of the study would be discussed with them before publication and this agreement was adhered to.

## **3.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the research design, the research methods, the methods of data collection and analysis, validity and reliability of the study have been described. The next chapter will encompass a presentation of the data collected, analysis of the data and a presentation of the resultant themes.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the discussion will focus on the context of the data collection and the analysis of the raw data that were selected. A description of data consolidation, examples of transcribed raw data from data resources, a process of analysis of data into semantic units and an illustration of the emerging categories and themes will be presented. The derived themes will ultimately be reconceptualised and interpreted through the theoretical framework.

#### **4.1.1 The research problem**

As inclusive education is a process to be fostered, facilitated and managed in order to accommodate a diversity of learners' needs in a unified system of education, the aim of this study is based on determining educator's perceptions of the implementation of an inclusive education.

### **4.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

As described in chapter three, the data for this research were derived from focus group interviews with educators. The attendance of the focus group interviews was voluntary and in both cases the fact that the data were to be used for research purposes was stressed (refer to Section 3.2.2).

#### **4.2.1 The educators**

All the educators resided in a rural area. The educators' teaching experience and qualifications varied, as indicated in table 4.1 below.

**TABLE 4.1: EDUCATORS' QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

<b>EDUCATORS</b>	<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>	<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>GRADE TAUGHT</b>
Educator 1	JPTD, Remedial Diploma	7	7
Educator 2	PTC, BA, Bed	23	7
Educator 3	PTC	22	7
Educator 4	SPTD, HED	9	6
Educator 5	PTC	21	6
Educator 6	PTC	20	6
Educator 7	PTC	25	4
Educator 8	PTC	21	4
Educator 9	JPTD	24	3
Educator 10	PTC	19	3
Educator 11	SPTD, BA, Bed	22	5
Educator 12	SPTD, BA	11	5
Educator 13	SPTD	18	5
Educator 14	JPTD, HED	19	2
Educator 15	PTC	15	1
Educator 16	PTC	20	1
Educator 17	PTC	19	R
Educator 18	JPTD, Remedial Diploma	23	R

### **4.3 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis took place in three phases as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994:10) whereby it was first reduced and then displayed. Finally the conclusions were drawn and verified. The data collected were verbal data. The process of data analysis is described below.

#### **4.3.1 The process of data analysis and reduction**

The process of data analysis I followed may be referred to as "culling for meaning from words and actions of the participants in the study, framed by the researcher's focus of enquiry" (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:128). These authors further state that the process involved firstly identifying small units of



meaning in the data, which were later to serve as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning.

An example of the transcript of data from the focus group interview is presented. This process is described as a method employed to "understand phenomena better by grouping and then conceptualizing objects that have similar patterns and characteristics" (Miles & Huberman 1994:249).

The following steps were implemented:

#### **4.3.1.1 An example of data analysis from the focus group interview: educators**

An example of the transcript of data from the focus group interview is presented. The process of clustering and categorizing that was also applied to the transcribed data is illustrated.

The identified categories were coded by means of recognizable cues, in order to facilitate analysis and interpretation. (An inclusive list of categories and codes appears in Annexure C, as well as all responses of the educators.)

As mentioned in chapter three, section 3.4, the respondents involved were indicated in transcription codes by means of the following letters:

#### **Transaction codes**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
E 1, 2, 3 etc	Educator
Q	Indicates questions asked by the researcher

**Q: What is your perception about the implementation of inclusive education?**

E1: To me, I think that the implementation of inclusive education is not 100% correct as we educators do not know how to integrate values into subjects as we have different learners who are disabled in our classes.

E3: I would like to add to what E1 said that we do not know how to integrate values into subjects. We have to, on the ground, see to it that

policies that we get provide a relevant curriculum as the curriculum does not provide for values education.

E5: I have a problem because I am definitely not for inclusive education especially with our class sizes being as big as they are and I think for the sake of the disabled or learners with special educational needs (LSEN) it would be better to keep them in a separate place.

E9: I have nothing against it, but I feel that as long as we have this large class size it is going to be difficult to meet the needs of all learners.

**Q: How do you look towards being disabled?**

E4: I mostly consider disabled children as one and clearly limited group.

E8: Yes, I can also distinguish three groups of disabled children we have in our school, that and slow learners.

E12: I have nothing against inclusive education but I accept the idea of having physically handicapped children in the mainstream classes as they have a normal Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and can cope.

E2: Just to add to what E12 has said, slow learners can be in a mainstream school and just allowed to learn at their own pace. But mental handicapped have special needs and cannot fit in the normal classes.

E6: I disagree with E12 as we don't know how to teach the blind child and I also feel that the normal child is going to be left on the side because you are going to be so busy dealing with children with special needs.

**Q: Have you received the resources and training to implement inclusive education?**

E7: Special didactic materials are not there, classes and toilets are inaccessible for wheelchairs, ... etc.

E13: We have not being trained to get on with disabled children in class and also feel uncomfortable with the idea of inclusive education.

E16: Yes, we are still waiting for knowledge and help from the government in order to implement inclusive education effectively in our school.



E10: Even other normal children are not accepting these children in their classes. They tease them and they feel that I think these normal children also need to be involved in training.

E14: It does not mean that we do not like these children, we have no relevant facilities and not trained on how to teach them as there should be flexibility in schools and classroom organization patterns.

**Q: How will the classroom educator's role change?**

E5: It is true that with the implementation of inclusive education the role of the regular classroom will change dramatically.

E11: As we are expected to accommodate these children with special needs, change will require close collaboration with other educators who will need to work with these children.

E1: Just to add to that, we are also trying to work hand in hand with our nearby Tshilidzini special school to secure effective learning for all children and for mutual benefit.

E9: Furthermore, we must work together to encourage peer acceptance of and tolerance for individual differences.

E15: In the inclusive classroom the regular educator must be as involved with the problems of children with disabilities as is the special educator, therefore knowledge is important.

**Q: What can be done to have a good inclusion?**

E17: I am in favour of the idea of inclusion, I think good inclusion can be one in which children with disabilities make at least as much academic and social progress as they would in a separate classroom.

E12: If good inclusion is implemented it is reflected in academic and social progress for typical children, that is, progress that is at least as great as these learners would make in non-inclusive classrooms.

E10: To me, good inclusion ensures that educators are supported as they make the necessary classroom adaptations to meet children's needs.

E18: To add to what E10 has said, educators are actively involved in determining the form of that support.

E2: Good inclusion should have programmes which reflect the concept of normalization, that is, the rhythm of the day for children with disabilities is as similar as possible to the rhythm of the day for typical children.

**Q: What barriers will prevent you from being effective?**

E3: Big class sizes.

E11: Lack of in-depth knowledge.

E15: Lack of support from specialist educators.

E18: Inflexibility in curriculum.

E7: Inaccessibility of school buildings to allow wheelchairs to move freely.

E5: Lack of resources.

The main ideas that emerged were written down in a process of discovery. This would be used as the provisionally identified categories as indicated by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:133). This process is both intuitive and systematic. It involves identifying recurring regularities in the data. Semantic units were identified and indicated on the data source.

**Categories of meaning from the focus group interview**

The above raw data in transcribed format were then analysed into semantic units and categories as illustrated below in table 4.2. As stated by Merriam (1998:181), that "categories are abstractions derived from the data", thus the presentation of this table is a method of data display. After processing the entire transcript, I grouped the comments and notes that seemed to go together and present the data as in table 4.2 (see Annexure D).

Miles and Huberman (1994:11) aver that data displays are used by researchers to assemble organized information into an immediately accessible, compact form so that the researcher can see what is happening." Analysts are instructed to "hand craft" appropriate data displays for their own



study (Miles & Huberman 1994:93). Merriam (1998:184) states that "categories should be conceptually congruent".

**TABLE 4.2: CATEGORIES OF MEANING DERIVED FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

<b>SEMATIC UNITS</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>
Provide educators with skills and knowledge of providing support.	Capacity building
Ensure that we have a well-developed support system.	Support
Inaccessibility of school buildings to allow wheelchairs to move freely.	Physical facilities
Learners with disabilities will be teased by other learners.	Concern about peer reaction
Learners who have special needs need to be treated specially.	Separate facilities
We are also trying to involve other stakeholders.	Collaboration
Inclusion of all learners with special needs into mainstream.	Placement
The role of the regular classroom educator will change dramatically.	Attitude change
To be trained on how to work with children with disabilities.	Need for training that incorporates learners who have mixed disabilities

(See Annexure E)

#### **4.4 DATA REDUCTION TO DERIVE THE MAIN THEMES**

The next step followed in the process of data analysis was the clustering of the categories in a dendrogram in order to arrive in at the final themes.

Below is the dendrogram drawn from clustering categories from the focus group interview.

- Waiting for knowledge and help from the government.
  - Provide skills and knowledge to educators.
  - Trained to get on with disabled children in class.
- } Need for ongoing training
- Class sizes are too big.
  - Limitation of individual attention
- } Reduce educator-pupil ratio in class
- Change physical setting.
  - Proper physical buildings and facilities should be built.
- } Physical resources
- Importance of mutual acceptance.
  - Discrimination should be discouraged.
  - Teach all learners unconditionally.
- } Change of attitude

In order to arrive at a deeper analysis of meanings and themes, dendrogramming of the main categories was undertaken. The categories that were identified in the focus group interview were reduced to the final themes as above.

#### 4.5 MAIN THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE DATA SOURCES

The following table presents the main themes that emerged from the data source when the categories were reduced.

<b>FOCUS GROUP WITH THE EDUCATORS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Curriculum should be flexible.</li> <li>2. Ongoing training develops capacity building.</li> <li>3. Reduction of educator-pupil ratio in class is necessary.</li> <li>4. Provide better protection against teasing, abuse, etc.</li> <li>5. Site improvement is essential.</li> </ol>

##### 4.5.1 Flexibility in curriculum

The participants raised the point that barriers to learning arise from different aspects of the curriculum such as the language or medium of instruction, the content taught, the pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum, the learning materials and equipment that are used.



#### **4.5.2 Ongoing training develops capacity building**

The participants were of the opinion aired that ongoing training is essential for them to improve their skills and knowledge and develop new ones. This means that district level and staff development at school will be critical to establishing successful integrated educational practices.

#### **4.5.3 Reduction of educator-pupil ratio**

The participants commented that they were experiencing many problems in their daily teaching activities because of the class sizes that were too big. It was difficult to give individual attention to learners, therefore the educator-pupil ratio should be reduced.

#### **4.5.4 Provide better protection against teasing, abuse, etc.**

The participants raised the issue of the importance of respect and acceptance among learners. They feared that learners with special needs would be teased which could cause many of them to drop out.

#### **4.5.5 Site improvement**

Another concern aired by the participants was that special didactic materials were not available, that classrooms and toilets were mostly inaccessible to disabled learners. It was feared that this might prevent some learners from enjoying equal opportunities with others.

### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter data that had been collected through different methods have been presented. The steps followed in data reduction have been described. Finally, the process followed in deriving main themes was demonstrated. In the next chapter these themes, that is, flexibility in curriculum, ongoing training to develop capacity building, reduction of the educator-pupil ratio, providing better protection against teasing and abuse and site improvement will be discussed in detail and final comments will be made.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In investigating the educators' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education, accounts of activities were written and data were gathered. The analysis of the data gathered yielding the main themes was reported in the previous chapter. This chapter aims to focus on the themes that emerged. These themes will be discussed in the context of the literature review. By way of concluding, comments on the limitation of the study, as well as possible recommendations and suggestions for further research will be covered.

### 5.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE MAIN THEMES

#### 5.2.1 Flexibility in curriculum

Accounts from the participations indicated that barriers to learning arose from different aspects of the curriculum such as the language or medium of instruction, the content taught, the pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum, the learning materials and equipment used. According to educators the current curriculum did not cater for the diverse needs of all learners in the classroom. This was further emphasized by a comment from another participant: "We cannot meet the needs of all learners if the curriculum is not changed." Ainscow (1992:3-8) states that a precondition for implementing the policy of inclusion is to consider the curricula to meet the needs of each individual learner in a very specific manner. This is an indication that educators should be equipped with instructional strategies to use in teaching disabled learners within an inclusive framework. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:46) maintains that the "Department of Education will assist provincial education departments in developing effective management systems and capacity in respect of strategic planning,



management, information systems, financial management and curriculum development".

In describing flexibility in the curriculum for inclusion, Ainscow (1992:3-8) states that curricula and subject content that are totally different and that meet the needs of each individual learner in a very specific manner must be considered before implementing the policy of inclusion. Flexibility in the curriculum will also include the curriculum transformation which will ensure that the diverse needs of all the learners are met. In the White Paper 6 (2001:16) inclusive education and training are described as entailing enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners. Other participants indicated that different learning needs may arise because of an inflexible curriculum.

The participants also mentioned that the most important way of addressing barriers arising from the curriculum was to make sure that the process of learning and teaching was flexible enough to accommodate different learning needs and styles. One of the tasks of the district support team was to assist educators in institutions in creating greater flexibility in their teaching methods and in the assessment of learning. They would also provide illustrative learning programmes, learning support materials and assessment instruments (White Paper 2001:20): The respondents were primarily involved in facilitating inclusive education.

### **5.2.2 Ongoing training develop capacity building**

Capacity building is another theme that was identified. This was mentioned in the context of assisting the educators to develop skills that would enable them to respond to some of the learners' needs. The participants felt that they were not adequately trained to get on with the disabled children in their classes. The lack of knowledge was one of the biggest reasons for the participants to feel uncomfortable with the idea of inclusive education. A further comment from another participant illustrates this: "I feel pretty insecure about inclusive education because we as educators, we aren't trained to deal with these children."



Some participants remarked that having academic skills was not enough. Qualities such as patience and love were also important. Inclusive education would require that educators improve their skills and knowledge, and develop new ones. Ongoing training of educators would make a critical contribution to inclusion. Training should focus on supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met (Education White Paper 6 2001:19).

Bennet, Deluca and Bruns (1997:127) indicate the importance of ongoing training for educators; training that includes disability awareness, information on the benefits of inclusion, and factors that promote successful inclusion. This is reiterated in another participant's remarks that pertain to the establishment of the ongoing training: "It is difficult enough with a language impairment to be in a class if you do not even understand the language and to teach the blind child." Sixteen of the participants felt that they needed more training, knowledge and skills to teach properly. They were still waiting for help from the Government to implement inclusive education in their school successfully. For 16 participants it was difficult to get on with disabled children. They were not sure about what was wrong with the child and how to handle him. They said that at times they felt they were failing as educators.

Capacity building within the process of inclusion therefore extends from facilitating a paradigm shift to imparting required skills.

### **5.2.3 Reduction of educator-pupil ratio**

An issue that seemed to bear some importance for the participants was the large class sizes, and the fact that they felt that schools were understaffed. They generally felt that having to cope with the normal day-to-day problems in these large classes was nearly more than they were able to do. School buildings, materials and teaching aids were inadequate. The concern raised was that an impaired child demanded so more attention, yet no allowance was made for this by the education department in the prescribed class sizes. The educator-learner ratio should be such as to enable an educator to give proper attention to the needs of each learner (Ainscow 1992:10).



York, Vandercook, McDonald, Heise-Neff and Caughey (1992:246) state that a good predictor of more positive attitudes towards inclusion, has been found to be smaller class sizes.

#### **5.2.4 Provide better protection against teasing, abuse, etc.**

The participants in the focus group were also greatly concerned about the "normal" child in the classroom. The general sentiment appeared to be that the "normal" child in the system would be neglected, due to the educator's time and effort being consumed by the learners with special educational needs in the class. This was linked to a fear that the importance of respect and acceptance among learners would drop. They feared that the learners with special educational needs may be teased and labelled by the "normal" children, which would also ultimately contribute to low self-esteem. Idol (1997:392) states that other learners in the class where inclusion is to take place must be educated about the barriers faced by the included learner in a healthy, positive and nurturing way.

Learners could be involved in values-workshops in order to be guided towards acceptance of learners with disabilities. Tolerance would be increased by mixing the children in one class. Learners should accommodate learners with special educational needs at all possible opportunities in the classroom, on playgrounds or sports fields. Educators could also invite positive role models to interact with learners. By understanding the unique aspects of their classmates, and learning how to interact with their classmates peers will develop empathy and respect for other learners. The philosophy of inclusion "is about recognizing and respecting the differences among all learners and building on similarities" (Education White Paper 6 2001:17). Involving learners as peer helpers for learners with disabilities is a very effective strategy.

#### **5.2.5 Site improvement**

Part of the educational support that participants referred to was the specific infrastructure such as special teaching aids or ramps and lifts for wheelchairs and accessible toilets, to facilitate successful education. They stated that their schools did not have the facilities or equipment needed by learners with special educational needs. These limitations might prevent some learners



from enjoying equal opportunities with other learners. The kind of support the schools needed to receive would include physical and material resources (Education White Paper 6 2001:22).

The participants were generally concerned with the resources. They felt that schools needed to be renovated to allow all learners to have free access to the environment. According to Vaugh and Schumm (1995:266) successful inclusion requires considerable resources. The focus group was concerned about the barriers in the environment. This is confirmed by statements such as "I feel that if we are to accommodate learners with different disabilities then we need to renovate the school." They felt that the centre of learning should create an environment which would accommodate the diverse needs of the learning population and enable all learners to move around the environment freely and unhindered. Existing schools would have to be progressively altered to ensure accessibility so that the choice of learners with disabilities would be progressively widened.

According to the Education White Paper 6 (2001:28) the physical environment of most ordinary schools and learning settings is not barrier-free.

### **5.3 SUMMARY**

The discussions that follow will present the main findings of this study.

Although the participants were ready to welcome children who have disabilities, they stated that they were still grappling with the paradigm shift and they had reservations about the success of the implementation. There was uncertainty about the new functions and roles that they had to assume in order to indicate effective and efficient implementation of inclusion. This was reflected in statements such as "You work, you function but you don't know whether you are on the right track, you don't know whether you are developing."

The lack of knowledge and skills was one of the biggest reasons for the participants to feel uncomfortable with the idea of inclusive education. They stated that they were waiting for help from the Government to enable them to develop necessary skills such as skills in collaboration and facilitation. They



also needed assistance with professional development programmes. Evaluation and monitoring mechanisms were required as part of the development.

Reference was made to barriers to learning and development resulting from disability. Concerns were expressed that their school did not have the facilities or equipment needed by the children with disabilities and that upgrading all the schools would be far more costly than building one school to cope with all the needs. They also felt that the normal children wouldn't accept the disabled children in their class but that they would tease them. Other children would be disturbed by the behaviour of the disabled children. They also believed that disabled children needed more attention and they felt that the normal children in their classes would be disadvantaged and neglected as a result of all the time and attention they would need to give to the children with disabilities. These sentiments were reflected by statements such as "... and I also feel that the normal child is going to be left on the side because you are going to be so busy dealing with these children".

As South Africa is such a large country it will not be possible to satisfy all its inhabitants, but for the sake of all learners it would be good if the community as a whole could come to grips with the principles of inclusion. This viewpoint is supported by Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht (1999:48) who state that there is a need to view inclusion in its correct perspective within the South African context as a human rights issue and as a context for addressing all forms of discrimination relating to social class, race, gender, disability and any other form of discrimination.

## **5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS**

### **5.4.1 Implications for current theory and practice**

This study has focused on educator's perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education.

In comparing the findings of this study to the literature (discussed in chapter two) it would appear that factors that have historically contributed currently seem to be the focus of the participants of this study.



The following issues were highlighted:

- Educators felt inadequate and therefore incapable of coping with the learners with special educational needs in the classroom effectively.
- There was a perception that learners with special educational needs in the mainstream are labelled and develop numerous emotional problems.
- Educators felt that resources and educators' experience should be taken into account.
- Educators believed that inclusion would run smoothly, if the class sizes could be kept smaller.

#### **5.4.2 Implications for further research**

It is important that further research should take place in our schools to describe educator's skills of training, the strong emotional aura of educators and educational practices that foster inclusive education.

### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although this study focused on determining the particular roles and experiences of the group, there are certain lessons that can be learned from the process. These will be described in this section as recommendations.

#### **5.5.1 Recommendations for practice**

As the participants in the focus group felt that they were inadequately prepared to cope with learners with educational needs in the classrooms, it is important to assist educators to deal with the change, thereby enabling them to take the process forward with confidence and conviction. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:18) states that educators in mainstream education will be assisted so that educators can prepare main lessons with variations that are responsive to individual learner needs, co-operative learning, curriculum enrichment and dealing with learners with behavioural problems.

While ongoing training courses take cognisance of and include skills that the new roles require, policy-makers must also engage in thorough preparation of educators, especially if they are expected to drive policy initiatives. The Education White Paper 6 (2001:10) maintains that the policy will introduce



strategies and interventions that will assist educators to cope with a diversity of learning and teaching needs to ensure that transitory learning difficulties are ameliorated.

Furthermore, this will require implementing a flexible curriculum with flexible teaching methods, and organizing resources to support diversity and collaboration among educators. This will give educators vast amounts of knowledge and easy access to information.

The department of education must fully support the process. As continuous monitoring and evaluation of the process can yield information that can inform evolving practice, the implementation of inclusion should incorporate this support. This will enable educators to feel that they have the ability to work with learners with special educational needs and to share resources through collaboration with others.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

An important limitation to take into account in this inquiry is that the study was based on a very small sample of participants, which cannot be generalized.

Lastly, data collection also became limited by the constraints of time and money.

## **5.7 FINAL COMMENTS**

In this chapter the findings of the analyzed data were interpreted and discussed. The themes were discussed and recommendations and suggestions were made. Possible areas of further research were suggested and limitations of the inquiry were also discussed.

In this reflection it is important to note that educators cannot cope with too much diversity in the classroom. Educators are desirous of training and help from the Government so that they will be able to implement inclusive education in their schools effectively. Educators need to be empowered both cognitively and emotionally.

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# ANNEXURE A

## REQUEST TO CONDUCT A GROUP INTERVIEW

I am presently engaged in a study of the educator's perceptions about the implementation of inclusive education as part of fulfilling requirements for my studies.

I hereby requesting you to allow me to involve educators of Tshikurukuru Primary School in your district in group interviews of approximately one hour duration, starting from 13H30 – 14H30. Contents of the interview will remain confidential and individual participants will not be identified by name.

If you have any further questions or desire for further information, you can contact me at the above address or phone 083 737 0912. You may also contact my supervisor Dr R. Newmark at Stellenbosch University, cell number 082 440 0726.

Thank you in advance for co-operation and support.

Yours faithfully

.....  
Nekhumbe Julia Mulalo

.....  
Date

## **ANNEXURE B**

# **THE INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM**

In a bid to study the educator's perceptions about the implementation of inclusive education, ideas, perceptions and reports have to be amassed from educators. Your school has been identified as one of the schools that can provide valuable information.

An invitation is therefore extended to you to participate in a group interview of approximately an hour's duration. The decision to participate is completely voluntary. All contents of the interview will be held in strict confidence. Individuals will not be identified by name. All raw data will be held by the interviewer and will not be distributed to any other unauthorized individual.

Thank you for co-operation and support.

.....  
Interviewer's Signature

.....  
Participant's Signature

.....  
Date

.....  
Date



## ANNEXURE C

# CODING FOR THE DATA ACCORDING TO THE IDENTIFIED CATEGORIES

The categories identified in the data were coded according to the following list of codes used by the researcher.

The educator = E

The researcher = Q

**Q: What is your perception about the implementation of Inclusive education?**

E1: Educators do not know how to integrate values into subjects as we have different learners who are disabled in the class.

E3: Government policy enforced new curriculum without consultation.

E5: Our classes sizes are big.

E9: No government support for dealing with LSEN in mainstream.

**Q: How do you look towards being disabled?**

E4: I consider these children as one and clearly limited group.

E8: We have children who are physically handicapped and slow learners.

E6: I accept the idea of having that physically handicapped children in the class because they have normal intelligence quotient and can cope.

E12: Even slow learners are suitable to be mainstreamed as long as you allow them to work or learn at their own pace.

E2: Learner with no special educational needs will not receive enough time and attention from the educator because you are going to be so busy dealing with these children.

**Q: Have you received the resources and training to implement inclusive education?**

E7: Special didactic materials are not there, classes and toilets are inaccessible for wheelchairs, etc.

E13: We have not being trained to get on with disabled children in the class and you also feel uncomfortable because you function but you do not know whether you are on the right track, you don't know whether you are developing.

E16: Yes, we are still waiting for knowledge and help from the government.

E10: Even, learners are not accepting these learners, they are teasing them. They need training.

**Q: How will the classroom educator's role change?**

E11: Change will require close collaboration among educators to help each other.

E1: To add on that, working with a nearby special school is also important to secure effective learning for all children and for mutual benefit.

E9: Furthermore, working together will encourage peer acceptance of and tolerance for individual differences.

**Q: What barriers will prevent you being effective?**

E17: If educator – pupil ratio is not decreased.

E12: Lack of resources.

E10: Lack of in depth knowledge, for example, it is difficult enough with a language impairment to be in a class if you don't even understand the language.

E18: Lack of support from the government.

E2: Inaccessibility of school buildings to allow wheelchairs to move freely.



## ANNEXURE D

# CATEGORIES OF MEETING FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

The categories identified in the data were coded according to the following list of codes, using the initial categories identified during discovery.

### ***P. 57 line 14 and P. 61 line 11***

E1: ... We do not know how to integrate values into subjects.

E18: I feel the same as E1, we have inflexible curriculum.

E3: The policy should provide relevant curriculum.

### ***P. 58 line 6***

E5: Our class sizes are big.

E9: Large class sizes will be difficult to meet the needs of all learners.

E3: Big class sizes is our barriers to learning.

### ***P. 58 line 13-24***

E6: Learners with special educational needs need to be treated specially.

E2: Blind child cannot see and I cannot cope well with the child.

E17: For their own sake these learners with special educational needs it would be better to keep them in separate place.

### ***P. 59 line 13-16***

E7: Special didactic materials are not available.

E5: Lack of resources.

E11: Inaccessibility of school buildings to allow wheelchair to move freely

### ***P. 59 line 5-9 and 14***

E9: ... we are not being trained to get on with disabled children.

E13: It is difficult enough with a language impairment to be in a class if you do not even understand the language.

E16: We are still waiting for knowledge and help from the Government.

E10: ... need to be supported.

***P. 59 line 10 - 12***

E10: Normal children are teasing them.

E9: Encourage peer acceptance of and tolerance for individual different.

E11: ... require collaboration with other educators.

E1: We are also trying to work and lend things from our nearby special school.



## ANNEXURE E

# DENDROGRAM DRAWN FROM CLUSTERING CATEGORIES FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

