

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY**

BY

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions and understandings of diversity and inclusive education held by teachers at one South African school. Since 1994, the South African education system has undergone many policy changes. An inclusive education system is consistent with the principles underlying the current democratic dispensation in South Africa. In this research, the researcher aimed to identify and describe the perceptions and understandings of the teachers at the school hold regarding diversity and inclusive education. Elements of school culture, such as values, practices and procedures were looked at in detail.

The paradigm worked from in this research is the interpretive constructivist paradigm. The strategy was inductive, the outcomes descriptive and the meaning mediated through the researcher as instrument. This paradigm accounts for multiple realities and highlights the importance of context. A qualitative descriptive case study was done with the aim to describe the phenomena accurately. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model provided a theoretical framework for this study. This theoretical standpoint has great relevance for emphasising the interaction between the development of an individual and the systems within an individual's social context. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted and individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers who participated in the study. Interpretive analysis was done on the transcriptions of the interviews by making use of the constant comparative method of analysis. Coding and inducing of categories and themes helped the researcher engage with and make sense of the data that was generated.

The key findings of this study showed that the teachers working at School A have a good understanding and sense of what diversity and inclusive education entails. Their attitudes are generally positive and they embrace diversity and see inclusive education as having many advantages. The teachers feel well-supported in their school environment and display a sense of belonging among the staff. The shared value system of the school is one of acceptance, respect and embracing difference and diversity. There is a culture in the school that encourages the uniqueness of each learner and each child is seen as having potential and subsequently supported in their quest to reach their own unique potential. There are also elements within the school's functioning that require attention, for example, there are two classes of 'special education' learners that are not entirely included in the regular classes. But, even though there are still elements that need to be addressed and refined within School A – this school is working hard to approach diversity in such a way that creates an environment in which inclusive ideals and practices can continue to grow and develop.

Key concepts: diversity, inclusive education, teachers' perceptions, teachers' attitudes, values, school culture.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om ondersoek in te stel na die wyses waarop onderwysers by een bepaalde Suid-Afrikaanse skool diversiteit benader en dit hanteer. Sedert 1994 het die Suid-Afrikaanse onderwysstelsel etlike beleidsveranderinge ondergaan. 'n Inklusiewe onderwysstelsel is in pas met die onderliggende beginsels van die huidige demokratiese bedeling in Suid-Afrika. In hierdie ondersoek het die navorser daarna gestreef om vas te stel watter persepsies en begrip van diversiteit en inklusiewe onderwys by die onderwysers van 'n betrokke skool bestaan. Elemente van die skoolkultuur, soos waardes, praktyke en prosedures, is in besonderhede bestudeer.

Daar is met hierdie navorsing vanuit 'n interpretatiewe paradigma vertrek. Die strategie was induktief, die uitkomsteskriptief, en betekenis is gemedieer deur die navorser as instrument. Hierdie paradigma erken meervoudige werklikhede en belig die belangrikheid van die konteks. 'n Kwalitatiewe beskrywende gevallestudie is onderneem, met die doel om die verskynsels akkuraat te beskryf. Bronfenbrenner se bio-ekologiese model het 'n teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie verskaf. Hierdie teoretiese standpunt is besonder relevant vir die beklemtoning van interaksie tussen die individu se ontwikkeling en die stelsels binne 'n individu se sosiale konteks. Die deelnemers is doelbewus gekies en individuele, semigestruktureerde onderhoude is gevoer met onderwysers wat aan die studie deelgeneem het. Die konstante vergelykende metode van analise is gebruik om die data te analiseer. Die kodering en indusering van kategorieë en temas het die navorser gehelp om die data wat gegenereer is, te hanteer en sinvol te interpreteer.

Die sleutelbevindinge van hierdie studie het getoon dat die onderwysers wat aan Skool A verbonde is 'n goeie begrip en aanvoeling het vir wat diversiteit en inklusiewe onderrig behels. Hulle instelling is oor die algemeen positief; hulle verwelkom diversiteit en beskou inklusiewe onderrig as 'n stelsel wat vele voordele bied. Die onderwysers voel dat hul skoolomgewing hulle goed ondersteun en dit blyk dat die personeel 'n onderlinge samehorigheid ervaar. Die gemeenskaplike waardestelsel van die skool is dié van aanvaarding, respek en die viering van verskille en diversiteit. Daar heers 'n skoolkultuur wat die uniekheid van elke leerder aanmoedig; elke kind word gesien as iemand met potensiaal en elkeen word gevolglik ondersteun in 'n poging om hul eie, unieke potensiaal te verwesenlik. Daar is egter ook elemente binne die skool se funksionering wat aandag verg, byvoorbeeld die twee klasse vir 'spesiale-onderrig'-leerders wat nie ten volle in die gewone klasse opgeneem word nie. Maar, hoewel daar in Skool A steeds aspekte is wat aangespreek en verfyn moet word, werk hierdie skool hard om diversiteit op so 'n wyse te benader dat dit 'n omgewing skep waarin inklusiewe ideale en praktyke voortaan kan groei en ontwikkel.

Kernbegrippe: diversiteit, inklusiewe onderrig, persepsies by onderwysers, houdings van onderwysers, waardes, skoolkultuur.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	i
DECLARATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
OPSOMMING.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
1. CONTEXTUALISATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALISATION AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY.....	1
1.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH.....	5
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	6
1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	10
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
2.1.1 Definition of concepts.....	10
2.1.1.1 Inclusive education.....	10
2.1.1.2 Diversity.....	11
2.1.1.3 School culture.....	12
2.1.1.4 Attitude.....	12
2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	13
2.2.1 Paradigm shift.....	13
2.2.2 Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model as a framework for this research.....	14
2.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.....	19
2.3.1 Historical development of inclusive education.....	19
2.3.1.1 Inclusion internationally.....	19
2.3.1.2 Inclusion in South Africa.....	23
2.4 LITERATURE: PERCEIVING AND UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.....	27
2.5 SUMMARY.....	33

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	35
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	35
3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM.....	35
3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM.....	36
3.4 METHODOLOGY.....	38
3.5 RESEARCH METHODS.....	40
3.5.1 Sampling.....	40
3.5.2 Data generation.....	42
3.5.2.1 Semi-structured interviews.....	42
3.5.2.2 Documents.....	46
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS.....	47
3.6.1 Familiarisation and immersion.....	48
3.6.2 Coding into themes.....	49
3.6.3 Inducing themes.....	49
3.6.4 Elaboration.....	50
3.6.5 Interpretation and checking.....	50
3.7 QUALITY ASSURANCE: VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY.....	50
3.7.1 Triangulation.....	52
3.7.2 Data verification: member checks.....	52
3.7.3 Peer review.....	53
3.7.4 Adequate engagement in data collection.....	53
3.7.5 Audit trail.....	53
3.7.6 Rich, thick descriptions.....	53
3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	54
3.9 THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE.....	58
3.10 SUMMARY.....	59
4. FINDINGS.....	60
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	60
4.1.1 Description of the physical setting.....	61
4.1.2 Description of participants.....	66
4.2 EXPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	67
4.2.1 Introduction of themes.....	67

4.2.2 Theme 1: Diversity.....	71
4.2.3 Theme 2: Inclusive education.....	75
4.2.4 Theme 3: School’s responses to diversity.....	85
4.2.5 Theme 4: Elements of school culture.....	91
4.3 SUMMARY.....	96
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	97
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	97
5.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	97
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	104
5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	105
5.5 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY.....	107
5.6 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES.....	108
5.7 CONCLUSION.....	109
REFERENCES.....	110

ADDENDA

ADDENDUM A: Informed consent form.....	125
ADDENDUM B: Ethical clearance from University.....	130
ADDENDUM C: Interview schedule.....	132
ADDENDUM D: Excerpt from a transcript.....	135
ADDENDUM E: Mission Statement.....	138
ADDENDUM F: Anti-bias Policy.....	140
ADDENDUM G: Inclusion Policy.....	145
ADDENDUM H: Learner Support Policy.....	150
ADDENDUM I: Example of coding process – excerpt of raw data.....	158

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Illustration of themes.....	69
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Description of participants.....	42
Table 4.1: Illustration of themes and sub-themes.....	70

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUALISATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALISATION AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Since 1994, the South African education system has undergone far-reaching policy changes. These changes are reflective of the government's desire to transform and restructure a divided, fragmented and discriminatory education system into a more democratic, open and inclusive system (Welton, 2001). In South Africa, the inclusive education system is consistent with the principles underlying the new democratic dispensation (Sayed, 2001). The South African Constitution and Bill of Human Rights adhere to the notion of a rights culture, a culture that embraces the democratic values of equality, liberty and human rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). It also implies an education system that is capable of meeting the diverse needs of every learner and preventing exclusion of learners (Republic of South Africa, 1996a).

According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), no learner may be denied access to education on any grounds, including disability, language, race or learning difficulty. In June 2001, as a part of this process of transformation to a more democratic and inclusive education system in South Africa, the South African Ministry of Education released Education White paper 6: Special Needs Education, *'Building an Inclusive Education and Training System'* (Department of Education, 2001). White Paper 6 outlines what an inclusive education and training system is and how it should be established in South Africa (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006). This study looked specifically at one South

African school and focussed on ways in which it is responding to diversity and moving towards inclusive practices.

“The socio-political conditions in South Africa were both shaped and devastated by apartheid. The entrenchment of apartheid policies resulted in social inequalities and poverty along racial lines” (Engelbrecht et al., 2006, p. 121). Apartheid education policies aimed to perpetuate white supremacy by giving white children a better quality of education than other races. Sayed (2001) notes that this resulted in a system that entrenched gross educational inequities and disparities between different racial groups. In White Paper 6 it is mentioned that due to the inequalities perpetuated in the past – there are still some ‘hurdles’ that need to be overcome before the provision of quality education for all learners can be a reality (Department of Education, 2001). Barriers to learning and problems with participation in schools in South Africa often arise from a variety of factors, including socio-economic deprivation, an inflexible curriculum, negative attitudes to and stereotyping of difference, inaccessible and unsafe built environments, inappropriate language of learning and teaching, inappropriate and inadequate support services, the non-recognition and non-involvement of parents, inadequate policies and legislation and inadequately and inappropriately trained leaders and teachers in education (Department of Education, 2001). The context in South Africa is therefore complex and the challenges are interactive and need to be addressed on various levels.

Sands, Kozleski and French (2000) note that achieving an inclusive school community is dependent on establishing an inclusive school climate and culture and the involvement and collaboration of all role players within the school community is

vital. This implies a process of reculturing learning and teaching whereby “teachers and communities have to shift from a set of embedded assumptions, values, customs and practices that encourages maintenance of the status quo to one that promotes reform, including building a commitment to change, planning for change and providing support that promotes and maintains change” (Engelbrecht et al., 2006, p. 122).

In South African schools, this requires a fundamental change in the roles and responsibilities of teachers, administrators and school management as well as a change in the organisational structures of school (Engelbrecht et al., 2006). This implies that our schools have to change in all spheres of their functioning; all role players should be encouraged to share and build on their existing knowledge in order to increase learning and participation in all aspects of their school. When looking at South African schools and where they are in this process of transformation one needs to pay special attention to the culture of the school. School cultures have the potential to support or undermine development in learning or teaching and it is through inclusive school cultures that changes in school policies and practices can be sustained and passed on to new learners and teachers (Engelbrecht et al., 2006).

This research topic was derived out of a great deal of preliminary reading in the areas of inclusion and education. Research has shown that inclusive education can only become a reality when schools adjust their culture and ethos (McLeskey & Waldron, 2007). A successful inclusive education system must start with the acknowledgement of the diversity of learning needs among all children (Ellins & Porter, 2005). “All young people should be valued as individuals so that the

differences between them can be acknowledged without prejudice” (Wedell, 2008, p. 127). The ultimate goal of inclusion is to make an increasingly wider range of differences ordinary in a general education classroom (McLeskey & Waldron, 2007). The ideal outcome is that “inclusive classrooms create students who are comfortable with differences, skilled at confronting challenging issues, and aware of their interconnectedness” (Sapon-Shevin, 2008, p. 49).

According to Carrington and Robinson (2004) the move towards more inclusive schooling requires schools to address professional development on two levels: enhancement of teacher skills and knowledge to better address the learning needs of all learners and reculturing of the school to reflect inclusive beliefs and values. Collaboration among general and special education teachers, as well as support from families, community members and administrators is essential for schools to become more inclusive (Fisher, 2005; Voltz, Brazil & Ford, 2001). Much research has pointed to the fact that teacher beliefs and values are affecting the development of inclusive education, both positively and negatively (Carrington, 1999). Carrington and Robinson (2004) state quite poignantly “it is the thoughts, words, deeds and hearts of members of the school community that create or stifle change. It has been widely recognised that effective change occurs when it happens from within and that an organisations culture shapes the energy of the workplace to respond to change and reach goals” (p. 142). The implication of such a change in culture would be that in every interaction with learners, adults would set a positive tone; model acceptance and celebrate diversity and help learners feel welcome, safe and a sense of belonging.

This study is extremely relevant given the current difficulties some South African schools seem to be having with regard to moving towards inclusive policies and practices. One must not be mistaken to think that the school focussed on in this study is an example of a perfect “inclusive school”, yet there may be elements of this school’s functioning that may put it further along the path of becoming inclusive in comparison to other schools. Even though every context is different, it may prove to be useful to some South African schools to read about the current practices and culture of this school – it could potentially provide insights, talking points and inspiration for schools that seem to be struggling with their own approaches to diversity. Within both education and inclusion there is by no means a ‘one size fits all’ approach because contexts differ – yet, focussing specifically on one school’s approaches to diversity, may be both interesting and relevant for other schools and society in general.

Another motivating factor for doing this study is that it is also important to expose such a school to the wider educational community as often it is easy to become overwhelmed with negativity about the situation in some schools in South Africa – this study is hopefully a way of showing that there may be schools that, despite difficulties, are rising above and creating environments that genuinely embrace diversity and aim to create appropriate suitable learning experiences for all learners.

1.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

When reading through some of the multitude of texts in the inclusive education field – it is clear that much literature describing management and policies around inclusive schools exists (Carrington & Robson, 2004; Fisher, 2005). One also finds a

large quantity of texts focussing on microsystems, like specific classrooms within inclusive education systems (McLeskey & Waldron, 2007). The purpose of this study was to bring a different perspective – one where one specific school is looked at from both a ‘management and policies’ perspective and a ‘micro, classroom’ perspective. To serve as a backdrop, the school in this study was explored in terms of its reported ethos and leadership principles and also on what effects such an ethos or culture has on teachers and their perceptions. The aim was to analyse and describe how teachers understand and perceive diversity and inclusive education in this primary school. It was also relevant to look at the schools’ values, procedures and views, because these along with staff members’ personal views and understandings, work together to create the overall system of the school. Because of the limited scope of this study, I provide a ‘snap shot’ of the said unit of analysis.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question of this study was to investigate the ways in which the teachers working in this school perceive and understand diversity and inclusive education. The specific research questions that guided the research were: What are the teachers’ perceptions and understandings around diversity and inclusive education in this school? And, according to them, what elements of the school’s culture create an environment where inclusive ideals can flourish? As part of the second question, I hoped to find out (according to participants) what the school’s values, procedures and views are that allow it to function as it does? A goal of this study was to provide insight for other South African schools – looking at the ways in which one school experiences and approaches diversity, may be useful or interesting to other schools in similar contexts.

The focus will briefly shift to a description of the design and structure of this study and the methodology that was followed in addressing the above research questions.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology of this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. This section merely provides a summarised introduction to contextualise the study at this point. The paradigm worked from in this research is the interpretive constructivist paradigm – this paradigm asserts that participants “make meaning” of a phenomenon or situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The strategy is inductive, the outcomes descriptive and the meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument (Merriam, 2002). A descriptive, qualitative case study was done. Descriptive studies aim to describe phenomena accurately rather than trying to speculate insights or prove hypotheses. A case study involves “a detailed description of a setting and its participants, accompanied by an analysis of the data for themes, patterns and issues” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 11). In this research the “what” being studied is a ‘bounded system’ – “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (Merriam, 2002, p. 178). The ‘case’ in this research is the teachers at the primary school. All the elements (such as values, practices, procedures, understandings and perceptions) that each teacher consists of are included in this ‘bounded system’ or case. People are presented on their own terms; therefore the reader is able to determine real, lived experiences.

Semi-structured interviewing was chosen for this study as it allowed for much rich data to be collected. Individual interviews also provided an environment whereby

participants could talk openly about their personal understandings and experiences of diversity.

The sampling for this study was purposive. The sample consisted of teachers and management personnel who agreed to take part in the study. The nature of the study and reasons for the research was explained to all participants, after this, teachers who were interested in taking part contacted me directly. Informed consent was gained from all participants. (See Addendum A). Through the process, I hoped to get a realistic glimpse into the life of this South African school in the era of inclusive education, to gain a real 'slice of life'.

Once interviews were completed, transcriptions were done and the process of analysis began. Qualitative data analysis is the process I used to make sense of and explain the data that was generated during the research process. According to Geertz (cited in Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 321), the purpose of interpretive analysis is to provide a "thick description", which refers to a thorough description of the "characteristic process, transaction and context that constitutes the phenomenon" being studied and described in rich language that is familiar and appropriate to the phenomenon.

Terre Blanche et al. (2006) state that a qualitative research perspective implies making the "strange familiar and the familiar strange" (p. 321). Interpretive analysis is a back and forth movement between what one knows and what one wishes to know, "description and interpretation, foreground and background, part and whole, to achieve a compelling account of the phenomenon being studied" (Terre Blanche et

al., 2006, p. 321). I aimed to stay close enough to the context so that people familiar to the context can recognise it as true, but far enough to see the phenomenon in a new perspective (Merriam, 2002; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The purpose of this analysis is to organise and simplify the complexity of the data into meaningful and manageable themes or categories (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

In qualitative research, it is vital that a researcher can show her audience the procedures used to ensure the methods used were reliable and the conclusions valid. Validity is “interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers” (Silverman, 2000, p. 175). On the other hand, “reliability can be understood as the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (Hammersley, as cited in Silverman, 2000, p. 175). Both of these concepts and the strategies used to ensure validity and reliability in this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

At this point, it is also important to note that I, as the researcher, am a product of my society just as much as the participants taking part in the research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 141). As a researcher, my background, feelings and beliefs are part of the process of knowledge construction. Therefore, throughout this research, I made it a priority to constantly be aware of my own thoughts, feelings, biases and assumptions when dealing with participants, interview transcripts or documents.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this study was to describe the perceptions and understandings held by teachers in one South African school regarding diversity and inclusive education. In order to do this, I will first define the key concepts and then look closely at the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Because inclusive education is a core tenet of this research, it will be focussed on in some detail. It is relevant to gain an understanding of the development of inclusive education, both internationally and nationally, as it provides context for understanding the school and its practices more clearly. Once a description of inclusive education has been given, some current literature in the area of diversity and inclusive education and the ways in which they are affecting schools today will be described.

2.1.1 Definition of concepts

For the purposes of this study, the following four concepts will briefly be explained to give the reader a sense of context and understanding when reading this research: inclusive education, diversity, school culture and attitude.

2.1.1.1 Inclusive education

There are many definitions for inclusive education because internationally it is described differently in different educational and social contexts. However, in essence, inclusive education refers to the practice and process of involving and meeting the diverse needs of all learners in supportive schools and classrooms. "It

therefore reflects a deep commitment to create an education system that values and respects diversity and supports all learners, educators and school communities to maximise participation and development of their full potential” (Swart, 2004, p. 231). In the process of celebrating and accommodating diversity, the education system transforms by developing ways of making the curriculum accessible to all learners. Inclusive education therefore means ‘change’ – such as restructuring and reculturing education systems. It also refers to new responsibilities for all school community members with the aim of being able to meet the needs of every learner. “This involves new and continuous learning for everyone. The concept of inclusion in school communities is not static. To meet the needs of an increasingly diverse learner population effectively, inclusive education must be approached as an ongoing and evolutionary process” (Swart & Pettipher, 2006, p. 107). The field of inclusion is often characterised as the field within which resolutions of the dilemma of difference emerge (Dyson & Howes, 2009).

2.1.1.2 Diversity

“The term ‘diversity’ allows for the reconceptualisation of ‘difference’, and for the production of non-hierarchical plural identities. The school that ‘values diversity’ does not separate or exclude anyone, but instead celebrates the plurality of its community, to the benefit and inclusion of all” (Benjamin, 2002, p. 309). This notion of ‘valuing diversity’ presents a departure from the categorical thinking that has previously resulted in the separation of particular groups. It suggests that everyone is different, everyone is unique and everyone is valuable for who they are (Benjamin, 2002). In schools that value diversity – all young people are valued as individuals so that the differences between them can be acknowledged without prejudice (Wedell, 2008).

Although the understanding of this concept is complex and requires more of an in-depth description, the above will suffice for the purposes of this study. Such schools have unique school cultures – this concept will briefly be described as it is used in the context of this study.

2.1.1.3 School culture

School cultures are unique to every individual school – it can be defined as “moving mosaics of beliefs, values, understandings, attitudes, norms, symbols, rituals and ceremonies, preferred behaviours, styles and stances and power structures” (Swart & Pettipher, 2007, p. 107). A school’s culture is what either encourages inclusive ideals or not. A school’s culture and ethos refers to its ‘way of being’ and functioning – it is only when as part of a school’s culture diversity is valued, can it truly create a sense of belonging for all in the school community.

2.1.1.4 Attitude

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an attitude is a ‘way of regarding; a considered and permanent disposition or reaction (Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1992). In this research study, the word ‘attitude’ will be used when describing what participants’ opinions are toward, how they react to or experience elements pertaining to diversity or inclusive education. Reber (1995) describes an attitude as a response tendency, some internal affective orientation that would explain the actions of a person. This meaning is an extension of the idea of intention and contemporary usage generally entails several components namely: “cognitive (consciously held belief or opinion); affective (emotional tone or feeling); evaluative (positive or negative); and conative (disposition for action)” (Reber, 1995, p. 67).

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is relevant and important to be aware of the paradigm that informed this research. A paradigm is “a framework for identifying, explaining and solving problems. In a larger sense, the term has come to signify an all-encompassing framework for understanding and interpreting the world and all one’s experiences” (Naicker, 1999, p. 82). A paradigm shift, therefore, is a radical change in the way one views the world. The shift to inclusive ideas is not separate from the shift in paradigms that occurred late in the twentieth century. Within education, this shift is seen as a move from a medical deficit model to a social systems change approach (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

2.2.1 Paradigm shift

The ‘medical model’ (which was popular from the early 1900’s) is a model of diagnosis and treatment. “...It is highly focussed on pathology, sickness, the nature and aetiology of the presenting problem, and dealing with the specific pathology in a centred way” (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p. 5). When applying this model to education, learners with any type of difference or disability are singled out and the cause or origin of the difference is believed to be located within the child. Subscribing to this model leads to a belief system that regards some learners as, at best, disadvantaged and in need of individual “fixing” and, at worst, as fundamentally deficient and therefore beyond support (Engelbrecht, 2004). There is much criticism of the medical model and many view it as problematic in understanding education today. Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) point out that although assessing, diagnosing and treating pathologies of learners are relevant for much clinical work, it is too restrictive

in scope for educational support services. They continue to point out that neither education support professionals, nor learners, function in isolation. We are all influenced by the multiple systems that surround us and the many systems of which we are a part. “This simple observation has the most profound implications... we cannot serve children effectively by decontextualising their problems as internal pathologies, as the medical model would have us do. We must understand how ‘dysfunction’ relates to the larger systems that encompass our clients, and find ways to intervene effectively with these systems” (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000, p. 489).

One can clearly see that a paradigmatic shift was required, a move away from medical understandings to a more holistic view of the child. This change came in the form of theories, such as Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model for human development (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). This model is a significant theory that can be used as a framework to analyse the different systems in inclusive education and this research. One can briefly look at what the theory entails and how it is relevant for understanding inclusion and the theoretical context of this research.

2.2.2 Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model as a framework for this research

In the field of inclusive education, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (and more recently, the revised bioecological model) has great relevance for emphasising the importance of the interaction between the development of an individual and the systems within the individual’s social context (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). This perspective integrates both ecological and systems theories. “Ecological theory is based in the interdependence between different organisms and their physical environment. These relationships ... are seen holistically. Every part is as important

as another in sustaining the cycles of birth and death ... which together ensure the survival of the whole system” (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006, p. 36). Systems theory sees different levels and groups of people as interacting systems – where functioning of the ‘whole’ is dependent on the interaction between all parts (Donald et al., 2006). Bronfenbrenner has had significant influence on the shaping and creating of our understanding of how different levels of systems, in the social context, interact in the process of child development. Since Bronfenbrenner’s model of the 1970’s, four interacting dimensions are used to understand the process of human development.

The first of these is what is referred to as the microsystem – this system refers to a pattern of roles, activities and interpersonal relations experienced between individuals and the systems in which they are active participants (such as the family, school or peer group) (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). This is the immediate environment experienced by the child where proximal interactions occur. This type of interaction refers to face-to-face, usually continuous social interactions.

A second level or system is what Bronfenbrenner refers to as the mesosystem. “The mesosystem is a set of microsystems that continuously interact with one another. So, what happens in the family or peer group can influence how children respond at school and vice versa” (Donald et al., 2006, p. 42). When looking at how this theory informs inclusion, it can be deduced that implementing inclusive education is not possible without paying attention to relationships developing between the different microsystems. This needs to be done in order to give educators an idea of the

effects of contextual factors on the child's functioning and it is also relevant to understand the potential for collaborative relationships.

The exosystem is seen as including other systems in which a child is not directly involved, but which possibly influence the people he or she has proximal relationships with in the microsystems (Donald et al., 2006). Examples could include the education system (e.g.: curriculum, inclusive policies), a parent's place of work, the media or a sibling's peer group.

A fourth system Bronfenbrenner notes is the macrosystem. It involves dominant social, cultural and economic structures, as well as beliefs, values and practices that influence all systems. This system includes ideologies and discourses inherent in the systems of a specific society (Donald et al., 2006).

Encompassing these four systems is what Bronfenbrenner refers to as the chronosystem. Swart and Pettipher (2005) describe this system as 'developmental time-frames' that cross through and affect the interactions between the systems and, in turn, their influences on individual development. Within inclusion one should be aware of the potential barriers, assets and support factors (both internal and external) that exist for children, teachers and all the other systems that exist in and around a school. It is in the interaction between any of the above levels that barriers may occur or supports exist.

Four further key components of this theory can be looked at to further understand the relevance of this framework. Firstly, an important component of this theory is that

children are also active participants of their own development and the environment is therefore not simply impacting on the child. A child's perceptions and views of their context are central to understanding how they interact with their environments (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

Secondly, Bronfenbrenner refers to the fact that in adapting to internal and external change, systems attempt to maintain a 'dynamic balance' (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Within a system there are always experiences that cause a sense of disequilibrium, yet according to this framework, a system will always work towards achieving that sense of balance that is valued.

A third key component is that which is referred to as 'circular causality'. This idea is quite opposite to that of linear cause and effect commonly associated with the medical model. Circular causality refers to the fact that "change (or activity) in any part of a system or individual affects other systems and individuals and at a later time could be seen as a cause for change" (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p. 12). This is an important concept to understand, especially when one is trying to understand an education system. It is also relevant to keep this idea in mind when looking at the school at the centre of this study – attitudes, actions, changes and occurrences happening in one area of the school's functioning has an effect on the functioning and experience of other parts of the school system.

A final concept that is relevant is the notion that the whole system is greater than the sum of its parts. To understand the whole, the relationships between the different parts of the system need to be looked at. In terms of education, a school that

encourages reciprocal relationships within the school environment is more effective than one that does not interact with different systems (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). All of these concepts that, although briefly, have been discussed are central to understanding the bioecological perspective. Having a clearer conception of this perspective should give one insight into understanding the framework from which this research was done.

This framework is extremely relevant in this study because it is both useful and important to look at the 'case' (the teachers) as a set of interrelated and interconnected systems (Donald et al., 2006). All schools are made up of many levels or layers of functioning (learners, parents, teachers, school management, curriculum, other schools in the area, policy, the wider community, national education issues, etc.). Whether directly or indirectly, functioning in one area affects functioning in another. This is vital to understand when looking closer at this school. When changes are made at a management level, it is experienced (in different ways) by all the other constantly interacting systems. In the same way, if attitudes or actions in one classroom change, the effects can filter through into other systems and areas of school functioning. For example: a child may take a new thought or idea discussed in class on to the sports field or to the family dinner table that evening. In the same way, the teacher might chat about this same idea in the staffroom or the idea may inform her behaviours or subsequent actions. Therefore, although the effects one system has on another may be clear and obvious, they may also be subtle. Being aware of the interconnectedness of systems is extremely useful when trying to discover and understand the school. This framework is therefore clearly relevant and important to consider when looking at the school.

2.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

While knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of this research are important, it would also be valuable to look practically at the historical and contextual development of inclusive education internationally and nationally.

2.3.1 Historical development of inclusive education

Having looked at the theoretical background to clarify and understand the “roots” of inclusive education and this research, one can now place these paradigm shifts and theory changes in historical and contextual reality.

2.3.1.1 Inclusion internationally

Social contexts changed internationally when demographics in education began to change as well as the end goals of education and the needs of the economy. Historically, in the U.S.A. (for example), the response to learner diversity was to create special programs, usually separate from the scope of general education (Sands, Kozleski & French, 2000). Learners with disability or any specific need that could not be catered for by the dominant education system were separated and taught in ‘special’ institutions. The realisation that education practices were inappropriate was solidified when, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created by the United Nations. The international human rights movement exposed educational practices in many countries as questionable.

Within America, the beginnings of a change in paradigm became evident when ‘normalisation’ was introduced. The concept of normalisation originated in

Scandinavia but came to the fore in America in the late 1960's. "Normalisation can be defined as making available to all handicapped people patterns of life and conditions of everyday living which are as close as possible to the regular circumstances and ways of life of society" (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p. 6). This process placed children with special needs into "normal" schools and expected them to adjust and fit in like the other "normal" children. Normalisation was the idea or concept that gave rise to 'mainstreaming' in education. Mainstreaming suggested that people with disabilities have a right to life experiences similar to others in society. As Swart and Pettipher (2005) explain, the goal of mainstreaming was to return learners with disabilities to the mainstream of education. This usually only applied to some learners (those with mild disabilities), as learners would still have to prove their readiness to enter the education mainstream. This was required because upon entering the mainstream, learners had little or no access to support services. When entering a mainstream class, the child with a disability had to prove their readiness to fit in, yet the schools or classrooms never adjusted to fit the needs of the incoming students. One could say that mainstreaming actually reinforced the medical paradigm by focussing on the problem within the individual and the individual's need to be 'fixed' or cured (Sands, et al., 2000).

During the 1970's humanitarian and civil rights movements drove policies leading to 'integration'. Integration is different to mainstreaming as it relies heavily on political and social discourse (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). The goal of integration is "to ensure that learners with disabilities are assigned equal membership in the community. Integration aims to maximise the social interactions between the 'disabled' and the 'non-disabled'" (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p. 7). Integration was different to

mainstreaming because special support services followed learners into the schools, whereas this did not occur through mainstreaming. European countries however refer to integration as the translation for inclusion.

'Inclusion' is about the extension of the above ideas in education. A new understanding took shape around the mid 1990's, focussing on the need for an "inclusive society" and closely focussing on an education system's role in doing so. The differences became apparent between integration and inclusion: inclusion was seen as a reconceptualisation of beliefs and values (Artiles et al., 2006). These values celebrated diversity and were to become a way of 'being', not simply a set of practices or policies (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

This approach to education received its first major boost at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. The purpose of the conference was to extend the objective of education as a fundamental human right. This conference paved the way for fundamental policy shifts to occur internationally and nationally. The Salamanca Statement described specifically what the ideal was that all countries and education systems should be leading towards. These ideals and aims were emphasised at many conferences worldwide, the World Conference on 'Education for All by the year 2000' that was held in Thailand, was one such influential event (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). Another was the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). Within this convention it was understood that all humans have the same rights, yet a separate treaty was created because the 'needs' of people with disabilities are different. South Africa became a signatory of this international law in 2007. These conventions and policies

all began to create an awareness of the importance of, not just approaching disability differently, but of looking at difference and diversity in a different light. The Salamanca Statement can be interpreted broadly, it creates an understanding that inclusion and inclusive practices are about more than just disability, it is about embracing and learning from diversity and difference in general.

Internationally, a move toward inclusion is in motion, policies are continuously being revised and there is constant effort to make practices more inclusive. It is important to note though, that institutional access alone does not necessarily create the grounds for inclusive education (Wiebe Berry, 2006). She also notes that it is what goes on in a place (not the location itself) that can potentially make the difference (Wiebe Berry, 2006). There is research constantly being done, looking at what developments and growth are occurring within practices internationally. Ferguson (2008) states that “outcomes in the United States for students with disabilities are improving, at least for some. More and more countries in Europe have made great strides toward at least restructuring education for students with special educational needs” (p. 113). She goes on to mention that while access and presence in ‘mainstream’ classrooms is a necessary step towards inclusive education, it is not entirely enough. It is what happens in the classrooms and schools that is equally critical to achieving true inclusive education (Ferguson, 2008).

It would be beneficial to look at how the development of inclusive education internationally affected South Africa. To focus specifically on the historical changes in South Africa, should give one a better understanding of how we arrived at where we are today and provides context for the school focussed on in this research.

2.3.1.2 Inclusion in South Africa

It is quite useful to look at education and special education in South Africa through four phases of history: starting at the 18th and 19th centuries and looking at how education has changed and developed into what it is today.

In South Africa, as everywhere else in the world, the 1700's and early 1800's saw hardly any provision for any type of special education need. In this 'first phase' of education history, a superstitious attitude held by society saw people chained, imprisoned and killed because they were different or strange (Naicker, 1999). These people were later recognised as "mentally retarded", physically disabled, blind or deaf. This attitude influenced the treatment of people who were constructed as disabled in the South African context. As a result of superstitious understandings and beliefs in African communities – those who were labelled as disabled suffered a similar fate to those in white communities (Naicker, 1999).

Phase two in South Africa's history of education saw white-dominated provision and the growing influence of the Church. The nature of special education policy on the part of the state, during the period 1863 to 1963, was extremely oppressive. "Initially no special education provision was made by the state for African children. It took a century for the state to provide subsidies for African deaf, blind, cerebral palsied and crippled children. This only occurred in 1963" (Naicker, 1999, p. 29).

Churches played a pivotal role at this time; they initiated the provision of special education services for 'handicapped' white and non-white children. They continued

to provide a service for non-white children without any state provision for these children for the next hundred years (Naicker, 1999). The state only became involved in special education in 1900, when these church-run schools were recognised. In 1928, Act 29 (Special Education Act) was passed. This led to the creation of “vocational schools” and “special schools” for white children.

The 1920's saw the first development of intelligence tests. Many revisions of international tests were applied to white school-going children; these tests were the first connection between education and the labour market. These intelligence tests were the precursor of categorisation, labelling and the exclusive system of special education (Naicker, 1999). From 1948, one saw the policies of apartheid have an effect on every aspect of South African life (Engelbrecht, 2006). Also in 1948, the Special Schools Act was passed. This introduced into special education a medical and mental diagnosis and treatment model (Engelbrecht, 2006). “The medical model shaped and largely influenced exclusionary practices in the field of education which have continued for decades after their introduction” (Naicker, 1999, p. 31). Because some children were seen as having deficits within themselves, separate special education was justified.

Phase three can be seen as the period from 1963 to 1994. After Act No 39 of 1967, whites were privileged to psychological support services in some schools. Clinics were set up (including many different specialised education support personnel) to service white schools (Naicker, 1999). In the following years, due to new policies and segregating practices “the disparities in special education and education support

provision were clearly racial and became visible within the unfolding of separate development” (Naicker, 1999, p. 34).

The fourth phase in South African education development is the phase starting in 1994 – the new democracy. Wide-scale transformation was set in motion. Within education, the seventeen separate education departments were unified into a single ministry of education (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006). In 1996 the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) was appointed, along with the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS). The issue of human rights moved to the forefront of all policy making. In 1995 the White Paper on Education and Training pointed out that education should be committed to equal access, redress and non-discrimination (Engelbrecht, 2006). In November 1997, the report (created by the joint NCSNET and NCESS): ‘Quality Education for All: Overcoming barriers to learning’, recognised the need for all learners to have access to a single unified education system (Engelbrecht, et al., 2006). Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) builds on previous policies and legislation by placing inclusive education, and its focus on addressing barriers to learning, at the core of education transformation in South Africa.

Donald (1996) summarises a few of the aims of the education system as it is today. Non-discrimination is important in fulfilling the right of every child to access an effective and appropriate education system. He also states that representation and participation, by all members of the school community, is vital for this inclusive system to work (Wiebe Berry, 2006). Finally, there needs to be a unitary system aimed at redress (Donald, 1996). While many schools in South Africa today still

struggle with the process of becoming more inclusive, there are many more schools today than there were a few years ago with an awareness of the requirements of an inclusive school community.

Wildeman and Nomdo (2007) provide comments regarding where South Africa is in terms of its quest to become more inclusive. They note that “provinces did not conceptualise a strategic campaign and integration strategy for the inclusion of marginalised children and youth with disabilities. Thus, in provinces where learners were successfully mobilised, provinces did not have the requisite resources (financial and learning) to provide access to education in the existing institutions” (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 3). They also note that schools that are working at becoming more inclusive require specialised support. Education White Paper 6 proposes the establishment of district-based support teams, “which would be functional at the district level and [would be] actively supporting both public ordinary and special school institutions” (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007, p. 3). The establishment of such district-based support teams is not yet a reality in all provinces, yet there are some teams that are functioning effectively at present (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007). All provinces still have a long way to go – either in terms of getting infrastructure and resources in place or creating understandings and attitudes among teachers and other professionals towards inclusion and diversity that will promote the inclusive ideals that Education White paper 6 outlines.

Looking at the historical process leading up to the present has hopefully provided useful insight into how the current education system has come about. It also provides the reader with important relevant background information regarding the

historical context of the school at the centre of this study. With the information provided above, one should have a clearer idea as to the nature and development of inclusive education. The reader is now familiar with the important and relevant context of this study.

This chapter will now move on to describe the ways this current system affects real schools and the ways in which they adjust and cope with diversity, difference and inclusive ideals will be described.

2.4 PERCEIVING AND UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The focus of this chapter now shifts to a description of some of the relevant literature that shows how diversity and true inclusive ideals affect schools, teaching, school culture and everyday functioning in education. At this point, it may be useful to unpack the concept of diversity. For the purposes of this study, as mentioned earlier, diversity refers to difference. Difference on a number of levels is included in this broad definition. It includes difference in gender, age, academic ability, culture, language, religion, socio-economic status and physical ability. Hertberg-Davis and Brighton (2006) note that tremendous diversity exists among children; within any classroom, there is likely to be great variability from child to child in terms of appearance, cognitive and physical development, social maturity and behaviours. They continue to state that “the unpredictability and irregularity of cognitive, social and physical growth in [children] presents educators with the formidable challenge of providing appropriate learning experiences for this highly diverse group of students” (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006, p. 90). Teachers first need to recognise that

learners come into the classroom with much difference and diversity between them; they need to recognise that the learners have a continuum of academic needs and that instructional practices need to be shifted accordingly to respond appropriately to all the individual needs of the learners (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006).

Learners bring their cultural histories into the classroom every day. Teachers and their professional worlds are actively engaged in shaping and organising these cultural contexts through a combination of their individual and collective cultural histories that have been shaped by personal, professional and community interactions (Kozleski & Smith, 2009). It is therefore imperative that teachers are constantly aware of aspects pertaining to diversity and how it affects the learners and their teaching. Just as children arrive in the classroom with all their unique characteristics, so do teachers – teachers therefore have to make conscious choices about how to respond in a way that is most suitable and appropriate for each child.

“For the teacher, the move from the acknowledgement of diversity in the classroom to the positive management of singularities requires a paradigmatic change. He or she has to adopt a model centred on the search for diversity which is no longer a problem to be overcome, but an opportunity to be seized” (Thomazet, 2009, p. 558). It is this view that is used as a framework for understanding diversity in this study.

As much as the focus of this study is on teachers and their perceptions and understandings of diversity and inclusive education, it is also relevant to note that for children, fear of difference is normal – children in the midst of constructing their own identity are inclined to reject everything which is not familiar or standard (Thomazet,

2009). Learning to accept otherness and the awareness of the uniqueness and singularity of human beings should therefore be taught. “From this point of view, education cannot be allowed to portray an image of a community which excludes, if not in speech, at least in deed. In school, pupils should be able to meet and respect the diversity of the population they will meet and respect in society” (Thomazet, 2009, p. 560). Because diversity is a reality in South African society, it is therefore both relevant and imperative that diversity be a focus in our schools and also this study.

The reader should now hopefully have a better understanding of what diversity refers to in the context of this study and also why it is relevant as a topic of research in South Africa. Within the context of this research and education in general, a school should not merely be labelled ‘inclusive’ – an inclusive school should live and breathe equity and diversity should truly be valued. For a school to move towards becoming inclusive and to genuinely embrace diversity – aspects of general school functioning need to be different to what is usually experienced in the majority of schools. Schools approach diversity and move towards becoming inclusive in a number of ways – some essential ideas will be described.

Soodak (2003) notes that for a school to begin to move towards embracing diversity and creating an inclusive community: membership should be promoted. According to some teachers and parents, ‘membership’ refers to a child’s right to belong and to have access to the same opportunities and experiences as other children. A revealing indicator of a school’s commitment to inclusion is whether there are conditions placed on a child’s participation in general education classes and

activities (Soodak, 2003). A sense of belonging or classroom community is undermined when membership is made conditional on the child's academic, emotional or behavioural readiness. According to Wiebe Berry (2006), participation implies a coming together of social relationships with academic engagement and responding. "In classroom communities, the construct of participation locates learning activities in the intersection of social interaction and academic accomplishment, the latter being enfolded within the joint enterprise (i.e., the work) of the community" (Wiebe Berry, 2006, p. 494). According to Lave and Wenger (in Wiebe Berry, 2006), participation is characterised as mutual, because it shapes the experiences and identities of all individuals who are part of the process. It is also reciprocal, in the sense that both the individual and the community are shaped by and shape each other – participation is therefore transformative for both the individual and the context (Wiebe Berry, 2006). True participation is required for a school to develop in its inclusive practices.

Another hallmark of a school working at embracing diversity and moving towards inclusive practices is facilitation of friendships. This is an example of what Bronfenbrenner refers to as proximal processes. "Inclusive school communities focus on social as well as academic outcomes for children. Friendships matter to children, their parents and teachers because they provide children with the opportunity to develop important skills and attitudes and, perhaps the most important, they enhance quality of life for children and their families" (Soodak, 2003, p. 329). Schools that with inclusive cultures, which embrace diversity, prioritise relationships within the school community (Brownlee & Carrington, 2000). Collaboration between teachers, parents, the wider community and the learners is

vital for creating an ethos of belonging (Kinsella & Senior, 2008; Wiebe Berry, 2006). In other words, collaboration between Bronfenbrenner's micro and mesosystems is vital. Inclusive schools seek to encourage collaboration among teachers for the purposes of teaching, planning and supporting learners (Laluvein, 2010; Soodak, 2003). "The collaborative process enables teachers to expand on repertoire of methods for teaching diverse needs, accommodating student diversity" (Laluvein, 2010, p. 45). The creation of a collaborative learning community requires the promotion of shared values and an appreciation of working together as well as caring about each other (Laluvein, 2010). The members of such a community see themselves and each other as communal resources and collectively see the value of delivering a high quality and appropriate education for the learners (Laluvein, 2010). With appropriate support, collaborative teaching can lead to positive outcomes for all learners.

Within inclusive classrooms, a constructivist perspective offers an alternative to the more traditional behavioural approach by capitalising on the social context and social activity in the classroom – to teach children how to be responsible members of the community and to manage their own behaviour (Bloom, Perlmutter & Burrell, 1999). When looking at inclusive classrooms from a constructivist and bioecological perspective – schools and classrooms are recognised as being social places where social context and social activity influence children's actions and thoughts. "Further, according to this perspective, learning is a creative rather than a receptive act that involves construction of new meanings by learners within the context of their current knowledge, previous experiences and social environment" (Bloom et al., 1999, p. 133). This fits with inclusive education principles whereby all learners are to be

assisted in learning to their own ability and potential – working with the child’s own abilities and contextual situation.

The schools’ values, procedures and views along with teachers’ personal attitudes and understandings, work together to create the overall system of the school, or the ‘school’s culture’ (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004; Kozleski & Smith, 2009). Research has shown that a strong sense of community within a school creates a sense of belonging and shared purpose where children learn to care for one another and value diversity (Bloom et al., 1999; Wiebe Berry, 2006). We will look closely at what sense of community exists within the school at the centre of this study. In the context of South African education; this study is important as “school cultures have the potential to undermine or support development in teaching and learning and through inclusive school cultures change in school policies and practices can be sustained and passed on to new teachers and learners” (Engelbrecht, et al., 2006, p. 122).

For inclusion to be successful, schools require a certain culture and ethos. Part of this is that an aim in all classrooms should be to expand the circle of tolerance so that a broader range of behaviours are embraced and provided for through supports that are an ordinary part of the classroom, as a broader range of learner differences become an ordinary part of the school day (McLeskey & Waldron, 2007). Inclusion is about creating a society in which all children and their families feel welcomed and valued. In truly inclusive classrooms, teachers acknowledge the myriad of ways in which learners differ from each other, this diversity is valued and productive, sensitive responses are designed and implemented (Sapon-Shevin, 2008). “Inclusive classrooms put a premium on how people treat one another. Learning to live

together in a democratic society is one of the most important goals and outcomes of inclusive classrooms” (Sapon-Shevin, 2008, p. 53).

Research has clearly shown that a ‘different’ school culture is required in order to effectively respond to diversity (Carrington, 1999; Burstein et al., 2004; Kugelmass, 2001). The implications for the inclusive school are that inclusion cannot be effectively created simply at the insistence of national, regional or school administrators, “teachers in inclusive schools have to construct the meaning of inclusion for themselves as part of an overall cultural transformation of their school” (Kinsella & Senior, 2008, p. 660). To bring about effective change, school leaders and teachers must be actively involved in the change process together (Lambe & Bones, 2007). Collaboration among general and special education teachers – as well as support from administrators, families and community members – is essential for schools to become inclusive (Fisher, 2005; Korinek et al, 1999). “Because inclusion can be understood as a process rather than a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, there are strong links to school and staff development and processes for managing change” (Carrington & Robinson, 2004, p. 142). Teacher involvement and continuous staff development are elements required in schools aiming to become more inclusive.

2.5 SUMMARY

Any school is a unique environment where many elements interact forming the day-to-day functioning of the educational environment. It is for this reason that this study is so important and fascinating – it provides a perspective into the workings of a school that is trying to move towards being more inclusive.

In this chapter, relevant concepts were explained and the theoretical framework underpinning this study was described. The development of inclusive education, both internationally and in South Africa was focussed on and relevant literature was described showing that with inclusive education, change is required on all levels of a schools functioning.

The following chapter will describe the research design and methodology for this study as well as a justification for why the design and methods were chosen and deemed most appropriate.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will discuss the research design and methodology that has been used as a framework for this research. The research design took the form of a strategic framework for action – it served as a bridge between the research question and the implementation or execution of the research (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The research design can therefore be seen as a plan and guide for the conditions of the data collection and analysis. It is the planned and designed nature of the observation that allows for empirical evidence which distinguishes research from other forms of observation we do every day (Terre Blanche et al, 2006; Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM

An aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions and understandings held by teachers regarding diversity and inclusive education – to look at the practices, experiences and attitudes.

The research questions that directed this study were:

- What are the teachers' perceptions and understandings of diversity and inclusive education in this school?
- And, according to them, what elements of the schools' culture create an environment where inclusive ideals can flourish?

As part of the second question, I would hope to find out what the school's values, procedures and views are that allow it to function as it does, according to participants. However, because of the limited scope of the study the purpose is not to do an extensive analysis of the values and cultural practices of the school as that would require an ethnographic design. This is an exploratory study that aims to describe the perceptions, understandings and experiences of the teachers at this school.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

“A paradigm is a way of looking at the world” (Mertens, 2005, p. 7). The paradigm worked from in this research is the interpretive constructivist paradigm – this paradigm asserts that participants “make meaning” of a phenomenon or situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The strategy is inductive, the outcomes descriptive and the meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument (Merriam, 2002).

According to Lincoln and Guba, (2002, cited in Mertens, 2005), there are three concepts which help define a paradigm. These are ontology, epistemology and methodology. Each of these concepts is briefly explained below.

- **Ontology** – In this study, the questions that are asked are, “what is the nature of reality?” and “What do we know about that reality?” Constructivists believe that there are multiple socially constructed realities. According to the ontological position (or what it is we want to know about the world), we accept that individual subjective understanding and the social world exist independently of each other – and that it is only accessible via the

participants' interpretation which may be further interpreted by the researcher (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Therefore in this study, one gains in understanding of the teachers' realities and their everyday interactions with diversity and inclusive education.

- **Epistemology** – When dealing with this concept in this study, the following questions are asked, “what is the nature of our knowledge?” and “how can that knowledge be acquired?” Constructivists believe that there is a link that is interactive between participants and researcher that values are made explicit and that, through the research process, findings are created.
- **Methodology** – The question asked in relation to this concept is, “how can the desired knowledge and understanding be obtained?” Constructivists believe that research is primarily qualitative, hermeneutical, dialectical and only contextual factors are described (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Mertens, 2005; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

In conducting a qualitative research study, researchers seek to understand the worldviews of the people involved in the research (Merriam, 2002). Through using the interpretive constructivist paradigm, the participants' subjective experiences are taken seriously as the essence of what is real for them. I attempted to make sense of their experiences by interacting with them and paying careful attention to what they said.

We should try to be objective and neutral in the collection, interpretation and presentation of qualitative data, if we are to know about the world empirically. Interpretation is reflected through the understanding of people's perspectives in the contexts of their own lives. A "thick description" is therefore what we seek through qualitative research – we want as much detailed information as possible about the participants' experiences (Merriam, 2002; Mertens, 2005; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

It should also be noted that different participants will have different vantage points and perspectives, which will result in different types of understanding. This multifaceted and diverse external reality will in turn add richness to our understanding of various ways in which reality can be explained (Mertens, 2005; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Terre Blanche et al, 2006). (See 1.4).

3.4 METHODOLOGY

Research methodology focuses on the process and kinds of tools and procedures used. "Methodology is the epistemological home of an inquiry" (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p. 36). Methodology is more than a collection of methods – there is thus a distinction between the terms 'methods' and the term 'methodology'. The term 'method' refers to a way of doing something, whereas 'methodology' refers to the "coherent group of methods that complement one another and have the 'goodness of fit' to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose" (Henning et al., 2004, p. 36).

In research that is designed to provide an in-depth description of a setting or phenomenon, qualitative methods are mostly used (Mertens, 2005). Qualitative

research is defined by Mertens (2005) as a constructed activity which places the observer in the world in which she wants to investigate. Qualitative research makes use of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible to the researcher (Polkinghorne, 2005). According to Mertens (2005) and Terre Blanche et al. (2006), qualitative researchers study phenomena in their natural settings, to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

As mentioned in the title, this research is a 'case study'. It may be useful at this point, to clarify what is meant by that and also to explain why it was deemed an appropriate choice for this study.

"Case studies may be classified as such whenever they cover a bounded system" (Henning et al., 2004, p. 40). Henning et al. (2004) continue to explain that case studies are distinguished from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system. According to Merriam (2002), a 'bounded system' refers to a single entity or a unit around which there are boundaries. The case then has a finite quality about it, either in terms of time, space, and/or components comprising the case (Gerring, 2007).

"Case studies can provide a kind of deep understanding of phenomena, events, people, or organisations... In essence, case studies open the door to the processes created and used by individuals involved in the phenomenon, event, group, or organisation under study" (Berg, 2009, p. 318). Qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, an

inductive investigative strategy, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and the end product being richly descriptive (Merriam, 2002).

It may be said that because the case study focuses on a single unit, the issue of generalizability looms larger here than with other types of qualitative research. However, as several writers point out, much can be learned from a specific case (Merriam, 2002). Readers can learn vicariously from an encounter with the case through the researcher's narrative description (Stake, 2000). As justification for using case study in this research, Merriam (2002) notes that since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. Case study is most appropriate for this research as it allows for deep, rich data generation and analysis, within a specific, bounded system – the teachers working at School A. The following section will look closely at the specific methods used in this research.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials (data) that describe the problematic moments in participants lives (Mertens, 2005; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

3.5.1 Sampling

A sample is a systematically and strategically identified group of people or events that meet the criterion of representation for a particular study (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 57). Mouton (2001) describes the research population as a set or collection of elements of various kinds.

This population can include a population of:

- Individual human beings;
- Organisations;
- Collectives;
- Social activities or events;
- Cultural objects; or
- Interventions.

According to Merriam (1998), the group of participants in qualitative research is usually small, non-random and purposeful. A specific sample is selected to provide or yield the most information about a phenomenon of interest. In this study a purposeful sampling strategy was used, so that I would be able to interview participants who are typical of the population, in this case, teachers working at the specified school (Merriam, 2002; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). All the teachers in the school were exposed to the research project and were asked to volunteer. I was content to have any teachers taking part in the study as the only requirement was that they worked at School A. Six teachers volunteered and subsequently took part in the study. A brief outline of the demographics of participants is included below. Further description of participants can be found in Chapter 4.

Table 3.1 Description of participants

Participant	Gender	Position at school	Qualifications	Years experience
1	Female	Grade 2 teacher	BEd Foundation Phase	1,5 years
2	Female	Grade 2 teacher	BEd Foundation Phase	12 years
3	Female	Grade 1 teacher	BEd Foundation Phase	3,5 years
4	Female	Grade 6 teacher	BA and HDE	8,5 years
5	Male	Principal of Prep School	BEd Hons Intermediate and Senior Phase	24 years
6	Female	Grade 4 teacher	BSocSci and PGCE	4,5 years

3.5.2 Data generation

The following methods were used to generate data in the research: semi-structured interviews and documents.

3.5.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

In-depth interview uses individuals as the point of departure for the research process and assumes that individuals have important and unique knowledge about the social world that is ascertainable through verbal communication (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). "In-depth interviews are a particular kind of conversation between the researcher and the interviewee that requires *active asking* and *listening*. The process is a meaning-making endeavour embarked on as a partnership between the interviewer and his or her respondent" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 119). According to Punch (1998), the interview is a very good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality. He also states that it is one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others

(Punch, 1998). Berg (2009) succinctly describes it, when he says that interviewing is simply a conversation with a purpose – specifically, the purpose is to gather information.

For this study, I made use of semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data generation. Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a general plan of investigation, but allows the conversation to progress in no specific order, although specific areas of interest are raised. Like structured approaches, semi-structured interviews involve specifying the key themes of the interview that are, in turn, formulated as key questions (Whiting, 2008). Unlike structured approaches, however, researchers are usually more flexible in the way the interview schedule is used (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Researchers try to fit their pre-defined interests into the unfolding topics being discussed, rather than forcing the interviewee to fit their ideas into the interviewer's pre-defined question order (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

One might ask, when is it appropriate to use such interviews? Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) respond to this question by saying that in-depth, semi-structured interviews are 'issue oriented'. In other words, this method is most appropriate and useful when the researcher has a particular topic she wants to focus on and gain information about from individuals. Such a data generation method is applicable for this case study as my aim was to investigate the understandings and perceptions held by teachers in this school.

So far, I have given a general description of interviewing as a data generation method, I have also described semi-structured interviews. It should be clear why this method is applicable and appropriate for this research. It may be useful to look briefly at some advantages and disadvantages of this method and then I will describe the implementation in some detail.

A clear advantage of interviewing is that it is a “communicatively rich mode of exchange in which the gestural aspects of the discourse are visible to the participants” (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p. 94). Another advantage is that data can be recorded with video or audio devices. Other materials, such as documents or photographs, can be easily used in the interview as a resource to aid discussion (Gibson & Brown, 2009). It is also extremely valuable for a researcher to be able to take note of the interviewee’s body language, facial expressions and other non-verbal cues as these might provide further insight or information. This is truly a method that allows the researcher to get valuable, in-depth information and insights from participants.

On the other hand, there are some potential disadvantages of using this method. One such aspect may be that when conducting the interviews, it may be required of either the interviewer or interviewee to travel and can therefore be expensive and time-consuming (Gibson & Brown, 2009). In this research, I conducted interviews in settings that were both convenient and agreed upon by the interviewee. All interviews took place at the school. I met with each of the teachers in their own classrooms and with the principal in his office. No extra monetary costs were knowingly incurred by participants. Interviewees were also told beforehand of the

approximate length of the interview, so they were able to make arrangements and plans around that.

Another disadvantage could be that in such interviews, interviewee's are generally expected to come up with answers on 'the spur of the moment' and this does not enable interviewees to reflect for long on their answers (Gibson & Brown, 2009). As much as this aspect cannot really be avoided, I made it clear to participants that they were to take their time in answering questions. I also gave them the opportunity to ask any questions or add any more information when the interview was drawing to a close.

Another critique or disadvantage of this method is explained by Henning et al., (2004), "the critique of the interview in its broadest sense involves many issues. They mostly have to do with the fact that in this practice the interview process itself is not seen as a *data making process*, but just as a data eliciting mechanism. What is meant by this critique is that the process of interviewing itself gives rise to a type of interaction that cannot be completely neutral" (p. 54). With regard to this critique, it is important that the interviewer is aware of their own personal ideas and any biases they might have.

When looking at the implementation of interviewing in this research, several aspects can be mentioned. Firstly, I had somewhat of a relationship with participants prior to doing the research as I had spent some time in the school doing substitute teaching in the past. So I was essentially a 'familiar face' to participants. Prior to interviewing, I used the research questions to compile an interview schedule that would serve as a

guide for the interview process. (The interview schedule has been attached – refer to Addendum C). Convenient meetings times and venues were set up for participants. All participants requested that the interviews take place at the school. Meeting times varied from before school, to during the school day, when teachers had ‘free’ time, to the majority who chose to meet after school. Each participant was interviewed once, but they were given the opportunity to contact me if they wished to add any further information, ask questions or adjust what was previously said. The interviews were recorded on audiotape cassettes. After all interviews were completed, I then transcribed the recordings for data analysis. (Refer to Addendum D for an excerpt from a transcript).

The central purpose of the interviews was to engage in dialogue with the participants to elicit their knowledge of inclusive education and diversity, their views and experiences, their feelings and attitudes towards diversity and their approaches to diversity. Through the interviews, the researcher gained access to and sought to understand “the private interpretations and reality that individuals hold” (Merriam, 2002, p. 272).

3.5.2.2 Documents

Merriam (1998) refers to documents as ready-made sources of data accessible to the researcher. According to Henning et al. (2004) “the collection of documents and other artefacts is often neglected in qualitative research. Yet they are a valuable source of information and if they are available ... they should be included in the design. Any document, whether old or new, whether in printed format, handwritten or

in electronic format and which relates to the research question may be of value” (p. 99).

The documents used in this study were school policy documents provided by the school principal. The use of documents in this study can be seen as a secondary method as the documents provided were not used for analysis, but rather for extra insight and information about the school. When looking at the advantages and disadvantages of using such documents, I can only see their usage as an advantage. Specifically regarding the way they were used in this research – as additional information regarding the school.

The policy documents provided were:

- Mission Statement, 2004
- Anti-bias Policy, 2005
- Inclusion Policy, 2006
- Learner Support Policy, 2006.

Copies of these policy documents can be found in Addenda E, F, G and H.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is based on an interpretative philosophy. It is the process researchers use to make sense of or explain the data they have collected during the research process. Researchers examine the symbolic and meaningful content of the data when doing qualitative data analysis. For good analysis, one needs to stay

close to one's data to interpret it from a position of empathic understanding (Richards, 2009).

Terre Blanche et al. (2006) state that a qualitative research perspective implies making the "strange familiar and the familiar strange" (p. 321). Interpretive analysis is a back and forth movement between what one knows and what one wishes to know, "description and interpretation, foreground and background, part and whole, to achieve a compelling account of the phenomenon being studied" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 321). This is the constant comparative method. The researcher should aim to stay close enough to context so that people familiar to the context can recognise it as true, but far enough to see the phenomenon in a new perspective (Merriam, 2002; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Analysis in qualitative research is "a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings" (Berg, 2009, p. 338). As mentioned previously, the method that I used was the constant comparative method. This method entails: familiarisation and immersion, coding into themes, inducing themes, elaboration and interpretation and checking.

3.6.1 Familiarisation and immersion

Interpretive research is generally analysed as it develops – this implies that when I reach the data analysis stage, I should already have a preliminary understanding of the meaning of the research data. During data analysis, I immerse myself in all the material, working with the interview transcriptions and documents. By this stage I

should know my data well enough to know what aspects can be found there, what interpretation could be drawn and what could be supported by the data and what cannot (Mertens, 2005; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In this study I read and re-read the interview transcripts and documents to familiarise myself with the content of the interviews.

3.6.2 Coding into themes

I identified passages of text by applying labels to them to indicate that they are examples of a specific theme or idea (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Essentially, coding is used to divide the data up into themes. In this research, coding was used and I generated and constructed themes from all the data. The method was inductive and the process was to reduce and analyse the data into key themes (Merriam, 2002; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

3.6.3 Inducing themes

Themes were identified and I used language that arose from the interviews to label the categories (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The constant comparative method was used to construct themes. As mentioned earlier, the constant comparative method involves continually comparing one unit of data with another in order to devise conceptual elements of the theory (Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) continues to say that units of data which the researcher sees as meaningful are compared with each other to generate tentative categories. By constantly comparing incident with incident and incidents with emerging conceptual categories and by reducing similar categories into smaller numbers of highly conceptual categories, a clearer understanding of the data was gained (Charmaz, 2006). I worked with the themes

that emerged from this data and then constantly compared them to each of the other themes that emerged from the data. Finally the themes were isolated and placed into collective patterns because they were repeated in each of the data-gathering processes.

For an example of this process, refer to the excerpt of raw data which is included in Addendum I.

3.6.4 Elaboration

Elaboration refers to exploring themes more closely by going over the data and transcripts several times – being open to the possibility that new ideas may emerge which will revise the coding system. “The purpose is to capture the finer nuances of meaning” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 326). In this study I continued to explore and read through the transcripts after the coding had occurred. I looked closely at the themes created; constantly open to the possibility that new ideas or insights may become visible to me after much interaction with the data.

3.6.5 Interpretation and checking

Once I felt I had captured the essence of the interviews and truly interacted with the data at a deep level, I began to interpret the findings. The interpretation of the results is the final written account of the research.

3.7 QUALITY ASSURANCE: VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

“All researchers aspire to produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (Merriam, 2002, p. 22). Researchers as well as consumers of research want to be

certain that the findings of the research can be trusted. The issues of reliability and validity are important, because in them the trustworthiness and credibility of the research is at stake (Peräkylä, 2004). It may be useful to begin this section by explaining what reliability and validity are in qualitative research. Following that, some of the strategies used will be described.

Reliability refers to “the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (Silverman, 2000, p. 175). According to Peräkylä (2004), reliability is the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research. The explanation of the methods of the study, how the sample was selected, how the data were generated and analysed constitutes an audit trail. This audit trail or transparency of method is an extremely important strategy for enhancing a study’s reliability (Merriam, 2002).

Validity is described by Silverman (2000) as ‘truth’ – it is interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. “Internal validity asks the question, how congruent are one’s findings with reality? ... In qualitative research we are not interested in how many or the distribution of predefined variables. Rather, it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved, uncover the complexity of human behaviour in context, and present a holistic interpretation of what is happening” (Merriam, 2002, p. 25). Most agree that when reality is viewed in this manner – that it is always interpreted – internal validity is considered a strength in qualitative research.

There are a number of strategies that qualitative researchers can employ to promote the reliability and validity of a study. The following strategies were used in this research:

- Triangulation
- Data verification – member checks
- Peer review
- Adequate engagement in data collection
- Audit trail
- Rich, thick descriptions

3.7.1 Triangulation

By making use of triangulation, the researcher generates data in multiple ways and from different sources. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006), triangulation allows the researcher to inspect the phenomenon from different angles thereby providing a clearer understanding. To a certain extent, methodological triangulation was used in this study. I made use of multiple methods, including: interviewing for generating primary data and documents for adding supplementary information regarding the case. The credibility of the research findings was improved by using multiple data sources.

3.7.2 Data verification: member checks

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), member checks entail returning the transcripts to the participants, allowing them to confirm that what has been deduced and written, present a true and valid reflection of their responses. Time was provided for each participant to read through the transcript of their interview and the coding of

the data. This gave the participants an opportunity to validate the data generated through their interview. All participants were satisfied that the interview transcripts adequately represented the content covered in the interview.

3.7.3 Peer review

Discussions with colleagues and my supervisor regarding the process of the study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations all proved to be extremely valuable and promoted validity.

3.7.4 Adequate engagement in data collection

It is important that adequate time is spent generating data, such that the data becomes 'saturated'. "The best rule of thumb is that the data and emerging findings must feel saturated; that is, you begin to hear or see the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more" (Merriam, 2002, p. 26). In this research, interviews were continued until I found the same information was being repeated. Analysis was also done until I found no new themes, ideas or insights that were different to the initial themes or ideas discovered.

3.7.5 Audit trail

As mentioned earlier, this refers to a detailed account of the methods, procedures and decision points in carrying out the study. This chapter and the chapters that precede it, provide the reader with clear information in this regard.

3.7.6 Rich, thick descriptions

It is most important in qualitative research to provide enough rich description to contextualise the study, “such that readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situation matches to research context, and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (Merriam, 2002, p. 31). Such description and interpretation of data and findings will be found in chapters 4 and 5.

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, it is also relevant to note that as a means of ensuring reliability, I was always aware of my role as researcher during the research. I was the instrument for collecting data in qualitative research. According to Mertens (2005), it is the researcher who decides what questions to ask, what to observe and what to write down – therefore I bring my own values, assumptions, beliefs and biases to the study.

“Researchers can use the process of *reflexivity* as a tool to assist them... Reflexivity is the process through which the researcher recognises, examines, and understands how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process.” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 141). Our backgrounds, beliefs and feelings are part of the process of knowledge construction. Therefore, throughout this research, I made it a priority to constantly be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and assumptions when dealing with participants, interview transcripts or documents.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical guidelines are necessary in research to guard against possible harmful effects of the research (See 1.5). Henning et al. (2004) state that “respondents need

to give informed consent to participate. This means that they must be fully informed about the research in which the interview is going to be used. They need to know that their privacy and sensitivity will be protected and what is going to happen to their information after recording. In a letter of consent, which is pre-drafted by the researcher, the participants gives consent to these and any other ethical issues that may be relevant” (p. 73).

Written permission was obtained from the school principal and informed, written consent was obtained from the participants. In order to participate in the research, participants need to give their informed consent. In qualitative research informed consent is particularly important due to the personal and in-depth nature of the data to be collected (Duffy, 2008). The APA Ethics Code (in Swenson, 2007) gives certain guidelines for the consent form. These are: participants must understand: the purposes of the research; the expected duration and procedures; their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research; the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing; the potential risks, discomfort or adverse effects due to participation; the prospective benefits; the limits of confidentiality; the incentives for participation; and whom to contact with regard to questions about the research and their rights. These guidelines for informed consent are also in line with those provided by the Health Professions Council of South Africa’s (HPCSA) Code of Ethical Conduct (2008) and that of the University of Stellenbosch.

Ethical clearance was granted by the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee. (The ethical clearance from the University can be found in Addendum B). In order to maintain and ensure the anonymity of the participants, no identifiable

indicators were used in the study. Voluntary participation was ensured by allowing teachers to contact me directly, no other staff members were aware of which or how many teachers chose to participate.

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioural Research (1978) identified three ethical principles and norms that should guide research (Mertens, 2005). These principles are:

- Beneficence: research should be beneficial to participants, science and humanity as a whole. Researchers should avoid unnecessary risks which could be harmful to participants. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the understanding and knowledge that already exists in the areas of diversity and inclusive education.
- Respect: researchers should treat all people with dignity and respect. In this study, all participants were informed beforehand about the nature of the research. All participants participated in the research voluntarily and participants could refuse or withdraw their participation at any stage during the process.
- Justice: researchers should ensure that the participants in the research are the ones who will benefit from the research. Researchers should ensure that the procedures that they use in the research process are non-exploitive and responsible, that they are considered carefully and administered fairly (Mertens, 2005; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In this research, I adhered to relevant ethical principles – anonymity and confidentiality of all participants were ensured to the best of my ability. Because of the close nature of a

school, it is often possible to identify participants by mere description of the data – participants were informed of this possibility. No personal identifiers were used when discussing or working with data. All data collected was stored, locked away and only the researcher and supervisor had access to these documents.

- Role of the researcher: The researcher is the instrument for generating data in qualitative research. According to Mertens (2005), it is the researcher who decides what questions to ask, what to observe and what to write down – therefore the researcher brings certain values, assumptions, beliefs and biases to the study. Researchers should therefore be aware that their position could influence the research process. They should reflect on their own values, beliefs and biases. They must constantly monitor these as the study develops to be able to determine their own impact on the study. With that said, it may be useful to mention that I have experience in teaching and understand the ideals behind inclusion and would dearly like to see schools in South Africa become more inclusive. Our country is diverse and I see this diversity as a beautiful thing and something to be celebrated and learnt from. I am particularly interested in looking closely at real experiences of diversity in the classroom. As a fairly inexperienced researcher, I see the need for research in this area as very important because it could potentially provide other schools and researchers with valuable knowledge on relevant practices and current experiences. Having heard about the school at the centre of this case study a few years ago, I have always had a fascination with finding out more about its practices, culture and everyday functioning – this research provided me with a great opportunity to do that and potentially use the information

gained to inform other research or schools. I also realised that I had to be open for what lies beneath the surface of what they project.

An example of the informed consent form is included in Addendum A and the Ethical clearance from the University is found in Addendum B.

3.9 THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE

In qualitative research, the researcher works inductively, which according to Terre Blanche et al. (2006, p. 43) implies an: “immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions and interrelationships; this begins by exploring genuinely open questions rather than testing theoretically derived hypotheses.” Researchers are mostly concerned with the process rather than the outcome. The research process is therefore more descriptive and represents meaning and understanding of the data.

This research proceeded as follows:

- Prior to the study a review of suitable literature was undertaken to provide a theoretical framework and clarity for the research question, the interpretation and conclusion (Merriam, 1998).
- From the theoretical framework and my drive to discover the reality of practices in the school, the research problem was formulated. The research was then designed adopting a qualitative approach.
- Sampling was done and the research was implemented. This included visits to the school to interview participants and consultation of relevant

school policy documents to add contextual information to the study. The constant comparative method was used to analyse data (Merriam, 1998).

- The data was generated and transcribed. After consolidating data, the data was verified and the interpretation was done. Conclusions and recommendations were also made.

3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter focussed on the research design which consisted of the research paradigm, research methodology and the purpose of the study. The research process was guided and directed by the research framework.

The research question, paradigm and methods were all explained as well as the elements of data analysis. Aspects relating to reliability and validity, ethics and the specific procedure followed were described. The following chapters will focus on the findings of the study, as well as a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focussed on teachers' understandings and perceptions of diversity and inclusive education. The aim was to describe how teachers understand and perceive diversity in a primary school. It was also to look at the schools' values, procedures and views, because these along with staff members' personal views and understandings, work together to create the overall system of the school.

The specific research questions that guided the research were: What are the teachers' perceptions and understandings around diversity and inclusive education in this school? And, according to them, what elements of the schools culture create an environment where inclusive ideals can flourish? As part of the second question, I hoped to find out what the school's values, procedures and views are that allow it to function as it does. The main argument about diversity and inclusive education is that all schools attempting to become more inclusive have to do so in such a way that incorporates and collaborates all elements of a school (teachers, learners, parents, practices, values, culture and procedures). There truly has to be a sense that diversity is embraced and valued for inclusive ideals to grow or develop.

This chapter will provide an overview of the findings of this study. It will begin by describing the setting and participants in some detail and then move on to focussing on and discussing the findings, using the relevant themes as a structure for reporting findings.

The school at the centre of this case study will be introduced in some detail. A brief history will be provided and a summary of some current policies and strategies will also be included.

4.1.1 Description of the physical setting

The school at the centre of this research is a private school situated in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa. For the purpose of this research it will be referred to as School A. The school's mission statement is as follows: "our mission is to create a happy, vibrant school offering quality education in a challenging, sharing and caring environment" (School A, Mission Statement, 2004). The school's motto is *Virtute et Valore*, which translates to: 'the courage to do what is right'. According to policy and information documents from the school, the concept of *respect* is adopted as the school code. Respect for oneself, for others, in relationships, for property, for the environment and for the wider community all form part of the school's understanding of respect in the school context (School A, Mission Statement, 2004).

School A originally began as an all white, all boys school. Significant changes occurred in the demographics of the learner population, when in 1978 School A admitted the first learners of colour and in 1989 admitted the first girls, becoming co-educational. In 1904 a new school building was opened, with another wing added in 1950. The lack of sports field and facilities at its original location prompted a move to the school's current site in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. Since the school's move, much development has occurred on the site providing further sports facilities and buildings. The school provides teaching in all grades from pre-school (Grade R)

to Grade 12, with the focus of this study being the preparatory school (Grade R – Grade 6).

The preparatory school is able to accommodate about 200 boys and girls. There are two classes per grade and on average 20 – 25 learners per class. The school is Christian-based, yet learners and teachers are from a variety of different religions and cultures. According to information provided by the school, the learners who attend School A are given a firm grounding in those basic skills that are vital for all-round academic and social development. In addition, every opportunity is taken to extend all learners. “In keeping with our belief that every child has special abilities, we place strong emphasis on encouraging learners’ emotional intelligence and cognitive skills. We do this by following and extending the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) Curriculum as set out by the National Department of Education.” (School A, Mission Statement, 2004).

The school’s philosophy is that every child has specific, unique or special needs at some stage or another and the school therefore has a Support Unit that ensures every learner benefits from the range of support services offered at School A. There is a school counsellor on site providing emotional support for learners, teachers and families. She is employed by the school and therefore her services are not at any extra cost to learners. There are also private occupational therapists and physiotherapists practising at the school. Although there is a cost for their services, they are always willing to make a plan to help families who may find it difficult to pay the full fee. Emphasis is placed on academic, social and emotional support and close links are encouraged between educators, parents and learners (School A, Mission

Statement, 2004). Some of the school's policies that are relevant to this study will be described briefly.

Two relevant policies are the Anti-Bias Policy created in 2005 and the Inclusion Policy created in 2006. Another policy specific to the preparatory school is the Learner Support Policy. Brief descriptions of these will be given now.

According to the Anti-Bias policy, School A recognises that schools play a major role in either perpetuating or combating forms of unfair discrimination and oppression and that prejudice, stereotyping, unfair discrimination and inequality still exists in our society. With this knowledge, and according to this policy, School A is committed to:

- promoting an anti-bias approach and practise throughout the whole school, ensuring that all forms of prejudice, bias, stereotyping and unfairness will be addressed.
- providing a welcoming, safe, secure and inclusive school community and learning environment in which every member of the school community feels valued and respected.
- developing a value system based on respect, equality and dignity of all people.
- promoting a culture of human rights, peace and democracy.
- achieving diversity and equity within the school community
- creating a school that is inclusive, multicultural, multilingual and anti-bias.

(School A, Anti-Bias Policy, 2005).

Within the Inclusion Policy it is mentioned that within the School A community, the terms 'inclusion' and 'inclusive practice' are used in their broadest sense and mean the following:

- that every member of the school community: learners, staff, parents and governors, feels acknowledged and values and that he or she belongs;
- that all differences and similarities are recognised, acknowledged, affirmed and valued;
- that the school strives towards being responsive to, and meeting the needs of all within the school community. (School A, Inclusion Policy, 2006).

The Learner Support Policy, also created in 2006, begins with the line: "At [School A] every child matters". The sentences that introduce this policy state "in keeping with our policy that every child has special needs at some stage or another, we have modified our system of academic support to include all learners. We also subscribe to the belief that every child has special abilities." (School A, Learner Support Policy, 2006). At School A every teacher is thought of as a generalist and a specialist – this is enabled by the philosophy that every person has something to offer in the way of finding solutions to difficult problems that challenge children's lives. A consultative approach, accessible staff and tireless dedication are all evident in the school (School A, Learner Support Policy, 2006). It may be useful at this stage to list the principles outlined in this policy. Under the heading of 'principles', the policy states: "It is our undertaking that we will be effective in:

- coordinating academic, social and emotional support for children;
- consulting with teachers, parents and learners on the important areas of learning and socio-emotional development of our children;

- early identification of areas needing support and intervention;
- facilitating our children's development of sound problem solving abilities so that they leave school one day prepared for living life in a creative and positive way;
- ensuring a carryover of these important problem solving skills into the daily curriculum in the classroom and on the playground;
- ensuring opportunities for regular meetings between teachers and the support staff to discuss every child in every class;
- conducting an annual Special Needs Audit, which captures each child's special abilities and areas needing further development; and
- promoting the efficacy of teachers in working with children in a way that promotes confidence, love of discovery and awareness of preferred learning styles." (School A, Learner Support Policy, 2006).

It may also be useful at this point to include some of the participants' views of the school. During the interviews, participants were asked to describe the school; some of the comments made will be included now.

"[School A] is an inclusive school with a particular focus on diversity. We have many learners with learning difficulties as well as other barriers to learning. It's quite a small school and we have two classes per grade and there are classes all the way from grade R up to Matric" (Participant A).

"If I were to describe [School A]... in a nutshell, it is a happy, relaxed environment, with a sense of family values where everyone is included. And I say that because I think this happy relaxed environment is felt by all staff and

all the learners who are here... There is a definite sense of family values that exists and things are worked through in a very positive manner and it's something that you can feel when you walk into the school, there's this warmth and sense that people belong here" (Participant B).

"... It is very diverse. It is a private school, but not overly wealthy and so most parents have to work very hard to pay the school fees. There is a prep school, middle school and high school. Being in the prep school, I can only really speak from my experience in the prep school, but the staff on the whole is a young, dynamic staff who absolutely love what they do" (Participant C).

"The school is a co-ed school, it's an independent Anglican school with a diverse student and teacher body, there are two classes per grade and class sizes are relatively small. It has an inclusive, supportive outlook on education" (Participant D).

"In each phase of the school there are classes which have children with special educational needs. The school caters to mostly middle-class society of all demographics and it is a Christian-based school" (Participant F).

The focus will now shift to look at a brief description of each of the participants.

4.1.2 Description of participants

Participant A is a female Grade 2 class teacher. She has been teaching for one and a half years and this is the first school she has worked at. Her qualification is a

Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase teaching. The second participant (Participant B) is also a female Grade 2 teacher with the same qualifications as Participant A, yet she has twelve years of teaching experience. School A is the third school she has worked in. Participant C also has a degree in Foundation Phase education (BEd); she is currently a Grade 1 class teacher. The fourth participant (Participant D) is a female Grade 6 teacher. Her qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a Higher Diploma in Education (HDE). Participant D has been teaching for eight and a half years at School A. Participant E is male and his qualifications include a Bachelor of Education Honours degree specialising in Intermediate and Senior Phase. He is currently the principal of the preparatory school and has been in this position for almost 5 years. The final participant (Participant F) is a female Grade 4 class teacher and she has been teaching at School A for four and a half years. Her qualifications include a Bachelor of Social Science (BSocSci) and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

4.2 EXPOSITION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings will be presented according to the main themes uncovered during analysis. First an introduction to all themes will be presented, providing the reader with an overall structure for this section. Following that, each theme will be presented and discussed in detail.

4.2.1 Introduction of themes

The four main themes uncovered in this study are: diversity, inclusive education, school's responses to diversity and elements of school culture. Each theme arose out of the interview data gathered. They were topics mentioned on many occasions

and the four main elements that were spoken about by participants. Within each theme or category, sub-theme's exist. The four main themes were uncovered by placing several sub-themes with a common focus under one larger heading. The themes of this study have been presented in Figure 4.1. The sub-themes are presented in Table 4.1.

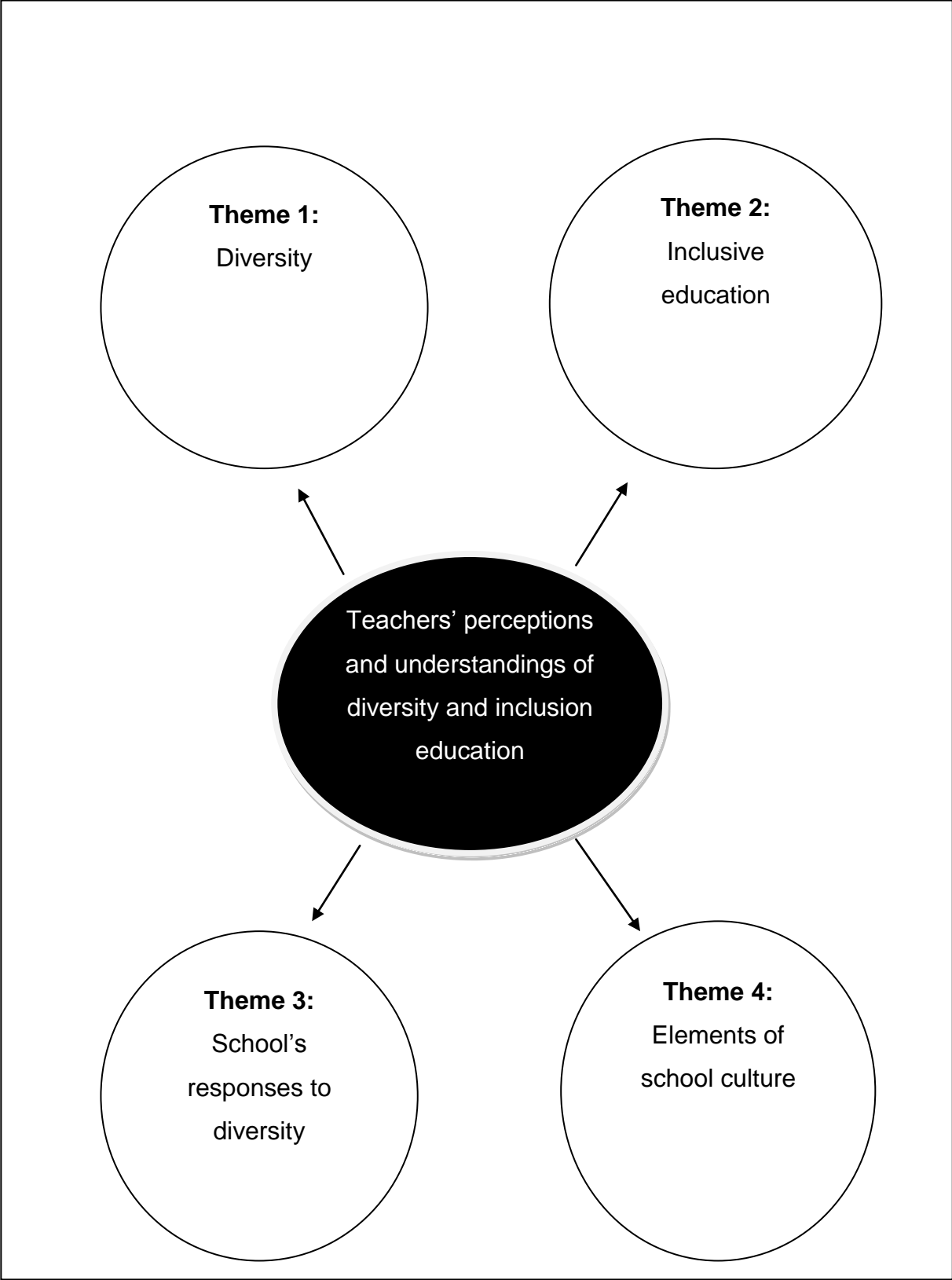


Figure 4.1: Illustration of the themes

Table 4.1: Illustration of themes and sub-themes

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' experiences of diversity • Teachers' understandings of diversity
Inclusive education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' understandings of inclusive education • Teachers' thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards inclusive education • Requirements for inclusive education • Barriers to inclusive education
School's responses to diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared vision – Values • Procedures within the school • Practices
Elements of school culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging among teachers • Unified staff • Belief that every child can learn • Attitude of acceptance

4.2.2 Theme 1: Diversity

“The global community shows up in our classrooms every day, inviting us – even requiring us – to grow as we learn from and with our students and families” (Howard, 2007, p. 16). Diversity is a reality in South Africa and in the school at the centre of this research. In this research, all responses given by participants that mentioned the words: ‘difference’ or ‘diversity’ were included in this theme. Diversity in the context of this study was explained in 2.4.

Participants were questioned about their daily experiences of diversity, their ways of working with it and their personal understandings of what diversity actually means to them. I found that there was an overwhelming consensus when looking at the experience these teachers have. When looking at the findings obtained regarding their personal understandings though, one sees some difference among participants. The first sub-theme that will be discussed is ‘teachers’ experiences of diversity’.

Teachers’ experiences of diversity

When talking to participants about what they actually experience in the classroom, they spoke mostly about the demographics of the school, mentioning that many different races, cultures, religions, abilities and socio-economic backgrounds co-exist on the school campus. Most participants mentioned that diversity is an everyday part of life in South Africa and therefore was quite ‘normal’ in the classroom. Participant B stated that, “it’s natural to be working in a diverse environment, that’s what our communities are and country is. If any school in South Africa is at all representative of the population, it has to be diverse” (Participant B). There was definitely a sense from teachers that being exposed to diversity is the ‘norm’ and that learners are

encouraged to embrace their own uniqueness. Participant E describes this; “because diversity is so much a part of this school, it filters into everything I do... but it’s just about being aware and using the difference in everyday experiences to learn and grow from it. I always try to encourage the children to embrace their own uniqueness.”

When speaking about how diversity is actually dealt with in the school, it was clear that the teachers in this school strive to use the diversity they are exposed to in the classroom to the benefit of all learners. They use the difference as talking points and aspects that can be learned from and incorporated into everyday teaching. The teachers are open to using and embracing the difference and diversity in the classroom. Most teachers stated that they make a concerted effort to use the difference as teaching points in the classroom. Comments from a few participants are included:

“I see the diversity as such a gift in classrooms today. Kids get to learn things they never would have before, things like tolerance, acceptance, information and facts about other languages and cultures. The diversity is something we should all be using and appreciating in our teaching every day” (Participant B).

“I do work very hard at trying to teach my children that their differences are what make them unique and special. I try to let them realise that we all have our own strengths and weaknesses and we can learn from each other” (Participant D).

“I can’t really think of any difficulties I’ve ever had with diversity, the only thing is the usual arguments that arise between children, but they never really become huge issues, because I will always make a point of discussing the issues in the class” (Participant F).

Teachers in this study understand and perceive diversity in such a way that encourages openness and learning in the classroom. They are consciously choosing to use diversity in the classroom to both increase awareness and encourage acceptance. Research in this area has mentioned the value of openness and acceptance of diversity – Sapon-Shevin (2008) notes that “classrooms cannot feel safe to anyone if discussions of difference are avoided, discouraged or considered inappropriate” (p. 50). Another author speaks about the importance of providing multiple opportunities for talking about diversity, differences and similarities should be explored (Calloway, 1999).

The teachers in this school seem to be approaching diversity in such a way that uses it to the advantage of all in the school environment. They see it as a reality in South Africa and therefore an element of education in the country. As Sapon-Shevin (2008) states, “in our increasingly diverse world, all people need to be comfortable with diversity...When we are surrounded by people who are different from us, we are forced to ask questions that go beyond the individual and address the community” (p. 50). This author continues to mention that the goal is not to make differences invisible, but to develop the language and skill to negotiate and embrace diversity (Sapon-Shevin, 2008, p. 50). The teachers in this school seem to be doing just that,

not ignoring the diversity, but using it in appropriate ways to create learning environments for the children.

Teachers' understandings of diversity

The majority of participants seemed to understand diversity as a version of difference. They each had their own unique way of explaining how they understood the concept, but the overall finding was that participants understood diversity by often simply describing it as "difference". Difference in their responses referred to language, race, culture, religion, academic ability and socio-economic status. Some also spoke of the importance of valuing diversity and the benefits of this for the classroom and the school in general. Some participants' understandings of the concept 'diversity' will be included now:

"Diversity is kind of just to do with difference and including all different types of races or cultures or religions" (Participant A).

"Diversity for me is having a whole lot of cultures together maybe in a school, community or church. Diversity is kind of lots of difference... I suppose diversity doesn't only have to refer to cultures and religions, it can also be people who have no special needs co-existing with people who do" (Participant C).

"Diversity means not everyone in the same race, gender or religion. Not everyone speaks the same language or is the same age. There are differences in socio-economic levels, different life experiences, different cultural practices, different kinds of intelligence all around us – and this to me is diversity" (Participant D).

“It’s all about difference... Any school calling itself diverse should aim to be inclusive. It’s because of these differences, one needs to embrace them and use them” (Participant E).

“Diversity is about accepting all different kinds of demographics, learning types and behaviours in the normal realms of society. We are surrounded by so much diversity and so much difference in South Africa that it would only make sense if our school were also diverse” (Participant F).

I found that teachers have a clear sense of what diversity is and also how they wish to approach it. Participants spoke of diversity in a positive way and I believe that these thoughts and understandings about diversity have far-reaching benefits for the teaching and learning that happens in the classrooms at School A.

Benjamin (2002) argues that, “the term ‘diversity’ allows for the reconceptualisation of difference and for the production of non-hierarchical identities. The school that ‘values diversity’ does not separate or exclude anyone, but instead celebrates the plurality of its community, to the benefit and inclusion of all” (p. 309). I found that the participants in this study had a good conceptualisation of what diversity actually refers to. It did not seem to be only a “buzz word” used around the school, but the teachers genuinely seemed to have a good understanding of what the concept refers to.

4.2.3 Theme 2: Inclusive education

Referring back to the research question: what are the teachers’ perceptions and understandings of diversity and inclusive education? The first theme that was

discussed looked at diversity: what teachers' understandings, experiences and perspectives are. This theme will focus on inclusive education. The sub-themes that will be covered are: teachers' understandings of inclusive education, teachers' thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards inclusive education, requirements for the successful implementation of inclusive education and barriers to inclusive education.

Teachers' understandings of inclusive education

When speaking to participants about inclusive education, it was clear that each participant had their own unique understanding of what the concept meant. A teachers' understanding of what inclusive education refers to could affect his or her response or attitude to it and in turn, affect the effectiveness of inclusive education.

I found that, to a large extent, the participants seemed to understand and grasp the true spirit of inclusive education. When looking closely at the content of the interviews, the main finding was that the teachers working at this school believe that inclusive education is a way of including all learners regardless of their ability, race, gender, religion, socio-economic status or culture. Teachers spoke mostly about the inclusion of learners with different academic needs and explained that the idea is to be able to have learners with different educational needs in one classroom and for all learners to have their needs met.

There also did seem to be a sense that inclusion refers specifically to including learners with disabilities and learning problems – making place for them in the mainstream environment. This idea is slightly contrary to the idea that inclusion is actually much bigger than that (Kinsella & Senior, 2008). It is about a culture or ethos

where difference and diversity is celebrated not just tolerated or made space for. Some of the personal understandings will be included now:

“The way I understand inclusion and inclusive education is... it is a way to lessen the separation between “normal” children and children with barriers to learning... Inclusion is kind of like looking at all the diversity and taking it into account and it still being okay and everyone’s difference being valued and appreciated because they are different” (Participant A).

“What inclusion is, is when children of diverse or different abilities are catered for and included in the regular mainstream school day... and catering for their individual needs” (Participant B).

“Inclusion is all about having every child in the classroom and meeting their individual specific needs, no matter what they are” (Participant C).

“Inclusion is not leaving someone out of the circle or group or conversation or of the game or activity... It is about an inviting stance, rather than a ‘turn-the-shoulder’ attitude. It is a conscious, decisive action that we take. [Inclusive education] is acknowledging that all children can learn and be taught, some may need different methods and approaches” (Participant D).

“Inclusivity and inclusive education encompasses the tolerance, support and involvement of children who learn and socialise differently to children who would be considered ‘normal’” (Participant E).

“Inclusion and inclusive education is the accommodation and space provided for learners with special needs to be accepted and taught in the mainstream of society... It’s about making these classrooms appropriate for these learners” (Participant F).

When looking at the literature, it is reported that inclusive education challenges all schools to cater for a wider range of learners. This implies that schools and teachers often have to change their understandings, practices and attitudes (Pijl & Frissen, 2009). Teachers' understandings of what inclusive education is could significantly affect whether they embrace the concept or not. Carrington (1999) acknowledges that teachers have their own unique understandings and beliefs about inclusive education and this definitely influences their actions in the implementation of inclusive practices. Some of the participants' understandings have been included; it may be useful at this point to provide a definition of inclusive education from the literature.

To define inclusion in a single definition is an impossible task as it means different things to different people in different contexts. However, there seems to be similarities and basic overlapping principles. "The definition of inclusion embodies a number of factors: (1) education needs to be non-discriminatory in terms of disability, culture and gender; (2) it involves all students in a community with no exception; (3) students should have equal rights to access the culturally valued curriculum as full-time members of age appropriate regular classrooms; and (4) there should be an emphasis on diversity rather than assimilation" (Carrington, 1999, p. 259). Described simply, inclusive education is about responding to diversity and being open to new ideas, empowering all members of a learning community and celebrating difference in dignified ways (Leeman & Volman, 2001).

Generally, I found that the teachers who participated in this study had a good understanding of what inclusive education entails. That is always a good starting point for any school in the process of becoming more inclusive.

Teachers' thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards inclusive education

An important subtheme that emerged in the process of analysis was regarding the personal feelings and attitudes towards inclusive education held by the teachers. We have just confirmed that the teachers working at School A have a clear sense of what inclusive education entails, it is now useful to look at what attitudes and personal feelings these teachers have towards inclusive education.

Teachers at School A seem to hold generally positive attitudes towards inclusive education. They generally hold the belief that all learners benefit from being in a school that is inclusive. Some of the views held by the teachers in this regard are included:

“I feel that [inclusive education] is wonderful in many ways and also that it doesn't quite work in other ways. It is wonderful for the child with special needs who gets to feel included in a mainstream environment, socially and emotionally and academically and it's also particularly great for mainstream children to be exposed to special needs learners and to learn to accept different people. ... However, I do think there is a down side though, when learners with special needs realise that they don't totally fit in, when they are older, they sometimes notice this, they may not be on the same social, emotional and academic level, sometimes then I feel that these children would

be happier in an environment with children who have similar needs to them, but then there are other times when I look at the benefits and I feel that having these learners in this environment far outweighs any of the things that would be negative about it” (Participant C).

“I feel that it must exist for the basic reason that inclusivity, the idea of including rather than excluding is central to what we teach children. I think it is important for the ‘normal’ or mainstream kids to be exposed to and also taught how to deal with the other children... I think the benefits are definitely there... yet I think they are definitely conditional or dependant on whether support and those things are in place” (Participant D).

“I could no longer imagine teaching in a school that doesn’t cater for children with special needs... I look at all the benefits that are gained from working towards being an inclusive school and the benefits far outweigh all the difficulties that are experienced” (Participant E).

“I feel there is definitely a place and a need for [inclusive education] and that it needs to be done with care and consideration to all of those who have to be involved and exposed to it. I feel that balance needs to be correct and there needs to be enough training and enough opportunities for learning, to be taught and to accept everyone for who they are. I think if all of these things are present, inclusive education is something that is beneficial for all people concerned” (Participant F).

Much research has been done in the field of teacher attitudes and the consensus is that teacher attitudes have a great influence on the effectiveness of inclusive education (Carrington & Robinson, 2004; Engelbrecht et al., 2006). The general statements the teachers made about inclusion suggested that, generally speaking, they were in favour of it in their school and they believed the advantages outweighed any disadvantages. Although all participants mentioned to some extent that inclusion is about accepting *all* learners and creating space for *all* learners, I got the feeling that these ideals were perhaps conditional. They seemed to believe that inclusion was beneficial for all learners, but that it was only possible if certain elements were in place (for example, appropriate support structures). This being said, I do feel that the teachers working in this school were in favour of inclusive education and were willing to put in the work required to make a success of it. Findings in this study support those found in other research where teachers' thoughts, feelings and attitudes were generally positive towards inclusive education and because of this, they were willing to work on making it succeed (Kinsella & Senior, 2008; Sadler, 2005).

Attitudes of teachers at School A seem to be positive and the only conditional aspects are regarding the requirements that teacher's feel they need to make inclusion work. This aspect was mentioned many times in the interviews and thus a sub-theme ('requirements for inclusive education') was created.

Requirements for inclusive education

This sub-theme arose out of the countless times the participants mentioned something that they felt was a requirement for inclusive education to work. As much as they supported the idea of inclusive education, they also backed up those views

with what they thought needed to be in place before inclusion could be successful. The main requirement mentioned by teachers was the need for support. They spoke about support in terms of: facilitators in the classrooms, regular meetings with support personnel and a general feeling of being supported as a member of staff.

Some participants' views are included now:

“The biggest thing above everything else is support. It is so important to have one person or a team of people to consult when something goes wrong or isn't working the way you planned or just to see how best to go about teaching a particular child” (Participant A).

“If [inclusive education] is implemented correctly, it can be very effective. But for something like that to be implemented correctly, there needs to be the right support structures in place, like for example, facilitators” (Participant B).

“What I have learnt first-hand is that for good facilitators to be with the children in the mainstream class is vital. I think willing and flexible teachers; we need a supportive and a broad-minded principal. Definitely money, I think, parents usually have to pay a facilitator privately and the costs of starting a specific special needs class can be very high... There also needs to be ongoing training options for teachers also” (Participant D).

“Teachers definitely need training on how to deal with specific kinds of learners, both emotionally and educationally... There also needs to be professional support for teachers in the form of facilitators and specialised educators, like OT's, physios and psychologists” (Participant F).

Much research has been done in this area – trying to determine what elements are necessary within a school to make the practice of inclusive education possible. Achieving an inclusive school community is dependent on establishing an inclusive school culture and climate and the involvement and collaboration of all role players within the school community. “It implies a process of reculturing learning and teaching whereby teachers and communities have to shift from a set of embedded assumptions, values, customs and practices that encourages maintenance of the status quo to one that promotes reform, including building a commitment for change and providing support that promotes and maintains change” (Engelbrecht et al., 2006, p. 122). According to Burstein et al. (2004), inclusion is not something that “just happens”, but rather something that requires careful thought and preparation, implemented with proper attitudes, support and adaptations in place. This is also echoed by Fox et al. (2004), where they mention that effective inclusion can only be a reality when an interaction of certain key factors takes place. One of the key elements they mention is that appropriate support for teachers is vital to the effectiveness of inclusive education. Hertberg-Davis and Brighton (2006) also found in their study that teachers needed administrator support, “both in terms of resources and emotional support – to feel comfortable with differentiating curriculum, instruction and assessment” (p. 99).

The findings by the authors mentioned above are mirrored in my research. The overwhelming requirement mentioned by participants was that support for teachers is a necessity. Other aspects that were mentioned are money, resources and appropriate training for teachers – but the overwhelming response was that teachers need support in order for inclusive education to be implemented successfully.

The discussion in this sub-theme shows that the findings in this study clearly support those in other research. I found that the teachers interviewed from School A do feel that they are well-supported in the school environment. Further discussion about teacher support will be included in a later theme but, for now, it is valuable to note that the most important requirement mentioned by teachers was support. The teachers at this school speak positively about the support they receive (this will be covered in a later theme). This is a way in which this school is working towards creating an environment where inclusive ideals can grow. The final sub-theme that will be looked at is barriers to inclusive education.

Barriers to inclusive education

There was generally consensus among the participants with regard to what barriers stand in the way of effective inclusive education. According to the teachers working at School A, the main barrier to the promotion of inclusive education would be teachers' attitudes. Participant A explains this sentiment very nicely:

“A big thing that would stand in the way [of effective inclusive education] would be teachers' perceptions, ideas or attitudes about particular children, about particular problems. I think as soon as teachers have closed their minds off to something or they think they are unable to cope with something, they no longer even try... I think a teacher's perception of their ability, of the child's ability and of the school's ability to cope with something makes a huge difference and could definitely potentially be a barrier.”

This ties in with the literature mentioned earlier in this chapter regarding the effect teachers' attitudes can have on the effectiveness of inclusive education. “Whereas in

truth it is the thoughts, words, deeds and hearts of members of the school community that create or stifle change. It has been widely recognised that effective change occurs when it happens from within” (Carrington & Robinson, 2004, p. 142).

Although all participants spoke about potential barriers to inclusive education, the main barrier being teacher attitudes, I definitely got the sense that this was not a barrier experienced at School A.

The discussion in the preceding two themes has shed light on what perceptions and understandings are held by teachers at School A regarding diversity and inclusive education. These essentially provide a clear answer for the first research question. The following discussions in theme three and four will look at how the data gathered answered the second research question: what elements of the schools’ culture create an environment where inclusive ideals can flourish? The aim was to find out what values, procedures and practices exist that allow the school to function as it does.

4.2.4 Theme 3: Schools’ responses to diversity

This theme was divided into three sub-themes: shared vision – values, procedures and practices. Each will be discussed separately; the first that will be looked at is ‘shared vision’.

Shared vision – Values

A strong theme emerged from the interviews whereby participants clearly explained the values held by themselves and also the shared vision and set of values held in

the school. Participant E described it by saying “our value system is all about respect and embracing diversity and using the diversity we have around us to create colourful creative classroom atmosphere’s where we learn from each other”. Another participant described the school’s values as “a positive and active approach to diversity” (Participant F). Participant F goes on to say that: “everyone’s attitude needs to be open-minded and willing to embrace different cultures and embrace different learning styles. Because we all have an open-minded attitude or outlook, it leads to a different type of school climate. And I do, for the most part, think that our prep school has got that.”

The school’s shared ideas and values about diversity are quite simply described by Participant C, when she says: “our school believes completely in embracing diversity.” With such a clear reported sense of what the values within the school are, School A is in a good position to grow and develop their inclusive practices even more.

Swart and Pettipher (2005) wrote that the values of an inclusive school should be those of equality, tolerance, acceptance, and the celebration of diversity. Although each participant described the school’s values in a slightly different and unique way, there was definitely consensus regarding the fact that all children in the school have potential and that acceptance is the norm. Respect is a core value in the school and this is reflected in the teachers’ attitudes and some of the school’s policy documents.

“Without a shared vision a school has little or no direction” (Carrington & Robinson, 2004, p. 144). Van Kraayenoord (2007) also adds that shared values within a school

create a sense of belonging for all staff and learners. She also mentions the importance within inclusive education for a school to value and embrace diversity (Van Kraayenoord, 2007). At School A, there definitely seems to be a common understanding between the staff that within this school, diversity is valued.

Procedures within the school

The second sub-theme within this theme is regarding the procedures that were mentioned by participants. As a way of responding to diversity, School A has put into place some procedures that are believed to help the school become more inclusive. This theme emerged as it was spoken about by all participants and definitely provides the reader with a clear way in which the teachers perceive and respond to diversity.

When looking closely at the respondents' comments regarding the procedures followed at School A, it is interesting to note that most participants mention the fact that within the school there are two specific classes that have been set up to cater for learners with more severe disabilities, those that (according to them) cannot be included in the mainstream classes.

“We cater for children who experience barriers to learning in many ways. Our mainstream classes include children who require extra attention and assistance and they also experience barriers. We also have a unit within the school that caters for children with severe special learning needs” (Participant E).

Participant A also describes this by saying, “we also have two specific classes within our school that cater for children with severe learning difficulties”. I find this point

fascinating as the idea of inclusion is not to have separation at all, but rather to include *all* learners in the school day.

Another interesting finding regarding the procedures followed at School A was that most participants mentioned that the school hires a person to be the 'diversity co-ordinator' at the school. She is someone who has extensive training in inclusive education and working with diversity. Her job description entails reviewing and creating relevant policies for the school, being aware of biases in practice with learners or staff and taking appropriate actions where necessary. She conducts diversity workshops and lessons with learners during their Life Orientation lessons as well as workshops for staff and parents on issues that arise during the everyday functioning of the school.

Participant A describes this job in the following way,

“There is even a job created at our school with the title, “diversity co-ordinator”, and her job as I understand it, is to make sure that we are a diverse school, learners, teachers, all staff, and it’s not just that we are diverse, but that we make use of these differences in such a way that benefits the whole school and that we all use the differences that we have to learn from each other.”

Within this school, there is definitely a sense that diversity is important and should be embraced, but when hearing participants describe the separate classrooms for learners with severe disabilities, one wonders if the true nature of inclusion is understood. Wiebe Berry (2006) quite poignantly states that “if integration and

inclusion of students with disabilities is satisfied by standards of participation rather than by standards of substantive opportunity to learn, the very point and purpose of special education and supposedly inclusion, is undermined” (p. 521).

Within this theme, the two main procedures mentioned by all participants was the fact that there are two extra separate classes for learners who are not able to be in the ‘mainstream classes’ and that the school hires a ‘diversity co-ordinator’. The fact that the staff at this school refer to their workplace as an inclusive environment does not sit well with me when hearing about the separate classes. My personal feeling is also that the ‘diversity co-ordinator’ may be put to better use by trying to find ways that would enable the children in the two separate classes to fully become part of the ‘mainstream’ functioning of the school as this fits more with the ideals of full inclusion (Kraayenoord, 2007).

Practices

A third and final sub-theme within the theme ‘school’s responses to diversity’ is regarding some of the specific practices encountered at this school. Specific practices followed at School A emerged as a strong theme when doing analysis of the data.

Participants mentioned many practices that occur within the school, two aspects will be focussed on. The first is that participants spoke about the regular meetings with management, the support team members and parents that help them feel supported and also part of a team. Another aspect was regarding the fact that the teachers feel that they can rely on each other and the management of the school for support

(emotional support and support related to teaching and academic issues). They understand that each teacher is often facing challenges and teachers seem to be open to assisting each other where necessary. These are all ways in which the school has chosen to respond to diversity.

With these elements in place, I am confident that School A does have a solid grounding for becoming more inclusive. Participant B describes the practices at the school:

“Something I’ve definitely noticed in the school is that every learner has a voice and every teacher is actively engaged in the whole process... Meeting with the head of the remedial team every fortnight to discuss ways of helping learners, meeting with the principal, meeting with other staff members, meeting with the parents, there’s a constant process that goes on looking at the best ways to teach and support every learner.”

Participant C adds the following comments:

“We are a group of keen staff members, we love what we do and we want to teach and learn every day. So I think the fact that we are all in a staff that is well-supported and supportive of each other, that’s, I think, the first thing that helps to support and create this culture in our school...”

Research has shown that for inclusive education to succeed the staff members of a school need to feel supported and be in constant contact with management and support personnel (Leo & Barton, 2006; Korinek et al., 1999; St Clair Hoare & Taylor, 2005). It has also been shown that parental involvement has been a driving and

decisive factor in the development of inclusive education around the world (Engelbrecht et al., 2005). With regular contact between staff and a sense that teachers are supported within their work environment, I think School A clearly has some key elements in place that could help steer it in the direction of becoming more inclusive.

4.2.5 Theme 4: Elements of school culture

This was a significant theme that emerged as all participants spoke about the general climate and culture of the school. They mentioned elements of school culture all the time, often without even realising that what they were saying was clearly describing the culture within the school.

An inclusive school culture is a cornerstone in the building of a unified, healthy, and caring school community (Harris & Muijs, in Swart & Pettipher, 2006). The culture of a school can be defined as “moving mosaics of beliefs, values, understandings, attitudes, norms, symbols, rituals and ceremonies, preferred behaviours, styles and stances and power structures” (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Bereford, in Swart & Pettipher, 2006, p. 107). School culture is deeply rooted in unique patterns of behaviour, thought and norms (Swart & Pettipher, 2006).

Because of the limited scope of this study, I did not intend to do an ethnographic case study. However, the elements of school culture presented as a strong theme. The four sub-themes within Theme 4 are: sense of belonging among teachers, unified staff, belief that every child can learn and attitude of acceptance.

Sense of belonging among teachers

“In a rich, caring classroom and school community, children feel welcome and part of the group. A strong community creates a sense of belonging and shared purpose where children learn and care for each other” (Bloom et al., 1999, p. 133). Although these authors speak specifically about the importance of a ‘sense of belonging’ for learners, the same rings true for teachers and staff members of a school. It was very clear to me that teachers at School A possessed this “sense of belonging” – it became clear to me when I closely noted the language they were using when describing the school. Often they used the words “our” or “we” when speaking about the school. This shows me that they definitely feel a sense of belonging within the school. When one works in such an environment, it is easier to deal with daily challenges because there is a sense of unity and of support.

Unified staff

A second element of school culture that became very apparent to me when speaking to the participants was that there is definitely a strong sense of a unified staff front.

Participant A describes this nicely when she says:

“I don’t think support is only from management level down, I think, as teachers, we need to be support for each other and I think as soon as you have this as a school – which I do feel our school has – everyone is kind of open to asking each other for help and learning from each other. I think as soon as that support base is there and that culture of support is instilled in all teachers, the school can go a long way.”

School cultures that reflect norms of collaboration and collegiality have been described as communities, rather than organisations, these kinds of communities not only accommodate, but also expect and embrace diversity (Kugelmass, 2001; Daane, Beirne-Smith & Latham, 2001).

This concept of collegiality is demonstrated nicely in the following comment:

“We perceive diversity as diverse religions and cultures and I say “we” because I really feel part of a staff that is ‘one’ and we work together with a common goal of getting all these kids to benefit from the teaching we do here and the type of education we do” (Participant B).

Being part of a staff that feels unified and supported is definitely a key component to making inclusive education work. This is an important aspect of school culture for School A. This finding leads one to believe that this school does have yet another important element in place to help it on its way to becoming more inclusive.

Belief that every child can learn

An aspect that is mentioned by most participants is that all teachers believe that all children at the school can learn. Comments made by Participant A describe the sentiment held by all the teachers who were interviewed:

“Our school is one that is open to the challenges that come with any learners and it could perhaps be more so... The main view needs to be that every child can learn, it is then up to us as teachers to find the easiest and best way for a particular child to learn, whether they have a barrier to learning or not. And I definitely feel that within our prep school, the majority of teachers feel this

way. They do see potential in every child and because we all feel that way, we all push and challenge these children to achieve... The levels of achievement are obviously quite different – but the fact that they are working towards their own potential is what's important to all of us" (Participant A).

This belief affects the attitudes teachers have towards the learners (Wiebe Berry, 2006). "Increasingly, schools are seeing past the label and historical medical picture and embracing a simple concept. A child is a person first and their difficulties are an add-on which, although posing difficulties, can be overcome by a good teacher, appropriate support and a positive attitude" (Johnson, 2006, p. 29). This certainly rings true at School A where I got the feeling that teachers genuinely believe that every child has the potential to learn. Teachers are by no means naive in thinking that every child has the *same* potential, but they definitely believe that each child *has* potential nonetheless. This is yet another element of this school's functioning and culture that help it to create an environment where inclusive ideals can develop and grow.

Attitude of acceptance

A final sub-theme that will be discussed is the widespread attitude of acceptance that is felt within School A. The overriding attitude is one of acceptance, respect and embracing diversity in this school. I found it to be a vital aspect of this school's culture that helps create a sense of belonging for the learners.

Participant B explains the importance of the right attitude in her own words:

“The only thing teachers need is the right attitude. An attitude of acceptance and a heart for wanting to help the learner achieve. All of the rest of the things can be learnt along the way, so for me, the correct attitude, one of complete acceptance, is what’s required and once you’ve got that, you can go anywhere with it really” (Participant B).

Another participant described what he experienced to be dominant attitude or value within the school,

“As a school, our value system is all about respect and embracing diversity and using the diversity we have around us to create colourful creative classroom atmosphere’s where we learn from each other ... The school definitely has a strong value system regarding that and I think you will find that in everyone’s attitude within the school” (Participant E).

The importance of teacher attitudes has been mentioned earlier in this chapter. Much research has found that teacher attitudes are essentially a deciding factor in whether inclusive education is successful or not (Lindsay, 2007; Frazier Cross et al., 2004; D’Alonzo, Giordano & Vanleeuwen, 1997). Teachers’ attitudes, values and beliefs affect the potential success of inclusive education – because of this, Carrington (1999) points out that inclusive education requires a different school culture. One where teachers believe every child has potential and their attitudes regarding inclusive education and the changes that may need to take place in their school are positive. Wedell (2008) states that “all young people should be valued as individuals so that the differences between them can be acknowledged without prejudice” (p. 127). I definitely found this to be the dominant attitude at School A.

I found that the teachers working at School A do have generally positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusive education. Regarding the importance of teacher attitudes in a school; I can conclude that because the teachers who work at School A have the attitudes they do, the school is in a better position to develop and grow in its inclusive practices.

4.3 SUMMARY

The above chapter has looked closely and discussed the findings of this study. From the analysis, four themes emerged from the data. These themes were: diversity, inclusive education, schools' responses to diversity and elements of school culture. Each theme was discussed in detail, along with the sub-themes within each category. By looking closely at the four themes that emerged, one can see a clear picture as to what the teachers' perceptions and understandings of diversity and inclusive education are. One should also have an understanding of the elements of the schools' culture that are at work to create an environment where inclusive ideals can grow and flourish.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As was mentioned before, this research enquiry explored teachers' perceptions and understandings of diversity and inclusive education. The research findings suggested that the teachers have well-informed understandings of what diversity and inclusive education refer to. They also have many of the key elements in place that work towards encouraging and promoting the growth of inclusive practices.

This chapter will present a summary of the research and concluding remarks on the main findings, discuss recommendations, reveal limitations and strengths of the study, and formulate suggestions for further research.

5.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Diversity is a reality in South Africa. The goal that we are faced with is not to make differences invisible, but to develop the language and skill to negotiate and embrace diversity (Sapon-Shevin, 2008). The school at the centre of this study is a school with a diverse learner and teacher population. Diversity in this school is visible in race, culture, socio-economic standing and academic ability, among other aspects. The aim of this study was to describe teachers' perceptions and understandings of diversity and inclusive education in School A. It was also to look at the schools' values, procedures and practices because these, along with the teachers' understandings and perceptions, work together to create an environment that either encourages the growth of inclusive practices or stifles it. This subsection will look at

an overview of the study and provide concluding remarks on the process and findings of the research.

Chapter 1 provided a contextualisation and statement of the problem. It focussed on the aim of the research and the research questions. The two main research questions guiding this research were:

- What are the teachers' perceptions and understandings around diversity and inclusive education in this school?
- And, according to the teachers, what elements of the school's culture create an environment where inclusive ideals can flourish? As part of this question, I hoped to find out what the school's values, procedures and practices are that allow it to function as it does.

This chapter also provided the reader with an overview of the research design and methodology.

Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature. Important concepts were defined and the theoretical framework underpinning this study was described. Inclusive education, diversity, school culture and attitudes were all defined within the context of this study. The theoretical framework was described showing how a move from the 'medical model' way of thinking was required. This great paradigm shift brought about ideas and thinking such as Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. The main tenets of this framework were described mentioning the value of looking at School A from this perspective – taking note of the interacting elements and levels within the school environment.

A brief background into the development of inclusive education was included as this provided vital background and context for this study. International developments and the development of normalisation, mainstreaming and integration were all mentioned, showing the progression to the current inclusive ideas that exist. This inclusive approach to education received its first major boost at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. Internationally, a move toward inclusion is in motion, policies are continuously being revised and practices made more inclusive. The developments and growth of inclusive education in South Africa was also focussed on. The historical developments from the superstitious attitudes held by society regarding people with special needs in the 1700's and early 1800's to the influence of the Church in the late 1800's and 1900's. Initially special education services were only provided for white people and only later did these services become available to all. From 1994, wide-scale transformation was set in motion, and with the creation of Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) building on previous policies and legislation, inclusive education, and its focus on addressing barriers to learning, was placed at the core of education transformation in South Africa.

An overview of current literature, with a focus on diversity and inclusive education, was also included. Some of the ways in which teachers and schools perceive, understand and approach diversity and inclusive education were mentioned. These elements included: promoting membership, facilitation of friendships, creating a strong sense of community and belonging in a school and creating a school culture whereby diversity is valued and inclusive ideals promoted. Overall, this chapter

served to situate the study within a theoretical framework, current literature, as well as the context of South Africa.

The focus of Chapter 3 was an overview of the research design and methodology of this study. The research question, aim and paradigm were all explained as well as an in-depth description of the methodology. The paradigm worked from in this research was the interpretive constructivist paradigm and a descriptive case study was done. Purposive sampling was done and semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants. The constant comparative method was used when analysing data.

Issues of reliability and validity were described as well as ethical considerations. There are a number of strategies that qualitative researchers can employ to promote the reliability and validity of a study. The following strategies were used in this research: triangulation, data verification – member checks, peer review, adequate engagement in data collection, audit trail and rich, thick descriptions. Ethical considerations were described; including: the informed consent form, the researcher's aim to keep all participant information confidential and their identities anonymous as well as the ethical clearance granted by the University.

Chapter 4 provided the reader with an overview and discussion of the findings of this study. As an introduction, the physical setting and the participants were described in some detail. The four main themes of the study were then introduced along with their sub-themes.

Within the Theme 1: Diversity, teachers' experiences of diversity as well as their understandings of diversity were looked at. Findings showed that the teachers are approaching diversity in such a way that encourages openness and learning in the classroom. The teachers have a good sense of what the concept means and they are consciously choosing to use diversity in the classroom to both increase awareness and encourage acceptance. I found that the teachers have a clear sense of what diversity is and also how they wish to approach it. All teachers spoke of diversity in a positive way and I believe that their understandings and perceptions about diversity have far-reaching benefits for the teaching and learning that happens at School A.

The second theme, Theme 2: Inclusive Education, focussed on teachers understandings of inclusive education, their personal feelings and attitudes towards it, requirements for inclusive education and barriers that stand in the way of the effective implementation of inclusive education.

I found that, generally, the participants seemed to understand and grasp the true spirit of inclusive education. An important finding was that the teachers working at this school believe that inclusive education is a way of including all learners regardless of their ability, race, gender, socio-economic status or culture. There also did seem to be a sense that inclusion refers mainly to including learners with disabilities and learning problems – making place for them in the mainstream environment. As mentioned in Chapter Four, this idea is slightly contrary to the idea that inclusion is actually much bigger than that. It is more about a culture or ethos where difference and diversity is celebrated.

I can conclude that the teachers who participated in this study had a good understanding of what inclusive education entails. This is an encouraging starting point for any school in the process of becoming more inclusive. Linked to the understandings teachers have in inclusive education, is their attitudes and personal feelings towards it. Attitudes of teachers at School A seem to be positive and all teachers interviewed believe that the benefits of inclusive education outweigh the disadvantages.

It was found that teachers expressly believe that a vital component of successful inclusion is that they have the appropriate support systems in place. I found that the teachers interviewed from School A believe that they are well-supported in their school environment. The fact that all teachers feel well-supported in their work is another way in which this school not only approaches diversity, but also works towards creating an environment where inclusive ideals can grow.

Although all participants spoke about potential barriers to inclusive education, the main barrier mentioned was teacher attitudes. Although the teachers are aware that this is a potential barrier, I definitely got the sense that this was not a barrier experienced at School A. The attitudes of the staff were encouraging to see. The values of respect and acceptance are clearly the “norm” among the teachers at School A.

The third theme (Theme 3: School’s responses to diversity), was divided into three sub-themes: shared vision – values, procedures and practices. The value system of

the school is described by participants as being all about respect and embracing diversity. They also spoke about the importance of being open-minded and being open to learning from each other. Such values are clearly aspects that add to the school's ability to approach diversity effectively and become more inclusive.

Within this theme, two procedures were focussed on: the two extra separate classes for learners who are not able to be in the regular classes and that the school hires a diversity co-ordinator. My personal feeling was that the diversity co-ordinator could possibly be given a further task: trying to find ways that would enable the children in the two separate classes to fully become part of the regular functioning of the school. With regular contact between staff and a sense that teachers are supported within their work environment, I concluded that School A has some of the key elements in place that will help steer it in the direction of becoming more inclusive.

Theme 4: Elements of school culture; had 4 sub-sections and the main findings were as follows: there was a sense of belonging felt by the teachers working at School A. When one works in such an environment, it is easier to deal with daily challenges because there is a sense of unity and of support.

Being part of a staff that feels unified and supported, is a key component to making inclusive education work. This is an important aspect of school culture for School A. This finding leads one to believe that this school does have yet another important element in place to help it on its way to becoming more inclusive. At this school, it was also evident that teachers are of the belief that every child has the potential to learn. I found that the teachers working at School A do have generally positive

attitudes towards diversity and inclusive education. Because of the attitudes the teachers at School A have, I can conclude that the school is in a better position to develop and grow in its inclusive practices.

The data generated and the themes and sub-themes created all formed part of a process that essentially allowed me to answer the original research questions. Looking at the reported findings, I can conclude that the research questions posed have been well addressed and answered in this study. The reader should have a clear idea as to what the teachers' perceptions and understandings regarding diversity and inclusive education are, as well have a better understanding of what the elements of this school's culture are, that create an environment where inclusive ideals can flourish.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the research and with regards to the school, various recommendations are made. They are presented below:

- School A should be encouraged to look into the possibilities of incorporating the learners from the two extra 'special needs' classes into the 'mainstream' classes of the school. With the help of the diversity co-ordinator, arrangements can be made to expose these learners to the general functioning of the school day in one of the regular classes.
- The management team of the school should ensure that all staff members are always kept abreast of the latest developments, changes and advancements

in inclusive education and education in general. Continuous training opportunities should be made available to all staff members.

- The management of School A and its teachers should constantly work to keep up the high motivation levels and the support between the staff, as this will help to ensure that inclusive practices continue to develop in the school.
- Tied in to the previous recommendation, the school should continue to encourage the maintenance of the current culture of respect and acceptance. They should constantly work at keeping the view that every child can learn and should be helped to reach his or her own potential.
- Finally, I think it may also be beneficial to connect School A with other schools in their area. This would provide other schools with an opportunity to get a sense of the daily practices and ethos at School A. Because all schools differ, it may be useful for different schools to link up and share experiences.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has certain limitations that need addressing in future research. This research represents only a small-scale study and cannot be generalised to the large-scale education population in South Africa. A larger or more comprehensive study or similar studies done concurrently across a wider range of school contexts, and including a more diverse sample of teachers might have been more effective. The involvement of more educators, parents and learners could have added a broader perspective on the outcome of the research.

Within this study, an in-depth focus on the challenges teachers face when dealing with diversity would have been useful and beneficial. Approaches that teachers employ to deal with challenges faced would have been relevant.

When the aim of the study is to explore approaches, perceptions and understandings of teachers working at School A, a large number of participants to be interviewed and a wide variety of data sources, provide for a thorough study of the unit of analysis. Because of the limited scope of the study, I also did not interview a large number of participants. This would have provided for a comprehensive study of the school. Even though qualitative research claims that in-depth information can be gathered from a small group of participants, larger groups increase the transferability of the research findings.

Another limitation has to do with data collection. Being a non-participant observer within the classrooms would have helped me to gather first hand information on the methods of teaching, adaptations made, and social interactions. Rather, this data was gathered only from interviews with the participating teachers. Multiple interviews with the participants could have provided richer data. Description of specific incidences could have added value to the richness of the data.

Another limitation was that there was not another person involved in the data analysis and coding. This would have added to the reliability of the study.

In doing future research, focus groups can assist the researcher to explore the topic in depth through group discussions. Focus groups can convey key information and

can be an efficient way to collect a wide range of information. These groups will also enable the researcher to identify possible information-rich participants who will illuminate the questions under study by yielding insights and in-depth understanding.

A final limitation is that the voices of the parents and the learners were not heard in this research. Because of the limited scope of the study, only teachers were focussed on, but it would be beneficial to do a further research with the learners of this school and their parents. This is another research opportunity that can be focussed on in the future.

5.5 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The participants in the study provided valuable information and insight into how they perceive and understand diversity and inclusive education. This study has provided the participants with the opportunity to express their own understandings and perceptions as well as their personal feelings and attitudes towards diversity and inclusive education.

Through this study the researcher was able to identify areas where the school is working effectively to promote the ideals of inclusion and also discovered areas where more work can still be done. Because of this, useful recommendations were made for the key role players in the school. The recommendations involve ways to further improve the school environment and the teachers' experience of and approaches to diversity and inclusive education.

The study highlighted the important elements of the current school functioning that provide a grounding for inclusive ideals to grow. The final strength of the study is that it gathered in-depth and first-hand information from those directly influenced by and involved in the process of working with diversity in a setting that is working towards being inclusive.

5.6 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

Further research can be done within a fully inclusive school to investigate all the different ways in which they approach and work with diversity and different abilities. This can provide useful insight into the adaptations and adjustments that can be made to practices, attitudes, procedures and general everyday functioning of school that are in the process of becoming more inclusive.

A research study can also be done focussing specifically on the experiences of learners within this school or any other school in the process of adopting inclusive practices. The experiences and information gained from learners may provide a useful insight into changes or adjustments that still need to be made within the school.

A further study can be done at School A in a few years time, looking at the growth and development of the current practices and also focussing on what changes have been made and what the consequences are.

Finally, a study can be conducted on the important role that parents can play in the functioning of this school or others like it. Participants did mention parental

involvement at times, but it may be useful to do research with parents of the school, focussing on their experiences and understandings of the current school functioning.

5.7 CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I drew the different parts of the study to a conclusive whole; I revealed the limitations and strengths of the study and discussed recommendations and further research possibilities. The process of completing this research has been an enlightening one, one where I have learned so much and where the participants have also learned a lot about themselves and their school. Although School A, still has a way to go in the process of becoming inclusive, the current practices, ethos and school culture is encouraging to see and I can only hope that one day more schools implement the changes, adaptations and practices that School A has, because they truly are on the way to becoming more inclusive.

It is through school cultures like the one described in this study that one can have hope for the future of education in South Africa and also for the nature of the child that is growing up in such an education system. If such values and morals are modelled for our children every day, one can be optimistic that such approaches to diversity and difference will be mirrored in the way the children interact with the 'real world'. As a concluding thought, I would like to include a question posed by Fisher (2005, p. 205), he, quite poignantly, asked:

“How different will it be when children who understand and celebrate individual differences run the world?”

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ADDENDUM A – INFORMED CONSENT FORM

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Teachers' approaches to dealing with diversity: a case study of one school.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Miss Bronwyn Barnes, from the Educational Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results obtained will contribute to a Masters Research thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently working at [*School A*] – this is the school at the centre of the focus in this study.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to establish or investigate the ways in which your school approaches diversity. This study aims to look closely at what the schools perceptions and understandings of diversity and inclusive education are. The purpose is to establish how teachers conceptualise and experience diversity in classrooms today.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Listen to a brief explanation of the study, its purpose and aims.
- Complete an Informed Consent form.
- Be available to attend an individual interview where questions regarding your school, work environment, personal knowledge and perceptions will be discussed. The interview will take place at a time that suits you and the interview should take more or less one hour. It will be conducted at your school or a place that suits you, so as to minimise inconvenience for you as participant.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You will potentially gain greater insight into your current working environment. You will also gain greater insight into your own knowledge and perceptions about diversity and inclusive education. Awareness will be raised as to specific elements of the often 'taken-for-granted' culture and ethos of the school.

This study is extremely relevant and beneficial when looking at the wider society. Although this school is not being labelled as a 'perfect inclusive school', there are many aspects of this school's functioning that put it further along the path of becoming inclusive in comparison to other schools. It therefore may prove to be useful to some South African schools to read about the current practices and culture of this school – it could potentially provide insights, talking points and inspiration for schools that seem to be struggling with their own approaches to diversity. Within both education and inclusion there is by no means a 'one size fits all' approach – yet, focussing specifically on a school that has found a way of approaching diversity that is appropriate for all learners concerned, may be both relevant and important for other schools.

This study can also be seen as a way of showing that there are schools that, despite difficulties, that manage to rise above and create environments that genuinely embrace diversity and aim to create appropriate suitable learning experiences for all learners.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not be paid for their participation in this study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding procedures that will ensure that all participants remain anonymous throughout the process. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet, with only the researcher having access to it.

Information will only be shared with the supervisor working with the researcher on this study.

Interviews will be audio-taped and the participant has the right to review the tapes. Only the researcher will have access to the audio tapes that will also be kept in a locked cabinet.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Bronwyn Barnes: Principal Investigator or Estelle Swart: Supervisor. Contact numbers: Bronwyn Barnes – 0839530342, bronwynbarnes4@hotmail.com and Estelle Swart – 0218082306, estelle@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Mrs Malene Fouche at the Division for Research Development [Contact: 0218084222, mfouche@sun.ac.za]

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Miss Bronwyn Barnes in English and I am command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____
[*name of the subject/participant*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date

ADDENDUM B – ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

6 August 2010

Tel.: 021 - 808-9183
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Reference No. 364/2010

Ms BA Barnes
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7602

Ms BA Barnes

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *Teachers' approaches to dealing with diversity: a case study of one school*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards



MR SF ENGELBRECHT
Secretary: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Non-Health)

Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling • Division of Research Development

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ADDENDUM C – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview schedule for semi-structured interviews

What are this schools (and its teachers) perceptions and understandings around diversity and inclusive education?

- Describe the school you currently work at – structure of grades, number of learners, demographics, number of staff members, interesting facts
- Experienced teachers say that their classrooms are much more diverse than in the beginning of their careers. What is your experience?
- What type of diversity do you work with?
- How do you go about working with diversity in your daily functioning?
- What have you experienced as difficulties? What helped you in the process? What did you learn?
- What is your understanding of ‘inclusive education’? Have you had any training in this area?
- What are your personal thoughts and feelings about inclusive education?
- Describe what you believe to be your schools’ perceptions and approaches to diversity

What elements of the schools culture create an environment where inclusive ideals can flourish?

- What do you think is required to make a school more inclusive of diversity?
- From your experience, what do teachers require when working in a school that is in the process of becoming more inclusive?
- What are your schools’ values, procedures and overall views that allow it to be as inclusive as it is?

- Are there any specific practices, policies or procedures that occur in your school that help to create an environment where diversity is celebrated?

[This schedule for the semi-structured interview provides a guide for a line of questioning. Yet, the interview is driven by the responses given by the participant. By using the responses given to initiate and continue conversation, the above areas of interest are incorporated in a sensitive, appropriate manner.]

ADDENDUM D – EXCERPT FROM A TRANSCRIPT

Excerpt from a transcript

Interviewer: Thank you. In your first answer when you described your school, you were saying that your school has a focus on diversity; could you explain what your understanding of this concept of “diversity” is?

Participant: Um... diversity is kind of just to do with difference and including all different types of races or cultures or religions and, um... inside a particular school or community. So our school is a particularly diverse one, because there are children from many different backgrounds. Different socio-economic backgrounds and different parental structures, different family structures ... ja, so it's definitely diverse, ja, so diverse to me, just means difference.

Interviewer: Thank you for that. You've mentioned some of the different types of diversity that you experience at your school, how do you go about working with diversity every day? Have you ever experienced any difficulties and what has helped you in the process?

Participant: I suppose I go about working with diversity the same way I would work with anything else. I mean, having a diverse classroom just requires a teacher to be more aware of the differences and to use the difference to the children's advantage...umm... what was the second part of the question?

Interviewer: I asked if you had ever experienced difficulties and then what helped you in that process?

Participant: oh yes... the only difficulty I've really experienced was when I had a little girl in my class who didn't speak English very well when she came into my class. She was a new child and her home language was Xhosa. For a little while it was difficult and quite frustrating for both her and me but with lots of patience and help from more experienced teachers and her parents, we grew so much together and her confidence and English ability improved greatly.

ADDENDUM E – MISSION STATEMENT

“SCHOOL A”

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to create a happy, vibrant school offering quality education in a challenging, sharing and caring environment

OUR MOTTO

Virtute et Valore

The courage to do what is right

OUR SCHOOL CODE

We have adopted the word **respect** as our school code

Respect for myself

Respect for others

Respect in relationships

Respect for property

Respect for the environment

Respect for the wider community

(School A, Mission Statement)

ADDENDUM F – ANTI-BIAS POLICY

“SCHOOL A” – ANTI-BIAS POLICY

Recognizing that schools play a major role in either perpetuating or combating forms of unfair discrimination and oppression (such as racism, sexism, class-ism, able-ism, linguicism etc.) [Robb, 1992], and that prejudice, stereotyping, unfair discrimination and inequality still exists in our society, [*School A*] is committed to:

- promoting an anti-bias approach and practice throughout the whole school, ensuring that all forms of prejudice, bias, stereotyping and unfairness will be addressed
- providing a welcoming, safe, secure and inclusive school community and learning environment in which every member of the school community feels valued and respected
- developing a value system based on respect, equality and dignity of all people
- promoting a culture of human rights, peace and democracy
- achieving diversity and equity within the school community
- creating a school that is inclusive, multicultural, multilingual and anti-bias.

Definitions:

Anti-bias:

A proactive approach that challenges prejudice, stereotyping, bias and all forms of unfair discrimination and oppression

Bias:

Refers to an attitude, opinion or feeling that results in and helps to justify unfair treatment of an individual because of her or his identity

Diversity:

Refers to an inclusive collection of individuals and groups who bring varied human characteristics, qualities and capabilities, backgrounds, lifestyles, experiences, interests and points of view to enrich the school community.

The term diversity encompasses a number of dimensions and aspects including, race, gender, ability (mental and physical), age, ethnicity and nationality, geographic origin, language, culture, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical appearance, situational and health factors.

Inclusive:

Refers to learners and adults from diverse backgrounds being included in, belonging to and having equal status within the whole school community. It refers to our policy and practice being welcoming, acknowledging, valuing, accepting and respecting of all individuals and groups of individuals and their differences.

Multilingual:

Acknowledging and reflecting the different languages represented within our school community with a particular focus on promoting the 3 main languages of the Western Cape – Xhosa, Afrikaans, English.

Multicultural:

Refers to recognizing, valuing, respecting and affirming all differences and similarities (all aspects of one's identity, not just one's culture)

[School A] is committed to promoting an Anti-Bias Approach because we believe and understand that:

- it is inclusive in that it recognizes, understands, appreciates and draws on all differences and similarities

- it affirms all learners, their families and their experiences
- it fosters the development of positive self concepts
- it is flexible and open, creating spaces for different perspectives and worldviews
- it is proactive – it assumes bias exists and addresses all biases
- it challenges any form of prejudice, stereotyping, bias and discrimination
- it encompasses human rights education, peace education and democracy
- it is a dynamic and ongoing process

Implementation:

- Ensure that our Mission Statement is a living one.
- Regularly reflect on and evaluate practices within the school to ensure that it is in line with the school's Mission Statement
- Ongoing staff development opportunities – workshops, presentations and discussions on topics including, diversity and inclusion, transformation, race, gender, religion, able-ism, human rights education and values in education.
- Create opportunities for staff to discuss, debate, examine and explore issues of bias, stereotyping, unfairness and discrimination.
- Create opportunities for staff to reflect on their own beliefs and practices within the school and to unlearn one's prejudice
- Encourage staff to be vigilant about what they say and do as well as what they don't say and don't do
- Review the school's policies and procedures and update them when necessary.
- Prep, Middle and Senior schools to regularly evaluate methodology, curriculum, teacher and learner support materials and resources.

- Create and maintain a visual environment that reflects our rich diversity
- Acknowledge the various religious holidays and celebrations as well as public holidays – assembly, class discussions, newsletters, notice-boards
- While remaining an Anglican school to continue to create and maintain a culture and ethos that welcomes, acknowledges and respects other religions and faiths.
- Promote multilingualism and create and maintain a multilingual environment with a focus on the 3 languages of the Western Cape (English, Xhosa, Afrikaans)
- Ensure diversity and equity in the workplace by reflecting on our practice and actively engaging the Employment Equity Forum
- Create opportunities for learners to discuss, debate, examine and explore issues of discrimination, unfairness and inequality.
- Ensure that programmes on conflict management, teambuilding, assertiveness training, building self esteem, building empathy etc form part of the curriculum [Life Orientation / Life Skills Learning programme]
- Encourage learners to engage in democratic processes within the school viz. Student Council and PTSA which serve as mechanisms for democratic practice.
- Ensure inclusive practice amongst all staff - teaching, administrative and service staff.
- Promote and maintain a culture of acknowledging, affirming and valuing all staff.
- Ensure that communication throughout the school (with learners, staff, governors, parents, visitors) is effective
- Encourage meaningful parent involvement. Consult with parents, drawing on their expertise and experience.

(School A, Anti-Bias Policy, 2005).

ADDENDUM G – INCLUSION POLICY

“SCHOOL A” – INCLUSION POLICY

“Inclusion means changing the attitudes and practices of individuals, organizations and society so that all children and adults can fully participate in and contribute to the life of their community.

An inclusive society is one in which differences are respected and valued, and where prejudice and discrimination is actively combated in policy and practice,”

Prof Roy McConkey

[School A]’s Anti-Bias Policy embraces a philosophy of inclusive practice (see *Anti-Bias Policy doc*). We at [School A] use the term ‘Inclusion’ and ‘Inclusive practice’ in its broadest sense, to mean the following:

- that every member of the school community: learners, staff, parents and governors, feels acknowledged and valued and that she/he belongs;
- that all differences and similarities are recognised, acknowledged, affirmed and valued;
- that we strive towards being responsive to, and meeting the needs of all within the school community.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE AND THE LEARNERS:

At [School A] we believe that every child has special needs at some stage or another. We also recognise that our learners have different abilities, strengths, multiple intelligences as well as areas for growth. We strive to meet the social, emotional, and scholastic needs of all our learners: the high achiever, the average learner, the below average learner, learners with learning difficulties or barriers to learning.

Learners with learning difficulties or barriers to learning refer to any child requiring particular support, special intervention both within and outside of the classroom.

With regard to learners with identified special needs, we will admit a learner to our school if we believe:

- that the child will benefit from her/his experience at our school;
- that the school is able to meet the child's educational needs;
- that others within the school will benefit from the child's presence;
- that the child's presence will not in any way hinder the progress of the other learners;
- that the ratio of learners requiring regular support does not exceed 20 - 25% in any given class.

Support for Learners

The use of facilitators (who are employed by the parents) may be encouraged in cases where the learner requires more individual attention and extra support.

Support to Staff:

In order for staff to meet the needs of their learners, we undertake to:

- facilitate discussions on what it means to be an inclusive school;
- inform and prepare staff for any new learner with special needs requiring support;
- make available where possible, readings, articles and resources on relevant topics;
- encourage staff to access information from libraries, organisations, the internet to broaden and deepen their knowledge;

- provide ongoing staff development opportunities (training courses, talks, workshops, discussions) to equip staff with the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to work with learners with different abilities;
- provide a support system where staff meet individually and in teams with the support co-ordinator to share ideas, discuss areas of concern and areas of success;
- conduct annual special needs audits to ensure that we maintain a reasonable balance in terms of learners requiring special attention and regular support.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE AND THE STAFF

- Our understanding of inclusion extends to our practice as a staff. The word staff refers to all those employed by the school: management, teaching staff, administrative staff, support staff and service staff (cleaning, kitchen and grounds staff), part-time and full-time staff, permanent, ad hoc and contract staff. As an educational institution, we actively engage in establishing a culture of human rights and dignity for all.
- In so doing, we undertake to ensure that:
- all staff, irrespective of their position and status within the school, will be acknowledged and valued and treated with respect and dignity;
- all staff will be included in the life of the school and attend school functions and meetings where appropriate;
- Invitations to social functions such as the end of year staff lunch, the Head's cocktail party, the Board of Governors function, include all staff. We recognise that in some cases transport will have to be arranged for staff to make it possible for them to attend.

- All staff will be referred to and addressed in the same way viz. by their title and surname.
- The annual staff photograph will include all categories of staff mentioned above.
- There will be opportunities for combined staff meetings and staff development programmes.
- Inclusive practice and an anti-bias approach are key aspects of the culture and ethos of *[School A]*. We recognise that inclusion and inclusive practice are Human Rights issues. We are committed to working within the framework of our Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the SA Schools Act, White Paper 6 on Inclusion in promoting and maintaining a culture of human rights and dignity for all.

(School A, Inclusion Policy, 2006)

ADDENDUM H – LEARNER SUPPORT POLICY

“SCHOOL A” – LEARNER SUPPORT POLICY (PREP SCHOOL)

At [School A] every child matters

In keeping with our philosophy that **every child has special needs** at some stage or another, we have modified our system of academic support to include all learners. We also subscribe to the belief that **every child has special abilities**.

At [School A] every teacher is a generalist and every teacher is a specialist. This is enabled by the philosophy that every person has something to offer in the way of finding solutions to difficult problems that challenge children’s lives. A consultative approach, accessible staff and tireless dedication are all in evidence in the school.

Principles

It is our undertaking that we will be effective in:

- coordinating academic, social and emotional support for children from Pre-School to Grade 6;
- consulting with teachers, parents and learners on the important areas of learning and socio-emotional development of our children;
- early identification of areas needing support and intervention;
- facilitating our children’s development of sound Problem Solving abilities so that they leave school one day prepared for living life in a creative and positive way;
- ensuring a carryover of these important problem solving skills into the daily curriculum in the classroom and on the playground;

- ensuring opportunities for regular meetings between teachers and the support staff to discuss every child in every class;
- conducting an annual Special Needs audit, which captures each child's special abilities and areas needing further development; and
- promoting the efficacy of teachers in working with children in a way that promotes confidence, love of discovery and awareness of preferred learning styles.

Support Services include

1. Consulting on *learning difficulties*
2. Consulting on *emotional/social difficulties*
3. Supporting *facilitator-assisted learning* as required
4. *Supporting the co-ordinator of the Grade 04 Special Needs Unit as required*
5. Overseeing new and innovative approaches to *providing learning support* as part of the school programme
6. Creating opportunities for the development of *Cognitive Education and Emotional Intelligence programmes* in the school as part of staff training and as part of the curriculum

1. Consulting on learning difficulties

- overseeing the screening for learning difficulties for all incoming learners
- annual re-screening and tracking of children at risk for learning difficulties throughout the grades
- meeting weekly with class teachers to discuss the progress and Special Needs of every learner in every class

- assisting in the development of Individual Education Intervention programmes for children where needed
- facilitating meetings between parents, teachers and therapists as regards children's progress in the learning and socio-emotional areas
- liaising with a team of in-house therapists who offer their services on the school premises (occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, a physiotherapist and a remedial therapist).
- coordinating weekly consultative Teacher Support Team meetings for discussion of more complex problems
- liaising with doctors and therapists who are in private practice or at local government hospitals or clinics.
- offering some therapeutic intervention to learners with specific barriers to learning (this is an area that is addressed by in-service teachers and also outsourced to our network of therapists in private practice, where necessary)
- accommodating new computers in the support room, so as to allow for some learners to have access to developing their typing and word-processing skills.
- sourcing computer-assisted spelling, Maths and reading programmes that allow for some children with specific learning needs to develop their skills in these areas

2. Consulting on emotional/social difficulties

- providing counsel and support to teachers, learners and parents individually and in groups where required
- running Conversation Club discussions with learners during break
- offering opportunities for learners to make appointments to discuss troubling

issues affecting their school lives

- making the Support Room accessible to all learners and encouraging children to visit this room for relaxation and play during specified break periods, so as to de-stigmatize the idea that only certain people require support
- introducing/supporting/making visible conflict resolution opportunities to the children in the Prep.
- responding to situations of conflict, as teaching opportunities for the development of Mediation Skills.
- supporting and encouraging staff and children to develop their skills in their approach to resolving conflict.
- developing a strong focus on Emotional Intelligence Skills during our Life Orientation programmes.
- introducing/supporting the Peer Mediation Programme as part of the Grade 6 Life Orientation programme. (The Grade 6 class teacher has had intensive training and currently runs this programme with Grade 6 learners, supported by the Support Co-ordinator and Prep School Principal)
- introducing a discipline policy that requires counseling as part of disciplinary support (see discipline policy)

3. Facilitator-assisted learning

- Supporting the introduction of facilitator-assisted learning at the school. (Prior inclusion of children had always been simply including these children unassisted, into the mainstream classroom.)

- Two children have been included in this project to date. Both cases have been considered successful.
- Mentoring and guiding facilitators and staff involved with these particular children

Grade 04 class (Special Needs Unit within our school)

- providing mentorship and support to the class teacher of the unit
- being available for counseling and support to the children where needed
- actively fostering good relationships between the children in the unit and the children and staff in the mainstream section of the school
- participating in social and educational activities when invited

4. Overseeing the provision of Learning Support groups

All children are catered for in this in-house Support Programme which is designed to provide 'free' in-house extra lessons to children needing to develop the underlying skills necessary for successful learning at school.

Book Worm Club and Maths Club are offered to Grades 1 and 2. Here class teachers teach extra reading and extra Maths to children experiencing difficulties in these areas.

Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 have a Support Period as part of their school week. In this period they receive extra reading skills, extra Maths skills or are identified for extension/research skills lessons in the library and computer rooms.

In our commitment to further develop Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Skills we also offer the following private group therapies. These are skills based groups that have been developed from the respective therapeutic disciplines.

Talking Circles group support:

- Learners with attention and listening difficulties
- Learners with delayed language or language difficulties
- Thinking skills for gifted underachievers (Learning Extension Programme)

Fine-motor groups development and support.

- pre-writing skills
- writing skills

5. Cognitive Education and Emotional Intelligence programmes

We believe that developing children's awareness of thinking skills is an important part of developing pathways to learning that will extend learners' creative potential in all areas. This is currently evolving by:

- supporting a Cognitive approach to teaching throughout the Prep School
- developing teachers understanding of a mediational approach to teaching.
- encouraging children's Cognitive Skills in the training of our teachers to teach cognitively to different kinds of minds.
- supporting teachers in identifying opportunities for implementing this theory as "real practice" in the classroom and playground.
- supporting children by referring to specialized groups or individual programmes e.g. Talking Circles for Gifted Underachievers; Instrumental Enrichment programmes.)

- supporting the teaching of Emotional Intelligence skills via the Life Orientation lessons.

- The Diversity Coordinator and the Support Coordinator assist in offering modules to classes in their relevant specializations of anti-bias, and counseling practices.

- introducing a Passion Portfolio Programme as part of the Grade 6 curriculum for the encouragement of a sense of personal ability and self worth. This serves as an opportunity for children to prepare to leave the Prep School and be ready for the transition into a new stage of their schooling and lives.

The *[School A]* school community is committed to making inclusive practice a successful and seamless daily reality.

(School A, Learner Support Policy, 2006)

ADDENDUM I – EXAMPLE OF CODING PROCESS – EXCERPT OF RAW DATA

Example of coding process – Excerpt of raw data

<u>Excerpt from interview</u>	<u>Codes</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>	<u>Themes</u>
<p>“Something I’ve definitely noticed in the school is that <u>every learner has a voice</u> and <u>every teacher is actively engaged in the whole process</u>. Um... <u>meeting</u> with the head of the remedial team every fortnight to <u>discuss ways of helping learners</u>, meeting with the <u>principal</u>, meeting with <u>other staff members</u>, meeting with the <u>parents</u>, there’s a constant process that goes on <u>looking at the best ways to teach and support</u> every learner, not just the ones with specified learning difficulties. And I think the fact that <u>every child is taken seriously and is seen as having potential</u> that really is <u>part of what we as a school believe</u>.”</p>	<p>All teachers involved</p> <p>Meetings</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Each child: unique and has potential</p> <p>“We”</p> <p>School beliefs</p>	<p>Unified staff</p> <p>Practices</p> <p>Belief that every child can learn</p> <p>Sense of belonging</p> <p>Shared vision</p> <p>Values</p>	<p>School’s responses to diversity</p> <p>Elements of school culture</p>