SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN THE TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any other university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, learners with intellectual disability were legislatively marginalised from participation in mainstream education in South Africa. Since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, legislation has been passed and education policy developed which supports the inclusion of learners with intellectual disability in mainstream secondary schools.

This research was prompted by a problem situation which occurred in the Western Cape of South Africa when it became apparent that many learners described as having mild intellectual disability could not be accommodated within the School of Skills (previously a Special Secondary School) to which they had applied. The purpose of the research has been to evaluate the implementation of a programme of support developed collaboratively between various stakeholders to allow for the inclusion of these learners within six urban mainstream secondary schools.

Through its guiding transformative theoretical framework and its evolving design, the evaluation of the programme has attempted to be as inclusive as possible. It has used qualitative research methods in order to seek out the views and encourage the participation of diverse stakeholders; from the learners whose social and academic wellbeing and advancement have been the central focus of this study, to individuals representing various systems surrounding these learners.

In order to do justice to the complexity of the programme implementation and evaluation process and to identify and accurately represent common themes and categories which emerged over time, data transformation has been emphasised in three different ways; namely a description, an analysis and an interpretation. The observations and themes which have emerged from this evaluation have highlighted various factors which were seen to advance or impede the inclusion of learners with mild intellectual disability in the six secondary schools; the extent to which the learners' social and academic wellbeing had been advanced by the programme; and the degree to which problem solving was evident in the participating secondary schools and the local education authority. Prolonged and sustained engagement in a process of programme development, implementation and evaluation suggests that positive educational and social transformation is enabled when stakeholders are given the time and space to reflect upon their intentions and practice.

SAMEVATTING

Tot onlangs is leerders met intellektuele gestremdhede wetlik gemarginaliseer van deelname aan hoofstroom-onderwys in Suid-Afrika. Sedert die koms van demokrasie in Suid-Afrika in 1994, is wetgewing uitgevaardig en onderwysbeleid ontwikkel wat die insluiting van leerders met intellektuele gestremdhede in hoofstroom-hoërskole ondersteun.

Hierdie navorsing is geïnspireer deur 'n probleemsituasie in die Wes-Kaap, Suid-Afrika, toe dit geblyk het dat baie leerders wat as matig intellektueel gestrem beskryf is, nie in die Vaardigheidskool (voorheen Spesiale Sekondêre Skool) waarvoor hulle aansoek gedoen het, geakkommodeer kon word nie. Die doel van die navorsing was 'n evaluasie van die implementering van 'n ondersteuningsprogram, ontwikkel in oorleg met verskillende belanghebbendes, wat voorsiening maak vir die opname van hierdie leerders in ses stedelike hoofstroomskole.

Deur sy rigtinggewende transformerende teoretiese raamwerk en die ontwikkelende ontwerp, het die evaluasie van die program gepoog om so inklusief moontlik te wees. Kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodes is gebruik om die menings van verskillende belanghebbendes in te win en hulle deelname aan te moedig; van of die leerders wie se sosiale en akademiese welsyn die sentrale fokus van hierdie studie was, tot die indiwidue wat die verskillende stelsels rondom die leerders verteenwoordig.

Om reg te laat geskied aan die kompleksiteit van die program-implementering en evaluasieproses en om gemeenskaplike temas en kategorieë wat geleidelik na vore gekom het, te identifiseer en akkuraat weer te gee, is data-transformasie op drie maniere beklemtoon; naamlik 'n beskrywing, 'n analise en 'n interpretasie. Die waarnemings en temas wat uit hierdie evaluasie voortgevloei het, het verskeie faktore belig wat die insluiting van matig intellektueel gestremde leerders in die ses hoërskole bevorder of belemmer het; hoedanig die program die leerders se sosiale en akademiese welsyn bevorder het, en die mate waarin probleemoplossing by deelnemende skole en die plaaslike onderwysowerheid sigbaar was. Langdurige en volgehoue betrokkenheid by 'n proses van programontwikkeling, implementering en evaluering dui daarop dat positiewe opvoedkundige en sosiale transformasie moontlik is wanneer belanghebbendes tyd en ruimte gegun word om oor hulle voornemens en praktyk te besin.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE INQUIRY

1.1 AN OPENING

Writing this thesis has involved a representation of a troubling array of discordant and competing social and personal voices and a keen appreciation of the selective and delimiting nature of language. The committing to paper of an evaluation of a programme which has involved diverse social actors and situations is my attempt to write my way to some understanding of the range of complex historical, social, economic and political forces which drive social and educational systems and within which individuals are constrained and given opportunity.

In its presentation, this research will follow the conventional structure in which works of a scholarly nature are typically presented and positioned in relation to the work of others. At the same time it will acknowledge that writing and research cannot be neutral exercises where the participant observer does not possess cultural biases and personal reference points (Artiles, 1998:33). Ultimately this representation is a personal construction of a selection of experiences and knowledge sources which will allow me to chart a way towards some interpretations in the hope of deepening understandings of a social process, while being mindful of the lessons to be learned, particular in human terms, from South Africa's past and the ways in which research has traditionally dealt with issues of disability.

1.2 CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE FOCUS OF THE INQUIRY

1.2.1 Introduction

South Africa has recently celebrated its first ten years of democracy, a decade which has involved major restructuring of the educational system in order to expunge any legislative imprints of a painful and divisive past and create a unitary system able to provide access and equity and effect redress. The focus now is upon the implementation of policies, specifically through the vehicle of a recently revised national curriculum and a progressive move towards inclusive education.

Preceding and accompanying the changes in educational policy has been a greater assertiveness and cohesion amongst people with disabilities in the construction of a strong civil movement based on a sociocultural view of disability. This view of disability regards society and its institutions as being the originator and perpetuator of the myriad and often complex discriminatory practices which marginalise people with disabilities. It follows therefore that the accordance and acknowledgement of full human rights to people with disabilities can only be effected through the restructuring of society, a change in the attitudes of its people and the active participation of people with disabilities in all spheres of social life. The sociocultural model of disability demands that schools should change their practices in order to cater for the diversity present in society, so that learners with disabilities are welcomed and included, rather than marginalised and excluded (Office of the Deputy President, 1997:10-11).

This inquiry is positioned at a place where individuals and institutions, curriculum delivery, inclusive education and notions of special need and disability conflate. Its primary focus is upon a group of learners who have always been part of the educational landscape, albeit peripherally, and whose current problematic situation has provided an opportunity for their inclusion into mainstream secondary school education to command a greater presence in the local educational dialogue.

Over the past few years it has become increasingly apparent that there are large numbers of applicants to a local School of Skills (previously known as a Specialised Secondary School) who cannot be accommodated, and whose attributed lack of sufficient intellectual ability has impeded them from meaningful participation in the current structure and management of mainstream secondary schools. It is thus that these children form part of an alarming and recently highlighted trend within the context of the Western Cape which is that there is a dramatic decline in enrolment in secondary schools after Grade 8 and that only 45-52% of learners who enrol in Grade 1 will reach Grade 12 (Crouch, 2002 quoted in Schreuder, 2003:8), a situation which accentuates the divergent rather than the convergent nature of inclusion and secondary school education.

1.2.2 Statement of the Problem

Given that the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996) stipulates that education is compulsory from the ages of 7 to 15 years and that one of the short to medium term goals of the education system enunciated within recent education policy in Education White Paper 6 (2001a:45) is to expand "… access and provision to those of compulsory school-going age who are not accommodated within the education and training system", the task to seek ways in which mainstream secondary schools can include and support these excluded learners seems a particularly urgent one. It is thus that the problem which this research will seek to address is framed as:

How can support be provided to learners with mild intellectual disability in their transition to mainstream secondary schools?

1.2.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research will be to present a systematic investigation of the unfolding planning and implementation of a programme designed collaboratively between district educational agents and a non-governmental organisation to provide some support within selected mainstream secondary schools to learners described as having mild intellectual disabilities.

It will also seek to determine the merit or effectiveness of the programme to enable positive educational and social change for its intended beneficiaries as well as gauge the worth of the programme to the broader education and social community (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004:18). It will aim to be alert to the possibilities and constraints regarding support to learners with mild intellectual disabilities in secondary school which will be revealed in the process of the programme implementation.

1.2.4 Research Questions

The questions which the research will seek to address are:

- Which factors within the programme settings and within the broader educational, social, economic and political context are advancing or impeding the inclusion of learners with mild intellectual disabilities in secondary schools?
- To what extent does the programme enable positive educational and social opportunities for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in the first years of secondary school?

- What evidence is there of collaborative problem solving capacity and abilities within the participating secondary schools and the local education authority?

These questions have been designed to provide a balance by including both positive and negative aspects of the research question and to provide a link between the findings of the research and possibilities for social transformation (Mertens, 2003b:145).

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.3.1 Introduction

The evaluation of a social programme which has as its broad intention an amelioration in the educational and social experiences and opportunities of a group which has been marginalised by society, demands an outer framework for guidance and action which can honour the experiences of this group as individuals, as well as examine the forces operating in society which reproduce the status quo and/or are capable of reforming or transforming attitudes and practices. The worldview or paradigm which I consider to best accommodate these individual and institutional variables is that provided by transformative theory.

1.3.2 The Transformative Paradigm

Mertens and McLaughlin (2004:3) consider the transformative paradigm as emerging in concert with the sociocultural view of disability. They describe it as being an umbrella term that incorporates other paradigmatic perspectives which include emancipatory, participatory and critical approaches and consider that it is made most articulate in the work of writers such as particular feminists, people with disabilities and their advocates, and others who represent marginalised groups such as racial/ethnic minorities (Mertens, 2003a:93). "The transformative paradigm is characterised by placing central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalised groups ..." (Mertens, 2003b:139-140).

The distinguishing features which characterise transformative scholars' work are the following:

- the assumption that knowledge is not neutral but rather directly influenced by human interests and values;

- that all knowledge is a reflection of the power and various social relationships within society;
- that a fundamental intention of knowledge construction should be to assist people to improve society (Banks in Mertens, 2003b:139).

Many writers in the evaluation field assert that it is particularly within the varying contexts of social programme evaluation where the central role of values becomes most evident (House & Howe, 1999), and within which the inevitability of political inherence is played out, and that a recognition of these forces is crucial in determining whose political and personal interests will be served (Greene, 2000:982). I feel that the transformative paradigm will allow for an examination of the dilemmas which are present in the contemporary South African educational and social landscape as well as highlight the lingering influences of our history of segregation, deficit thinking and social and economic injustice. The main roots which comprise the transformative paradigm enable an examination of these forces through the contributions of critical theory, feminist scholars and scholars with disabilities (Mertens, 2003b:136-139).

In this research the role of critical theory will be most evident in the awareness that certain questions need to be asked especially regarding the traditional view of the role of schools as a producer of human capital and that this demands that "… special education developments ought to be examined in the context of larger cultural and political processes located in educational reforms and society at large" (Artiles, 2003:166). Questions needing to be asked involve inquiries around to whose benefit education is organised, whose ways of knowing or accumulation of knowledge are privileged or granted legitimacy, the relationship between the inner workings of schools and the larger society, and views of the role of power and how it is constituted (Apple, 1999:2). Critical theory also has as its distinct agenda, an impetus to accelerate transformation through the more equitable sharing of power (Capper, 1993:14).

This research will attempt to temper the harsh edges of critical theory's rationality, and the tendency of the influence of contemporary poststructuralist thought to decentre the subject, through reference to recent feminist scholars' emphasis on subjectivity. Butler (1992:13) conceives subjects as "… neither a ground nor a

product, but the permanent possibility of a certain resignifying process". This view allows spaces for different interpretations of and for people who have been oppressed by normative related and deficit based categories. It also allows for the marker of disability to have a presence in the discourses of power relations relating to the intersections of the axes of race, gender and sexuality, axes which critical theorists have tended to privilege (Erevelles, 2000:25).

The influence of disability scholars will be most evident in the emphasis on the sociocultural view of disability which dislodges the location of the 'problem' of disability from being within an individual to the responses of the environment to disability (Oliver, 1996:32). It is thus that this research, while seeking to represent the experiences and feelings of the learners themselves, will place an even greater emphasis on initiating and maintaining dialogue with the individuals and organisations representative of the various school and community systems in which these learners are situated. The explicit intention of this will be to effect educational and social transformation.

1.3.3 Assumptions of Three Major Paradigms

The transformative paradigm is considered to be one of the three major paradigms which are in evidence in past and contemporary research and evaluation. The two other major paradigms are represented as being the positivist/postpositivist paradigm and the interpretive/constructivist paradigm (Mertens, 1998; 6-21; Mertens, 2003b:139-142; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004:3). As the transformative paradigm is rooted in key ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions which differ from those undergirding those of the more traditional and still dominant positivist/postpositivist and more recent interpretive/constructivist world views, an exploration of these assumptions in contradistinction to the transformative paradigm will be presented.

The positivist/postpositivist's ontological view has its origins in the development of science in Classical times and is most often associated with a period in history called the Enlightenment (Crotty, 2003:42). This view attempted to describe the world in rational, empirical and objective terms as a means of combating the ignorance, superstition and tyranny which had ruled the lives of most of Europe's inhabitants for many centuries. Its initial intentions were humanistic and driven by the ideals to build

a better world (Brown & Jones, 2001:20; Crotty, 2003:185; Heron, 1996:19). The inherent promise in these patriarchal approaches was that 'man' could rely on his own capacities as a subject to develop a rational knowledge of the physical world and human society which would be objective and generate an immortal body of truth.

This separation of the knower from the known laid the foundation for the development of Western theory and practice and entrenched the analytical method of reasoning advanced by both Newton and Descartes, alternatively referred to as reductionism, as the way in which reality could be discovered (Guba, 1990:19; Kincheloe, 2003:49). In evaluations this view of reality is translated into the belief that the scope of programme evaluations should be limited to aspects which are considered to be possible to objectively measure and observe (Potter, 2002:211). In terms of research regarding people with disabilities, this view of reality subscribes to the medical model which regards disability as a problem or defect which can be objectively described, measured and managed by experts (Gill, 1999:281).

The dominance of this view of reality is still strong within research and evaluation as the attraction of attempting to preserve the hallmarks of modernistic or positivistic thinking in an attempt to reduce, measure and provide answers to many of life's challenges is considerable. It cannot be denied that the modernistic approach has not only survived for centuries but that it has enabled man to control his environment with "… ever greater sophistication.." and has provided the successful resolution of many practical problems which were previously deemed to be insoluble (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:52). However the parallel to inquiry into and consequent control over the human situation has proved to be extremely problematic, illustrative of how power relationships can become entrenched and uncritically accepted, and potentially and often realistically damaging to universal human survival and the belief in an ennobling human spirit. Control, manipulation and the objectification of human beings revisits the ever present spectres of social engineering, the belief in a chosen race, the justification for the annihilation of whole communities of human beings and an accompanying pessimism about the future of our planet as a shared and treasured resource (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1999:78, 85; Lather, 1991:88).

The interpretive/constructivist alternative view of reality developed as a counter to the narrow focus of positivism and a questioning of the value and possibility of the outsider and apparent objective view adopted by positivist researchers and

evaluators (Potter, 2002:214). The assumptions of this view are that reality is socially constructed, that there are consequently multiple views of reality, that reality is contextually bound and consensually created through meaning making, and that one view of reality cannot claim precedence over another (Lincoln & Guba, 2000:167). The discourse around the existence or otherwise of a reality independent from "negotiated accounts" (Lather, 1986:269) has in the past and to varying degrees separated proponents of the interpretive/constructivist paradigm and those who frame their views of the world in the context of "… critical theoretical concerns" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000:279). One of the major criticisms of the more interpretive approach to human inquiry is that an over reliance on the subjective constructions of reality of participants necessarily disregards the influence of the social forces in operation in particular communities which themselves shape, constrain and often severely limit the possible cognitive constructions and associated actions of individuals (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:95).

The nature of knowledge within the interpretive/constructivist paradigm is constructed as being essentially social and research is considered as being an interaction between a researcher and participants where values are made explicit and knowledge is contextually co-created (Mertens, 2003b:141). An evaluation conducted within this paradigm would be conceptualised to be responsive to the needs of different groups of people represented in a programme with the evaluator being mandated to collect information as an outsider to the events in the programme, but an insider to the views of different stakeholders (Potter, 2002:216). Researchers working within this paradigm have attempted to give voice to people with disabilities by seeking to interpret how they experience the world (Walmsley & Johnson, 2003:26).

The ontological assumption of the transformative paradigm "… holds that there are diversities of viewpoints with regard to many social realities but that those viewpoints need to be placed within political, cultural, historical, and economic value systems to understand the basis for the differences" (Mertens, 2003b:140). The view of objectivity within this paradigm is considered to be important in terms of an overall awareness and complete view of the process of a programme to prevent bias through omission of key viewpoints. An area which differentiates the interpretive/constructivist view from that of transformative scholars is the extent to

which the researcher merely serves as a human vehicle who phenomenologically describes constructions of reality of participants within their situations, and the degree of active participation, reciprocity and negotiation within a co-creation of knowledge within an action reflection research cycle. This latter approach is considered to be integral to the transformative paradigm and necessitates the involvement of the researcher in the communities affected by the programme to the degree where deep understanding can be gained (Mertens, 2003b:141). Another distinction between these approaches to the nature of knowledge is the extent to which the emancipation of both researchers and participants is sought in an understanding of the manner in which particular people and particular settings are shaped historically, culturally, socially and discursively (Kemmis, 2001:92). I feel that a quote from the Aboriginal social worker, Lilla Watson, located in Stringer (1999:193), aptly reflects this relationship between researcher and participants when she said: "If you have come to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you've come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together".

The philosophical assumptions which underpin the different paradigms are given practical expression in the use of differing methodologies for human inquiry. The positivist/postpositivist paradigm is associated with the use of quantitative methods which are often interventionist and decontextualised in that they are used in controlled settings upon a group of randomly assigned subjects (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:169-169). Data collection is effected through an evaluator considered to be neutral and detached (Greene, 1994:535) and the results are typically represented in statistical forms. The interpretive/constructivist view requires evaluation methodologies which are context sensitive, predominantly take place in natural settings, and which require a human instrument who will be flexible and intuitive in order to apprehend, gather and interpret meanings through the use of qualitative methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:175-176; Greene, 1994:535).

The methodological distinctness of the transformative paradigm is that researchers working within this paradigm involve individuals of the communities affected by the research in decision making regarding both the research programme and the methodologies used to evaluate the programme (Mertens, 1999:5). This involves extensive engagement in the naturalistic settings of the communities involved in the

research as well as the use of methods which will invite the inclusion of participants and enable democratic dialogue.

1.3.4 The Influence of Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

Research questions which seek to address the human dilemmas which confront contemporary social life and aim to examine the extent of the various cultural and social forces which impact upon society cannot be unaffected by the influence of the various 'post' theories which have the potential to shape and challenge ways in which knowledge is constructed.

Many now consider that we are firmly located within a postmodern era, a fast -paced and ever evolving landscape which acknowledges that there is little reality which is stable, objectively knowable and quantifiable, and that our very means of understanding our world are filtered through processes of our social experiences, both historical and current, which allow us to construct different pathways to interpret our perceptual realities (Dyson, 1998:6; Stringer, 1999:195).

Current scholarship is debating not only whether the Postmodern Era represents a discrete period, but the very essence of what this label signifies (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000:292; Lather, 1991:88). Many see this label as being a frustrating and enigmatic concept which attempts to describe our current cultural condition. Stringer (1999:195) describes it as a "... genre of theory ..." that provides the means to discern the social world in an alternative cast and thereby to seek different understandings of human experience. Reason and Bradbury (2001:4) report that many researchers and writers feel that the positivist worldview has outlived its usefulness. As evidence of this they suggest that there is an underlying transformation in the way in which humans are experiencing their place in the universe which require different beliefs and ways of thinking which will in turn will transform "… our experience, our thinking and our action". An essential vehicle for expressing this transformation is a deliberate turn towards the linguistic and narrative which examines the role of language in constituting identity and social practices and an alternative way of writing in which researchers place and discover themselves within the text (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3). Hargreaves (1994:23) refers to the postmodern era as a "sociohistorical shift" which presents crucial challenges to

education and educators at the beginning of a new century and to which the largely modernistic school system is ill equipped to respond.

It is acknowledged that the postmodern condition provokes both sceptical and affirmative views. Some sceptics consider it to be one where our constructions of our cultural narratives and associated identity formation are mediated through an information society which has become saturated with ever increasing and technically sophisticated forms of representation. This hyperreality has the potential to dislocate people from direct involvement in lived experiences and suspend them, rootless, in emotional "… pseudo-belonging to the mediascape" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000:292). More affirming views consider that the uncertainty which the postmodern condition has created as an opportunity or "affective space" (Lather, 1991:88) to move beyond the trenchant, often circular and 'deconstructive' poststructuralist textual analysis of our current dilemmas, to a more constructive and active form of inquiry which will allow us to participate creatively in reciprocal and collaborative relationships with the world and others.

Major postmodern discourses revolve around the central issues of power, language and gender. It is interesting therefore to note that postmodernism views 'discourse' as a word which signifies the inescapably political system of relations between people involved in communicative activity (Apple, 1999:vii). Postmodern and poststructuralist discourses, spearheaded by theorists such as Foucault (1972) and Derrida (1976), have disrupted and enriched our understanding of our taken for granted cultural representations. Through their examination of the problems of power and legitimation and the logocentric notion of certainty of meaning in a rational language they have opened up spaces for self conscious criticisms of the social control and domination inherent in the accepted policies, practices and routines which direct our daily lives and the tyranny of the structuralist assertion that true meaning can be represented through a language of reason (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1999:77-85; Stringer, 1999:196).

Foucault's examination of social life has led to a richer appreciation of the localised forms of power and domination which operate in institutionalised contexts such as schools and how an analysis of power has to be initiated within our understandings of the micro politics of power expressed at the local level. This view of the dynamics of power shifts the responsibility to the individual and small group to uncover what

have become unconsciously accepted practices which we have subsumed into our interpersonal systems. The means to reveal this mental subjugation is through the exploration and development of the open dimension of human conversation or discourse within the particular local venues in which the power discourse is prevalent (Stringer, 1999:197).

Postmodern theorists view language as being constitutive within social contexts rather than a definitive and transparent means of accurate representation of the real world, "… the performance of language has taken precedence over the study of the structure and system of language" (Brown & Jones, 2001:19) As such the meaning which language attempts to articulate is never universal and stable but is "… provisional and relative …" (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1999:79). The way in which language performs is varied, it can express the way in which sense is made of a system of ideas within a particular social context but it also can "… create distinctions, differences, and categories that define and create the world, and whose rules are continually changing in relation to different circumstances" (Popkewitz, 1995:142). Derrida introduced deconstruction as a tool to reveal the underlying layers of meanings which reside within texts which have been suppressed, excluded and assumed so that language can take its structural configuration. Lather (1991:13) considers that the goal of deconstruction is "… to keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continually demystify the realities we create, to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal …".

The arena of special and inclusive education is one in which the defining and exclusive tendencies of language continue to be enacted, disputed and revealed (Slee, 2001b:167-177; Clough, 1999:63-73). Through its objectifying, descriptive and labelling capacities, the continued use of the vocabulary annexed by special needs education is seen to deny rather than create possibilities for inclusion in education and society. The challenge is therefore to bring the discourses which have framed disability and difference into open debate where the complicity of society and its institutions in the perpetuation of the 'othering' of certain people can be discussed and understood.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Research Design

As the focus of this inquiry is directed at the process of the implementation of a programme of support to learners in certain secondary schools, the research design considered to best suit the research problem and questions is that of programme evaluation. This is an applied form of social inquiry which has the intention of gathering information and generating and sharing findings which can be of use (Patton, 2002:10). More specifically, the design will be that of process evaluation.

Some writers in the field of evaluation studies use the words process, implementation and monitoring interchangeably (Babbie & Mouton, 1998:345; Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004:57). In this research, process evaluation will refer to the investigation and reporting of the ongoing development, monitoring and adaptation of a programme of support to learners with mild intellectual disabilities in some secondary schools in the Western Cape of South Africa. The focus of this evaluation therefore will be trained upon the practical issues, personal experiences, interactions and questions which will arise from the **process** of negotiation and implementation of a programme of support to learners in some secondary schools. It will also attempt to highlight and discuss the policy priorities and compromises which will emerge within and across different contexts in the course of its application (Greene, 2000:981) and develop the problem-solving capacities of all participants in order to foster improvements and self-determination (Fetterman, 2001:3).

In order to accommodate the unfolding nature of both the programme development and implementation, and its evaluation, the design will also be an emergent one. This means that the design will be flexible and open to possibilities and changes during the process of data gathering and transformation and that the design will be naturalistic and participant oriented (Patton, 2002:40).

The design will also be qualitative and interpretive in that the kind of interactions between different participants in the programme will be best captured, interpreted and portrayed in words. A qualitative design will also allow for rich descriptions of the evaluation of the process of programme implementation, the recurrent themes which emerge in response to the research questions and the political, economic and social factors which impact upon the programme (Patton, 2002:159; Potter, 2002:215).

The current focus on the implementation of educational policy in South Africa will involve the targeting of areas which are seen to be of greatest priority. Recent newspaper reports have dwelt upon the general lack of skills exhibited by learners in country wide assessments (Du Plessis, 2004; Kassiem, 2004; Smith, 2004). Commentators and education officials have pointed out that measuring outcome on the final exit point of a matric exam means that the system has been 'flying blind' (Crouch in Schreuder, 2003:10; Taylor, 2001:9). This inquiry is thus firmly situated within competing demands which will be made upon policy makers, administrators and particularly teachers who, according to Jansen, are "… confused and exhausted by the constant shifts in the policy environment and the ever increasing demands made on their time" (Jansen, 2004).

Greene (2000:982) stresses the sociopolitical and value-based role of evaluation in contemporary democracies and asserts that the contexts in which evaluations take place are "… about contested social policies and programmes, about how and by whom resources are allocated, and about competing civic values, both in the global arena and in the local community". The introduction of the possibility of including learners with mild intellectual disabilities in secondary schools throws into greater relief exactly these questions. Greene goes on to say that evaluators thus need to "… negotiate whose questions will be addressed and whose interests will be served by their work …", people who represent the stakeholders in evaluations (Greene, 2000:982).

1.4.2 Stakeholders and Participants

Stakeholders are considered to be "… individuals or groups that may be involved or affected by a programme evaluation" (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994:3). In this research the stakeholders will represent a diverse range of interests and positions of power in the local educational environment. The inclusion of a diversity of stakeholders in the research process will provide opportunities to examine the effect of power inequalities in the local educational environment as well as suggest ways in which shared knowledge construction can help to shift the balance of these power relationships in helping people to improve educational opportunities with and for a traditionally marginalised group of learners (Mertens, 1999:12).

As the transformative theoretical framework implies, it is the explicit intention of the research be aware of and to involve all the various stakeholders who could be affected by or have an interest in the implementation of the educational programme to support learners with mild intellectual disabilities in their transition to secondary school. This is allied to the belief that all people have the potential to contribute positively to creating a more just society, that they have the potential to change and that they can contribute valuable knowledge and experience (Marais & Taylor, 1999:14). It is thus that the identified stakeholders will be concurrently regarded as potential participants in this research process.

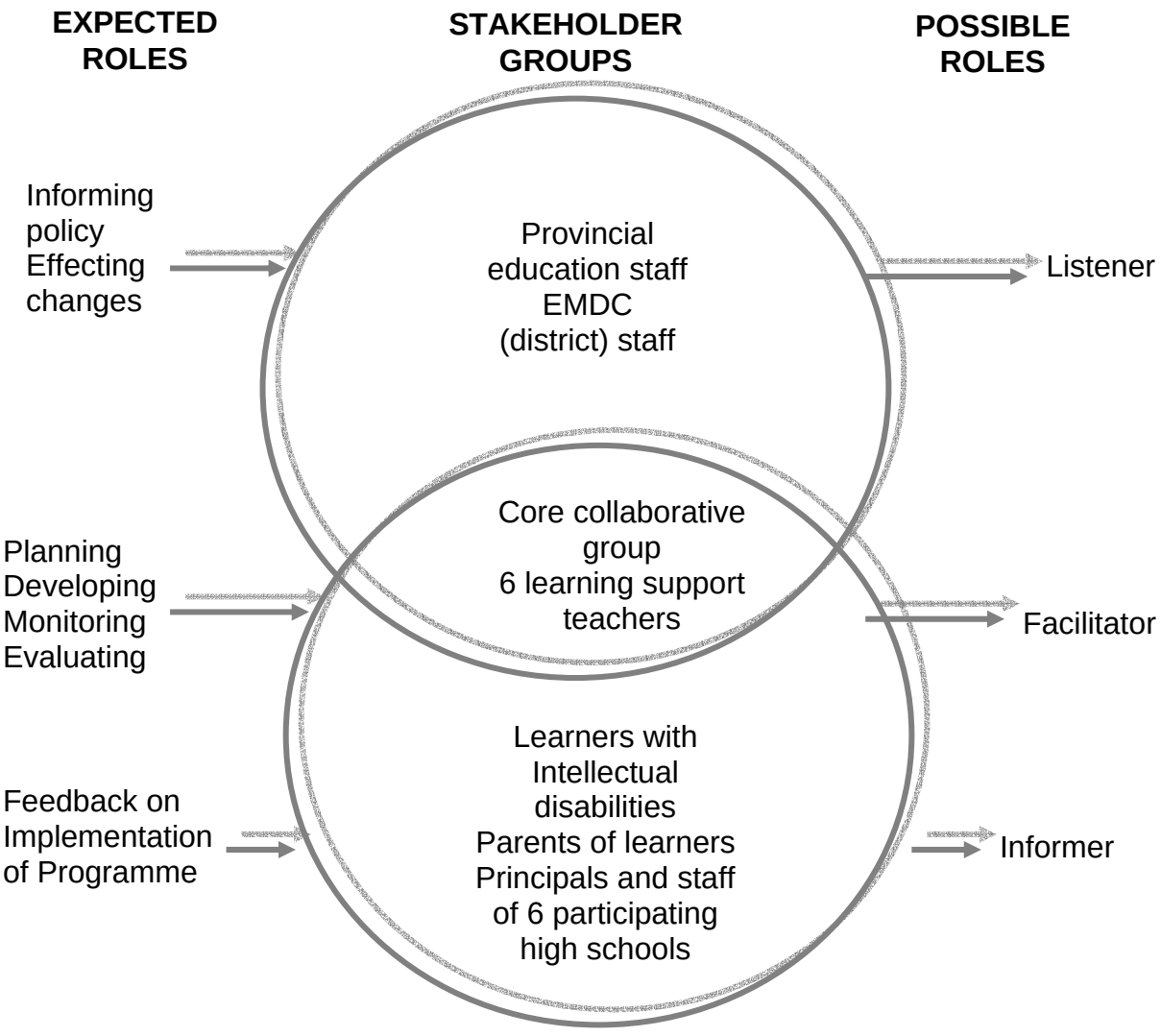
The stakeholders in this research will be regarded as being part of two heterogeneous and overlapping groups of people. Certain stakeholders have been identified as being crucial to driving the ongoing planning of the programme and its evaluation. These stakeholders include a core team of members of the Special Learner and Education Support team (SLES) at the local Education and Management Development Centre (EMDC) and members of a non-governmental organisation including myself, a PhD student. These stakeholders will form the core collaborative group which will provide the forum for the ongoing planning and monitoring of the programme through the use an action learning process. Other stakeholders who will be included will be members of the EMDC representing other areas of expertise such as curriculum, Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and assessment, members of the provincial education staff and the six learning support teachers at the secondary schools. These stakeholders have the potential, within the current structure of local educational governance, to effect changes and inform policies which can alter conditions to provide a more positive educational experience for learners with intellectual disabilities within the secondary school environment. Paradoxically it is also these stakeholders who have greater choice in deciding whether and to what extent they want to engage with the programme process.

Stakeholders who have been identified as having a particular role in providing feedback on the implementation of programme are the learners in the programme and their parents, the six learning support teachers, the principals and specifically the Grade 8 and Grade 9 teachers at each of the six the secondary schools, and the core collaborative group. The learners, who are also the recipients of the

programme, while being afforded an opportunity to have their voices heard, have traditionally had less power to effect change and have fewer options than other stakeholders regarding their choice whether or not to engage in the programme.

The core collaborative group and the 6 learning support teachers represent stakeholders who will be able to move frequently between the two larger groups and thus they have the potential to provide an interactive link between the ongoing development and implementation of the programme and its evaluation and the learners who are "... the members of the community that the programme is designed to serve" (Mertens, 2001:368). It is also intended that this interactive link can act as a fulcrum to equalise power imbalances and to suggest alternative roles to each group, such as from director to listener, from recipient to informer, as illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: INTERACTION OF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS



1.4.3 The Role of the Researcher

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2000) have presented an interpretation of the French word 'bricoleur' as a Jack of all Trades to portray a possible role for the researcher in the postmodern era. The emphasis is on the inventiveness of the researcher in apprehending what is to hand in the context of the research, as well as which diverse tools can be called upon as practices which will help him or her to create a montage which presumes an "active audience" and open up "… spaces for give-and-take between reader and writer" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:5).

Crotty (2003:51) takes issue with this presentation of bricoleur as his interpretation of the original use by Lévi-Strauss (1966:18-19) highlights the pre-constraining and limiting nature of the objects, themselves originally parts of other objects (such as a part of a table leg etc), with which bricoleurs have to make something anew. Crotty's caution is that this representation forces the researcher to look at the objects of research, their history and the features which made them accommodate the uses for which their fashioning was originally intended. He feels that the key skill of this interpretation of bricoleur is the ability to "… 're-vision' these bits and pieces, casting aside the purposes which they once bore and for which they were once designed and divining very different purposes that they may now serve in new settings".

It seems to me that this latter interpretation of 'bricoleur' talks more readily to the dilemmas and difficulties apparent in this work and to my roles as a researcher. The 'objects' of the research are the learners described as having mild intellectual disability, their history is constraining to them, their apparent cognitive features have been fashioned to fit specific categories and be 'prepared' for separate uses. One of my roles as researcher would be to reinterpret this history and fashioning, and envision new forms and possibilities in the new setting of inclusive secondary schools.

A role of the poststructuralist researcher is to acknowledge that my own telling is fashioned by my history and is constrained and made partial by the "… discourses of my time and place …" and point to the contradictions that "… structure the uneasy dialogue between humanism and poststructuralism, between what is taken as lived experience and the afterthought of interpretive efforts, between the real subjects and their textual identities" (Britzman, 2000:32). I thus introduce myself as a middle-aged,

white South African woman whose historical and present perceptions of 'other' have been misshapen through decades of experiencing the privileged end of Apartheid and an education and teaching practice which championed a reductionist and deficit view of difference. The discourses of my time and place are as confusing and unsettling to me as they are enlightening. I find myself actively having to reframe my perceptions, to look at my compatriots anew but with an acute awareness of the lingering stigmata of a legacy of separation and distrust. I feel that with ongoing self reflection and the opportunity to engage with what Schön (1995:2) calls the "swampy lowlands" of important but messy and confusing problems, I will be more able to transform myself and transcend the normalising classifications and objectifications which limited my past perceptions.

My interest in becoming involved in this research was in part generated by a previous research project which portrayed the perceptions of parents of children without disabilities of inclusive education. One of the parents' primary concerns was the perceived lack of possibility for children with disabilities to be included in secondary schools. This perception seemed to be somewhat justified when I was invited to become part of a programme to provide support to include learners with mild intellectual disabilities in selected secondary schools. As I have worked in both specialised and mainstream school environments, I was drawn to the challenge of the possibility of the refashioning of secondary schools to be more inclusive and responsive to diversity.

I have described myself as a participant observer – a role which has a long history in ethnographic studies and which, by its very definition, implies a dilemma and a tension. For how can one be both a participant and observer? Merriam (1998:103) portrays participant observation as "a schizophrenic activity" in that while engaged in one part of the activity one is reminded of the other.

An interesting analogy which Apple (1999:15) invokes is that of Bakhtin's examination of the functions of balconies hundreds of years ago during carnival in Europe. The affluent bourgeoisie "… were both attracted to and repelled by the cultural, political, and bodily transgressions that accompanied carnival…" and while being fascinated by this, also wanted to have a safe area to retreat to. The creative solution to this was provided by the balcony that overhangs the street, allowing vicarious access to the rich sensations of carnival and a place from which to indulge

in and comment upon the moving pageant. Apple thus concludes that "... one could be in and out, almost participant but mostly observer, at the same time". This quote echoes my feelings about my role as a participant observer in this evaluation. It also portrays my current status in understanding what Gill (1999:286) describes as the "… social dynamics of disability".

1.4.4 Methodology

1.4.4.1 Data Gathering Procedures

The considerations which will guide the data gathering procedures will be manifold. Firstly, it will be important to ensure that the data gathering procedures and outcomes will both benefit and offer opportunities for participation for the programme beneficiaries (Mertens, 2003b:160). A further consideration will be to find appropriate ways to gain access to multiple perspectives on the ongoing planning and implementation of the programme. Additionally the data gathering should provide sufficient material for an in-depth account and analysis of the whole programme process as well as fairly represent the various perspectives of the stakeholders.

The data gathering procedures will be extensive and will include paying attention to and describing the contexts across sites, minutes of all meetings, transcriptions of focus group and individual interviews and observations at schools and core collaborative group meetings. As further stakeholders are identified during the process of programme implementation, the information, personal views and suggested interventions will be discussed, reflected upon and documented. Further information such as Grade 8 mark schedules will also form part of the data to be transformed, as will provincial circulars and other relevant policy documents.

The following data gathering procedures will be used:

- Evaluator Journal - to chart my own participant observations and experiences of the evolving programme design and implementation process,
- Participant Observations - to record the deliberations of the core collaborative group in its action - reflection - learning cycles, site visits to schools and attendance at meetings with other stakeholders,
- Focus Group Interviews - to gain in-depth information as to the perceptions and experiences of different stakeholder groups,

- Individual Interviews - to honour the individual constructions and experiences of the learners described as having mild intellectual disability,
- Document Analysis – of policy documents, provincial and district circulars which have the potential to impact upon the programme.

1.4.4.2 Data Transformation

The major challenge for me as a researcher will be how to transform the data gathered during the implementation of a programme into a written reconstruction which can both capture the complexities of this process and lead to deeper understanding of the emerging issues and recurrent themes.

To this end I have found Wolcott's (1994:10-11) explanation of three different ways of thinking about how qualitative data can be explored, organised and presented, to be instructive. Wolcott suggests that the three categories of description, analysis and interpretation, while not "mutually exclusive", can be usefully employed to provide different **emphases** in the transformation of qualitative data. However he cautions that "... any effort to categorise qualitative studies exacerbates the very problems that categorising is designed to resolve. It is not so much a question of where description stops and analysis or interpretation begins, as a question of whether description itself can ever be free of the analytical or interpretive frameworks that drive it" (Wolcott, 1994:256).

I have decided that data transformation in this research will be explored and organised in three ways, each representing a different level of abstraction from the data; namely, a narrative, descriptive account of the programme implementation process, an analysis of emergent themes, and an interpretation which will attempt to extend beyond the data in order to make personal sense of the description and the analysis. I realise that these forms of presentation and the ensuing discussion will necessarily be influenced by interpretations coloured by the transformative theoretical framework which is guiding the research process.

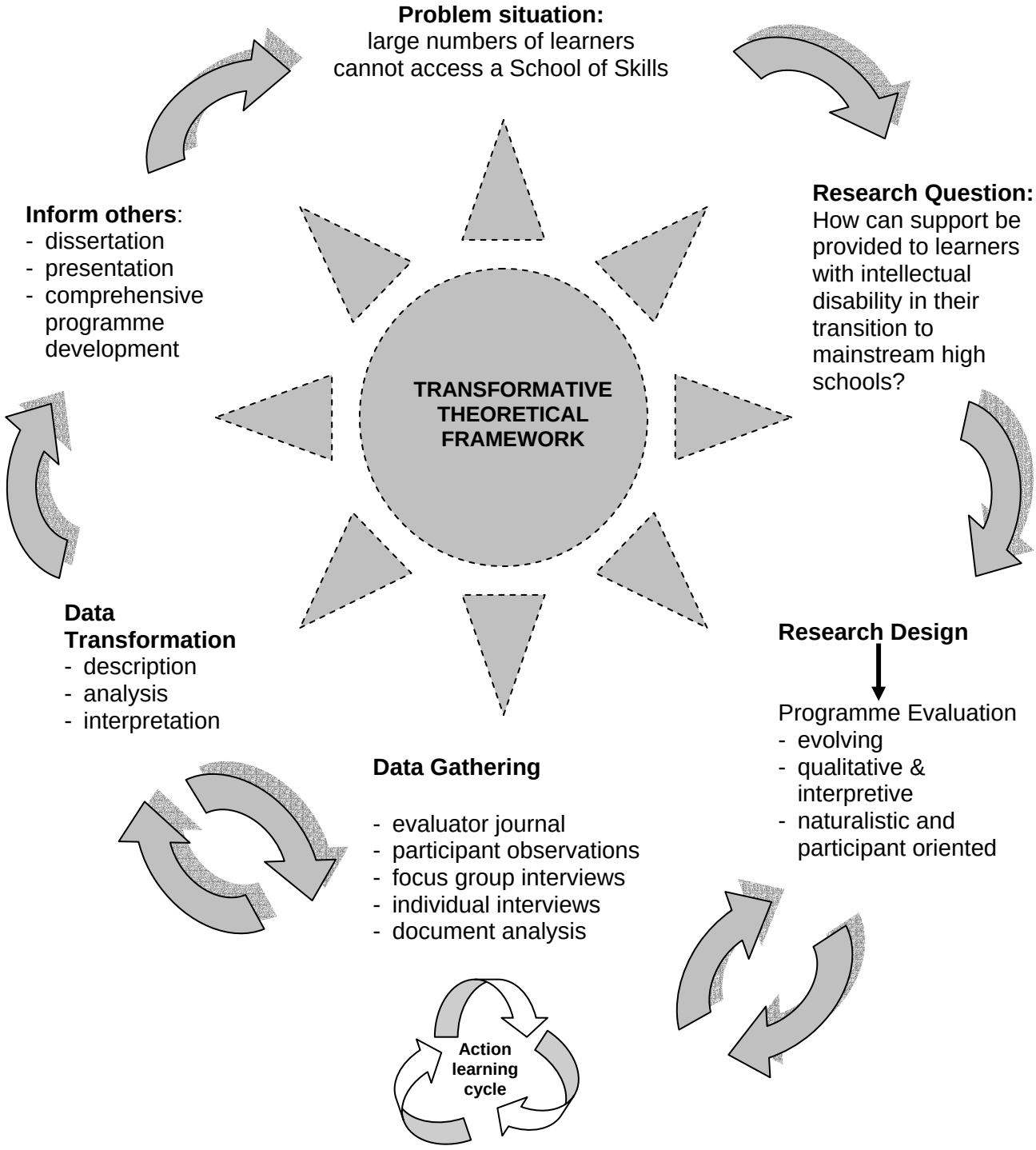
In Chapter Five data transformation will be presented through an initial narrative reconstruction or synthesis of the whole programme process. This description will attempt to stay as close to the data as possible and will employ a content analysis of the minutes of the deliberations of the core collaborative group, evaluator journal, transcripts from the individual and focus group interviews and the notes of participant

observations in order to portray the action learning progressions over a period of time. Emerging themes evidenced and agreed upon by the core collaborative group will be documented in the evaluator journal and will initiate the next level of data transformation.

A second data transformation, in Chapter 6, will flow from and build upon the first, but will extend beyond description with an analysis which will systematically focus upon the identification of common themes and their relationships emerging across sites and groups of participants. This analysis will make use of the Constant Comparative Method as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:127-149). In this method, use is made of a progressive inductive analysis of all the data, originating from the identification of units of meaning in the data, followed by the ongoing comparison of new units of meaning with all other identified units of meaning in a process of categorisation and recategorisation of units which display similar units of meaning or content.

These two forms of data transformation will be further reflected upon and discussed in Chapter 7 in a process which Coffey and Atkinson (1996:6:139) refer to as "going beyond the data" in order to develop ideas. This interpretation of the data will be influenced by the guiding transformative theoretical framework, pertinent reference to a review of literature and the values and experiences I bring to the process as a researcher. An overview of the research process is portrayed in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: THE RESEARCH PROCESS



Adapted from Neumann (2003:13)

1.4.5 Ethical Guidelines

Permission to proceed with the research has been obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (refer to Appendix A).

The nature of an evaluation of an educational programme which is in the public domain necessitates careful attention to ethical considerations, particularly those pertaining to the individual rights of participants (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002:65). These considerations involve gaining the informed consent of all participants in the research process, the undertaking that in the gathering and dissemination of data the anonymity of all individuals and institutions involved in the programme will be protected, and that all documents used in this research are in the public domain.

A more in-depth discussion of the various ethical issues regarding this research will be discussed in the Data Verification section in Chapter Four.

1.5 DISCOURSES AROUND DEFINITIONS

To define means to fix in words an identity, a meaning, a view of reality within a reduction to an essence. It presupposes collusion on the part of the reader in a normative, absolute and transparent arrangement of words to deliver shared understanding and points of reference. Feminist poststructuralist thought and critical theory disrupt the quest for certainty of meaning. The whole idea is to "… keep the subject in play …" and eschew definitions which will deny reconfigurations that can create alternative ways of working ethically, politically and interpersonally (St Pierre & Pillow, 2000:7- 8).

Words have been juxtaposed in the title of this work that contain a promise of delivering a shared understanding of what this work might be about. They are a kind of shorthand to some confirmation of a discipline of rigour within the ensuing text. My present understanding is that no such certainty exists, neither is it desirable. For if we are to rewrite ourselves in a truly democratic environment we need to work on the edges and constantly "… keep the subject in play ..." (St Pierre & Pillow, 2000:7). The following are therefore some tentative descriptions of what I currently understand the following terms to represent.

- **Support**

The word support conjures up feelings of security, of a strong foundation and a means of strengthening and shoring up something that might be in danger of collapsing. It is also a word that has come to be used very loosely, as a panacea, a vague hope that something might be improved upon.

Since the advent of a democratic government in South Africa, the notion of support in education has lost some of its paternalistic and deficit associations. It has been represented in policy documents as a general responsiveness to a variety of unique needs which every learner will exhibit to varying degrees during their learning processes. Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001a:16) integrates notions of need and associated support with its definitions of inclusive education. It also sanctions a departure from the perception of support as being defined and restricted through the use of categories of disability as an organising and segregating principle, towards developing a greater understanding and responsiveness towards individual needs based upon the intensity and nature of support needed to overcome various barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001a:10).

The Draft Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education (Department of Education, 2002 a:55) describe support in the following rather tautologous phrase as being about "… an enhanced facilitation to learning through interaction with various support providers". Within the current sphere of education provision, support is deemed to exist at a variety of levels within the education system. These include at the micro level of classroom-based support to the more intermediate levels of contextual, psycho-social, institutional and administrative support. However this document does refer to the fragmented way in which support to schools has been and often continues to be organised, and recommends the development of a framework of collaboration where support providers can work constructively to allow educational institutions to develop their own capacity to respond to diverse learning and community needs.

The notion of support as a general responsiveness places a demand on educational institutions and staff members to be alert to and capable of apprehending what additional or contextual elements can be used to accompany a learner to enhance

participation in the learning environment. The Open File on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2001:71) indicates that support "… includes everything that enables learners to learn. It particularly includes those resources which supplement what the ordinary class teacher can provide". The Index for Inclusion (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan & Shaw, 2000:9) defines support as "… those activities which increase the capacity of a school to respond to student diversity".

- **Learners**

The term' learners' has replaced the former notions of school pupils and university students which were descriptors which were often prefaced by a colour or race classification and which fixed people in time and space. The NCSNET/NCESS report (Department of Education, 1997:149) describes the term learners as referring "… to **all** learners, ranging from early childhood education through to adult education". The term also allows for a fluidity in apprehension in that teachers or educators can also be learners in the teaching, reflection and learning cycle and that we all are encouraged to view ourselves as life-long learners.

- **Intellectual Disabilities**

This term is the preferred substitute of the still pervasive label of 'mental retardation' which is a term which carries much stigma and is associated with the medical model's reductionistic definition representative of the positivist paradigm. Even though 'mental retardation' seems to carry the weight of a medical diagnosis, its use is suggestive of a lack of personal development, differences in kind rather than differences in degree, and a lack of membership of humanity which is not consistent with a human rights approach to diversity (Crane, 2002:78-89; Naicker, 1999:45-47; Shapiro, 1999:37-47).

The professional or clinical discourse currently views intellectual disability as being one of several developmental disabilities which involves a persistent impairment of intellectual functioning, which is manifest before the age of 18, and which is accompanied by limitations in adaptive functioning in various areas of life activity such as self-care, receptive and expressive language, mobility, self-direction, learning, capacity for independent living and economic self-sufficiency (Crane, 2002:78; American Psychiatric Association, 2000:41).

It cannot be denied that intellectual disability still remains as a label, framed in deficit terms, which contains further categorisations (mild, moderate, severe, profound) which has the potential to assert some form of social control and attendant assignment of human value rather than provoke the change of attitude which is considered pivotal to the alertness and response to the existence of different learning needs which can exist in a population of learners (Howell, 2000:115). It is therefore with great caution and alertness to the possible impact of labelling on this target group (Mertens, 2003b:149), that this term is used in the title of this research project as it refers to the population of learners who traditionally have been accepted into and deemed to have been catered for the School of Skills to which the learners have applied.

Disability studies have brought into focus a social model theory which distinguishes between disability and impairment and implicates society in the creation and perpetuation of disabling conditions and mindsets (Johnstone, 1998:19-20). Many people with disabilities have begun to reauthor themselves and the concept of disability within this discourse, simultaneously bringing into vision the way in which society has restricted the identity formation of people with disabilities within categories of deficit (Swain & Cameron, 1999:71-72). Gill (1999:280) represents disability as a dimension of human diversity, something that always has been part of human experience and into which most humans enter at some stage of their lives.

It is interesting to note that Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001a:25, 31, 41, 48) consistently refers to learners with intellectual disabilities as being a group which could be more easily accommodated than other groups with disabilities within an inclusive educational and training framework at this stage of our social and educational transition.

- **Transition**

The word transition refers to a period of change. Transition implies a movement from one situation to another and is a common feature occurring in the life span of individuals (Patton & Dunn, 1998:1). This period of change could apply to an individual, groups, organisations and entire social systems and involves an associated change in behaviours which need to be employed in new ideological or physical settings.

Wehman (1992:5) describes examples of transitions as including changes in self-awareness, sexuality, body, type of work and the need for greater independence. In this research, the transition to secondary school is considered to represent a right of passage for all learners, both in terms of being incorporated into new learning environments and also in terms of an implicit societal demand for more evidence of self-directed learning behaviours. For most learners entering secondary school the move from childhood to adolescence signals a biological transition towards adulthood. For the learners with intellectual disability involved in this research, transition can be conceptualised as the life changes, cumulative experiences and adjustments which occur as they move from one school environment to another (Wehman, 1992:5).

Internationally, over the past few decades, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of planning for certain transitional phases for the facilitation of the positive experience of change for individuals with intellectual disability.

In terms of the contribution of secondary schools, the focus is upon encouraging and facilitating learner choice in the vocational area in order to prepare learners with disabilities to live and work in their communities (Wehman, 1992:16). According to Engelbrecht, Howell and Bassett (2002:70), transition planning for individuals with disabilities within the South African context involves paying attention to three areas which are of concern. These involve the building of an inclusive education system which is capable of providing for a diverse range of learning needs, the transformation of the curriculum to enable a more comprehensive response to diversity and greater possibility for skill acquisition which will enhance participation in the world of work, and the on-going training of all educators to skill them to respond more effectively to diverse learning needs.

- **Secondary School**

Within the formal schooling system within South Africa, schools have been traditionally described as being either primary or secondary schools. The primary school caters for learners for the first seven years of their formal education whereas the secondary school caters for the last five years of a learner's formal schooling. A learner's school years are now incorporated within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), a legislative mechanism which has been developed to record all

types of learning achievements within one of eight levels (Olivier, 1998:4). According to present formulations, primary schooling and the first two years of secondary schooling fall within the General Education and Training Band and represent the attainment of Level 1 in the NQF. Secondary schools now cater for the attainment two bands of the NQF as the last three years of the formal schooling system fall within the Further Education and Training Band which can result in the attainment of Levels 2 – 4.

Within secondary school education these two bands of education culminate in two formal exit points, the first one being the Common Task for Assessment at the end of the General Education and Training Band which occurs at the end of a learner's Grade 9 year, and the final one being the Matric Examination which occurs at the end of Grade 12.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

It is intended that this first chapter has given a brief overview of the theoretical and situational context within which this research will take place. It has also presented the central research problem and related research questions and discussed the prospective stakeholders and the role of the researcher. It has sketched the course which the research will follow and has provided some detail of the procedures which will be drawn upon to gather and transform the data in order to give a holistic account of an evaluation process.

Chapter 2: Intellectual Disability

This chapter will focus upon the problematic nature of intellectual disability through a discussion of issues regarding labelling, definitions, classification and terminology. Various models of viewing disability will then be discussed and the chapter will conclude with an exploration of the ways in which careful planning can aid the emotional and academic development of adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities.

Chapter 3: Historical and Current Influences on Support for Learners with Intellectual Disability

A second chapter of literature review will explore the issues concerning support offered to learners in secondary schools in both international and local contexts. I

feel that it will be particularly important to give some space to the past history of support offered to variously defined learners in South Africa as well as to trace the emergence of policy since the advent of democracy. The chapter will then proceed with a discussion of the current dilemmas facing South African education, and conclude with an explanation of the support models and services in the Western Cape.

Chapter 4: Design and Methodology

In this chapter details of the research design and methodology will be presented as well as a brief overview of the main features of the programme which will be evaluated.

Chapter 5: Narrative Description of Programme Implementation

This chapter will present the first level of data transformation. It will provide a narrative of the chronology of the programme implementation process in an attempt to allow the reader to gain a sense of the evolving, cumulative and process nature of the programme development, implementation and its evaluation, as well as the roles played by the various stakeholders.

Chapter 6: Thematic Analysis of Data

In this chapter I will present the second level of data transformation. This will take the form of an analysis of the recurrent themes which emerge across all the data sources.

Chapter 7: Interpretive Discussion

The information in this chapter will represent the third level of data transformation. It will present a discussion of the previous forms of data transformation through reference to my own personal influences, the influence of the transformative theoretical framework and links with the literature review.

Chapter 8: A Summary, Reflections and Recommendations

The final chapter will summarise the preceding chapters and offer reflections on the evaluation framed by the research questions. It will conclude with a brief discussion of the limitations of the research, recommendations, suggestions for further research and a personal reflection.

CHAPTER 2

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine the problematic nature of the concept of intellectual disability and how responses to intellectual disability, and particularly the classification of mild intellectual disability, are influenced by changing political, social, cultural and economic contexts. It will also advance the idea that the contentions surrounding definitions, classifications, etiology and labelling all signal possibilities for a reinscription of the identity of learners with mild intellectual disability.

As the transformative paradigm subscribes to the sociocultural view of disability, the dilemmas associated with intellectual disability will be framed as problems belonging to society and its forms of 'othering', rather than problems associated with deficits within individuals. Ways in which learning environments can become more responsive to learners with intellectual disability will also be discussed.

2.2 LABELLING, DEFINITIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

2.2.1 Introduction

Intellectual disability (South Africa, Australia), mental retardation (America) or learning disability (United Kingdom) all represent names which communities use to draw some sort of line between what is considered to be the difference between normal and subnormal intellectual functioning. Where this line is drawn is "… socially arbitrated and then validated through common usage" (Mercer, 1973:1). The concept of intellectual disability is thus a socially constructed one (Banks, 2000:35). It is a construct which can differ amongst communities situated within common geographical areas. It is also a social construct that has reflected changing attitudes and beliefs about difference throughout human experience, which in turn have been mediated through associated political, economic and cultural hierarchies and practices.

2.2.2 The Problem of Labelling

The acceptance that intellectual disability exists in certain individuals in society as an objective reality has been expressed in various ways of naming this perceived difference and implicates the complicity of language in providing the forms and related actions for the 'othering' and exclusion of individuals. Shapiro (1999:37) points out that language functions both to express our ideas and to shape them. The negatively couched language associated with intellectual disability thus has the power to assign value, define relationships, prejudice attitudes and shape behaviour.

The nomenclature associated with intellectual disability over time has illuminated attitudes towards what has been considered to be both a social deviance from a perceived norm and a lack of competence among certain individuals in a society. Before and during the 20th century the terms 'idiot', 'imbecile' and 'moron' were still used to describe the variations that were perceived to be apparent among the 'feeble-minded' (Lea, 1990:206). During the 20th century and up to this day the labels of 'mental retardation', 'mental handicap' and 'developmental delay' still abound. These labels, through their negative formulations, continue to reflect the implicit disapproval and associated unworthiness which illustrates society's judgement of intellectual disability as deviance from what it considered to be acceptable and normal (Johnstone, 1998:6).

The stigmatising effects of these past labels still have reference points in the media, have cultural currency in determining worth and are still in common usage in personal interactions in the 21st century. Crane (2002:68-69) attributes this to the tendency for former labels to become informally and pejoratively used for name-calling. Thus terms which in their times were considered neutral such as 'retarded' have now taken on the negative connotations associated with words such as 'idiot'. Recent and seemingly politically correct and less stigmatising labels such as 'intellectual disability' seem to have inherited the exclusionary and deficit based assumptions which these earlier labels seem now to enunciate more explicitly.

There are some professionals who continue to maintain that labels are of use in helping them to explain to the public the special needs and atypical behaviour which are considered to accompany certain kinds of disabilities (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994:47).

2.2.3 The Problem of Definitions

The need to develop measures that would be able to distinguish a group of people considered to be intellectually disabled from a perceived normal population has been ascribed to a more humanitarian interest in the possibility of more appropriate care for groups of people in Europe who in the past had been inhumanely treated (Anastasi, 1988:6). From the early work of French physician Esquirol in 1838 (Anastasi, 1988:6), to the ongoing development of intelligence tests from 1879 to the present, the belief that intellectual capacity can be objectively measured has served to entrench the middle-class behavioural norms of American and European core culture (Mercer, 1973:37) and has impacted upon the varying definitions of intellectual disability.

During the 20th century the definitions which have been most widely used and accepted by the professions associated with intellectual disability have been issued as a result of the ongoing work of the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR). The AAMR published its first manual on definition in 1929 and recently published its tenth in 2002 (Cuskelly, 2004:117).

During the first 6 decades of the 20th century there was an over reliance on the use of intelligence tests to define intellectual disability. In particular, the adherence to the theoretical assumption that intelligence is distributed along a "normal curve" (or bell curve), exercised a hold on how learning potential was gauged and frozen within eight demarcated areas, each defined as a standard deviation from the mean or average score of 100 (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994:120-121). The initial practice of using one standard deviation of 15 points from the mean of 100 as an indication of sub average intelligence which was reflected in the 1962 AAMR definition, meant that a substantial portion of the population could be defined as intellectually disabled (Crane, 2002:74).

Professionals became more cautious about diagnosing intellectual disability as various contextual factors became apparent. One of the factors which led to a questioning of this particular choice of demarcation of the existence of intellectual disability in the hierarchy of measured intellectual functioning was the realisation in the United States that minority group children were overrepresented in the range from 70 – 85 points. This pointed to the fact that cultural differences existed between

the test developers and these minority groups and that this difference was translated as a bias towards the dominant cultural group (Franks in Crane, 2002:75). Another contextual factor which was acknowledged by some professionals was that a diagnosis of intellectual disability carried a stigma with associated harmful consequences for individuals in terms of poor self concept and being negatively viewed by others (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994:116). A further factor was the emergence of the view that for many individuals, intellectual disability is a socially ascribed condition underpinned by a particular set of cultural expectations which only become apparent when a child enters school. Recognition of this phenomenon, aptly named the six-hour retardation, prompted an increased awareness of the importance of another dimension in the diagnosis of intellectual disability, which was the ability of an individual to cope with the various demands of the environment or his or her adaptive skills (Crane, 2002:75).

Later definitions of intellectual disability placed a greater emphasis on the concurrent existence of deficits in adaptive behaviour, together with a significantly sub average intellectual functioning as measured as at least two standard deviations below the mean on an I.Q. test, and a manifestation before the age of 18 years.

Current definitions of intellectual disability include reference to measured I.Q. scores, adaptive behaviour and age of onset. In 1992 The American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) defined intellectual disability as follows:

> Mental Retardation refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterised by significantly sub average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home-living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work. Mental retardation manifests before age 18 (Luckasson et al., quoted in Crane, 2002:79).

Another widely used publication in the psychological and medical professions, The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000:41), includes the same three criteria, namely significantly sub average intellectual functioning, limitations in adaptive skills and onset prior to the age of 18.

However despite this seeming agreement in definition, there still remain areas of doubt as to the reliability of use of I.Q. scores as one of the determinants of the existence of mild intellectual disability. Nell (2000:83) contends that there is a

general tendency for populations in developing countries to produce lower scores on I.Q. tests than their Western counterparts. He goes on to say that test scores between cultural groups cannot be compared until language proficiency, educational quality, socially mediated definitions of what constitutes ability, test-wiseness and cognitive style have been shown to be equivalent.

One of the scholars who has disrupted the more static notions of intelligence in general and intellectual disability in particular is Reuven Feuerstein, the Israeli psychologist. Following in the footsteps of Vygotsky (Hodapp, Burack & Zigler, 1998:6), Feuerstein challenged the way in which I.Q. tests were structured to assess an individual's prior knowledge and how the scoring of tests sets limits on how much an individual can learn (Feuerstein, 1979:13). He also felt that traditional I.Q. tests did not reveal whether an individual displayed a lack of ability to learn or whether it merely reflected a lack of opportunity to learn. He felt that an assessment tool should be able to measure learning directly, rather than reflect what are often unequal opportunities for learning (Feuerstein, 1979:xv). Through his theory of cognitive modifiability he suggested that changes could occur in the structure of the intellect which deviated from an individual's expected course of development as statistically measured on an I.Q. test.

Research with many displaced and immigrant children convinced Feuerstein and his colleagues that the reasons for lower intellectual functioning in children and adolescents could be ascribed to serious flaws in thinking skills such as impulsivity and failure to make comparisons. According to Feuerstein, "retarded performers" view themselves at best as passive receptacles of information rather than generators of information. He came to believe that many cognitive deficiencies could be ascribed to a lack of instruction about interactions with the environment and that what counts is not only direct exposure to environmental factors, but more importantly a mediated experience of these factors. Feuerstein thus developed a dynamic approach for evaluating intelligence called the Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) which measured modifiability during active learning tasks and a programme of instruments called Instrumental Enrichment to help individuals acquire the thinking skills necessary for them to learn best from experience (Feuerstein, 1979:56-71).

2.2.4 Problems of Classification and Etiology

The classification of intellectual disability into various subgroups has had a problematic history and continues to be an area of contention, particularly regarding the role of measurement in I.Q. based classificatory systems.

The earliest I.Q. based system which was proffered by The American Association for the Study of the Feebleminded (later the AAMR) employed the terms *moron* (I.Q. 75-50), *imbecile* (I.Q. 50-25) and *idiot* (I.Q. less than 25). It is interesting to note that the terms associated with these I.Q. ranges were changed as late as 1961 when the AMMR replaced these labels with the classifications of mild, moderate, severe and profound.

The American Psychiatric Association in its DSM-IV-R (2000:42), also uses these labels which are seen to represent a continuum of degree of severity of intellectual impairment. The range of scores associated with each level has not changed much and are as indicated in Table 1.

TABLE 1: DEGREE OF SEVERITY OF INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

DEGREES OF SEVERITY	RANGE OF ASSOCIATED SCORES
Mild Intellectual Disability	50 - 55 to approximately 70
Moderate Intellectual Disability	35 - 40 to 50 - 55
Severe Intellectual Disability	20 - 25 to 35 - 40
Profound Intellectual Disability	Below 20 or 25

Lea (1990:205) states that there is generally more consensus on the classifications of individuals considered to have the more severe forms of intellectual disability and that there is greater controversy regarding individuals who are classified at the upper ends of the I.Q. based system. However, despite this lack of consensus amongst professionals which is often related to accepted ranges to account for standard errors in measurement, it cannot be denied that this type of classificatory system has impacted significantly on the social lives, economic possibilities and educational opportunities of learners described as belonging to a particular subtype.

Up until the move to democracy in South Africa many children with intellectual disability were classified as being able to be placed within certain institutions which fell under the ambit of different government departments according to their perceived educability (Department of Education), or need of care (Department of Health). Children who were classified as having mild intellectual disability fell into the category of 'educable' and were placed in special or adaptation classes and special secondary schools. Children who were graded as moderately intellectually disabled were considered to be ineducable but trainable, and therefore suited to training centres (Grover, 1990:164).

MacMillan, Siperstein and Gresham (1996:356) assert that mild intellectual disability is qualitatively different from the more severe forms and feel that it should be recognised as a separate entity, not allied to intellectual disability or mental retardation. These authors feel that a new term would be able to capture the uniqueness of this group, particularly in describing the pervasive weakness in abstract reasoning and problem-solving that many children show, rather than the overall delay in functioning which is evident across different contexts in moderate to severe forms of intellectual disability.

Most individuals who are identified as being intellectually disabled are classified as mildly intellectually disabled and typically do not differ in appearance from peers without disabilities (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994:12). In most cases there are no pathological conditions which are shown to cause mild intellectual disability (Kirk, Gallagher & Anastasiow, 1993:183), which has led to some researchers to referring to this category as being intellectual disability of unknown origins (MacMillan et al., 1996:356).

Behavioural and psychological characteristics of learners with mild intellectual disability are represented as including experiencing difficulties with maintaining attention and being able to focus, short-term memory, self-regulation, language development, cognitive development and particularly the ability to engage in abstract thinking, the generalisation of learning, social development and the development of intrinsic motivation (Hallahan & Kauffman,1994:132-135; Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 1998:196).

The possible causes of mild intellectual disability continue to be debated and are often most apparent in the relative weighting arguments give to the role of intrinsic or extrinsic factors. Many scholars of intellectual disability feel that a child's environment (nurture) is more likely to be the cause of mild intellectual disability than genetic or inherent factors (nature). This view was instrumental in the initiation of the Head Start programme in the United States which attempted to counteract what were seen to be the negative impacts of poverty on intelligence through improved educational and medical services for preschoolers of low socio-economic status (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994:124).

Kirk et al. (1993:183) maintain that studies illustrate that more families of children with mild intellectual disabilities come from lower socio-economic backgrounds than do the families of children with moderate intellectual disabilities. They go on to say that poverty and social disorganisation in the home environment increase health risks, and contribute to early and progressive language deficits and a variety of cognitive problems.

In 1992 the AMMR moved away from a type of classificatory system based on a range of I.Q. scores to a system which referred to the levels of support intensity over four domains (intermittent, limited, extensive and pervasive) which individuals with intellectual disability were considered to need. This system is seen to hold particular promise for use in inclusive educational settings as it focuses on the degree of need of an individual rather than the degree of deficit (Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 1998:192-193). However, in response to critics who found the 1992 definition too vague and the absence of a number based classificatory system too representative of social rather than scientific concerns, the most recent definition of 2002 of the AMMR appears to have reaffirmed the supposed usefulness of the previous quantitative classificatory system (Cuskelly, 2004:117-122). These moves are illustrative of the ongoing tensions which exist between different models of viewing disability.

2.3 MODELS USED TO UNDERSTAND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

2.3.1 Introduction

From its rather unclear and shrouded beginnings, the history of the provision of education or care for people with intellectual and other disabilities has demonstrated

the relationship of unequal power between 'helpers' and 'helped', has reflected the social adjustments related to demands of the labour market, and has provided for the reification of the roles of those groups of individuals who have been seen to provide a service (Johnstone, 1998:15). Many scholars find it useful to view these forces through an examination of the different models which frame the various ways in which disability is perceived.

2.3.2 The Moral Model

The moral model of disability is implicated in the views that a disability has a moral or religious significance and that people become disabled either as a punishment for personal or inherited sins, or as a means for the redemption or inspiration of others (Gill, 1999:281). As example in the New Testament the parables all portray disability as a sin, and that a cure can be achieved with sufficient faith (UNESCO in Shapiro, 1999:161). During the Reformation, Luther viewed people with intellectual disabilities to be essentially evil, without a soul and representative of Satan (Shapiro, 1999:163). Various religions also reinforce the provider and receiver relationship which is still very much in evidence in the beliefs and behaviours of many charitable organisations. Individuals with disabilities are viewed as unproductive members of society who need to be pitied, helped and uplifted. Individuals who give of their time to these charitable organisations are praised for their selflessness and dedication to the service of the less fortunate in society.

The power of the moral model of disability to shape attitudes is perhaps most evident in the ways in which many children are socialised into interacting with disability. The means through which a child is first exposed to disability is most often transmitted through strong cultural influences such as the media, our language and literature, and school (Shapiro, 1999:3). The power of language to shape our thoughts and not merely to express them is evident in the many representations of disability as punishment or as representative of evil in traditional children's stories. The stories which children are read often represent disability as a cultural stereotype which is static, imposed and removed from direct and reciprocal human interactions with individuals who have disabilities (Bilken, 2000:339).

2.3.3 The Medical Model

The most influential model of viewing disability is the one provided by the medical model. Gill (1999:281) describes this model as the one that brought disability "… down to earth, to the secular world, and replaced supernatural explanations with natural science". This model served to make disability seem more understandable and therefore more amenable to human control. By locating the problem of the disability within the individual and to the functional limitations or psychological losses assumed to be occasioned by the disability (Oliver, 1996:32), there seemed ample justification to intervene and do things to people with disabilities rather than to try to do things with them (Johnstone, 1999:16). In this model, disability is routinely represented as a problem or a defect that can be measured, that is able to be located within an individual, that has the effect of diminishing the quality of life of an afflicted person, that needs cure or some curative efforts which need to be provided by medical and other professional experts (Gill, 1999:281).

Skrtic (1995:3) asserts that both practical and political claims were instrumental in the rise of the professions to positions of authority and prominence. The practical claim expressed itself in the access which the professions have to exclusive knowledge which is needed to solve society's problems. The political claim asserted that professionals would be able to apply this knowledge in a benign manner in the interests only of their clients and for the common welfare rather than for their personal gain. The justification for professionalisation privileged the triumph of scientific superiority over traditional authority at the same time as promoting the institutionalisation of an associated ethic of service. The combination of these two claims produced a situation in which the voices of people with disabilities were effectively silenced, where professionals had the power to define problems and formulate largely technical solutions, where issues regarding social access were unexamined and where all deliberations took place within existing patterns of economic and social structures (Troyna & Vincent, 1996:132-133).

Over the past 40 years the legitimacy of the claims of the professions have been called into question by what Skrtic (1995:3-4) refers to as "... three waves of criticism: a sociological critique of professional practice, a philosophical critique of professional knowledge, and a political critique of professional power". The sociological critique has questioned not only the practical argument of the

professionals in terms of the manner in which they deliver their expertise to society, but also the ideological premise of their practice which critics believe has served merely to promote capitalism and the compartmentalisation of social problems.

The philosophical critique is linked to the more general uncertainty which postmodern thinking has provoked and which has dislocated the objectivism privileged through modernism in a move towards the less certain and more relative views of subjectivism. This fundamental shift in worldview "… questions the very ideas upon which our modern institutions are premised, including the institution of the professions" (Skrtic, 1995:4).

The political critique of the social professions is based on the political and moral implications which a move away from the objectification of social problems has provoked through alternative ways of regarding social analysis as a text. Skrtic (1996:41) goes on to say that "no aspect of social life has received more critical attention under the text analogy than the social professions, for it is this group in modern societies that has the authority to interpret normality, and thus the power to define and classify others as abnormal and to treat their bodies and minds".

The medical model of disability directly influenced the official sanctioning of the institution of special education in South Africa which was enacted through the 1948 Special Schools Act. The enactment of this view of disability within the education system in South Africa had the effect legitimising exclusionary practices towards learners with intellectual disability, affirming the status and power of the emerging professions and creating the "… mystification of special education in South Africa for regular education teachers" who felt that teaching learners described as having intellectual disability was beyond their area of expertise (Naicker, 1999:31).

The year 1948 also heralded the institutionalisation of Apartheid in the form of separate development for racially described groups. Provision for learners described as having intellectual disability varied greatly with most resources being made available to white learners who had an expanded system of special schools to cater for their medically diagnosed and psychologically measured needs (Du Toit, 1996:10; Department of Education, 1997:23).

2.3.4 The Social or Sociocultural Model of Disability

The still-evolving social model of disability has been driven and brought into greater prominence in political, economic and social spheres by scholars and activists with disabilities and allies without disabilities. This view of disability represents a sharp departure from the moral and medical models in that it views disability as a dimension of human difference rather than an individual defect.

Disability is seen to derive its particular cultural meanings though society's responses to individuals who are seen to deviate from particular cultural standards or norms (Gill, 1999:281). Within the social model the 'problem' of disability thus resides within society rather than within an individual and is evident in all the elements within society that impose constraints and restrictions on people with disabilities (Oliver, 1996:32).

The social model of disability is an interesting lens to focus upon the classification of mild intellectual disability as most scholars in the field acknowledge the central role of context (the society and the environment) in the determination of whether or not an individual is considered to have the socially ascribed status of mild intellectual disability. Kirk et al. (1993:167) give the example that a child who is developing slowly might not be seen as intellectually disabled in an agricultural society, but would more likely be considered so in a technically sophisticated society in which the demand for mastery of language and mathematical skills would more likely lead to educational and social difficulties. This leads to the situation where a child can become intellectually disabled merely by moving from a community where expectations for the display of certain competencies are low, to a situation or community where expectations are high, a set of circumstances which justifies the claims of proponents of the social model. Likewise a child or young adult can lose the status of intellectual disability by leaving a social system such as school.

MacMillan et al. (1996:357) feel that mild intellectual disability can only be understood in terms of the interactions between "… a child's cognitive inefficiencies and the environmental demands for problem solving". They believe that the condition of mild intellectual disability is highly contextual and relative to the environment, a dynamic feature which is absent in other forms of intellectual disability.

Many proponents of the social model of disability insist on the value of creating a distinction or lack of causal relationship between disability, which is seen to be socially constructed, and impairment, which is seen to be a physical constituent of the body (Oliver, 1996:39). This distinction is used by the South African White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Office of the Deputy President, 1997:11) to explain the social model thus:

> The social model is based on the belief that the circumstances of people with disabilities and the discrimination they face are socially created phenomena and have little to do with the impairments of disabled people.

One of the constraints which society routinely imposes on individuals with intellectual disabilities is an assumption of a greater or lesser degree or lack of human agency. Isaacs (1996:28) considers that the traditional dualistic view of the human as being composed of the two distinct parts of body and mind is complicit in Western views of intellectual disability as it emphasises the rational human mind as being the distinctive feature of humanity. Intellectual disability is thus viewed as being problematic as it suggests that individuals so described lack the ability to have access to agency in their world and in fact need other people to act or advocate on their behalf.

The view of advocacy which the social model promotes is how careful planning can enable individuals with intellectual disabilities to be supported in their adaptive behaviours and the learning of skills in the critical environments of home, school, work and community. The aim of this planning is for learners to develop self-advocacy skills which are evident when they speak or act on their own behalf in order to improve their quality of life (Alper, Schloss & Schloss, 1995:266). In this planning process advocates for adolescents with intellectual disabilities need to take cognizance of the fact that this period of transition within an individual's life span is characterised by significant changes in expectations for functioning in school, in the family and in the community. It is therefore during this period of transition that accommodations in the learning environments of learners with intellectual disabilities are necessary, as these will have a significant effect on their overall adjustment and particularly their struggles with independence and identity (Zetlin & Morrison, 1998:482-483).

2.4 PLANNING FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

2.4.1 Introduction

The provision of learning environments which can enhance the independence and ongoing positive identity of all learners, including those defined as having mild intellectual disabilities, is an ideal which is difficult to achieve in secondary school organisations which have been historically geared towards competitive academic performance and where the goal of schooling has been traditionally structured to prepare a "… select group of students to pursue higher education ..." (Sands, Kozleski & French, 2000:14). Within South Africa, the gradual move towards inclusive education signals that changes need to occur to make schooling more willing to provide an enabling learning environment for all learners. McConkey (1998:56) suggests that this involves a move from school-centred education to individual-centred education.

2.4.2 Alignment of Self-Determination, Quality of Life and Educational Outcomes

The independence and positive identity of learners with mild intellectual disability have been advanced by two important constructs which have emerged in the provision of learning opportunities for people with disabilities. These are self-determination and quality of life.

Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001:21) believe that special and general education can be brought together through conversations which place an emphasis on the promotion of self-determination and quality of life as these are both constructs which display universal needs and can be of benefit to all learners.

Self-determination provides the means through which all learners can be actively involved in their learning experiences. Self-determination can be encouraged through instructional experiences which involve goal setting, problem-solving and decision making. Agran, Blachard and Wehmeyer (2000:361-362) reported on significant gains made by individuals, most of whom had intellectual disabilities, who had been exposed to the Self-Determined Model of Instruction by their teachers. The study showed the value of teaching learners to become more self-determined as it

allowed learners to set their own goals, determine ways in which these goals could be achieved and evaluate how successful they had been.

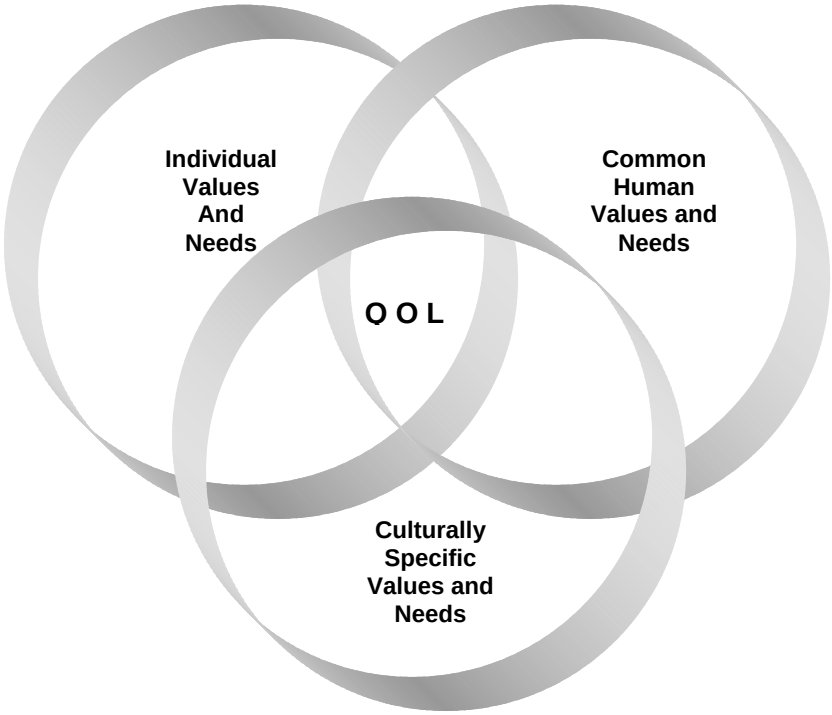
Sands et al. (2000:33) describe the essence of the many descriptions of quality of life as being a personally defined and ever-changing construct which entails the ability to adopt a lifestyle which is satisfactory in terms of an individual's unique needs and wants and which generates a sense of contentment and success. The purpose of an examination of the quality of life of people with disabilities is to enhance participation in and full membership of society (Dennis, Williams, Giangreco & Cloninger, 1993:499).

Drawing on the research of Goode (1990), Dennis et al. (1993:500) report several principles regarding the quality of life for people with disabilities:

1. Quality of life for people with disabilities comprises the same elements and relationships that have been shown to be important for persons without disabilities.
2. Quality of life is experienced when a person's basic needs are being met and when he or she is afforded the opportunity to pursue and achieve goals in major life settings.
3. The meaning of quality of life in major life settings can be consensually validated by a wide array of persons representing the viewpoints of persons with disabilities, including their families, professionals, service providers, advocates and others.
4. The quality of life of an individual is intrinsically related to the quality of life of other persons in his or her environment.
5. Quality of life of a person reflects the cultural heritage of the person and of those surrounding him or her.

Three spheres which represent an individual's world view are considered to influence quality of life of individuals with disabilities (Sands et al., 2000:34-34; Dennis et al., 1993:500-502).

FIGURE 3: INFLUENCES ON QUALITY OF LIFE



Adapted from Sands et al. (2000:33); Dennis et al. (1993:501)

The individual sphere represents the idea that every person is like no other person. As example one person's experience of disability and their particular needs, strengths and talents can contribute to a unique world view that undergirds his or her subjective assessment of quality of life (Dennis et al., 1993:500). In terms of providing an enabling learning environment, this would mean that learners with disabilities are acknowledged as being unique individuals with particular strengths and talents which, if recognised and affirmed, can contribute to individual wellbeing and learning progress.

The second sphere represents common human experiences and the recognition of the alikeness of all humans in their desire that their basic needs are recognised and met (Dennis et al., 1993:501). In educational learning environments there is a danger that so much attention can be paid to the perception that there are special needs that must to be met in individuals with disabilities, that the basic needs such as belonging to a group or feeling valued and loved are overlooked.

The third sphere is that of cultural influence in that every person is like some other person through experiences and meanings that groups of people share (Dennis et al., 1993:503). In schools in South Africa it is of great importance that teachers affirm the quality of life standards and values of different groups, families and individuals who have differing life experiences. This recognition alone can significantly improve the quality of life of learners who are often identified as having intellectual disabilities as a result of their perceived difference from a dominant culture.

The need to involve adolescent learners with intellectual disabilities in discussions around their subjective needs is an important component of planning for their emotional educational and vocational outcomes and can be incorporated into an individualised education plan and in instructional experiences in increasing self-determination.

Watson and Keith (2002:309) suggest that specific teacher training in the ability to work in collaborative teams can provide effective ways to address improvements in the quality of life of learners with disabilities.

2.4.3 Expectations of Learners with Mild Intellectual Disability

Recent publications represent learners with mild intellectual disabilities as having potential for development in three areas. In the academic area development is deemed to be possible to at least the level of the higher grades of primary school, in the social area it is accepted that individuals with mild intellectual disability can live independently in their community, and within the vocational domain the potential to be partially or totally self supporting in work of an unskilled or semi skilled nature (Kirk et al.; 1993:172, Lomofsky & Skuy, 2001:200; Mwamwenda, 1996:439 - 440).

Smith et al. (1998:425) believe that a comprehensive curriculum should be made available to learners with intellectual disabilities in secondary school. The curriculum should be responsive to the individual needs of learners, facilitate socialisation through maximum integration with peers without disabilities, and focus upon the learner's transition to post-school settings.

Mercer and Mercer (1993:585) suggest that research done by Moran (1980) is important in revealing the skills needed to succeed in secondary schools where the lecture method is used as the predominant method of instruction. These skills are in listening, attending, remembering, note-taking and writing, skills which are difficult to

master for learners with varying attention spans, poor memory skills, limited vocabulary and reading proficiency. Moran's research also demonstrated that many secondary school teachers use few advance organisers to help learners to take notes more effectively, that they do not often ask learners to paraphrase or demonstrate understandings of materials presented in lectures or readings, that they lecture at a fast pace and that the frequency of oral feedback and reinforcement is low.

In order to better accommodate diverse learning needs in secondary schools, Mercer and Mercer (1993:589) indicate attention to seven kinds of provision. These are academic remediation, transition instruction, career-related instruction, functional living skills, social development instruction, learning strategies and content instruction. Kirk et al. (1993:193) believe that these provisions are more easily achievable within a middle school concept of schooling which places stronger emphasis on counselling and affective education, team teaching and an interdisciplinary curriculum.

2.4.4 Educational Methods Found Effective in Teaching Learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities

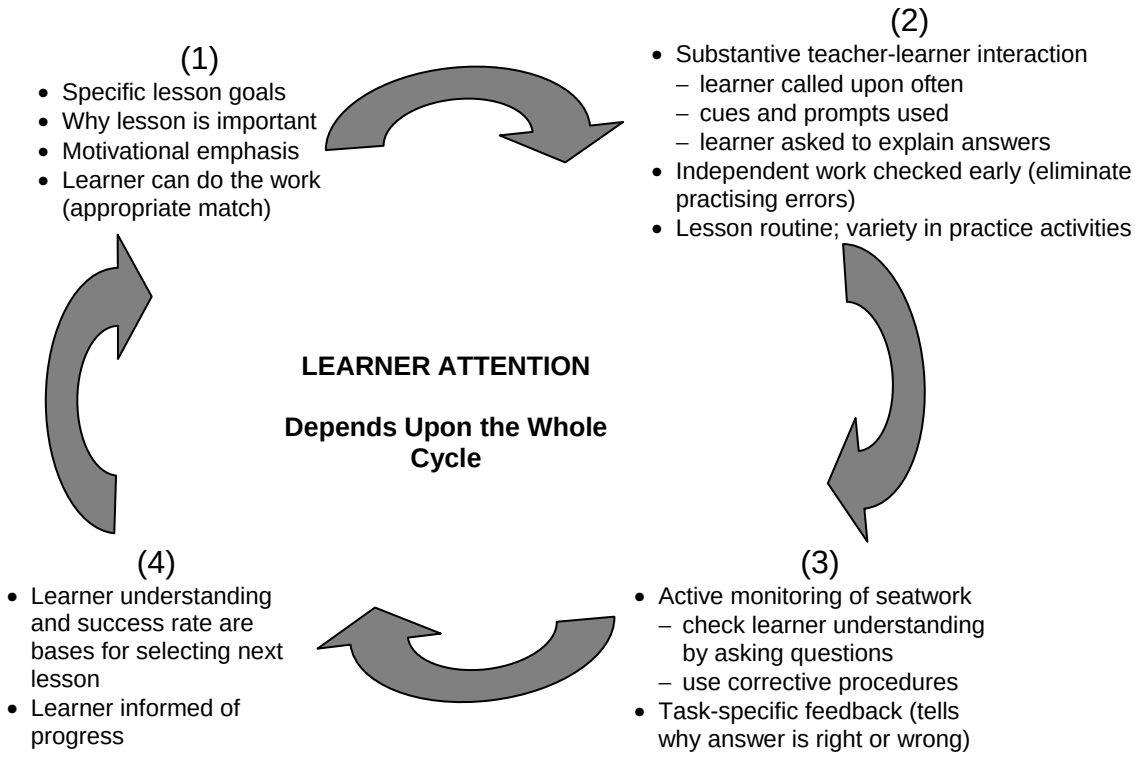
Lomofsky and Skuy (2001:201) state that "… learners with mild or moderate disability are frequently encountered by educators in South African classrooms". However, it is at the level of secondary school education where these learners present educators, who are unaccustomed to catering for diversity, with many challenges, particularly in terms of a working knowledge of methods which allow for active participation for all learners.

From their own extensive research, Christenson, Ysseldyke and Thurlow (1989:21-31) have drawn several conclusions regarding effectiveness of instruction for students with mild intellectual disabilities. The first conclusion was that there was no distinguishing factor which differentiates effectiveness of instruction in general and special education environments. In fact they found that particular instructional factors, such as the importance of corrective feedback to learners, are prerequisites for learning regardless of educational setting. Secondly they found that the literature they surveyed was useful in generating a list of factors which relate to achievement in learners with mild intellectual disabilities, but that knowledge of these factors was

not helpful unless they were organised into a system which could be used by an educator. Their final conclusion was that learner achievement results from "... interacting and mutually influencing factors ..." (Christenson et al., 1989:21) which occur between learner, teacher, classroom, instructional, district and home characteristics.

Christenson et al. (1989:28) regard the degree to which the environment is constructively active as being the hallmark of an effective learning environment for learners with mild intellectual disabilities. The instructional cycle illustrated in Figure 4 incorporates this belief, together with an organisation of the instructional factors considered essential to creating a positive learning environment for learners with mild intellectual disabilities.

FIGURE 4: INSTRUCTIONAL CYCLE



Adapted from Christenson et al., 1989:28

2.4.5 Parental, School and Community Involvement

The role of the family in creating a context for a child with mild intellectual disabilities is viewed by some researchers as being determined by the source of the disability.

In subscribing to the developmental approach to intellectual disability, Zigler (in Hodapp, Burack, & Zigler, 1998:9) proposed that there are two different groups of children with intellectual disability; those whose intelligence is measured at the lower end of the normal distribution curve and have no identifiable pathological cause for their condition (often referred to as having familial mental retardation), and those who have intellectual disability as a result of various neurological insults, metabolic dysfunctions or genetic defects (often referred to as organic retardation). The implications of this differentiation for education is that the former group are seen to develop through the same sequence as the average child but at a slower pace, whereas the latter group usually require major adjustments due to the specific consequences which are allied to the particular pathological condition which caused the intellectual disability.

Kirk et al. (1993:167) and Zigler (1999:5) claim that children who are identified as being in the first group often come from families of low socio-economic status who create a context in which a combination of poverty, limited education, and a barren home and environment often create additional problems for the learner. Smit and Liebenberg (2003:1) believe that it is often schools which actually exacerbate the problems experienced by these and other learners from sub-economic groups, in that many teachers remain unaware and insensitive to the needs and contexts of learners. In their research study which targeted parents from poor communities in South Africa, the findings were that schools pose barriers to participation for families living in poor communities. Moreover parents experience school staff as being out of touch with the daily realities of sub-economic living conditions and feel pressured by the demands which they feel schools place upon them (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003:2).

Further findings suggested that schools could play a central role in increasing parental involvement by attending to the practical support which parents in high risk communities need. According to the parents who participated in this study, this support involves teachers providing for the fundamental needs of learners, taking responsibility for learners when they are at school, treating parents and their children with empathy and respect and offering them opportunities to feel empowered, and offering emotional support to parents. The Open File on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2001:87-88) suggests that parents from marginalised groups often need

to be given a sense of confidence and self-worth themselves before they can be advocates for their children and that this requires proactive support from schools.

In discussing research regarding parent teacher relationships, Epstein (1995:703) cites the existence of certain emerging patterns. The first pattern is that partnerships between parents and the school tend to decline across the grades, unless schools actively work to develop and implement meaningful practices which encourage partnerships at each successive grade level. Secondly, schools in economically depressed areas tend to make more contacts with families about the difficulties and problems which their children are experiencing, unless they work hard at developing a balance in their communications which also include contacts about positive accomplishments. Thirdly, that single parents, parents who are employed at a distance from their home, parents who live far from the school, and fathers are likely to be less involved in the school, unless schools organise opportunities for parents to engage with the school at various times and at various places.

Stakes and Hornby (2000:111-116) suggest that teachers need to develop certain interpersonal skills to work effectively with parents, the most important of these being listening skills, counselling skills and assertion skills. Listening skills are characterised by a progressive layering of competency in attentiveness, passive listening, paraphrasing and active listening. Counselling skills are seen to be needed in order to allow parents to clarify their problems and generate strategies to deal with them. Assertion skills are used in order to be able to make requests, communicate ideas effectively and deal with criticism and aggression in a constructive and non-confrontational manner.

Research by Cushing and Kohl (1997) which investigated factors inhibiting school - community collaboration indicated the existence of three major barriers to successful collaborations. The first is the schools' apprehension regarding public scrutiny, particularly when schools have been already the target of negative media coverage. Another factor is the influence of teacher burnout due to high levels of exhaustion and frustration and the accompanying reluctance of teachers to extend themselves beyond what are seen to be overwhelming school demands. A third factor is that the attitude and perceptions of certain administrators and teachers that the community is uncaring or lacking in resources impede collaborations between schools and communities.

2.4.6 The Role of the Learning Support Teacher in Secondary Schools

Smith et al. (1998:438) believe that learning support teachers have an important role to play in the successful inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in secondary school environments. They describe their roles as involving ongoing collaboration with general classroom teachers, the preparation of learners for the challenges that may occur in general education classes and the equipping of learners for the future challenges in independent living and employment. According to Smith et al. (1998:438), the most important role that learning support teachers play is in their support of general classroom teachers by providing them with assistance through direct instruction or consultation. An additional competency which is considered to be required is an ability to support learners through daily crises which are often allied to difficulties in adolescent adjustments. This involves emotional counselling to learners (Smith et al., 1998:438).

Whether it is better to use a pull-out system of support or to provide support in classroom settings is still a contentious issue in the specialised education literature. Hallahan and Kauffman (1994:55) are critical of what they consider to be the methodological flaws of the many studies which have asserted that pull-out programmes are ineffective. On the other hand, learning support as part of a team effort within classrooms has associated challenges which often have to do with interpersonal relationships, issues of status and school organisation.

In research which interviewed support teachers who work alongside other teachers in classrooms, Thomas (1992:119) identified key ideas which incorporated participants' feelings of success or failure in their roles. The key ideas were status and self-esteem, territoriality, threat/suspicion, interpersonal factors, ideology/ professionalism, communication, organisation, school policy and role clarity. These ideas were seen to be important constructs for learning support teachers to make sense of what was happening in their particular schools and support environments. Support teachers who worked in secondary schools reported feeling that they had a poor image and status which was in part due to a lack of special skills or a status which could be deemed as more professional and distinguishing from other teachers. The status of the support teacher appeared to be aligned with the feeling of being marginal to the main business of the school (Thomas, 1992:123-125). Teachers found that working in classrooms led to feelings of infringement of personal space by

the class teacher. This was linked to feelings of threat or suspicion which classroom teachers displayed initially and that it took time and effort to win teachers over through accommodating teachers' models of teaching to ultimately effect change, rather than imposing change upon teachers.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Intellectual disability is a notion which societies have employed to portray difference from what is considered to be the norm. This difference has been described, defined, classified and labelled in many ways and has illustrated the changing attitudes of society towards dimensions of human diversity.

Disability can be viewed through different models which differ in the emphasis placed on human culpability, deficit or possibility. An appreciation of the role which the environment plays in creating disabling conditions allows for more contextually responsive ways of enhancing the social and educational possibilities for individuals with mild intellectual disability.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL AND CURRENT INFLUENCES ON SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has explored ways in which learning environments can become more responsive to learners with mild intellectual disability. This chapter traces the historical, international and national influences on support to learners and pays particular attention to South Africa's past and current political influences. The chapter concludes with a description of the current structures of support available to learners with mild disabilities within secondary schools in the Western Cape of South Africa.

3.2 INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

3.2.1 Introduction

Support for learners in different education placements has driven fierce debates over several decades and continues to highlight the inescapably political essence of the purpose of schooling and education and the reproduction or rearranging of the relative and most often extreme positions of the more and less powerful people in societies.

3.2.2 Different Historical Contexts for the Understanding of Disability

Vislie (1995:43-45) links the support for or neglect of individuals with intellectual and other disabilities in Western societies to prevailing economic conditions and related progress and increased life chances and choices for the majority. She describes the relationship toward perceived deviance and disability over time as being characterised by "liquidation", then by "isolation" and later, after the establishment of institutions in the 19th and 20th centuries, by "segregation".

The post World War 2 period witnessed rapid advances in technology, production and consumption and access to goods and services, including educational provision for the majority. The war had also resulted in large numbers of people becoming disabled in a short time, advances in medicine and the emergence of a new industry of rehabilitation and welfare (DPSA, 2000:19-21). The extermination of children and adults with disabilities by the Nazi regime had also served to remind people of a past behaviour of permanent exclusion which did not seem to fit 20th century notions of progress.

During the 1960's the general optimism created by modernisation and greater access to educational opportunities was tempered with more critical views of the economic and political institutions in societies and resulted in formulations of public policies for people with disabilities or suffering from disadvantage in many western countries. The ideological direction which these policies took was the integration of previously marginalised people in society and its institutions as a means of promoting greater social cohesion (Engelbrecht, 1999:6).

3.2.3 The International Movement towards Inclusive Education

The integration movement is characterised by its attempt to fashion learners to fit in with existing educational arrangements rather than effecting the change of attitude and educational provision to accommodate learners with diverse learning needs. During the 1970's the United Kingdom and the United States of America produced public documents which according to Dyson, Bailey, O'Brien, Rice and Zigmond (1997:6) illustrated the "… mixed motivations …" of the integration movement. Both the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) in the U.K. and the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) of the U.S.A. did not guarantee integration into the general educational system as an unequivocal right, but rather provided the mechanism in which a judgement could be made whether individual children's best interests would be served within available mainstream provisions. The suitability or otherwise of placements was therefore predicated on assessments by professionals whose affirmed stature in this process ensured a continued existence of segregated placements. Successful integration pointed to the fact that it was possible to incorporate children with special needs into mainstream classes, but it also highlighted the fact that the power to effect integration was in the hands of

professionals and policymakers whose political will to effect change and alter attitudes were critical issues.

During the past three decades it is the varying understandings of inclusive education which have provided the pivotal area around which the nature of the support offered to all learners in various national contexts is being conceptualised and contested. The impetus to change the power structure inherent in the practice of integration was provided through the inclusion movement which was given prominence and formally recognised during the early 1990's through the formulations of two International Conferences, in Jomtein in Thailand in 1990 and in Salamanca in Spain in 1994. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), through its unequivocal assertion of inclusion as a human right, armed advocates with a rhetoric of the universal nature of inclusion to advance global social justice and equity. "Inclusion is about all students. Inclusion is an aspiration for a democratic education and, as such, the project of inclusion addresses the experiences of all students at school" (Slee, 2001a:168).

Inclusive education draws upon the social model of disability in order to understand the difficulties experienced in education. This implies a shift from locating educational difficulties within individuals, towards an examination of the ways in which social environments act to exclude individuals from full participation in society. Inclusive education is thus an approach that recognises that each child is a unique learner. It requires that ordinary public schools become capable of providing an education for all children in their communities regardless of intellectual, physical, social, emotional, linguistic or other difference (Magrab, 2003:8).

Many scholars consider that integral to the building of inclusive schools is an acceptance that in addition to making schools welcoming and affirming environments for learners with diverse learning needs, a further acceptance is necessary. This entails the acknowledgement that tensions and dilemmas have always and will continue to be embedded within the provision of education (Artiles, 1998:32-36; Dyson, 2001:24-29). These tensions exist between notions of equity and excellence, individuals and groups, commonalities and differences, producers and consumers and so on. The issue is whether schools choose to celebrate this reality and work critically but constructively with it and mediate between these tensions (Florian &

Rouse, 2001:403), or whether they fall into the trap of restricting themselves to contrived and progressively eliminated series of 'solutions'.

3.2.4 Strategies which Help Schools Become More Inclusive

Two recent publications which have actively sought to help promote and suggest good practice in moving towards inclusive education are The Index for Inclusion (Booth et al., 2000) and the Open File on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2001).

The Index for Inclusion comprises a set of materials which have been developed to support schools in a process of inclusive development. "It involves a process of school self-review on three dimensions concerned with inclusive school cultures, policies and practices" and comprises progression through a series of developmental phases (Booth et al., 2000:2).

Drawing on experiences of inclusive education in many countries, The Open File on Inclusive Education attempts to identify some of the principles which inform and develop inclusive practice. It describes itself as being a set of resource materials which is open to ongoing development which can be used in its present form as an initiation for educational systems and schools to examine their own situations (UNESCO, 2001:12). Topics presented include managing the development of inclusive policies and practices, professional development for inclusive education and educational assessment as part of quality education.

From his involvement in many research activities regarding the development of inclusive practices in schools, Ainscow (2001:2-3) suggests a transformative approach comprised of certain components which help schools move forward to being more inclusive of all their learners. These are that schools should examine their existing practices and knowledge, that difference should be seen as an opportunity for learning, that schools should scrutinise the barriers to participation which operate in their environments and that all available resources should be used to support learning. Further ingredients seen to add to inclusive school environments are that teachers develop a common language of practice which can facilitate in sharing of ideas and reflective teaching and learning and the creation of conditions which encourage rather than discourage risk-taking.

3.2.5 International Trends in Support in Secondary School

It is perhaps in secondary schools where the tensions between equity and excellence are most keenly felt, particularly in societies where education reforms have forced schools into an environment where market-place values are being applied to the measurement and publication of educational outcomes (Clark, Dyson, Milward & Robson, 1999:38; Florian & Rouse, 2001:399-400). Equally the acknowledgement of diversity is severely mitigated against by the traditional and fragmented forms of academic knowledge production which the disciplinary impulse of formalism has entrenched and which formal exit examinations continue to champion. Secondary schools as organisations have been routinely configured for performance, not problem-solving (MacKinnon & Brown, 1994:126-152; Skrtic, 1991:148-206).

Research into support for learners at secondary schools over the last 15 years illustrates the complexities associated with including learners in environments which traditionally have had structural characteristics more akin to professional bureaucracies rather than the 'adhocracies' which Skrtic (1991:148-206) believes they need to become to accommodate learners with diverse learning needs. Many researchers acknowledge the very different terrains of expectation which exist between primary and secondary schools which often mitigate against the restructuring of secondary schools into more inclusive learning and social environments (MacKinnon & Brown, 1994:126). Primary school learning environments are assumed to cater for the development of the fundamental skills of reading writing and mathematics, whereas secondary school environments have been traditionally structured with the assumption that learners will be able to use these skills independently in concert with other processing strategies in order to access and learn large amounts of information (Schumaker & Deshler, 1994:50).

Furthermore secondary schools have particular structural, curricular, instructional and system related factors which make responses to individual learning needs more daunting and threatening to teachers and administrators. Secondary school teachers work with large numbers of learners daily and consequently have restricted contact time with individual learners. Large classes make 'teaching to the middle' in didactically driven whole class teaching a favoured instructional technique which is encouraged by evaluations which are calculated on normative performance levels

(Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2000:7-8). Most secondary school teachers have been trained as specialists in content areas to teach relatively homogeneous groups of students and are thus unprepared and disinclined to make adaptations for individual students. System related requirements such as fixed examination timetables and formal exit assessments and procedures focus teachers' attention on corralling students towards externally demanded outcomes (Florian & Rouse, 2001:399), rather than concentrating on the process of participation in learning environments. In addition, public scrutiny of published school and system results provide a great deal of pressure to schools to be seen to be raising academic standards (Cole & McCleskey, 1997:2).

A further influence upon individuals within secondary school environments involves the general transition through adolescence, a developmental period which presents unique challenges to schools. The adolescent's desire for independence, propensity for risk-taking and experimentation serve as both a resource and a deterrent to learning (Magrab, 2003:8). It is acknowledged that the transition through adolescence presents even greater challenges to individuals with disabilities (Smith et al., 1995:424).

Despite these factors, research at secondary schools in several western countries share common strands indicative of promising practice and displays the greater confluence between the previously parallel areas of educational research, namely the school effectiveness and school improvement movement, and inclusive education.

From their cross cultural analysis from data obtained in school districts in the UK and the USA, Rouse and Florian (1996:71-85) identified that certain common features of effective inclusive secondary schools were evident despite contextual variations. Chief amongst these was that inclusive schools were problem solving organisations which embraced a common mission that emphasised a responsibility for and created conditions for learning for all students. The staff which were employed at these schools were committed to working together and were supported in this process through clear policies, administrative leadership and, most importantly, through long-term professional development. Barriers experienced by teachers to the development of inclusive secondary schools included teaching methods aimed at the middle range of achievement; the presence of alternative, segregated facilities;

confusion about roles and responsibilities and a lack of coordinated, long-term professional development.

MacKinnon and Brown (1995:126-152) studied two secondary schools in Canada to assess their attempts to accommodate students with widely diverse needs in regular classrooms through focusing on the way the teachers made sense of and adapted to the structural changes that took place in each school. They found that the teachers in the two schools struggled to break away from the historical-structural nature of secondary schools to find new ways to deal with contemporary problems. However a powerful tool in the potential to develop innovative solutions to difficult problems and to provide the impetus for professional rejuvenation was experienced by teachers who were deployed as part of problem solving teams. The researchers found that this forum necessitated a willingness on behalf of participant teachers to re-examine the assumptions that underlie traditional teaching methods and school organisation. Furthermore the study revealed that teachers whose classes represent a wide diversity of learning needs consistently ask for and require support. Two important implications as to the nature the support teams needed in these secondary schools became apparent. The first implication was that support teams needed to move beyond simple curriculum planning to the development of a clear problem solving locus which could generate new knowledge relevant to altering classroom practice. The second implication was the acknowledgement that teaching students with diverse needs is shared work which necessitates alterations to the structural configuration of the school, particularly in terms of ensuring common time for the problem solving, planning and evolving knowledge creation necessary for inclusive education.

More recent work by Florian and Rouse (2001:399-412) involved an investigation into the identification of strategies which appear successful in enabling secondary schools to extend inclusive practice. The investigation involved ongoing contact and work with representatives from a group of eight secondary schools who met regularly to discuss their own teaching practice and other examples of inclusive practice. With regard to teachers' knowledge and use of various teaching strategies often associated with successful inclusive practice such as co-operative learning, differentiation strategies and social skills teaching, most teachers said that they were familiar with the strategies but many found implementation difficult due to subject

area cultures and constraints. Schools also varied with respect to the extent which they used streaming for different subject areas or in particular year groups. In their observations of class teachers, Florian and Rouse (2001:405) found that teachers were generally able to instruct whole classes and also offer a choice of tasks and varying expectations with respect to individual pupils. They also observed that the teachers were constantly evaluating their own performance and consequently revising their approach in response to the reactions of their pupils. Even though the teachers in these inclusive settings were primarily teachers of their subject, they also showed the potential and capability of being responsive to the individuals in their classes. The elements which supported this process were the use of personal planners which increased pupil involvement and target setting and the use of monitoring systems that were formative in nature.

Many of the schools involved in this study displayed a change in their use of learning support from individually based interventions to whole school responses such as regarding learning support as a means of improving classroom practice and as a source of knowledge and support for teaching and learning. In one case the learning support teacher was reassigned from individual interventions to being assigned to a subject area. In other schools individual instruction was offered in less obvious ways than in the pull out system in terms of offering an after school homework club which was open to all pupils. The researchers noticed real progress in the extent to which the schools in their study had been able to include learners in extra curricular activities but less progress was noted in the reported social inclusion and emotional wellbeing of some learners. The influence of national exams was apparent in the way teachers viewed their pupils as groups rather than individuals and in the particular supports offered to pupils with the view of equipping them for greater success in tasks related to examination writing.

In a survey study which was designed to extend knowledge regarding secondary school teacher attitudes towards inclusion, Van Reusen et al. (2001:7-17) found that teachers who had more training in special education or had experience of teaching students with disabilities, displayed more positive attitudes towards inclusion, a finding consistent with previous research (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996:59-74). Of note was the fact that more that half of the secondary school teachers surveyed produced responses which indicated that they held negative attitudes towards

including student with special needs in their classrooms. However the most negative attitudes were evident among teachers with the least amount of experience or training with regard to special education needs. Additionally the responses of these teachers indicated their belief that the inclusion of students with disabilities would have a negative effect on the general learning environment, their ability to deliver their subject content and the quality of learning in their classrooms.

Of particular concern to Van Reusen et al. (2001:13-15) was the potential that these negative attitudes have on limiting the use of techniques which have been previously mentioned as being commensurate with good inclusive practice, thereby restricting the learning opportunities offered to all students in a class. A further concern was that the lack of learning opportunities thus created would perpetuate a negatively reinforcing cycle in which lowered achievement would be seen to be a result of the inclusion of students with disabilities, rather than from the lack of creative and appropriate learning strategies employed in the classroom. Recommendations included ongoing teacher training and support in the application of specific instructional procedures, the creation of group reflection time where teachers can share beliefs and strategies which would allow for a more holistic perspective of their learners and administrative attention to the realities of class size and the severity of the disabilities included in secondary school classrooms.

Research into the investigation of inclusion at a whole school level conducted by means of an in-depth case study of a secondary school in the south west of England confirmed previous findings that having learners with disabilities in the classroom results in positive changes in educators' attitudes (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2002:143-163). This finding has implications for the anticipation of initial negative attitudes at the initiation of an inclusion programme and confirms previous research which found that as teachers' experience with learners with special needs increases, so does their confidence to teach a diverse range of learning needs (LeRoy & Simpson, 1996:32-36; Villa, Thousand, Meyers & Nevin, 1996:29-45).

3.3 PAST PROVISION OF SUPPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.3.1 Introduction

The delivery and conception of support services in South Africa followed the same general ideological pathway as in other countries proceeding from superstitious beliefs, neglect and limited support; to the development of legislation which considers that the provision of support is best effected within mainstream learning environments. The intervening periods bore witness to initial interventions from religious organisations, increasing involvement of the state and the provision of specialised schools for differently diagnosed disabilities (Du Toit, 1996:7; Naicker, 1999:29-30).

3.3.2 The Apartheid Era and Special Education

The central feature which distinguishes South Africa from other countries in terms of past provision of support for learner needs is the extent to which its particular socio-political and economic history and locus of power contributed to the general lack of educational provision and massive social deprivation of the majority of its people. From 1948 until the 1990's the only contender in the production of education policy was the state which utilised its power vested in parliamentary supremacy and legal complicity unhindered by a popular constitution (Jansen, 2001:12). Racially entrenched attitudes and the institutionalisation of discriminatory practices led to extreme disparities in the delivery of education, a reflection of the fragmentation and inequality that characterised society as a whole (Department of Education, 1997:22). The divisiveness of the education system was dramatically portrayed through the existence of 19 different education departments which were not coordinated, were centrally controlled and which based their delivery on separation and resulting discrimination along the axes of race, colour and disability (Du Toit, 1996:7).

Racial classification was legislated in 1950 through the Population Registration Act which divided all South Africans into the racially assigned groups of Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Africans and whose enactment impacted upon an assigned group's ability to exercise human agency and receive government related services. Education provision and general support services thus became differentiated between racial groups and reflected gross disparities in funding, curriculum formulations and learner expectations. The parallel and marginalised provision of

specialized education became the area in which racial disparities in support provision were most starkly evident as a costly and highly specialised support interventions were provided for white learners and some Indian learners, with a poorly developed and often externally supported system for other racial groups (Du Toit, 1996:9; Engelbrecht et al., 2002:61; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:316).

Following well established international trends, the form of specialisation which these selective support services championed involved further categorisation and labelling procedures through the use of "… doubtful identification criteria …" and a predominantly medical view of disability which located deficits in the learner and devised interventions that were curative (Engelbrecht, 2001:17). This deficit view of specialised education not only added to the exclusion and marginalisation of its recipients from mainstream education provision, but created the space for a specialist culture to develop, a culture whose privileged knowledge and practices still impact on current attitudes towards disability and difference. The dominance of this model obscured the educational system's complicity in the perpetuation of environmental and economic disadvantage and thus the creation of special needs, and its failure to provide for different learning opportunities for the majority (Department of Education, 1997:23).

The government's complicity in the perpetuation of inequalities was most evident in its delivery of the curriculum which was organised along racial line and allied to an ideology that certain races were predestined for certain kinds of work in certain places. Bantu Education was therefore conceptualised and experienced as a form of subjugation of the masses to provide an abundance of cheap manual labour, thereby denying the majority of the right to develop skills and access to what was considered to be the more prestigious academic learning pathway. "The education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under Apartheid" (Department of Education, 2002b:4). It was the means of delivery of the curriculum which provoked the resistance struggle which was waged within black schools from 1976, a resistance which has left within many secondary schools an enduring legacy of contestation of authority (Christie, 1998:284).

The 1980's witnessed an increasing resistance to the government's delivery of black education which was considered inferior and a means of reproduction of the current

social and economic conditions which favoured the continuation of white supremacy. Contextual realities were overwhelming the narrow view of education imposed by the government. It become increasingly apparent that despite some efforts to upgrade black education and investigate the contextual aspects relating to the high incidence of disability in the black population, that any system imposed by an Apartheid government would fail and that a radical transformation was necessary (Du Toit, 1996:13).

3.3.3 The Move Towards Democracy

The political realities of the early 1990's, the official unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the initiation of a new era of negotiation required that members of this organisation move away from the rhetoric of resistance and develop and subsequently be able to defend a new orthodoxy. One of the main competitors in new policy development was the trade union movement whose demands for improved training and subsequent formulations over many years had stressed the importance of the future integration of education and training as a vehicle to effect access, redress, equity and internationally recognisable quality (Jansen, 2001:14-15). Such was the fervour and urgency to develop new policy that there was little if any critical judgement of the new systems being developed (McGrath, 1998:112-113).

Policy documents relating to the restructuring of education prior to the first democratic elections of 1994 include the government's Education and Renewal Strategy and the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992). The former policy document signalled an acknowledgement on the part of the then government of the existence of discriminatory practices in education and it made recommendations for reform including the increased availability of support services and that the children requiring these services should be as far as possible included in the mainstream of education (Department of Education, 1997:24). The NEPI investigation included a report on Support Services which also promoted the concept of integration. "Schools are in a position to provide services in a natural setting thereby minimising the likelihood of separating children with difficulties from their peer, and reducing the stigmatising effects inherent in current mental health practices and special facilities". This report gave prominence to the role of support services in the process of social transition particularly in recognition of the fact that in

many schools were replicating a sorting process which differentiated between weaker and stronger learners resulting in a high student drop out in the early grades (NEPI, 1992:2).

3.3.4 Education Policy in the Era of a New Democracy

The potential for meaningful participation which the democratic elections of 1994 made apparent to the majority of the adult population of South Africa heralded a new era of possibilities for inclusiveness in the process of developing policies which would enable social and legislative transformation (Sayad & Carrim, 1998:2). The greatest initial challenge for educational transformation was to bring the different departments together under one ministry which could develop policy that would redress the inherited inequalities in resources and access and develop a coherent national system which would attend to the needs of all learners through curriculum development, support services, teacher education and a qualification framework.

The White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to develop a new system (Department of Education, 1995) was the first education policy document negotiated and produced by the new government. This broad approach to the total restructuring of education was soon followed by major legislative milestones, namely the *Constitution of South Africa* and the *South African Schools Act* whose adoption in the new parliament redefined relationships between citizens and charted a new course towards the fulfilment of human and civil rights. The Constitution recognises the right of all citizens to a basic education and gives legal protection against unfair discrimination on the basis of race, class, gender and disability (Du Toit, 1996:14; Howell, 2000:116).

The South African Schools Act was passed in 1996. It swept aside all previous legislation concerning school education by making provision for a single system of education thereby eradicating the previous divisions and the parallel provision of general and special education (Howell, 2000:117). The act also made schooling compulsory for all children between the ages of 7 (or Grade 1) and 15 (or Grade 9) and laid down the provisions for the establishment of statutory School Governing Bodies, a local school body that would be able to determine each school's own admission policy and language policy (Fleisch, 2002:76-78).

The promulgation of the *South African Qualification Authority Act* in 1995 was deemed necessary in order to usher in a structural reform and provide a legislative framework to ensure that all future educational practices and qualifications met international and national standards (Van der Horst & MacDonald, 1997:70). This authority was responsible for the establishment of the *National Qualifications Framework* (NQF), the final result of years of negotiations between labour, the ANC and the previous departments of education. The purpose of the NQF was to provide an integrated system of registration of national standards and qualifications within education and training to enable human resource development which would meet the economic and social needs to the country and provide ongoing developmental opportunities for individuals in terms of the standardised recognition of both formal and informal learning situations (Lubisi, Parker & Wedekind 1998:64-65). A diagrammatic representation of the NQF is presented overleaf.

The NQF comprises eight different levels which are grouped into three broader bands these being the General Education and Training Band or GET, the Further Education and Training Band or FET and the Higher Education and Training Band. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the formal schooling system caters for the first two bands of the NQF. The compulsory phase of schooling is contained within the GET and provides for learners from age 7 to 15 years. At the end of their Grade 9 year learners in the formal school setting are eligible to receive the general education and training certificate (GETC), a form of recognition which is also attainable at the end of the parallel Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) level 4.

FIGURE 5: NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

<table>
<tr><th>GRADE</th><th>NQF LEVEL</th><th>BAND</th><th colspan="2">TYPES OF QUALIFICATIONS</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>8</td><td rowspan="3">HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND</td><td colspan="2">DOCTORATES AND FURTHER RESEARCH DEGREES</td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">DEGREES, DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES</td></tr>
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<tr><td colspan="5">FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING CERTIFICATE (at present – matric)</td></tr>
<tr><td>12</td><td>4</td><td rowspan="3">FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="3">SCHOOLS/COLLEGES/NGOS TRAINING CERTIFICATES</td></tr>
<tr><td>11</td><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td>10</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING CERTIFICATE</td></tr>
<tr><td>9</td><td rowspan="10">1</td><td rowspan="10">GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND</td><td rowspan="2">SENIOR PHASE</td><td>ABET 4</td></tr>
<tr><td>8</td><td rowspan="3">ABET 3</td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td rowspan="4">INTERMEDIATE PHASE</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td rowspan="3">ABET 2</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td rowspan="3">FOUNDATION PHASE</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>ABET 1</td></tr>
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Source: Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:75)

The form of curriculum which would provide the vehicle for the transformation of education and society which the new government was hasty to initiate was a move away from a syllabus-led, input-oriented, content-based curriculum to an outcomes-based curriculum which defined competencies rather than specified content (Kgobe, 2000:103). The new curriculum which was modelled upon an outcomes based approach to education was unveiled in 1997 and named *Curriculum 2005*, the date towards which the phasing in process was conceptualised to be completed within the schooling system. The emphasis of the new curriculum was to develop learning environments that are learner-centred and teachers who are facilitators rather than bearers of knowledge.

Critics of the new curriculum pointed out that its hasty implementation and its radical break with past curriculum delivery would favour the already privileged sectors within the educational community and further disadvantage and disempower the sectors already ravaged by years of lack of resources and an absence of a culture of learning (De Clerq, 1997:144; Jansen, 1998:330; Kruss, 1998:109). Jansen

(1998:330) felt that the prerequisites for fundamentally changing the old curriculum were not yet in place and that that Curriculum 2005 was based on "… flawed assumptions about what happens inside schools, how classrooms are organised and what kind of teachers exist within the system". Taylor (2000:2), criticised Curriculum 2005 for being too constructivistic and felt that it would mitigate against children who are from lower socio-economic environments as in its formulation it accorded "… equal status to the life contexts of all learners …"

The most important initiative of the post-Apartheid government in the progressive move towards inclusive education was the appointment of two commissions the *National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and* the *National Committee on Educational Support Services (NCESS)* which were originally established as separate entities but who decided to work together and presented a joint report in 1997 after a year of work during which time consultations were conducted with a diversity of stakeholders (Howell, 2000:108; Naicker, 1999:35). The report of these joint commissions radically transformed both the language and narrow focus of specialised education. Through its eco-systemic view of the origins of barriers to learning it revealed the dynamic nature of the interactions between individuals and the broader social, economic and political factors present in different contexts. The report articulated the need to restructure the entire educational system to increase its responsiveness to a range of learning needs. More particularly it stressed the priority of ensuring that all learners are accommodated in the education system especially within the years of compulsory education. It also introduced the concept of 'barriers to learning' (Department of Education, 1997:80).

Government response to the NCSNET/NCESS report ultimately took the form of the publication of *Education White Paper 6* in July 2001 which acknowledged that the education system was unresponsive to and thus failing to cater for the needs of a substantial number of children, not only those previously defined as having special needs. Furthermore it accepted the existence of a broad range of learning needs which, if not effectively addressed, could contribute to continued failure to learn and exclusionary pressures (Department of Education, 2001a:17-18). These needs are conceptualised as barriers to learning which can be extrinsic or intrinsic.

White Paper 6 defines inclusive education and training as:

- Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.
- Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.
- Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases.
- Broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal settings and structures.
- Changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners
- Maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001a:6-7).

White Paper 6 places the onus for implementing change squarely in the hands of the education and training system which "… must transform itself to contribute to establishing a caring and humane society …" and "... accommodate the full range of learning needs and the mechanisms that should be put in place (Department of Education, 2001a:11). It also expresses the belief that it is classroom educators who will act as the primary resource in achieving the goal of an inclusive education and training system and stresses that this will necessitate the development of integrated educational practices through staff development at school and district level.

In terms of support services, the Ministry of Education asserts that a strengthened education support service will provide the key to reducing barriers to learning. Central to the support services is the establishment of a new district-based support team the primary function of which will be "… to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications" (Department of Education, 2001a:29). Support at the individual institutional level will require the establishment of institutional-level support teams (Teacher Support Teams or Educator Support Teams). In addition special schools will be qualitatively improved to better cater for the learners they serve and to become resource centres in their areas and will be "...

integrated into district-based support teams" (Department of Education, 2001a:20). Table 2 illustrates the envisaged levels of support.

TABLE 2: LEVELS OF EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA

GOVERNMENT LEVEL	KEY SUPPORT FUNCTIONS
National Department of Education	Providing national policy and a broad framework for support
Provincial Departments of Education	Coordinating the implementation of national framework of support, in relation to provincial needs
District-based support teams	Providing integrated support to education institutions to support the development of effective teaching and learning
Institution-level support teams (Teacher Support Teams (TSTs) in the Western Cape)	Identifying and addressing barriers to learning in the local school context – thereby promoting effective teaching and learning

Department of Education (2002a:87)

A major conceptual shift endorsed by White Paper 6 is a move away from using categories of disability as means of exclusion and organisation of support services and institutions, towards a system which will encourage a greater scrutiny and responsiveness to the nature and intensity of support required by learners to "... overcome the debilitating impact of those disabilities" (Department of Education, 2001a:10). This relates directly to the 1992 AMMR shift from a classificatory system of intellectual disability based on I.Q. score ranges, towards the level of support intensity which individual learners require which was discussed in Chapter 2.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Education White Paper 6 makes specific reference to learners with disabilities originating from impaired intellectual development and that their inclusion will require "… curriculum adaptation rather than major structural adjustments or sophisticated equipment" (Department of Education, 2001a :25). It also undertakes to co-ordinate the provision of education to learners with intellectual disability who do not require intensive support with the restructuring of the further education and training sector (Department of Education, 2001a:31).

White Paper 6 acknowledges that one of the most telling barriers to learners in schools is the curriculum. Barriers to learning are conceptualised as arising from different aspects of the curriculum, such as:

- The content (i.e. what is taught)
- The language or medium of instruction.
- How the classroom or lecture is organised and managed.
- The methods and processes used in teaching.
- The pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum.
- The learning materials and equipment that is used.
- How learning is assessed (Department of Education, 2001a:19).

During the year 2000 the Council of Education Ministers in South Africa agreed that Curriculum 2005 should be revised in order to strengthen it and make it more streamlined. This resulted in a process whereby curriculum developers worked on this revision and produced a Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R – 9 in July 2001. After public comment and further revisions the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (RNCS) was released in 2002.

The Revised National Curriculum streamlined what was experienced as the convoluted terminology of its predecessor. Critical outcomes, phase and programme organisers, range statements, specific outcomes, performance indicators, assessment criteria and expected levels of performance were rationalised into two notions: Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards (Dieltiens & Motimele, 2003:16). A Learning Outcome is a description of what learners should know and demonstrate at the end of the General Education and Training band. Assessment standards are grade specific and describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcome (Department of Education, 2002b:14). The Revised National Curriculum is conceptualised as being implemented through Learning Programmes which are described as structured and systematic arrangements of activities which promote the attainment of Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards for the phase (these being The Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase).

In the Senior Phase there are eight learning areas; Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Technology, Economic and Management Sciences, Life Orientation and Arts and Culture.

With regard to inclusively, the RNCS overview document states that "the Revised National Curriculum Statement adapts an inclusive approach by specifying minimum requirements for all learners. The special educational, social, emotional and physical needs of learners will be addressed in the design and development of appropriate Learning Programmes" (Department of Education Revised National Curriculum Statement Grade R – 9, Policy, 2002b:10).

3.4 CURRENT DILEMMAS IN THE DELIVERY OF A NEW EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.4.1 Introduction

The re-charting of the South African education territory has been a radical enterprise involving a plethora of policy formulations and two major curriculum initiatives which have been informed through international developments and consultants and whose implementation has been tempered by local and fiscal realities. Jansen (2001:272) claims that "the making of education policy in South Africa is best described as a struggle for the achievement of a broad political symbolism to mark the shift from Apartheid to post-Apartheid society".

The core concepts of access, equity, redress and quality which underpin policy discourse and which are often presented as having self-evident meaning, have led to unanticipated ambiguities. Critical voices which have recently emerged have drawn attention to the areas of concern which the practice of education within a restructured system is revealing, not the least of which is the narrowing of the policy agenda in a process of ongoing, fiscally-driven compromise. Issues of quality, differing notions of participation and human resource development are repeatedly surfacing in educational discourses as is a clamour to clarify accountability and evaluate progress (Lewin, 2001:v).

The dilemmas and tensions facing education systems in western countries are very much in evidence in particular localised forms in South Africa as the roll out of reforms continue. The most abiding tension is that between notions of equity and those of development. The dilemma faced within education is not only how to

simultaneously create the conditions for the delivery of a more just and humane society and provide the conditions for future economic growth and participation, but to accomplish these in a climate of increasing financial austerity and within the centrifugal forces of advancing globalization.

Of particular urgency after 10 years of democratic government is the enduring tension between changing the structure and changing the process of education. It has already been mentioned that the policy documents which have emerged after 1994 have been understandably high on rhetoric and empowering symbolism partly due to the fact that much research had already been completed which had generated a rich store of ideas about educational and other policy, and partly because there was an overwhelming desire to wipe the slate clean. Manganyi (2001:28) says "... there is a real danger that policy making in the first five years was motivated largely by an impulse to obliterate a painful past in the face of some ignorance about the fibre and texture of the state and society in the making". The implementation of policy involves the quality of the interactions between people in the process of education. It is at this literal interface where changes need to be made by students, teachers, parents and administrators in their attitudes and understanding towards difference which can be translated into actions which can empower all (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:17). However it is at this level where a failure to deliver is noticeable and consequently where many tensions and challenges are evident, particularly in the form and extent of support services.

3.4.2 Current Status of South African Schools

3.4.2.1 Introduction

After ten years of democratic government the current status of South African schools is an area of intense concern and debate in public, academic and government arenas and is the focus of several monitoring systems and plans to hasten mobilisation. Monitoring and reference systems include *Education 2000 Plus*, a project of the Centre for Education Policy Development, the *South African Education for All Assessment Report*, the Education Department's *School Register of Needs 2000* and national and provincial systemic assessments. The main thrust for mobilisation has come from the National Education Department's *Tirisano Campaign.*

Perhaps the most telling acknowledgement of the parlous status of the education system came from the then newly appointed Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, in July 1999 when he announced his statement initiating the Tirisano Campaign, "A Call to Action: Mobilising citizens to build a South African Education and Training System for the 21st century". Minister Asmal stated that in many crucial respects the South African educational system was not ready for the 21st century:

> ... the national education leadership is unanimous that our system of education and training has major weaknesses and carries deadly baggage from our past. Large parts of our system are seriously dysfunctional. It will not be an exaggeration to say that there is a crisis at each level of the system (Department of Education, 1999:2).

The most troubling features which were singled out for special mention and where the system was seen to be failing were in the massive inequalities in access and facilities, the serious state of the morale of the teaching force, failures in governance and management, and the poor quality of learning in much of the system (Department of Education, 1999:2). The key legislative and administrative determinants of access, equity, redress and quality, which had underpinned the focus of educational policy development, were patently not reaching required levels of practice in terms of the efficiency of organisational structures and resultant improved teaching and learning.

3.4.2.2 Access

Access to education has been a key consideration of the government of South Africa since 1994 and has been central to the education policy documents which have been developed over the past 11 years. The NCSNET and NCESS report (Department of Education, 1997:11-19) identified major barriers to participation within the South African educational context which "... render a large number of children and adults vulnerable to learning breakdown and sustained exclusion ..." (Muthukrishna, 2002:2). Amongst these identified barriers are problems associated with the provision of education; problems with language and communication; socio-economic barriers; factors which place children at risk such as violence, substance abuse and high levels of crime; an inflexible curriculum and inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services to schools, parents, care-givers, families and communities. These barriers to access to education are acknowledged in White

Paper 6 (Department of Education 2001a:7) which commits itself to promote education for all and develop centres of learning that are both inclusive and supportive and which will enable all learners "... to participate actively in the education process ..." (Department of Education, 2001a:5). Although this commitment is necessary and laudable and intended to provide a vision towards which to aim in the long term, it has proved difficult to either promote or sustain enthusiasm for this vision in the short term in the face of many daunting contextual challenges and a lack of coherence between practice and policy.

In the most recent report of The Education 2000 Plus project which has monitored the transformation of the South African schooling system over the past 6 years, access to education in secondary schools is viewed as being a cause for concern as statistics reflect that too many learners are dropping out before completing school. In 2001, for example, approximately 847 000 learners were enrolled across the country in Grade 10, 710 000 in Grade 11 and 488 000 in Grade 12 (Bot, 2003:121). Access to schooling is seen to be affected by two divergent strands in policy. On the one hand it is seen that the educational department has tried to increase the access of marginalised groups as evidenced in policies on HIV/Aids and on learners with special education needs. However, on the other hand, the recent admission policy has had the effect of restricting access to under-age and over-age learners (Dieltiens & Motimele, 2003:5).

In The Education 2000 Plus report, particular mention is made of Education White Paper 6 and its intention to reach approximately 40 000 children with disabilities and youth of compulsory school going age who are presently excluded. The concern expressed regarding this policy is not about its intentions to include these learners, but whether the plan is too ambitious, given the limitations of the accompanying funding strategy to cater for the vast numbers of learners who, by the policy's own definition, could be described as having barriers to learning (Dieltiens & Motimele, 2003:11).

Access to participation in learning environments is greatly influenced by the language of instruction at schools. Even though the Constitution states that everyone has a right to instruction in the language or his or her choice (Chapter 2, Section 29 (2) RSA, 1996), the reality in many schools is that English is used as a medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004:72).

Compensatory mechanisms which are often used in primary schools, such as code-switching, are often not a practical possibility given the staffing and lack of training in the principles of language acquisition of most secondary school teachers (Lemmer, 1996a:330), nor are they favoured by many parents in the Western Cape where instruction in English is considered to be preferable to instruction in an African home language. Adams (1996:315) contends that parents want their children to be taught in English as it is considered to be an international language, a language of power and the key which will "... open the doors to high status occupations". Bot (2003:156) reports that evidence shows that many schools have changed to English or a parallel medium of instruction. These changes have been seen to diminish the status of African languages and Afrikaans. Lemmer (1996b:20) studied the establishment of language policies in Namibia and Zimbabwe and cautioned South Africa regarding the realities of a language in education policy thus:

> … language in education policies designed to redress former racial inequality may unintentionally create new class stratification. Moreover, the proposed equal treatment of the indigenous African language embodied in Constitutional documents often means their decline in practice in the light of their impotency to compete with the popularity of and perceived advantages associated with English.

This view is supported by Heugh (1999:307-308) who is critical of the missed opportunity of a concurrent development of a new curriculum and a language in education policy and feels that until such time as both these entities are re-examined together and that due regard is paid to the status of South Africa's 11 official languages in learning materials, that it is unlikely that the majority of African language speaking learners will succeed in schools. "The gap between the middle class and the working class will not narrow since most students will continue to remain linguistically excluded from meaningful access to learning" (Heugh, 1999:308).

Access to schools and the curriculum are experienced as problematic for parents and learners of low socio-economic status. As discussed in Chapter 2, many parents, especially those living in sub-economic areas, feel excluded from their children's schools and in fact find the school system intimidating and inaccessible (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003:4). Furthermore, alienation from a culture of learning is seen to be exacerbated by the damaging effect of pessimistic and negative

expectations of young people who come from what are perceived as high-risk environments, a situation which perpetuates the likelihood of self-fulfilling prophecies (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Brockern, 1998:12-13). There is an acknowledgement in the Education for All, 2000 Assessment Report (Department of Education 2000b:16) of the impact of socio-economic factors such as travelling long distances to school, hunger, the need to perform household chores, homelessness and a lack of funds to buy school uniforms and pay school fees, in preventing children from attending and effectively participating in school.

Access to an outcomes based curriculum is seen by many as favouring families and environments of middle to high socio-economic status (Taylor, 2000:3; Todd & Mason, 2005:222). In quoting the research of Bernstein on the relationship between class and access to types of knowledge required in schools, Taylor (2000:3) concludes that while unequal access to school resources is an important variable in learning, the greatest barrier to access and equity in any schooling system is "... the differential access to formal knowledge open to children of different social classes". Middle class children are seen to have an advantage in being able to extend their thinking processes beyond their immediate personal experiences, whereas poor children tend to limit their thinking to their day to day lives, which in many urban areas of South Africa are threatened by forces which deny children and adults access to feelings of safety and security.

It is unfortunate after 10 years of democratic government that many communities in South Africa are still ravaged by poverty and victim to high levels of political and criminal violence. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:3) characterise the debilitating context in which many learners and teachers in South Africa have to contend with as follows:

> These cycles of violence and anger often spill over into schools and other educational institutions. Gang warfare threatens the lives of teachers and youth at schools, drugs and drug dealing occurs at many schools, and schools are regularly torn apart by theft and vandalism. At these schools, both teachers and learners feel their lives are at risk.

In discussing the context in which support professionals have to work, Engelbrecht (2001:19) cites the common risks which accompany many South African learners as including undernourishment, violence, abuse, HIV/aids, commercial exploitation and ineffective developmental transitions.

3.4.2.3 Equity and Redress

Since the mid 1990s the education department has linked equity and redress to the redeployment of resources rather than embark upon a massive expansion of the education system. The initial focus of achieving greater equity within provinces, schools and socio-economic groups was upon the existing pool of teachers in the system and the right sizing of teaching provisioning (Motala, Perry, Sujee & Fleisch, 2003:2). The manner in which the rightsizing policy was implemented was divisive and counterproductive as schools which were overstaffed were given the responsibility for naming teachers for redeployment, a situation which made many uncomfortable and angry and intent on drawing out the process (Fleisch, 2002:41-42).

Faced with the failure of the redeployment system, the government allowed large numbers of teachers to take voluntary severance packages which resulted in a situation where approximately one out of every ten teachers left their schools. The unfortunate consequence of this form of rightsizing was that some of the most experienced school managers and teachers were lost to the system (Fleisch, 2002:41-.43).

The major challenge to the provision of support services since 1994 has been to plan a continuum of support for all learners in the education system through a more efficient and equitable use of the skills and facilities which are currently available (Department of Education, 2001a:37), and which were primarily conceptualised and developed within the former segregated special education sector. The initial challenge which this view of support has encountered is to change the mindset of support professionals and teachers whose training and practice has routinely employed a deficit approach to the provision of support, and whose skills and proficiency have traditionally been evaluated through the use of normative based tests, diagnoses, remedial programmes and similar reductionisitic, prognostic and curative approaches (Engelbrecht, 2001:17; Naicker, 1999:33-34).

The development of a comprehensive and more equitable system of support within an inclusive education system therefore necessitates a philosophical shift or change in mindset in professionals, support staff, teachers and the general public with regard to what is similar about all learners and the unique insights which local education

contexts can contribute to diminishing both environmental and individual barriers to learning (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001:vii; Hay, 2003:135).

A critical feature of the strengthened and more equitable support system envisaged by Education White Paper 6 is the establishment of district-based support teams whose composition will be "... affected and influenced by local needs and resources ..." and whose functioning will reflect a capacity building, collaborative and community based approach to taking responsibility for the management of learning environments and developing an awareness of the competencies needed to respond to local needs (Department of Education, 2005:17). The question arises whether this form of support will indeed be equitable given the acknowledged and enduring impact of historical disadvantage and the influence of socio-economic conditions referred to as possible barriers to the establishment and functioning of district-based support teams in recent guidelines to the implementation of inclusive education (Department of Education, 2005:16). A complicating factor in the provision of support is raised by Welton (2001:175) who claims that many teachers and staff at district, regional and provincial levels who are tasked with rendering support to others feel "... ill-equipped in their roles as agents of change ...' and "... disempowered, deskilled and deprived of professional esteem and status by the pressure they experience to both manage the present and build the future".

An important ingredient in the sharing of current resources is the envisaged strengthening of special schools and the incremental conversion of these traditionally isolated and often elusive facilities to school community resource centres. The rationale for these changes is that special schools, which have been strengthened subsequent to an audit reflecting any inadequacies, will be better able to attend to their enrolled learners who are in need of intensive support. It is argued that strengthened special schools will additionally be capacitated to form an integral part of district support teams where they can provide specialised professional support in curriculum, instruction and assessment. Special schools are also seen as possible sources of comprehensive education programmes which will provide life-skills training and programme-to-work linkages (Department of Education, 2001a:21, 29, 47).

White Paper 6 (2001a:29) requires that all educational institutions develop institution-level support teams (previously known as TST's) whose function it will be to co-

ordinate learner and educator support services through identifying and addressing the needs of their institution, learners and teachers and developing localised plans for support, if necessary with help of expertise from the local community, district support teams and higher education institutions. Although the establishment of Institution Support Teams are considered vital to accommodate and address the problems of learners in adverse environments (Smit & Liebenberg-Siebrits, 2002:41), it seems likely that it will take some time and a determined effort on the part of schools to initiate, maintain and establish positive contacts with community resources in areas with a history of low social cohesion.

3.4.2.4 Quality

Physical access to schools is of little value unless there is an accompanying pathway into quality learning opportunities. Quality is viewed as the ability of schools and other educational institutions to provide epistemological access to learners (Department of Education, 2000b:17). Integral to this process is appropriate teacher training, the relevance of the school curriculum to learners' current needs and future vocational aspirations, and a flexibility in matching an awareness of learners' needs to a variety of methods of facilitation of a learning process (Department of Education, 2000b:17). However, both local and international comparative quality tests have consistently shown that the quality of South African school education is poor. As evidence of this, South Africa was rated one of the lowest countries in a UNESCO-UNICEF project monitoring learning achievement in 12 African countries. Within the Western Cape the Systemic Evaluation of Grade 3 learners in 2002 and Grade 6 learners in 2003 has produced results which point to the alarmingly low levels of literacy and numeracy in many schools (Dieltiens & Motimele, 2003:14).

In the Grade 3 systemic assessment it was found that only 36% of learners were reading and calculating at the Grade 3 level and that 15% of learners were not able to read and calculate at the most basic levels. The Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation Report of 2002 (quoted in Swartz, 2003:33) reported that there were reasons for serious concern about the numeracy and literacy abilities of learners, barriers to full access for disadvantaged learners, poor achievement of equity goals and a general overall concern about the quality of education in relation to indicators such as the quality of teaching, unsafe conditions at school, ineffective use of contact time in the classroom and overcrowded classrooms.

The Grade 6 results of the assessment in 2003 were equally alarming and were published widely. It was reported that of the 35000 learners from 1000 primary schools who were assessed, only 15,6% of Grade 6 pupils achieved what was expected of a Grade 6 learner in numeracy and 35% achieved what was expected in numeracy (Du Plessis, 2004). Almost half of the Grade 6 learners were found to be functioning at a Grade 3 level. Poverty was seen to have a major influence upon the results as schools in more affluent areas achieved significantly better results. Large class sizes were considered to influence the results as classes with more than 32 learners produced lower scores (Smith, 2004). These recent results illustrate that the average learner in schools in the Western Cape is not included sufficiently or participating with requisite understanding in learning environments at the primary school level. It is little wonder then that when faced with continuing failure at the secondary school level, that more than half of the learner population does not complete their secondary school education. Measuring quality solely in the form of the improvement of results in the final school exam, the Matriculation Certificate, "... is of limited worth if large numbers of children are lost to the system" (Schreuder, 2003:9).

Along with other major structural changes in education policy, achieving parity in teacher education has been a major concern of the post-Apartheid government. Recent national statistics reveal that the number of under qualified teachers is diminishing with only 9% of secondary school teachers being viewed as officially lacking in requisite qualifications, this despite the fact that the average age of teachers is increasing due to a drop in student educators ascribed to a lack of appeal of the profession (Bot, 2003:174-186). There are now more teachers aged 40 years and older in the education system and considerably fewer younger teachers. In 1997 a quarter of teachers were younger than 30 years compared with only 8% in 2002. While a lack of interest in the teaching profession and the possible toll of HIV/AIDS are cited as causes of this change, the practical implications for current and future in-service training of teachers is that most teachers in the system were primarily trained and beginning their teaching within the Apartheid era and have subsequently been exposed to radical changes in educational policy, the confluence of the previously separated general and special education and at least one major curriculum change.

Furthermore teachers within secondary schools within the Western Cape have been grappling with the implementation and grading of the continuous assessment (CASS) of learners in each of the eight prescribed learning areas as well as the trialing of the first formal exit point, the Common Task for Assessment (CTA). In 2003, Brombacher and Associates (2004:1-28) were commissioned by the Western Cape Education Department to conduct a study on the Grade 9 CASS and CTA processes. The general findings of the study were that most teachers expressed anger and frustration about the CASS and CTA processes. The CASS process was criticised by teachers for significantly increasing their work load in terms of the demands made by the Western Cape Education Department in the compilation of learner portfolios in each of the learning areas. Teachers also felt that there was little clarity or uniformity in the advice they received. They felt that the process of the CTA had not been made clear to them and had been inadequately explained by curriculum officials. In addition the teachers reported that the language of the CTA was too difficult for the learners to understand. The study illustrated that teachers had tried to implement these new measures to the best of their ability, but that the training had not prepared them in an understanding of the philosophy underpinning continuous assessment and that teachers were implementing both CASS and the CTA on a purely technical level (Brombacher & Associates, 2004:1-28).

Recent research on teachers' attitudes and experiences of implementing inclusive education in South Africa has revealed that practising teachers, while being considered to be the primary resource in becoming change agents in achieving the goal of inclusive schooling (Department of Education, 2001a:11), need evidence of a long-term commitment to professional development in the form of time, ongoing support and in-service training (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff & Pettipher, 2002:175-189). In their comparative analysis of three independent studies which identified and described teachers' attitudes to and experiences of implementing inclusive education in different geographical areas, Swart et al. (2002:175-189) discovered that the common findings were that teachers felt that they had an inadequate knowledge, skills and training to implement inclusive education; that there was a general lack of educational and teacher support; that there were insufficiencies in infrastructure, facilities and assistive devices and that teachers had the view that inclusive education could negatively affect learners with and without special needs. In the one

study which investigated the attitudes of secondary school teachers, the findings were that the teachers who participated in the research were still in a transitional phase with regard to the transformation of school and classroom practice and were in fact resistant to educational renewal. Even though the teachers found the philosophical underpinnings of inclusive education acceptable, they did not regard themselves as being ready to implement inclusive education (Oswald, 2001:iv). Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff and Swart (2001:80) believe that the identification and understanding of the conditions that can potentially cause teachers most stress in the implementation of inclusive education are critical in the provision of appropriate community based and collaborative support services.

As mentioned previously, teachers within secondary schools have been exposed to one curriculum change in the form of Curriculum 2005 and varying amounts and quality of in-service training in this contested version of outcomes based education. An unfortunate consequence of the roll-out of training of teachers in the Revised National Curriculum is that the senior phase of the GET (Grades 7 - 9) will be the last to be targeted for the switch from Curriculum 2005 to this more streamlined and detailed form of Outcomes Based Education. Thus the benefits of the revised curriculum such as its simpler terminology and language, its greater clarity on what and how learners should achieve and clearer guidelines for educators on how to record and report on learners' progress will not benefit either teachers or learners until the implementation date of 2006 (Bot, 2003:172). However a potential advantage of this delayed exposure to the revised curriculum is that the critiques of and recommendations for teacher training which were offered within The Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education, 2000a) might be taken into consideration in future teacher training. These are that the existing models and duration of training should be adapted, that the quality of both trainers and materials should be improved upon and, most importantly, that in-class support should be provided (Motala et al., 2003:25-26). Further important recommendations of the Review Committee are the following:

- The training must be based on principles of adult education whereby learning takes place through cycles of action and reflection, and through a combination of skills, knowledge, and value interventions.

- Training processes must better address whole school teams, whereby knowledge is considered and actively incorporated into organisational processes, opening up 'space' for new knowledge to be applied.
- Training must facilitate the personal change processes inherent in the transformation of classroom practice.
- There must be space for action and reflection, as well as in-class observation, reflection, and mentoring support (Motala et al., 2003:26).

Todd and Mason (2005:221-235) feel that the ineffective learning environments created largely by the historical and situational constraints inherited as a result of Apartheid education in South African schools necessitate strategies that are more effective and easier to implement that those associated with Outcomes Based Education. They suggest that "proximal variables" such as teaching strategies which emphasise goal setting, the provision of frequent feedback and reinforcement to learners, and the general quality of teaching itself as being easier to implement and as having greater potential to enhance learning. As discussed in Chapter 2 (2.4.4), research has confirmed that these instructional variables have been found particularly effective with learners with mild intellectual disability.

3.4.3 Support in Primary and Secondary Schools within South Africa

3.4.3.1 Introduction

Achieving equity in the provision of support services within a context of financial constraint and a redeployment of existing resources has led to inevitable early compromises. An understandable emphasis in various policy documents and draft guidelines on the implementation of inclusive education (Department of Education, 2002a; 2005) on the importance of early identification and intervention, has meant that support to learners in mainstream secondary schools has been largely underspecified and neglected and conducted on a reactive and ad hoc basis. This early trend in the provision of support is evident within the recently negotiated and organised levels of support within the Western Cape.

3.4.3.2 Support Services within the Western Cape

In broad terms, the nature of the support services within the Western Cape is following the recommendations initiated in the NEPI policy options, made more

tangible in the NCSNET/NCESS report (Department of Education, 1997:92) and adopted at the level of official policy in White Paper 6 (Department of Education 2001a:47-49). This means that the model of support has been conceived as operating at various levels, provincial, district and at individual institutions.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) was established in 1995 as a consequence of the amalgamation of four local and former departments of education. Several years of interim arrangements followed which were accompanied by policy research and development by WCED task teams in collaboration with donor agencies and non-governmental organisations (Swartz, 2003:21). The result of these deliberations ultimately took the form of a clearer understanding of the role and functions of the provincial head office within various directorates, and the establishment of seven Education Management and Development Centres (EMDCs) in July 2001, four situated within the urban metropole of the greater Cape Town area and three in predominantly rural areas (WCED, 2000:12). These centres can be conceived as representing a particular localised interpretation of the district-based support teams which White Paper 6 identified as a key mechanism for the provision of support in a progressive move towards inclusive education.

EMDCs, as intermediate organisations between provincial education and sites of learning, are considered to offer a range of services which are provided by teams of specialists which are assisted by the WCED's head office. The core services which the EMDCs provide are offered within four distinct areas, each staffed with a specialist team. These core areas are Curriculum Development and Support, Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES), Institutional Management and Governance Support, and Administrative Services (this includes institutional development and support for Articles 20 and 21 schools, labour relations assistance and internal administration services).

The task of the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES) component of each EMDC is to offer "… psycho-educational, psycho-therapeutic and psycho-social support services to educators, parents and learners in support and development of an enabling learning environment in which learners can make optimum use of their learning potential and curriculum opportunities" (WCED, 2000:30). The focus of this support is aimed at accommodating and providing for the needs of learners with special education needs at the primary school level through the provision of support

for teachers in the form of incremental access to learning support posts in schools, the in-service training of teachers and newly appointed learning support teachers, and the establishment of institution-level support teams (Theron, 1999:5-6). There is no evidence of planning and provision in terms of the nature and extent of support services for learners and teachers in mainstream secondary schools. This lack of a continuity of support causes considerable anxiety to the teachers in primary schools who have supported learners with special needs and in turn those learners who find the academic curriculum inaccessible.

One viable learning pathway which has been potentially available to learners who have been described as having mild intellectual disability after the completion of primary school is acceptance at one of the 10 Schools of Skills, formerly known as Specialised Secondary Schools, situated within the Western Cape. These schools offer a combination of instruction in the eight learning areas and pre-vocational training in the form of various workshops which offer access to practical skills training in subjects such as spray painting, institutional management and furniture upholstery (Interprovincial Co-ordinating Committee for Learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities, 2003:1-20). It is to one of these schools that the learners who are the focus of this research applied, and where they were unable to be accommodated.

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Support to learners both internationally and nationally is informed by past and present trends and tempered by local realities. It is characterised by sets of tensions and dilemmas which are central to the human and social process of education. South Africa's recent reforms in education have been dramatic and have witnessed the introduction of new national legislation and a plethora of educational policy documents. The immediate and pressing challenge for South Africa is to translate these policies into improved educational possibilities for all learners as recent reports illustrate the continued existence of very unequal learning opportunities in South African schools. Within the Western Cape support services have recently developed which are attempting to address some of the backlogs inherited from the inadequate provision of support services in the Apartheid era. Research into inclusive education and assessment in secondary schools have illustrated that both education officials and teachers are not ready to implement change.

It has been intended that this and the preceding chapter have examined the influence of and interactions between the historical, political, economic, social and cultural forces which have impacted upon and continue to have agency in the lives of children who have been described in terms of a deficit and are considered to be in need of support in a secondary school environment. It is against this background that diverse viewpoints can be sought as a deeper understanding has been gained as to the possible reasons for the historical and cultural legacies which accompany these learners and which have provided the matrix for differing views and value systems.

CHAPTER 4

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a review of the problem situation which indicated the need for a programme of support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities. It proceeds with a brief reminder as to the importance of continual alertness to the overall guidance provided by the theoretical framework, and continues with an explanation of the research design. It follows with a description of the essential elements of the programme and concludes with the details of the methodology considered most suited to addressing the research questions within the broader and more local constraints of the evaluation study.

4.2 THE PROBLEM SITUATION

As indicated in Chapter 1, the programme was initiated as a response to a problem situation which, through its urgency and magnitude, demanded comprehensive responses and locally possible and economically sustainable solutions.

The problem situation arose when it became known that of the 600 applicants to a local School of Skills, only 200 children could be accommodated. The immediate challenge which this situation prompted and the initial focus of the programme design and development was how to devise an intervention which would ensure continued educational possibilities for the learners who had been excluded from this particular educational pathway and to explore the question of how support could be provided to these learners in their transition to mainstream secondary schools.

The purpose of the research is to determine whether the programme to support learners with mild intellectual disabilities has merit and is effective in reaching the goals for its intended beneficiaries. This involves a process of prolonged engagement in the programme in order to gain experience regarding the whole programme process and to gauge the impact of the various contextual factors which advance or impede the successful transition and retention of these learners within secondary school learning environments. It also involves making judgements as to

the capacity of these schools and the EMDC to use collaborative problem-solving strategies in order to make the systems surrounding learners in secondary schools more responsive to and supportive of diverse needs in secondary school learners.

4.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The transformative paradigm and its associated philosophical assumptions will provide overall guidance to inform the thinking and direct the actions in this research process. It will provide reminders that the evaluation needs to be as inclusive as possible, particularly in terms of seeking the voices of individuals who have often traditionally been overlooked in evaluations. In this research this will mean seeking to hear the individual voices and to report upon the experiences of those learners who have been described as having mild intellectual disabilities and being alert to the possibility that other people may be excluded. It will also encourage prolonged engagement with all stakeholders and contexts affected by the programme in order to gain a holistic picture and a more complete and objective view of the whole programme process (Mertens, 2003b:140). The transformative paradigm will prompt continual attention to the desire to create the kind of knowledge or the attaching of a value to knowledge that will truly assist people to improve society. Additionally it will be alert to the influences of past and present forces within society which constrain or afford possibilities for human advancement.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

As indicated in Chapter One, the overall design of this research is programme evaluation. It is more particularly the evaluation of the process of the implementation of a programme.

This research has involved a simultaneous development and implementation of a programme with the initiation of its evaluation, a situation which Babbie and Mouton (1998:365) cite as being ideal because of the increased opportunities afforded for continuous and independent feedback on the programme's clarity and logical coherence, and ongoing monitoring of the programme's implementation and effectiveness. The particular demands of this situation, however, necessitate an evaluation design that will be flexible and responsive to the unfolding of events and personal interactions in the programme implementation process.

A research or evaluation design is routinely represented as an overall plan or strategic framework which guides the activity of the inquiry process to ensure that the kind of evidence is gathered in order that the research problem is addressed (Babbie & Mouton, 1998:74-75; Durrheim, 2002:29; Leedy, 1997:93; Merriam, 1998:6). Designs are tailored to accommodate different articulations of reality which inform research questions and the specific orientation of researchers. They range from the more positivistic detailed blueprint which is very specific and technical and becomes the "… container into which the data must be poured …" (Lather, 1986:267), to a more flexible framework which invites ongoing dialogue and which describes "… the iterative process in which the researcher will engage" (Durrheim, 2002:32).

The flexible framework for guiding action which this research has adopted is an emergent design which provides the space for a circular and interactive process of data collection and ongoing data analysis deemed necessary for this process-related, formative evaluation. Patton (2002:40) describes an emergent design as being one which allows for openness to adapting the evaluation inquiry as situations change and understandings deepen which allows the evaluator to follow new pathways of discovery as they become visible. It also necessitates that the evaluation is naturalistic and participant oriented.

The design of this evaluation is also qualitative and interpretive as it seeks to provide a description of the details of programme implementation and ongoing refinement and be able to reflect a comprehensive and holistic understanding of differing stakeholders' perspectives and experiences.

Patton (2002:159) considers that the use of qualitative inquiry is appropriate for the study of process in evaluation for the following reasons:

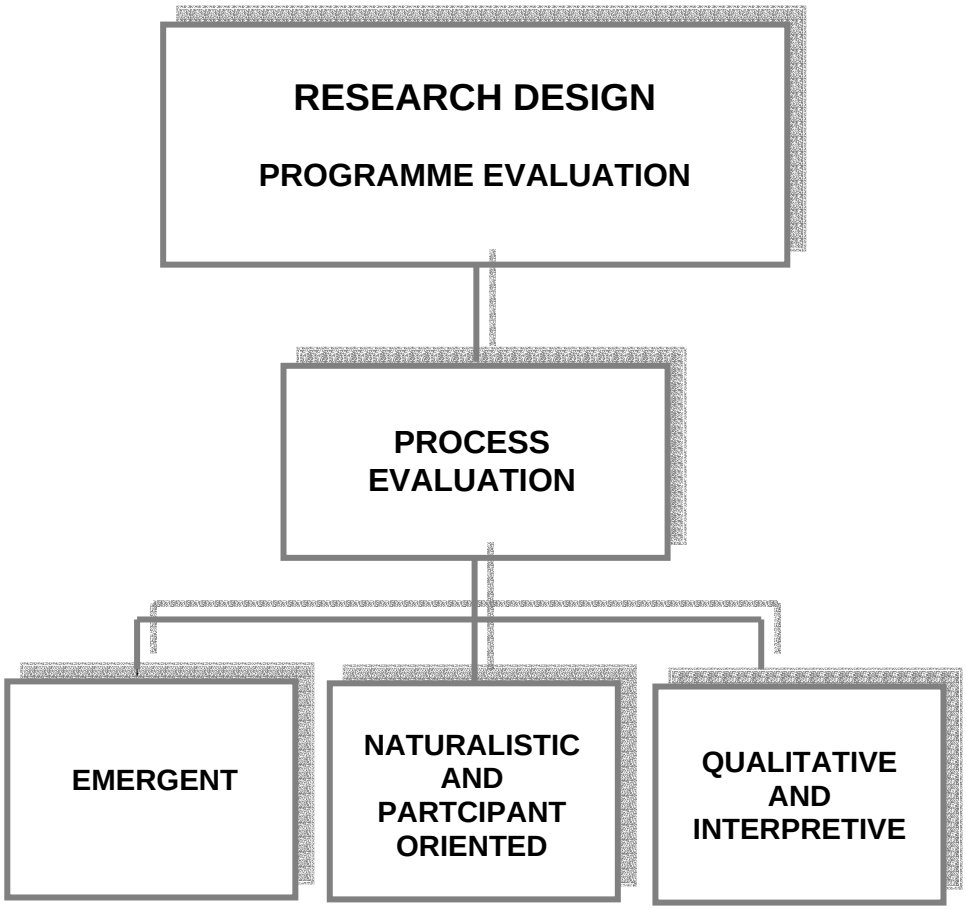
- The representation of process warrants detailed descriptions of how people engage with each other.
- The experience of process typically varies for different people in differing contexts necessitating a portrayal of their experiences in their own words.
- Process is by nature dynamic and fluid and cannot be summarised fairly at one point in time upon a single rating scale.

- The perceptions of participants are key considerations in process oriented evaluations.

In terms of an interpretive approach Potter (2002:215) considers that:

> the strength of interpretive approaches lie in the prolonged engagement of the evaluator with the programme, the breadth of data that is considered to be relevant to the evaluation, the ability of the evaluator to progressively focus on a variety of issues relevant to the development of the programme, as well as the flexibility to incorporate issues into the evaluation design that emerge from the contact between the evaluator and different programme stakeholders.

FIGURE 6: DIAGRAMMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN



4.5 RETROSPECTIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME TO BE EVALUATED

4.5.1 Programme Context

The programme has taken place within the geographical area of the Western Cape, one of the nine provinces of South Africa. The Western Cape has a population of approximately 4,5 million people and incorporates 10% of South Africa's total population. According to Swartz (2003:14), the Western Cape population has the highest levels of education in the country, even though most of its adults have not completed their secondary school education.

The programme took place within the broader historical, social and political contexts as discussed in the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 and was more specifically influenced by local economic, political and educational factors.

The programme's initiation, ongoing development and implementation took place within the offices of the local Educational Management and Development Centre and six participating secondary schools within one of the seven geographical areas which delimit the operations of this local educational body.

The programme was thus developed within the financial constraints of the operating budget of the local Educational Management and Development Centre (EMDC) and the educational constraints of having to work within the non-negotiable aspects of recent educational policy and curriculum directives. The financial constraints meant that no new teaching posts to support these learners could be created and that the existing learning support teachers and two teachers who were in excess could be used in the programme. Finances that could become available would be used exclusively for teacher training. Curriculum constraints were that these learners were obliged to engage in instruction in each of the eight learning areas as prescribed in the curriculum of the Senior Phase of the General Education and Training Band of the National Curriculum Framework.

The six schools which agreed to participate in the programme were situated within three areas, two close to the city of Cape Town, two within a circumscribed middle to working class residential area bordered by light industrial developments, and two within an area associated with low socio-economic status and gang related activity.

Two of the six schools are primarily serving learners who do not live within the locale of the school and who travel some considerable distance to reach school each morning. The other four schools attract learners from the neighbouring residential areas and learners from outside the area. In one area, a particular school was seen to be the school which attracted learners with more academic potential than its neighbouring school, and is therefore viewed as being more selective. The other five schools accommodate learners without obvious preconditions and are keen to attain sufficient numbers of learners to allow them to maintain their teacher quotas. All of the schools had previously been classified under the government as schools who would cater exclusively for the 'coloured' population. All of the schools are now admitting learners who are classified as both 'coloured' and 'black'.

The recommendations for the strengthening of support services as delineated in White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001a:28-29) provided a contextual reference for the programme to be alert to including the various levels of district, institutional and individual coordinator and teacher support in the programme's ongoing design and implementation.

4.5.2 Programme Goal and Target Group

Babbie and Mouton (1998:343) stress the complementary relationship between programme goals and the target group or intended beneficiaries of a programme. This relationship is premised on identifying the needs of the target group and the conceptualisation of goals in order to meet these needs.

The goal of this programme was to provide district, institutional and individual teacher led support to learners described as having mild intellectual disability in their first years of mainstream secondary school. The target group consisted of the learners identified as being those who had not gained entry into the School of Skills who had subsequently enrolled in one of the six participating secondary schools. The needs of the target group were considered to be primarily in the area of academic support, but also involved the possibility of curriculum adaptation. Further identified needs were to skill the teachers to better cater for diverse learning needs and to effect a change in attitude towards intellectual disability within each schools' management and teaching teams.

4.5.3 Critical Success Factors

The factors which were considered to signal that the programme had achieved success were the following:

- The retention of learners with mild intellectual disabilities in secondary school until the first official exit point of Grade 9,
- Improved academic skill acquisition and application in the target population as reported by the learning support and/or subject teachers,
- Evidence of the establishment of Teacher Support Teams and the development of associated problem solving capacities at the participating secondary schools,
- Ongoing communication between the schools and the Education Management and Development Centres with respect to these and other learners with diverse learning needs.

4.5.4 Programme Components

The components which comprised the programme and which were designed to enable the attainment of the goals of the programme were:

- The introduction of a learning support teacher into each of the 6 participating secondary schools. Four of the teachers were part time and were able to give four hours weekly to their secondary school. Two of the teachers were placed at the two remaining secondary schools on a full time basis,
- Workshops with the whole staff at each of the six secondary schools,
- Ongoing support to the learning support teachers in terms of in-service training and monthly meetings where they shared their experiences and discussed interventions, assessment and reporting procedures,
- Ongoing monitoring of support teachers' timetables learning support interventions and roll of learners,
- Progress meeting with the principals of the six schools,
- On site visits - for support and problem solving, In-service literacy training to Grade 8 and Grade 9 teachers,
- Meetings with Grade 8 and 9 staff at each of the six schools,

- Discussions with Provincial Head Office staff representing learning support and curriculum development.

4.5.5 Programme Management and Human Resource Base

The ongoing planning and implementation of the programme was managed by a core collaborative group which was comprised of members from the EMDC, two members from a non-governmental organisation and myself, a PhD student. The group met on a continuous basis throughout the programme and used a method of operation based on action research inquiry methods.

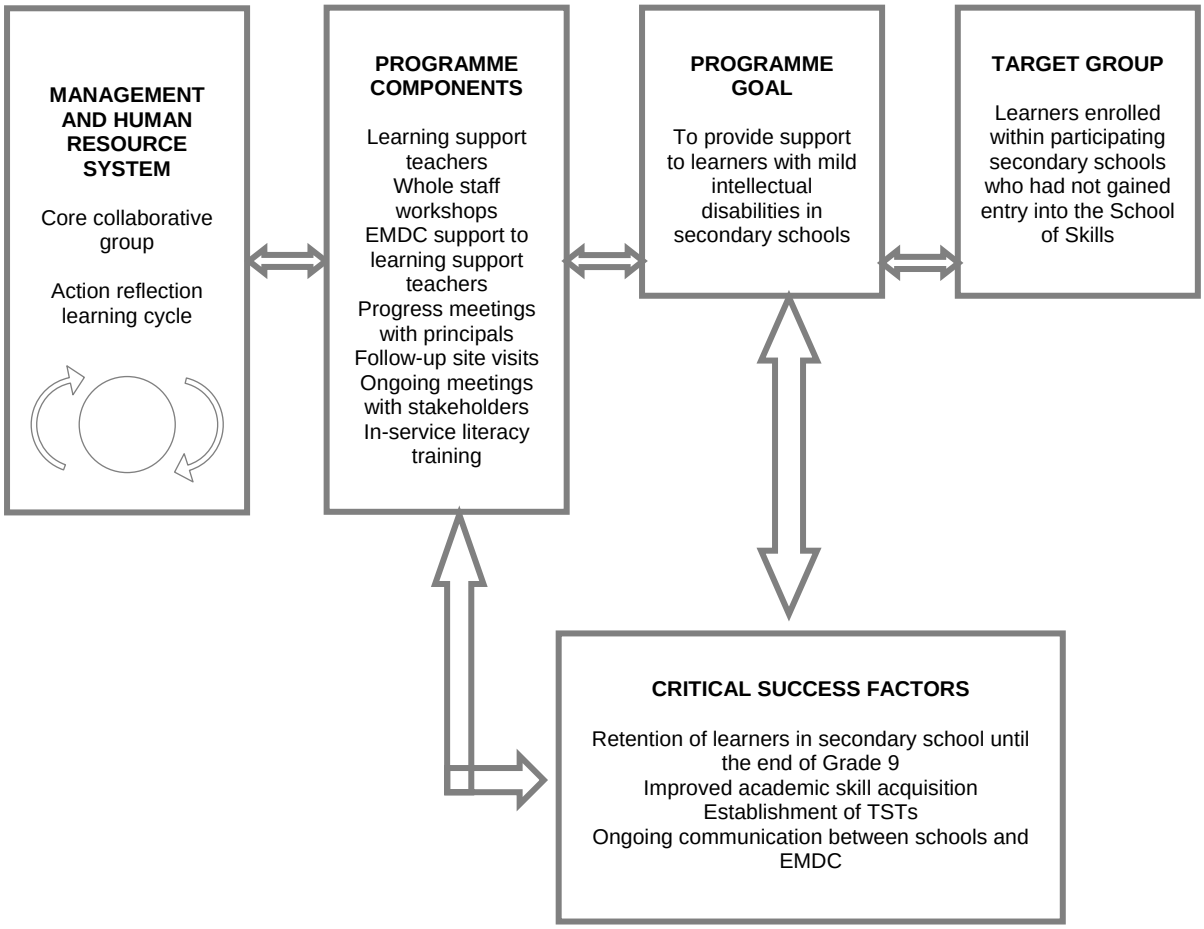
The reason for the use of these methods was that the group realised that the best way to gain understanding of the programme development and implementation would be through an authentic and contextualised form of participative knowledge creation involving cycles of action and reflection. The use of these methods also reflected the belief of the group that as far as possible the programme should be dislocated from the influence of manipulation and professional elitism and become demystified, democratized and contextually located. This form of inquiry also incorporated the human rights perspective that people have a right to participate in and express their own values within decisions about the design and implementation of a programme that ventures into the domain of their own lived experiences.

A model of the programme is depicted in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7: MODEL OF PROGRAMME

BROADER POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXTS AND TIME FRAME



STAKEHOLDERS

Adapted from Babbie & Mouton (1998:34)

4.6 METHODOLOGY

4.6.1 Stakeholders and participants

Potter (2002:216) defines stakeholders as being people "... who fund programmes, those who plan and implement programmes, programme participants and users as well as those whose interests are affected by the work of programmes" (Potter, 2002:216). In an evaluation which is being informed by the transformative paradigm, the term also is a reminder to become more aware of the individuals who may well be affected by a programme, but who are often overlooked. It also means that the

stakeholders will be invited to become participants in the programme development process in order that a deeper understanding can be gained as to the dynamics, local politics and power relations both within the immediate school environments and within the district and provincial educational authorities.

In chapter 1, I referred to two main groups of stakeholders which were heterogeneous in nature and to a certain extent overlapping, but which represent differing potential in directing and informing the programme implementation process. I feel that it is now appropriate to introduce the stakeholders more comprehensively.

The over 70 learners in the six participating secondary schools represent the stakeholders who are the intended recipients of the programme of support. They have the potential to provide information on how they are experiencing the programme, how aspects of the programme could be changed, and how they are negotiating their daily lives within their secondary school environments. Even though the overwhelming majority of these learners come from poor socio-economic circumstances, I have felt it wise to guard against what Mertens, (1999:12) refers to as the "... myth of homogeneity ..." in assuming that members of an identified group share the same characteristics and particularly similar cultural mores.

Further stakeholders include the parents of the learners receiving support. Many of the parents of the learners come from sub-economic areas within the Western Cape and in the Eastern Cape. Many of the parents are unemployed or underemployed and several work "in service" and others have jobs which entail shift-work at night.

Another collection of stakeholders were certain identified staff members at the provincial education department and at the local EMDC. These stakeholders were considered to be important to the programme implementation, its ongoing evaluation and ensuing recommendations as they have the potential to effect changes and influence policy at provincial and national level.

Further stakeholders, who formed an integral part of the core collaborative group were two members of a Non Governmental Organisation which specialises in providing support to parents and organisations in respect of inclusive education.

The principals and teachers at the participating schools were the stakeholders who were consulted frequently to provide feedback and give suggestions as to the ongoing planning and development of the programme. The six schools varied in staff

complements from over 34 teachers to 9 teachers. Each one of these teachers was exposed to a greater or lesser degree to information about the programme implementation.

The six learning support teachers appointed to the participating secondary schools were essential to the ongoing feedback upon and ensuing planning of the programme. Four of the teachers were employed primarily in neighbouring primary schools and spent two hours twice a week at a secondary school. Two of the teachers were employed full time at secondary schools. Two teachers had achieved formal qualifications in learning support, two were secondary school teachers who were receiving in-service training in learning support, and two were primary school teachers who were receiving in-service training in learning support.

The stakeholders who were responsible for the initial design and implementation of the programme were drawn from the local EMDC, a Non Governmental Organisation and myself, a PhD student. This core group met frequently throughout the design and implementation of the programme in order to reflect, plan, facilitate the development of skills, gain a deeper understanding of events and continue to be cognizant of how the programme was being experienced in each particular school context and as a whole.

4.6.2 The Researcher

My role as researcher has been discussed in some depth in chapter one. I feel that it is important to reiterate that my role is of participant observer of a nature which falls some way short of complete immersion in the daily experiences of many of the stakeholders in this evaluation. I have thus equated my role as being that of someone looking upon a pageant from a balcony, there from a distance, but separated from full participation and the risk associated with being moved along by events and forced accommodations of fellow travellers.

I have also attempted to describe my history and the constraints which I feel it imposes upon my perceptions and ability to escape from past habits of thought. I have had a particular South African experience which was separated from the experiences of the majority of people in my country. I experienced a traditional school education, in single sex and racially separated schools until my matriculation. I then proceeded to study at a historically advantaged university and taught at

various local schools, special and mainstream, public and private. It was only in 1994 that I was able to teach at a school which truly represented the racial demographics of our country, a situation which I feel has taught me most of which I can truly claim to know about my current teaching skills and my fellow South Africans.

4.6.3 Methods of Data Gathering

The gathering of data during this evaluation has been extensive and has followed the traditional means of qualitative data collection namely interviews, observations and document analysis (Merriam & Associates, 2002:12; Wolcott, 1994:10). Data gathering has been sourced from engaging with different stakeholders in order to access the differing strands of knowledge, experience and personal and group interpretations of past experiences and unfolding events.

The data in this evaluation includes a personal evaluator journal, transcriptions of focus group and individual interviews, extensive notes on the participant observations of numerous meetings, observations at each of the participating schools, written feedback from the teachers attending the workshops at each of the schools, and the ongoing examination of policy and other education related documents (refer Appendix B).

4.6.3.1 Evaluator journal

Janesick (2004:146) describes journal writing as a process "... that allows one to reflect - to dig deeper ... it is a kind of member check of one's own thinking done on paper". My journal has recorded my personal observations and feelings throughout the evaluation process. It has provided me with a tool to explore my own complicity in alternatively maintaining and disrupting the normalising constructs which had become lodged in my teaching and learning practice. It has also allowed me to explore themes and intuitions before presenting these ideas for further reflection within the core collaborative group. It has also been a reminder to be continuously reflective and to tread lightly and carefully.

4.6.3.2 Interviews

Focus Group Interviews

Morgan (1997:2) describes the hallmark of focus groups as being the purposeful use of group interaction in order to produce insights and data that would be less

accessible without the added dynamics of group interactions. Focus groups are defined as a "... research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (Morgan, 1997:6).

Focus groups were conducted with groups of teachers at each of the six schools at the initiation of the programme. The question which was asked was: "How can support be provided to learners with mild intellectual disability in secondary schools?" These interviews yielded data on what kind of support the teachers and schools felt was necessary to include all their learners more successfully, and particularly the learners who had not been accepted into the School of Skills. The focus group interviews were also used to gauge the attitude of staff members towards accommodating diverse learning needs in secondary schools.

Focus group interviews were also conducted with groups of learners in the support programme at the participating schools in response to inquiries regarding the nature of the support they felt they needed to participate and prosper in their school environments. Further focus group interviews were undertaken with senior management team and Grade 8 and 9 staff members at each of the schools at the end of the first year of the programme's implementation. These interviews yielded rich data as to general contextual information of each school as well as the status of the programme of support and the teachers' responses to particular issues which the programme had highlighted or provoked during the year.

Individual Interviews

As the process of the evaluation unfolded it became apparent that further data collection was necessary from the individuals who form the focus of this inquiry. It was thus that individual interviews were conducted with learners involved in the programme from the various schools. These interviews allowed for further probing of the questions relating to the programme and the nature of support which learners felt was needed. They also eliminated the influence of the peer group dynamics which had restricted the expression of opinions within the focus groups at most of the schools. The issue of speaking in a second language could also be more sensitively accommodated in a one-to-one environment. Two learners from each geographical area were interviewed individually.

4.6.3.3 Participant Observations

"Observational data, especially participant observation, permit the evaluation researcher to understand a programme or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews" (Patton, 2002:23). As a participant observer I was an active member of the collaborative group and thus participated while observing (Merriam & Associates, 2002:13), a feat made more comfortable by extensive use of cassette recorder. The strength of observation is sited in most texts as providing a firsthand discovery of the subject of inquiry as well as being more naturalistic in that it occurs in the context in which the programme is being implemented (Merriam, 1998:94; Merriam & Associates, 2002:13; Mertens, 1998:317). Observations were done:

- during core collaborative group meetings
- during meetings with selected EDMC and provincial staff members
- during support lessons given at the six schools
- during monthly meetings with the learning support teachers
- while teaching lessons on diversity to four classes of Grade 8 learners at one of the six schools
- during on-site visits to schools
- during focus group interviews and whole staff workshops

4.6.3.4 Document Analysis

Hodder (2000:703-704) refers to documents as being "mute evidence" which, unlike spoken language, possess a physical endurance which allows them to be separated temporally and spatially from their authors and imbued with meaning by their readers. He goes on to assert that the reading of documents and associated meaning making is context dependent and socially situated and that no "true" or "original" meaning is possible outside particular historical contexts. "Text and context are in a continual state of tension, each defining and redefining the other, saying and doing things differently through time" (Hodder, 2000:703-704).

The documents which formed part of the evaluation process were largely those of public record such as policy documents to do with the evolving assessment policy

regarding learners with barriers to learning and various provincial circulars, statements and presentations. Many newspaper articles regarding the reporting on educational matters, such as the results of systemic assessments, also formed part of the document analysis as did the written feedback after the workshops at each of the six schools.

The issue of confidentiality of records on individual learners and schools is extremely important in evaluation and was respected through this investigation. Where mention is made of individual learners and schools, any identifying details have been purposely omitted (Patton, 2002:294).

4.6.4 Data Transformation

Ongoing analysis of the data has formed an integral part of the programme implementation and evaluation process. The core collaborative group has met frequently to discuss and reflect upon the data and make recommendations or engage in actions based on this ongoing interpretation.

As an evaluator of the whole programme implementation process, however, I needed to find ways in which to make sense of all the data gathered over a two year period. I needed to accurately reflect the complexities experienced during the process by describing the entire programme implementation process and particularly the cycles of action, reflection, learning and planning which have characterised the deliberations of the core collaborative group. I also needed to access a deeper understanding of the recurrent patterns and emergent themes which were asserting themselves in response to the central research question and then frame these within transformative theoretical ideas and my own experiences and interpretations. It is thus that the data has been transformed in three ways, each form of representation providing a different emphasis and level of abstraction from the data (Wolcott, 1994:10-11).

The first is a descriptive chronology of the whole programme process. The form which this presentation takes is through a narrative description of the negotiations, actions, interactions and reflections over time. Patton (2002:438-439) refers to this form of organising and reporting data as a storytelling approach. This form of data transformation has been effected through a content analysis of all data gathered in the programme implementation process. Neuman (2003:36) describes content

analysis as involving the creation of a system of recording specific aspects of a chosen body of material. I have chosen to use the system of action, reflection and planning cycles to record and describe the programme implementation and evaluation process. A calendar of the chronology of events compiled by the core collaborative group has provided an overall guiding temporal framework (refer to Table 3 at the end of Chapter 5).

The second form of data transformation has been the identification of themes which have emerged across sites and participants in order to capture the recurring patterns that have cut across the bulk of the data (Merriam, 1998:179). This analysis has made use of all gathered data and has been achieved through the use of the Constant Comparative Method as advanced by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:126-149).

This form of analysis of qualitative data is a simultaneous synthesis of inductive category coding with comparisons of all obtained units of data. Merriam (1998:179) describes a unit of data as being "... any meaningful (or potentially meaningful) segment of data …" which can be "… as small as a word a participant uses to describe a feeling or phenomenon, or as large as several pages of field notes describing a particular incident." During this process the data was copied and reread several times and compared with the themes noted in my evaluator journal. This enabled a process of 'discovery' in which the existing themes were confirmed or altered and further themes were noted. This initial process, which is illustrated in Figure 8, provided a tentative initial framework for further and more intensive inductive analysis.

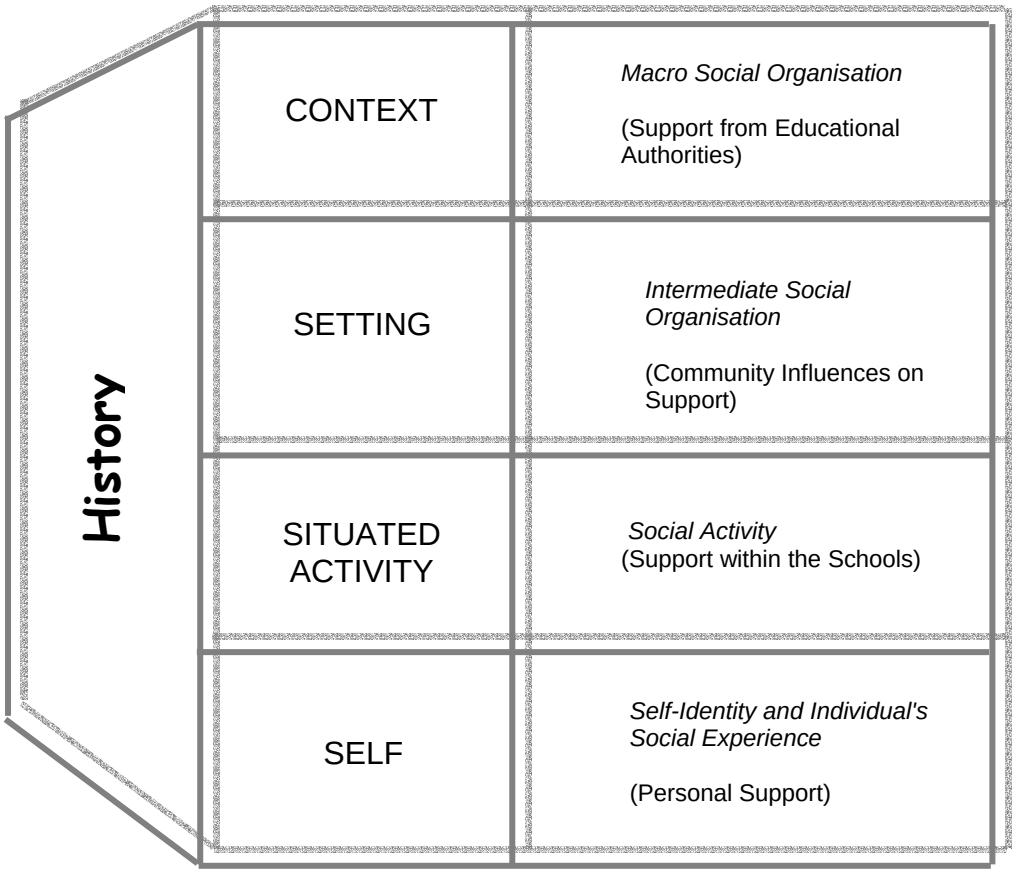
FIGURE 8: DISCOVERY SHEET OF INITIAL THEMES

add-on view of support
emotional counselling
reinscription of identity
low level of literacy and numeracy skills
personal space
communication
lack of appropriate resources
curriculum inflexibility and inaccessibility
learning through a second or third language
prestige and exclusion
staffing structures and class sizes
importance of reflection time
lack of parent and learner motivation
learning a second language
impact of socio-economic factors
high drop-out rates
unreliable information from primary schools
effect of the presence of a support teacher
stigma
overage learners and ABET
influence of matric results
assessment challenges
special school as a resource
denial of past privileges
lack of personal agency
lack of vocational options in the senior phase
need for secondary school teacher training in basic literacy and numeracy

A major part and really daunting aspect of the inductive analysis process involved the subsequent identification of units of meaning within all pieces of information contained in the data. Pieces or fragments of data were then cut from the texts if they were considered to reveal information pertinent to the evaluation and could stand alone without needing specific supporting information. These pieces of text

were then grouped and regrouped into the existing or newly created categories (see Figure 10), each with tentative rules of inclusion, as each successive unit of meaning was compared with all other units of meaning. During this process category formation was informed by constant reference to the central research problem and the need to provide links between categories and increasing possibilities for the evaluation to indicate pathways towards social and educational transformation. The final organisation of categories was influenced by a research map developed by Layder (1993:8, 72) as illustrated in Figure 9 and in Figure 11.

FIGURE 9: RESEARCH MAP



Adapted from Layder (1993:72)

FIGURE 10: INITIAL CATEGORIES AND THEMES

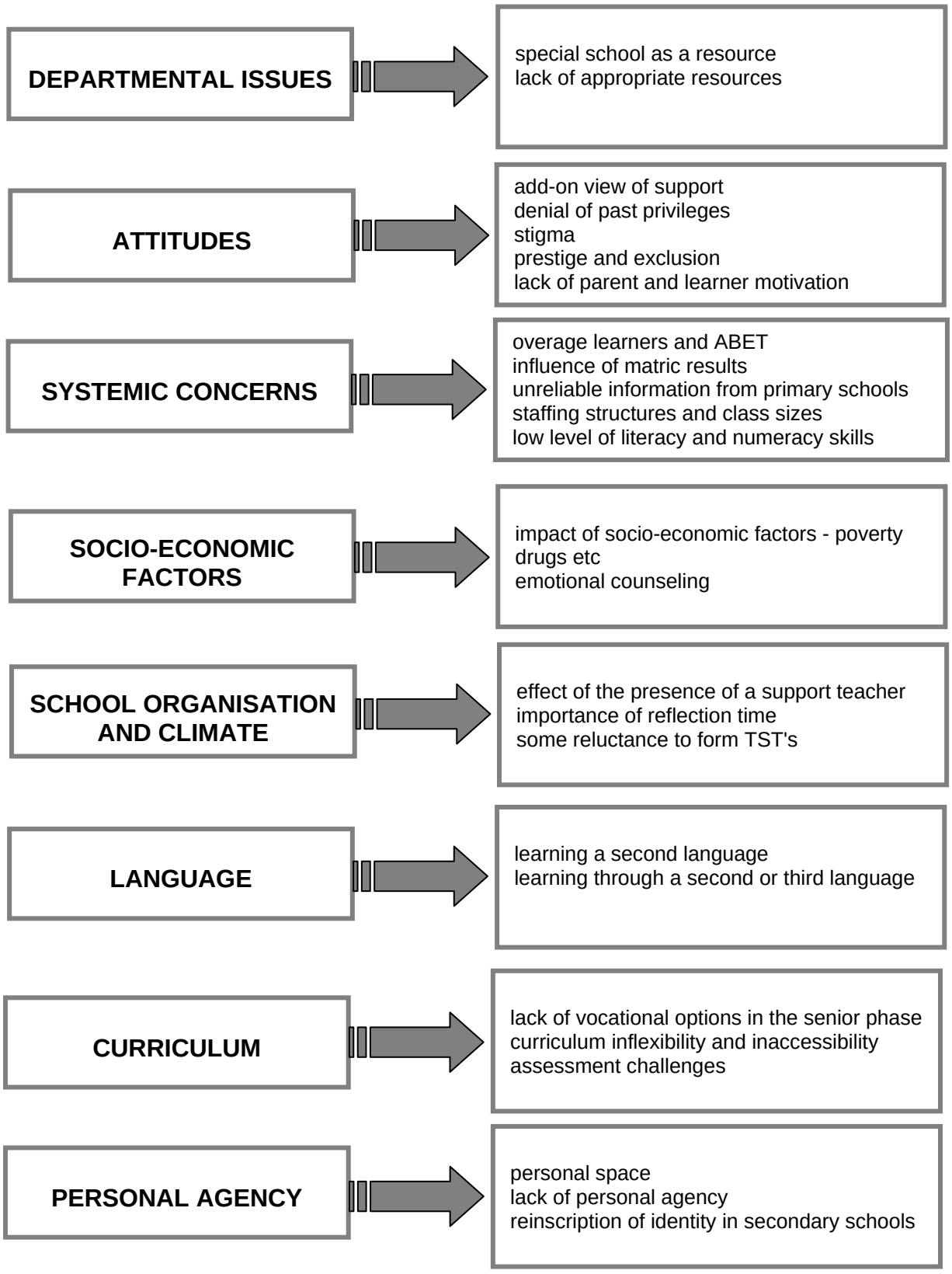
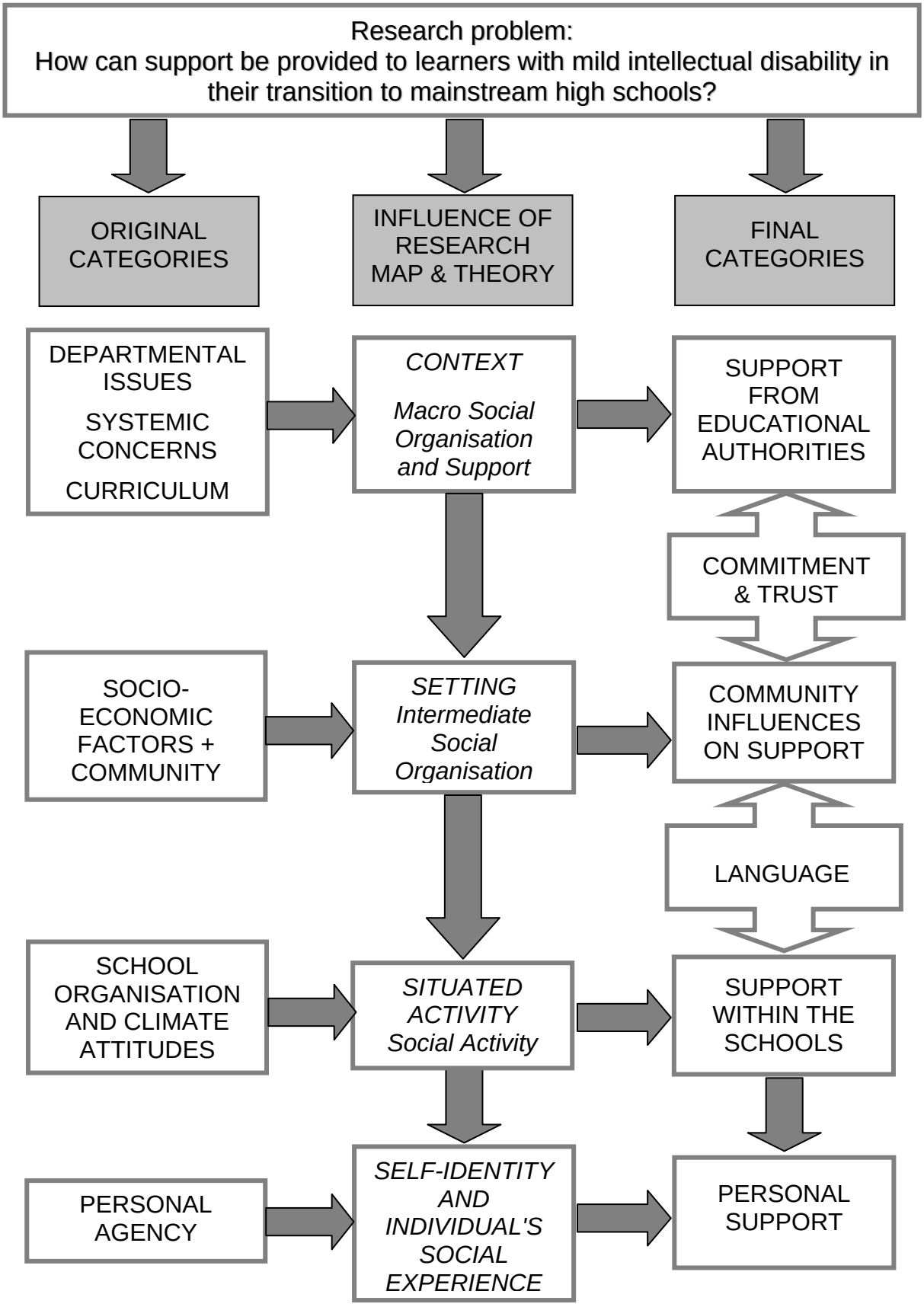


FIGURE 11: FORMATION OF FINAL CATEGORIES



The final form of data transformation has been an interpretative discussion of the programme implementation process and the analysis of recurrent themes. This representation has involved moving beyond the data in an attempt to develop ideas by incorporating the theoretical framework, my own influence and experiences as a researcher and reference to a review of literature.

4.7 DATA VERIFICATION

4.7.1 Introduction

Qualitative research has become accustomed to using different terms from quantitative research to describe the criteria for judging the quality of a study. These include credibility which parallels the positivist internal validity, transferability which parallels external validity, dependability which parallels reliability and confirmability which parallels objectivity (Mertens, 1998:181).

In the evaluation field yet another set of standards have been advanced as being those which capture quality in evaluation research. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation in their publication The Program Evaluation Standards (1994) developed a generic set of four criteria which the representatives felt that a good evaluation study should satisfy. These are utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy (balance). MacMillan and Schumacher (1997:546) believe that these standards should not be viewed as a "… cookbook of steps to follow ..." but they should be regarded as a basis from which any specific evaluation situation can operate and adapt. Patton (2002:550) contends that these standards challenge evaluators to take greater responsibility for use than was previously evident in more positivistic evaluations. He goes on to say that "… implementation of a utility-focused, feasibility-conscious, propriety-oriented, and accuracy-based evaluation requires situational responsiveness, methodological flexibility, multiple evaluator roles, political sophistication, and substantial doses of creativity". Fetterman (2001:87-88) feels that it is important to apply the standards to empowerment evaluation as an examination of the standards illustrates how this form of evaluation meets or even exceeds the spirit of each of the standards.

4.7.2 Utility standards

These standards are to ensure that an evaluation will serve the practical and timely needs of intended users or given audiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:545;

Mertens, 1998:241). These include stakeholder identification, evaluator credibility, information scope and selectivity, values identification and evaluation impact.

This evaluation has made initial and ongoing stakeholder identification central to the evaluation design and process. Stakeholders have been included in the planning, implementation and reporting back to various audiences in the process of the evaluation. The persons conducting the evaluation have a combined history and experience of working in the field of inclusive education and general community work and training. The information or data during this evaluation has been "broadly selected" (Mertens, 1998:241) in an effort to address important questions which have arisen in the process of the evaluation according to the expressed needs of the stakeholders.

The impact of the evaluation is difficult to ascertain at this time but several meetings have been held with members of the EMDC and the core team to draw up plans to disseminate the findings of the evaluation and draw up plans for EMDC-wide application of support, particularly in the senior phase of schooling. These include assisting schools to administer baseline assessments for all Grade 8 learners, follow up literacy workshops for teachers, exploring the use of computer literacy programmes for learners who are still learning to read, examination of schools' language policies, encouraging secondary schools to employ more Xhosa speaking educators and EMDC run workshops for parents. Further plans involve fast-tracking the formation of Teacher Support Teams at secondary schools and exploring further and linking in with provincial initiatives with career guidance.

4.7.3 Feasibility Standards

These standards exist to ensure that "… an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal" (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994:63). These include practical procedures, political viability and cost effectiveness. The practical procedures used in this evaluation have been described in detail in the preceding sections and involve explanation as to how the data was gathered, stored and retrieved and how the data was transformed. How the data has been reported is detailed in the following chapter. The methods of data gathering were employed in such a way as to limit the disruption in each school's day. Most of the meetings with the teachers were held in the afternoons after the end of teaching

time. Meetings with the learners took place during their learning support lesson times and the school principals met at a time when their schedules were least busy.

Ongoing meetings with the core collaborative group took place within the constraints of the demanding programmes of the EMDC staff and had frequently to give way to periods in which intensive training in the Revised National Curriculum were taking place. The political viability of the programme has been carefully monitored in terms of making sure that all members of the EMDC who wished to become involved in the programme were encouraged and invited to do so. We have also been acutely aware of the relative potential of the various stakeholders to exercise agency and pressure in the process of the evaluation and have tried to accord equal opportunity to all the stakeholders to give input. The only representative group which we feel have been largely excluded are the parents of the learners with intellectual disabilities as access to them has been limited because of their working lives and associated difficulties in arranging for times where the evaluators and parents could meet. The programme has been extremely cost effective as we have been forced to work within the budgetary constraints of the EMDC and this has affected the ability to employ more learning support teachers and fund workshops and cover the costs of transport and other operating expenses.

4.7.4 Propriety Standards

Mertens (1998:241) describes the propriety standards as ensuring that an evaluation "… will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard to the welfare of those involved in the evaluation as well as of those affected by the results." These include service orientation, formal agreements and the right of human subjects, human interactions, complete and fair assessment and disclosure of findings. The goal of this evaluation has been service oriented as it has sought to find ways in which to support learners with intellectual disabilities in secondary schools. This has involved collaboration and problem solving exercises with various stakeholders with the intention of the enhancement of the learner's ability to participate in secondary school learning environments. I have received a formal agreement from the Department of Education to conduct research in specified schools (see Appendix A). The rights of all the human subjects have been integral to the design and process of the evaluation as we have been acutely aware that inclusive education is premised on a human rights perspective of access to education. However, working within

hierarchically organised structures such as an EMDC and schools presents certain dilemmas with regard to being certain whether the consent given is indeed informed and fully understood, or rather coerced and uncertain. It was with the latter in mind that human interactions in this evaluation were constructed so as to give voice to and honour the experiences of all the stakeholders involved in this process and that all participants were continually reminded that they had a choice rather than an obligation to be involved in the programme. Findings have been disclosed throughout the programme process through written communications, discussions and presentations to management teams and individuals.

4.7.5 Accuracy Standards

These are intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features determining the worth or merit of the programme being evaluated. These include programme documentation, context analysis, described purpose and procedures, valid, reliable and systematic information and analysis of qualitative information. Programme documentation has been provided in the following chapter which describes the whole programme process including its unique features and component parts so that the reader will be able to compare the programme with other similar programmes. The analysis of the context has been circumscribed to a certain technical sense through the application of the anonymity and confidentiality. However a concerted attempt has been made to give details as to the general context in which the programme is operating in Chapter One as well as the operational details and varying contexts of the programme in Chapter Five. The purpose and procedures are elucidated in Chapter One. The data gathering and transformation procedures are provided in preceding sections in this chapter.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the technical details of the research process. It has detailed the research design and methodological procedures which have been employed in the process of an evaluation of a programme in order to gather and transform the data in ways which will fairly represent all stakeholders and allow for a holistic account of the entire programme process. It has also discussed the standards by which the evaluation can be judged.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter represents the first level of data transformation. Its aim is to provide a textual synthesis of the data which has been gathered over a period of two years within a personally experienced, chronological, observational description of the negotiations, interactions, actions and reflections of the entire programme implementation process. Its intention is to stay as close to the data as possible in an attempt is to allow the reader to gain a holistic sense of the evolving, cumulative and process nature of this research as well as to offer some vicarious experience of the series of action learning cycles which have informed the programme implementation.

5.2 THE GENERAL CONTEXT

As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Four, the programme was initiated primarily to explore and develop methods of support and offer alternative educational provision for learners whose applications to a School of Skills had been unsuccessful. The programme was regarded as innovative one in the South African context as no documented evidence existed regarding the development and monitoring of a programme of inclusion for learners with mild intellectual disability in several secondary schools in an urban area. The programme was also viewed as being relevant to the general context of the majority of learners in South Africa as it was due to unfold in schools which served learners of low socio-economic status where inclusion has been deemed to occur by default rather than by design (Department of Education, 2001a:5).

It was anticipated from the outset, therefore, that the implementation of the programme to include these learners into mainstream secondary schools would reveal far more than the individual possibilities and constraints associated with the inclusion of some learners in particular places. As Shapon-Shevin (1996:35-36) so aptly describes it, inclusion is like a dentist's disclosing tablet in that it can reveal the

areas where schools themselves are experiencing problems and where attention needs to be directed and "… the manner in which our educational system must grow and improve in order to meet the needs of all children". It also entails changes in "… curriculum, pedagogy, staff development, school climate, and structures … it means that mere tinkering on the edges of existing structures will not work …" The extent of the areas which were urgently in need of some attention was progressively revealed as the programme evolved and situations unfolded.

5.3 FIRST CYCLE

5.3.1 The Initiation of the Programme

A core collaborative group was formed early in November of 2002 to initiate a programme to include learners who had been identified as being those who had not been accepted into the School of Skills into mainstream secondary schools. The group consisted of an initiating member based at the local EMDC, a member of a non-governmental organisation, a learning support co-ordinator and myself, a PhD student and learning support teacher. There was a certain synchronicity to this coming together as I had expressed an interest in engaging in research in this area prior to the invitation to join the group. Within group diversity was evident as each member brought different experiences and areas of interest to the group, these being language learning, community work, secondary school teaching experience and learning support and primary school teaching experience and learning support. As a student at a tertiary institution, I requested and received consent from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct research in the secondary schools who had agreed to join the programme.

Of particular urgency was the need to provide some alternative school placement to the learners who were not accepted into the School of Skills. To this end, after consultation with school area managers, it was agreed that certain secondary schools in three geographical areas in which the learners were either living in or travelling to should be approached to offer places to these learners and that learning support teachers within these areas would be asked to spend some of their time working with these learners in secondary schools.

Two schools within each of the three areas agreed to join the programme. It had been decided that it was of utmost importance that each school would feel that they

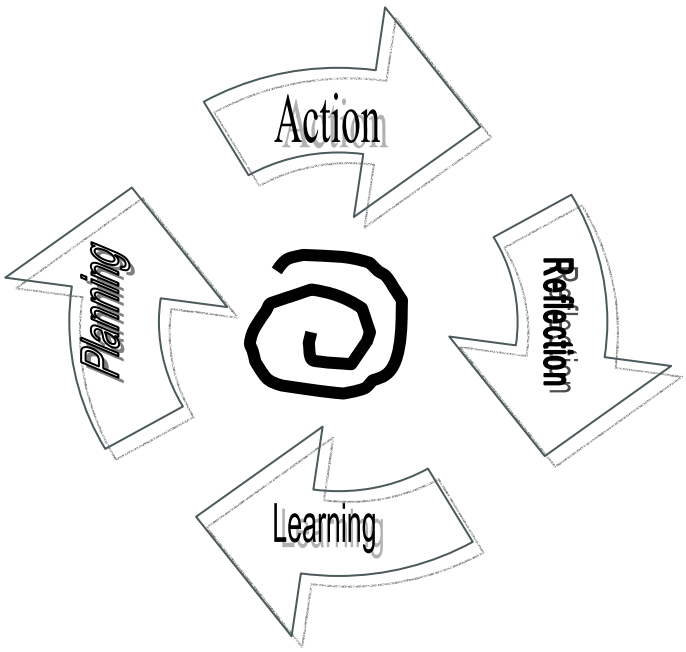
had a choice rather than an obligation to participate in the programme. This belief was borne out early in the process when a school which had initially agreed to become part of the programme withdrew when they heard at short notice from educational authorities that they would be losing some staff members. This led to further negotiation and another school deciding to join.

The plan to provide learning support to these schools required some creative strategising as budget constraints dictated that no further funding was available for the employment of additional personnel. Four learning support teachers who were working at neighbouring primary schools each agreed to provide some part time learning support to a secondary school and two teachers who were in excess at a specialised facility agreed to work full time in the two secondary schools where educational managers had indicated there was a high need for support largely due to the low socio-economic status of the population of learners. Two of the six teachers had completed formal courses and qualified as remedial teachers. The four other teachers are receiving all their learning support training through in-service provision. One of the secondary school teachers has extensive experience in counselling learners with emotional difficulties.

The core collaborative group met several times in order to discuss and agree upon common assumptions and understandings about the anticipated challenges of working within the programme. It was agreed that our main task would be to enable mainstream secondary schools to develop strategies and access support to help learners with mild intellectual disability. It was also agreed that people learn from their experiences, especially when given time and space to reflect upon these experiences. Additionally, it was our firm belief that planning which was grounded in the lessons learned from experience, would be more likely to catalyse transformation in learning and teaching environments than policy directives.

The core collaborative group thus adopted the action learning model portrayed in Figure 12 to guide the ongoing programme development and implementation.

FIGURE 12: DIAGRAM OF ACTION LEARNING MODEL



Adapted from Marais and Taylor (1999:5)

5.3.2 Initial Action Plans

The initial action plans were to:

- meet with the Senior Management Team of each school to introduce the learning support teacher and initiate a system of school-wide support
- meet with an official at the Head Office of the Western Cape Education Department to discuss the possibility of curriculum adaptation in Grade 8 for the identified learners

Members of the core collaborative group met with staff of each of the six schools during early December 2002 and late January 2003 to introduce the learning support teacher and to brainstorm how the procedure of integrating learning support into the school would be facilitated. Two of the meetings included contact with parents of children who had not gained entry into the School of Skills. One of the meetings included a request from a member of the Senior Management Team that a member of the group and the learning support teacher should speak to each of the eight Grade 8 classes at the school about matters of diversity, support and inclusion.

A meeting was arranged with personnel at the Western Cape Department of Education to obtain information regarding whether the mainstream curriculum could be adapted for some learners in Grade 8.

5.3.3 Reflections upon the Action Plans in the First Cycle

The initiation of the programme progressed well in respect of collaboration with the principals and senior staff members of each of the six schools and initial access to the schools and to personnel within the Western Cape Education Department. More difficult to negotiate and achieve greater clarity upon was the implementation of some of the ideas generated within the core group and aspects of negotiations which intersected with policy, particularly in respect of the General Education and Training (GET) curriculum.

Core collaborative group meetings stressed the importance of whole school responses to learners with diverse learning needs and the key role of school principals in driving any process of change. Further recommendations from the group were the fast-tracking of the establishment of Teacher Support Teams (TSTs) in these secondary schools to enable a process of localised problem solving and related individual school identification of other role players and resources to bolster a general support process. Attention was also paid to making the transition to secondary school a more welcoming and less threatening experience for all learners through recommendations of mentoring systems, orientation programmes and a generic letter of welcome to parents and learners. It was a strong feeling of the group that education at school was in preparation for a productive life after school and that the development of life skill competencies would greatly aid a school-to-work transition for all, but particularly these learners, and if sensitively introduced, would have some counterbalancing effect on the failures which these learners had experienced.

Suggestions as to orientation for new Grade 8's met with some incredulity on the part of staff members at the secondary schools as all but one of the schools are still actively involved in enrolling new learners in the first two weeks of the new school year. "You must understand that many of our learners come from the Eastern Cape and they have to wait to collect enough money after Christmas to afford the travelling, they only come along in the second or third week". The one school which

had a more stable year start was the school that drew most of its learners from its immediate community and the school which was seen in the area as being the more prestigious secondary school institution. However, one member of the School Management Team at that school was concerned as to the negative mindset of both the staff and the learners towards the acceptance of diversity and the teachers' lack of skills to incorporate learners who were struggling academically. She requested that we run a programme for all the eight Grade 8 classes early in the new year, a negotiation which was presented as a challenge to our commitment, a feeling which was confirmed while we were implementing the programme with the comment, "Oh, I see that you are as good as your word".

More difficult to negotiate was any possibility of concurrent adaptation to the curriculum for learners who still fall within the legislative ambit of compulsory schooling. Discussions revealed that the curriculum that the local Schools of Skills was using was not accredited as particularly the practical subjects offered did not fit in with either the General Education and Training (GET) curriculum, nor the subsequent Further Education and Training curriculum (FET). One of the Schools of Skills in the Western Cape was making use of the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) curriculum. The dilemma presented was that the eight learning areas prescribed in the senior phase of the GET were compulsory and that any adaptations at this stage would have to be effected through an evolving and contested assessment policy. Discussions as to the creation of an adapted curriculum were going to be addressed by a Task Team of representatives in the field, co-ordinated at the national level.

5.3.4 Further Planning within The First Action Learning Cycle

What emerged from the initial analysis of the collected data and personal interpretations of each member of the core collaborative group was that the 'add-on' view with which some school staff members were viewing this programme pointed to the necessity of the six schools and the learning support teachers becoming more familiar with the philosophy of inclusive education and in particular the implications of White Paper 6 for all schools (Department of Education, 2001). It was apparent that any move towards inclusive education in these secondary schools necessitated whole school responses to catering for diversity. It was felt that some progress towards these responses could be set in motion through enabling a needs analysis

and some exposure to the policy directives regarding the implications of inclusive policy through the provision of whole staff workshops at each school. In this process the staff could reflect upon the kinds of strengths and barriers which were evident and experienced in each environment. As a group we felt that we needed to listen actively to all the staff members of each school. This could be in the form of direct verbal communication, an awareness of what was not articulated in words and an opportunity to read through written feedback through the use of an open ended questionnaire given to each teacher at the end of each school workshop.

Entry into each secondary school environment for the six support teachers was also a process of delicate negotiation and of reinscription of their identities as support teachers within a secondary school environment. The two teachers who had specialised qualifications seemed to experience less initial insecurity surrounding their status as teaching professionals. The four teachers who are receiving ongoing training found the initial negotiation of their status within the secondary schools as being more problematic, a view which had been clearly transmitted to one of the principals as he stated that he was concerned that "the LSEN teacher isn't trained".

Access to space and interpersonal communication within the secondary school environment also provided some initial complex negotiations in most of the schools (refer to Appendix G). The schools varied in their ability to provide dedicated teaching space for each teacher. Placements varied from spaces in the library to whole classrooms to small rooms without any teaching aids. Again the lack of attention paid to these details seemed to suggest that most of the schools were wary about dedicating much of their time or effort to a programme which in their rather jaded view could be of a transient nature and before any commitment had been proven or evident on our part. Two of the schools made concerted attempts to make the learning support teacher feel welcome from the outset; other relationships took more time and dogged efforts to improve communication on the part of both the support teacher and members of the core group.

5.4 SECOND CYCLE

5.4.1 Action Plans

The action plans which initiated the second action learning cycle were the following:

- the provision of whole staff workshops at each of the six schools to discuss whole school responses to diversity, introduce White Paper 6 and provide a forum for a focus group session (refer to Appendix D and Appendix E)
- on site visits to schools
- further meetings with officials to discuss curriculum adaptations
- meetings with the 6 learning support teachers for feedback and further planning

Five of the six workshops were run at the secondary schools during the first term of 2003 and the sixth early in the second term of 2003. Each workshop culminated in focus group sessions where teachers were asked the question, "What support do you think is needed to include learners with mild intellectual disability in the secondary school environment?" Focus groups varied in number from 15 members to 9 members.

5.4.2 Reflections, Learning and Planning within the Second Action Learning Cycle

The workshops run at each school produced many common clusters of strengths and challenges and views on inclusive education. The staff of the school with the most prestige showed more negative attitudes towards inclusion, one written response proclaiming that it meant "...more work for teachers." However, all staff members at each school took very readily to the concept of barriers to learning. Many common barriers were evident including the inability to comprehensively assess and track learners in large classes, language problems, the lack of human and physical resources, generally low levels of literacy skills, the progression of older learners who had been unsupported in earlier phases, the difficulty of teaching Afrikaans to African language speakers, the large drop out rates in the early grades of secondary school and a lack of motivation within both learners and parents. Socio-economic barriers to learning featured prominently in five of the six schools, namely poverty, a culture of violence, pervasive drug and alcohol abuse amongst learners

and parents, teenage pregnancy and a perceived lack of parental agency and involvement. A common refrain was that the information provided by the primary schools about learners was of little use and in many cases was viewed as being misleading, as was the associated difficulty of identifying learners with barriers early enough in the year to be able to intervene timeously.

Further consultations with authorities in respect of an adapted curriculum for learners in the Senior Phase of the GET underscored the problematic situation that no alternative learning area selection was possible in any of the phases of the GET. Choices as to access to vocational, academic or technical education are only possible when a learner has passed Grade 9, a situation which was less likely to be achieved by the learners who had not gained entry into the School of Skills. The roll out of training of teachers in the Revised National Curriculum Statement was occurring with each successive year targeting a phase. The curriculum was now "cast in stone" and any adaptations hostage to lengthy negotiations on a national level.

Several meetings with the learning support teachers and site visits to each school provided ongoing opportunities for feedback and the exploration of strategies for providing learning support in different environments. The learning support teachers were finding their feet, establishing their routines and greater clarity regarding their roles within new environments. What was emerging very strongly in all the schools was that the presence of a 'support person' had had the effect of making teachers generally more aware of the challenges which learners were facing and they were looking at each learner more carefully. To many this was a daunting experience and one which raised their ire as to the perceived failings of the primary school system and the educational authorities to respond to and provide earlier intervention and assistance. To others this process merely revealed the inadequacy of the support time allotted to them and their lack of training to "deal with these kinds of learners".

The issue of a stigma associated with receiving a pull-out system of learning support became evident towards the end of the first term in many of the schools. In one school it was the learners who had come from a particular primary school who were the ones who were resistant to coming to learning support lessons. Other learners found the learning support environment to be a lifeline and only came to school on

the days on which the learning support teacher would be present and ignored any negativity directed towards them from their classmates.

Awareness of learners' vulnerabilities led to greater attention being paid to the issue of overage learners. In one Grade 9 class a learner had recently turned 20, in other Grade 8 and 9 classes there were several learners who were 16 years and older. This closer scrutiny of learner profiles prompted some investigations into the possibility of access to an ABET curriculum and career pathway for these learners.

5.5 THIRD CYCLE

5.5.1 Action Plans

The action plans which were formulated on the lessons learned during the second cycle of programme implementation were the following:

- to make contact with a day run ABET centre
- to arrange a meeting with the six principals at the EMDC to discuss the programme implementation in general, the issue of stigmatisation of learners in particular, and to explore alternative learning pathways for older learners and training opportunities for secondary school teachers
- ongoing site visits to the learning support teachers at their schools
- to gain input on alternative assessment strategies
- to strengthen contact with the EMDC psychologists so as to hasten the introduction and establishment of teacher support teams (TST's) in the six schools
- to arrange for focus group discussions with groups of learners receiving learning support at each of the six schools

5.5.2 Reflections, Learning and Planning within the Third Cycle

At the end of the first school term of 2003 contact was made with a day-run ABET centre close to one of the three geographical areas and negotiations took place as to the possibility of the transfer of older learners from two of the schools to this facility. The learning support teacher of one of the schools visited the centre and encouraged the learners to apply for places. The principal at the other school made

contact with the parents of the over-aged learners who were invited to an open day at the ABET centre.

Early in the second school term a meeting was arranged for the principals of the six schools to meet to share experience of the programme and areas of concern with the core collaborative group and two area managers. The ongoing feedback from the learning support teachers informed the preliminary agenda, particularly how to address the issue of stigma and link discussions around diversity to a movement away from special needs and towards inclusive education through the enactment of the Constitution and a progression towards attainment of the Critical Outcomes of the curriculum. The forum also gave the core collaborative group and representatives from each school an opportunity to give the principals more information as to the discussions and developments within the EMDC, the core group and other school and community environments.

Many issues were discussed and debated and in this particular forum it became more and more evident to all present that there are no pat answers but a series of ongoing dilemmas and questions. Practical issues were raised such as learners who had been deemed to need more time in Grade 7 being sent to secondary school at the beginning of the second term, means of assessment of learners with intellectual disability in the secondary school environment, the possible streaming of learners to allow teachers to cater for a less extreme range of diverse learning needs and the converse problem of then creating a possible lack of peer modelling of excellence and so on. The issue of secondary schools being judged solely on their matric results was raised, as was the lack of acknowledgement on the part of both government and the media of efforts made to retain learners in secondary schools. The development of a programme of vocational guidance was debated as well as developing the problem-solving capacity of secondary schools through the establishment of teacher support teams (TSTs). The provision of skill related workshops for Grade 8 and 9 teachers particularly in the area of the teaching of literacy skills was also debated as was the possibility of pairing learners to aid learners who "... can't read and write". Participants were interested in information regarding the day run ABET centre and asked questions as to why more of these facilities were not available in all their areas.

The issue of how to assess learners of differing abilities within the constraints of subject teaching in secondary schools continued to be raised in the core group meetings and our meetings with school management and the learning support teachers. On the advice of one of the learning support co-ordinators in the EMDC, a meeting was arranged with primary school teachers, who were considered to be developing creative ways of assessing and reporting on their learners, and members of the provincial and local education authorities involved with assessment policies. Strong input was received from Grade 6 and 7 teachers around issues of language barriers within the classroom, differentiation of work tasks and the assessment of learners. The most intractable issue was whether learners should be assessed using the assessment standards which reflect current competencies, or whether they should be judged according to assessment standards applicable to their current grade. The debate then moved to whether report cards were of any but negative value if the criterion referenced coding system only reflected the minimum codes and descriptors namely a code of 1 with the descriptor "not achieved", or a code of 2 with the descriptor "partially achieved". Some primary schools have developed alternative reports for learners with barriers to learning which indicate the current status of competencies in skill areas in order to provide more useful information for the learners and parents. One teacher reported on experiencing great difficulty with the perceptions of parents when alternative reporting indicated their children as having a special needs. Retorts such as, "Are you telling me that I have got a 'tarty' child", were then often levelled at the teachers and appeals to higher authorities were invoked.

Site visits to the schools and a meeting between the 6 learning support teachers produced varying feelings of competence and some ambivalence as to whether the programme was reaching the learners for which it was originally intended. It was becoming more apparent that relatively few of the learners who had been excluded from the School of Skills had enrolled at the six schools but that a greater scrutiny of the learners who formed part of the natural Grade 8 intake of the schools was revealing many learners who were displaying needs which necessitated even more intensive levels of support than the few excluded learners. The teachers were encouraged to strengthen their assessment information by compiling portfolios and profiles of their learners in order to reflect their strengths and challenges and areas

where further support was necessary in their contact with parents. A proposed vocational assessment intervention which was generated in the group was to approach the School of Skills to arrange for visits for a group or groups of learners to attend weekly sessions within the various practical workshops to allow some experience of the various skills to aid vocational pathway planning.

Negotiations at the day run ABET centre signalled the increasing possibility of the initiation of a class for the older learners from the Cape Town area. The principals of the two schools, members from the provincial and local educational authorities met at the centre and were very excited as to this prospect. The principals undertook to encourage their learners to investigate this avenue of furthering their education.

The introduction of teacher support teams to the secondary schools by the school psychologists was varied in its progress. Some schools had arranged for meetings and others were not able to commit time within the various demands of other workshops. Commitment to the process was also influenced by an expressed suspicion that the formation of a TST was yet another way for the education department to effect rationalisation and deny schools the services that had been available to more privileged schools in the past. This view of being denied past privileges resurfaced as a current theme throughout the programme and presented as a hindrance to the acceptance of whole school responsibility for all learners and a move towards a more inclusive mindset and practice amongst school staff members.

Focus groups were conducted with groups of 9-10 learners receiving support at each of the schools. The intention was to facilitate discussion around their experience of moving from primary to secondary school, to talk about their strengths and what they found challenging, and to gauge their perceptions as to the kind of support which would help them to achieve their goals (refer to Appendix C for interview schedule). Many of the learners found it extremely difficult to be spontaneous in a group in response to questions about their experiences and the sessions proceeded slowly with much probing and requests for further elaboration. The learners at the more prestigious school were more forthcoming and particularly vocal about the teachers who made them feel more and less affirmed. They also were very aware of a lack of personal agency and having to "do time" and often repeatedly fail within a curriculum which did not serve or recognise their strengths. The experience gained in these

forums prompted a decision to conduct individual interviews with learners at a later stage of the programme.

5.6 FOURTH CYCLE

5.6.1 Action Plans

The action plans which were generated from the action learning process during the third cycle and informed the fourth cycle were the following:

- to establish contact with the School of Skills to negotiate a programme of vocational exposure for a sample of learners from the 6 schools
- to establish a firm bond between the programme in the schools and the day run ABET centre and monitor the learners who had transferred to a new class created for them from the middle of the year
- to arrange for literacy training for the Grade 8 and Grade 9 teachers at the six schools at the beginning of the third term
- monthly meetings with the learning support teachers
- to arrange a meeting with the Provincial Directorate for Learning Support to provide feedback on the programme and discuss future directions
- to send a survey questionnaire to all primary schools in the EMDC to gain information on the teachers' perceptions of the kinds of barriers to learning which existed in their Grade 7 classes
- to gain information on the June exam results of the Grade 8 and 9 classes of the participating secondary schools

5.6.2 Reflections, Learnings and Planning within the Fourth Action Learning Cycle

Communications with the principal of the School of Skills produced a positive response to a request for a trial vocational period for a group of learners. The six schools contacted the parents to ask their permission for this intervention and a list of learners from the schools was compiled for a trial period to start in the third term of the school year.

A group of 7 learners from four of the schools arrived for the weekly vocational programme at the School of Skills on the first day. A few more joined over the ensuing weeks. The learners who had regularly attended the programme were very enthusiastic about what they had experienced in the different workshops and indicated that the exposure to these different learning environments had given them clearer ideas of where their respective interests lay. Attempts to gain some written feedback from the School of Skills about each learner were not successful.

10 learners from two of the schools close to the ABET centre had enrolled for the third term and had been assessed. The director found that their basic academic skills were "very weak" but that they were displaying "… talents beyond the classroom". A visit to a classroom during the first month saw the learners engaged in a practical mathematics class. The teacher was concerned that the financial assistance hinted at by the education department had not been forthcoming.

The need expressed by the staff and the principals at each school for some form of literacy training for secondary school teachers had prompted a search for and contact with a workshop coordinator specialising in this area. Invitations to all the Grade 8 and Grade 9 teachers and the learning support teachers in the six schools were sent out to attend a workshop on the last day of the midyear break and the first two afternoons of the third term. There was a response of over 50 prospective participants.

The secondary school literacy workshop yielded less participants than indicated on the reply forms. Two schools did not have any teacher representatives and, rather disappointingly, two of the learning support teachers were not present on the first day. The participants found the practical sessions of the workshops to be the most beneficial but were less enthusiastic about the theoretical aspects of the course on the first day. The three days provided opportunities for the teachers of the four represented schools to network and share their ideas, common frustrations about poor literacy levels amongst their learners, and examples of their teaching practice.

The two learning support teachers who had full time positions at the secondary schools indicated the pressing need to provide emotional counselling to learners in their teaching environments. At her request, one of the teachers was sponsored to join a counselling course at the nearby school clinic. The other teacher was running

several life-skill related programmes for learners as well as providing individual and group counselling and learning support. Her commitment to the welfare of the learners was evident in her willingness to conduct home visits in areas which were commonly viewed as being unsafe (refer to Appendix I). The lack of appropriate and sufficient resources to interest and stimulate the engagement of emergent adolescent readers was evident in all of the six schools. The teachers were encouraged to use the newspapers which are delivered to some of the schools and share ideas about what had and had not worked in each teacher's learning environment.

The core collaborative group met with provincial educational authorities to share with the Learning Support Directorate many of the dilemmas and challenges which the programme was revealing. Enquiries as to the status of discussions around adapted curriculum proposals revealed that there were many disagreements as there was a resistance to an adapted curriculum from an ideological perspective. The opinion was expressed that an adapted curriculum was viewed as a threat as the fear was that many learners would rather opt for a pathway which to the curriculum advisors was reminiscent of a past where vocationally related education was an assigned status rather than a choice. A pilot project in all special schools would be implemented in order to attempt to align their curriculum with national requirements and build the capacity to introduce these changes.

The need for additional contextual information concerning the numbers of learners considered to be experiencing barriers to learning prompted the core group to request some quantitative as well as additional qualitative sources of data. A questionnaire was sent to every primary school served by the EMDC to source information on the total number of learners in their Grade 7 classes, the number of learners experiencing barriers to learning and a list of the most common barriers experienced by these learners. A request was sent to each of the six programme secondary schools for their Grade 8 June exam results.

Of the 109 primary schools contacted, 60 responded to the questionnaire. The average percentage of learners in Grade 7 considered to have barriers to learning was 21%. Language and literacy related barriers were the impediments to learning most cited, closely followed by problems with basic mathematic concepts.

5 of the 6 secondary schools sent their June results. The percentage of learners who received a Code of 1 (not yet achieved) in all eight learning areas ranged as follows 21%,15%,11% 7%,1,5%. Learners who received a code of 1 for their primary language displayed the following sequence 42%, 42%, 36%, 35%, 22%.

5.7 FIFTH CYCLE

5.7.1 Action Plans

This action learning cycle of the programme implementation took place towards the end of the school year and was characterised by group reflections of the programme thus far and strategising for the following year. Much time was spent on preparation of a presentation of the programme to the broad management of the EMDC and this process allowed the core group to distil our experiences and knowledge gained. The purpose of this presentation was to persuade the management to adopt the programme as a whole EMDC project rather than being a programme within the EMDC.

The actions plans for this cycle were:

- to continue to monitor the ABET class at the day run centre
- to present an overview of the programme of support to the broad management of the EMDC (refer Appendix F)
- to organise for year review focus group sessions with the school management teams and Grade 8 and Grade 9 teachers at each of the six schools
- to provide a forum for year end feedback and planning for the next year for the 6 learning support teachers
- to discuss with the school the possible use of a baseline assessment to aid them in assessment of Grade 8 learners in general and intervention plans in particular.

5.7.2 Reflections, Learning and Planning in the Fifth Cycle

There was positive feedback from one of the principals whose overage learners had joined the class at the ABET centre. His visit there early one morning had revealed that one of his learners who used to "stroll" into his school at 9.00 am was present at the ABET centre at 7.40am. Other learners from the centre were visiting their previous school and reporting proudly on their progress.

Review focus group sessions with school management and Grade 8 and 9 teachers at each school conducted in the more relaxed period of post teaching and marking administration time, yielded rich data about general contextual issues and the impact of the programme. In the schools which catered more for the neighbouring population issues of class and switching from speaking Afrikaans to speaking English provided interesting insights into local social dynamics. Teachers had more time to recall specific incidents and enjoy telling the stories of their schools and their learners. The feeling which was evident was that we had walked a journey together and that we were not complete outsiders. All the schools were keen to use the information generated by a baseline assessment to get more and early information about each learner. Different methods of learning support interventions were discussed with the Grade 8 teachers which involved team teaching and other within class interventions.

At an end of year get together the learning support teachers shared their experiences, successes and frustrations. Despite being reminded and encouraged to do so, the teachers found it difficult to celebrate their successes, and tended to dwell upon issues which they felt still needed to be resolved. One of the teachers was leaving the programme. The core group however decided to continue to have contact with and support the school to which she had been assigned wherever possible in the following year.

Strategies for the next year were focused around the evaluation of evidence of increased problem solving capacities within the schools and the administration of a baseline literacy assessment to the new Grade 8 learners. Experience of the programme thus far had indicated that collaborative workshopping of a 'tool' such as an assessment strategy or the development of a lesson plan within individual school environments yielded positive engagement and a greater feeling of trust from the staff as well as a shared sense of purpose. Our intention was to use individual school's request for assistance in the administration of the baseline assessment to further each school's ability to gauge and plan for the diversity within their Grade 8 learning population and to use the time of the learning support teacher in a more didactically inclusive manner.

5.8 SIXTH AND FINAL CYCLE

5.8.1 Action Plans

The action plans of this final action learning cycle reflect the sense of moving forward to expand the reach of the lessons learned during the earlier phases of programme implementation to benefit the broader district educational community. They also reflect the concern of the core collaborative group that support be conceived not as individual support for learners with deficits but support which would allow the educational system to respond more comprehensively to the diversity within its learning population.

Actions plans for this cycle were:

- to include more stakeholders from the EMDC in the core collaborative group
- to assist schools with the administration and marking of baseline assessments for their Grade 8 learners
- the compilation of a comprehensive support programme for all secondary schools in the EMDC
- ongoing contact with the ABET centre
- to engage in individual interviews with two learners from each of the three school areas
- review meetings with the learning support teachers

5.8.2 Reflections, Learnings and Planning in the Final Cycle

The new year started with requests for assistance with baseline assessments of the new Grade 8 learners and a three day literacy workshop for all of the EMDC learning support teachers. Two members of the core collaborative group 'marked' the scripts from the two of the schools. This was in order to gain information about the general literacy levels of the learners and contextual information about the population of the learners at each school. Each Grade 8 learner was asked to provide their name, date of birth, primary school and the language they spoke at home. At the first school over 90% of the learners spoke the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) at home and at the second school over 90% of the learners spoke a home language other than the LOLT of the school. Other members of the core group discussed the

marking, took samples of the work and discussed the results with staff at each respective school.

Within the EMDC the literacy assessment co-ordinator and the assessment co-ordinator joined the core group in order to broaden the scope of the programme and provide a platform for the transfer of the programme to the broad management of the EMDC.

These deliberations which took place over a series of meetings resulted in the compilation of a comprehensive support programme to address many of the concerns which the programme at the schools had made manifest. These included the general lack of literacy skills in Grade 8 in the secondary schools, language issues, social economic barriers and the need to link up with provincial initiatives in vocational guidance (the PACE programme). Issues around an adapted curriculum for Grade 8 and 9 and the difficulties experienced regarding assessment of these learners were deferred until the findings of the two national task teams dealing with these areas had been made known.

The group drew up a proposal to present to the management of the EMDC which highlighted the following general problems which the programme had revealed; generally very low literacy levels amongst Grade 8 learners, a low level of knowledge of basic maths concepts, many learners learning through their second or third language, little support from home environments, substantial socio-economic barriers, lack of career guidance for learners in Grade 8, lack of capacity amongst Grade 8 and 9 teachers to support their learners in basic literacy and numeracy skills and to understand the nature of their learners' challenges, a heavy academic slant to the curriculum in the senior phase of the GET and a lack of formal channels for communication between teachers and EMDC management. Further areas of concern were insufficient numbers of Xhosa speaking teachers in this phase, a lack of counselling and learning support facilities at these and other secondary schools, large class sizes and learners being promoted through the primary school and into secondary school "with support" which was not, in effect, provided.

Suggested interventions included the following; a focus on literacy in all secondary schools in the emphasis of language across the curriculum in Grade 8 and 9 and a particular focus for at least the first three months of Grade 8. This would be aided by

the use of a baseline literacy assessment within the first few days of the new school year in order to differentiate the different competencies and needs within the group of Grade 8 learners. Ongoing training for Grade 8 and 9 teachers in methods of teaching literacy to older learners through content and language learning areas and regular reporting back to the EMDC on the learners who are struggling to learn to read. Evidence of these learners would suggest the possibility of using a structured computer literacy programme. The literacy training for teachers could be complemented by encouraging teachers to share strategies that are achieving success in their circuit or cluster school meetings so that models of best practice could be shared. These meetings could be encouraged by a focused involvement, commitment and support from the Curriculum Advisors and collaborative planning between the SLES and curriculum development and support departments of the EMDC. Instruction in basic Xhosa could be offered to teachers along with a glossary of English/Xhosa terms.

Furthermore it was suggested that the Western Cape Education Department should embark on a series of meetings for parents of children entering or within the first years of secondary school and the involvement of the department would encourage the correct perception of the importance of these meetings. The meetings could address how parents could still play a vital role in partnering their children's education in the secondary school years and suggest strategies which could be used at home to help learners feel more confident in their language use. It was felt that the socio-economic barriers should be addressed by a strategy compiled by each school through the teacher support team and that plans should be submitted to the institutional management and governance division of the EMDC so that firm links with welfare agencies could be explored and established. Career guidance could be explored in more depth in the Life Skill Learning Area and firmer links with the Provincial Pace strategy encouraged.

Reports from the ABET centre were that the learners had achieved well and had clearly benefited in both skill and greater self-esteem from the practical coursework. 2 of the 11 learners had not returned in the new year and 15 new learners had joined the course. Parents of the learners were reported to be very happy with their children's education and had agreed to pay a monthly sum to cover costs. The ABET

centre however was extremely disappointed that no funding had been forthcoming from the Western Cape Education Department.

Individual interviews with learners yielded some more information as to what kind of support they considered helpful in the secondary school environment. The general feeling about most secondary school teachers was that they did not care about learners who found it difficult to keep up with their work. The learners wanted to be given more time and clearer instructions about work tasks. Many of the learners complained about the general noise levels in the class and consequent problems with concentration. The general feeling was that teachers did not listen or respond to them when they asked for assistance.

Towards the end of the second year it was evident that working in the programme had been particularly difficult for the learning support teachers who were at both primary and secondary schools. One of the teachers had been given extended leave for stress related reasons and another was requesting to leave the programme at the end of the year. The remaining support teacher was content to continue with her work load but have more of an advisory than an active teaching role in the secondary school. The teachers who were full time at secondary schools were finding it easier to manage their considerable workloads. They had found that the groups of learners which came into the programme in the second year had been much younger in age than the first year group and this had made it easier as they had found it more possible to have contact and work with the parents. The stigmatising of learners involved in the programme was lessening as the general learner population and the teachers were becoming more acquainted with the learning support programme and greater collaboration between teachers was increasingly evident. The teachers felt that their workload would be lessened and their learners would be better catered for through a curriculum that offered vocational pathways in the senior phase of the GET.

Teaching strategies which had been most useful had been those which made extensive use of visual material such as diagrams, pictures and charts. The teachers were finding out from the class teachers about the work to be covered in the eight learning areas and helping their learners to plan their work and project assignments at a pace at which they could more easily experience success. At two of the schools

a Grade 8 reading programme was working well. The teachers felt that counselling skills were vital for teachers working in secondary school learning environments.

5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Data transformation in a personally experienced, chronological, descriptive narrative of the whole programme implementation process has attempted to do justice to the transformative theoretical framework's view of objectivity. This is that an evaluator's significant involvement in the communities affected by a programme can provide a more complete and balanced view of programme processes and actions thereby limiting bias due to a lack of understanding of key viewpoints (Mertens, 1999:5). This form of data transformation has also made evident the usefulness of having an evolving research design which has allowed the unfolding events and views and experiences of stakeholders to enable ongoing data collection and analysis which has guided future action in the programme's implementation. Additionally the overview of the process of programme implementation has made manifest the powerful influence of contextual factors in attempts to effect change.

The introduction of a programme in secondary schools to support learners described as having mild intellectual disabilities has indeed illuminated many areas in which changes need to be made and improvements effected within the education system in general and secondary school learning environments in particular. The implementation of the programme has confirmed the views of Shapon-Shevin (1996:35-36) that these changes involve curriculum, pedagogy, staff development, school climate and structures; factors operating within the school environment which are independent of the perceived deficits in a defined sub-group of learners.

The implementation of the programme has allowed the core collaborative group to monitor the retention and academic and social progress of identified learners, discuss and refine assessment and teaching methods with the learning support teachers, and engage with school staff members in the participating secondary schools and members of the district and provincial education departments schools in problem solving exercises. The suggested intervention of the core group to the management of the EMDC has also presented an opportunity for a comprehensive and integrated response to challenges evident in secondary school learning environments.

TABLE 3: PROCESS OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

CYCLE 1 DATE	ACTION	REFLECTION	PLANNING	DATA GATHERING & ANALYSIS	EMERGING THEMES
C	**Y**	**C**	**L**	**E**	**1**
29/10/02	Formation of core collaborative group			Journal and Observational notes	Collaboration
14/11/02	Meeting with Provincial head office staff			Journal and Observational notes	Curriculum inflexibility - learners have to do all 8 learning areas
November 02	Meetings with principals of 6 identified secondary schools			Observational notes	Initial wariness
November 02	Discussions with 6 identified learning support teachers			Participant Observation - notes - Journal	
05/12/02	Meeting of collaborative group and Learning support teachers			Observational Notes	
10/12/02	Meetings with parents from two schools in one area to discuss transfers to participating secondary schools			Observational Notes	
Dec 02 - Jan 03	Meeting with School Management teams at each school			Observational notes and journal	Support is an add- on
27/01/03		Core collaborative group meeting with Learning support teachers		Participant Observation - notes and journal	• Difficulty in reinscribing identity as a secondary school learning support teacher • access to physical and interpersonal space

CYCLE 2 DATE	ACTION	REFLECTION	PLANNING	DATA GATHERING & ANALYSIS	EMERGING THEMES
C	**Y**	**C**	**L**	**E**	**2**
21/01/03 - 10-4-03	Whole staff workshops at each school			Observational notes Audio tape recordings of focus group interviews	• language barriers • large class sizes in Gr 8 + 9 • socio-economic barriers • generally low literacy and numeracy skills • inaccurate information from primary schools • inflexible curriculum • overage learners • lack of motivation • high drop out rates
31/01/03 05/02/02	Orientation sessions with 8 Grade 8 classes at School B			Observational notes	
31/01/05 - 25/02/02	Site visits to schools			Observational notes	• teachers more aware of barriers to learning in secondary school • anger at lack of earlier interventions • stigma associated with attending learning support • overage learners ABET
17/02/03	Meeting with prov staff member re curriculum adaptations			Observational notes Document analysis	• non-negotiables of the curriculum
11/02/03 24/02/03 25/02/03 11/03/03 28/03/03		Core collaborative group meetings to reflect on actions taken and plan further		Journal Observational notes	
24/02/03 24/03/03		Meetings with learning support teachers to discuss action and to plan further		Observational notes and journal	

CYCLE 3 DATE	ACTION	REFLECTION	PLANNING	DATA GATHERING & ANALYSIS	EMERGING THEMES
C	**Y**	**C**	**L**	**E**	**3**
March 03	Make contact with day run ABET centre			notes on telephone conversation	• collaboration
09/04/03	Meeting with 6 principals and members of EMDC			Audiotaping and transcription - journal	• matric as push factor • importance of ABET provision • vocational guidance • teacher support teams • teacher training in literacy
22/04/03 20/05/03 27/05/03	Site visit to schools			Observational notes	• few identified learners • greater scrutiny of all learners • stigma still a problem
30/04/03	Meeting with assessment co-ordinator of EMDC and Grade 6 + 7 teachers			Observational notes Document analysis	• assessment of learners with barriers to learning
05/05/03 02/06/03		Meeting with learning support teachers		Audiotaping and transcription and notes	• need for vocational assessment
07/05/05	Visit to ABET centre with members of provincial education department			Observational notes	• need for day run ABET classes for overage learners
27/05/03 03/06/03 10/06/03	2 x school focus group with learners			Audiotaping and transcription	• group dynamics hinder spontaneity • lack of personal agency • victims of the curriculum
15/04/03 22/04/03 13/05/03 16/05/03 29/05/03 13/06/03 20/06/03		Meetings of core collaborative group to reflect and plan further		Observational notes Document analysis	• slow progress with introduction of TST's into secondary schools. One functional

CYCLE 4 DATE	ACTION	REFLECTION	PLANNING	DATA GATHERING & ANALYSIS	EMERGING THEMES
C	**Y**	**C**	**L**	**E**	**4**
03/06/03	Visit to special school to discuss possible job sampling placement			Observational notes	• collaboration
21/07/03 - 23/07/03	Literacy training workshop for Grade 8 + 9 teachers from the 6 schools			Observational notes	• need for ongoing literacy training for secondary school teachers
29/07/03 12/08/03	Visit to staff and learners at ABET centre Telephonic follow up			Observational notes Document analysis	• need for literacy, numeracy and vocational skills training
14/08/03 23/09/03	Meet learners sent from the 6 schools at School of Skills			Observational notes	• uncertainty on how to be a resource to mainstream schools
09/07/03 18/08/03 02/09/03 10/09/03 26/09/03 06/10/03 14/10/03 14/11/03		Core collaborative group meetings to prepare presentation to broad management		Presentation notes	
26/08/03 14/10/03 28/10/03	Site visits to schools			Observational Notes	
12/09/03	Meeting with Provincial Directorate			Observational notes	
18/08/03 15/09/03		Meetings with learning support teachers		Audio-tape recording and observational notes	• need for emotional counselling • lack of age appropriate material
22/09/03 14/10/03	Questionnaire sent and most returned by primary schools			Analysis of responses	
15/10/03	Review of June examination results			Analysis of results	

CYCLE 5 DATE	ACTION	REFLECTION	PLANNING	DATA GATHERING & ANALYSIS	EMERGING THEMES
C	**Y**	**C**	**L**	**E**	**5**
Oct 2003-Dec 2003	Monitor progress of learners at ABET centre			Observational notes	
22/10/03	Run through of presentation to broad management of EMDC				
04/11/03	Presentation of support programme details to broad management of EMDC				
14/11/03		Core collaborative group meetings		Observational notes	
17/11/03		Year end meeting with learning support teachers		Audio-tape recording and transcriptions	• difficulty in celebrating success
19/11/03 27/11/03 01/12/03 03/12/03 08/12/03 (2 schools)		Reflection and planning with school management teams and Gr 8 + 9 teachers		Audio-tape recording and transcription Observational notes Journal	• positive feedback re ABET centre • class and language dynamics • core collaborative group not seen as outsiders • interest in conducting baseline assessments of all Grade 8 learners • evidence of increasing problem solving capacity

CYCLE 6 DATE	ACTION	REFLECTION	PLANNING	DATA GATHERING & ANALYSIS	EMERGING THEMES
C	**Y**	**C**	**L**	**E**	**6**
21/01/04 02/02/04 11/02/04 19/02/04	baseline assessments in schools			Observational notes and journal	commitment
03/03/04 08/03/03 15/03/04 05/04/04	involvement of further EMDC stakeholders in the compilation of a comprehensive support programme for all secondary schools in the EMDC			Observational notes and journal Document analysis	collaboration
	ongoing contact with ABET centre			Notes of telephone conversation	collaboration
	individual interviews with two learners from each of the three geographical districts			Audio tape recording and transcription Journal	personal agency inaccessible curriculum
20/01/04 28/01/04 18/02/04 29/04/04 20/05/04 12/08/04 17/09/04 11/10/04		Meetings of core collaborative group		Observational notes and journal	
01/03/04 21/06/04 31/08/04		Meetings with learning support teachers		Audio tape recording and transcription	
30/03/04 06/05/04 08/06/04	Site visits to schools Individual learner interviews			Observational notes. Audio-tape recordings and transcriptions	

CHAPTER 6

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DATA

6.1 INTRODUCTION

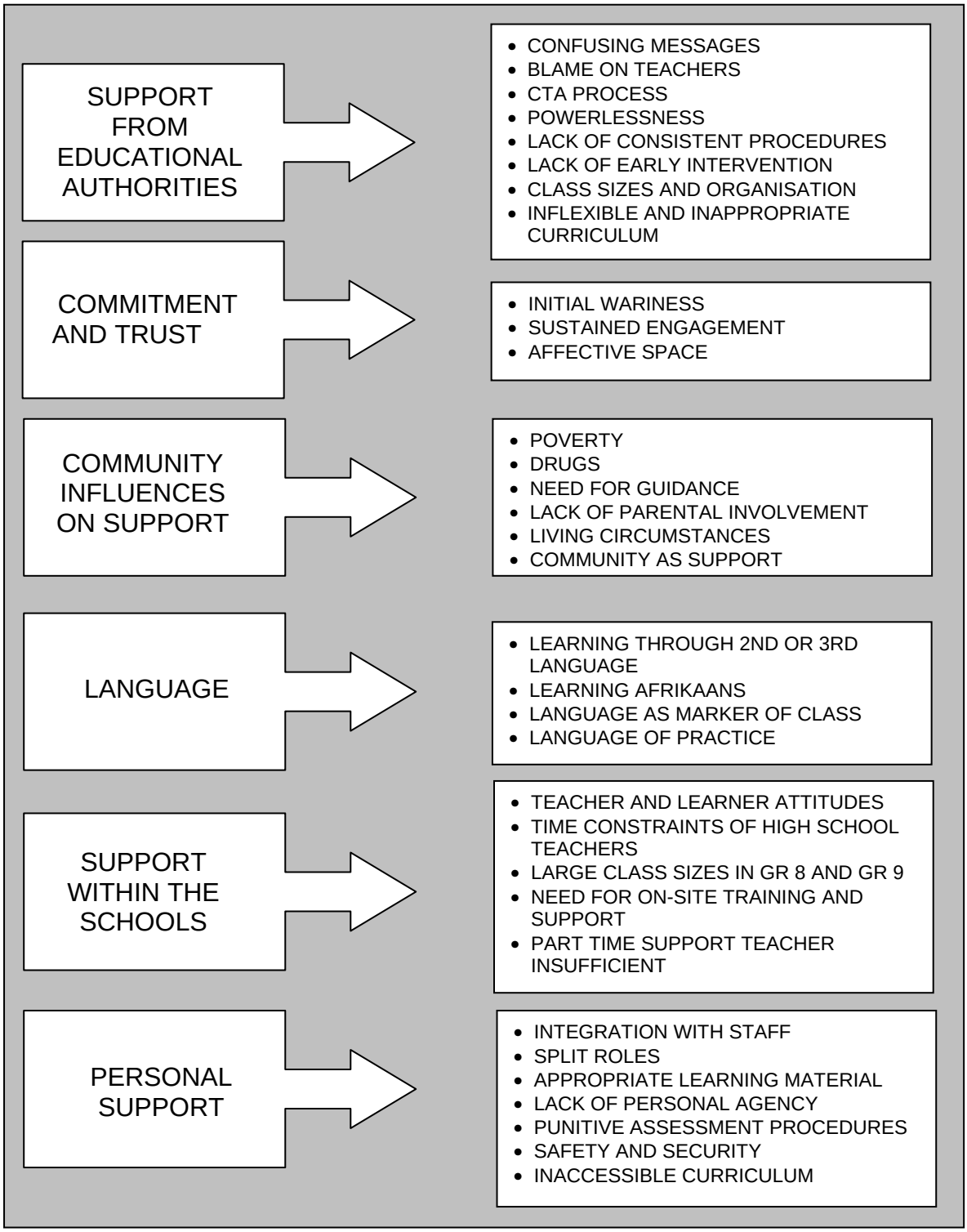
In this chapter data transformation will focus upon the identification of the essential themes which emerged from the data across time and across and within stakeholder groups in response to the central research question. The themes have been grouped into categories which represent broad areas of arrangement. This has been done in an attempt to create spaces for interpretations, to suggest that there is a fluidity of boundaries and a need to keep knowledge production continually in process (Lather, 1991:13).

Responses to the research question ranged from macro related issues concerning the formulations, communication and enactment of educational policies from various government agencies, through community and school influences on support, to micro issues of personal recognition, development and agency. The final categories and themes are illustrated in Figure 13.

6.2 SUPPORT FROM EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Generally the schools felt that they received little or no support from the national and provincial educational departments and rather were on the receiving end of many demands and a lack of cohesion between levels of administration and within the local Education Management and Development Centre (EMDC). This made inclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities to be a particularly daunting and often treacherous enterprise.

FIGURE 13: FINAL CATEGORIES AND THEMES



Teachers and principals in the secondary schools were very vociferous regarding the confusing messages they felt they receive from National and Provincial educational departments and a lack of consistency between the different sections of the EMDC. One principal was particularly trenchant in his views saying:

> You come here representing one leg of the EMDC and you say this, and a different person will come from the same EMDC but representing another leg of the EMDC and say something totally different. You know, you might say "Don't judge your teaching on the matric results", and another person from the EMDC will harp upon those matric results. Someone else from the EMDC will say that the child must be able to read. So we sit here at school and at some stage we just get fed up because we don't know what to do….you don't know what people expect from you and no one from Head Office will take the time to come to us and say you know this is what we expect from you. That is the big problem I have ... no one knows exactly what is expected from you from one day to the next. Because depending on who communicates with you … the goal posts shift."

Another principal felt similarly that confusing messages and little or no support was evident from the education authorities:

> What is happening at Head Office? One of the short term objectives of our EMDC is to place learners within the age band where they are supposed to be. Now we have an 18 year old applying for the first time in Grade 8. And they tell you if you have space, you have to make provision for that learner. There is no correlation between what they preach on the one side and what they almost coerce us to do on the other side.

There was also great negativity expressed towards how teachers were routinely blamed for problems in the educational system and that the image created about teachers had the effect they "... are not anybody that I want to learn anything from. Children don't see us as people that you would want to follow".

At the end of the first year of the programme frustration towards the authorities was evident in difficulties which the teachers experienced in the administration of the new Common Task of Assessment (CTA) for the Grade 9 learners. In one school that had piloted an experimental phase of the CTA in Grade 8 of the previous year and had given much feedback about the problems they experienced, there was the added perception that none of their recommendations had been taken seriously. Strong opinions centred on a general lack of support and understanding from the local authorities about how the project work favoured learners who had parents "waiting

for them at home" and disadvantaged the majority of their learners who seldom had any support from home. One of the teachers said, "We can write a chapter or a dissertation on just the CTA. You know if you compare our kids with their socio-economic background … where they come from … with the other children – that didn't work for us you know". The teachers also found that the whole process exhausted the children and that many of them did not come to school "… because 4 hours changed into 8 or 9 hours because of the explaining we had to do ...", "… it was matric English that they used in the questions. Not at the level of Grade 9". Many teachers and principals felt that the CTA was merely a method of formalising drop out from school.

There was also expressed dissatisfaction and a sense of powerlessness to deny educational managers when they forced schools to accept "problem children" who had been expelled from other schools and that certain schools were then seen to be accommodating of children which other schools rejected and that this situation was then exploited.

It was the feeling that many of the schools had agreed to become part of this programme because they were so desperate for any form of support and that they were accommodating learners with extensive barriers to learning both as part of their natural intake and as a function of their perceived lower status and relative lack of choice in the matter.

After the first year of the programme it was the perception of at least one of the schools that schools in the area were regarding them as an "LSEN secondary school" and were referring their difficult learners to them without following the procedures of clinic referral which learners applying to School of Skills had to follow. This resulted in the situation where learners who were in Grade 6 and even Grade 5 were being referred to their secondary school. This school also received learners from Grade 7 in the second term of Grade 8 as these learners had been deemed to need more time in Grade 7. The principal felt that there was a severe lack of understanding as to the rationale for sanctioning this move as "… they were already behind at their primary school and then they are already three months behind when they arrive here ...". He also felt that no effort had been made in the primary school for these 'struggling' learners and that they were basically just sent over to secondary school after a period of time had lapsed. The consequence of this

procedure was that four of the seven learners sent to the secondary school in April, dropped out of school before the end of their Grade 8 year.

Another procedural matter which was seen to be confusing, often misleading and illustrative of lack of administrative support was the nature and quality of reports which accompanied applications to secondary school. One of the schools which draws most of its learners from outside the area found it impossible to make any judgments on the basis of primary school reports and often found that learners who had received 80% and 70% on their school reports for English and Afrikaans received 20% and 30% when assessed at secondary school. It was felt that this was the case particularly for learners who came to the Western Cape from schools in the Eastern Cape.

Allied to the frustration of lack of consistent reporting procedures was an undercurrent of anger towards primary schools. The following quote typifies the general attitude of the secondary school teachers:

> I also have the feeling that people are promoted – they get to Grade 8 and they don't understand a single thing – I am talking about children in our communities that came through primary school but they can't read or they can't even give you 5 words in their mother tongue – so what happened there in the primary school – do they just push them through?

Another teacher was angry that no safety net was in place earlier in the system as he felt that by the time problems were evident in the secondary school it was often too late to intervene effectively and than a firmer foundation should have been laid in the primary school. "So I want to see how this support system is going to work and could not something be done in the lower grades so that we can get more children through the system so that less support is needed in the higher grades". Another teacher wanted to know about promotion at the end of the year for children with intellectual difficulties "Will your child with a disability have different criteria for assessment and promotion?" There was also a concern as to where the children with intellectual difficulties "would end up at the end of the day when they are finished with their schooling?"

In all of the schools the staff was aware that the school organisation actually encouraged the drop out of learners before matric and that this was factored into the acceptance of learners and the employment of staff. It was the opinion of one

teacher that "… schools are supposed to open classes in every Grade 8, 9 and 10 to keep the teachers' posts who feed the whole school." One of the smaller schools takes between 90 – 100 Grade 8 learners and has a matric class of 30 to 35 learners. Another school has a Grade 8 intake of 130 learners and a matric complement of 45 learners. Teachers also felt that the organisation of a secondary school's curriculum was very difficult "… because all the EMDC does and all the National Department of Education does – is give a formula to use to determine how many educators you will get on the different post levels and you just have to make it work. But that comes at a very high cost to the learner in particular …" The high cost was particularly evident in the large class sizes in the 8 and 9 Grades in the schools. All of the schools had class sizes which varied from 48 to 60 learners in a class. One teacher said "Well, if I sit with a class of 50 and there are 20 learners who are having difficulties, I would have a big problem … I would not even be able to include those learners. Whereas if you have a more privileged school and I have 30 learners in a class and 2 of them are experiencing problems, you are not actually going to have a problem".

Another teacher was more vociferous: "How does the department expect that we have inclusive education when we have such large class sizes? Now overseas they have inclusive education but they have support structures in your teacher aides. How can we expect teacher aides in our situations when we can't even give the attention to the students who need a little extra attention?"

Another failing levelled at education authorities and one which was seen to be at the cost of many learners was that subjects such as woodwork and home economics, subjects which had great potential to engage learners with academic barriers to learning in Grade 8 and Grade 9, were only offered after Grade 9. Teachers felt that at this stage most learners who have survived the secondary school system would rather opt for more academic than practical subjects and that these specialist teachers and facilities were thus being progressively abandoned in many secondary schools. The schools felt that the introduction of Curriculum 2005 had in effect disqualified many of the teachers who could be of great benefit to learners who wanted to follow a more practical curriculum. Experienced woodwork teachers now had to teach technology as a subject which it was felt was far too theoretical to benefit learners who needed a more practical learning route.

The teachers were acutely aware that many children were leaving school with very little in the way of skills. The following quotes represent a repeated refrain from mainstream secondary school teachers.

> On the one side we know when a child must repeat a grade but the system says a learner can only repeat once in a phase. I believe that eventually that negatively affects that learner and then we land up with an adult on the outside who cannot offer anything to the community. And that is not necessarily the school's problem, it is the system that is failing that child. And I think that that is really where we must perform and say what kind of certificate or report are we going to give these children.

> Another issue that needs to be highlighted is that the department has to realise their moral obligation to learners who are not academically successful in Grade 9. They should put structures in place for these learners, a School of Skills or some training facility so that they can be productive in the world.

Educational authorities felt hamstrung by the non-negotiable aspects of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, such as the Learning Areas and Outcomes and Assessment Standards. The feeling was that the new curriculum was not open to further refinements but was now "cast in stone". As one official said, "The crux of the problem is that a learner has to pass Grade 9 in order to access Further Education and Training (FET)".

It was generally felt that there should be more day-run ABET centres that the older learners could attend and that some of these could be run at schools both during the day and in the evenings.

The issue of receiving consistent messages, clear guidelines and support from the education department on the matter of alternative assessment surfaced routinely during meetings. Again the additional burden placed on the class teacher was mentioned in effecting any form of differentiated assessment and reporting system.

6.3 COMMITMENT AND TRUST

Issues regarding commitment and trust featured prominently within all stakeholder groups and had an effect on the entire programme implementation process and particularly its initiation. Teachers were extremely wary of yet another group of people coming to their schools to make what were perceived as further demands upon them by people who were not experiencing on a continuous basis, the contextual realities of their classrooms and schools. It took some time before teachers began to trust that the members of the core collaborative group would be available to spend time in their schools and stay the distance of the programme with them.

Sustained engagement in the implementation of a programme gradually allowed for trust to develop between different stakeholders as a shared commitment to the goals of the programme was evidenced over time. The emergence of trust was reflected in the more positive attitudes of the school teachers after the first year of implementation, the acknowledgement of the core group members by learners at each of the schools on site visits (an often rare privilege from adolescents), and the recognition that no definitive answers were going to be forthcoming from 'experts' but that problems could be dealt with in a collaborative and collegial manner. This allowed a space for all stakeholders to feel comfortable in expressing their frustrations and disappointment with an education system which is not seen to be serving the needs of all its children. It allowed for anger to be expressed at the many directives from the educational authorities which were seen to be at variance with contextual possibilities, such as reducing the number of overage learners with no possible alternative learning pathway available within the communities surrounding the schools, the inclusion and retention of learners with mild intellectual disability and the emphasis on improved matric results, the completion of the common task for assessment (CTA) in schools where learners routinely arrive late and unprepared for work tasks.

6.4 COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON SUPPORT

Without exception the teachers and learners referred continuously to the impact of poor socio-economic conditions on their ability to receive and maintain support in school learning.

Many of the teachers felt that the working class or "sub economic" environment from which most the learners came engendered "a sense of hopelessness" and apathy from both parents and the teachers. "The problem is that this notion of empowerment … many of these things cannot be changed by us. … we are sitting with a multitude of problems". In terms of parents becoming involved in the school, the feeling was "that is the unfortunate part of the communities that we serve struggle to find solidarity in coming forth and offering their services". Financial constraints led to absenteeism because of transport costs, hunger in learners and the risk of arrest because the learners often had to "steal train" to come to school. In the one area most of the parents were unemployed and the few people in the community who are earning money are doing so through gang related activities. This had an impact on the perception of learners of their life chances as one teacher explained "You know every second learner tells me when I ask them what they are going to do 'Ag, don't worry about me, I'm going to be a merchant, that smuggles drugs and that' … every second learner. Or they will even tell you 'I am going to go to jail … there is a better life inside for me' ". It also concerned the teachers as they felt that they had no impact as role models and that their learners were too influenced by the lure of materialism. "I think that our competition is very tough because they have other role models in the community and I think that those role models do NOT have principles … so we struggle here …"

Drug taking was also linked to the poor socio-economic conditions in that it was viewed as a means of escape. In one school in particular drug taking was viewed as the norm by the learners with the use of dagga being commonplace amongst the younger learners and "Tik" amongst the older learners. Interventions such as having SANCA to talk to all the Grade 8 learners and the offer of individual counselling from trained teachers had had limited impact because "… it has become a norm learners think 'Why should I' because it is okay … everybody does it you know. It is like the one chap smokes, the other one does something else and both feel okay because everyone is doing it and nobody is criticising it so we are such a bunch of wet blankets when we say something about it you know '... where do these teachers come from, who are they ...?' "

Allied to the experience of the impact of poor socio-economic conditions was the need for guidance. The TST which was operational in one of the schools had

compiled a list of at least 50 learners deemed in urgent need of counselling. Many of the staff felt that this kind of support would benefit their learners as much if not more than learning support. Two of the learning support teachers were also providing counselling and found that this area of their interventions provided many more positive gains than did their learning support. "It's been progressing – there have been interventions – I am doing home visits as well – there is progress. The learners that are coming for counselling - when you go to their homes you discover that it is not just the learner it is the whole family and you just have to be there as a support and they know that there is somebody there for them".

The perceived general lack of parental involvement was seen to hamper the ability to support learners in general but particularly those with learning challenges. Teachers felt that most of their parents were generally ignorant, were often themselves poor role models to their children and considered that education was the school's sole responsibility. Some more sympathetic attitudes towards parents displayed the realisation that many parents worked difficult hours in shift work or "were in service" and therefore could not attend school meetings. "The parents are mostly working class individuals with working class barriers. If they find that their child doesn't do well at school, then they just sort of resign themselves to it". In one school the teachers felt that many of the parents viewed themselves as being of a lower class than the teachers and that the parents also looked to the teachers for support and assistance "They have the perception that you can fix things". Parents were viewed as being disempowered and not able to help their children with their school work. "So sometimes they reject helping the child not because they don't want to help the child but they don't want the child to see that they don't know much".

Many learners who attended the schools in the town area are not living with their parents and are living with other family members, or with 'boyfriends' or with other teenage siblings. The majority of girl learners have to work in the homes when they get home. A substantial number of learners were in fact living like adults and therefore expected to be treated like adults at school. "Yes they are grown ups – when they are young they are grown ups …"

Support from the community for learners was evident however in the newspapers which were delivered to many of the schools along with magazines which encouraged learners to enter drawing and other competitions. School principals were

encouraged to use the businesses in their school areas for support and one of the schools encouraged people living in the close vicinity of the school to take learners in the afternoons to give support by helping with homework and feeding. Teachers were generally aware of the support available in their communities and one of the schools from the most impoverished areas used the immediate area for an environmental programme. "It was about safety and security, health and education and it was interesting for the learners to find out about our area, the teenage pregnancies, the murders and all that and they achieved second place in a competition".

6.5 LANGUAGE

Many of the learners at the six schools were not learning in their home language, a situation which is commonplace in South Africa but one which continues to frustrate both learners and teachers and complicate the delivery of learning support and identification of learners who are considered to have an intellectual disability.

In one school in particular 95% of the learners were Xhosa speakers and most of the staff were English or Afrikaans speakers. The teaching of Afrikaans at this school was problematic as the teacher felt that "... the majority of the learners do have a problem with English and teaching them English and at the same time a totally different language, Afrikaans, they can't cope".

At other schools there was a gradual shift from providing education through the dual mediums of English and Afrikaans to English as the sole language of instruction. The teachers felt that in the areas in which this shift was happening that it was a reflection of a concerted attempt on the part of certain members of the community to be seen to be moving away from the working class to the middle class. What seemed to substantiate the claim of language being a marker of class was that the Afrikaans classes in the schools were considered to be 'weaker' and have the highest number of drop outs in Grade 8 "more Afrikaans speaking learners have problems at this school – they seem to have more barriers and this is not even a language barrier".

Parents who had moved to English were generally considered to be more supportive and interested in their children's education. "Those people who have moved to English – they know more about education and they want a better educational future

for their children". The Afrikaans speaking parents were considered to be stuck in a cycle of poverty and disinterest "if you go to the learner's house you can see … often parents don't even know that he is coming to school – they don't even know what grade he is in". Neighbouring schools were considered to have made a move to English instruction in order to attract "a better kind of learner" and exclude the weaker learners. Generally the whole issue of language became an obfuscating factor in determining whether support was needed because of intellectual or language barriers to learning.

After two years of experiencing the programme of support to learners it was evident that secondary school teachers and district support agents need further exposure to and a shared experience of the language of practice associated with inclusive education. Although the staff at each of the six schools took readily to the concept of barriers to learning, the continued use of outdated terminology and the persistence of locating problems as residing within learners need to be further examined and discussed within each secondary school environment.

6.6 SUPPORT WITHIN THE SCHOOLS

Support at the school level was complicated by both teacher and learner attitudes and the excessive demands which secondary school teachers feel that they have to deal with.

Teacher attitudes towards diversity were mixed ranging from anger at having to deal with learners with differing abilities in large classes to an appreciation of how teachers often create barriers to participation. One teacher was vehement that supporting learners within the classroom would negatively impact upon the class "... how can you actually think that I must now leave my learners or leave whatever I am supposed to do and spend time with that girl. It is unfair, unfair to all the other learners, unfair to the normal learners ..." whereas other teachers were aware of the tendency to label children too easily and limit their participation. However learners are still predominantly judged as to whether they can "cope" with the status quo in secondary schools not how the secondary schools can better accommodate the learner. Many of the teachers were generally exasperated by what they consider being a "cultural resistance to learning". This made differentiating between learners with real needs and those with merely attitude problems very difficult. In working

class communities the difficulty in attaining employment was seen to engender a general lack of motivation in the learners. The teachers also felt that it was not 'cool' to be seen to be trying at school and that learners "… don't want to be seen to do well as they want to fit in with the rest and they don't want to be labelled as trying to strive".

The issue of stigma arose in all of the secondary schools and this was exacerbated by the pull out system of learning support which most of the teachers had to use because of time and timetable constraints. Learners resented having to be called out of their classes and were often teased by other learners. "… because they had that insight – here is something wrong and you need to go to this teacher ..." Workshops which were run for the Grade 8 learners at one of the schools did have some initial impact in attitude change amongst the learners particularly in the learners' responsiveness in the learner focus groups. Other schools felt that "… more groundwork must be done especially amongst some of the learners – they must really work at changing their mindsets because whenever they see something that is not regarded at part of the setup they do no want to co-operate". Despite the issue of stigma all of the teachers reported positive gains amongst the learners who received learning support. One of the teachers was very clear that the class teacher had a pivotal role to play with regard to the issue of stigma. She had made it her business to call in the parents of the learners and explain to them why it was essential for their children to attend these classes. She felt that many other teachers made the learners feel awkward about going to classes, whereas she felt that she praised her children for going and promoted the programme. She felt that the benefits from this were that their work improved and that their self-confidence grew.

Teachers generally felt that it was difficult for them to support learners within their classes as they were "overloaded" with the demands related to their particular learning areas and that they did not "... spend much time with one class". The perception was that it was far easier to include "these learners" in primary school and that secondary school teachers "… are not trained to deal with these different learners". Teachers also felt that in their teaching environments that they were "... not just teachers, you are a lawyer, you are a social worker, sometimes you are the police …" Teachers had very little time to do planning and as one principal put it:

> A teacher with three free periods per week, also in change of late comers or detention or whatever … so you find that you are already overtaxing people and then on a particular day you have one or two teachers absent or one absent and one on a workshop then there is chaos.

The learning support teachers felt that the large class sizes made it easier for their learners to "... exploit the situation, hiding behind the others so that the teacher doesn't pick up that they have difficulties in reading or spelling or whatever and at the end of the day the teacher only realises it when the teacher takes in all the worksheets and realises that so and so haven't handed in any work". They also found it difficult to call the learners from their classes as the learner who had become adept at hiding and "... all of a sudden all the focus is on them and they have got to produce and they have got to work and then you find that there is that apathy and then they duck and dive when they see you and point blankly refuse to come to your class". The learning support teachers felt that this tendency to hide away and negative feelings towards learning had been developed over years of failure in the primary school and that it was a shock to the learners to be revealed at secondary school, particularly considering their teenage status and the conformity which adolescence is seen to demand. One teacher felt very strongly that the learners were at school under duress because the system and their parents wanted them to be there and that the only motivation for them to attend school was to socialise and that school learning was an unfortunate corollary.

Despite their collective frustrations, teachers were generally keen to receive training in the teaching of basic mathematical concepts, literacy and in methods of differentiation in the classroom. The literacy course which was run after the programme had been in place for six months was well received by those teachers who attended the full course. They were particularly taken with the methods of how to create a desire to read in the learners and how to deepen and extend comprehension. However many teachers felt that they still needed to know more about how to "do the basics" as there were so many learners reaching Grade 8 who could barely read. "It wasn't around reading skills in terms of teaching learners to read, it was teaching them to comprehend what they were reading so the learner was able to read already – but we need to learn how to teach the learner how to read". The teachers who attended the course felt that on-site training and follow-up

support would enable them to develop their skills further, better inform their teaching practice and provide a structured forum for collaboration with their peers in a collective effort to infuse the teaching of reading and language across the curriculum.

Most of the teachers felt that having one teacher to provide some learning support in secondary school was totally insufficient to meet the multiplicity of demands for support in their learning environments and those who had experience of inclusive education overseas felt that this situation was derisory. There was the feeling in many of the schools that inclusion was merely a fancy form of rationalisation "I don't see inclusive education working here as we don't have the resources to do Outcomes Based Education in the schools and maybe to me this is just a part of rationalisation, closing the LSEN schools at the point in time and focusing and saying 'be inclusive' but without the proper resources. So the bottom line is for me if there are no resources and support structures – it will fail".

Teachers at schools that were accepting larger numbers of second or third language learners felt that they were ill equipped to deal with the magnitude of the language and literacy issues which the inclusion of these learners made manifest. "The numbers of the intake of those learners is becoming much bigger. So we are morally and ethically obliged to see to their needs otherwise it becomes immoral to accept those learners. And for me this becomes a moral and an ethical issue rather than a financial issue because we need to provide them with the support to empower them to be able to just go through the system".

6.7 PERSONAL SUPPORT

Generally the learning support teachers found it initially extremely difficult to integrate with the staff at the secondary schools. Often the teachers spent most if not all of their break times within their rooms or classrooms as they also used this time to give support to learners. One teacher did attempt repeatedly to join the staff at their break times but found it difficult as all the teachers were marking or working at their desks and the tea facilities seemed to be personally organised as she didn't know how to fit into this hidden scheme of things. Another had never been into the staff room. One of the learning support teachers, despite having to share a multifunctional room, felt very welcomed by the staff and communicated with them about the work they were doing in their classrooms. For most teachers this situation improved

gradually over the first year and was facilitated by opportunities to network in a more relaxed manner with the grade 8 teachers from their schools who attended the literacy workshop in July 2003.

The learning support teachers who were giving support both at a primary and at a secondary school found that they were exhausted on the days that they visited both schools and found the switch between the age groups difficult to accommodate. "Sometimes I feel that I am actually holding down two jobs – because you have to start all over again at the end of your other day which is very difficult".

The need to have reading material which was of an interest level sufficient to capture a teenager's attention with an associated low level of reading skill demand became a difficult problem to address. "Honestly they struggle to read and you can see there are very enthusiastic when it comes to a worksheet, doing the worksheets and giving input but when you ask them to read you see it is just like a cloud which descends upon them and you feel so sorry for them …" The use of newspapers and other publications sent to schools provided some material which could be used but the need for publishers to produce books of this nature was regularly discussed at meetings and with publisher representatives. The literacy workshops run in July and again in January of the following year did help this situation as the teachers found the tips given; particularly those on finding out what learners know, want to know, and what they have learned after each lesson; to be very useful to their teaching practice.

The learners receiving support at the secondary schools generally found it difficult to articulate their concerns in the focus groups and found it easier to talk in one to one interviews. General support issues which arose in connection with being in the classroom were that the teachers expected them to write too much and more often than not didn't give them enough time to complete their work.

"You just write a small bit and then the period is done already". Most of the learners complained that the teachers did not explain work sufficiently well for them to understand how to proceed, and that when they asked for assistance, this was viewed as being deliberately disruptive and that teachers said "just do the work".

The writing of exams presented a huge barrier to the learners. They expressed their frustrations in that they often felt that they would be able to produce an answer but

found the questions difficult to decipher. "They give you an English paper and say you can't make out some words then they don't explain it to you so that you can understand more". "You know the answer but you don't understand the question". They also felt that they needed more time in the exams.

The learners in the more socio-economically disadvantaged areas viewed support as being primarily in terms of providing for their physical safety and improvements in the physical environment. They complained about the state of the ablution facilities, the broken windows in the classroom and that many of the learners smoked and fought a lot. One learner summed it up by saying "people must respect each other".

Many of the learners were aware that they could attend institutions which offered a choice of practically related subjects when they reached Grade 10 but were quite realistic in their assertions that they would not pass Grade 9. "Now why must you wait until Grade 10 – why must you wait until that time – then you will rather drop out". Questions were asked as to why subjects like woodwork were not offered in Grade 8 and all of the learners expressed interest in doing subjects which directly related to skills acquisition for a career after school. Areas of interest were mechanics, woodwork, nursing, social work, and electronics, catering and pursing their chosen sport as a career. The learners also wanted greater access to computers and were particularly interested in design related programmes and skill acquisition.

6.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The recurrent themes which have emerged as a result of the second level of data transformation have ranged from macro issues regarding perceptions and experiences of the educational system to micro issues regarding personal agency and support. It is hoped that this form of data transformation has succeeded in giving voice to the many stakeholders who became participants in the research process.

CHAPTER 7

INTERPRETIVE DISCUSSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

My efforts to make sense of and move beyond the large amounts of data gathered during this research process have been greatly aided by reference to the kind of knowledge creation which is encouraged by the guiding transformative theoretical framework. Knowledge creation within this framework is that which acknowledges human influences, power relationships and the importance of the use of knowledge to create operational links to help society to transform itself to become more just and equitable.

The most obvious human influence in this research is my own. It is through my perceptions, my experiences as a white woman in South Africa, my academic training, reference to a review of literature, and my personal interests that the data has been filtered, organised and interpreted. Ultimately it is through the words that I have chosen to use that it has been presented as text. It is my intention and desire that this text can become a vehicle through which changes in the educational system can be provoked and encouraged.

Through its guiding transformative theoretical framework and in its evolving design, this evaluation has attempted to be as inclusive as possible. It is thus that it has sought the views and encouraged the participation of diverse stakeholders, from the learners whose social and academic wellbeing and advancement have been the central focus of this study, to individuals representing the various systems surrounding these learners. This has been in order to gain access to a diversity of interests and viewpoints, to accord these equal weight, and thereby be in a position to gain a better understanding of the complex historical, economic, social and political forces which have the potential to advance or impede including learners with mild intellectual disability in secondary school environments.

7.2 SUPPORT FROM EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES

The implementation of a programme of support has allowed the participating schools to experience some support and evidence of commitment to a process from the EMDC over a period of two years. However, any benefits of a positive view of this involvement has been substantially undermined by the teachers' general exasperation with 'the system', and in particular the Grade 8 and Grade 9 teachers' experience of the pilot and initial CTA process.

Generally, 'the system' is perceived as being represented by people who have the power to visit schools only to make demands or complain about aspects of the school functioning and who, when asked for assistance, retreat from crisis situations to the relative safe distance of their offices. These perceptions complicate the delivery of support services from district levels and illustrate the belief of many of the teachers that those who engage on a continuous basis within the classroom and school contexts in which challenges of diversity and educational transformation are played out, are not listened to and have the least power to effect change.

The continuous assessment (CASS) process and common task for assessment (CTA) in Grade 8 and Grade 9 over the past two years (as discussed in Chapter 3: 3.4.2.4) have proved to be a constraining contextual variable in the implementation of the programme of support for learners with mild intellectual disability. The attendant workload for teachers and the excessive and often conflicting demands they felt were placed upon them by curriculum advisors made it difficult for them to simultaneously have sufficient energy to really engage in the workshops and discussions around inclusive education and creative strategies for support for learners. This contextual experience is confirmed by the recent findings of Brombacher and Associates (2004:1) as discussed in Chapter 3. Their findings reflected that teachers were attempting to implement both CASS and CTA's to the best of their abilities, but that the training of teachers and the guidelines for implementation of these processes had not succeeded in preparing them adequately for these tasks and had added to their confusion and resulted in a situation where changes were implemented in technical detail only. Enabling sufficient commitment to ongoing development and time for reflection for both teachers and newly appointed officials to process new information and understand, debate and absorb

the philosophy which undergirds both inclusive education and different forms of assessment and instruction, a finding confirmed by Swart et al. (2002:175-189), seem crucial in planning for the ongoing implementation of policy changes.

A further complicating factor in the provision of support from authorities or 'the system' is that the first two years of secondary school fall within the senior phase of the GET which is currently caught between Curriculum 2005 and the Revised National Curriculum (see Chapter 3: 3.4.2.4). Teachers within this phase have yet to receive training in this more streamlined version of Outcomes Based Education and the possibilities for inclusion which the design and development of learning programmes can afford (Department of Education, RNCS Policy: 2002b:10). The teachers are thus being asked to trial the first official exit point at the same time as being denied the benefit of the fuller conceptual understanding of the goals and best practices of Outcomes Based Education. A further exacerbating factor is that support staff at the EMDC has been employed to help with the orientation and training of teachers in the earlier two phases of the GET, affording them less time to support teachers in their allocated primary schools, let al.one teachers in secondary schools.

Lingering in the recent memory of teachers is the effect of the rightsizing of teacher provisioning in schools and how many schools in the areas in which the programme was operating were seen to be adversely affected by this top-down procedure. As referred to in Chapter 3 (3.4.2.1), the serious state of teacher morale occasioned particular mention from Education Minister Kader Asmal who acknowledged that teachers had been demoralised by the uncertainty and distress of rationalisation and redeployment and that the reasonable expectation of teachers to have job security "… has been a long time in coming" (Department of Education, 1999:2). However it is the experience of this evaluation that there continues to be a sense of distrust between teachers and representatives of the educational system and a feeling that last minute top-down decisions continue to be thrust upon them, often without prior consultation or warning, by educational officials.

Compounding what is experienced as an already uncertain pedagogical and professional terrain for secondary school teachers is a perceived lack of adherence by staff at primary schools to the procedures which the educational system has managed to put in place. Thus inconsistencies in the grading of and reporting on learners, confusion over when to send learners identified as in need of support to

secondary school, and a lack of adherence to procedures regarding how and when learners are referred to district support teams for the purposes of special education placement, all added to the tendency of secondary school teachers to adversely judge the competence and practices of primary school teachers and administrators.

The plea of the principal of one of the schools for clarity from Head Office on the role of secondary schools and the associated expectations of teachers is keenly felt, as is the emphasis which the system is seen to place upon the product of secondary school education in the form of acceptable matric results rather than the process of retaining and engaging all learners in secondary school learning environments. This perception of the lack of importance of attention to process, made the closer scrutiny of individual learners which the programme encouraged a potential threat to the human capital view of secondary school education which a focus on product has traditionally encouraged. This confirms the finding of an international study discussed in Chapter Three (3.2.5) which was that national exams influence teachers to view their learners as groups rather than as individuals.

7.3 COMMITMENT AND TRUST

Transformative scholars acknowledge that evaluations involve addressing issues of commitment and trust which often incorporate difficult historical and emotional legacies (Mertens, 2001:369; Stanfield, 1999:374). Within the South African context, the influence of recent racially-based exclusionary beliefs and practices and the additional emotional impact of the uncertainty and confusion experienced by many teachers, have the potential to threaten a process of educational transformation and create situations where innovations are met with hostility, suspicion and distrust.

The experience of working with the schools and teachers over a two year period allowed some trust and acknowledgement of commitment to a process to become evident over time. Commitment was evident and trust developed as learners, teachers, EMDC staff and other stakeholders realised that the programme implementation and its ongoing evaluation were evidenced through first-hand contact with the core collaborative group and a tangible benefit in the provision of additional personnel. There was an increasing awareness that 'outsiders' wanted to become 'insiders' who would listen, hear and be a witness to the experiences of schools and

staff bodies who had been legislatively marginalised themselves under an Apartheid government.

The emotional space afforded to all stakeholders contributed positively to the development of trust between individuals and the ability of the core collaborative group members to understand and experience elements of the social reality of the learners, teachers and other stakeholders.

7.4 COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The apparent low socio-economic status of the areas in which the participating secondary schools are situated or from which the learners are travelling are experienced by teachers and learners as being constraining factors in feeling supported and comfortable in reciprocal relationships with parents and the wider community. In particular teachers feel that they are not supported by parents and that parents expect too much from them and too little of themselves and consequently have low expectations of their own children. These perceptions of teachers are unfortunate in the light of the findings of Smit and Liebenberg (2003) as discussed in Chapter 2 (2.4.5), which suggest that teachers and schools have a positive role to play in firstly developing an awareness of and subsequently providing for the particular needs of parents and learners of low socio-economic status. Furthermore, attention to reversing the patterns of teacher parent relationships which Epstein identified in the research literature as referred to in Chapter 2 (2.4.5), is critical in creating some social cohesion within environments where poverty and threats to safety and security have undermined community and within school relationships.

The experience gained during the implementation of the programme in these schools has illustrated very clearly the value of having learning support teachers who are trained to provide counselling to learners and their families. As suggested by The Open File on Inclusive Education, referred to in Chapter 2 (2.4.5), parents from marginalised groups need to be afforded opportunities to develop their own self-confidence and self-worth. As Epstein (1995:703) suggests, this involves actively maintaining contact with parents within the higher grades of school, making contacts with parents when there are good things to report about learners, and being flexible in the organisation of opportunities for parents to engage with the school. The

schools at which the teachers served the dual role of being both learning support teachers and counsellors have been the most successful involving the parents and the wider community in support for their learners. It is, however, these schools which primarily serve the children from the immediate area surrounding the school, a situation which was only evident in three of the six schools in the programme.

Despite some evidence of individual successes with parent and community involvement, a general lack of collaboration between the schools and their surrounding communities was evident through the inhibiting factors revealed in the research of Cushing and Kohl (1997) as discussed in Chapter 2(2.4.5). The teachers at the six schools in the programme were apprehensive of public scrutiny and generally felt very poorly served by media reports. Additionally teachers felt exhausted and were of the opinion that the educational system and their particular school circumstances placed additional and intolerable demands on them which in some cases occasioned teacher burnout and consequent extended periods of sick leave. Teachers and administrators also felt that the communities in which they were working were uncaring and that they placed excessive demands upon the schools largely due to a specific lack of social services and a general lack of community based resources. Teachers in the participating schools generally saw their work and ability to receive support as being constrained rather than alleviated by the communities surrounding their schools.

Attempts to give effect to White Paper 6's vision of a Special School part of a district based resource as delineated in Chapter 3 (3.4.2.3) achieved limited success in the programme and had to be carefully and continually monitored by the core collaborative group. Factors which complicated the giving of support to learners from outside the Special School were manifold. These included a lack of funds for transport to the Special School, uncertainty on the part of the Special School staff as to their roles and responsibilities for these 'outsiders,' and the additional burden it placed on teachers to integrate the visiting learners into the practical work schedules of the school and to provide written reports on each learner. The experience of the programme is that this kind of support is still in its infancy and needs to be explored slowly and sensitively over time in situations where all participants are afforded the opportunity to have their concerns and needs acknowledged and comprehensively

addressed before being requested to provide services which expose them to even greater challenges and the possibility of public scrutiny.

7.5 LANGUAGE

The learners who were directly involved with the programme of support at the participating secondary schools were predominantly from two language groups, learners who were learning through a second or third language and learners of low socio-economic status who spoke and were taught in their home language, Afrikaans.

Three major factors were seen to be complicit in the situation of learners who were learning through a second or third language. The first of these was the view of the teachers that the parents of the learners had insisted that they come to a school where the medium of instruction was English. Secondly it was a strong feeling that there were not sufficient speakers of Xhosa on the staff bodies to be able to provide multi-lingual support to these learners. Thirdly it was evident that teachers within the secondary schools felt unprepared to address these language barriers as they had not received any training in the principles of language acquisition and thus felt that they did not have knowledge and skills to support English language learning or to teach language across the curriculum, a finding supported by the research of Lemmer (1996a:330).

The issue of English being seen as a language of upward mobility can be understood in terms of the perception that being a speaker of English affords greater socio-economic and educational opportunities. Many schools within certain geographical areas of the Western Cape have, to quote a teacher, "verEngelsed", or moved from offering the dual mediums of English and Afrikaans to the sole medium of English. The schools in the programme who had retained a dual medium status were adamant that Afrikaans was perceived by the majority of the learners as being of lower status. They also felt that the parents who had 'moved' to English were more motivated to partner their children in their education and had made this move to indicate a shift from working to middle class status. Thus the learners who were classified as having mild intellectual disability and who spoke Afrikaans carried two stigmatising labels. It therefore appears as if secondary schools are still functioning as the sorting systems to which the NEPI report referred over a decade ago

(1992:2), and that language policies are indeed having the unintended effect of creating a new class (rather than race) stratification, a situation which was foretold by Lemmer (1996b:20) as quoted in Chapter 3 (3.4.2.2).

7.6 SUPPORT WITHIN THE SCHOOLS

Reflections upon the issues raised regarding the provision of support to learners within schools has revealed that the majority of the staff within the six schools who participated in the programme is thinking in terms of deficits rather than assets when encountering diverse learning needs in learners. This seems to suggest that the both the moral and medical models of disability continue to frame the thoughts and inform the actions of individuals who are involved in education. Furthermore, attempts to establish school wide support within the schools has shown that it is difficult for secondary school teachers to move away from what has been a dominant paradigm of competitiveness and survival of the most academically able which their own schooling and further education has encouraged, and which their own practices and externally imposed demands for evidence of improved quality continue to reinforce.

There is a feeling that these practices have been unconsciously accepted as being part of the fabric of secondary school teaching and learning, and as Foucault has alerted us (see Chapter 1:1.3.4), they do represent the operalisation of localised forms of power and domination in local secondary school institutions (Stringer, 1999:197). Sustained engagement in the programme and the opportunity to discuss issues and be reflective have shown that efforts to disrupt these practices are difficult to accept and accommodate, certainly initially, and that time, exposure to seeing disability as a way of being rather than not being (Gill, 1999:279-282) and continual reminding of alternative ways of seeing the person and his or her own strengths will be needed to effect the change in mindset which is considered to be critical for transformation to occur (see Chapter 2:2.3.4; Chapter 3 :3.4.2.3). As discussed in Chapter 3 (3.2.5), international studies have illustrated that a sustained engagement with including learners with disabilities in the classroom does result in positive changes in teachers' attitudes and their confidence in their ability to teach to a diverse range of learning needs.

The stigmatising of learners who were viewed as being the recipients of a withdrawal system of learning support in the secondary schools was initially sanctioned through

the lack of whole-school engagement in the support programme. The view that learners did not want to co-operative with "something that is not regarded as part of the setup" is a school and teacher issue, rather than a learner issue and illustrates the view of the NCSNET/NCESS report (Department of Education, 1997) of the importance of an ecosystemic view of the various barriers to creating environments in which learning can take place (see Chapter 3:3.3.4). It was only after the programme had been running for some time and after some teachers took the initiative to promote and encourage learners and parents to accept support as being part of what their school did, that issues of stigma diminished.

The stigmatisation of learners was also encouraged by the use of various labels to define them within the operalisation of the programme of support, which confirms the conviction of Shapiro (see Chapter 2:2.2.2) of the power of language not only to shape and give expression to our ideas, but to provide the forms and actions for exclusion of 'others'. The attempts of the core collaborative group to track the learners within the six schools focused initial attention on a relatively few individuals in each school and thus promoted the tendency to view and treat the learners as a homogenous group that needed a name. The learners were thus often referred to as "those learners", "the LSEN learners" and, paradoxically, by the name of the School of Skills to which they had applied and failed to gain entry.

As programme implementation proceeded contextual variables intervened which diminished the initial narrow focus. What the programme implementation did reveal very starkly was that a large proportion of learners who form the natural intake at all of the six schools displayed significant barriers to learning, a phenomenon which is consistent with the recent systemic assessment results (see Chapter 3:3.4.2.4). Many of the learners at the six schools who had not been referred to the School of Skills were in need of support of a more intensive nature than the few identified learners. It thus became increasing difficult and morally unacceptable to focus upon the needs of a relatively small number when support for a substantial number of learners was urgently needed.

Even though these contextual variables eventually overwhelmed what was initially a more narrow focus, they illustrated very clearly the need for comprehensive whole school and district responses. The recognition of this situation necessitated a more careful scrutiny of how the existing arrangements within schools could be adapted

such as infusing language learning across the curriculum, the need to look for strengths in learners rather than focus on deficits, and the need to debate and question the usefulness of the notion of an externally described 'normal' learner. It therefore forced greater attention upon the need for education to be more individual-centred rather than school-centred (McConkey, 1998:56 in Chapter 2:2.4.1). It also shifted the focus from defining and classifying learners to defining the levels and kind of support needed, as discussed in Chapter 3 (3.3.4).

Accompanying the ideological barriers in the schools, the capacity of schools and teachers to give support in the form of differentiated learning opportunities for large classes of learners was severely compromised by the timetabling in most of the secondary schools and the lack of training of teachers in group work. Most of the teachers felt that they often did little more than crowd control in their classes and that providing alternative learning opportunities was beyond their capacity and training as language and content subject specialists. The teachers who attended the literacy course did come away with alternative strategies for encouraging participation for all in large classes, but the feeling was that further in-service training of this sort was necessary within their teaching environments in order to maintain and improve upon the practice of new strategies, a finding which resonates with the recommendations for teacher training of The Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 discussed in Chapter 3(3.4.2.4).

The initial perception amongst the teaching staff that inclusive education was merely a euphemism for the rationalisation of specialist resources is an unfortunate one as it certainly contained the potential to deflect attention away from the underlying social and human rights messages of inclusion and devalue the efforts of the learning support personnel in the schools and the EMDC. It was the experience of the core collaborative group that schools and teachers have had too many changes forced upon them without sufficient time and effort being afforded to them to develop an understanding of the underlying philosophies which have guided these changes. It was only after some time had passed and after issues of trust had been tested and commitment to a process had been evident, that most schools came to appreciate the value of the formation of an institution based support mechanism such as a TST.

7.7 PERSONAL SUPPORT

The issues raised within the programme which reflected a lack of sufficient personal support showed very clearly the importance of proactive planning for changes in organisations; cultural sensitivity, particularly in appropriate ways of asking questions; and continual alertness to the recognition of needs of individuals who are trying to establish their identity within institutionalized practices. As Donald et al. (1997:17) cautioned (see Chapter 3:3.4.1), it is at the literal interface between individuals where policy implementation in changing the process of education needs to take place and where support is needed to effect changes that will empower all.

> At the centre of changing the process in education is the need to change the values, understanding, and actions of individual people - parents and members of the community, students, and professional educators. What needs to be examined is what people believe about themselves and what they are involved in; what they think and why they think it; and what they do, how they do it, and why they do it (Donald et al.,1997:17).

Even though meetings were held at the schools prior to the introduction of learning support teachers, the approach to having another person joining the staff was largely ad hoc in the schools. This added to the situations where the learning support teachers felt awkward, unrecognised and not affirmed in their new role in secondary schools during the first cycle of programme implementation. This made it difficult for them to give support to others when they, themselves, felt unsupported and did not feel secure within their roles.

An additional factor which impacted upon the integration of the learning support teachers within the secondary schools was the kind of training which the six teachers had received. The teachers who had secondary school training felt more attuned to the work being presented in the classrooms but less able to determine where to intervene with their programmes of support with groups of learners. The teachers who had training in learning support found it easier to start with intervention plans with their learners, but took some time to connect with the level of work expected within the classrooms. The two teachers who were primary school trained and who were receiving in-service training in learning support from their district authorities (see Chapter 3:3.5.2), felt extremely uncomfortable at the secondary schools and a lack of personal competence. Personal support from the core collaborative group in

terms of allowing the space for the teachers to discuss their concerns with each other became extremely important, as did discussions around the development and accessing of teaching materials relevant to adolescent interests.

The learning support staff at the EMDC felt constrained in their abilities to offer support to teachers due to the pressure placed upon them from national and provincial authorities to become trained in the new curriculum and in turn to become trainers in the new curriculum. Generally it was evident that individuals within the EDMC and within schools did not feel affirmed in their roles, neither did they feel supported. This seems to confirm the views of Welton (2001:175) referred to in Chapter 3 (3.4.2.3) that many teachers and staff working at institution and particularly at district level feel that they are ill-equipped for their new roles as change agents and consider that there are no role models who can guide them in the new paradigms of learning and management which they have to advance.

The focus groups and individual interviews with the learners receiving support in the programme revealed that they were not satisfied with their quality of life within the general school and community environment; neither in terms of their basic needs being met, nor with regard to their opportunities of being able to pursue or achieve their goals in the current life setting of school (see Dennis et al., 1993:500 Chapter 2:2.4.2). They were positive about the interactions and opportunities afforded to them in the learning support classes, but felt that this support was not evident or transferred to the general school environment. Many actually perceived the school environment as being a threat to their basic needs of safety and security, this being an unfortunate consequence of the debilitating context, described in Chapter 3 (3.4.2.2), in which many schools in the Western Cape have to contend with on a daily basis

The feelings expressed by the learners, particularly within the individual interviews, were that they were routinely ignored, that teachers did not understand them and that they had to have their weaknesses constantly revealed rather than their strengths. Furthermore they were of the belief that teachers were trying to force them to fit into a system, that they were not included in the pace of work presented, nor were they allowed or even given the space to advocate on their own behalf within a classroom environment. It is clear therefore that the teaching staff within the 6 secondary schools in the programme neither had the will, training nor facilities to

recognise what are considered to be core elements in the improvement of quality of life of learners with mild intellectual disabilities (see Chapter 2: 2.4.2). Individual values and needs, common human values and needs and culturally specific values and needs were experienced by the learners as being unrecognised and opportunities to advance self-determination quashed.

The learners expressed very clearly that they did not see school as being a meaningful preparation for their future vocational lives; in fact they experienced the delivery of the curriculum in Grade 8 and Grade 9 as presenting a barrier to future learning and training opportunities and a reason for them to opt for dropping out of school.

7.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented an interpretative discussion as the final form of data transformation. The final chapter will draw conclusions and make recommendations in order to provide the links to practical steps which can improve the quality of life of learners with mild intellectual disabilities in secondary school and transform society to better accept and include diversity within secondary school learning environments.

CHAPTER 8

A SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the research has been to determine the merit and worth of the implementation of a programme of support for learners described as having mild intellectual disability in their transition to secondary schools. The transformative theoretical framework which has guided the research has provided reminders to be as inclusive as possible and to engage in the contexts affected by the programme to a significant degree. It has encouraged me to place myself within the data and to acknowledge the influences of my background, cultural reference points, values and interests. It has also encouraged me to create the kind of knowledge that can enable positive change in the lives of a group of individuals who have been legislatively marginalised from mainstream secondary school education in the past and whose inclusion into these learning environments is currently supported by democratically driven legislation and educational policies.

This chapter presents a summary of the preceding chapters, offers reflections on the research process framed by the research questions, and discusses the limitations of the research. It then presents recommendations, suggests areas for possible future research and concludes with a personal reflection.

8.2 BRIEF SUMMARY OF PRECEEDING CHAPTERS

The first chapter begins with a brief overview of the situational context in which a particular problem arose regarding learners described as having mild intellectual disabilities within an area of the Western Cape of South Africa. It then presents the central research problem and related questions and outlines the purpose of the research which is to present a systematic investigation of the unfolding planning and implementation of a programme of support for learners with mild intellectual disability in their transition to selected mainstream secondary schools. It proceeds with a discussion of the transformative theoretical framework which has guided the

research process and particularly how it differs from other major theoretical frameworks. Reference is made to the influence of postmodern and poststructuralist thought on studies which seek to address the human dilemmas apparent in contemporary life. The chapter then proceeds to outline the course which the research will follow, and provides some detail as to the procedures which will be drawn upon to gather, transform and report upon the data in order to give a holistic account of the programme implementation process and its concurrent evaluation. The chapter concludes with an examination of the discourses around definitions of words within the research title.

The second and third chapters represent a review of literature. These chapters have been constructed to provide the necessary background understanding of the influences and continued impact of the historical, social, economic and cultural factors which have shaped the provision of education both internationally and locally and continue to have agency in the lives of children described in terms of deficit in an area of South Africa. The first literature review chapter focuses upon the problematic nature of the concept of intellectual disability and the second provides information on the nature of support which has been offered to learners both internationally and nationally and details the past political and educational policies and recent political and education changes which have shaped the contemporary educational environment.

The fourth chapter presents the procedural aspects of the research process. It explains how the design and methodology of the research have been formulated to allow for a holistic evaluation of the process of programme implementation through an evolving, qualitative and interpretative design of programme evaluation and a variety of data gathering and transformation procedures. This chapter also gives a retrospective overview of the entire programme and details how data has been gathered through a personal journal, observations, focus group and individual interviews and document analysis. As the opinions and experiences of various stakeholders have been sought regarding the ongoing development and implementation of the programme, it explains why the gathering of data has been incorporated into cycles of action, reflection and further planning. In order to better understand and reflect diverse viewpoints, it details how data transformation has proceeded through different levels of abstraction; initiating with a descriptive

chronology of the programme process, followed by an analysis of recurrent themes and concluding with an ensuing interpretive discussion.

Chapter Five represents the first form of data transformation. It presents a narrative synthesis and chronologically based description of the entire programme process. It attempts to stay as close to the data as possible by detailing the action learning cycles which have occurred over a two year period. Chapter Six represents the next level of data transformation which builds upon the first by transforming the same data but at a further level of abstraction. It does this by using the Constant Comparative method of data analysis to uncover the recurrent themes which became evident during the programme development and implementation process. In Chapter Seven the final form of data transformation is presented. This involves an interpretative discussion which incorporates the previous two forms of data transformation, more explicit reference to the theoretical framework, resonance with elements of the literature review and an acknowledgement of the influence of my role as researcher.

8.3 REFLECTIONS

8.3.1 Introduction

Reflections on the evaluation of a programme of support to learners with intellectual disability within certain secondary schools are framed by the questions posed in Chapter 1 which the research process has sought to address.

8.3.2 Factors which are Advancing or Impeding the Inclusion of Learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in Secondary Schools

An evaluation of a programme through the lens of transformative theory has allowed for an appreciation of the effects of past and present social, economic, cultural and language forces and how these interact to either reproduce past habits of exclusion or create opportunities to promote new practices of inclusion.

Secondary schools have in the past been routinely configured for optimum performance in a competitive academic curriculum. This has been allied to the value placed by society on the education of people who can compete globally and occupy positions of prestige and power. Secondary schools have not been encouraged to be problem-solving organisations that provide diverse learning opportunities to cater for

the future employment needs of a developing and transforming society, nor the emotional wellbeing of its many temporary inhabitants.

The initiation and development of a programme of support for learners in secondary schools over a two year period has demonstrated the positive effects of collaboration between members of an EMDC, a non-governmental organisation and members of staff in six secondary schools. This collaboration has allowed for a broadening of views of the whole programme process, enabled greater time to be spent in each of the participating schools, aided in the development of trust between stakeholders and provided many teachers with opportunities to be more reflective about their teaching and their role in creating environments where diverse learning needs can be met.

Sustained engagement in the schools has led to the finding that relatively few of the learners who had applied to the School of Skills enrolled at the secondary schools participating in the programme. However, the introduction of learning support had the effect of making each school look more carefully at their Grade 8 and Grade 9 learners. This in turn revealed that many learners who experience considerable barriers to learning form part of the natural intake of these schools and are in many cases in need of more intensive academic support than the learners who had applied to the School of Skills. This meant that the learning support teachers at each of the schools took groups of learners which included those who had been identified. It was thus that the composition of the groups was not exclusively characterised as being for learners classified as having mild intellectual disability, but rather for those who were in need of support in their learning. This process is seen to represent the beginning of a move away from deficit-based thinking to a more positive view and experience of learners needing support.

Experiences in the programme over a two year period have had the positive effect of suggesting a suitable profile of a secondary school learning support teacher. The teacher should preferably have experience in providing learning support, have secondary school teacher training and teaching experience, be able to spend time exclusively in secondary schools and have some training in working with adolescents and their parents on an emotionally supportive level.

A specific focus upon the inclusion of learners with mild intellectual disability in secondary schools has indicated very clearly that the categorisation of many of these learners is more a result of constraining environmental and educational factors than any inherent individual lack of ability. A mismatch between the primary language of learners and the language of teaching and learning in schools is a major factor in the existence of barriers to learning and conceptual development.

The programme was particularly successful in its exploration and follow up of an ABET learning opportunity for the older learners. Even though this learning pathway did not retain learners in their particular secondary schools, it did offer them ongoing possibilities to be included in a learning environment and, more importantly, one which would develop vocational skills. The success of the day-run programme for learners from several schools and demands for similar facilities from the principals of the secondary schools has prompted an EMDC investigation as to the feasibility of making more day-run ABET centres available to learners over the age of 16 years. The possibility therefore exists that ABET classes can be included in school organisations in the future.

Engagement in baseline assessment in the participating secondary schools has revealed that literacy levels in Grade 8 learners is worrying low. This questions the usefulness of the conceptualisation of an average or normal learner as being one who displays competencies described by curriculum developers. However, it does illustrate that learners in secondary schools are generally in need of greater support, a factor which will aid the inclusion of learners with mild intellectual disability.

One of the major factors seen to militate against the inclusion of learners with mild intellectual disability in secondary schools and the advancement of the general population of learners is that the teachers in the six schools felt that the secondary school curriculum is largely inaccessible to learners who have not achieved at least a Grade 6 level of literacy. Additionally they felt ill-equipped to offer differentiated learning opportunities within their classes, to teach literacy skills or to infuse literacy learning and development across the curriculum.

The delivery of the curriculum was also viewed by both teachers and learners as affording less rather than more flexibility to learners within the senior phase of the

GET whose perceived strengths and expressed interests were in practical skill related areas. Learning areas such as technology were seen to be unnecessarily theoretical rather than practical. Teachers who had been trained to teach woodwork and domestic science were frustrated through what they experienced as being a dilution of their subject area and a consequent hampering of their ability to provide these learners with skills which would be of benefit to them in future vocations. There was a plea from learners, teachers and educational authorities for the introduction of vocational learning programmes in the senior phase of the GET.

A further mitigating factor is that the secondary schools consider that their success or otherwise is solely measured on matric results and this influences the way schools organise their classes and prioritize their efforts. Schools thus cater for dropout of learners throughout secondary school and have more and larger Grade 8 and 9 classes and fewer and smaller Grade 10 – 12 classes. Larger classes in the lower grades impact upon the willingness and ability of teachers to intervene timeously as having large classes makes it easier for learners to 'hide' their learning challenges. It also means that teachers consider that engaging in group work is an invitation to relinquish the already tenuous control they feel that they can exercise upon the increasingly challenging behaviour of large groups of young adolescent learners.

Attempts to enable the Schools of Skills to be a support to the learners in the programme met with mixed results. The learners who did attend the weekly workshop sessions were very excited about the opportunities afforded to them to explore different skills. However feedback from the teachers as to the progress of the learners was not forthcoming. This suggests a lack of sufficient co-ordination between the programme staff and the staff at the School of Skills and that tighter monitoring procedures should be in place, should this form of support be offered in the future.

It was the experience of many stakeholders within the programme implementation process that working with children and parents of low economic status presents great challenges to teachers within secondary schools. Poverty and the accompanying sense of hopelessness which is often evident in children and parents made it difficult for teachers to engage and plan with the parents in attempts to encourage them to become partners in their children's education.

The influence of contextual factors on the inclusion of learners described as having mild intellectual disability have demonstrated very clearly the importance and need for comprehensive whole school and district responses in making secondary schools more inclusive of all their learners.

8.3.3 The Extent to which the Programme has Enabled Positive Educational and Social Opportunities for Learners with Mild Intellectual Disability

Through its evolving and responsive nature, the programme of support to learners has shown that an engagement within the communities involved in a programme over time has the potential to effect positive educational and social change for many learners, including those described as having mild intellectual disability. This has been possible through ongoing dialogue within the venues in which certain unconsciously accepted practices have been in operation for many years and where exposure to change has been perceived as being imposed, forced and confusing. I feel that programmes within schools which illustrate a commitment over time will have more power to disrupt entrenched attitudes and effect personal changes in teachers and learners than series of teacher workshops which are dislocated from specific school contexts. Integral to this is the attitude of the programme initiators who should not represent themselves as experts but as people who will stay the distance, involve stakeholders in the process, dwell with problems and collaboratively seek some solutions.

The class teachers at the six schools reported that the learners who participated in the learning support programmes at the schools made gains in self-esteem and academic skills. Some learners were reluctant to participate and felt stigmatised by being identified as being in need of support. The stigmatising of learners was not as evident in the second year of the programme and this change was attributed to the development of more positive communications about the importance of support between teachers, between teachers and parents and between teachers and learners.

However, the overall experience of secondary school of the learners was that it continued to be a place where their quality of life was impeded rather than advanced. Generally they felt that secondary school environments were hostile, retained learning schedules that were inflexible, and discouraged the communication of

personal needs. Additionally they felt that there were no obvious links between what they did at school and future employment opportunities. The learners felt that they were more affirmed in their learning support lessons, but that this was not evident in the general classroom environment. This suggests that the programme achieved limited success in integrating learning support into the classrooms where the learners spent most of their time. It also suggests that much more effort and time needs to be directed towards working on changing the attitudes of secondary school teachers towards the acceptance of and positive interactions with diverse learning needs. Experience in this programme and other research, notably of Van Reusen et al. (2001) in Chapter 3 (3.2.5), indicates that this will involve the creation of time for group reflection where is emphasis is on the sharing of inclusive strategies, and ongoing and carefully planned and coordinated teacher education.

The experience of the programme that has been most revealing is the importance of providing concomitant emotional and learning support. The teachers who had developed their counselling skills found that emotional counselling played a pivotal role in the retention of many learners who presented with learning barriers and with their communication with staff members. The use of counselling skills as a form of support for learning also had the effect of better co-ordination of support within individual learner's home and school environments.

8.3.4 Evidence of Problem Solving Capacity and Abilities in the Schools and EMDC

Evidence of problem solving capacity varied from school to school with the schools who drew their learners from the surrounding and poorest socio-economic areas showing increasing use of problem solving strategies and fully functioning Teacher Support Teams. Teachers in the school which was considered to be more prestigious in its area were generally more resistant to the idea of inclusive education and of the need to have a Teacher Support Team.

Meetings between the core collaborative group and groups of teachers at schools showed very clearly that teachers needed to be afforded the space and time to become reflective about their practice. It was evident that at the end of the year when the learners had left the school and teachers had managed to submit the documentation attendant to the CTA and CASS processes, that they had more time

to engage in conversations within and about their own teaching environments and the learners who challenged them.

8.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

During the process of programme implementation and evaluation it is possible that sufficient in-depth information from each stakeholder group has been sacrificed in an attempt to reach and be seen to be representative of all groups.

It was the initial intention of the evaluation of the research to be inclusive of all stakeholder groups and particularly those who are often overlooked. The research was somewhat limited by the lack of ongoing and direct contact of the core collaborative group with the parents of learners who were receiving support. Contact with parents was considered to be a sensitive issue which necessitated the building of positive relationships over time and which the learning support teachers were in a better position to provide. An additional feature of the learning support teachers' contact with parents was that this often involved confidential and personal information which could not be disclosed to the group, nor incorporated into the data.

A further limitation involved the lack of ability of the core collaborative group members to speak the home language of many of the learners. The inclusion of a person who could speak Xhosa would have necessitated extra costs or time away from core EMDC responsibilities which the programme was not in a position to cover or negotiate.

8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.5.1 Introduction

The evaluation of the programme of support for learners with mild intellectual disabilities in secondary schools has provoked many questions as to how the early years of secondary school can become more inclusive of all learners.

8.5.2 Changing Existing Arrangements and Attitudes

As schools feel that they are predominantly judged on their matric results and not their ability to retain learners throughout the secondary school grades, it would seem sensible to create a system for the senior phase of the GET which is separated from the exclusionary pressures and influences attendant to producing results which can

withstand critical public scrutiny. This could be in the form of a middle school concept where learners in this phase within the secondary school could be initiated into an environment where their emotional and future vocational needs could be explored and met by learning programmes which emphasise the strengths of learners rather than their literacy and numeracy challenges. National and provincial departments of education could promote the idea of the middle school as being a period which offers great opportunity to young people to discover their strengths and plan for their futures.

Within this middle school programme learners could be encouraged to develop skills in self-determination through an exploration of quality of life indicators. The focus of teaching could be on the explicit development of thinking skills through the provision of mediated learning opportunities. The change in focus within this middle school concept within secondary schools would have a greater potential for encouraging teachers to view themselves as critical agents in the self development of individual young people, rather than the gatekeepers to potential chaos which they routinely portray themselves as being.

8.5.3 Teacher Development and Training

Teachers need to feel valued and nurtured in their status as professionals in secondary school learning environments and offered ongoing professional development rather than task specific and technically presented workshops (Brombacher & Associates, 2004:12). Secondary school teachers need to be offered training opportunities which can address what seem to be the overwhelming needs of learners in secondary schools. As the recent systemic evaluations of Grade 6 learners have clearly indicated, there is an urgent need for teachers to be able to teach and develop literacy skills. In-service training for teachers and the forthcoming Revised National Curriculum training must therefore include information on stages of literacy development, various theories of language acquisition and specific methods for both teaching and developing language skills through content and language learning areas. In addition to this secondary school teachers should be equipped with skills in the mediation of thinking skills and the development of metacognitive strategies in their learners. In this way learners can be encouraged to develop a thinking vocabulary and to assume increasing responsibility for planning and regulating their own learning behaviour and future education and training.

Prospective training for the Senior Phase in the GET will also afford an extremely important opportunity for teachers to meet across the primary and secondary school divide, to share information about learners, to plan collaboratively for the entire phase and to work on strategies which will facilitate greater differentiation in learning tasks in large classes.

Courses in counselling skills would be most beneficial to all secondary school teachers, but particularly those teachers who are employed in learning support. This will encourage teachers to be empathetic and skilled listeners and allow greater opportunity for more positive communications with learners and parents, particularly those who live in poor socio-economic areas.

8.5.4 Parental Involvement

Secondary schools need to plan for opportunities where parents can have positive associations with their child's school and teachers rather than negative and exclusionary experiences. The initial burden which this extra effort might entail is likely to be reduced when parents feel more affirmed and that their emotional and practical needs are being met. Written communications with parents should ideally be written in the parent and learner's home language.

8.5.5 Learner Participation

Learners should be welcomed into secondary schools and made to feel excited about the opportunities which the first years of secondary school can offer them, no matter how their intellectual ability has been described. The focus of the first years of secondary schools should therefore prepare learners to develop skills in self-knowledge and independence which will allow them to make better informed choices in their vocational lives and/or further education and training.

8.6 POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The implementation and evaluation of a programme of support to learners described as having mild intellectual disabilities has revealed many areas of secondary school restructuring which could benefit from future research efforts.

Investigations into the impact of the particular features and functioning of a middle school concept on learner participation, retention and the development of self-

directed behaviour in young adolescents would be a valuable avenue for future research.

Research into assessment procedures which are affirming and useful to both learners and teachers is very necessary in the early years of secondary school, given the recent negative experiences with assessment procedures.

An investigation of the usefulness of the direct teaching of thinking skills and the infusion of metacognitive strategies into all eight learning areas of the senior phase of the GET would be of great use, as would a study or programme of which directly addresses the use and impact on learners of the teaching of literacy strategies across the curriculum in secondary schools.

Research into the development of learning programmes which are delivered through pre-vocational or vocation skills (such as catering or upholstery) is considered to be very necessary by many stakeholders consulted in this research.

Further research into the ways in which secondary schools can involve parents who feel excluded from their children's education due to reasons of poverty and other socio-economically linked barriers would greatly aid social transformation.

8.7 PERSONAL REFLECTION

My role as a researcher who has been engaged in a process of programme implementation and evaluation in post-Apartheid South Africa has been a liberating experience for me. It is one which has afforded me the opportunity to both observe and become part of the rich pageant of educational and social transformation which is playing itself out within schools, educational departments and society at large. It has allowed me to fashion a particular account of a process that has drawn together pieces of past history, legacies of exclusionary practices, information from international studies, differing interpretations of recent educational policies and a particular focus upon the possibilities of the reconstruction of both group and individual identities within an immensely challenging social and educational landscape. As a bricoleur in the sense of an alternative interpretation by Crotty (2003:51), it has given me some space to escape from the limitations of many of the pre-constrained meanings formerly assigned to elements and "objects' of research.

The experience of grappling with the many contextual constraints and possibilities which a programme of support for learners has revealed in the process of implementation gives me cause for hope that positive social and educational transformation is possible, particularly if the players are given time to be reflective about their actions and intentions. It is particularly within this process of discovery where I believe that this research makes a unique contribution to knowledge creation in South African education as it illustrates the value of transformative theory in informing researchers and participants to model inclusivity and democratic practice.

Even though staff at provincial, district and school level are overworked, often confused and angered by the challenges and often unanticipated consequences of the processes of educational policy implementation, there is still a desire to learn more, to do things better and an urgency to develop strategies which can provide a more secure future for all the young people in secondary schools. I feel that programmes which enable a sharing of these frustrations and encourage a collaborative approach to addressing the needs of all learners, including those described as having intellectual disability, are of worth and have value in alerting us all to the lesson that if we attend to the needs of those who are at risk of exclusion, we are attending to the needs of all.

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APPENDIX A

Enquiries / IMibuzo: Dr Frances J Wessels
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Faks / Fax / IFeksi: 021-425 7445
Verwysing / Reference / ISalathiso: 20021227-0010

Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement
Western Cape Education Department
ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Ms H Loebenstein
Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
University of Stellenbosch
MATIELAND
7602

Dear Madam

Re: SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN THE TRANSITION TO INCLUSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research at schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Interviews and completion of questionnaires are allowed as long as these do not impinge on educators' programmes.
5. The investigation is to be conducted from 27 January 2003 to 25 June 2003.
6. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the schools, please contact Dr F Wessels at the contact numbers above.
7. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal of the schools where the intended research is to be conducted.
8. Your research will be limited to the schools mentioned on the list attached.
9. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
10. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

    The Director: Education Research
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag 9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.
Kind regards.

pp Wessels
HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 2002/12/27

APPENDIX B

LIST OF POLICY DOCUMENTS

Circular 0067/2002	-	Grade 9 promotion requirements, condonations and report cards.
Circular 0111/2003	-	Grade 9 promotion requirements and progression in Grade R to 8
Circular 0122/2003	-	Timetable for common tasks for assessment in Grade 9 in 2003.
Circular 0159/2002	-	Reading policy for Grades 8 and 9.
Circular 0004/2003	-	Senior Phase continuous assessment guidelines.
Circular 0240/2003	-	Admission of over-age learners to public schools.
Circular 0040/2004	-	Western Cape Education Department policy and procedures for the admission of learners to ordinary public schools
Department of Education, 2002	-	Curriculum 2005 Assessment Guidelines for Inclusion

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNER FOCUS GROUPS

1. How is secondary school different from primary school?
2. What things do you think you are good at?
3. What things do you find difficult?
4. How do you think things could be made easier at secondary school?
5. What work would you like to do when you leave school?
6. What kind of help do you think you need at school to help you to reach your goals?

APPENDIX D

OUTLINE OF TEACHER WORKSHOP AT INITIATION OF PROGRAMME

1. Introductions:

Background to the programme and workshop. Why workshop? - school agreed to be part of the programme around the inclusion of learners who could not access the School of Skills.

Reason for programme - to see how mainstream secondary schools can develop strategies and access support to include these and other learners in the school.

Why this school? It is serving the area from which some of the learners who applied to the School of Skills have come from.

One of the purposes of the programme is to try to identify the barriers to learning within the school and community environments and look collaboratively at ways of addressing and supporting these learners within the mainstream schooling system.

2. Placing the programme into the general inclusion context - White Paper 6

Buzz - What does inclusion mean to you?

Introduce concept of barriers to learning.

Looking at barriers more closely - systemic, societal, classroom, intrinsic

Participants to give examples and then cluster them.

Brief overview of Education White Paper 6 - discussion

3. Focus group discussion/s

"What support do you think is needed to include learners with mild intellectual disability in the secondary school environment?"

APPENDIX E

EXCERPT FROM TRANSCRIPT FROM TEACHERS' FOCUS GROUP AT PROGRAMME INITIATION

E The thinking is that once the learner has been accepted into the school it now becomes the school's responsibility to teach and educate that learner - the parent is not involved at all - the main reason for parents sending their children to our school - that is Xhosa speakers - is that they want their children to learn English or Afrikaans. - and that is where it stops - there is no parental support or involvement and also some of those learners do not have parents - we have a Grade 8 girl who lives with her boyfriend - so it is a totally different family structure and that impacts also...

G People come from the Eastern Cape - parents stay there or parents are somewhere in the Western Cape but the parents themselves don't have adequate accommodation - the child often lives with an aunt or an uncle but the aunt or uncle doesn't really take responsibility for that child and when you try to make contact - then we discover that the person who registered the child - it seems like you pick someone up along the way - just come and sign for me and that's it.

T But we need to state that the language issue, especially as far as Xhosa is concerned is only one of the barriers. We have many Afrikaans and English speaking learners who are so weak that you cannot hold a conversation with them in their mother tongue - you don't understand a word they are saying - I am thinking of the boy I spoke to just now - I had no idea what he was saying and he is in Grade 8 - so it is a general problem. If you look at parent involvement we find it throughout, across all language groups that parents are not involved. Because the parents believe that it is the school's responsibility to educate - they have no role to play.

E Economically also - our children come from very poor economic backgrounds so of course that means that they are not exposed to things like children who have magazines and books laying around are exposed to. Also I think that drugs - really this is a big issue. It is an accepted norm, even the learner who does not want to take drugs will never criticise those that do. They do not take a stand because it is so common - it becomes so common.

APPENDIX F

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION TO EMDC BROAD MANAGEMENT

EMDC SECONDARY SCHOOL INCLUSION PROJECT

How can we support secondary schools to respond creatively and comprehensively to learning differences?

BACKGROUND SITUATION

- Of 600+ applicants to a local School of Skills in January 2003 only 200 learners were accepted.
- The remaining 400 learners from primary schools spread across the EMDC had been identified as experiencing a range of barriers to learning.
- These barriers would prevent them from engaging with the curriculum as currently delivered in Grade 8. These learners would receive little or no support.
- These learners were at risk of becoming part of the "out of school youth" to which White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001) refers. They had the right to be able to participate in self development and further skill acquisition which would enable them to gain employment and participate productively in a democratic society, but the education system was unable to provide them with the opportunity to do so.

INITIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL INCLUSION PROJECT – CENTRAL EMDC

- The SLES team discussed this challenge and possible interventions over a period of some months during 2002.
- In October 2002 the SLES team decided to initiate a programme where learners could be referred to six secondary schools where some learning support would be provided. A group of people came together to coordinate, develop, implement and monitor the programme.
- It was recognised that this programme could be usefully guided by the principles enshrined in White Paper 6 and its commitment to building a more inclusive education and training system.
- Group members brought different skills to the programme and an initial need was to orient the various schools to an inclusive approach and track the process of identifying and supporting the learners.
- A number of secondary schools were approached about their possible participation in the project. Criteria for participation were: the school served areas of high socio-economic need from which School of Skill applicants could have been drawn, was functioning reasonably well, and was willing to be a part of the project.

WHICH SCHOOLS, WHICH TEACHERS?

TWO SCHOOLS IN THREE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

- 4 learning support teachers based at various neighbouring primary schools were each approached to support one of the secondary schools on a part-time basis
- 2 teachers in excess, with experience of teaching secondary school learners in specialised secondary schools, were approached to support the remaining 2 project schools

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

- Offer an alternative to learners who did not access a School of Skills
- Introduce the concepts of inclusion and “barriers to learning” in the context of White Paper 6, the importance of whole school involvement and support and school-community links
- Gain insight into and raise awareness of the various barriers to learning existing in secondary schools, particularly in the Senior Phase
- Reflect upon and understand the current situation of learners within the broader educational context
- Explore the possibility of using an adapted curriculum in mainstream secondary schools, particularly with a view to vocational preparation of learners
- Form collaborative relationships with teachers and principals at secondary schools to promote ongoing evaluation and reflection and develop problem solving capacities
- Explore and develop different models for support in secondary schools, as well as outside sources of support
- Reduce the likelihood of drop out in the senior phase

PROJECT PROCESS

- Oct/Nov 2002 – schools were approached to express willingness to participate in project.
- 1st term 2003 – 6 participating schools were orientated to the project via a workshop with whole staff. Concepts of inclusive education and barriers to learning were introduced; schools were asked to identify barriers within their school, as well as to consider strengths and possible sources of support. Schools were encouraged to establish TST’s.
- 1st term 2003 – learning support teachers and school personnel identified learners in need of support

PROJECT PROCESS - CONTINUED

- 2ND term 2003 – meeting with principals and senior staff from the 6 schools provided an opportunity for sharing and identifying possible strategies within the project. Issues of assessment, stigma, repeating, language & literacy were raised.
- Ongoing, regular meetings have been held with the learning support teachers and learning support facilitators to monitor and discuss what was happening in the various schools, as well as plan strategies for support.
- Other members of the EMDC, such as curriculum advisors, circuit managers, ABET specialist and assessment coordinator, have been engaged in discussions as the project has uncovered the need for further collaboration.

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED

- Part-time withdrawal of learners by learning support teachers for literacy enrichment activities
- Liaison with subject teachers re curriculum to support some activities in withdrawal periods
- TST recommended as problem-solving forum in school
- Some older learners transferred to ABET centres
- Workshop on literacy development with older learners run for learning support teachers and grade 8 & 9 educators
- Work-skills exposure programme piloted at School of Skills for a group of learners – 1 day per week for 5 weeks
- Assessment strategies explored

SCHOOL SELF ASSESSMENTS

STRENGTHS	***CHALLENGES***
• Extra Mural programmes • Teacher commitment • Peer mediation programmes • Leadership programmes • Awareness of socio-economic challenges	• Third Language learners • Cultural misunderstandings • Socio-economic barriers e.g. poverty, substance abuse, gangsterism, teenage pregnancies, lack of work ethic • Teachers not seen as role models • Low literacy levels • Lack of parental involvement • Over age learners

FINDINGS/SITUATIONAL ANALYSES

- Very few of the original School of Skills fallout enrolled at these schools
- Many learners experiencing barriers form part of the natural intake of these schools, and are in many cases academically weaker than the learners who had applied to the school of skills
- Socio-economic factors play a crucial role in the presence of learning barriers or deficits
- Many learners from the Eastern Cape and Cape Town Black Townships travel extensive distances to attend these schools - three of the schools serve learners from outside the immediate community
- Because of the above, language mismatch plays a significant role in the existence of learning barriers
- That it is not unusual to find learners who are over the average age of their grade
- Literacy levels in Grade 8 and Grade 9 are worryingly low
- Teachers feel ill-equipped to assist learners who are unable to engage in the given secondary school curriculum
- That schools anticipate and even plan for drop-out of learners after grades 8 & 9
- That emotional counseling is an integral need in terms of support to these learners

LEARNINGS THUS FAR

- That the mismatch between the primary language of learners and the language of teaching & learning in schools plays a significant role in the existence of learning barriers in a growing number of schools
- That the secondary school curriculum is largely inaccessible to learners who have not achieved a certain level of literacy
- School considers themselves measured by matric results alone and this influences the way schools organise their classes and prioritize their efforts
- That the more practically orientated learning areas of the curriculum are allocated a lower percentage of time than the more traditional academic subjects
- That secondary school, as well as intermediate phase teachers need training in how to mediate learning, and especially reading skills, to learners
- That schools are in touch with the barriers & challenges in their schools, but feel disempowered in terms of their ability to address them learners
- Many learners need a more practical orientation to learning – to access learning through doing
- That the stigma attached to needing learning support is an issue which needs to be addressed seriously and sensitively when supporting adolescent learners
- That lack of parental involvement in schools is a major stumbling block which is often seen as insurmountable by schools
- Not enough attention is given to identifying strengths and vocational interest of learners
- Learners are often assumed to have intrinsic learning barriers when in fact their barriers are largely due to external factors
- Many of these learners are not going to make it into the FET band even with concentrated support

This appears not to have been addressed in any policy documents

QUESTIONS???

This project has revealed wider issues which are beyond the scope of a programme in 6 schools and SLES alone.

- How can we cooperatively support schools to respond creatively and comprehensively to learning differences?
- How can the provision of learning support become part of Whole School Development and school development plans?
- How can the EMDC as a whole and in particular the MFT's collaborate in assisting schools to respond some of these many challenges?
- How can we promote the culture that schools are for all learners and that support is an integral part of this?

SUGGESTED WAY FORWARD

- EMDC integrates the learnings from this project into planning for Whole School Development – MFT's ?
- Literacy Intervention for all Learning Area teachers in the Intermediate Phase. Teachers are assisted in how to respond to learners at their level and to scaffold the reading/writing process. Those schools that scored lowest on the systemic evaluation are targeted first. Schools that scored higher in systemic evaluation are studied for best practice and encouraged to network with other schools.
- Explore the possibility of the adoption of an adapted curriculum in mainstream secondary schools. ABET, alternative vocational skills based GETC for those learners who for whatever reason are not able to access the present curriculum.

SUGGESTED WAY FORWARD

- EMDC support for multilingual language learning practices in secondary school
- Give high priority to developing and assisting TST's in exploring support strategies for both individuals and groups of learners
- Fast track the development of School of Skills as a resource centre

REVIEW – END 2003

- Stigma associated with learning support is still a problem – feeling that more groundwork should be done with learner attitudes and that the role of the class teacher was critical in this regard " I am saying that the stigma towards the learning support classes can be changed".
- Poverty is considered to be a major barrier in allowing learners to access ABET and FET facilities and enabling parental involvement. The CTA is seen to be unfair towards learners who have little resources at home and this places additional burdens on teachers in poor areas as they have to provide the resources at school – both practical and time based.
- Written feedback about the project process often does not reach the staff members.
- That the need for counseling is great and that learners who have received some counseling often improve in their attitude and work ethic.
- Language issues are major barriers – both in the schools where learners come from predominantly outside the community of the school and schools serving their immediate communities – the move from Afrikaans to English in some communities is seen to represent an upwards class shift – " If they rise from here, then they are all English speaking" - learners who speak Afrikaans are seen as having more barriers to learning than English speakers . Afrikaans is a major barrier to many Black learners.
- Children who can't read in secondary school are seen as too much of a burden to teachers "I think, oh my God, I can't cope with this now – you know I must get on (with the curriculum)….most teachers just forget about those children"
- That there is a huge need for in-service training to teach basic literacy and time given to allow learners to engage in an intensive literacy programme.
- That many learners are expected to assume adult duties at home and find conforming to class discipline difficult.
- That the weighting of subjects does not allow learners with more practically oriented abilities to gain enough skills and self confidence in their areas of strength.

- That teachers perceive curriculum advisors to be only interested in the delivery of their expectations in their learning area and are not interested in the whole child "They put a lot of demands on us in terms of what they want without looking at the child"
- Some Circuit Managers force schools who are already struggling to cope with their learner population to take in learners who have been expelled from other schools and do not offer any support for these learners.
- That there is a huge drug problem in secondary schools – dagga is commonplace in younger learners – the older learners 'graduate' to 'Tic".
- That there is a misconception about learners who need more time and that learners are sent to secondary school from primary schools during the second term.
- That the Department often misplaces referral forms and is generally slow to respond to requests which involve a paper trail.
- TST's have not been introduced in most secondary schools.

APPENDIX G

EXCERPT FROM TRANSCRIPT OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS' MEETING DURING FIRST CYCLE OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

S: Well I'll go first and I will just tell you about how I feel about the staff - I've been there for four months now and I still feel like I am a total outsider - um I walk into the staff room and it is a similar setup to this where they all have their own desks and they are all busy working and marking and I walk in and some people will look up and say "hello" and carry on and I stand there like a twit because I don't have a seat or a chair and I am there for twenty minutes and nobody says "Make yourself a cup of tea." I see the cups are there and I am scared to go because I think that well, now I am not going to say anything else and I walk out. Sometimes I have actually sat in the car just making call on my cell phone or reading a book or whatever or I go and talk to the secretary who is very friendly - at least there is someone to talk to ...

C: Are they any learners that you feel you have reached?

S: Well yes. But you can see what is going on in the classes - it is an eye opener. I really feel sorry for the educators and also for some of those learners just sitting there - because they are learning nothing and the teachers are not interested in them really - they are just sitting at the back.

M: Actually the teachers don't have the time to be honest - the teachers in the classroom - and many of these learners actually exploit the situation - they have actually become quite adept and um exploiting the situation within the classroom, knowing that there are 40 odd of them, hiding behind the others so that the teacher doesn't pick up that look "I have difficulties in reading or spelling or whatever" and at the end of the day the teacher only realizes when the teacher takes in all the workbooks and "Oh, so and so hasn't handed in" and a few weeks later "Oh, the same one hasn't handed in" and then the teacher only becomes aware that this learner cannot cope. They become professional at hiding behind the others.

APPENDIX H

LETTER FROM EDUCATOR TO AN EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY

Subject: Fw: Issues teachers at the chalkface that needs to be addressed

----- Original Message -----
From:
To:
Sent: Wednesday, September 08, 2004 9:23 PM
Subject: Issues teachers at the chalkface that needs to be addressed

Sir,

This letter's intention is to facilitate the Western Cape Education Department to address the issues teachers at the socio-economically disadvantaged schools on the Cape Flats are facing daily. We are struggling to stay mentally and emotionally healthy despite the health hazards (with reference to the Occupational Health & Safety Act) that is an integral part of the schools serving poor communities. Consequently, learners are imbedded in a counter-school culture of which hunger, poverty, absent parenting, gangsterism, crime, violence and drug abuse is a way of life.

This impacts negatively on the teacher's working environment and morale. To illustrate the point, I want to cite my own school as a case study.

In grade 8A there are currently 60 learners of which ten are "More Time Needed" cases from last year. These repeaters are absent frequently, bunks, do not hand in portfolio pieces and when they are in class, they cause major disruptions through physical abuse
of their peers and bullying tactics. About half of my contact time is spent struggling to get the learners in the big classes to listen to me. There is no self-discipline, nor respect for the teacher!

The result was that appromately only eight learners "passed" their portfolio in both June and September 2004 (Afrikaans Hooftaal) - similar trends are noticable with the other learning areas.

The issue at the heart of the matter is the working conditions of teachers. More specifically in this instance, the need for smaller classes and teacher assistants to deal with the management of portfolios for 260 learners (I am teaching grade 8A - 60 learners; grade 9A & 9B - 80 learners; gr. 10 - 60 learners; gr.11 - 41 learners & gr. 12 - 26 learners.) The great disparity between the number of learners in gr. 8 & 12 points to the large number of learners that drops out and adds to the problem of juvenile delinquency.

Thus, the issue of promoting learners to the next grade needs to be revisited as this is at the root of the problem. The problem is transferred to the next grade and gets worst with the passing of time.

The petition is therefore, to reprioritise HOW the education department is spending its money. Second, it is neccesary to show teachers that money will be invested to address the issues that will enable them (the teachers) to be more effective in the classroom. This, I believe, is at the heart of delivering a Quality Education.

Finally, it is not fair of the education to impose such a lot of changes on teachers in such a short period. I am referring the implementation of OBE, the FET and the IQMS in short succession. The time frames must take into consideration that it takes time for teachers to adjust to 'another way of delivering education'. We are not even coping with OBE in grades 8 & 9 (the issue of designing learning programmes, the longer work day, more administrative work and meetings - are still problematic.) Yet the department expects its employees to grapple with the IQMS and FET.

Please education managers - these are the REAL issues in education that needs to be prioritised.

From: A public servant striving to be an agent of & for social change...

APPENDIX I

LETTER FROM PRINCIPAL CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNSELLING SKILLS OF THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER

19 November 2003

SUPPORT CLINIC
ATTENTION:

We, the members of the High TST would like to convey our heartfelt appreciation to Mrs for the sterling work done in counseling our learners this year.

The situation at High looked bleak to us as educators, because we do not have the necessary training and expertise to deal with the growing socio-economic, behavioural and emotional problems of our learners.

Then, along came Mrs who has proven to be an angel with the necessary patience, love and expertise. She empowered many learners to rise above the hard blow that life has to offer. Throughout this year, she counseled at least five to eight learners per week, did crisis intervention in classes, assisted in de-stressing matriculants as well as group counseling for substance abusers. Mrs went as far as counseling families of our learners in her own time and for this the family of the late Mrs – mother of (Grade 8) and (Grade 10) are very grateful.

Mrs wonderful manner and methods of counseling was and is without a doubt effective. This was proven by the change of attitude in our learners whom she had counseled. These learners became confident, self-assertive and improved in their schoolwork. Some of these learners took it a step further and referred other learners and friends directly to Mrs They were found waiting for her in the school foyer on a Tuesday and Thursday.

We hope to maintain the relationship with Mrs with the approval of the Support Clinic.

Thank you for all your support.

PRINCIPAL

HIGH SCHOOL
Cape Education Department