

# **THE EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS IN INCLUDING LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this assignment is my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university in order to obtain a degree.

## SUMMARY

In South Africa, including learners with disabilities has been a concern in education since 1994. With children with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, being increasingly included in mainstream schools, consideration needs to be given to the experiences of teachers in inclusive classrooms. Since an understanding of teachers' experiences can lead to the development of support strategies, this study sets out to explore teachers' experiences.

The research design of this research is qualitative in nature and the unit of analysis is an inclusive school in the Western Cape. Data are collected through semi-structured interviews, field notes and a review of school records. Interviews are held with three teachers, the school principal, the governing body chairperson (parent) and four learners.

The data are analyzed using aspects of the constant comparative analysis. Three main themes, namely school factors, the learner with an intellectual disability and the role of the teachers emerge. Findings indicate that the learner with an intellectual disability can be effectively included if the school community (teachers, parents and learners) is informed and thoroughly prepared. There must also be a willingness on the part of all the role players to make a success of the inclusive process. An analysis of the experiences of teachers in this study indicates that the demands put on teachers and learners alike are challenging and that teachers need support regarding in-service training on specific strategies for successfully including learners with intellectual disabilities. An effective and collaborative support system can also provide teachers with the necessary support to approach inclusive education in a positive manner.

## OPSOMMING

Die insluiting van leerders met leergestremdhede is sedert 1994 'n brandpunt in die onderwys in Suid-Afrika. Aangesien kinders met gestremdhede, waaronder ook intellektuele gestremdhede, al hoe meer in hoofstroomskole ingesluit word, moet aandag geskenk word aan die ervarings van onderwysers in sulke inklusiewe klaskamers. Hierdie studie poog om die relevante ervarings van onderwysers te ontgin, aangesien 'n analise van sulke onderwyserservarings kan lei tot die ontwikkeling van ondersteuningstrategieë.

Die navorsingsontwerp van hierdie studie is kwalitatief van aard, en die analise-eenheid is 'n inklusiewe skool in die Weskaap. Data is versamel deur middel van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, veldnotas en 'n oorsig van skoolrekords. Onderhoude is gevoer met drie onderwysers, die skoolhoof, die voorsitter van die beheerliggaam ('n ouer), asook vier leerders.

Die data is geanaliseer deur aspekte van die 'constant comparative analysis' te gebruik. Drie temas, nl. skoolfaktore, die leerder met intellektuele gestremdhede, en die rol van die onderwysers, kom duidelik na vore. Die bevindinge bewys dat 'n leerder met intellektuele gestremdhede effektief ingesluit kan word in 'n hoofstroomskool, indien die skoolgemeenskap (onderwysers, ouers en leerders) ingelig en deeglik voorberei word. Al die rolspelers moet ook 'n gewilligheid openbaar om die inklusiewe proses suksesvol te maak. Die analise van die ervarings van onderwysers wat in hierdie studie gebruik is, maak dit duidelik dat die eise wat aan beide onderwysers en leerders gestel word, formidabel is; en dat onderwysers ondersteuning nodig het wat betref indiens-opleiding m.b.t. spesifieke strategieë vir die suksesvolle insluiting van leerders met intellektuele gestremdhede. 'n Effektiewe en onderling-ondersteunende sisteem kan ook die onderwyser van die nodige ondersteuning voorsien om inklusiewe onderrig op 'n positiewe manier te benader.

## Heaven's special child

*A meeting was held far from earth  
'It's time again for another birth,'  
said the angels to the Lord above.  
'This special child will need much love.  
His progress may seem very slow,  
Accomplishments he may not show;  
And he'll require extra care  
From folks he meets down there.  
He may not run or laugh or play;  
His thoughts might seem quite far away.  
In many ways he won't adapt  
And he'll be known as 'handicapped'.  
So let's be careful where he's sent,  
we want his life to be content.  
Please, Lord, find the parents who  
will do a special job for You.  
They will not realize right away  
The leading role they're asked to play.  
Comes stronger faith and richer love  
And soon they'll know the privilege given  
In caring for this gift from Heaven.  
Their precious charge so meek and mild  
Is Heaven's very special child'.*

Anonymous

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## CHAPTER 1

# ORIENTATION, ACTUALITY, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND METHODOLOGY

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*Disabilities are socially constructed. Change the way people think about disability and you eliminate the problems of disabled people.*

(Oliver, 1988)

### 1.1 ORIENTATION

Internationally and locally there is a campaign to include all learners with disabilities in mainstream education. In South Africa, this campaign has been gaining ground in education since 1994. According to the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995a:15-16) and White Paper 6: Special Needs (Department of Education, 2001), an inclusive approach to education and training is one of the vital principles that will lead and direct educational provision in a transformed educational dispensation.

During the past 30 years, a number of articles, literature reviews and books have addressed the effectiveness of separate class placements for learners with disabilities, including learners with intellectual disabilities (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001; Gouws & Mfazwe, 1998; Bouma & Atkinson, 1995; Oliver, 1988). A key question asked by researchers is whether separate class placements improve the academic and social progress of learners with disabilities and whether ordinary teachers will be able to cope with the educational needs of these learners. Various researchers (McLeskey & Waldron, 1996:150; Miles, 1989:111-118; Pijl & Meyer, 1991:100-1; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001) conclude that an inclusive setting offers more of a challenge for these learners as it levels the educational playing fields and enables learners to improve academically. Furthermore, the curriculum

offered by separate special educational settings lacks coherence, frequently consisting of disjointed activities that are used to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills. It seldom makes provision for higher order cognitive skills and lacks the richness of the general education curriculum. Teachers have a key role to play in the implementation of inclusive education. They have the immense task of promoting school and classroom cultures that welcome, appreciate and accommodate diversity and make every learner feel valued, safe, connected and cared for. They also need to possess knowledge and skills to identify and make provision for the strength and needs of every learner, as well as to have an understanding of curriculum design (McLeskey & Waldron, 1996:150; Miles, 1989:111-118; Pijl & Meyer, 1991:100-1; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001). The latter is further emphasised in the Revised National Curriculum statement (2003:7): "Teachers need to be aware of the social, emotional, physical and other needs of learners as they develop their learning programmes".

Teachers need support in order to include learners with disabilities effectively in mainstream classrooms (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001; Gouws & Mfazwe, 1998; Bouma & Atkinson, 1995; Oliver, 1988). Apart from learners with behavioural or emotional difficulties, the acceptance and teaching of learners with intellectual disabilities that seems to raise the most difficult issues for teachers (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart & Eloff, 2003:294; Bouma & Atkinson, 1995).

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The inclusive educational practices that are being introduced in South Africa mean that children with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, are increasingly being included in mainstream schools. Consideration also needs to be given to the experiences and views of teachers who already have these learners in their classrooms. Understanding teachers' experiences can enable schools to meet the needs of teachers and so develop effective support structures for both teachers and learners. Consequently the primary aim of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers who already have learners with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms.

## 1.3 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF KEY CONCEPTS

### 1.3.1 Intellectual disability

Kochar, West and Taymans (2000:6) make a clear distinction between the terms impairment and disability:

An **impairment** may be a consequence of congenital problems, birth trauma, brain damage, poor nutrition, disease, or injury. Impairments might include cognitive, physical emotional or psychomotor deficits. Such a functional limitation resulting from impairment is referred to as a disability. Usually **disability** is a consequence of impairment and implies some deprivation that prevents the person from developing alternative ways of functioning. For example, an inability to read or communicate clearly may result from a head injury. The learner has a disability because she cannot perform the daily activities of reading or communication with teachers. As a consequence the learner's ability to perform in the social role of learner will be impeded unless the school and teacher can respond in a more flexible way to the disability.

The term 'intellectual disability' is currently used to describe learners whose intellectual disabilities handicap their everyday functioning. An intellectual disability has a major influence on how a child learns (Gouws & Mfazwe, 1998:10).

If intellectual disability is defined in terms of IQ, the following four groups may be identified:

- Learners who are mildly disabled have an IQ range of 51 and 70 and are in many ways quite similar to their peers who are not disabled.
- Learners who have moderate disabilities have an IQ range of 36 and 50 and are more obviously developmentally delayed. Learners who are moderately disabled can learn to take care of their personal needs and perform hands-on vocational tasks.

- Learners who are severely disabled have an IQ range of between 21 and 35 and are more dependent on others for basic needs. Learners who are severely disabled can learn basic self-care and can contribute partially to self-support, usually under supervision.
- Learners who are profoundly disabled have an IQ range below 20 and may be largely dependent on others for their care [[www.disabled.com.Ed](http://www.disabled.com.Ed); Keller & Kaplan, Sadock & Grebb (1994:1025-1041)].

Crow (1989:276) states that: many learners are not diagnosed as intellectually disabled until well into their preschool or early elementary school years. Early identification of marker characteristics that predispose learners to intellectual disabilities allows for environmental intervention to reduce or prevent eventual developmental delay.

This research study will deal specifically with the learner who is mildly and moderately intellectually disabled. For the purpose of this study intellectual disability is therefore defined as sub-average general intellectual functioning that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviour and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a learner's educational performance. (<http://vwz.education.mcgill.ca/students/mmazza/IntellectualDef.htm>.)

### **1.3.2 Inclusion and inclusive education**

Inclusion is a philosophy that acknowledges the importance of the real world for students' learning. Every society has had to face the question of how to treat individuals who differ from the norm, and the vision of building strong communities based on peace, unity, and acceptance for all is an appealing one. We can begin to make this vision a reality in our schools by accepting and valuing learners with disabilities unconditionally (Van Dyke, Stallings & Colley, 1995:475).

The concept of "inclusive education" has been much discussed in recent years and differs from "integrated education" (UNESCO 1994; Sebba & Ainscow, 1996; Giangreco, 1997; Mittler, 2000). Mittler (1999:4) states that **integration**, as traditionally understood, involves preparing a learner to adapt

academically and socially to a mainstream setting. There is no assumption that the organisation or the curriculum of the school should change. To be successfully integrated, the learner is expected to adapt to the school, rather than the school to the child.

**Inclusive education** on the other hand is a road to be travelled, rather than a destination, a process rather than a clear goal, comprising a number of distinctive features:

- Schools in which all children without exception attend ordinary classrooms in their neighbourhood school
- Schools in which all teachers accept responsibility for the learning of all learners
- Schools which restructure their curriculum and their pedagogy to ensure access and success for the whole range of children in their community
- Schools which provide support for learners and teachers which is planned, but unobtrusive (Mittler, 1999:51-56).

Various authors (Green, 2001; Engelbrecht, 1999; Dyson, 1997; Sebba & Ainscow, 1996) all emphasise that inclusive education is not about how to assimilate individual learners with identified special needs into existing forms of schooling, but about restructuring schools and education systems so that they can accommodate the learning needs of every individual.

The Report of the National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCSNET/NCESS) (1997:55) states as follows:

The separate systems of education which presently exist ('special' and 'ordinary') need to be integrated to provide one system which is able to recognize and respond to the diverse needs of the learner population. Within this integrated system, a range of options for education provision and support services should be provided. Learners should have the ability to move from one learning context to another (e.g. from early childhood education (ECE) to general education and training (GET), from a

specialized centre of learning, or from a formal to a non-formal programme). The system of education should be structured in such a way that, irrespective of the learning context, opportunities for facilitating integration and inclusion of the learner in all aspects of life should be provided.

For the purpose of this study inclusive education will be defined as

- a never ending process rather than a simple change of state. It is viewed as processes of increasing the participation of learners in, and reducing their exclusion from cultures, curricula, and communities of local centers of learning
- acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth needs support
- enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of children
- one that acknowledges and respects difference in children, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV status etc.
- broader than formal schooling, and acknowledges that learning occurs in the home, the community, and within formal and informal manners (Williams, 2000:3).

## **1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.4.1 Introduction**

The research design of this project will be qualitative in nature and the unit of analysis will be a case study. The qualitative approach attempts to view the world through the eyes (perspective) of the actors themselves. Bogdan and Taylor (1975:13-14) relate this to the phenomenological roots of qualitative research: the phenomenologist views human behaviour as a product of the way people interpret their world. The task of the qualitative methodologist is to capture this process of interpretation. Using interviews and observations the researcher has attempted to do just this.

Qualitative research is mostly used in the social sciences and is defined by Merriam (1998:1-25) as research that focuses on meaning in context, and requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Merriam (1998:1-25) highlights the following as characteristics of qualitative research:

- The researcher is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed (see also Babbie & Mouton, 2002:53).
- It is contextual in other words an effort is made to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions that take place there.
- The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis.
- It usually involves fieldwork.
- It primarily employs an inductive research strategy, that is the theory develops from observations and intuitive understandings gained in the field.
- The product is usually descriptive e.g. the researcher might include pictures, video clips or transcripts.

#### **1.4.2 Research process**

The researcher obtained permission from the relevant authorities (in this case the Western Cape Education Department) to conduct the necessary research in their school. The teachers to be interviewed were notified beforehand and an appropriate meeting place date and time were decided on. The teachers were all at the same school. The school was purposefully selected as it has a number of learners with intellectual disabilities included in the mainstream schooling programme.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three teachers, the school principal, the governing body chairperson (parent) and four learners (of which two have been diagnosed with an intellectual disability).

### **1.4.3 Methodology**

#### **1.4.3.1 Data collection methods**

As in any study, the researcher can benefit from knowing how well certain data collection techniques used in previous related studies may or may not have yielded meaningful data. Merriam (1998:51) points to the importance of previous research, which is often cited in support of, as well as the importance and urgency of the research being conducted.

- **Literature review**

The purpose of the literature review is to explore research findings already published on a particular topic. In the process of reviewing literature, researchers may become aware of inconsistencies or similarities, which may justify further research. Cozby (1985 in Smit, 1995:8-9) has the following to say in connection with the study of literature:

The study of the literature forms a fundamental and integral part of the planning and undertaking of this research project. A meticulous identification and an incisive scientific study and interpretation of the relevant sources of information are essential for scientifically valid research.

According to Mouton (2001:87) the literature review can also be termed a body of accumulated scholarship. The researcher wants to learn how other scholars have theorized about and conceptualized issues, what they have found empirically, what instrumentation they have used and to what effect. The researcher is therefore interested in the most recent, credible and relevant scholarship in her/his area of interest. As Smit (1995:8) puts it, the researcher obtains a clearer insight in the nature of the problem, and is able to describe and demarcate the problem more clearly.

With the help of a literature review, the researcher tries to make a meaningful contribution to the existing body of scientific knowledge, without replicating or duplicating research already done. Huysamen (1994:190) makes it clear that a literature review places your own research in context, makes you aware of

inconsistencies, discovers whether your research is relevant and might even inspire other researchers to do research on the particular topic.

Literature reviewed in this study elucidates the problem statement and also explains the importance of the inclusive classroom in teaching the learner with an intellectual disability.

- **Open ended statement**

An exploratory open-ended statement preceded the interviews. The statement that was presented to the research respondents was:

Please comment on your experiences of teaching the learner with an intellectual disability (Addendum A).

- **Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information on how teachers were experiencing inclusive education. Semi-structured interviews can be described as a type of interview where the questions are more or less structured:

"Specific information is required from the respondents. But the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time" (Merriam, 1998:74).

This type of format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world-views of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic.

- **Observations and field notes**

According to Merriam (1998:95) observation takes place in the natural field setting instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing: The observational data represent a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a second-hand account obtained in an interview.

The researcher took field notes during observation since extensive field notes are another important means of enhancing the validity and reliability of research done within the interpretive paradigm. Babbie and Mouton

(2001:275) point out that by regularly referring to your field notes, you are able to adjust your research design as the research project progresses.

#### **1.4.3.2 Data analysis**

In this study the constant comparative method of data analysis is used to analyse data. The constant comparative method works exactly as its name suggests, it constantly compares, in other words the researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons in turn lead to tentative themes that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated (Merriam, 1998:159).

#### **1.4.4 Validity and reliability**

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research the following methods were employed:

- Triangulation – using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings.
- Member checks – taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible.
- Peer examination – asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge.
- Researcher's biases – clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study.
- Construct Validity – the instruments should be measuring what they are supposed to be measuring (Merriam, 1998:212-19; Huysamen, 1994:111-121).

#### **1.4.5 Ethical guidelines**

Ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings in qualitative studies. Merriam (1994:131)

notes that in any qualitative study, ethical issues relating to the protection of participants are of concern.

The researcher used the following guidelines as suggested by Wellington (2000:57) to protect the rights of the respondents in this research study:

- The right to informed consent
- The right to remain anonymous
- The right to privacy of the respondents
- The right to confidentiality.

## **1.5 STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION**

The discussion of the research proceeds as follows:

**Chapter 2** of this study focuses on a literature review of Inclusive education and Intellectual disability.

**Chapter 3** deals with the research design and methodology.

**Chapter 4** deals with a discussion of findings and recommendations. Some recommendations will also be suggested.

## CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

An understanding of inclusive education is a prerequisite for proposing guidelines to support teachers who work with learners who are intellectually disabled (and perhaps even other learners who need support within mainstream education).

The focus of this chapter will, therefore, be first of all on inclusive education and secondly on intellectual disability.

### 2.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

#### 2.2.1 Introduction

Van Dyke, Stallings and Colley (1995:475) see inclusion as a philosophy that acknowledges the importance of the real world. According to them, every society has had to face the question of how to educate individuals who differ from the norm, and the vision of building strong communities based on peace, unity, and acceptance for all is an appealing one. We can make this vision a reality in mainstream education by accepting and valuing learners with disabilities exactly as they are. Mcleskey and Waldron (1996:150-156) see inclusive schools as communities to which all children should belong in their most formative years. They view classrooms as a reflection of real life with its challenges and distractions. Learners with various forms of disabilities need to be immersed in this microcosm of "the real world," beginning in pre-school and continuing throughout their educational careers. This is the "normal" world they will be required to live in and eventually work in, so their education should be in classrooms that reflect that world. There has been considerable discussion regarding the strengths and weaknesses of either full or partial

inclusion (Forlin, Douglas & Hattie, 1996; Engelbrecht, Naicker, Green & Engelbrecht, 1999; Kochar, West & Taymans, 2000; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001; Mittler, 1999; Mcleskey & Waldron, 1996), and it seems that with ongoing research, and the development of new educational policy in South Africa, the scales are tilting more towards full inclusion.

According to Forlin, Douglas and Hattie (1996:1-20), current debates concerning inclusive educational practices revolve around opposing views that focus on a number of broad issues, three of which the researcher would like to look at. These are academic achievement, emotional development and teacher attitudes. These three issues are interwoven regardless of whether learners with an intellectual disability or learners in general are involved.

## **2.2.2 International and National developments in inclusive education**

Inclusive education which is gaining ground in many parts of the world, was given Considerable impetus by the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994 (Ainscow, 1997; Engelbrecht, Naicker, Green & Engelbrecht, 1999; Vlachou, 1997). At this conference the road that special needs education should take, but more importantly international efforts to ensure the rights of all children to receive basic education, were clearly defined.

It is important to know what is happening in other countries so as to know that what is happening in one country is not happening in isolation. With this in mind, the researcher shall take a brief look at what is happening in a few other countries and how South Africa can learn from these other countries.

### **2.2.2.1 International developments in inclusive education**

The UNITED KINGDOM government discussion papers as well as the 'Programme for Action' (1998) and the Revised Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs (2001) have provided the impetus for the idea of a more inclusive education system (Farrel & Ainscow, 2002). Alongside policies that are promoting notions of inclusion, schools are under more pressure to raise their academic standards and to support all learners.

In England, all mainstream schools are (effectively) required to designate a

teacher to act as their 'Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator' (SENCO). This teacher has the task of co-ordinating the school's response to those learners who are regarded as having special educational needs. SENCOs almost always have some brief training for their role (in the form of occasional day-long courses, for instance) but may or may not have extended training in special needs education and may or may not regard themselves as special needs 'specialists'. Their role is complicated by the fact that responsibility for learners with special educational needs is divided between the school and the local education authority (LEA), which manages education in the area. Learners with the lowest levels of need are the responsibility of the school alone. Responsibility for those with the highest level of need is shared between school and LEA, with the LEA typically supplementing the resources available to the school for these learners and specifying the provision to be made for them through a legal document called a 'statement'. For those with intermediate levels of need, responsibility is shared more informally. Typically the LEA provides peripatetic specialists (special education teachers, educational psychologists) who work in conjunction with the school's SENCO. However, the decision as to where the boundaries between these levels of need lie is a matter for the LEA and its services to decide. Since each LEA is free to formulate its own policy, these boundaries are different in each authority area (Dyson & Milward, 2000:1; Bush & Middlewood, 1997; Caldwell & Spinks, 1992).

It should be noted however that the role of a SENCO is more a management than a teaching role. It seems in Wales and England, their understanding is that, the key aspect of inclusion is that children who are at a disadvantage for any reason should not be excluded from mainstream education.

Education in CANADA is also in a state of reform, and particularly with regard to ensuring educational equality and opportunity for all learners. According to Winzer (in Daniels & Garner, 1999:99) discussions of the inclusionary movement in Canada must consider factors such as the pervasive influence of developments in the United States, the lack of a centralized school system, provincial legislation, and recent litigation. There is also no legal mandate on, or consistent definition of inclusion in Canada. Canada it seems has a system

of integration (Chapter 1) and educating learners with special needs in the least restrictive environment. Recent law in Canada on special education deals with it under the guise of equality enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the supreme law of Canada. The current movement in Canada to educate all children in general education is variously termed 'inclusion', 'inclusive schooling', and 'inclusive education'. The education system is a critical community resource for children in Canada. Over the past few years, increasing concerns have been raised about the educational resources available for children with special needs. In numerous provinces, the funding and delivery of special education services have been raised as concerns. In order to review the current situation across Canada, the CCSD (Canadian Council on Social Development) conducted key informant interviews in each province with experts in the field of special education (Kierstead & Hanvey, 2001:1). The CCSD survey was divided into three main sections:

- General context of special education services,
- assessment of how well children's needs are met and
- special education resources.

The result of the survey can be summarized as follows: Many of the respondents interviewed painted a bleak picture of special education in Canada. Special education teachers are in high demand across the country, but there are few of them. Many people who once sought a career as a special education teacher are reluctant to enter the profession because of the pressures, lack of resources, lack of funding, and the increased workloads involved in dealing with children with special needs. Clearly, education systems across the country are in flux, but with the growing demand for special education services, adjustments need to be made to those systems so that children who are in need can get the services they deserve (Kierstead & Hanvey, 2001:1).

In the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA), education is a state responsibility. The federal law concerning the education of learners with disabilities offers states the opportunity to participate. While some states

chose not to do so at first, for the past 21 years all 50 states have elected to participate and, thus, are governed by the structures of the federal law and its interpretations by the federal courts (McLaughlin, Fuchs & Hardman, 1999:26).

According to Lipsky and Gartner (1999:12) the United States has no official definition of inclusive education. The term, along with inclusion, integration and mainstreaming does not appear anywhere in the federal legislation, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act, passed in 1975 or its current manifestation, the individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was reauthorized in 1997.

Two specific landmark lawsuits filed in the USA in 1972 ensured rights for learners with disabilities. These cases determined that excluding learners with disabilities from public education violated the constitutional law of due process. According to Sherrill (1998:75) "due process within the educational context, refers to fair treatment in the removal of learners from mainstream classes". As a result of these lawsuits, two legislative mandates were passed. One was the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public law 93-112) and the other was the Education for all handicapped children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142). According to Lieberman and Houston-Wilson (2002:5-7):

Part of the rehabilitation act, section 54 stipulated that: "no person with a disability shall be discriminated against or be denied equal opportunity afforded to non-disabled individuals ... Thus, learners with disabilities were guaranteed equal rights amongst their peers. This included not only educational opportunities, but also after-school and interscholastic programs. Furthermore, this law requires learners with disabilities to be provided with an individualized education plan (IEP) that identifies specific educational needs and determines appropriate resources to address those needs. Finally, this law requires learners with disabilities to receive their education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and to be educated with their mainstream peers to the maximum extent possible. The rehabilitation act of 1973 section 794 states that: learners with

disabilities should be educated with their peers unless it would not be beneficial to the learner. This model of providing services to learners with disabilities in the mainstream class, rather than removing them from the mainstream class to receive services, is known as inclusion.

In 1990 the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed. This law changed the terminology from handicapping conditions to learners having disabilities. As of 1997, IDEA came to be known as Public Law 105-17, IDEA amendment of 1997. The IDEA Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97) represent a major milestone in the education of children with disabilities. This was the first major revision to the Act in more than 23 years (since the enactment of P.L. 94-142, the Education of all Handicapped Children Act of 1975).

IDEA '97 retains (and strengthens) the basic rights including, the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of June 4, 1997 strengthens academic expectations and accountability for the nation's 5.8 million children with disabilities and bridges the gap that has too often existed between what children with disabilities learn and what is required in mainstream curriculum.

Major US federal legislation, such as Goals 2000: Educate America Act, Title 1 of the Improving America's Schools Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), now contains provisions that require states to develop challenging common standards, and to report on how all learners are meeting these standards. The intent of all this legislation is to ensure that no learner receives differential treatment within schools.

BANGLADESH and LESOTHO are rated as two of the world's poorest countries in terms of global socio-economic rankings (UNICEF, 1999). In the former, a wide-ranging country-specific non-governmental organisation (NGO) is taking the lead in developing inclusive schools and in ensuring that teachers are trained for and supported in teaching for diversity. In the latter, the government made a formal commitment to the United Nations Education

for All initiative (UNICEF, 1990). It recognised the importance of including all its citizens in this new drive for universal primary education and, with the help of international advisers and NGOs, developed a pilot project on inclusive education (Khatleli, Mariga, Phachaka & Stubbs, 1995).

BANGLADESH has embarked on a programme to include children with intellectual disabilities in rural village schools run by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). BRAC is a non-governmental organisation run on business lines (Lovell, 1992). It aims for effective, productive and sustainable economic development for one of the poorest countries of the world, with a GNP per capita of US\$ 220 a year. Schools are single classrooms. They are simple structures, built in local materials by the villagers themselves. Inside they are light and sparsely furnished. There are few resources, with materials for teaching and learning provided by BRAC or fashioned by teachers and the local community. The children sit on mats on the floor, forming a horseshoe shape. The teacher has a station at the open end of the horseshoe but moves freely around the classroom, giving help to individual children. The curriculum is strongly linked to the culture and life style of the local community. Parents are an integral feature of the life of the school and peer tutoring takes place naturally with those children who experience difficulties receiving help from those sitting next to them.

The basic infrastructure of learner access, training and support for teachers both from BRAC and from the local community is already in place. BRAC schools aim to provide a locally relevant curriculum, together with core literacy and numeracy skills, to the 1.2 million children aged eight to eleven who would otherwise have no access to government schools. These children include a high proportion of girls (70 per cent). 33 000 teachers are already receiving an effective school-based programme of training and ongoing support to equip them to teach these children. The programme is enjoying spectacular success, with a drop out rate only one fifth of that of government schools and a graduation rate of 85 per cent at year 3 level. Many of these learners then continue into year 4 of the state schools. Fully trained itinerant supervisors who visit each teacher once a week provide mainstream support and staff development. The supervisor helps with assessment, curriculum and

lesson planning and provides continuous mentoring, consultancy and training through joint problem solving. Furthermore, district teams provide the support structure for the village schools. These district officers receive additional training in order to enable them to assist the local communities in meeting the additional needs arising from the inclusion programme (Mittler, 1999:9, 39-56).

BRAC plans to admit one or two children with intellectual disabilities to 2 500 schools over a five-year period, starting with 30 schools in the first year and scaling up to 170, 300, 1000 and 1000 in subsequent years. Given the accessible nature of the curriculum, the relatively small classes, built-in support from peers and the high level of parental and community involvement, BRAC's assessment of the environment for inclusive education looks realistic and likely to succeed. If so, this smooth transition to mainstream schools based as it is on existing competencies and effective training, could prove beneficial to the countries which are in the process of implementing inclusive education.

LESOTHO is a landlocked mountain-edged kingdom surrounded by South Africa. Its per capita (gross national product) GNP in 1997 was US\$ 720. The country is strongly committed to attaining universal primary education. Since it has a subsistence agrarian economy, it relies heavily on young boys to herd cattle. This means that, especially in rural areas, boys may well start their schooling at a later age than girls, only once they are free of their herding responsibilities. This is allowed for in the primary school system and leads, quite naturally, to classrooms of some diversity. Progress is broadly by grade attainment rather than age, so there is considerable diversity within any given class.

Responsibility for learning remains with the teacher. In a pilot project to determine the need for extra classroom support, the Lesotho government took a policy decision not to provide a resource teacher or other form of support for the ten pilot schools. This decision rests on the principle that every teacher carries sole responsibility for the teaching and learning of all the learners in her or his class. The Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education offered an intensive three week-workshop, followed by an ongoing

programme of further training and support, to seven teachers from each of the pilot schools. One teacher was the lead or contact teacher but had the same teaching brief as any other class teacher. Some external support was available from district officers but this varied according to the confidence felt by individual officers about inclusive education. Some external support was available from district officers but this varied according to the confidence felt by individual officers about inclusive education (Mittler, 1999:9, 39-56).

### **2.2.2.2 National developments**

In South Africa the legacy of Apartheid created huge inequalities in educational provision for learners defined as having 'special needs' particularly those who had been oppressed under the previous regime.

Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001:308) argue that international guidelines have provided the overall framework for policy developments in inclusive education in South Africa.

A number of key policies and legislation have developed and been enacted since 1994. The new government recognised that effective changes in education required policies and practices to redress past inequalities and create equal opportunities for all learners, particularly those who had experienced the most severe form of discrimination and exclusion.

In analysing the initiatives that the new government has undertaken since 1994, it is important to focus on two aspects:

- The changes to the provision of education for all learners;
- The extent to which the proposed policies challenge the previous understanding of 'special needs' in education and undermine the dominant values of the past (Howell, 2000:108).

## **THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY AND DOCUMENTS**

The following South African policy documents will serve to add substance to what has been dissented above:

➤ **THE CONSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA (1996)**

**The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996** indicates the following:

**Article 9: Equality**

(2) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic, or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language or birth.

The South African Constitution (1996) recognises the right of all citizens to a basic education, including basic adult education, which the state must make progressively available. In accordance with this, the South African School's Act (Department of Education 1996) provides for compulsory education for learners from the year of their seventh birthday until the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first.

➤ **SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT (Admission policy in public schools)**

Admission to public schools as stipulated in the schools act (RSA, 1996c:6) stipulates that in the case of learners with special educational needs, the rights and wishes of the parent must be taken into consideration when such learners are placed. It is therefore clear that the rights of all learners are protected including learners with 'special educational needs', by ensuring that 7 years of primary education and a further two years in secondary school are compulsory.

➤ **WHITE PAPER ON AN INTEGRATED NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY, 1997**

The Disability Rights Charter of South Africa includes the following provisions:

**Article 1: Non-discrimination**

There shall be no discrimination against disabled people and they shall enjoy equal opportunities in all spheres of life and they shall be protected against

exploitation and all treatment of an abusive or degrading nature.

#### **Article 4: Education**

- (a) Disabled people shall have the right to mainstream education with personal assistance where necessary, appropriate assistive technology and specialized teaching.
- (b) Parents of disabled children shall have the right to participate in the planning and provision of their children's education.

#### ➤ **CHILDREN'S CHARTER OF SOUTH AFRICA**

The **Children's Charter of South Africa** (in Gouws & Mfazwe, 1998:5) includes the following:

#### **Article 8: Education**

- (1) All children have the right to free and equal non-racial, non-sexist and compulsory education within one department of education which is a right, not a privilege.
- (4) Parents have a duty to become involved in their children's education and development and to participate in their children's education at school and at home.

#### ➤ **THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SPECIAL NEEDS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (NCSNET) AND THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES (NCESS) REPORT**

In 1996 the Ministry of Education appointed the NCSNET and NCESS to undertake a needs analysis and to make policy recommendations on all aspects of 'special needs and support services' in education and training in South Africa.

The NCSNET/NCESS report acknowledges that 'special needs and support services' have tended to focus on the delivery of highly specialised interventions which were limited to the more advantaged sectors, mainly in urban areas.

Howell (2000:116) notes that the NCSNET/NCESS (1997) recognises the importance of the Constitution in laying the basis for all policy in education. It argues that the constitution "provides not only for the provision of basic education, but more importantly for the right to equal educational provision for all learners. This means that all learners, whatever their needs or differences, have a right to equal educational provision" (NCSNET/NCESS, 1997:41). The NCSNET/NCESS report therefore argues that 'no learner may therefore be denied admission to an ordinary school on any grounds, including disability, language, learning disability or pregnancy. The commission recognises that a diverse range of needs exist and that the education system needs to be structured in such a way as to accommodate a diversity of learner and system needs.

The NCSNET/NCESS provided the following key strategies that they believe must be undertaken in order to build the system's capacity. There are four main areas of focus.

#### ➤ **REGARDING ORGANISATION AND SUPPORT**

The development of a single, integrated system of education is seen as crucial. The NCSNET/NCESS report argues that outcomes based education (OBE), outlined in initiatives such as Curriculum 2005, provides a very important framework for addressing diversity. **A support system** that can facilitate the transformation of the system to accommodate diversity and address barriers to learning and development is needed. It should also, facilitate the provision of additional support to those learners who may require it at any stage in the learning process. Both these roles involve support to learners, educators, and the system as a whole.

**With regard to human resource development** the NCSNET/NCESS argues that since the restructuring of the education system, many teachers have been confronted with learners in their classroom who have particular learning needs that they feel unable to meet. Therefore there is need to recognise the need for in-service training for teachers which will equip them with skills to meet the diverse learning needs, and to ensure they have access to ongoing support and learning opportunities. The report stresses the need for pre-

service training for teachers to focus on issues of diversity, and to equip them with skills to sustain an effective inclusive, education system.

The NCSNET/NCESS report addresses the issue of **government funding** to ensure the development of an inclusive education system that must be primarily directed towards the provision and development of support mechanisms and processes towards transforming the system's capacity to meet diverse learning needs and address barriers to learning and development.

➤ **WHITE PAPER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING 1995a)**

The White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995a) introduced the following key initiatives:

- The Culture of Teaching, Learning and Services (COLTS). This aims to restore respect for diversity and the culture of teaching and learning which has been severely eroded in our schools.
- The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (Department of Education, 1995b). This was designed to give recognition to prior knowledge and the concept of life-long learning. This integrated approach to education and training aimed to build a just, equitable and high quality system.
- An Outcome-Based Curriculum (OBE). This was designed to respond to diverse learner needs and has been declared national policy in South Africa (Department of Education, 1997a). The system is based on the belief that all learners can achieve success and, instead of encouraging learners to conform, their individuality is respected. In contrast to the traditional curriculum, OBE develops teachers' capacities to respond to the diversity in learners' styles and rates of learning. In accommodating a diversity of learner needs, OBE is 'inclusive' by nature and focuses on the process necessary for learners to achieve the desired outcomes. The Continuous Assessment System Policy forms an integral part of this curriculum.

- The New Language Policy includes recognition of 12 official languages, which includes sign language.

➤ **THE EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6 SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM (2001)**

The White Paper states that all children, youth and adults have the potential to learn within all bands of education and they all require support. It also makes it clear that in order to establish an inclusive education and training system, changes to mainstream education will have to be made in order to provide appropriate support to learners who are experiencing barriers to learning.

This policy paves the way for:

- A systematic movement away from using segregation according to categories of disabilities as an organizing principle for institutions
- Basing the provision of education for learners with disabilities on the intensity of support needed to overcome the debilitating impact of those disabilities
- Placing an emphasis on supporting learners through full-service schools that will have a bias towards particular disabilities depending on need and support
- Directing how the initial facilities will be set up and how the additional resources required will be accessed
- Indicating how learners with disability will be identified, assessed and incorporated into special, full-service and ordinary schools in an incremental manner
- Introducing strategies and interventions that will assist teachers to cope with diversity of learning and teaching needs to ensure that transitory learning difficulties are ameliorated
- Giving direction for the education support needed

- Providing clear signals about how current special schools will serve identified disabled learners on site and also serve as a resource to teachers and schools in the area (Education White Paper 6, 2001:10).

### **2.2.3 Conclusion**

It is clear that the development of inclusive education can determine how successful implementation can be. Everything cannot, however, be left in the hands of politicians. It is ultimately community pressure on the governments that will determine whether inclusive practices are implemented. The need for teacher training and the provision of resources is also clear.

## **2.3 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

Implementing inclusive education is a challenging process within the broader challenge of transforming education in South Africa since 1994. Schools are at different stages of development in this regard and need to find creative ways in which to address the needs of all learners (Lazarus *et al.*, 1999:200). The challenge facing teachers in inclusive schools, is to minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development and thus assisting the education system to become more responsive to the diverse needs of the learner population. Within a systemic approach these barriers, are seen as being within the learner, within the centre of learning or school, within the educational system and/or within the broader social, economic and political context.

### **2.3.2 Critical factors in the implementation of inclusive education**

#### ***2.3.2.1 The role of parents in the inclusion process***

The Children's Charter of South Africa (of Gouws & Mfazwe, 1998:5) states that parents have a duty to become involved in their children's education and development and to participate in their children's education at school and at home. The South African Schools Act (1997) parents should be actively and

significantly involved in all aspects – non-curricular as well as curricular – of the learners' formal education.

According to Yatvin (1995:482-83), the inclusion movement started with parents who watched their children with special needs suffering in exclusionary settings and not learning much to compensate for the indignity:

Parents can make an effective contribution towards school governance, planning and local policy making and the building of a supportive environment, as well as to the competence and self concept of their own child (Feldman, Gordon & Snyman, 2001:121).

Parents play a vital role in ensuring that their children are correctly placed and that these learners get the most out of the system. Parents should collaborate with teachers and others involved in the education of the learner. School personnel must make significant efforts to facilitate meaningful parent and family involvement by acknowledging parents' expertise and experience regarding the needs and abilities of their children, by allowing for variety in the types and amount of family involvement expected, and by being sensitive to the multiple demands those families must balance as they organize their daily routines (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk, 1997:148).

### **2.3.2.2 *The role of teachers***

Educational change can be effected when those who must implement the change feel willing to do it. Teachers are thus key role players in determining the quality of implementation of any new education policy (which includes the new policy of inclusion) (Hay, Smit & Paulsen, 2001:214).

At present, teachers in South Africa are at the receiving end of a number of changes within education as well as broader society. Consequently they feel overwhelmed, frustrated and helpless, their perception being that decisions have been imposed upon them without their being consulted and made part of the decision making process. Thus, teachers now need to actively participate and contribute towards shaping a vision and mission

statement that reflect the values and characteristics of an inclusive learning community (Swart & Pettipher, 2001:40-41).

### ➤ **Attitudes**

According to Swart, Pettipher, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Oswald, Ackerman and Prozesky (2000:7) a comparison of three studies conducted in Gauteng and the Western Cape to determine teacher attitudes towards inclusion indicates the following patterns:

- Inadequate knowledge, skills and training of teachers to implement inclusive education effectively
- Lack of educational and teacher support
- Inadequate provision of facilities, infrastructure and assistive devices
- Potential effects of inclusive education on learners with special educational needs as well as other learners in the mainstream.

Green (1999) and Kochar *et al.* (2000) make it clear that many teachers in mainstream education are scared and feel unprepared to work with the learners with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms. Not only is inclusive education the ultimate acceptance of diversity, but it also places a major responsibility for meeting educational needs on the shoulders of mainstream teachers rather than special education teachers in separate settings as in the past (although it accepts the necessity for separate provision for a small proportion of learners).

### ➤ **Collaboration**

Education White Paper 6 (2001:14), states clearly that classroom teachers will be the primary means of achieving the goal of an inclusive education and training system. This means that teachers will need to improve their skills and knowledge, and develop new ones. Staff development at the school and district level will be critical to putting in place successful inclusive practices. Ongoing assessment of teachers' needs through developmental appraisal, followed by structured programmes to meet these needs, will make a critical contribution to inclusion. Teachers are increasingly becoming involved in a variety of collaborative partnerships such as:

- Collaborative problem solving: in which the role players as equal partners share their particular expertise with one another
- Group problem solving: which relies on group partners, combining their expertise and generating ideas as a means of effectively accommodating all learners
- Peer coaching: in which teachers work together in developing new skills through demonstration, teaching and observation
- Co-teaching
- Facilitating co-operative learning

Another important role of the teacher is to promote school-wide and classroom cultures that welcome, appreciate and accommodate diversity and in which every learner feels valued, safe and cared for (Swart & Pettipher, 2001:41-42).

#### ➤ **Instructional adaptations**

These changes may involve any part of the teaching-learning process in the inclusive classroom: the teacher's instructional methods and strategies, learning activities and instructional materials, performance requirements for learners, testing and grading procedures, and grouping arrangements. Teachers must be able to select and use instructional/teaching methods that provide learners with the fundamental skills they need to become proficient learners. Information about when and how to make instructional adaptations can be based on informal classroom assessment, as well as the knowledge of a teacher's specific needs (Sands, Kozlesky & French, 2000).

#### ➤ **Management adaptations**

This refers to changes in the classroom behaviour management system.

According to Sands *et al.* (2000:358) classroom management strategies must support learner involvement in learning tasks and deal with lesson disruptions and distractions to learning. Positive teacher expectations can have a strong effect on learner behaviour.

### ➤ **Environmental adaptations**

Environmental adaptations do not only include the physical environment, but in the successful implementation of inclusive education they also include the cultural and psychosocial environments. Teachers must deal with the cultural roles and expectations that they and the learners in their classrooms bring with them and accommodate these by creating a context in which learners become members of the classroom community. Most classrooms contain learners on different levels of psychosocial development. Therefore teachers need to be able to respond to these needs of learners by providing them with boundaries for their behaviour that are based on knowledge of psychosocial development. With regard to the physical environment, teachers need to be aware that the effective management of space and time in their classrooms can affect how well learners cope with learning demands (Sands *et al.*, 2000).

### ➤ **Communication Skills of teacher**

According to Pretorius and Lemmer (1998:47) teachers should communicate firmly, confidently and enthusiastically with learners. Taking the language development of learners with intellectual disabilities into account, teachers should give clear instructions so that learners know what is expected of them and give only those instructions that are absolutely necessary. They should not give more than two or three instructions at a time. It is essential to scan the class regularly, keeping an eye out for inattention. Finally, good behaviour should be reinforced with judicious praise and rewards.

#### **2.3.2.3 The role of school principals**

The role of principals as key administrators in ensuring an inclusive education and training system can be defined as follows:

Principals must be dynamic leaders with a vision who can promote school reform that culminates in optimal outcomes for all learners. They need to envision a better future, empower all

teachers to conceptualise optimal outcomes for learners' and collaborate actively as well as facilitate collaboration to achieve these outcomes (Swart & Pettipher, 2001:38).

By developing a shared vision, principals extend leadership within the school so there is a community of leaders.

According to Moloi (2002:70), leadership is the most crucial success factor in determining the future of a school. Principals need to develop their own brand of leadership and leadership practice because each school is unique. Whatever the case, the leadership style the principal adopts will determine the climate, values, growth and development of the staff members. Effective leaders of tomorrow's schools must possess three fundamental skills of leadership namely, strategic thinking, innovative thinking and rational decision-making (Pretorius, 2001:5).

The principal should also be an instructional leader, and should be able to give direct assistance to teachers in designing and adapting curriculum. The principal should encourage and manage staff development, team development and action research. Swart and Pettipher (2001:39-40) note that implementing inclusive education requires the establishment of an extensive support network and the provision of supplementary aids, assistive devices and support services.

To transform a school into a learning organization, the principal should become more deeply involved in human resource development. Since the most significant resource at school level is teachers, principals must invest in their staff and train and develop them. This means that principals should ensure that conditions for the personal and professional development of teachers are an integral part of the core processes of the school (Bush, 1992:10-11; Welsch, 2001:6). The principal should enter into a psychological contract with members of the staff, building commitment (Welsch, 2001).

According to (Friend & Bursuck, 1999:35) the school's principal, is the administrator most likely to participate actively in the education of a learner with an intellectual disability. The role of the principal is to provide perspective on education policies, in this instance, specifically related to inclusion and

special education. Principals should assist the Teacher Support Team (TST) in determining learner's eligibility for services and exploring strategies to meet their needs. Principals also play an important role in addressing parent concerns.

#### **2.3.2.4 Support for all**

Supporting successful learning and behaviour in inclusive classrooms involves parents, learners, teachers, educational support professionals and community resources. The establishment of effective support strategies is consistent with the notion that the capacity of an inclusive school community needs to work collaboratively in order to best meet the individual needs of all the learners (Swart & Pettipher, 2001:42). The Education Ministry believes that the only way to reduce barriers to learning within all education and training lies in a strengthened education support service (White Paper 6, 2001:28-29).

Some suggested strategies (Muthukrishna, 2001:48-51) for developing an inclusive community-based system of support are as follows:

- First, establish school based support teams that support the teaching-learning process by identifying, and addressing barriers to learning and participation, and accessing support from the community.
- Secondly, establish district support teams whose aim should be to pool limited available resources in order to make optimum use of them. Special schools should be seen as resources.
- Thirdly, school-governing bodies should set up a subcommittee on support to monitor and facilitate inclusive education practices at the school.
- Another useful strategy is twinning or clustering of community centres as a way of building community support. Lastly, utilising community resources e.g. NGO's and other community organisations, is another practical option.

It would be wise to have school-based staff development programmes, which would encourage teachers to reflect on their own context so they can develop their own school improvement and development plans. There should also be

a focus on learner-to-learner support, which could be effective in creating classrooms that encourage all learners to participate and learn.

Muthukrishna (2001:45) refers to holistic integrated services, which bring together as many resources, perspectives and types of expertise as possible to support centres of learning and communities. A school-based support team is thus not a special group of professionals who are supposed to solve all the problems referred to them from teachers in the school, but a group of colleagues who can capitalise on the diverse and specialised knowledge of others in order to provide quality learning support (Hall, Campher & Smit, 1999:59).

### **2.3.2.5 The role of learners**

As the educational outcomes of inclusive schooling focus on self-determination and community participation and support, learners need to play a more central active role in inclusive classrooms. Learners should therefore, assume greater responsibility for their own learning and for that of their peers (Sands *et al.*, 2000:124). The role of learners in creating and maintaining friendships in school is also vital and so other role players should encourage all the learners to engage with one another (Sands, Kozleski & French, 2001:126-127). Among the many reasons given by opponents to inclusive education is that their peers will reject learners with disabilities, but research has indicated that, with the support of teachers and others, all learners can develop compassion and empathy for peers and create alliances (Sands *et al.*, 2000).

Peer tutoring has proved very successful with learners suffering from different degrees of intellectual disability. To enhance the chances of success the teacher should design a lesson format that is instructionally sound and easily implemented by the tutor. S/he should select a peer, inform parents of the programme and obtain their permission. S/he should also give weekly training to the peer and design assessment criteria (Hallahan & Kaufman, 1991:114-116).

The role of learners in creating and maintaining friendships in schools is also important.

### **2.3.3 Conclusion**

Schools are a reflection of the communities they serve, and so all members of those communities should be part of the schools. This includes learners. We need to learn from one another in our schools so that we can do the same in our communities.

## **2.4 THE EDUCATION OF LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

The most commonly used criteria to identify and classify intellectual disabilities are based on categories of scores on standardised intelligence tests (see Chapter 1, 1.3.1). On this basis learners with intellectual disabilities are identified as those whose IQ scores fall in the lowest 5% of the population, that is with measured IQs of 70 or less. Disabilities are classified as mild (IQ 51-70), moderate (IQ 36-50), severe (IQ 20-35), and profound (IQ less than 20).

Table 2.1 illustrates the variation in expected achievement according to the mild, moderate and severe categories of intellectual disability.

**Table 2.1: Levels of special need in cognitive functioning**

	<b>Mild</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Severe and profound</b>
<b>Aetiology</b>	Often a combination of unfavourable environmental conditions and genetic, neurological and metabolic factors	A wide variety of relatively rare neurological, glandular, or metabolic defects or disorders	Same criteria as in moderate but may differ in degree
<b>Prevalence</b>	About 10 in every 1000 persons	About 3 in every 1000 persons	About 1 in every 1000 persons
<b>School expectations Age 6 to 20</b>	Will have difficulty in mainstream school programme; needs special curriculum adaptations for appropriate education and can learn academic skills up to grade 6	Needs major adaptations in educational programmes (may learn up to grade 2 level in academic subjects; focus on self-care or social skills; should learn basic academic and vocational skills)	May attain limited self care Needs training in self care skills (feeding, toileting, dressing)
<b>Adult expectations</b>	With special education can make productive adjustment at an unskilled or semi-skilled level	Can make social and economic adaptation in a sheltered workshop or in a routine job under supervision	Is likely to be dependent on others for care

Source: Lomofsky and Skuy (2001:201)

## **2.4.2 Educational profile of a learner with an intellectual disability**

### **2.4.2.1 Introduction**

Learners with intellectual disabilities have significant limitations in intellectual ability and adaptive (social demands of the environment) behaviours (see Chapter 1). Although many learners with an intellectual disability may develop motor, social and language skills noticeably different from their peers, many learners are not considered intellectually disabled until they enter school. These learners are classified as moderate and severely intellectually disabled.

According to Lomofsky and Skuy (2001:198-199) moderate intellectual disability is generally identified no later than the preschool years, but mild disability may only become apparent when formal learning begins. Teachers will find that mild and moderate intellectual disabilities are frequently more of a barrier to learning and development if not recognised early on.

### **2.4.2.2 Characteristics of learners with an intellectual disability**

Not all learners will have all the characteristics discussed: a learner's physical development might be different from another learner with a similar disability and the environment can also impact on physical and intellectual development of learners.

#### **a) Intellectual functioning**

Most people with intellectual disabilities do not reach the stage of formal operations necessary for independent abstract thinking and are disadvantaged by the fact that they cannot choose to exercise this mode of thought (Lomofsky & Skuy, 2001). As a result learners with an intellectual disability, although they have many diverse learning characteristics, generally learn slowly and often fail to notice relevant features of what is being taught. According to Vaughn, Bos and Schumm (2000:225) these learners do not demonstrate learned skills spontaneously, and have difficulty generalizing learned skills to new situations. They have difficulty learning complex skills and abstract concepts and learn less overall in comparison to other learners. Many of these learners have memory deficits, either remembering incorrectly

or not remembering automatically. They also need additional cues to help them focus their attention.

They can learn basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics, sometimes achieving up to grade 6 level and in some areas they manage to the end of high school. They also have significant difficulty making connections among ideas and generalizing newly learned knowledge and skills to new situations (Lomofsky & Skuy, 2001; Vaughn *et al.*, 2000).

Because learners with intellectual disabilities have many opportunities to experience failure, they can develop poor motivation for learning, and set low goals (Vaughn *et al.*, 2000:225). Many learners with an intellectual disability respond by saying "yes" to please the teacher or hide their confusion. See Table 2.2 for learning related characteristics.

**Table 2.2: Learning related characteristics**

Characteristic	Description	Reference
Attention variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty in the three major components of attention: attention span (length of time on task), focus (inhibition of distracting stimuli), and selective attention (discrimination of important stimulus characteristics).</li> <li>• Key concern is to train learner to be aware of the importance of attention and to learn how to actively monitor its occurrence.</li> </ul>	<p>Alabiso (1977)  Zeaman &amp; House (1963, 1979)  Connis (1979)  Howell, Rueda &amp; Rutherford (1983)  Kneedler &amp; Hallahan (1981)</p>
Mediational Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less likely than normal learners to employ effective techniques for organizing information for later recall.</li> <li>• Typical techniques of mature learners include verbal rehearsal and repetition, labelling, classification, association and imagery.</li> <li>• Research indicates that learners who are intellectually disabled have difficulty producing mediational strategies.</li> <li>• Tend to be "inactive learners".</li> </ul>	<p>Spitz (1966)  Bray (1979)  Robinson &amp; Robinson (1976)  Strichard &amp; Gottlieb (1983)</p>
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty in the area of short term memory (STM) but retain information over the long term.</li> <li>• Long term memory (LTM) is usually similar to that of persons who are not disabled.</li> <li>• Improvements in recall can be achieved when learners with an intellectual disability are shown how to proceed in an organised, well planned fashion.</li> </ul>	<p>Belmont (1966)  Cohen (1982)  Baumeister &amp; Brookes (1981)  Borowski &amp; Cavanaugh (1979)</p>
Transfer/ generalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tend to show deficiencies in the ability to apply knowledge or skills to new tasks, problems, or stimulus situations.</li> <li>• Such difficulties relate to the inability to form learning sets.</li> <li>• In particular they may fail to use previous experience to formulate rules that will help solve future problems of a similar nature.</li> </ul>	<p>Stephens (1972)  Stevenson (1972)  Robinson &amp; Robinson (1976)</p>

Source: Smith, Patton and Ittenbach (1994:221)

**b) Social skills**

Learners with an intellectual disability have friends and participate in social activities, but often have difficulties in developing lasting friendships. Such difficulties may be due to behaviours that discourage interactions or to the lack of opportunity. They are able to take part in sporting events, religious and civic festivities and able to live independently (Lomofsky & Skuy, 2001; Vaughn *et al.*, 2000).

**c) Motor skills**

Some learners with an intellectual disability can also experience delays in sensory and motor development. During the early years, young learners show significant development in terms of their motor abilities. Young learners need to develop physical control, awareness of space, mobility and a variety of manipulative skills in both indoor and outdoor environments. This development enables them to explore their world and to have their first experiences of being able to manipulate objects in their environment. The execution of motor tasks becomes more complex as children grow older (Elof, 2001:61).

**d) Communication**

Communication is an important area for all learners, especially more so for the learner with an intellectual disability because it gives them control over the environment and a way to fulfil their wants and needs. It is also an important key to being socially accepted. Learners with an intellectual disability often have difficulties communicating, which could be in the form of delayed speech and other speech problems. Language development may be inhibited or significantly delayed in learners who have limited intellectual abilities on which to build language skills. Learners who do not have the verbal and communication skills of their peers may withdraw from interpersonal relationships or seek attention in inappropriate ways (Smith, Patton & Ittenbach, 1994:207).

Fewer experiences and less exposure to activities can also negatively impact on language development. Language is not only limited by cognition, but cognition (especially higher-order thinking, planning and reasoning) is also

limited by language (Lomofsky & Skuy, 2001:200). They use shorter, less complex sentences with fewer relative clauses and words with more concrete meanings. They also exhibit poorer recall of sentences (Vaughn *et al.*, 2000:228).

#### **e) Motivational characteristics**

Although learners who are intellectually disabled have the same basic physiological, social and emotional needs as their peers they do have specific needs regarding motivation.

Locus of control refers to how one perceives the consequences of one's behaviour. In other words, is one's failure determined by outside forces or does one contribute to success or failure? The learner with an intellectual disability would reason with an external locus of control and the latter is considered to be debilitating as it keeps individuals from accepting responsibility for their own successes and failures and from developing self-reliance and self-regulatory behaviours (Smith *et al.*, 1994:212).

Learners with intellectual disability exhibit learned helplessness. This is the belief that failure will crown even the most extraordinary efforts. This is always reflected in the response "I can't" when asked to do an activity, without even attempting the activity.

Smith *et al.* (1994:213) note that an individual who has accumulated experiences of failure sets lower aspirations and goals in an effort to avoid additional disappointment. The expectation of failure increases the chances that less effort is put into a task and the learner thus performs below her/his capabilities. Learners need positive encouragement and reward for their effort. It is important for these individuals to experience success and recognise it when it occurs. However, it is equally important to teach them how to deal with failure and how to persevere.

Another motivational characteristic Smith *et al.* (1994:213) focus on is outer-directedness which is another result of attempts to avoid failure. Thus, instead of being self reliant in problem solving, the outer-directed individual relies on situational or external cues for guidance. In dealing with locus of control, expectancy of failure and outer-directedness it seems that failure is the key

word. It would therefore be helpful when working with the learner with an intellectual disability to give them tasks which they are capable of doing.

### **2.4.3 Conclusion**

Learners with an intellectual disability learn at a far slower pace than do other learners and they may reach a point where their learning levels off (Friend & Bursuck, 1999:19). In addition, the learners' motor and/or speech and language developmental milestones may be delayed and development may be slower than that of their peers, with regard to using memory effectively, associating and classifying information, reasoning and making judgements. These difficulties will inevitably reveal themselves in their scholastic achievement (see Table 2) in areas such as oral and written language and mathematics (a language system of numerical symbols). These learners are also slow to acquire the social skills typical of their peers of the same age and may prefer to play with younger learners (Lomofsky & Skuy, 2001:198-199).

Despite the degree of the intellectual disability, most of these individuals can lead independent or semi-independent lives as adults and can hold an appropriate job.

### **2.4.4 Implications for teachers working with the learner with an intellectual disability in an inclusive setting**

#### **2.4.4.1 Teacher Training Needs**

Forlin and Engelbrecht (1997:1) make it clear that there is a need for effective teacher training if inclusive education is to be successfully implemented. Research conducted by Engelbrecht *et al.* (2003:305) revealed the following:

African teachers are disadvantaged by the poor quality of their training. In the past pre-service and in-service training assumed that learners with disabilities would be educated in separate schools. Only as a recent initiative have educational institutes in South Africa begun to train teachers to accommodate a diverse range of learner needs in one inclusive system.

In South Africa, primary school teachers have indicated their concerns about a perceived lack of relevant pre-service training. These teachers believe that they are insufficiently trained to

cope with the special needs of a learner with a (intellectual) disability if placed in their classroom. A few other concerns are class size, the lack of resources and the behaviour of the learner with an intellectual disability (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2003:303-7).

According to the Western Cape Education Department, improvement in education requires an improvement in teacher education. Many innovations have failed because the central role of teachers in the educational development process was not taken into account. When a teacher is not convinced that an innovation will benefit learners and classroom practice, it is doubtful that any effort will succeed. With regard to teacher education and training the Draft Bill WCED highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining *teachers' centres* for the enrichment of educators' academic and professional knowledge and teaching skills (<http://www.wcape.school.za/wced/admin/drftbll.htm>).

#### **2.4.4.2 Classroom modifications**

The teacher must design a classroom environment that supports the educational needs of learners with disabilities in the classroom. The classroom environment should be comfortable and structured in such a way that all learners can actively engage in the learning process. This could lead to increased participation and cooperation of learners (Khalsa in Elof, 2001:76).

The following classroom adaptations suggested by Lewis and Doorlag (1999:40-43) could be useful as intervention strategies for teachers in mainstream education working with the learner with an intellectual disability.

- **Curricular adaptations**

Teachers should focus on teaching only those areas of the work deemed the most important. Another option is substitution of an alternative curriculum.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

To enable teachers to work effectively and efficiently with intellectually disabled learners, it is vital that teachers be given proper guidelines and provided with in-service training.

## CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH DESIGN, AND METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research design, the collection and the analysis and interpretation of the data will be discussed.

### 3.2 RESEARCH AIM

The research question stems directly from the research problem, namely the exploration of the views of teachers who already have learners with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms.

### 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1 (1.4.1), the design of this study is qualitative in nature. Creswell (1994:1-2) defines qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting".

As outlined in Chapter 1 (1.4.1), qualitative researchers attempt to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves (also referred to by anthropologists as the "emic" perspective). The primary goal of using this approach is defined as describing and understanding (Verstehen) rather than explaining human behaviour.

#### 3.3.2 The research process

The research process has often been depicted as a linear, logical sequence starting with the formulation of aims, then planning, collecting, analyzing and

interpreting data, and ending with conclusions and writing up. However the researcher concurs with Wellington (2000:46-47) that

... research is cyclical in that people go back and replan/refocus their research, collect and analyse their data and realize that they need more, or different, data; start to write up and realize they are addressing the wrong questions; find that the targets or samples they have set themselves are too low/high, and so on.

The cyclical research sequence as outlined by Medawar (1963 in Wellington, 2000:48) is the sequence that the researcher followed (see Figure 1).

### **3.3.3 Unit of analysis**

According to Merriam (1998:34), a qualitative case study can be defined in terms of the unit of analysis (the bounded system), the process of carrying out the investigation and the end product.

The term case study pertains to the fact that a limited number of units of analysis (often only one), such as an individual, group or institution, are studied intensively, and not to some or other technique which is applied. Usually its objective is to investigate the dynamics of some single bounded system, typically of a social nature for example, a family, group, community, participants in a project, practice or institution (Huysamen, 1996:168).

The research site (case study) in this study was a primary school, in the Western Cape. Three teachers were purposefully selected for the study. During this stage, an attempt was made by the selected teachers to describe their needs and that of parents and learners in working with the learner with an intellectual disability. Meetings with the selected participants for the research, for the class-observation, and semi-structured interviews were arranged. The researcher also met with the school principal, four learners and the chairperson of the governing body.

## 3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.4.1 Participants

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used.

Purposive sampling is a process whereby the researchers rely on their experience, ingenuity and/or previous research findings to deliberately obtain participants in such a manner that the sample obtained may be regarded as representative of the relevant population (Huysamen, 1994:44).

The following criteria regarding the choice of research respondents (teachers) were used:

- The respondents should work in the Bellville region in the Western Cape
- The respondents should be in the employ of the WCED at the same school
- The respondents should teach in the primary phase in mainstream
- The respondents should teach a learner with an intellectual disability
- The respondents must be willing to be observed
- The respondents must be willing to be interviewed.
- The respondents should at least have five years teaching experience.

As discussed earlier, the principal of the school, the governing body chairperson (parent) and four learners (two learners with an intellectual disability), all from the same school, were interviewed.

### 3.4.2 Data collection methods

#### 3.4.2.1 *Open-ended statement*

An open-ended statement was used to assist the researcher in conducting the interview schedules. The question that was posed to the research respondents was:

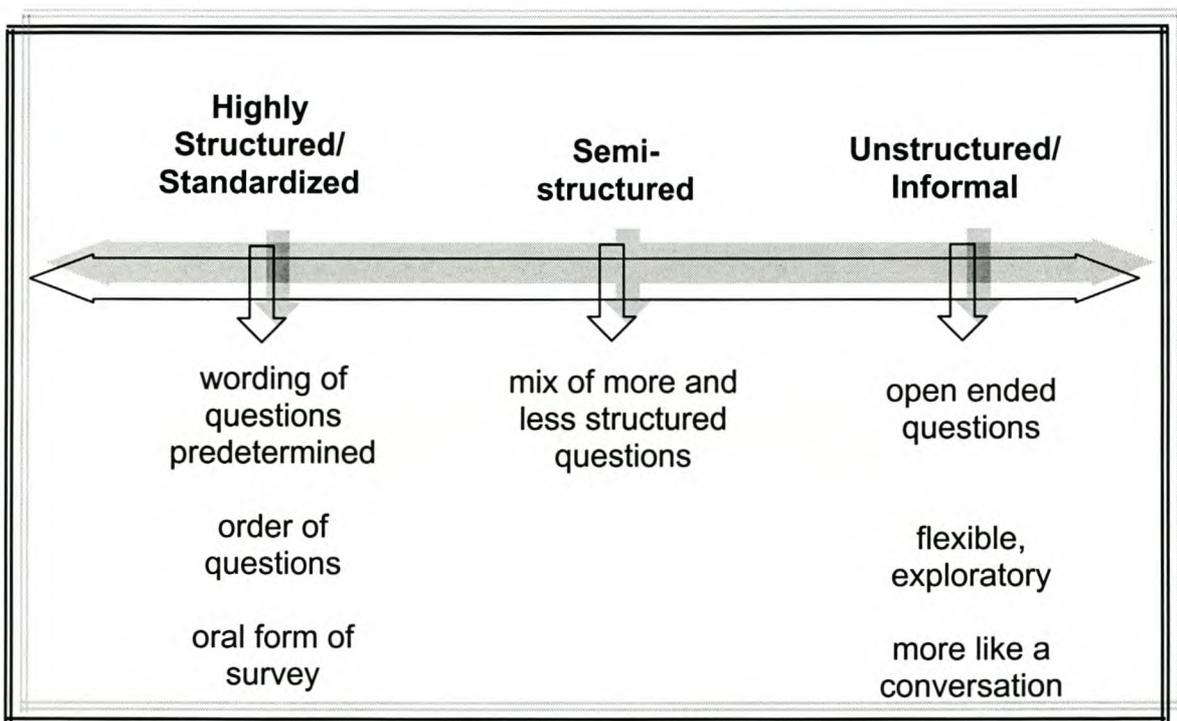
***Please comment on your experiences of teaching the learner with an intellectual disability.***

The document given to teachers also included a section on biographical data (see Addendum A).

### 3.4.2.2 *The Interviews*

The interview itself is described as 'a conversation with a purpose' (Webb & Webb, 1932 in Wellington, 2000:71). This 'conversation' can range from being highly structured to being unstructured. As Merriam (1998:72) puts it, "The most common way of deciding which type of interview to use is by determining the amount of structure desired" (see Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1: Interview Structure Continuum**



Merriam, 1998:73

Taylor and Bogdan (1988:87-88) list five issues that should be addressed at the outset of every interview:

- The investigator's motives and intentions and the enquiry's purpose
- The protection of respondents through the use of pseudonyms
- Deciding who has final say over the study's content
- Payment (if any)

- Logistics with regard to time, place, and number of interviews to be scheduled

The key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions. The way in which the questions are worded is a crucial consideration in extracting the type of information desired. Questions need to be framed in familiar language (Merriam, 1998:75-6).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information on current strategies employed by teachers in coping and working with learners that are intellectually disabled.

Semi-structured Interviews can be described as follows: In this type of interview the questions are more or less structured (see Figure 2.1).

Specific information is required from the respondents. The largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time" Merriam (1998:74).

This type of format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to emerging world-views of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (See addendum B – E for the complete interview schedules).

### **3.4.2.3 Literature review**

As discussed in Chapter 1 (1.4.3.1), a literature review formed the foundation on which this study was conducted. It informed every stage of the research process.

### **3.4.2.4 Documents**

Documents are a source of additional data, as a complement to interviews or observations. It also forms an excellent means of triangulation, helping to increase the 'trustworthiness', reliability and validity of research (especially as most of the documents used in the research are publicly accessible).

As outlined in Merriam (1998:112), Public records, personal documents and physical material are three major types of documents available to the researcher for analysis.

The researcher consulted documents (data from the WCED on learners with specific disabilities in schools) to find out at which mainstream schools there were learners with an intellectual disability. Public records that were read were the school registers, records of meetings, and personal and physical material included daily lesson plans, written texts and letters.

#### **3.4.2.5 Field notes**

According to Merriam (1994:104) what is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw data from which a study's findings eventually emerge. This written account of the observation constitutes field notes, which are analogous to the interview transcript. In both forms of data collection, the more complete the recording, the easier it is to analyze the data.

Field notes usually included verbal description of the setting, the people, and activities as well as direct quotations or at least the substance of what people said.

Extensive field notes are another important aspect of enhancing the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:275).

#### **3.4.2.6 Observation**

Observation can be distinguished from interviews in two ways. First, observations take place in the natural field setting instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing. Secondly, observational data represent a first hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a second hand account of the world obtained in an interview (Merriam, 1998:94).

Kidder (1981:264 cited in Merriam, 1998:95) says that observation is a research tool when, i.e.:

- It serves a formulated research purpose
- Is planned deliberately
- Is recorded systematically and

- Is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability.

Observations in the form of class visits were done to see how these teachers go about their task. As far as possible field notes were taken.

### **3.4.3 Data analysis and data transformation**

- **Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is the process of making sense of data by consolidating, reducing and interpreting what subjects have said and what the researcher has seen and read. Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. These meanings or understandings or insights constitute the findings of a study (Merriam, 1998:178).

The researcher made use of the constant comparative method (Chapter 1, 1.4.2.2). At the heart of this method is the continuous comparison of incidents, respondents' remarks, and so on, with each other (Merriam, 1998:179). First-person accounts of experience form the narrative "text" in this research approach. This draws on the interviews, (which is self reporting) as well as observations, (archival/documentary sources) journals, letters, etc. Coffey and Atkinson (1996:80 in Merriam, 1998:158) notes that:

There is no formulae or recipes for the 'best' way to analyze the stories we elicit and collect. This merely opens up the possibilities for a variety of analytical strategies as the researcher ponders over the narrative data.

The researcher also made use of the following strategies for analysing the data as outlined by Wellington (2000:135):

## 1. Immersion

This involves getting an overall sense or feel of the data, e.g. listening to the tape-recording, reading and re-reading the transcripts. It involves note taking, active reading, highlighting or annotating transcripts. This is the stage of 'immersing oneself' in data.

## 2. Reflecting

The next stage is often to 'stand back' from the data or, literally, to 'sleep on it'.

## 3. Taking Apart/Analysing Data

The word analyse means to literally break down into components, or to divide a whole into its parts. This is the stage, which is strictly speaking the analysis phase and can be described as follows:

All the data collected are first read and divided into 'relevant categories'



These categories can now be subdivided and new categories can be created



The researcher now looks for similarities (constant comparative method) and could combine some of the categories. At the same time look at categories that are too large and break it up into sub themes.



The researcher needs to determine whether the categories and sub-themes cover all the data; also are they different and not overlapping.



The researcher now looks for connections, contrasts and comparisons between sub themes.



*The researcher can now create themes.*



*From the themes the researcher can now start interpreting the data, not neglecting the rest of the data.*

- **Data reduction**

Data need to be coded in order to retrieve and consolidate the data easily. In this research each teacher that was interviewed was assigned a code, i.e. T1 signifying Teacher 1, the principal was assigned a P, the learners an L1 or L2 and the governing body chairperson was GBC. This made it easier for the researcher to store and categorise information in files. It was also a means of ensuring confidentiality.

These categories and codes form the emerging story to be told by the qualitative researcher. This process involves what have been called "segmenting" the information (Tesch, 1990 in Creswell, 1994:154), developing "coding categories" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992 in Creswell, 1994:154), and "generating categories, themes, or patterns" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989 in Creswell, 1994:154). Thus the researcher takes this voluminous amount of information and reduces it to certain patterns, categories or themes and then interprets the information by using some kind of schema.

- **Data consolidation**

Data consolidation refers to how the researcher draws all the strands together. In other words the objective of the research is to gather information on guidelines that could assist teachers in mainstream to academically support the intellectually disabled learner in the inclusive setting. This study was a long and frustrating process as the researcher first transcribed all the interviews, before having them typed out, discussing the findings, creating categories and then sorting the categories into themes and finally interpreting the data.

- **Data display**

At the data display stage data are organized and assembled, then 'displayed' in pictorial, diagrammatic or visual form. This 'display' allows the researcher to conceptualize the data leading towards interpretation and the drawing of conclusions. The data were first recorded on blank A4 sheets and then written out on wall charts.

- **Data interpretation**

Interpretation involves the synthesis of one's data into larger coherent wholes. One interprets (and explains) observations or data by formulating hypotheses or theories that account for observed patterns and trends in data. Interpreting means relating one's results and findings to existing theoretical frameworks or models, and showing whether these are supported or falsified by the new interpretation (Mouton, 2001:109). Interpretation also means taking into account rival explanations or interpretations of one's data and showing what levels of support the data provide for the preferred interpretation.

### **3.5 DATA VERIFICATION**

All researchers are confronted with the question of reliability, external validity or trustworthiness of data.

**Reliability** refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. Huysamen (1994:177) argues that it stands to reason that if we measure a construct by means of a particular instrument, it should yield comparable measurements for the same individuals irrespective of, for example, when the instrument is administered, which particular version of it is used, and who is applying (administering and scoring) it.

**External validity or trustworthiness** is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Wellington, 2000:201).

In this research the researcher followed the suggestion of Patton (1990:244) in Merriam (2000:137):

Multiple sources of information (which was sought and used), because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective ...

By using a combination of observations, interviewing and document analysis, the researcher is able to use different data sources to validate and cross check findings.

Furthermore, use was made of **triangulation** or the use of multiple data sources. The concept of triangulation is based on the assumption that any bias inherent in the particular data sources, investigator and method will be neutralised when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigator and methods. The researcher triangulates by means of multiple data sources of information, i.e., the recorded and transcribed interviews, the observation transcripts, literature and document overviews, and field notes. Checking data obtained by a variety of methods was therefore a way of contributing to the trustworthiness of the results of this study. Babbie and Mouton (2001:275) also note that triangulation is generally considered to be one of the best ways to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative research.

**Member checks**, according to Babbie and Mouton (2001:275-6), consist of taking transcribed data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them whether they agreed with the result. The researcher gave the participants transcripts of their interviews to comment on.

**Repeated observations** of the same phenomenon were accomplished by observing a class over a three-week period. This gave the researcher time to reflect and also to do renewed observations with new questions in mind.

**Peer examination** consisted of asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged.

**Consistency** (also called reliability) means that if different researchers were to carry out the investigation again, using the same methods, the results obtained in the earlier study would make sense in that they would be consistent and so dependable. The question is not whether the same findings will be reached again, but whether the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 1998:206).

**Generalisability** (also called external validity) refers to the applicability of the research to other contexts and settings (Merriam, 1998:207). In qualitative research, a single case study is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, and not to find out what is generally true of the many.

### **3.6 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

The role of the researcher was to initiate, do the research and write and report on the findings. In qualitative research the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study. According to Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (1987 in Creswell, 1994), "The investigator's contribution to the research can be useful and positive rather than detrimental" Therefore, the criteria for trusting the research (internal validity) should be the observer's critical presence in the context of observation of phenomena, hypothesis testing (by confrontation and disconfirmation), triangulation of participants' perceptions, interpretations and so on. The researcher is thus in a sense "closer" to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between the researcher and the participants (Merriam, 1998:203).

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics and morals play an important part both in educational and scientific research. Morals underpin ethics, but the two terms are not quite synonymous.

An 'ethic' is a moral principle or a code of conduct which actually governs what people do. It is concerned with the way people act or behave. The term 'ethics' usually refers to the moral principles, guiding conduct, which are held by a group or even a profession. In qualitative studies, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings (Wellington, 2000:54).

Merriam (1994:131) notes that in any qualitative study, ethical issues relating to the protection of participants are of concern. Ethical considerations come into play at three stages of a research project, namely, when participants are recruited, during the intervention and/or the measurement procedure to which they are subjected, and in the presentation of the results obtained. Two additional issues of an ethical nature refer to the withholding of a potentially

beneficial intervention from the control groups and the exploitation of the scientific research process for personal gain.

The researcher followed the following guidelines suggested by Wellington (2000:57) to protect the rights of the respondents in this research study:

- **The right to informed consent**

Relevant information about the nature and purpose of the research was given to the participants. They were also told where the findings would be publicised. No attempts were made to deceive the participants.

- **The right to remain anonymous**

The researcher assured the participants that their names would not be mentioned in the research conducted.

- **The right to privacy of the respondents**

The researcher avoided invading the privacy of respondents by not going to their houses, but having interviews in a neutral place at their place of work. The researcher also tried to use as little of their time as possible. No attempt was made to force the respondents to do anything unsafe or make them do something they were unwilling to do, e.g. have their voice tape recorded.

- **The right to confidentiality**

The respondents were informed that they had every right to insist that the data collected from them be treated with confidentiality, especially if it was of a more personal nature.

- **Debriefing of respondents**

Babbie and Mouton (2001:256) refer to the debriefing session as firstly, an opportunity to listen to the views and interpretations of the respondents, and secondly an opportunity for the researcher to help the respondents cope with negative feelings resulting from the personal nature of the interview. The researcher had a debriefing session with the respondents after the data had been obtained. During this session the researcher explained the process followed again just as it was outlined during the first session. The interviewees were also allowed to comment on the process and ask questions if they were

unclear, uncertain or uncomfortable with anything. The results were discussed with them after the completion of the research.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the research design and methodology have been discussed. The researcher used a qualitative research design and case study research format.

Chapter 4 will discuss the research findings and offer recommendations.

## CHAPTER 4

# RESEARCH FINDINGS, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter will focus on the research findings and discussion of the collected data. The discussion that follows will present the main findings of this study and relate these findings to the review study and the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2. The integration of the data with the theory will enable authentication and verification of the findings of this research. All the data were gathered through the lens of the educators' perspectives, the observations of the researcher, and a particular theoretical point of departure, namely: teacher experiences of including learners with intellectual disabilities in their mainstream classrooms.

### 4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.2.1 The context of the school

Primary School X is surrounded by high density housing in an impoverished community, where the unemployment rate is high and gangsterism is a daily and real life threat to teachers and learners.

The school has the minimum basic infrastructure of running water, and electricity. The flush toilets have been vandalised. The school equipment is basic: there is only one school telephone and one public phone. The only equipment in the school classrooms is desks, and chalkboards. There is only one school computer. There is no school hall; and the school sports field cannot be used as a playground as it is the place where learners are harassed and mugged by gangsters who enter the school premises via holes in the fences and or the gates that have been smashed. The school has no

audio-visual equipment like television, overhead projectors, or radio. It has one photocopy machine. Almost every school holiday, the school has a break-in and/or is vandalised. The school had 450 learners in 2001 and shrank to a mere 218 learners in 2002 due to rumours in the community that 'the school might close down', according to the school principal.

There are 14 teachers including the school principal. Three teachers as well as the principal and the governing body chairman, were interviewed by means of semi-structured interviews, (see 3.4.1 in Chapter 3). The media of instruction are English and Afrikaans and the learners are from predominantly Afrikaans speaking working class families. From discussions held with class teachers it seems that a number of the learners come from broken homes and are exposed to all kinds of abuse. Also, the number of complaints and welfare cases the school has to handle (alcohol, physical, sexual etc.), indicates that abuse are rife. The school principal and the governing body chairman corroborated the statements made by teachers.

#### • PROFILE OF THE TEACHERS

The following biographical information was collected (see Addendum A).

	T1	T2	T3
Teaching experience	22½ years	7 years and six months	22 years
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Learners per class	Between 35-42	Between 38 - 45	Between 40 -48
Learners with intellectual disabilities	At least one per class	Between 1-2 in her classes	Between 1-2 in each class
Training in specialised education	None	None	None
Grade/s	5-7	7	5&6

#### 4.2.2 Procedure

The researcher explained the purpose of the research before tasking responses to the open-ended statement i.e. collecting information on the inclusion of the learner with mild intellectual disability and how teachers working with the learner with an intellectual disability are experiencing the

process. Confidentiality was once again stressed and as such each respondent was assigned a code e.g. T1 = teacher 1, L1 = learner 1, P = principal etc. The researcher explained the use of the tape recorder and gave the respondents the assurance that they could request at anytime to have the tape recorder switched off by indicating that they wanted it switched off or simply saying so. Two of the teacher respondents felt at the last minute that they would not like to be recorded on tape, but were willing to have their responses transcribed by the researcher. The respondents were given enough time to prepare for the interview and received a copy of the transcript of the interview to comment on.

Before, after and during interviews the researcher recorded his reflections on the non-verbal responses of the interviewees which seemed insightful.

#### **4.2.3 Research findings**

The findings of the study will be discussed under the following broad themes:

- The transition to inclusive education
- Profile of the learner with an intellectual disability
- Support needs
- Classroom management.

The references in brackets refer to the codes given to the sources of data e.g. P:3 refers to the principal on page three. Although the findings are presented under themes, it must be noted that these themes do not exist as exclusive entities as there is a reciprocal influence between themes as well as between categories within themes. The following table with categories, sub themes and themes were constructed from all the information that was analysed (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Categories, sub themes and themes of analysed information**

Across cases		THEMES		CATEGORY: EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS
Teachers 1-3	Principal	Governing-body parent	Learners 1-4	
Transition to inclusive education • Aanpassings-klasse • OBE	Transition to inclusive education • Aanpassings-klasse OBE	Transition to inclusive education • OBE		
Profile of learner with intellectual disability • Specific needs off learner • school environment and surroundings • teachers role		Profile of learner • school environment and surroundings • teachers role		
Support • teacher • TST • SGB • WCED • Principal • Parents • District	Support • teacher • TST • SGB • WCED • Principal • Parents • District	Support • teacher • TST • SGB • WCED • Principal • Parents • District	Support • teacher • TST • SGB • Principal • Parents • District	
Classroom Practices • Classroom management • Teaching methods		Classroom Practices • Classroom management • Teaching methods	Classroom Practices • Classroom management • Teaching methods	
<b>ACROSS GROUPS</b>				

**THEME: TRANSITION TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Two sub-themes were clustered under the theme of the transition to inclusive education. Two of these were "aanpassingsklasse" and Outcomes based education (OBE)

- **"Aanpassingsklasse"**

The teachers as well as principal at the school experienced these classes in the past as negative for the learner as well as for teachers:

*Aanpassingsklasse gives a negative connotation ..... (T1)*

*Aanpassingsklasse ... labelled the learners and resulted in learners being teased by their peers..... (T1)*

Even though the school had these adaptation classes *till in the early nineteen nineties* (FN) the teachers interviewed were not directly involved with these classes or had a negative attitude to them, i.e.

*Never taught these classes ..... (T2)*

*Waste of time ..... (T2)*

*Teachers were unsure what to do in these classes as teachers had no remedial experience..... (T2)*

*Teachers did not do what they were supposed to ..... (T3)*

*Basic reading and writing skills were taught..... (T2)*

*Social skills like cleanliness were taught / life skills..... (T2)*

*Some teachers enjoyed having less work to prepare and present ..... (T3)*

*Some were dedicated to their learners ..... (T3)*

- **OUTCOME BASED EDUCATION (OBE)**

Curriculum 2005 as prescribed by the department of education is currently implemented at the school and is seen as an integral part of the transition to inclusive education.

*I teach according to OBE curriculum 2005 ..... (T1)*

Teachers and parents have come to grips with the dynamics of OBE as stated by a parent:

*As the parent body we received in service training with the department of education on Outcomes based education, Curriculum 2005.....(GBP)*

The school principal concurred on this point:

*Teachers (and parents on the governing body) have been attending workshops and training with the WCED on OBE, Curriculum 2005.....(P)*

*I read a little about curriculum 2005 myself .....(GBP)*

Nevertheless, some difficulties are experienced with the proper implementation of OBE as can be seen from the following:

*I use OBE but it is more drudgery of administrative tasks ..... (T2)*

*Learners taught according to WCED prescription with subject advisors interventions ..... (T3)*

*The classes are overcrowded..... (T2)*

*I am overworked and underpaid ..... (T2)*

*OBE were designed for individual attention but our class size does not allow for this ..... (T1)*

#### **THEME: Profile of learners**

- ***Specific needs of the learner with an intellectual disability***

As discussed in Chapter 2, learners with an intellectual disability have significant limitations to their intellectual ability and adaptive behaviours,

*Some of them have a low self-image..... (T1)*

In another statement T1 came back to this point and went a little further.

*They have low self image and this leads to behavioural problems..... (T1, T2)*

*Negative behaviour is most likely a need or a cry for help..... (T1)*

These learners either seem withdrawn due to poor communication skills or they seek attention in unacceptable ways.

*They are sometimes quiet and withdrawn ..... (T3)*

*These learners tend to fight and distract other learners in class ..... (T2)*

*Lack of self-discipline and controlling their emotions (as they sometimes have emotional outbursts) ..... (T2, T1)*

Learners with intellectual disabilities have several noticeable characteristics. First, their rate of learning may be quite slow. Second, they may have difficulty maintaining their skills; without ongoing practice they will forget what they have learned. To ensure that these learners continue to practice necessary skills, teachers stress the need for them to be included as far as possible and to be given support:

*Include the learner in all the lessons even if it means  
separate worksheets .....(T1)*

*These learners need academic and emotional support.....(T1, T2, T3)*

- **School environment and surroundings**

In dealing with the context of the school at the beginning of the chapter I referred to the location of the school and what it currently looks like. The school is surrounded by high density housing in an impoverished community, where the unemployment count is high and gangsterism is a daily and real-life threat to teachers and learners.

*Children are exposed to gang violence and all kinds of abuse.....(GBP)*

*Children get physically and psychologically abused at home  
and in their communities and this affect their schoolwork.... (P, T1, T2, T3)*

*Some even fail or become school dropouts..... (GBP, P, T1)*

*... because most of them have it tough at home ..... (T3, T1)*

*Lots of our children come from broken homes and the parents  
are unemployed.....(GBP)*

*Poverty is another issue ..... (GBP, T1)*

- **The role of the teachers**

All the teachers felt strongly that as they have no formal training in supporting these learners they needed specific training:

*I have no formal training .....(T1)*

*No formal training to work with learner with intellectual disability ..... (T2)*

*No formal training as a special teacher but has degree in  
business psychology plus teachers diploma..... (T3)*

*Training is definitely necessary* ..... (T1)

*Training is necessary, as it will help to identify and support learner* ..... (T2)

*Training is very important; Learners have special needs and one need training in these fields*..... (T3)

Apart from the in service training on OBE and curriculum 2005 it seems that the common cry of teachers is for more specialist training with reference to identifying, referring and teaching the learner with an intellectual disability or special educational needs.

*Training on how to identify different learning problems and disabilities and strategies on how to deal with it* ..... (T3)

*Teachers need training to identify the problems and how to deal with it* ..... (T1)

They also felt they needed training on how to handle the violence in the community of which the majority of learners at the school are part.

*In service training with the department of education on how to deal with violence is also needed*.....(GBP)

*Training should be for both parent and teachers* ..... (T2)

There are advantages to being trained and these are encapsulated in the following sentences:

*Early intervention can happen if teachers are trained*..... (T1, T3)

*A disadvantage is disempowered if teachers are not trained, also inclusion can become problematic if teachers are not trained* ..... (T2, T1)

Inclusion can sometimes lead to exclusion:

*I can sometimes see the hurt in their faces when they are excluded and I don't take time to work with them on a one to one basis* ..... (T1)

**THEME: Support needs**

The extent, to which support is emphasised by various role players such as parents teachers and other educationists, is significant.

- **Parents**

The learners, teachers and parents deem the role of parents as vital:

*Parent could sometimes assist the teacher in the class or if the teacher could get a class assistant it would help ..... (T1)*

*Also ... devise a plan of action or strategy for this learner and involve the parents or family to assist at home ..... (T1)*

Parents try hard to fulfil their duty by paying school fees and attending the relevant meetings they are summoned to.

*Parents pay school fees ..... (L1)*

Parents can also positively reinforce learners;

*Parents buy stuff if I pass a test ..... (L1)*

*Parents play good role always ask what I did at school, they come to parent meetings, and they buy things that I need for school..... (L4)*

Some of the learners also felt that their parents do not play an active enough part in their education:

*Parents do not play a good role..... (L2)*

*Mother helps me with my work. .... (L3)*

*Mother knows when I misbehave in class ..... (L3)*

*Mother pays my school fees..... (L3)*

*Mother phones my teacher if homework is too difficult..... (L3)*

Sometimes the parents cannot really assist the learner, as they themselves do not understand work in the curriculum:

*Parents say the work is too difficult ... don't help ..... (L1)*

- **Teacher Support Team (TST)**

The teacher support Team at the school is effective and an invaluable resource at the school:

*Our school have a teacher support team..... (TST) (GBP)*

*The school has a teacher support team, that meet at least once a week, which is made up as follows: the principal, LSEN teacher, two additional teachers, parent, district psychologist any other person who can make a contribution to the discussion..... (FN)*

*TST consists of the principal, remedial teacher, parent..... (GB), two teachers and a departmental psychologist..... (T1)*

*Parents are also consulted by TST ..... (P)*

*Have a teacher support team at school.....(GBP)*

*Luckily we discuss these problems in our interdisciplinary committee.....(TST) (T1)*

The TST at school forms an integral part of the school programme:

*We have a TST classroom on the school..... (T1)*

*The TST is pro-inclusion..... (T1)*

*The TST basically look at physical, social, emotional and intellectual progress (and problems)..... (T1)*

*The TST also offers learning support ..... (T2)*

- **School Governing body (SGB)**

The school governing body meets at least once a month and also has representation on the TST. The SGB is also responsible for the drawing up and implementation of the school vision, which reads as follows:

*... to give all our learners an education of good/high quality (in beautiful/peaceful surroundings conducive to education) and to inculcate in them a love for learning and a sense to achieve by doing (things) for themselves..... (FN)*

The SGB is sometimes responsible for dealing with disciplinary issues:

*Also extreme problems are dealt with by the governing body of the school ..... (T1)*

Apart from serving on the school governing body, parents are also involved in fundraising and started their own support group at school for parents of learners with an intellectual disability.

*Parents also started own support group.....(P)*

The SGB is also pro inclusion and this is evident from statements made by the SGB chairperson who is also the father of a learner with an intellectual disability in an inclusive class.

*As I have said I don't regret leaving my daughter at a mainstream school .....(GBP)*

*... we send my daughter for tests with the school psychologist.....(GBP)*

*... she (my daughter) was recommended to a special school .....(GBP)*

*The majority of our learners belongs right here .....(GBP)*

- **District support (WCED)**

The school work closely with the District support Team of the Western Cape Education Department that is situated in the Bellville district, but more specifically in Parow and Kuils River.

*The school is situated in the Bellville district..... (FN)*

The Western Cape Department of Education provides the school with a psychologist who visits the school at least once a month (though this is not always the case) or whenever needed.

*We get support from a school psychologist (district) .....(P)*

*TST assisted by school psychologist from the education department .....(GBP)*

*The WCED school psychologist visit once a month and assist in testing learners.....(T2)*

The Western Cape Education Department also provides training in various areas of speciality where needed.

*Teachers also received in service training with the department of education on how to deal with violence .....(GBP)*

*Teachers have been attending workshops and training with the WCED on OBE, Curriculum 2005.....(P)*

*Teachers got in service training with the department of education on Outcomes based education, Curriculum 2005 .....(GBP)*

- **Principal**

The principal and staff, just as the SGB, are pro-inclusion:

*Personally I support inclusive education.....(P)*

*Inclusive education is just a new name for an ongoing practice in our schools .....(P)*

*... staff is in favour of inclusive education.....(P)*

The principal is very supportive of his teachers and does his utmost to see to it that teachers are properly trained and assist where he can:

*The principal is very supportive, the governing body also work with us to help the learner with special needs so does the education department by making the school psychologist available .....(T1)*

*Support at school is in the form of TST classroom, the principal who is in support of inclusion, governing body too, WCED provides a school psychologist (once a month or when available) .....(T1)*

**THEME: Classroom practices**

- **Classroom management**

Teacher strategies in handling class discipline and teaching styles are the essential ingredients of classroom management. It has at times become an endless battle for teachers to complete the syllabi and at the same time maintain discipline and order in the classroom. A common 'complaint' is that since the removal of corporal punishment from schools, the disciplinary problems in schools have escalated. Teachers have in the meantime devised their own ways of dealing with disciplinary problems in order to ensure that education takes place in their classroom:

*Dealing with destructive behaviour: put learner out of class at first (disciplinary measure) .....(T1)*

*Let learners understand God loves them and each one is NB in the eyes of God .....(T1)*

*Play song with positive words in class..... (T1)*

*Discuss song with class & encourage giving compliments and positive feedback..... (T1)*

*My counselling background helps a lot in understanding destructive behaviour of learners ..... (T1)*

*Still gives detention sometimes ..... (T1)*

*In the case of extreme problems the governing body deal with it..... (T3)*

*My method is Detention..... (T2)*

*Sometimes talking helps but in most cases punishment helps not corporal. It could be anything from letting them sit outside the class and in extreme cases expels them from school. I try not to shout at them, yet sometimes I do and it works for that moment. Sometimes I ask them to stand in the corner, but not for long. Sometimes they must do tasks like organise the books, sweep the class etc. Lately they get sent to a serene class atmosphere under parent supervision. The latter I arranged on my own in consultation with the principal and other role players. The parent spend time with such a learner to determine the cause of the destructive behaviour ..... (T3)*

- **Teaching strategies**

According to one informant, the following teaching strategies are common practice since the implementation of OBE in our schools:

*... group work, assignments and class work (in this case, worksheets are meant) ..... (T1)*

In the case of the learner with an intellectual disability who needs remedial education in one or more subjects, the learner with intellectual disability leaves the subject class for some period to get specially designed worksheets from TST teacher, which they must complete.

*This is fitted in on school timetable..... (T1)*

*The learners with special needs are send to the TST teacher..... (T2)*

*Teachers make use of group work ..... (T2)*

*They also most of the time make use of handouts (worksheets)..... (T2)*

In a number of the classroom observations the following came to light with regards to group work. Some teachers have four groups i.e. top, middle, bottom and bottom bottom.

All the groups are tasked with same activity and the teacher facilitate and mediate the process.

The teacher works with learners with intellectual disabilities afterwards if they are unable to master the task.

Meanwhile the rest of the class are busy with warm up work sheets. Some of the work get send home & parent help via a note in the homework-book (OBS)

The school also has a reading program, which is run by the TST (also referred to as ELSEN teacher).

*We have a reading program for the learners ..... (T3)*

Some teachers make a conscious effort to accommodate the learner with an intellectual disability in their teaching method:

*I usually work questions through orally with the learner with an intellectual disability..... (T1)*

*I write their responses on the chalkboard..... (T2)*

*They write down from the chalkboard..... (T3)*

*Sometimes I make copies of the answers they give me (OBS) ..... (T3)*

### **4.3 DISCUSSION**

Including a learner with an intellectual disability is a challenging process. If one considers schools in their historical context, then it becomes apparent that a lot more than teacher training needs to be done to make our schools sound institutions of learning. Some of the points that need to be discussed are teacher support needs, curriculum needs, organisational needs, safety needs and social inclusion. All of these can provide the teacher with strategies for the successful inclusion of a learner with an intellectual disability.

Maja (1998:6) investigated the importance of teacher support and development and argues as follows: "The availability of both pre-set and in-set initiatives in the vicinity of the school's environment can have an effect on learning". As discussed in Chapter 2 (2.3.3), successful inclusive educational practices will be determined by the effectiveness of the training. In the words of the teachers:

*Training is definitely necessary* ..... (T1)

*Training is necessary, as it will help to identify and support learners* ..... (T2)

*Training is very important; learners have special needs and one need training in these fields* ..... (T3)

In South Africa, the main providers of in-service teacher training are non-governmental organizations, government, and professional associations such as subject associations and teacher unions. Teachers' personal development separate from organized training can also have an effect on the learning environment. Teachers who are generally well read and who consult extensively on their subject specific matters stand a better chance of mastering their subjects, understanding knowledge production more broadly, and inculcating a variety of methods in their teaching. Another important element is a learning environment, which incorporates peer/teacher support, whether it be per school or region. From the researcher's own experience, it seems that teachers who share their problems and expertise are likely to position themselves advantageously within the broader education realm.

According to Smith (1980:89), "The needs of the disabled learner are so great that the demands on their teachers are very great, and 'teachers' need solid support from their supervisor, principal, parents, therapists and the school administrations in general.

The responsibility of meeting the needs of learners with intellectual disabilities falls upon the mainstream classroom teacher and teachers who have had no training in special needs often does not know how to proceed. They cannot be expected to perform this job proficiently without proper support and guidance.

A very important element to assist the teacher in effectively teaching the intellectually disabled learner are, the insights and recommendations of psychologists, speech and language therapist, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, can be of immediate value in schools in developing education plans for learners with disabilities. The advice and support of these professionals should be available to staff who are working with young learners with special needs. Also teachers, see Chapter 2 (2.3.2.2), with expertise in special needs education should be members of teams when the education of a learner with a disability is being discussed.

Having looked at training needs of teachers, that of learners and the possibility of collaboration with parents as well, an important element (i.e. curriculum needs) that has direct bearing on learning needs to be addressed. It is vitally important that the curriculum/programme, and the teaching approaches and methods be appropriate to the needs of the learners. Teachers will come to realize that learners with disabilities are a very varied group; their needs and abilities make them quite different. For some learners the acquisition of certain personal skills may assume greater significance at a particular stage. For a young learner, being able to manage her own needs in regard to the toilet, personal hygiene, feeding and behaviour is a great boost to feelings of competence and self esteem. The researcher, from personal experience and interaction with other educators from various institutions, has come to realize that all learners can benefit from a broad curriculum, but with learners with special needs, some areas of the curriculum may be more important at particular times and may need greater focus

Teachers and learners alike not only have a need to be organized, but also need to acquire the skill (to plan and organize) if they have not already learnt it. The inclusive classroom must have a firm infrastructure or organisation. Stormost-Spurgin (1997:27) state that the ability to be organized is particularly important in the era of inclusive education and in the light of the subsequent call for teachers to make accommodations for learners with disabilities and other special needs in the mainstream classroom. This is reiterated in the NCSNET/NCESS report as discussed in Chapter 2 (2.2.2.1)

As discussed in Chapter 2 (2.1), Mcleskey and Waldron (1996:150-156) view classrooms as a reflection of real life with its challenges and distractions. Learners with various forms of disabilities need to be immersed in this microcosm of "the real world," beginning in pre-school and continuing throughout their educational careers. They will be required to live and eventually work in the "normal" world, so their social and academic education ought to take place in classrooms that reflect that world.

Abery and Simunds (1997:224) state that "educating learners with disabilities within general education settings does not guarantee that they will establish and maintain desired social contacts or develop social support networks. Many such learners and youth remain socially isolated despite their presence in general education classrooms

The social isolation of people with an intellectual disability with a concomitant lack of skills in developing and maintaining supportive social networks is complex. Whereas past research has primarily focused on the personal characteristics of individuals with disabilities as the primary limiting factor related to social inclusion, recent work highlights the negative impact of societal attitudes and perceptions on persons with developmental disabilities. A rather consistent finding in peer acceptance research is that learners, youth and adults without disabilities have a more negative attitude towards individuals with disabilities than towards non-disabled peers. Supporting learners with disabilities to develop and maintain positive social relationships is an overriding concern of many parents of learners with disabilities (Abery & Fahnestok, 1994). At the University of Minnesota's Institute of Community Integration the *Yes I Can* Social Inclusion Program, was designed to provide opportunities for learners with and without disabilities to work collaboratively over the course of an academic year with the broad goal of enhancing the social inclusion of isolated learners with disabilities (Abery & Schoeller, 1991; Abery, Simonds & Schoeller, 1996).

#### **4.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The limitation of this study is that it cannot be generalised to each and every school setting in South Africa, as the demographics for each school are

different. Furthermore, not all of the teachers were willing to be interviewed, even though they assisted me with information I needed, like school records and statistics.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

This study set out to explore teachers' experiences of including learners with intellectual disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. It is clear that the international and national debates about inclusive education are complex and at times confusing, and that the implementation of inclusive education has important implications for teachers. An analysis of the experiences of teachers in this study indicates that the demands on teachers and learners alike are high and that teachers need support in the form of in-service training to gain the necessary strategies to include learners with intellectual disabilities successfully. An effective and collaborative support system can also provide teachers with the necessary support to experience inclusive education in a positive manner.

#### **4.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Development of in-service training programmes**

In South Africa, primary school teachers (more specifically at the school where the research was undertaken) indicated their concerns about a perceived lack of relevant pre-service training. These teachers believe that they are insufficiently trained to cope with the special needs of a learner with a (intellectual) disability if placed in their classroom. Another concern is class size and the unavailability of resources.

Effective training programmes should be developed and should focus on teaching strategies. Forlin and Engelbrecht (1997:1) make it clear that there is a need for effective teacher training if inclusive education is to be successfully implemented. With regard to teacher education and training the Draft Bill WCED highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining *teachers' centres* for the enrichment of educators' academic and professional

knowledge and teaching skills; (<http://www.v.wcape.school.za/wced/admin/drftbll.htm>).

- **Classroom management strategies**

Classroom management strategies are vital as disciplinary problems have an adverse affect on the proper education of learners in the mainstream class with an intellectual disability. The classroom climate stems from management strategies and concerns the overall atmosphere in the classroom – whether it is friendly or unfriendly, pleasant or unpleasant and so on. According to Friend and Bursuck (1999:119), "Climate is influenced by the attitudes of the teacher and learner toward individual differences: Is the classroom characterized by a cooperative or competitive atmosphere? Is the classroom a safe place for all learners to take risks? Are skills for interacting positively with learners and teachers actively supported in the classroom?" Rules help create a sense of order and expectations for a classroom, and they form a significant first step in setting up a learning environment based on preventive classroom management. Experience shows that teachers in many schools are looking for a single strategy or a quick fix solution that will make including the learner with an intellectual disability in their classroom clear and simple. Unfortunately such a strategy does not exist.

- **Collaboration skills**

Teachers, parents, and other role players need to work together in the best interest of the intellectually disabled learner. Collaboration is how people work together, not what they do. It is defined in Friend and Bursuck (1999:71), as style professionals choose to use in order to accomplish a goal they share. Community sources need to be accessed in order to develop and support education provision through a structured community approach. Collaboration of all the role players is thus of cardinal importance. Muthukrishna (2001:47), speaks about a community–based approach to support.

- **Understanding of various barriers to learning and development**

This need stood out at the school and is vital for all teachers in order to best address a 'problem' is to know what it is you are working with. Many teachers lack the professional preparation to know how to successfully include learners

with disabilities simply because they do not have an understanding of the various barriers to learning and development.

Teachers may have good intentions, yet they often possess limited knowledge about how to adapt the curriculum (Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2002:2).

Two principles usually guide instruction of a learner with a mild intellectual disability. First is the principle of a functional curriculum.

In a functional curriculum, the goals for learners, whether they attend general education classroom or receive support elsewhere, are based on real life skills they need to succeed. The second principle is that education should be community based; that is, it should relate what is learned in schools to what occurs in the community. Many learners, both those with and without disabilities, benefit from applying skills learned in school to real life settings and activities. For some systematic instruction in the community is necessary to teach skills needed to live, work, recreate and continue to learn there.

Thus it can be concluded that many of the adaptations and general school conditions needed by learners with intellectual disabilities are the same ones that make learning more successful for all learners.

- **Support strategies**

Teachers need to be aware and or be made aware of the various support strategies to empower themselves and to better support learners.

Smith, S.L (1980:111-12) is of the opinion that teachers need solid training in theory, a vast exposure to methods and techniques, and then highly supervised practicum's under master teachers to put the theories to practice and to develop their own unique styles and teaching approaches. They need experience in creating their own teaching materials, worksheets, and games to be able to meet the specific learning needs of each learner. At the same time they need exposure to all the commercial materials available so they can select appropriately.

The Education Ministry believes that the only way to reduce barriers to learning within all education and training lies in a strengthened education

support service. Educational support services should have as its centre, new district based support teams whose function is to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. Through supporting teaching, learning and management, they will build the capacity at schools (White Paper 6, 2001:28-29).

Teachers need support to take on the broader roles and responsibilities required for effectively addressing the needs of all learners.

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# **ADDENDUM B**

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **QUESTIONS TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**

- 1.1 I.Q. Tell me, for how long have you been principal of this school?
- 1.2 I.Q. What in your view is the general feeling of the school about inclusive education?
- 1.3 I.Q. What resources do you have at school to assist the learner with an intellectual disability?
- 1.4 I.Q. How do you feel over the contention that learners with special needs must go to a special school?
- 1.5 I.Q. What are the involvement of parents (of learners with an intellectual disability) at the school with regards to learners with an intellectual disability?
- 1.6 I.Q. Explain the level of involvement of the following role players with reference to the learner with an intellectual disability: teachers, learners, department of education, school governing body, others.
- 1.7 I.Q. Anything else that you would like to mention?

# **ADDENDUM C**

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **QUESTIONS TO THE PARENT (GOVERNING BODY CHAIRPERSON)**

This interview was conducted in English and Afrikaans as this was how the respondent felt comfortable in speaking.

- 2.1 I.Q. When did you first discover that your child was intellectually disabled?
- 2.2 I.Q. How did you reach the decision not to put your child in a special school?
- 2.3 I.Q. How do you feel about learners without an intellectual disability in the same class as your child?
- 2.4 I.Q. What role do you and your family play to assist your child at home/school?
- 2.5 I.Q. There are people who feel very strongly that the intellectually disabled learner belongs in a special school or special class. What would you say to them?
- 2.6 I.Q. How can 'your school' help the learner with an intellectual disability?
- 2.7 I.Q. Anything else that you would like to mention?

# **ADDENDUM D**

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **QUESTIONS TO THE LEARNERS**

- 3.1 How long have you been at this school?
- 3.2 What role does your parents play in your education?
- 3.3 How do you get along with the other children (learners) in your class?
- 3.4 What role do you think you can play to help other learners in your class?
- 3.5 Do you think the teachers are helping you?  
Please elaborate.
- 3.6 What kind of help with your schoolwork do you get at home?
- 3.7 What would you like to become one day?
- 3.8 Anything else that you would like to mention?

# ADDENDUM E

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO 3 TEACHERS

Example of questions	Probes
For how long have you been working with the learner with an intellectual disability in the inclusive classroom?	
What training do you have in order to be able to work with learners with an intellectual disability?	If trained: Where, When, What, How? If not trained: Is training necessary? Elaborate.
Could you perhaps tell me more about what happened in the "aanpassingsklasse?"	
What is happening in your class now?	
What kind of support do you have at the moment?	School, principal, TST, parents, district, etc.
In your view, how can peers, parents and teachers play a positive role in the lives of the learner with an intellectual disability?	
How do you deal with the destructive behaviour of learners in your class?	
Are there any suggestions you would like to mention that could help with the effective inclusion of the learner with an intellectual disability? Are there any specific teaching strategies that you would recommend as a benefit to the learner with an intellectual disability in the inclusive classroom?	Explain, give examples.
What kind of support do you feel is necessary in order for you to be more effective in helping all learners, but specifically the learner with an intellectual disability in the classroom?	
Anything else that you would like to mention?	

**TABLE 2:  
INTERVIEW QUESTION FORMULATION**

<b>Type of question</b>	<b>Example</b>
<p><b>Hypothetical question:</b> asks what the respondent might do or what it might be like in a particular situation; usually begins with “What if” or “Suppose”</p>	<p>Suppose it was my first day of teaching at your school. What would it be like to work with such a diverse group of learners?</p>
<p><b>Devil’s Advocate question:</b> challenges the respondent to consider an opposing view</p>	<p>Some people might say that you must be gifted to work with the intellectually disabled learner in an inclusive setting. What would you say to them?</p>
<p><b>Ideal Position question:</b> ask the respondent to describe an ideal position</p>	<p>What do you think would be the ideal situation for teachers working with the intellectually disabled learner in mainstream education?</p>
<p><b>Interpretive question:</b> advances tentative interpretation of what the respondent has been saying and ask for a reaction</p>	<p>Would you say that further training pre-service and in-service is necessary? Explain your answer.</p>

Source Merriam (1998:77) and adapted