AN EVALUATION OF A LEARNING SUPPORT MODEL IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE WEST COAST/WINELANDS AREA

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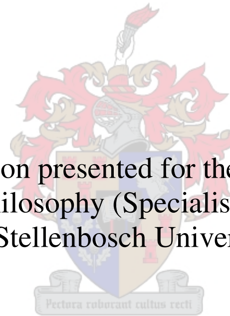

Dissertation presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Specialised Education)
at Stellenbosch University

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December 2008

DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that the success of inclusive education lies within the provision of adequate support for learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools as well as in the changing roles of teachers and support services staff. In South Africa, the provincial Western Cape Education Department (WCED) responded to the implementation of inclusive education by introducing a learning support model that was designed to systemically deal with barriers to learning in some primary schools in the province.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the learning support model that was introduced in some primary schools in the Western Cape with specific reference to schools within the West Coast/Winelands district. The evaluation was located in a comprehensive mixed methods research design, which focused on the evaluation of both process and outcomes of the learning support model.

The evaluation was done sequentially in three phases: Phase one consisted of a comprehensive literature review. Phase two focused on both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (through questionnaires containing both closed- and open-ended questions). The focus in Phase three was on follow up semi-structured focus group interviews.

The participants were drawn from all primary schools situated within the boundaries of the West Coast/Winelands district and where the services of a learning support teacher (full-time or itinerant) were available. While learning support teachers were selected through purposive sampling, mainstream teachers were systematically selected. The four primary schools and learning support teachers that participated in the focus group interviews were systematically selected.

Findings indicate that the current learning support model used in the West Coast/Winelands area does not provide effective learning support to all learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream primary schools. Constraints that contribute to this situation can be identified on all levels of the education system including the macro and micro systems. By mapping the findings from the data against the literature review, the researcher recommends that the provision of learning support should be addressed systemically from within a whole-school approach, taking into account local contextual factors impacting on the school.

In conclusion a model for the improvement of learning support service delivery within a whole-school approach is provided.

OPSOMMING

Navorsing bewys dat die sukses van inklusiewe onderwys lê in die voorsiening van voldoende ondersteuning in hoofstroomskole aan leerders wat leerstoornisse ervaar sowel as in die veranderende rolle van onderwysers en ondersteuningsdienstepersoneel. In reaksie op die implementering van inklusiewe onderwys het die provinsiale Wes-Kaapse Onderwysdepartement (WKOD) in Suid Afrika ’n leerondersteuningsmodel bekend gestel wat ontwerp is om in sommige skole in die provinsie leerstoornisse sistemies aan te pak.

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die leerondersteuningsmodel te evalueer wat in sommige laerskole in die Wes-Kaap bekendgestel is, spesifiek skole binne die Weskus/Wynland-area. In die ontwerp vir die evaluering is daar van omvattende hibriede metodes gebruik gemaak en die evaluering het op beide die proses en die uitkomste van die leerondersteuningsmodel gefokus.

Hierdie evaluering het in drie opeenvolgende fases gevolg. Fase een het uit ’n omvattende literatuuroorsig bestaan. Die fokus van fase twee was op beide kwantitatiewe sowel as kwalitatiewe data versameling en analise (deur vraelyste wat beide oop en geslote vrae ingesluit het). Fase drie het gefokus op opvolg semi-gestruktureerde fokusgroeponderhoude.

Die deelnemers is verkry vanuit alle laerskole binne die grense van die Weskus/Wynland-distrik en waar die dienste van leerondersteuningsopvoeders (vaste of rondreisende personeel) beskikbaar is. Seleksie van die leerondersteuningsopvoeders is deur middel van doelbewuste steekproeftrekking gedoen, terwyl die hoofstroomopvoeders deur middel van ’n ewekansige steekproef geselekteer is. Die vier laerskole en die leerondersteuningsopvoeders wat aan die fokusgroeponderhoude deelgeneem het, is ook deur middel van ’n sistematiese steekproef geselekteer.

Bevindinge toon dat die huidige leerondersteuningsmodel wat in die Weskus/Wynland-distrik gebruik word nie effektiewe leerondersteuning bied aan leerders wat leerstoornisse ervaar in hoofstroomlaerskole nie. Beperkinge wat tot hierdie situasie bydra is op alle vlakke van die onderwyssisteem insluitende die makro en mikro sisteme, geïdentifiseer. Nadat die bevindinge teen die literatuuroorsig gemeet is, stel die navorser voor dat leerondersteuning sistemies binne ’n heelskoolbenadering aangespreek behoort te word met inagneming van die plaaslike kontekstuele faktore wat ’n impak op die skool het.

Ten slotte word ’n model verskaf vir verbeterde leerondersteuningsdienslewering binne ’n heelskoolbenadering.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my father, Joseph (Charles) Challens, who is constantly encouraging all children to break through the invisible barriers imposed on them through an unjust system and my mother, Mary (Joyce) Challens, who together with my father taught us the value of a loving and supportive home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the contributions made by the following people and express my sincere appreciation:

- Professor Petra Engelbrecht for her constant support, guidance and constructive critique throughout this study.
- Professor Estelle Swart for sharing her expertise and guidance throughout this study.
- My colleagues, learning support advisors in the West Coast/Winelands EMDC, who assisted in collecting questionnaires.
- Dr. Leon de Jager for his support.
- My colleagues at the office and at schools in Circuit 4 who have shown a keen interest and encouraged me during the course of this study.
- Learning support and mainstream primary school teachers in the West Coast/Winelands EMDC who made this dissertation possible by contributing their time and sharing their experiences with me.
- Ms Maryke Hunter-Hüsselman for assistance with the questionnaires and data analysis.
- Mrs Ella Belcher for language editing.
- Ms Lize Vorster for technical formatting.
- Ms Nafia Botha for her relentless support and help throughout this study.
- Mr. PN. Mullineux for help with translation of the questionnaires.
- My sister, Verina Song, for help with some graphic design.
- My husband, William, for his loving support and encouragement throughout this study.
- My children, Nicole, Lorissa and especially William jr, who had to endure a busy mother.
- My parents, brother and sisters for their unwavering support and prayers, not only throughout the course of this study, but at all times in my life.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Lorna Martha Dreyer December 2008

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KEYWORDS

Inclusion

Inclusive education

Learning support

Learning difficulties

Learners experiencing barriers to learning

Learning support model

Learning support teacher

Mainstream teachers

ABBREVIATIONS

LST: Learning Support Teachers

MST: Mainstream Teachers

TST: Teacher Support Teams

EST: Educational Support Team

ILST: Institution Level Support Team

DBST: District Based Support Team

WCED: Western Cape Education Department

EMDC: Education, Management and Development Centre

SLES: Specialised Learner and Educator Support

LSEN: Learners with Special Educational Needs

SNE: Special Needs Education

ELSEN: Education of Learners with Special Educational Needs

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUALISATION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since South Africa embarked on the journey into democracy more than ten years ago, the country has been facing many challenges in an attempt to provide quality education for all. The efforts to implement outcomes-based education (Department of Education, 2001) brought about the challenge to respond to the diverse learning needs in our classrooms and schools. As in many other countries, the debate on inclusive education in South Africa is inextricably linked to the processes of democratisation and social restructuring. The democratic Constitution (RSA, 1996) enshrines the principles of equality, access and the right of every learner to receive quality education.

The establishment of an inclusive education system has profound implications for the provision and delivery of learning support in mainstream classrooms. The challenge for learning support services lies in the adaptation of the role and nature of learning support as well as the input of mainstream personnel to accommodate the new system (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:315). This challenge explicitly implies a paradigmatic shift away from the traditional narrow focus on specific categories of disabilities, moving towards a human rights model advocating an alternative view of support to learners who experience barriers to learning (Hay, 2003:135). The progression from a segregated, medical model approach to an inclusive model, where human rights are central in education and support is a highly emotive issue and may be experienced as overwhelming. In the South African context this paradigm shift is further complicated by multiple and simultaneous changes within society and education. Thus far, the structural changes within the education support services in South Africa have been characterised by a gradual developmental process or evolution. (This process is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3).

In the international arena, the adoption of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in 1994 is a culmination of several incentives to recognise the human rights of persons with disabilities. These include the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All and the many United Nations declarations which led to the 1993 United Nations Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 1994:vii). The Salamanca Statement distinctly states that inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercising of human rights.

However, many difficulties, dilemmas and contradictions (Vlachou, 2004:3) accompany the introduction of inclusive education. On the one hand advocacy groups against inclusive education express their reservations regarding the optimal provision of support to provide quality education for learners who experience barriers to learning (UNESCO, 2004a:1). They fear possible negative effects on these learners, on their peers in mainstream schools and on special school personnel. On the other hand, the advocates of inclusive education believe that educating all learners, regardless of barriers to learning, would be best served by receiving their education in mainstream education settings (Wilson, 1999:119). The increasing number of publications, workshops and policy papers supports this way of thinking (UNESCO, 2004a:1).

In Chapter 2 the various approaches countries have adopted towards implementing inclusive education and the provision of learning support are discussed. The United Nations (UN) have categorised countries according to their level of human development as high, medium and low level of human development ([http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_2006_tables.pdf]). This categorisation is used to explain how different countries have adopted policy on and implemented inclusive education. Approaches towards the implementation of inclusive education vary from a focus on including learners previously referred to special schools into mainstream schools, and providing them with support through well-established and well-resourced special education systems, to including all learners previously excluded from attending school. Broadly defined, the latter group includes learners previously excluded on the basis of various contextual factors such as gender disparities, social and economic status, geographic location and disability. Because of the political heritage and discrepancies in the provision of support and other contextual factors, South Africa is faced with challenges from both perspectives. The all-encompassing term “barriers to learning” is therefore used to refer to a diverse range of factors, which may lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity and in turn may lead to learning breakdown or the prevention of learners accessing educational provision (Department of Education, 1997a).

South Africa opted for addressing the issue of inclusive education systemically. According to Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (Building an inclusive education and training system) (Department of Education, 2001) the Department of Education envisions the strengthening of education support services through the establishment of district-based support teams (DBST) and institutional level support teams (ILST). In addition, many wealthier countries specialist teachers and teaching assistants are appointed to help address the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning, and to support and promote inclusive education in mainstream classrooms. The literature reveals that the traditional role of these specialist teachers

(learning support teachers) has been undergoing a number of transformations in recent years to align itself with the move towards inclusive schools, by playing a proactive role in building the capacity of mainstream teachers to address and overcome barriers to learning and participation in mainstream classrooms (Forlin, 2001:83).

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) responded to the transformation in education, and specifically to the needs of learners in mainstream classrooms, by introducing a learning support model, designed to systemically address barriers to learning in schools. As the focus of inclusive education in South Africa is on access, equity and the redress of the inequalities of the past, the approach is subsequently wider than simply including learners with disabilities in the mainstream. This learning support model should therefore be seen within the broader context of the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. The basis for this model is that it should facilitate participation, inclusivity and flexibility, and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3 (WCED, 2000). The WCED learning support model comprises four levels of support, depending on the degree of support needed. Learners experiencing learning difficulties constitute the largest group of learners who experience barriers to learning (Stakes & Hornby, 2000:10) and are generally accommodated in mainstream classes in South Africa.

At the first level of the learning support model, the mainstream teachers are thus increasingly expected to educate learners experiencing learning difficulties in the mainstream classroom. Mainstream teachers are consequently challenged and expected to be empowered and to "improve their skills and knowledge and develop new ones" (Department of Education, 2001:18). The continuous development of teachers thus has to include the ability to:

> provide multi-level classroom instruction so that educators can prepare main lessons with variations that are responsive to individual learner needs; co-operative learning; curriculum enrichment; and dealing with learners with behavioural problems (Department of Education, 2001:18).

This is in line with the Salamanca Statement that suggests that mainstream schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all (UNESCO, 1994: vii-x). It further supports the curriculum view of providing learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in the context of the mainstream curriculum (Vislie, 2003; Tilstone *et al*. 2000; Stakes & Hornby, 2000; Sands *et al*. 2000; Ainscow, 2001) as discussed in 2.5.1. This way of looking at inclusive education encourages the notion that the curriculum can be adapted to respond to all learners' needs in the classroom.

As expected of mainstream teachers, the role and function of education support personnel must be redefined in terms of the policy of inclusive education. In the WCED the current group of learning support teachers generally comes from the previous system of special, remedial and adaptation classes. The Education White Paper 6 states that education support personnel will have to be oriented and trained to provide support within the whole system to address the full range of learning support needs. In order to achieve this vision, the focus will have to be on:

teaching and learning factors, and emphasis will be placed on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners; on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs; and on adaptation of and support systems available in the classroom (Department of Education, 2001:9).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africa is facing a daunting challenge in the midst of the global move towards inclusive education and away from the stigmatising medical approach to teaching learners with learning barriers in separate educational settings. Providing quality education to all in South Africa remains a controversial issue concerning the provision and delivery of learning support.

Teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in the mainstream implies the use of a model that includes adaptive and supportive services (Wong, Pearson & Lo, 2004:263). The WCED has developed such a model, known as the Learning Support Model. Various anecdotal opinions have been expressed on this model regarding its success. Although the model is almost constantly being shaped with regard to the provision and management of learning support teachers to redress the inequalities of the past it has not been evaluated in depth to establish the effectiveness and constraints of learning support rendered through this model. In order to achieve this goal it is therefore important that the WCED Learning Support Model be evaluated against the background of the following factors impacting on it:

- The policy of inclusive education internationally, as well as within the South African context.
- Teachers' qualifications, experience and perceptions of learning support, and their ability to provide learning support within the fist level of support in the mainstream classroom.
- Learning support teachers' qualifications, experience and perceptions of learning support and their ability to provide learning support.
- Whole school development within an ecosystemic approach.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The three empirical research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How effective is the Learning Support Model used in the West Coast/Winelands area?
2. What are the constraints to effective service delivery experienced within the model?
3. What are the implications for the improvement of the learning support model?

The first objective of this research is to **evaluate** the effectiveness of the Learning Support Model that was introduced in some primary schools in the Western Cape, with specific reference to schools within the West Coast/Winelands Education, Management and Development Centre (EMDC)[1]. Priority is given to both levels one and two of the model (see 3.5), since these are the two levels of support provided in mainstream primary schools.

The second objective is to propose **recommendations** and a **model** for the improvement of service delivery to learners experiencing barriers to learning in the mainstream from an ecosystemic perspective. These recommendations and model will be based on answers elicited from questionnaires and focus-group interviews. The vision is that these recommendations and model will contribute to the promotion of the provision and delivery of learning support by using a whole school developmental approach.

As mentioned earlier, this study focuses on the first two levels of support of the model, i.e. support in the mainstream classroom and the withdrawal of small groups for additional support.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory is defined as a framework that orders and makes connections between currently known observations and information (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002: 387). Swart and Pettipher (2005: 9) define theory as a "set of ideas, assumptions and concepts ordered in such a way that it tells us about the world, ourselves or an aspect of reality". Although theory cannot capture the full complexity of life, it does offer frameworks for understanding and interpreting experience and suggests particular courses of action. Theories are not fixed, but are constantly developing as people actively engage with them (Donald *et al.* 2002: 387). However, theory can provide a set of organised principles, which, together with contextual knowledge, can generate insights into particular situations.

[1] See Appendix A for a map of the West Coast / Winelands EMDC in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

The challenge that the education system, abroad and specifically in South Africa, faces, is to

> … understand the complexity of the influences, interactions and interrelationships between the individual learner and multiple other systems that are connected to the learner from an ecological systems theory or systems change perspective (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 9).

As stated in 1.3 and later discussed in 4.3.2, the purpose of this study is to establish whether the learning support model introduced into primary schools is effectively implemented and of real benefit to the learners at whom it is aimed. However, an evaluation of the program cannot be conducted successfully without placing the model within a specific context and considering the complexity of the interrelationships within the model, as well as between the model as a system and other systems within and outside the school system as a whole. Green (2001: 7) contends that parents, learners, teachers and policy makers all make sense of their own experiences from particular perspectives. It is therefore difficult to understand the values and actions of people if it is seen in isolation, divorced from the social context (Engelbrecht, 1999: 4).

The underlying epistemological assumption of this study is that people (teachers, learners, parents and learning support personnel), with their own frames of reference and perspectives, drive the learning support model. People are constantly engaged in constructing meaning that involves formal, intuitive and creative knowledge. These different perspectives can enrich and contribute to creative and novel solutions to human problems (Green, 2001:7). Therefore diverse reactions towards the efficiency of the learning support model should be expected and valued. The researcher thus acknowledges the diverse ways of knowing.

The learning support model should further be seen as part of the global trend toward full inclusion. Inclusion is part of a global agenda (Pijl *et al.* 1997), which in turn finds expression in education systems. In this sense inclusion is about change to improve the educational system for all learners (Grenot-Scheyer, Jubala, Bishop & Coots, 1996: 1; Mc Leskey & Waldron, 2000: 9). Schools are complex in nature and the different components are too interrelated and interdependent for isolated changes to occur. Provision for learners who experience barriers to learning raises issues that relate to the way schools operate as a whole (Stakes & Hornby, 2000: 117; Mc Leskey & Waldron, 2000: 9). It is thus very important to understand the learning support model as part of the whole school, as part of the community and the broader social environment, as well as part of the global debate and practice of inclusive education.

It is therefore important to have an explanatory framework within which the learning support model has to function. According to Engelbrecht (1999: 3)

> such an approach enables us to transcend the simple reduction of the movement towards inclusive education as a debate around problems of professional practice, and enables us to focus on a comprehensive, global framework which makes previous and current knowledge intelligible, simultaneously providing the foundation for future knowledge.

South Africa has embarked on transforming all aspects of the education system to promote education for all and to develop inclusive and supportive centres of learning. The focus on systemic changes, according to Bronfenbrenner (1992), proves to be an advantage towards attempts to view the provision of learning support in schools from an ecosystemic perspective. I am of the opinion that the model of ecosystemic interaction presented by Donald *et al.* (2002:55) gives further impetus to an ecosystemic approach to the provision of learning support in schools (see Fig. 1.1).

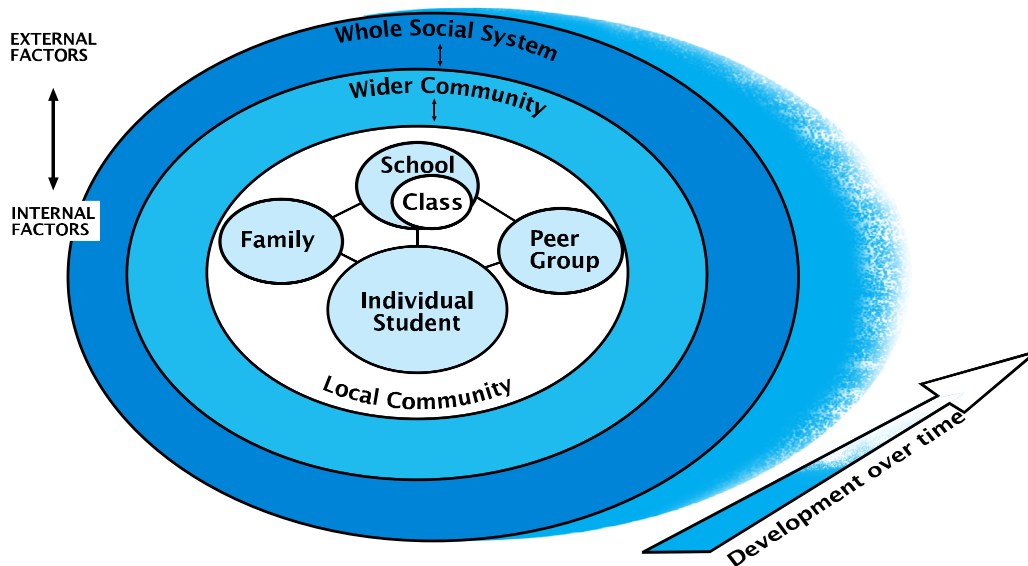


FIGURE 1.1: LEVELS OF SYSTEMS RELATED TO THE EDUCATION PROCESS (Donald *et al.* 2002:58).

This model provides a valuable contribution for understanding the interconnectedness of the individual learner and the challenges of addressing social issues and barriers to learning.

In agreement with the notion of interconnectedness of systems, the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (Department of Education, 2001:7) recognises that barriers to learning may arise from a range of factors from within the learner (internally). However, it is also realised that a number of factors in the system (externally) may contribute to creating the following barriers:

- negative attitudes to and stereotyping of differences;
- an inflexible curriculum;
- inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching;
- inappropriate communication;
- inaccessible and unsafe environments and building features;
- inappropriate and inadequate support services;
- inadequate policies and legislation;
- the non-recognition and non-involvement of parents and
- inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and teachers.

In the provision of learning support, cognisance should therefore be taken of all factors as they relate within the school as a system. Addressing the provision of learning support from an ecosystemic perspective provides insight into understanding the development of learners – both [2]holistically and in context. Secondly, it provides insight into understanding classrooms and schools by viewing them as systems in interaction with the broader social context. Thirdly, it also provides an understanding of how the origins, maintenance, and solutions to social issues, as well as the barriers to learning are caused by them, cannot be separated from the broader social context and the systems within it (Donald *et al*. 2002: 57-58).

By implication it is acknowledged that the different systems are interrelated and interdependent. Consequently, this constant dynamic interaction brings about inevitable forces of change, which cannot necessarily be predicted. To understand the value of learning support within the wider social context and in schools, it is imperative that the context set by socio-political developments in South Africa be taken into account. Its impact on the move towards inclusive education cannot go unrecognised.

In providing quality education for all learners it is furthermore important to consider the individual culture of each school and its capacity for change and development (Hopkins & Harris, 1997: 147). However, Ainscow (1998b: 70) argues that debates on school improvement largely exclude the learners experiencing barriers to learning. Ainscow attributes this to the fact that the fields of special needs education and that of school improvement have, traditionally, been treated separately. However, if the provision of learning support is viewed from an ecosystemic approach, learning support becomes a whole-school and therefore a mainstream issue. The provision of learning support and ensuring quality education for all learners cannot

[2] Holistically: defined as emphasising the whole and the interdependence of its parts.

remain the responsibility of a few individuals. It becomes the responsibility of the whole staff as they function within the subsystems of the school system.

Fleisch (2002: 96) conceptualises the nature of this dynamic interconnectedness of the ecosystemic approach in the following words: "school improvement projects must be explained in their political context. Again political contexts vary from the micro politics of the school to district / local government politics to the national scene". These three broad categories are not mutually exclusive. This conceptualisation correlates closely with the school as organisation as proposed by Sterling and Davidoff (2000: 46). The authors present the school as organisation situated within an external context. This context consists of the immediate community, the larger city, South Africa, and finally, the world (see Fig. 1.2).

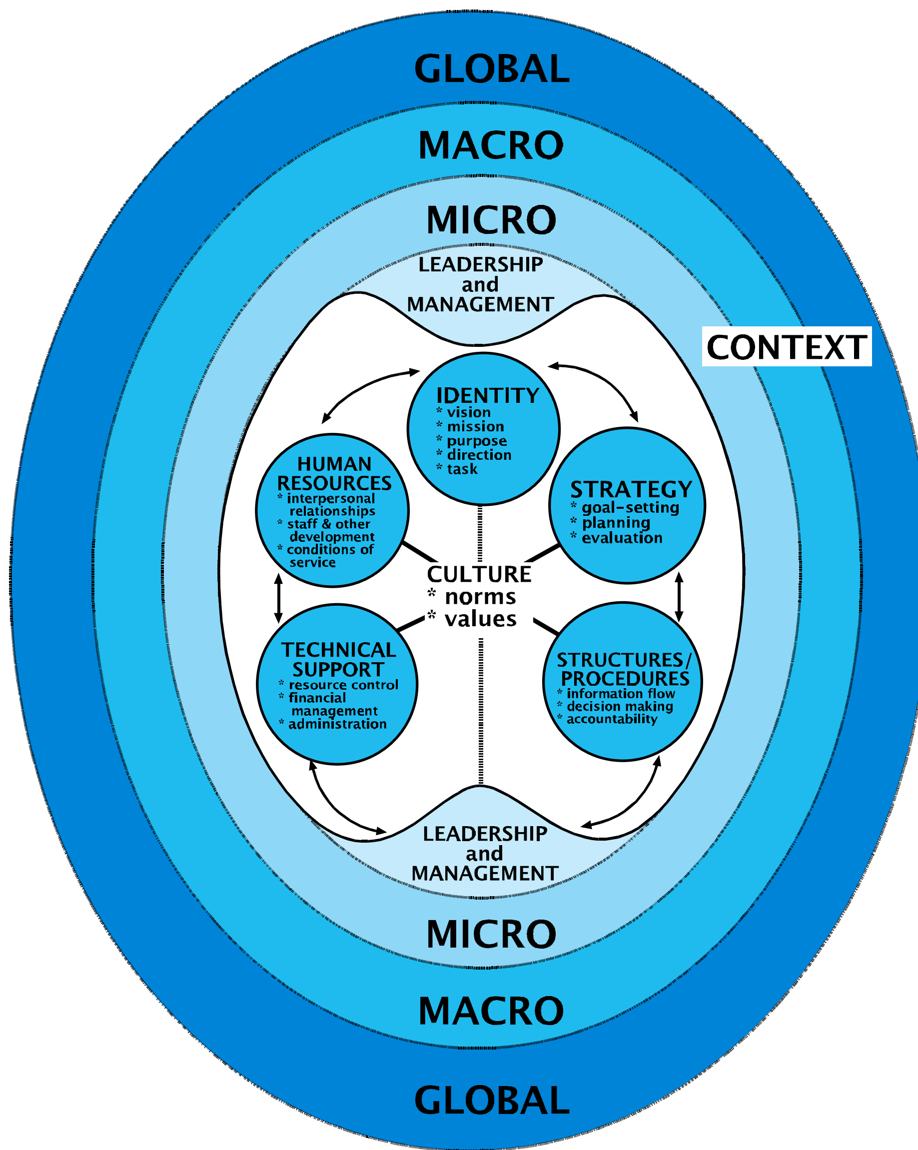


FIGURE 1.2: SCHOOL AS ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

(Sterling & Davidoff, 2000: 42)

The following graphic presentation (Fig. 1.3) is an adapted and expanded version of the "School as Organisation Framework" proposed by Sterling and Davidoff (2000: 42). This framework is proposed to view the learning support model in a whole-school context.

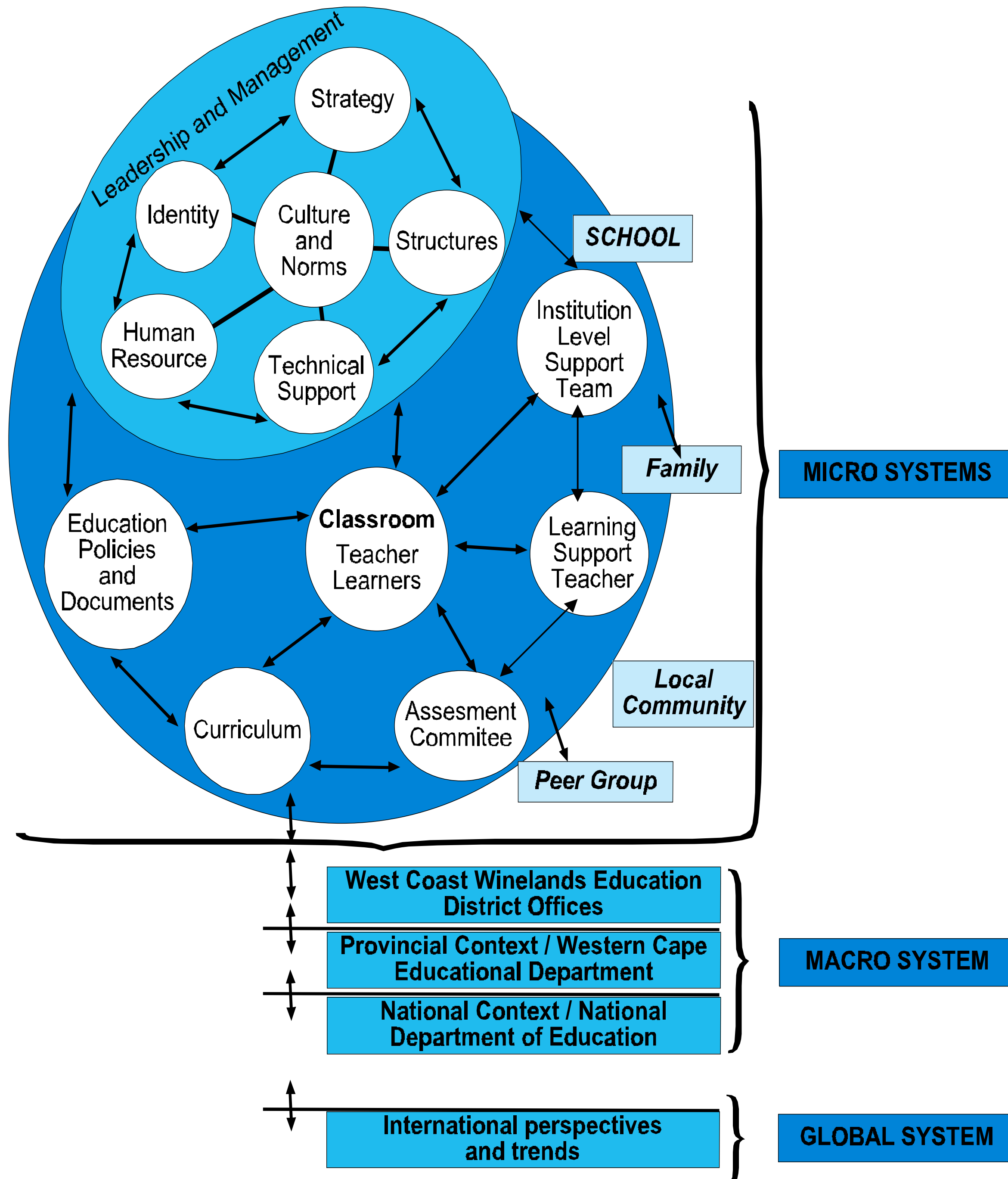


FIGURE 1.3: AN ECOSYSTEMIC MODEL FOR THE PROVISION OF LEARNING SUPPORT WITHIN A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

The **global system** is constituted of the international arena regarding international perspectives and trends in inclusive education and learning support. The global system can be seen as encompassing the "linkage and processes taking place between two or more settings […] in which events occur that influence processes within the immediate setting…" (Bronfenbrenner, 1992: 227). The Jomtien-, Salamanca- and Dakar conferences, as well as the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child, are evident of these influences on the South African movement towards inclusion in the broad sense, but of particular significance to inclusive education in the country. With regard to this study the global system thus relates to world issues concerning inclusive education and learning support provision.

The **macro system** constitutes of the national context in which the school is located (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000:49). The South African education system on a national level comprises the subsystems responsible for policy development and implementation. The National Department of Education is responsible for developing policies that also reflect the context of the country. Education White Paper 6 and other relevant policy documents are examples of this function. On the provincial and district levels initiatives are generated to implement and support these policies. Bronfenbrenner (1992: 227) defines the macro system as a system comprising micro systems and the corresponding interaction between them. In the South African context it will refer to the interaction between national, provincial and district education offices as the micro systems (subsystems) within the macro system.

The school as the **micro system** is further influenced by contextual factors encapsulated within the local community structures and organisations, as well as the family and peer groups that lie on the periphery of the school as a system. Within the school there are constant dynamic interactions between all the subsystems. The diagram (Fig. 1.3) displays a vibrant interaction between the classroom and the management, education policies, curriculum, institution level support team (ILST), assessment committee and the learning support teacher. These subsystems are constantly in interaction with each other. It is clear from the diagram that the school's culture and norms are at the centre of the leadership and management of the school. This culture and values will be evident in the accepted ways of thinking about inclusive education and the provision of learning support within a whole school approach. This value system permeates all subsystems that constitute the leadership and management and has a direct impact on the classroom and all the other systems in the school.

The strong move to viewing the education of learners, particularly those experiencing barriers to learning, from an ecosystemic perspective in South Africa is indicative of the revolutionary stage of a paradigm shift as discussed in 2.2.1 (Engelbrecht, 1999: 4; Naicker, 1999a: 23; Hay, 2003:

135; Donald *et al.* 2002: 55; Wiest & Kreil, 1996: 30). The ecosystemic approach is by nature holistic and according to Lewis (1998: 103) has already been successfully applied to special education. However, it is rather slow to take off. Porter and Lacey (2005: 33) predict that the ecological validity of studies and the exploration of its implications for service delivery would increase in time.

The development of inclusive school systems in South Africa enables us to ask crucial questions, such as whether the learning support model contributes to addressing the needs of all learners in a particular school.

1.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research paradigm and design

The philosophical paradigm underlying this research is pragmatic in nature (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Pragmatism is presented by various researchers (Patton, 2002: 71; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 16; Mertens, 2005: 26 & 294; Clarke, 1999: 89) as the underlying philosophical framework for a mixed methods design. As pragmatism is not committed to any one philosophy and reality (Creswell, 2003: 12; Patton, 2002: 71) it allows the researcher to draw on the underlying philosophical assumptions of both constructivism and postpositivism to conduct this study. These are elaborated on in chapter four.

"A mixed model design is one in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to answer the research questions in a single study" (Mertens, 2005: 292) and has particular value when a researcher is trying to solve a complex educational problem. A comprehensive mixed methods research design is therefore selected in order to focus on both process and outcomes evaluation of the Learning Support Model.

1.5.2 Methods of data collection

1.5.2.1 Literature review

The literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 provides a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual framework within which the data collected can be analysed and interpreted. The literature review allowed the researcher to map this study against international and national forms of the provision of learning support. It further also provides clarification on essential concepts in inclusive education and the delivery of learning support in mainstream schools. Specific literature regarding the design and methodology used in this study allows the researcher to structure the research within a pragmatic paradigm.

The conclusions drawn from the literature, in compliance with the empirical data collected and analysed, will be used to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the WCED Learning Support Model in the West Coast/Winelands district. The literature pertinent to this study is discussed in more detail in 4.4.2.1.

1.5.2.2 Questionnaires

Two questionnaires will be developed to measure the views and opinions of both learning support and mainstream teachers in order to evaluate this learning support model. Questionnaires will include both closed and open-ended questions. With the help of Learning Support Advisors they will be administered to participating learning support and mainstream teachers at the different service points within the West Coast/Winelands EMDC. The questionnaires will be pilot-tested to determine and ensure that the questions as well as the questionnaires are well structured so as to elicit valid responses, and not discourage respondents. Improvements will be made to the questionnaires before distributing them to respondents. The development and distribution of the questionnaires are discussed extensively in 4.4.2.2.

1.5.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured focus group interviews will be conducted with mainstream and learning support teachers. Interviews will be recorded if permission is granted. Where permission for recordings is not granted, extensive notes will be made. Interviewing is a valid part of research methodology and the procedure followed in this study is explained in more detail in 4.4.2.3.

1.5.3 Population sample

Participants will be drawn from schools in the West Coast/Winelands EMDC (Education, Management and Development Centre) (See Appendix A). The participants for this study will consist of learning support and mainstream teachers at schools that have the services of a learning support teacher. Most of these schools previously had a special, adaptation or remedial class. With the adoption of the WCED Learning Support Model, learners from these classes have been integrated into appropriate mainstream classes. In 36 of these schools, the learning support teachers are currently serving only one school (stationary). In the other 51 schools the learning support teacher serves two or more schools (itinerant). Currently learning support teachers serve a total of 87 schools in the West Coast/Winelands EMDC.

The motivation for the choice of sampling methods lies encapsulated in the mixed methods approach guiding this research. The current study made use of both non-probable, as well as

probability sampling methods. The procedures whereby samples were selected are explained in detail in Chapter 4.

1.5.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data by consolidating, reducing and interpreting verbal accounts, observations and information from documents (Merriam, 1998: 178). Quantitative data will be analysed with the help of the SPSS data analysis computer programme, while the process of content analysis will be used to analyse qualitative data. Data analysis is discussed in broader detail in Chapter 4.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical guidelines in research are needed to guard against possible harmful effects of research (Mertens, 1998). The researcher undertakes to ensure that the anticipated ethical guidelines are pursued. Permission to do the research will be sought from the Western Cape Department of Education. Participants in both the questionnaires and focus-group interviews will be informed that they are under no obligation to take part in the research, and that although the researcher has the consent of the WCED, participants are free to withdraw at any time if they so wish. Participants will be informed both verbally and in writing that the data collected will be anonymous, that they will be in no way be identified, and that their responses will be treated confidentially. The ethical concerns addressed in this research are elaborated upon in Chapter 4.

1.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity and reliability in the field of social science research is a very contentious issue. This is particularly true for mixed methods research. There is also a close relationship between reliability and validity. According to Neuman (2003: 186) these two concepts are usually complementary, but they can also be in conflict because although a measure may be reliable, there is no guarantee that what it measures will be valid.

With regard to evaluation studies Mertens (2005: 77) distinguishes three kinds of validity. These include methodological, interpersonal and consequential validity. According to Mertens methodological validity is concerned with the soundness of the methods of inquiry used with regard to measurement instruments, procedures and the logic of inquiry. Interpersonal validity relates to the soundness or trustworthiness of the understandings that eminate from "personal interactions" while "consequential validity refers to the soundness of change exerted on systems by the evaluation and the extent to which those changes are just". Neuman (2003: 185) refers to

validity in one word as “truthful”. In quantitative terms it depends on careful instrument construction and administration to ensure that it measures what is supposed to be measured (Patton, 2002: 14). The qualitative researcher is concerned with “giving a candid portrayal of social life that is due to the experiences of people [and processes] being studied” (Neuman, 2003: 185).

Reliability is also referred to as dependability or consistency (Neuman, 2003: 184). In qualitative research it refers to the “extent to which research findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 1998: 205). However, in social sciences it is difficult because the processes under study are not stable over time and human behaviour is in nature not static (Neuman, 2003: 184; Merriam, 1998: 205). For these reasons researchers who employ qualitative measures use a range of data sources and multiple measurement methods to adhere to the requirements for reliability.

It is however, important to acknowledge the highly controversial debate that surrounds the definition of validity and reliability of scholarly work that contains more than one methodology. In recent publications researchers (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003: Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006) have proposed different sets of terminology for the use of mixed methods studies. While Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) suggested the term “inference quality”, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) propose the term “legitimation” as opposed to the validity. It is thus clear that the concept of validity in mixed methods research has yet to be defined. This debate is elaborated on in 4.4.5.

Although qualitative and quantitative methods have different strengths and weaknesses, they “constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive strategies for research” (Patton, 2002: 14). This study will make use of both methods (qualitative and quantitative) in an attempt to ensure reliability and validity. Quantitative research addresses the issue of integrity and objectivity by relying on objective technology, such as numerical measurement, standard techniques and statistics, while qualitative research relies strongly on the personal integrity of the researcher. It does, however, also include a variety of checks on how the evidence is collected, such as detailed recording and checking of data. By using the mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis, the researcher will combine methods of both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure that the research activities are dependable and credible.

The researcher, being an official working within the WCED, endeavours to take extra precautions not to influence the outcome of the study.

1.8 ROLE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCHER

As an official working within the WCED with specific focus on learning support in the mainstream, the researcher is placed in a position that may raise ethical concerns. The researcher, as "human instrument" for gathering and analysing data as well as producing meaningful information, is "limited by being human and thus fallible as any other research instrument" (Merriam, 1998: 20). A greater priority of the mixed methods approach will be given to qualitative methodology. According to Patton (2002: 14) the credibility of qualitative research hinges to a large extent on the skill, competence and rigour of the investigator. Qualitative researchers also have personal contact with people and the situation under study. Therefore the critics of qualitative inquiry are concerned with the subjective nature of the approach. As objectivity is considered to be the strength of a scientific method, subjectivity is considered to be the antithesis of scientific inquiry (Patton, 2002: 50). Absolute objectivity, on the other hand, is "impossible to attain and of questionable desirability in the first place since they ignore the intrinsically social nature of and human purposes of research" (Patton, 2002: 50). Patton (2002) contends that the terms "subjectivity" and "objectivity" have become ideological ammunition in the methodological paradigms debate. However, any evaluation needs credibility to be useful, and therefore the strategies used in this evaluation will not "advocate biased distortion of data to serve the researcher's vested interest and prejudices" (Patton, 2002: 51). It is essential that honest, meaningful, credible and empirically supported findings are produced by the mixed methods approach used to conduct this evaluation.

In a qualitative study the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analysing data. The term "researcher" therefore refers to the project leader, interviewer, observer and evaluator. The "participants" include individuals or a group of people who are observed and/or questioned. The "research context" on the other hand, refers to the broad spatio-temporal circumstances under which the research is conducted and the specific spatio-temporal setting. These three factors are interrelated. The researcher's characteristics refer to attributes such as gender, nationality, age, socio-economic status and educational level. These, together with the researcher's orientations, such as attitudes, opinions, expectations, preferences, tendencies and values cannot be divorced from the research process (Mouton, 1996: 145; Merriam, 1998: 20). These human attributes make the researcher fallible and therefore the utmost care will be taken not to jeopardise the reliability of the study.

The researcher as evaluator is constantly aware of the purpose of the evaluation, *i.e.* to increase effectiveness, and provide information on whether the objectives of the intervention have been achieved. Many educational programmes are currently being conducted in South Africa. All of

them claim to be rooted in charitable and philanthropic motives with the aim to help learners and teachers. This study, being a data-oriented, empirically based evaluation of the learning support model, is aimed at providing valuable information for an improvement in the delivery of learning support.

In conducting the evaluation, the researcher has the responsibility to convince the participants of the possible value the evaluation holds. Research has established that "valuing evaluation" is a necessary condition for successful evaluation. To help increase the value that people attach to an evaluation and, correspondingly, their willingness to be actively involved to make the evaluation useful, reality testing is a useful concept. Reality testing is based on the notion that what is perceived as real, is real in terms of its consequences. Therefore the researcher cannot assume that all the participants are in touch with the reality of the program. It is also true that programmes and organisations can "lose touch with reality". The consequence is that the learning support and mainstream teachers operating within the learning support model may be "operating on myths and behaving in ways that are dysfunctional to goal attainment and ineffective for accomplishing desired outcomes" (Patton, 1997: 28). The researcher is aware that there may be participants who will experience the evaluation of the learning support model as a threat, as they have possibly become comfortable in their own worlds of untested assumptions and unexamined beliefs. They may have become complacent about their service delivery and quite content with the way things are. The researcher will not ignore these antagonistic feelings, but rather attempt to reduce the threat to evaluation and the resistance to evaluation use. As the researcher is also subjectively part of the model under evaluation, she is in a position to help participants in understanding the value of such reality testing and to buy into the process (Patton, 1997: 26-28).

The evaluator needs ways to encourage participants to give their full co-operation in cultivating commitment and enlarging their capacity to undertake the process. The researcher has to address the barriers typically associated with evaluations. The barriers experienced by participants of the evaluation of the WCED learning support model may be the following: fear of being judged, cynicism about whether anything can really change and scepticism about the worth of the evaluation.

The researcher as an interviewer must be sensitive to realise when to allow for silence, when to probe more deeply and when to change the direction of the interview. The interviewer must be alert to cues and nuances provided by the context (Merriam, 1998: 22). Many problems experienced by evaluators occur as the result of misunderstandings and communication barriers. Being a good communicator involves more than oral skills. It also involves having empathy with

the respondents, establishing rapport, asking meaningful questions and listening intently. The researcher will therefore attempt to ensure that the communication is clear at all times (Patton, 1997: 27; Merriam, 1998: 23).

1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The concepts (terminology) used in inclusive education are continually undergoing changes in search of politically correct language. Historically, discourses and practices contributed to the segregation and exclusion of people who (for example) do not fit the "norm". These discourses also impacted on the nature and structuring of education systems. As the move towards inclusive education is increasingly gaining momentum, there is a growing awareness of the dangers of perpetuating certain discriminatory concepts and practices (Sheehy, 2003: 124). Mittler (1999: 8) argues that the "constant use of words that create or maintain mind-sets that perpetuate segregation" contradicts the very notion of an inclusive education system. Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997: xi) contend that the concepts used are not as sharply delimited from each other and should be seen as "the emergence, regardless of the language used, of a clearer focus on an educational reform agenda…". In the following section I will attempt to clarify concepts associated with the journey towards inclusive education and the provision of support thereof.

1.9.1 Normalisation

Normalisation is a philosophical term adopted from Scandinavia, based on the "belief that individuals with disabilities should be viewed as entitled to the same freedoms, life choices, circumstances, and opportunities as their non-disabled peers" (Kochhar *et al.* 2000: 12). According to Engelbrecht (1999: 7) the idea of normalisation came to the fore in the 1960s. This movement began to advocate the notion that disability should no longer be seen as a reason to segregate people from mainstream society (Dyson & Forlin, 1999: 3). In an attempt to eliminate terminology that was increasingly experienced as offensive and inappropriate, learners with disabilities were regarded as normal. They were seen as special only "because so far the education system has not been able to meet their needs." (Mittler, 1999: 9).

The segregation of learners in separate special schools was increasingly challenged during the 1970s. Learners with disabilities "were selectively integrated in mainstream on a case-by-case basis, depending on the needs of each learner and the demands of the specific class" (Engelbrecht, 1999:7).

1.9.2 Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is defined as "the inclusion of special students in the general educational process for any part of the school day" (Lewis & Doorlag, 1995: 557). Mainstreaming is thus defined in relation to learners with disabilities. It generally implies the selective placement of learners experiencing barriers to learning in one or more mainstream classes. According to the definition proposed by the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) (2001: 2) the proponents of mainstreaming generally assume that learners must "earn the opportunity to be placed in [a mainstream class] by demonstrating the ability to keep up with the work assigned by the [mainstream] teacher".

1.9.3 Integration

Integration implies more extensive participation of learners experiencing barriers to learning with their peers. However, it does not attempt to "challenge or alter in any way the organisation and provision of the curriculum for all learners", but continues to focus on and address differences (Engelbrecht, 1999: 8). This view reflects the attempts to place learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream education. The school will not necessarily transform to accommodate a wider diversity of learners, so the learner has to adapt to the school (Mittler, 1999: 10). Integration tends to focus on the individual or small group of learners for whom the curriculum has been adapted. Different work is developed and/or support assistants are provided (Ahuja, 2002: 80). Although learners experiencing barriers to learning in the mainstream participate in instructional and social activities alongside their classmates, they often receive additional instruction and support from a special educator. This support may take place inside the classroom or outside in a special class (Lewis & Doorlag, 1995: 4).

Mainstreaming and integration are related concepts and are often used interchangeably. The South African Education White Paper on Special Needs Education discusses mainstreaming and integration as one, and thus defines mainstreaming as

> …giving some learners extra support so that they can 'fit in' or be integrated into the 'normal' classroom routine. Learners are assessed by specialists who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions, such as the placement of the learners in programmes (Department of Education, 2001: 17).

1.9.4 Inclusion

Inclusion is regarded as a moral issue of human rights and values, and as such it is linked to fundamental democratic reforms. In many countries, including South Africa, inclusion forms an integral part of the attempts to create a better society for all and to build a democracy (UNESCO, 2004b). Inclusion represents the wider social awakening to the needs of people who experience oppression. Social policies focus on the promotion of inclusion and participation, thereby combating exclusion. According to UNESCO (1994: 11) inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercising of human rights.

1.9.5 Inclusive education

The international move towards inclusive education must be seen as part of a widespread reconstruction of notions and social policies of disability (Dyson & Forlin, 1999: 26). However, inclusive education refers to a "broad philosophical and principled position in relation to the educational rights of all children", which includes learners with learning difficulties (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997: 20). Donald *et al*. (1997: 20) further argues that within the South African context, inclusive education relates to the Bill of Rights that "commits us to creating access to and provision of a process of education which is appropriate to the needs of all children". Inclusive education therefore focuses on supporting all learners, educators and the system to address the full range of learning needs. Mittler (1999: 10) further contends that "inclusion implies a radical reform of the school in terms of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and grouping" of learners. This means that inclusive education amount to much more than the physical placement of learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms (Engelbrecht, 1999: 10; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 306). According to Booth *et al.* (2000: 21) it involves increasing the learning and participation of learners and minimising the barriers to their learning and participation. The emphasis is consequently on overcoming barriers within the system and the support systems alike, to help all learners achieve their full potential.

A broad, all encapsulating definition is that of an inclusive learning environment by the Department of National Education (1997: vi-vii) as one that

> …promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language. It is one which is free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment and which intentionally tries to facilitate an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and respect. It is an environment, which respects learners and values them as partners in

teaching and learning. It respects the rights of all learners and enables them to participate fully in a democratic society.

An inclusive education and training system as defined by the Department of Education (2001: 16-17) “is organised so that it can provide various levels and kinds of support to learners and educators”. It thus favours new forms of education support service delivery (WEAC, 2001: 2).

South Africa recognises inclusive education as a moral and human rights issue in the Constitution and the South African Schools Act. However, against the historical context of the country, the National Education Department has opted for a systemic approach to ensure that all learners benefit from inclusive education. The provision of support for inclusive education is accordingly categorised as:

1. Low-intensive support provided for in ordinary mainstream schools;
2. Moderate support provided for in full-service schools; and
3. High-intensive education support that will continue to be provided in special schools.

For the purpose of this study inclusive education is therefore defined as education that addresses barriers to learning and development by providing adequate learning support systems for low to moderate support which will enable all learners to participate and achieve their full potential within mainstream schools.

From the foregoing discussion of inclusive education it is clear that South Africa promotes inclusive education as opposed to the concept of full inclusion discussed in the next section.

1.9.6 Full inclusion

Full inclusion means that all learners, “regardless of handicapping condition or severity, will be in a regular classroom/programme full time. All services must be taken to the child in that setting” (WEAC, 2001: 2). It thus refers to “the principle and practice of placing students into regular classrooms with non-disabled peers, regardless of the type or severity of their disability” (Kochhar *et al.* 2000: 12; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000: 21). It is a call for reform of practices that exclude and segregate individuals who experience barriers to learning. According to Lewis and Doorlag (1995: 5), the advocates for full inclusion maintain that the mainstream classroom is the most appropriate full-time placement for all learners experiencing barriers to learning, including those with high-level support needs.

In the quest for continuous evolvement and advancement of inclusive education Kochhar *et al.* (2000: 12) suggest the term for the next phase of 2000 and beyond as **full participation and meaningful benefit.**

1.9.7 Learning support (Educational support)

Learning support (Educational support) refers to the role that educational support professionals (such as educational psychologists, school counsellors, therapists, special educators and learning support specialists) and mainstream teachers play in addressing the diverse needs of learners and replaces "remedial support" that was based on the medical model. In accordance with the Salamanca "Framework for Action" a continuum of support should be provided in order to reduce their exclusion from the curriculum and the school as a community. In providing such support, the development of inclusive schools is fostered (Engelbrecht, 2001:17). Booth *et al.* (2000:21) define learning support as "all activities that contribute to the capacity of a school to respond to the diversity" of its learners. With regard to the Learning Support Model in some schools in the Western Cape, this translates into learning support as support provided by mainstream teachers on level one, in collaboration with the learning support teacher and other role-players within and from outside the school. Furthermore, support is provided to mainstream teachers by the learning support teacher and the Institution Level Support Team, as well as other educational support professionals. At level two it refers to temporary withdrawal from the mainstream class for small-group instruction by the learning support teacher. This support is strenghened by the support provided by the mainstream teacher. Support is thus provided in collaboration with the mainstream teacher and other role-players in and outside the school. This is unlike the integration of learners that does not challenge the organisational structure of the school and provision of the curriculum to learners experiencing barriers to learning. At level three and four of the learning support model learners are referred to special schools for a high level of support.

1.9.8 Learning difficulties

The UK Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs defines learners experiencing learning difficulties in terms of

> … their general lack of academic attainment will be significantly below that of their peers. In most cases they will have difficulties acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and will have significant speech and language difficulties. Some may also have poor social skills and show signs of emotional and behavioural difficulties (Tilstone *et al*. 2000: 7).

According to the Learning Difficulties Centre of British Columbia [http://www.theldc.com/glossary.php] learning difficulty is a

> … disorder that makes the development of math and language skills mildly, moderately, or severely difficult. A diverse group of disorders causing significant difficulties in the development of math and/or language skills, often occurring in individuals of average or above average intelligence, learning difficulties may mildly, moderately, or severely impair the learning process. They do not include learning problems resulting from physical disabilities, poor instruction, economic disadvantage, or mental retardation.

This definition coincides with the explanation proposed by Stakes and Hornby (2000: 11) as well as Tilstone *et al.* (2000: 7) that historically IQ scores were used to categorise cognitive impairment in terms of certain characteristics. According to Stakes and Hornby (2000: 11) learners who experience mild to moderate learning difficulties constitute the majority of learners with learning disabilities. Learners who encounter **mild** learning difficulties are generally identified as experiencing extreme difficulty in acquiring adequate proficiency in basic literacy and numeric skills. Sometimes referred to as specific learning difficulties, they are also defined as "of at least average intelligence and are free of any significant cognitive or sensory impairment" (Yuen, Westwood & Wong, 2004: 67). For the purpose of this study, learners with mild learning difficulties are generally considered to be included in the mainstream (see Figure 2.2) as opposed to the next categories that are still mostly accommodated in special classes and special schools. However, in the South African context cognisance must be taken of the remnants of the policy of apartheid and the segregation and marginalisation of the majority of the population in all spheres of life. Therefore learners with mild learning difficulties in this country may include learners with a history of poor instruction and economic disadvantage.

Learners with **moderate** learning difficulties are likely to have delayed speech and language development, poor social skills and may also show emotional or behavioural difficulties. Learners with **severe** learning difficulties exhibit substantial problems in all of the above-mentioned areas, as well as possible problems in learning basic skills such as dressing and toileting. Learners with **profound** learning difficulties (or multiple learning difficulties) have major problems acquiring all of the above skills (Stakes & Hornby, 2000: 11).

Terminology regarding the difficulties experienced by learners at school has acquired many different labels over time. Christensen (2004: 17) argues that language reflects our perceptions, beliefs and understanding of the world and that groups concerned with social justice have often stressed the role of language in political and social processes. The central issues of social justice

and the language of disability revolve around the medical model as mechanisms of social and cultural oppression (Christensen, 2004: 18). The medical model is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. The literature further reveals that countries differ in their use of terminology, depending on legislative definitions. According to Larson and Majsterek (2007) [http://www.cldinternational.org/Initiatives/scienceP2.asp] the definitions of learning difficulties used by advocacy organisations often reflect the belief systems and history of the organisation. However, the terms "learning difficulty" and "disability" are not always neatly separated, because a learner may have a physical barrier, like the deformation of the mouth or a hearing problem, that might seemingly cause difficulty in learning. As a consequence the terms learning disability and learning difficulty are sometimes used interchangeably, or the term learning disability may refer to learners having very severe problems, including those of a physical nature (Farrell, 2005: 14).

For the purpose of this study, learners who experience learning difficulties will refer to those learners who exhibit extreme difficulty regarding the acquisition of adequate proficiency in basic literacy and numeric skills in mainstream schools, and in need of low and meduim level support as refered to in 1.9.5. In Chapter 2, with reference to different countries, terminology used by the specific country will be used in context.

1.9.9 Learning support teachers

"These are those educators who have specialised competencies to support learners, educators and the system to ensure effective learning by all learners. This includes educators formerly referred to as 'remedial ', 'special classes or 'special needs' teachers" within a medical model approach (Department of Education, 1997: vii). The role of learning support teachers have evolved internationally with the move towards inclusive education in a social and human rights model, and is discussed in detail in 2.5. However, there is a discrepency in the terminology used to refer to these professionals by the Department of Education. The term LSEN (learners with special educational needs) is often used in official documents to refer to learners experiencing barriers to learning as well as the teachers who teach them (Chapter 3.3 and 3.4). The discussion of the WCED learning support model in Chapter 3.5 however, refers to learning support teachers.

1.9.10 Learning support advisors

Learning support advisors were appointed by the WCED to manage the implementation of the learning support model. They are also responsible to manage and support the newly appointed learning support teachers. The position of learning support advisors is discussed in Chapter 3.5.

Nevertheless, the discrepency in terminology mentioned above, is also evident in terms of learning support advisors who are sometimes refered to as ELSEN advisors as seen in Chapter 5.2.3.2 (Fig. 5.7).

1.9.11 Barriers to learning and participation

"Barriers to learning and participation" is the terminology adopted for the framework of legislation in South Africa. It recognises that learning breakdown may occur as the result of a range of factors such as problems from within the centre for learning, the education system as a whole, the wider society or from within the learner (Department of Education, 1997: v). In acknowledging this, it recognises that the learners most vulnerable to barriers to learning, and thus being largely excluded in South Africa, are those learners historically referred to as "learners with special education needs" *i.e.* learners with disabilities and impairments (Department of Education, 2001: 18). According to Booth (2000: 92) the term "barriers to learning" was taken up in discussion documents of UNESCO, where it is suggested that it be used to replace the term "special educational needs" in the UK as well.

1.9.12 Learning support model

This concept refers to the framework in which learning support is delivered to learners who need additional support within an inclusive education system. It facilitates participation, inclusivity and flexibility to prevent and break down barriers to learning (Theron, 1999: 4). The learning support model referred to in this research spans both mainstream schools and the current special schools. Learning support at mainstream schools is provided at levels one and two of the model, with high level of support provided at levels three and four of the model in ELSEN units and special schools.

1.9.13 Programme evaluation

Various definitions emphasise different aspects of evaluation. However, this study will focus on program evaluation as a systematic investigation to establish the worth of the program for the purpose of informing decisions to improve practice (Mertens, 1998: 217-218; Patton, 1997: 23).

1.10 CHAPTER DIVISIONS

Chapter 1 provides a theoretical orientation to the study within the framework of Educational Support delivery in South Africa against the backdrop of international inclusive education practices as well as the research problem, design and methodology.

Chapter 2 focuses on the international trends within the debate of inclusive education and the provision of learning support. It sets the background against which the South African developments are mapped.

Chapter 3 provides a brief historical background to the development of learning support provision and delivery in South Africa. The focus is on the educational transformation with specific reference to the restructuring of the support services since the NEPI Report in 1992. This is followed by the implementation of inclusive education in South African schools. It further describes the Model of Learning Support adopted by the WCED in order to provide quality education for all learners within an inclusive educational system.

Chapter 4 explains the research design and methodology used in this research.

Chapter 5 entails the data analysis and interpretation (research findings and discussion).

Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the research results.

Chapter 7 presents the recommendations for improvement of service delivery through the learning support model, as well as a model for the improvement of learning support service delivery within a whole-school approach. Furthermore the limitations of the study and themes identified that justify further research are presented.

1.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher contextualised the study within the ecosystemic theoretical framework. The philosophical paradigm underlying this research is briefly discussed and the design and methodology applied in this study is outlined. A brief discription is given of the anticipated ethical guidelines for this study. This is followed by a brief discussion on the contentious issue of validity and reliability of mixed methods designs as well as the role and limitations of the researcher. The research design and methodology is discussed in detail in chapter 4. In the last section of this chapter the key concepts used in this study are clarified after which the chapter divisions are made.

CHAPTER 2

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The quest for excellence in teaching and the concerted effort to provide equal opportunities for all learners are the two most fundamental concerns in education today (Kochhar, West & Taymans, 2000: 3; Department of Education, 2001:11). According to Sands, Kozleski and French (2000: 6) growing numbers of learners from diverse backgrounds and with different abilities and educational needs are entering the mainstream school system. This poses a challenge to educationists to grow and adapt to the demands of schooling for the 21st century.

In this chapter, the researcher gives an exposition of the movement towards inclusive education and the associated paradigm shift. The ways in which various countries address the issues of inclusive education and learning support provision will subsequently be explored. As learners experiencing learning difficulties constitute the largest proportion of learners experiencing barriers to learning (Stakes & Hornby, 2000:11) a discussion on learning difficulties follows. This is followed by a discussion of international perspectives on inclusive education and their influence on approaches to support learners with diverse abilities within an inclusive educational setting. Attention is further given to the changing roles of mainstream teachers and support services staff.

2.2 INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.2.1 Shifting paradigms

Lewis (1998: 92) defines a paradigm as "an interconnecting set of assumptions, values and methodologies that are taken as axiomatic, and which cannot be further examined within the paradigm itself". This means that paradigms are deeply entrenched in the socialisation of adherents and practitioners. It directs people to what is important, legitimate and reasonable. Paradigms are also normative in that it tells people "what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological consideration" (Patton, 2002: 69).

Much of the original thinking on paradigms and paradigm shifts comes from the work of Thomas Kuhn. His frame of reference was the natural sciences and he thus explained the process of the

emergence of a paradigm until its assumptions are fixed as the period of "normal science". Any other contending paradigm is refuted as a fallacy during this period as the dominant paradigm asserts itself. Findings that cause doubts about the validity of the dominant assumptions are explained as puzzling exemptions or rejected as false (Kuhn, 1970: 24). It is only when these "puzzling findings" aggregate the assumptions of the dominant paradigm and there are no more explanatory theories that a new set of assumptions must be accepted (Kuhn, 1970: 84). This is the stage that Kuhn refers to as the revolutionary period. During this period former contradictions are resolved and more inclusive theories are formed (Kuhn, 1970: 48 & 90). Thomas Kuhn defined paradigms as shared worldviews:

> Kuhn argued that these shared views eventually become so strong and institutionalized that only a sudden and dramatic break from these conventional perspectives can bring on a positive revolution in thinking (Smith, 2003: 360).

According to Smith (2003: 360) paradigm shifts may be "critical to advancement and improvement in any field of endeavour". It is argued that a paradigm shift must move beyond mere theory and postulation to the realm of the practitioner. It should thus go beyond ways of seeing and evaluative judgements but, crucially, should translate into practices (Naicker, 1999a: 67; Wiest & Kreil, 1996: 30). For this reason many people find it difficult when confronted by the changes brought about by a shift in paradigm. According to Wiest and Kreil (1996: 30) this frustration with the experience of paradigm shifting should be understood as being a normal part of change that is crucial for development. Internationally, educational systems are faced with challenging changes regarding the understanding of "special needs" in education. The inference can be made that the educational community is experiencing Kuhn's notion of the revolutionary period in contemporary paradigms. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge that this revolutionary period will be permeated with tensions and dilemmas in reconceptualising special needs and the inclusion of those learners previously excluded from mainstream schools on the basis of disability.

Mitchell (2005: 6) contends that conflicting paradigms is determined by the way people conceptualise "special needs". Therefore it stands to reason that people from different countries, different cultures and different contexts will to a bigger or lesser extent ascribe to a specific paradigm. Because of these inconsistencies UNESCO provided helpful guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education that reflect the diverse experiences of different countries with different educational systems and attitudes to diversity and difference (Mittler, 2005: 31).

Paradigms on viewing learners who experience barriers to learning have undergone major shifts in the past decades. The conflicting paradigms are represented in three major models (the medical, social and human rights models) of how these learners are viewed and treated. These models will be discussed in the next sections in an attempt to demonstrate how assumptions that were refuted in the past can become more commonly accepted ("the revolutionary period").

2.2.1.1 The medical model

Key concepts in the field of special education are deeply rooted in the "psycho-medical" paradigm or the "individual gaze" (Dyson & Millward, 1997: 53). Others (Naicker, 1999a: 31; Christensen, 1996: 229; Lindsay, 2003: 11; Gibson & Blandford, 2005: 6) also refer to this as the "medical model" or the "categorical perspective" (Emanuelsson, Haug & Persson, 2005: 115) and the "deficit theory" (Fulcher, 1998: 26). Traditional models and thinking on learning difficulties were based on this medical model.

This model, focusing on the individual deficit theory and viewing a person as a helpless being, is entrenched in the medical, charity and lay discourses. The medical model categorises and locates deficits within the person and translates into curative interventions (Naicker, 1999a: 31; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 305; Engelbrecht, 2004: 22; Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 5; Gibson & Blandford, 2005). It professionalises disability in that education support professionals regarded some learners as disadvantaged and in need of intervention or even beyond support (Engelbrecht, 2001: 17). The result is that it may have led ordinary mainstream teachers to believe that they are incapable to teach learners who are classified as "disabled" and that it has to be done by specialists (Naicker, 1999a: 32). Researchers are in general consensus that the medical model shaped and largely influenced exclusionary practices in the field of education that have continued for decades after their introduction (National Education Policy Investigation, 1992: 29; Naicker, 1999a: 31, Engelbrecht, 2001: 18). Because of the exclusionary and labelling consequences of this model, some theorists refer to the medical model in derogatory terms (Hay, 2003: 135).

The medical model thus portrays the need for diagnosis, appropriate treatment and subsequent cure. This gives a negative portrayal of the individual's physical, sensory or intellectual qualities as deficient or abnormal (Corbett, 1998: 26; Christensen, 1996: 229). It also accounts for the inability of certain learners to cope with mainstream education. Therefore some form of educational intervention (cure) such as the adaptation of the curriculum, which is then delivered in the context of special forms of support and teaching, and very possibly within a 'special' setting, appropriately follows the diagnosis (Dyson & Millward, 1997: 53). The medical model thus uses a patient-diagnosis-treatment sequence in order to function "normally".

This way of thinking further lays within the charity discourse that views individuals who experience barriers to learning as being in need of constant help. They are always dependent on others (Fulcher, 1998: 26). This individualistic and deficit perspective of disability is often criticised and analysed in terms of power, control and vested interests (Allen, Brown & Riddell, 1998: 22). Another argument against the medical model is that it "champions a narrow stereotype of normality, rather than fostering a celebration of difference" (Corbett, 1998: 26).

Hay (2003: 135) distinguishes the following factors as reasons for the demise of the medical model as:

- The realisation that unique human beings cannot be classified into simple medical disability diagnoses;
- The realisation that learners may have different medical disabilities, but similar educational needs;
- The insight that diagnosis is often a way of social control;
- The rise of post-modernism that seriously questions the old modernistic habit of classification. The tradition of disability classification is viewed as too rigid and does not recognise the multiple selves, which are constantly developing.

However, it is true that some barriers do exist within the learners and that these barriers need to be addressed (Naicker, 1999a: 80). Corbett (1998: 27) contends that it would be simplistic to assume that the medical model is all bad and that medical interventions always highlight the individual deficits without acknowledging the social obstacles and attempts to solve them. Medical developments have indeed had wide social implications and have improved the quality of life of many children in the process.

2.2.1.2 The social model

According to Slee (2005: 141) inclusive education started to reject traditional special education practices (medical model) by inserting the social model of disability into educational failure and disablement. The social model is also referred to as the "socio-political paradigm" (Slee, 2005: 141) or the "relational perspective" (Emanuelsson *et al.* 2005: 115).

The social model acknowledges that society has an impact on the abilities of learners to learn and develop (Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton, 2000: 3; Gibson & Blandford, 2005: 15). Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan and Shaw (2000: 14) maintain that the social model suggests that barriers to learning and participation are caused by the interaction between learners and their contexts. This paradigm thus suggests that society creates barriers that are constructed to serve the interest of the social majority, but limits accessibility for people with special needs. People

with impairments and those who do not conform to the expectations of the social majority's expectations of appearance, behaviour and/or economic performance are thus penalised (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005: 92). This model therefore focuses on the removal of barriers to allow individuals equal participation and the elimination of discrimination (Department of Education, 1997b).

The social model further implies that it is the inability of ordinary schools to deal with diversity in the classroom that forces learners who experience barriers to learning into special schools (Department of Education, 1997b). This perspective of barriers to learning, particularly learning difficulties, ascribe the identification and labelling of learners to the result of social processes that exist in classrooms, schools and the wider communities (Christensen, 1996: 233). Special needs are thus socially constructed and special education is a reproduction of the structural inequalities at the macro-social level (Mitchell, 2005: 7).

The deficiencies that exist within the educational system may cause barriers to learning. These need to be identified and addressed (Naicker, 1999a: 80). However, addressing the barriers in the wider social system to transform amenities and services to cater for the diverse needs of society as a whole and duplicating it in the education system, will support ordinary mainstream schools to deal with diversity in the school and classroom.

Lindsay's (2003: 17) critique of the social model, however, is that it tends to down-play or ignore the with-in child factors. However, Corbett (1998: 27) contends that both the medical and the social model have their advantages and disadvantages. Unless there is recognition of personal, cultural and locational differences that influence the ways in which barriers are experienced, both the medical and the social model will be of limited value (Corbett, 1998: 30). Nonetheless, this growing social consciousness is redefining the concept of access to education for all as a fundamental human right for all learners (Fletcher, 2005: 279).

2.2.1.3 The human rights approach

Researchers have come to recognise that inclusive education can be linked to the reformation of the status of persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997: 319; UNESCO, 2004b). Inclusive education is thus linked to fundamental democratic reforms. In countries like Chile and South Africa inclusive education forms an integral part of the attempts to create a better society for all and to build a democracy (UNESCO, 2004b). It follows then that the human rights approach has its roots in the wider social awakening to the needs of people who experience oppression. Inclusion and participation are seen as essential to human dignity and to

the enjoyment and exercise of human right (UNESCO, 1994: 11 [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001176/117625eapdf]).

Corbett (1998: 29) contends that the disability culture is following the same well-established pattern of minimising individual differences in order to maximise collaboration and cohesion, like with other oppressed groups. With the advent of the human rights approach, the use of terminology (e.g. diagnosis, prognosis, disability, deficit, etc.) associated with the medical model is being challenged. These terms impose the presumption of biological or physiological inferiority (Naicker, 1999a: 46). The human rights model, in contrast, stresses equal opportunity, self-reliance and independence. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994: 6) states "schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions". With regard to legislation, the Salamanca Statement (Mittler, 1999:17) is clear in urging governments to recognise the principles of equality for all learners in educational institutions.

Some authors (Clark, Dyson & Millward, 1998: 169) argue that although societies may find ways to respond to diversity and might become more just and equitable, it will be difficult to see how they actually resolve the dilemmas of responding to diversity. They contend that although the products of discrimination (the medical model and all that it entails) may be dismantled, theorists must take cognisance of the fact the dilemmas and complexities that follow are not as easily resolved.

However, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities marks a major paradigm shift with regard to persons with disabilities. According to the United Nations [http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=12&pid=150] the Convention is intended to be a human rights instrument with a definite social development dimension. Among the general principles of the Convention are "respect for the inherent dignity, individual autonomy and freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons" and "respect of the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities." It further adopts a broad categorisation of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all fundamental freedoms. This convention was adopted in December 2006 and signed by 82 countries (South Africa included) on the opening day for signatories on 30 March 2007.

2.2.1.4 Summary: from exclusion to inclusion

In the preceeding section, the position of learners who experience barriers to learning, particularly those with learning difficulties, was placed in an historical context with regard to

changing paradigms. Changing paradigms reflect the progression from a segregated, medical model approach to an inclusive model where human rights are central in education and support. The inclusion of learners who were previously largely excluded from mainstream schooling can be linked to the human rights and social justice agendas of the disability rights movements (Gibson & Blandford, 2005: 16). This movement led to an international increase of integration in schools. In some countries, as discussed in the next section, inclusive education is supported by policy and funding. However, inclusive education entails more than mere physical integration. The human rights approach stresses equal opportunities to develop and learn. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994: vii-x) challenges schools to provide effective education for all, as well as learning support for learners experiencing barriers to learning in the mainstream. Inclusive education, from a human rights perspective, and as opposed to integration, encourages the notion that the curriculum can be adapted to respond to all learners' needs in the classroom. However, as mentioned in the discussion of the social model, it is crucial that governments also provide the resources (in human, material and financial terms) and invests in the development of human capital to enable educational institutions to implement inclusive education successfully.

2.2.2 Inclusive education in practice

After the declaration of the Salamanca Statement, many countries have embarked on reform initiatives of their education policies. However, as explained in Chapter 1, the implementation of inclusive education should be viewed from a systemic perspective. According to Mitchell (2004: 4) attention should thus be paid to the broader society and the education system, the school and thirdly, the classroom. In so doing Skrtic, Sailor and Gee (1996: 216) contend that inclusive education is "more than a new special education service delivery model".

It is true that reforms vary between countries (Vislie, 2003), and despite major policy initiatives and a growing commitment to inclusive education, there still remain significant discrepancies regarding the rhetoric and legislation on inclusive education and practical implementation (Mitchell & Desai, 2005: 167; Emanuelsson *et al.* 2005: 115, 122; Brown, 2005: 253, 255). According to Mitchell (2005: 11), the reasons for this policy/practice gap are numerous and include barriers arising from a variety of educational and societal issues. It is therefore imperative to note that the philosophies and practices of inclusive education are embedded in a range of contexts (Mitchell, 2005) or social historical perspectives (Vislie, 2003: 23).

Policies on inclusive education in many countries are continually challenging schools to radically change their thinking and practices on including learners with a wide range of needs in the mainstream. In the past decade, many countries have adopted education policy changes

regarding learners who experience barriers to learning (Karsten, Peetsma, Roeleveld & Vergeer, 2001: 196) and according to Karsten *et al.* (2001) the most important changes have been:

- the explicit definition of special education as support for mainstream education;
- parental choice is increasingly regulated by law;
- the development of a unitary education policy regulating both special and mainstream education and
- reform of special education funding policies.

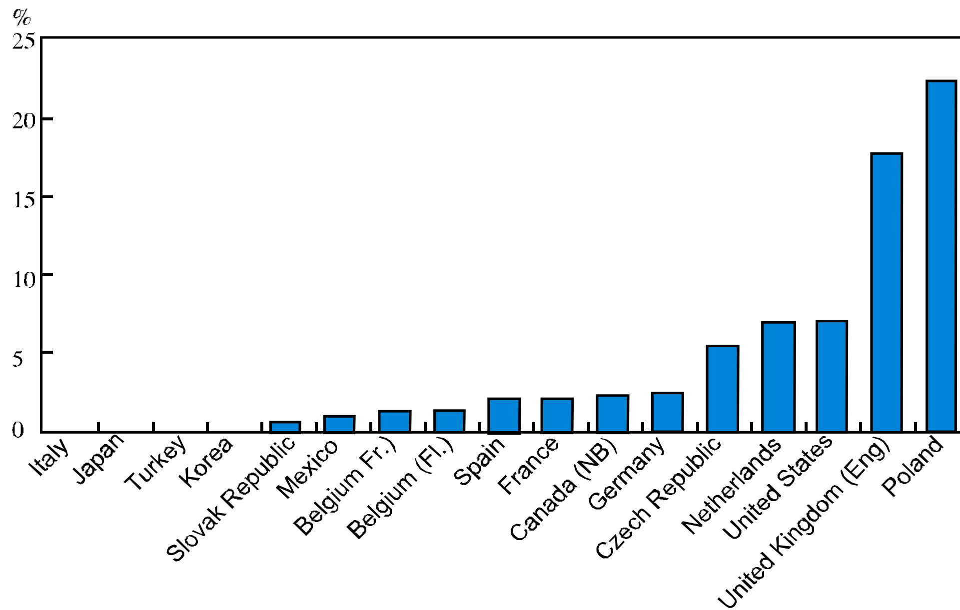
The Scandinavian countries have set the example on inclusion in the 1960s. However, it was Italy that has taken the most radical step in passing legislation in the 1970s, which led to the closure of most special schools. Spain has adopted inclusion gradually by inviting schools to volunteer, and in return receive a 25% reduction in class size as well as the services of a support team. Germany, France and the Netherlands have retained special schools while developing islands of inclusion. The USA has implemented several changes in response to inclusion, but still has many children in segregated classes in mainstream schools (Mittler, 2000: 172-173).

Skrtic, Sailor and Gee (1996: 229) argue that inclusive education goes far beyond the physical placement of learners in mainstream schools. However, policies on inclusive education have generally given much attention to the organisational aspects related to the placement of learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools. According to Vislie (2003: 24) this is an indication of a school system responding to diversity by “codification and labelling”. Using Ringer’s classification of segmentation, also known as segregation, in education, Vislie (2003: 24) argues that the next step after labelling is either placement in the mainstream class (with curriculum segregation) or in a segregated setting (organisational segregation). Formal recording of learners experiencing barriers to learning by identification and assessment thus perpetuates segregation (Vislie, 2003: 29).

This finding correlates with the findings of a comparison of inclusion practices in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (see Figure 2.2). It has been established that although educational provisions available to learners experiencing barriers to learning are straightforward, substantial variation in identification is reported among the OECD countries (Evans, 2004: 32; OECD, 2005). Florian, Rouse, Black-Hawkins and Jull (2004: 117) contend that comparative research on learners who experience barriers to learning is difficult because of the differences in definition and provision of learning support services available. Countries consequently differ in their approach to inclusive education in mainstream schools. However, even with the provision of legislation, some practical questions remain, such

as the extent to which it is possible to provide facilities (*i.e.* adapted accommodation, specialist teachers, equipment, and multi-disciplinary professional support) that are suitable for each learner's special needs in ordinary mainstream schools (CSIE, 2005:5. [http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/intperi.htm]).

Because countries differ in their identification of learners who experience barriers to learning, it was decided to create three cross-national categories on which to base the survey in the OECD countries. These are defined as: category A, which include learners whose disability arises from organic impairment; category B, referring to learners with learning difficulties (LD); and category C, which includes learners who are socially disadvantaged (Evans, 2004: 32). Although South Africa's concept of "Barriers to Learning and Development" is broad and inclusive of all three mentioned categories, for the purpose of this study the focus will be on category B. The reason for this is that current international trends regarding the inclusive education and support of learners experiencing learning difficulties may provide valuable insights into current practices in South Africa, more specifically in some primary schools in the Western Cape. The following chart (Figure 2.1) provides a visual image of provision made by various OECD countries in terms of resources for learners who experience learning difficulties in mainstream schools [http://oecd.org/dataoecd/27/53/35779248.pdf]:



1. Countries are ranked in ascending order of percentage of students.
2. In Italy and Japan there are no national categories falling within category B.

FIGURE 2.1: NUMBERS OF LEARNERS RECEIVING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OVER A PERIOD OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN CROSS-NATIONAL CATEGORY B, AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL LEARNERS IN COMPULSORY EDUCATION, 2001.

(OECD, 2005)

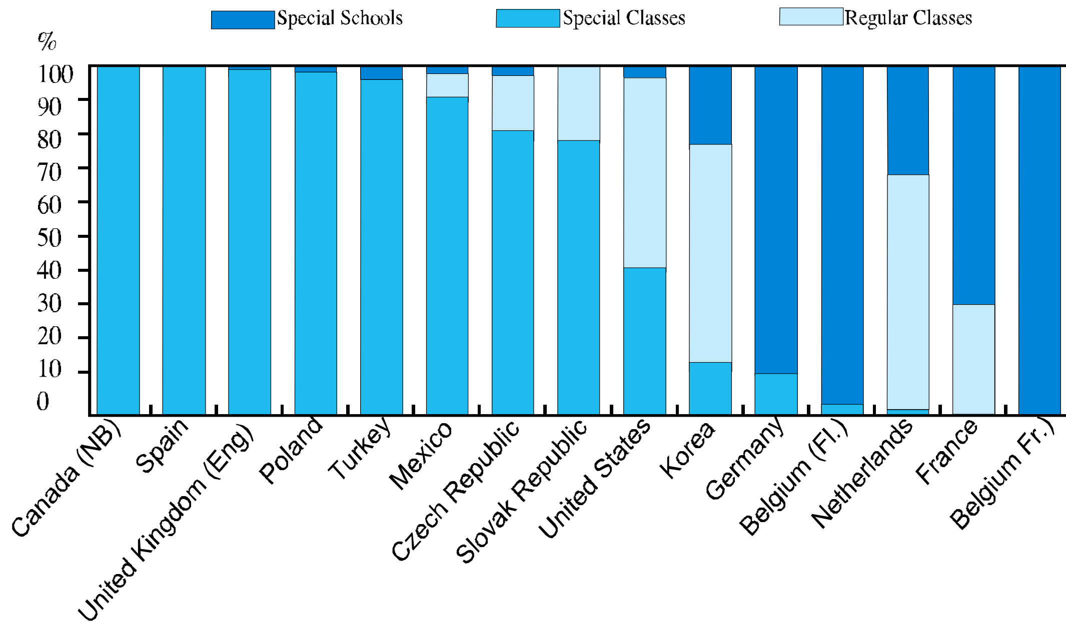
According to the statistics, Italy and Japan do not provide for a category for learners who experience learning difficulties. However, Poland is seen to provide the most in terms of additional resources for learners experiencing learning difficulties in the mainstream, followed by the UK, the United States and the Netherlands.

The data in Figure 2.2 reveals that Belgium (Fr.), Belgium (Fl), Germany and France make considerably more use of special schools than the other countries. Countries making use of special classes are mainly the Netherlands, Korea and the United States. Countries providing additional resources for learners experiencing learning difficulties in mainstream schools are Canada, Spain and the UK, followed closely by Poland and Turkey (OECD, 2005).

Despite the notion that inclusion has a “global agenda”, it is equally clear that the practice of inclusive education has a “strongly local flavour” (Artiles & Dyson, 2005: 37). It is recognised that countries differ regarding the scope and definition of special education, as well as the extent to which different groups are excluded and marginalised. However, with regard to inclusion the

> … affluent Western countries where well resourced segregated forms of special education are being merged with equally well resourced regular education, seem to be quite different

from those of many economically poorer countries where special education has never been fully developed and where regular education is desperately lacking resources (Artiles & Dyson, 2005: 37).



1. Regular Classes: not applicable in Belgium (Fr.) and France.
2. Special Classes: not applicable in Belgium (Fl.), Belgium (Fr.), Canada (NB) and Spain; included in Special Schools in Germany.
3. Special Schools: not included in Canada (NB) and Spain.

FIGURE 2.2: PERCENTAGES OF LEARNERS RECEIVING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OVER A PERIOD OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN CROSS-NATIONAL CATEGORY BY LOCATION, 2001. (OECD, 2005)

It is against this background that the following section will explore the ways countries have adopted policy on and implemented inclusive education. Brief descriptions are also presented of how these countries provide support to learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream classes.

Countries referred to in the subsequent section are categorised according to the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) ([http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_2006_tables.pdf]). The HDI is a comparative measure of poverty, literacy, education, life expectancy, childbirth, and other factors for countries worldwide (National Catholic Reporter, 1993. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1141/is_n8_v30/ai_14682974]). The HDI classifies countries by achievement in human development as high human development, medium human development and low human development.

2.2.3 Inclusive education in high human development countries

Although these countries are advanced in terms of socio-economic development, infrastructure, literacy and other factors as measured by the HDI, they differ regarding a series of contexts and cultural values and beliefs in which inclusive education is conceptualised (Mitchell, 2005: 14-15). Countries with a high level of human development have a long history regarding their contribution towards inclusive education and the debates arising from practical implementation. The countries reported on in this section are selected because of the different levels represented regarding the inclusion of learners with diverse abilities in mainstream schools. Therefore, the focus is on the different models employed to accommodate all learners in mainstream classes as part of their quest towards inclusive education. Reference is made to the provision of learning support in these countries where it is revealed in the literature.

In **Spain**, the 1990 law "emphasises the principles of normalisation and integration". This translates into a system of regular and special education. It draws attention to the diversity of learners, in foreseeing measures to adjust the curriculum and organisation of (mainstream) schools to the needs of all learners. Special education will only be authorised in Spain if learners' needs are not met in a mainstream school. In spite of that, Arnaiz and Soto (2003: 375) report that learners experiencing barriers to learning are often "handed down to the special educator teacher" who has to ensure their academic and social participation. There are a number of provisos in legislation and other declarations to keep a minority of such learners in separate special schools [http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/intperi.htm]. However, according to Moltó (2003: 312), Spanish mainstream teachers show some uncertainty regarding the "acceptance of strategies, such as adaptation of materials and the use of specific resources" in addressing the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream classes.

In 1991, **France** established "classes of school integration" (special classes) in mainstream schools, with the intention of allowing learners with disabilities to transfer to mainstream classes (CSIE, 2005: 3). According to Armstrong, Belmont and Verillon (2000: 67) learners experiencing learning difficulties (not those categorised as 'disabled') in mainstream schools are supported through the Special Support Network for Children in Difficulty. According to Figure 2.1 all learners with learning difficulties are accommodated in these special classes (Evans, 2004: 33). According to statistics provided by the French ministries of both health and education, 70% of learners with physical disabilities are accommodated in special schools (Evans, 2004: 32). Statistics in Figure 2.1 show zero growth in inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning into the mainstream (Vislie, 2003: 28). However, Ebersold (2003: 89) reports that the ratio of learners experiencing barriers to learning educated part-time in mainstream schools have

increased by 16% in 1999-2000, while the ratio of those included full-time shows an increase of 13%. Integration assistants have been appointed to assist in the process of inclusion (Ebersold, 2003: 91-2).

In **Germany** a number of Resource Centres ("Forder-zentren") have been set up to help bring about a more effective inclusive provision for all learners experiencing barriers to learning. They function in close co-operation with other services and their tasks include:

- providing expertise and remedial programmes;
- preparing and arranging meetings of remedial committees;
- taking care of the necessary assistance for teachers with competence in special education;
- giving advice to parents of learners with disabilities and
- bringing together, in a multidisciplinary way, all the provision for the learners with disabilities, depending on circumstances in the classroom and school (CSIE, 2005: 4).

However, Evans (2004: 33) as well as Booth and Ainscow (1998: 144) report that compared to other European countries, Germany has a high rate of educational exclusion. More than 80% of learners with physical disabilities are placed in special schools, while almost 90% (see figure 2.1) of learners with learning difficulties find themselves in special schools (Evans, 2004).

Greece has a long history of categorisation and separate education systems. Although special needs are conceptualised in accordance with the British Warnock Report, ten different categories of disability are used as a basis for placement in special schools. Until recently, most parents, teachers and education authorities have accepted separate schools (Emanuelsson & Jordan, 2005: 130). Nonetheless, according to Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris (2000: 36) the vast majority of learners with learning difficulties are educated in mainstream schools with minimal support, due to lack of resources for segregated provision. Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris (2000: 38) contend that the quality of education of learners with learning difficulties is dependent on the nature and degree of teachers' commitment and goodwill, which is largely influenced by the context in which they work. Learners are thus only integrated into mainstream schools.

In 1999 a new law passed in **Cyprus** declared the right of all learners to be educated in the same general mainstream classes as their peers of the same age. It is expected that they have the support and accommodation needed to be included (Angelides, 2004: 407). According to Angelides (2004: 408) the government has appointed "special" teachers to support these learners in almost all schools. These teachers must have a classroom where they teach learners individually or in groups of two or three. However, this practice is increasingly being challenged

and mainstream schools are to be transformed. The implication is that mainstream teachers will have to modify their practices in order to respond to the needs of all learners, including learners experiencing barriers to learning (Angelides, Charalambous & Vrasidas, 2004: 214).

Italy has almost 100% educational integration. According to Italian law, learners who experience barriers to learning may be enrolled into a mainstream class only if it does not exceed a number of 20 learners. For every two learners with "special needs" a support teacher is provided in the mainstream. Furthermore, a support teacher in each class that will also teach a child with "special needs" individually for six hours a week must be provided. Additional support is provided when the ratio is 1 (support teacher) to 4 (learners). A multi-disciplinary team determines the kind of support needed. They examine learners and issue a certificate (CSIE, 2005: 4; Abbring & Meijer, 1994: 20).

One of the main principles of **Norwegian** compulsory education has always been the integration of learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools and mixed-ability teaching. Only 0.7 percent of the total school population is enrolled in special institutions outside the local school system (CSIE, 2005: 4). According to Emanuelsson, Haug and Persson (2005: 119), however, learners experiencing barriers to learning are generally taken out of the mainstream classroom to receive special education individually or in small groups. Learners who remain in the mainstream classroom receive teaching collectively, without adequate individual attention.

Inclusion in **Sweden** must be understood as part of social progress and can therefore not be restricted to educational inclusion (Emanuelsson *et al.* 2005: 122). Almost all learners with disabilities between the ages of 7 and 16 are integrated into ordinary comprehensive schools (Persson, 2000: 117; CSIE, 2005: 4). About one percent of learners who experience moderate to severe learning difficulties attend special schools. These schools cater for learners "who study by sign language, are mentally handicapped or are multi-handicapped" (CSIE, 2005: 5). The role of the learning support teacher (special educator) has transformed from teaching learners with learning difficulties in small groups to one where she/he is responsible to give guidance to colleagues in the working team. He/she is further responsible to initiate and lead developmental work in neighbouring schools (Emanuelsson *et al.* 2005: 122). According to Persson (2000: 120) the Swedish National Board of Education also stipulates a maximum of 0.3 hours of special education per learner, per week, which translates into an average of one support teacher supporting four classes.

The **Netherlands** has a long history and a well-developed segregated educational system. The division between special and mainstream is enormous compared with other countries (Reezigt &

Pijl, 1998: 123; Karsten *et al.* 2001: 196). A recent national overview established ten different categories of special education located in a system separate from mainstream schools (Emanuelsson *et al.* 2005: 125). However, measures were taken to reduce the kinds of special schools to four expertise centres. Due to education policy reform and the introduction of the support model known as "ambulante begeleiding" (a visiting teacher model) growing numbers returned to mainstream schools (Meijer, 1994: 101; Pijl & Van den Bos, 2001: 112). Measures were also taken to cluster mainstream schools with one or more special schools for learners with learning difficulties. With this closer collaboration mainstream schools have to take part in decisions about LSEN (Reezigt & Pijl, 1998: 126; Karsten *et al.* 2001: 196; Emanuelsson *et al.* 2005: 126).

With regard to eligibility for learning support, a regional committee develops and applies placement criteria that are IQ-related, and relate to the level of learning difficulty and/or social-emotional problems. In a policy paper "Back Pack" of 1996, funding for special services is linked to learners, and the type of learning difficulty identified, regardless of the type of school (Emanuelsson, 2005: 127). This funding strategy is aimed at stimulating the process of inclusion and providing the required support (Reezigt & Pijl, 1998: 127; Pijl & Van den Bos, 2001: 112).

Inclusive education in the **United States of America** (USA) constitutes only one option within the policies surrounding educational placement (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005: 99). The United States has adopted legislation that entitles individuals with disabilities to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. A range of services commonly referred to, as a continuum of services within the least restrictive environment is available to learners experiencing barriers to learning (Vallecorsa, de Bettencourt & Zigmond, 2000: 10). This concept is discussed in more detail in 2.3.2.1 and Fig. 2.3. However, despite the significant social reforms and its impact on inclusive education, Ware (1998: 22) contends that progress remains uneven in states and schools across the USA. Nevertheless, according to McLaughlin and Jordan (2005: 105) more recent reports indicate an increase in learners experiencing barriers to learning being educated in mainstream classes. Pearpoint and Forest (1992: xiv) argue that this could be attributed to the increased demand for full inclusion and the abolishment of special education and a continuum of services. The call is to end labelling, special education and special classes but not end necessary support and services in the integrated classroom. In order to improve education for all, the US government have recently adopted a new Act entitled: The No Child left Behind Act of 2001 [http://www.ed.gov/policy/elcec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf]. According to the Act, the schools are responsible for results. It also gives parents greater choices and promotes successful teaching methods.

In **Canada**, the federal charter's understanding of inclusive education is aligned with the principles of the Salamanca Statement (Mitchell, 2005: 3). However, as in some other countries, the provision of special education is a provincial responsibility and therefore differs within the ten provinces and three territories (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005: 90). According to McLaughlin and Jordan (2005: 91) all provinces and territories subscribe to the following five themes concerning inclusive education:

1. freedom from discrimination;
2. access to schooling at public expense;
3. assessment of educational needs;
4. appropriate placement; and
5. appropriate services for self-advocacy by or on behalf of learners with disabilities.

Canada has many good examples of inclusive education in practice. However, Porter (2004: 48) contends that there are still too many schools that continue to operate in the traditional segregated system, funding two systems and implementing both poorly.

According to McLaughlin and Jordan (2005:91) issues surrounding identification, categorisation and the rights of these learners to inclusive settings, currently dominate the inclusion discourse in Canada. However, although most Canadians celebrate inclusion in their schools, there are those who are concerned about a growing inclusion of learners who are experiencing barriers to learning (Ungerleider, 2004: 20). According to Porter (2004: 48) most Canadian parents desire inclusion for their children. Nonetheless, they are concerned about acceptance of their children and the provision of well-trained and well-supported teachers. Porter (2004) suggests that Canada should "invest whatever resources are available to keep class sizes reasonable and provide proper support to [] teachers in the form of training initiatives, planning time, and provision of para-professionals and professional support".

Legislative changes concerning learners experiencing barriers to learning in the **United Kingdom** (UK) brought about many changes. Most significant was the Warnock Report (1978) and the 1993 Education Act with the accompanying Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (Stakes & Hornby, 2000: 5). In the UK, the local education authority (LEA) is the decision-maker regarding the provision for special educational needs. Learners who experience barriers to learning are to be educated alongside peers in mainstream schools, unless there are specific reasons to the contrary. Identification and assessment are controlled by legislation. A formal statement of special educational needs and provision on how it is to be addressed must be provided through involving a multidisciplinary team (Dyson, 2005: 65; Sacker, Schoon & Bartley, 2001: 260; Hegarty, 1994: 90).

However, according to Dyson (2005: 64), many learners are still placed in segregated and semi-segregated settings within the mainstream school. Although these SEN (special educational needs) units may be highly integrated with the rest of the school, some function in isolation like a mini-special school attached to a mainstream school. Recently mainstream schools were encouraged to develop a range of grouping systems that places learners in different settings and on different curriculum pathways on the basis of their ability and aptitude (Dyson, 2005: 64).

New Zealand made amendments to the Education Act in 1989 that resulted in the legal right of learners experiencing barriers to learning to attend mainstream classes in regular schools. However, many schools have ignored these provisions and excluded or placed restrictions on such learners whose parents wanted them in the mainstream (Ballard & Mac Donald, 1998: 70). Special Education Policy Guidelines were introduced in 1996 (originally referred to as Special Education 2000), which stated that learners experiencing barriers to learning should have access to the same range of age appropriate education as their peers. This policy provides support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in three levels addressing seven major components, as presented by Kearney and Kane (2006: 206-7):

1. Learners with high or very high needs:
    a) Ongoing and Renewable Resourcing Scheme;
    b) Severe Behaviour Initiative and Speech Language Initiative
2. Learners with moderate needs:
    a) Special Education Grant;
    b) Resource Teachers; and
    c) Learning and Behaviour.
3. Early Childhood:
    a) Early Intervention.

Although some efforts were made to move away from categorisation based on labels, such as e.g. Down Syndrome or Learning Difficulties (Kearney & Kane, 2006: 208), New Zealand still has a central process, monitoring funding for learners who experience barriers to learning according to categories of disablement (Slee, 2005: 155-6). Funding is, however, not tagged to individual learners, but rather allocated to schools on the basis of socio-economic indicators (Kearney & Kane, 2006: 208). It is left to the discretion of the school to spend the funds on meeting the needs of learners who need additional support. According to Wills (2006: 194), parents and schools were deeply concerned with these changes, which created a sense of

disillusionment, distrust and a sense of betrayal. Parents reacted by challenging the Ministry of Education on the basis that the Crown (state or government) had an obligation (under Section 9(a) of the Education Act 1989) to maintain special education provision for learners identified as in need of special education. Subsequently the court ruling declared that the closing of special education units would no longer be pursued. This may slow down the inclusion of all learners in their local schools.

Australian schools have embraced the strong philosophical movement towards inclusive education. Forlin (2005: 13) contends that mainstream primary schools in Australia are becoming “progressively more multifaceted as they include students with a wide range of diverse abilities”. Most states and territories provide an array of support facilities. These facilities range from segregated special schools to autonomous education support centres located on a mainstream school campus to special education classes within mainstream schools (Forlin, 2004: 185). Western Australia provides a continuum of services that also include full inclusion and an extensive visiting teacher network to support mainstream schools (Forlin, 2004:186). Moreover, Australia has a complex education funding system, which provides state schools with funds for specific programmes, such as Aboriginal education and learners experiencing barriers to learning (Slee, 2005: 151).

2.2.3.1 Summary

The countries in the preceding section are representative of developments regarding inclusive education in countries with a high level of human development. Although most countries have legislation regulating inclusive education, variations concerning practical implementation are apparent.

Segregation is still practised to a certain extent, and could be ascribed to well-resourced and established forms of segregated special education. In these affluent countries we witness a merging of the special education system with an equally well-resourced mainstream education system.

Many countries make use of the established infrastructure of the special education system to provide support for learners experiencing barriers to learning through a continuum of support. Inclusive education receives further impetus from increased financial incentives and additional human resources provided in these countries. However, this is clearly influenced by contextual factors of the specific country.

2.2.4 Inclusive education in countries with a medium and low human development level

According to Mittler (2000: 172) inclusion is taking off much faster and with greater commitment in some of the poorest countries. However, countries in the northern hemisphere with a high level of human development have largely dominated much of the international debate on inclusion/exclusion. The result has been that paradigms, theories, policies and practices of the north are transferred to the south without considering its own special set of systems (Muthukrishna, 2003: vii). Fact is that, as far as inclusion is concerned, one of the lessons of the past decade is that the countries classified as those with a low and medium level of human development have much to teach the countries with a higher level of human development (Mittler, 2000: 28). To obtain a broader perspective, it is important to gain insight into the inclusion/exclusion debate and experience of some countries with medium and low levels of human development.

Researchers (Rouse & Kang'ethe, 2003: 75; Du Toit, 1996: 5) contend that the basic concepts of special education and inclusion can only be understood in the context in which they occur. Unlike in the more affluent countries, the issue of inclusive education does not always focus on relocating learners from special schools to mainstream schools. For many medium and low human development countries the need is centred on major capacity development at local level to include learners previously excluded from attending school (Rouse & Kang'ethe, 2003: 78).

In a follow-up initiative to the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, it was recognised that the existing Education for All strategies and programmes are largely insufficient or inappropriate with regard to learners with disabilities and learning difficulties (UNESCO, 1999: 11). Regrettably, it was established that the predominant form of provision for special needs education in most parts of the world is still limited to separate schools, which are generally expensive, and often not within reach of many. The target of this special project was mainly African countries with the exception of the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Jordan, Chile and Lao People's Democratic Republic. It was established that many of these countries have special education principles embodied in the national education policies.

Following is a brief summary of the findings regarding the special Project on Inclusive Schools and Community Support Programmes (UNESCO, 1999):

The education system in **Malawi** remained segregated to the disadvantage of learners with disabilities. One of the objectives of the UNESCO project in Malawi was to facilitate the development of education policy with regard to special needs (UNESCO, 1999: 41). While in a

country like **Guinea** the General Policy on Education affirms the right to education, the learners with disabilities have still been marginalised to a large extent. It was found that 90% of learners with disabilities were still excluded from the school system in Guinea. The UNESCO project initiated the first steps taken towards inclusion (UNESCO, 1999: 27). On the other hand, some countries, like **Morocco, Jordan, Palestine, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Ivory Coast**, had already initiated local inclusion projects. The UNESCO project mainly helped to build on, strengthen and expand existing initiatives (UNESCO, 1999).

The UNESCO report (1999) reflected that the countries targeted, varied widely with regard to policy and the implementation of the principle of Education for All. While some countries had no policy in place, others presented a policy that was never implemented, while still others focused only on including learners with specific sensory disabilities. Some countries, like Palestine, presented well-developed programmes in the quest to provide Education for All. **Palestine** has already appointed resource staff to support learners in government schools, while in **Morocco** the UNESCO project established resource rooms, on the premise that inclusion required back-up support for both learners and classroom teachers.

From the findings of the UNESCO special Project on Inclusive Schools and Community Support Programmes (UNESCO, 1999) the conclusion is apparent that inclusive education takes on various forms in different countries. The following are a few more examples of reactions toward the universally accepted goal of Education for All adopted at Salamanca.

The countries have been selected because of their similarities regarding socio-economic development, literacy level and other factors used by the HDI to classify them as medium and low human development countries. However, taking into account the differences in historical and societal contexts, cultural values and beliefs, one would avoid "taking an unduly optimistic or an unduly pessimistic view" (Mitchell, 2005: 14) on the movement towards inclusive education in these countries. It is therefore important that local practices must be seen against differences in contexts, cultural values and beliefs.

Inclusive education in **India** is perceived as including learners with disabilities into mainstream school. This very narrow perception of inclusion does not allow children who are marginalised in other ways to be considered in the concept of inclusion (Rouse & Kang'ethe, 2003: 78). Although India has incorporated inclusive and compulsory education for all into their policies, the caste system is still dominated by social exclusion in some provinces (Balagopalan, 2003). At the international conference on education, India (2004) [http://www.ibe.unecso.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/india.pdf] recognised that the emphasis of the

Education for All is on those most underprivileged, *i.e.* girls, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other minorities. Nonetheless, it is also reported that a model to integrate learners with mild to moderate disability into mainstream education ("Integrated Education for Disabled Children") was implemented. The goal of this model is to comply with the Salamanca Statement in providing access to education for learners with disabilities, and in so doing, achieve harmonious coexistence.

In the **Philippines** the concept of a "school within a school" has been developed. In this approach a special education centre can be part of a mainstream school, preparing learners with disabilities, physically and psychologically, to move into the mainstream class on either a part-time or full-time basis (CSIE. 2005. [http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/intperi.htm]). Although the ultimate goal of educational legislation in the Philippines was inclusive education, various options for educational placement were developed in response to the recognition that not all learners experiencing barriers to learning can be integrated into mainstream classes (Mitchell & Desai, 2005: 169).

Although separate schools do exist in **China**, regular primary and secondary schools must admit learners with disabilities "who are able to participate" in the mainstream classes and parents may appeal to the school authorities if their child is not admitted. With regard to equity in schools, Sherman and Poirier (2007: 127) ([http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/publications/UIS/WP-Sherman-FINALwc.pdf]) report that the *Guidelines for the Reform and the Development of Education in China* particularly "mandates that the education of ethnic minorities and those with disabilities receive more attention". A National Conference on Special Education, held in 1988, led to the decision that although separate special schools will serve as the "backbone" of the system, the large number of special classes and learners experiencing learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms will be the "body" (Mitchell & Desai, 2005: 171). To support learners experiencing barriers to learning in the mainstream, China introduced the "Trail Measures of Implementing Learning in Regular Classrooms" (LRC) programme in 1994. However, Mitchell and Desai (2005: 170) argue that China's education policies and the process of inclusive education are influenced by the complex combination of traditional Confucian values, socialism, Western ideas and pragmatism. According to Mitchell and Desai (2005) this is clearly evident in the implementation of the LRC programme. Although the programme was built on the American notion of mainstreaming, emphasis was placed on a remedial model with its roots in the Soviet Union.

Zimbabwe has a history of separate education systems. Despite the enormous need for special education, the number of learners receiving special education is very limited. There are four

different types of special schools. According to Chitiyo and Wheeler (2004: 49) significant progress has been made to integrate learners experiencing barriers to learning into mainstream classes. Although learners who are integrated have to adjust to the requirements of the school, support is provided in a variety of forms. These include resource rooms, resource classes, special classes and integration units. In addition to these forms of provision, it was found that ability grouping was prevalent in some schools (Chisaka & Vakalisa, 2003).

According to the **Kenyan** Ministry of Education and Technology (Development of education in Kenya. 2004. [http://www.ibe.unecso.org/International/ICE47/Natreps/reports/kenya.pdf]) marked emphasis is placed on achieving Education for All. There is a commitment to socially include all vulnerable learners, including learners with "special needs". However, although there is a move towards integrated provision in Kenya, learners who experience barriers to learning are still accommodated in special schools and units. Nonetheless, Muuya (2002: 229) reports that despite the developments in provision for special educational needs, there is still a significant gap between policy and practice. This is attributed to the legacy of colonialism and indigenous educational traditions regarding special educational provision (Muuya, 2002: 230).

In 1987 the **Lesotho** government commissioned a report on the possibilities of integration. As part of the government's commitment to Education for All (EFA) a pilot programme was implemented in 1993 to integrate local learners with disabilities from rural areas into regular schools. According to the evaluation report, "disabled children appeared socially as well as educationally integrated" (Mittler, 2000: 27). However, the focus of Education for All in Lesotho is on promoting equity regarding access of learners previously excluded from school in general. This includes disparities on the basis of social status, geographic location and gender. Unlike some other countries, Lesotho has a higher school enrolment of girls as opposed that of boys. This is attributed to the migrant labour system and livestock herding by boys (Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training, 2004) [http://www.ibe.unecso.org/International/ICE47/Natreps/reports/lesotho.pdf]).

Countries of the **Eastern Caribbean subscribe to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States** (OECS) reform strategy. This emphasises the importance of inclusive education, while also identifying the provision of adequate and appropriate support as a great challenge (Armstrong, Armstrong & Lynch, 2005: 71). However, a large number of learners who experience barriers to learning are included in mainstream schools in the Caribbean. Nonetheless, the reality of the goal of Education for All remains distant for the majority of Caribbean people (Armstrong *et al*. 2005: 74).

South Africa underwent major democratic changes that have had profound implications for the development of inclusive education. A detailed discussion of the South African journey towards inclusive education follows in chapter 3.

It is apparent that the emphasis of "Education for All" and inclusive education in the economically poorer countries is on providing education to those who have been denied access to schooling in the past. Strong emphasis is placed on gender equity regarding access to schools. However, locational and social integration enjoys high priority in contrast to the prevalent provision of a continuum of services in the more affluent countries discussed earlier in 2.2.3.

2.2.5 Conclusion

It is clear that global discourse, developments and international declarations, such as the Salamanca Statement, have a profound impact on policy development in the different countries. It is, however, equally clear that local historical, cultural and socio-economic contexts, values and belief systems influence and determine local practices. In the words of Artiles and Dyson (2005: 57) it would thus be simplistic to have a unidimensional perspective, since "inclusive education is a multidimensional phenomenon with different countries … developing not simply at different rates but in quite different directions." However, it is argued that the vast range of "perspectives on inclusive education, its definition and implementation" hampers the progress in the field of inclusive education (EENET Newsletter No.8, 2006 [http///www.eenet.org.uk/ bibliog/unespubls.shtml]).

2.3 LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Stakes and Hornby (2000: 11) assert that learners experiencing learning difficulties (LD) constitute the largest proportion of learners experiencing barriers to learning. Unlike learners with easy to recognise physical or sensory barriers, learners with LD show no outward signs to alert the teacher.

In response to the UNESCO call for quality education for all, many countries embarked on efforts to accommodate learners with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms. In the United States most learners experiencing learning difficulties educated in pull-out programmes at mainstream schools (Zigmond & Baker, 1997: 98). In the UK, as well as in other countries (see Figure 2.2), the vast majority of learners with mild learning difficulties are accommodated in mainstream classes, while the majority with severe and profound learning difficulties are placed in special schools (Stakes & Hornby, 2000: 11; Evans, 2004: 3 [http://oecd.org/dataoecd/ 27/53/35779248.pdf]).

With the move towards inclusive education, the use of IQ scores to classify learning needs is rejected. However, the lack of IQ scores is of great concern for parent and advocacy groups. They are concerned that limitations are placed on the identification of learners with school-related, high-incidence difficulties such as those related to learning (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005: 94). These limitations culminate in a lack of recognition that these learners need additional learning support, and therefore also in a lack of government funding to provide such support. Definitions of learning difficulty by these concerned groups tend to claim a neurological deficit. The Learning Disabilities Associations in Canada and the United States define learners with learning difficulties (LD) as learners who have average IQ scores and "levels of assessed achievement which are significantly discrepant from the norm, particularly in the areas of reading and literacy". McLaughlin and Jordan (2005: 95) consider this definition as highly controversial from a research standpoint. However, the desire of parents to label their children as "learning disabled" should be viewed against the criteria for financial support for special programs in the United States and Canada (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005: 94-95). As discussed previously, this is also the situation in New Zealand (Wills, 2006: 194). Therefore the argument is that learners with learning difficulties in mainstream schools should receive "compensatory resources and supports if they are to compete on standards-based measures of achievement" (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2005: 96).

Although learners with LD are generally in the mainstream, they often remain relatively isolated. Ainscow (2001: 2) ([http/// www.man.ac.uk/include]) argues that learners with LD are conditionally included in the sense that the school has to provide continuous additional support and resources. As new responsibilities are placed on mainstream schools, an increasing number of schools are requesting more and better support services for learners who experience learning difficulties (Dessent, 1987: 69). According to McLaughlin and Jordan (2005: 99) very few teachers are equipped and willing to provide the individualised and intense instruction needed in the modern diverse classroom.

It therefore appears that despite the call for inclusive education, which will benefit all learners, current practices still do not translate into school improvement. There still remains a strong and indefinite demand for special education outside the mainstream classroom. Stangvik (1997: 42) is of the opinion that although this segregated model constricts the notion of inclusive education, it seems to at least provide an opportunity for learners who experience learning difficulties to be educated in their mainstream classroom on a part-time basis.

Ainscow (1998b: 70) argues that the fields of special education and that of school improvement still remain separate to a large extent. As a consequence the next section will examine current practices regarding learning support provided within an inclusive school.

2.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

2.4.1 Introduction

From the previous section it is evident that the provision of learning support should be part of how the whole school is managed. The establishment of inclusive schools should invariably be done within a whole school approach. Inclusive education is about change to improve the educational system for all learners because it relates to changing and adapting the system to benefit the learner and not changing the learner to fit in (Grenot-Scheyer, Jubala, Bishop & Coots, 1996: 1; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000: 9). It therefore encompasses much more than special education and should not be limited to learners who experience barriers to learning and their teachers. Schools are complex in nature. The different components are too interrelated and interdependent for isolated changes to occur. Provision for learners who experience barriers to learning raises issues that relate to the way schools operate as a whole. Inclusive education should consequently not be seen as a change in special education, but rather as an opportunity to reform or renew the whole school. It is accordingly essential that these concerns be addressed through the development of a whole school policy for inclusive education (Stakes & Hornby, 2000: 117; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000: 9).

A whole-school approach pre-empts the full range of factors involved in bringing about change in schools. It is one of the "most powerful approaches to generate and internalise innovation for the improvement of the school" (Mukhopadhyay, 2002: 142). Addressing the educational needs of all learners should be seen as a fundamental part of school improvement.

In asking "What are schools for?", Fullan (1991: 14) poses a very complicated / controversial question. In an attempt to categorise the major functions of schools, he sees the two major purposes of schooling as those of "cognitive/academic and personal/social development". Relevant to this study is his argument that in democratic societies the goals of equality, opportunity and achievement cannot be disconnected from these two main purposes of schooling. Provision and delivery of educational support services should therefore be part of the democratisation process, coupled with the new curriculum and educational policy reform.

Meeting the diverse educational needs in ordinary mainstream schools is much more than a process of opening school doors to admit learners previously excluded. It involves a radical re-

examination of what all schools have to offer all learners (Halliday, 1989). According to an Audit Commission/HMI report in England, the key factor to effective support is good planning and communication (Stakes & Hornby, 2000: 119). This notion gains further impetus with Lipsky and Gartner's (1997) argument, as cited by Walther-Thomas *et al.* (2000: 3), that effective models of inclusive education in general are characterised by comprehensive planning, support and resources. It is therefore imperative that the provision of learning support be managed strategically as part of the overall school improvement process (Gross & White, 2003: 1). Managing learning support as part of a whole-school improvement plan has the advantage of increasing the number of learners reaching national attainment levels and reducing the percentage of learners failing to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills before they leave primary school (Gross & White, 2003: 4). It therefore also changes the meaning of learning support. Fox (1993) as cited by Stakes & Hornby (2000: 119) identified three important areas of support in schools. These are support for the learner, for the teacher and for the whole school.

2.4.2 Management of learning support at a whole-school level

An important factor in the development of inclusive schools is how learning support services are provided. The educational requirements of learners experiencing barriers are as diverse as the learners themselves. Some learners may need a "highly structured environment with considerable individual attention, others benefit from access to sophisticated equipment or specialist staff, while yet others need little more than minor adjustments to normal schooling" (Hegarty, 2002: 166).

According to researchers such as Hegarty (2002), Pijl *et al.* (1997), and UNESCO (1999), education systems around the world respond to these needs by establishing systems of education provision that range from segregated special schools to fully integrated provision in mainstream schools. The previous section (2.2.3) affirms such provisions in the different countries. According to Mittler (2000: 11) learning support is generally planned and delivered through collaboration between the learning support teacher and the class teacher. Pijl and Meijer (1997: 11) suggest the following variations of an organisational structure to provide learning support to learners experiencing learning difficulties:

a. regular class, no support, fully integrated class;
b. regular class, in-class support for teacher and/ or pupils;
c. regular class, withdrawal for specialist support;
d. regular class as basis, part-time special class;
e. special class as basis, part-time regular class;

f. full-time placement in unit or special class;
g. part-time special school, part-time regular school;
h. full-time placement in special school.

These variants give a range of possible ways in which learning support can be organised within the school. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 (2.5) are examples of how the United States of America and England and New Zealand (2.2.3) have organised the provision of support in a continuum of services. However, local circumstances and traditions influence the actual provision of learning support (Pijl & Meijer, 1997: 11; Hegarty, 2002: 166). Schools face many challenges in response to the provision of support. As a result there is constantly a need to prioritise limited resources and develop creative means of supporting a wide range of learners' needs (Nowek & Campbell, 2003: 14).

The literature therefore claims that countries **differ** in their goals and means concerning the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning into the mainstream education system. They also differ with regard to the continuum of providing learning support and the range and possibilities on this continuum. Therefore, globally speaking, education support provision and delivery to learners experiencing barriers to learning **vary considerably**. However, researchers (Pijl, Meijer & Hegarty, 1997: 5: Wolhuter & Steyn, 2003: 29; Evans, 2004: 32) are of the opinion that **comparative educational research** can contribute to our knowledge of inclusive education. According to Evans (2004: 32) and Bonnet (2004: 180), governments are increasingly using international comparisons in both mainstream and special education to improve their own national provisions and to inform policy directions. Bonnet (2004:180) contends that comparative evaluation and monitoring of methodologies should become common policy. A marked feature of comparative studies is the fact that it reveals factors relevant to the success of inclusive education. In a comparison of learning support by Pijl *et al.* (1997: 5), the provision of additional support is highlighted as a relevant factor in the quest towards inclusive education. It reveals that successful inclusive education depends on having at least a part-time learning support facility outside the classroom.

However, in order for a school to manage the provision of learning support, within and outside the mainstream class at a whole school level, they would need a number of guiding principles. A useful tool for this purpose is the Index for Inclusion developed by Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan & Shaw (2000). The Index consists of a set of materials to support schools in developing inclusive schools "through a collaborative process of review, planning and implementation" (Rustemier & Booth, 2005: 5). According to Booth *et al.* (2000: 7) this Index is concerned with improving educational achievement through inclusive practices. It can assist

schools to systematically plan, prioritise, implement and review progress of change towards establishing an inclusive school.

The process of creating truly inclusive schools is therefore concerned with how the school can be "restructured in order to respond to all [learners] as individuals" (Ahuja, 2002: 80). It is further imperative that the process of establishing an inclusive school has the support of the whole school community.

While the foregoing section focused on the provision of a continuum of support services, there are advocates for full-inclusion, as well as the curriculum view of providing learning support within the classroom context (Ahuja, 2002; Vislie, 2003). The proponents of full inclusion and a continuum of services are contrasted in table 2.1 in 2.5.2 of this chapter.

2.4.2.1 Role of the school principal

Providing quality learning support can invariably contribute to the provision of quality education for all in the whole school. The principal, together with the learning support teacher and the governing body, is responsible to ensure that all learners have access to the whole school and all activities provided by the school (Mittler, 2000: 4). McLeskey and Waldron (2000: 23) contend that establishing inclusive schools needs the active support of the principal. In fact, to build a successful inclusive school, the principal needs to be actively involved in developing and implementing the plan. Swart and Pettipher (2001: 38) assert that principals have to be dynamic leaders with a vision to promote school reform that ultimately culminates in optimal outcomes for all learners. According to Salisbury and Mc Gregor (2002: 260) the importance of the school principal as a leader in "establishing and maintaining an ongoing focus on school improvement and support for change has been well established in theory and practice".

McLeskey and Waldron (2000: 26) argue that the active involvement of the principal is critical for several reasons. Some of the reasons suggested by McLeskey and Waldron (2000) are rephrased to coincide with the intent of this study, as well as current vocabulary used in South Africa. These are:

- the promotion and modeling of support for inclusive education and the need for changes with the school staff;
- provision of the necessary support for program development and implementation, including: time for planning, staff development and resources needed to support changes;
- ensuring that teachers are in control of changes;
- ensuring that the senior management team and school governing body own and support changes;

- ensuring that the whole-school development plan take cognisance of the local school context.
- encouraging risk-taking among teachers and assuring teachers that they will be given support;
- encouraging ongoing evaluation and improvement of the inclusive school.

Although there is a strong movement to provide a continuum of support services at schools, there are, as mentioned earlier in the concluding paragraph of 2.4.2, those advocating full inclusion. The following section will therefore look into the different approaches to providing learning support in schools.

2.5 INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES TO LEARNING SUPPORT

2.5.1 Full inclusion versus a continuum of support

As teachers become reflective and critical practitioners of inclusive education, a new debate is initiated. The debate on defining integration versus the definition of inclusive education is thought provoking. According to Vislie (2003: 20) there are two theoretical models of integration, one focusing on special education (integration as a reform in special education, and the other focusing on the reformulation of mainstream education (making mainstream education more comprehensive and diverse).

Inclusive education, as discussed in Chapter 1.9.5, is much broader than integration, in that it covers more issues and is concerned with the quality of education provided to those who are integrated (Vislie, 2003: 20; Ainscow, 1998a: 8).

Although many countries have phased out the traditional forms of educational segregation, these were replaced by more flexible arrangements in many countries (Vislie, 2003: 29). The controversy around inclusive education continues, with some professionals supporting full inclusion as opposed to those in favour of inclusive schools, but at the same time realising that mainstream education may not always be the best option. In contrast to the Italian philosophy and practice of “wild integration” (Vislie, 2003: 20), some other professionals describe “responsible” inclusion as a learner-centred, school-based model. Responsible inclusion allows provision for placement and learning support in accordance with individual needs (Webber, 2005; Burden & Burdett, 2004; Evans & Lunt, 2002; Slee, 2001).

In the United States of America this highly debatable issue of full inclusion versus a continuum of service options has led to the adoption of a policy statement as a call for a continuum of

services. The goal of the Council for Exceptional Children was to provide meaningful inclusion with the provision of a continuum of services. The implications of this policy are that schools have to provide support and technical assistance needed to serve the increasingly diverse learner population in inclusive settings (Olson & Platt, 2000: 16).

However, Sands *et al.* (2000: 20) argue that it is the system of labelling that has led to the introduction of a continuum of services. This, in turn, has led to the placement of learners experiencing more significant barriers further and further away from their home, schools and/or home communities. Although it was meant to address the need to support inclusive practices, it seems as if the provision of a continuum of support services is only perpetuating the medical model. Slee (2001: 117) supports this argument, as he contends that keeping the focus of inclusion on special needs is a constriction of inclusive education to the traditional special education framework. Ainscow (2001) ([http/// www.man.ac.uk/include]) takes it further by suggesting that this preoccupation with special educational needs is only one among the many that is vulnerable to exclusionary practices within the education system.

It has become essential to place the issue of disabilities alongside all other forms of oppression in a human rights framework. In so doing, inclusive education aims to fundamentally transform the education system into an "equitable education system that echoes and reflects fundamentals of an equitable society" (Dyson, 1999: 40). Slee (2001: 121) also adopts this view that the debate on educational inclusion/exclusion needs to be extended beyond the theoretical straightjacket of Special Educational Needs.

In the midst of this controversial and multifaceted debate, schools are consequently faced with the daunting challenge of how to support learners in an inclusive classroom (Kochar *et al*. 2000: v). The United States has opted to provide this range of services within the least restrictive environment for learners experiencing barriers to learning (Vallecorsa, de Bettencourt & Zigmond, 2000: 10). A least restrictive environment is defined as a "setting that as closely as possible resembles the general [mainstream] education process while simultaneously meeting the unique… needs of each individual" (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000: 18). The continuum of service delivery options consists of seven levels as represented in Figure 2.3 below.

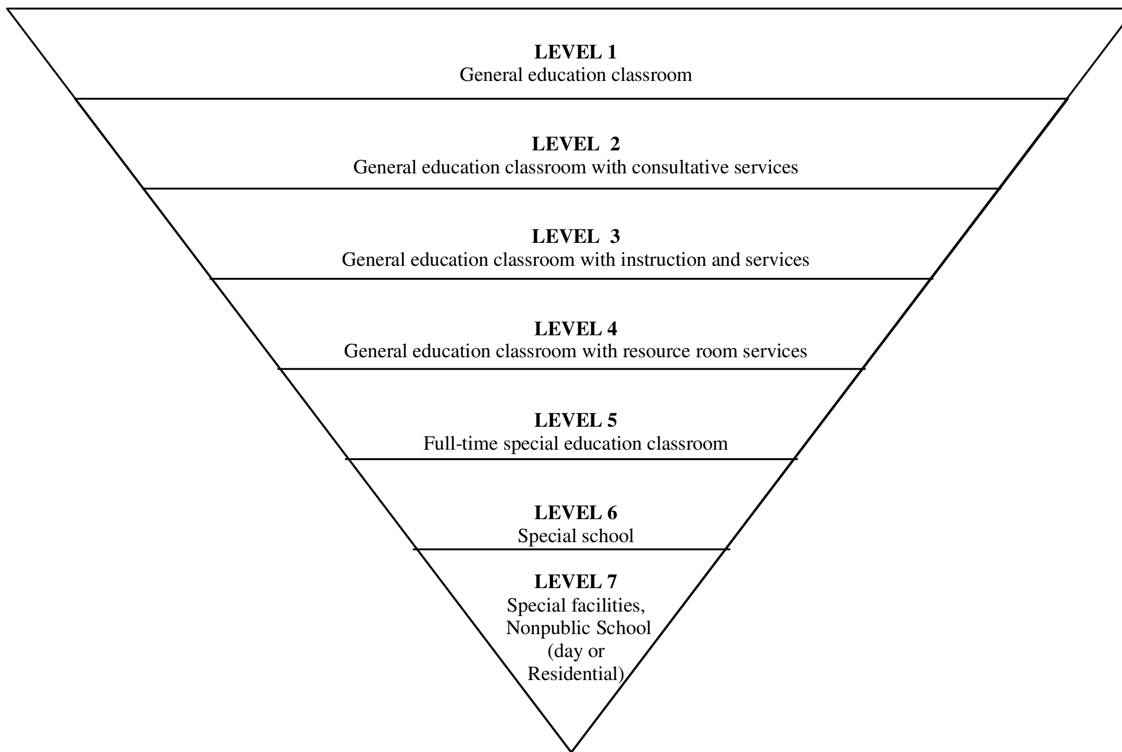


FIGURE 2.3: CONTINUUM OF SERVICES, FROM LEAST RESTRICTIVE TO MOST RESTRICTIVE.

(Source: Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000: 18)

England has developed a Code of Practice, based on needs and support, as a "guide for schools and Local Education Authorities (LEA) about the practical help they can give to pupils with special educational needs" (Stakes & Hornby, 2000: 5). The Code details the procedures for identifying, assessing and planning for programmes to address special educational needs (SEN). The Code also has a set of indicators for the provision on a continuum of SEN. The continuum ranges from mild, moderate and severe to profound learning difficulties. Support varies from assistance to learners experiencing barriers to learning who are fully integrated in the mainstream school to those who are educated outside the school system.

Gross (2002: 84) is of the contention that Figure 2.4 below conceptualises the provision of learning support in terms of increasing levels of intensity in English schools. This proposal is made against the backdrop of limited adult support and financial constraints.

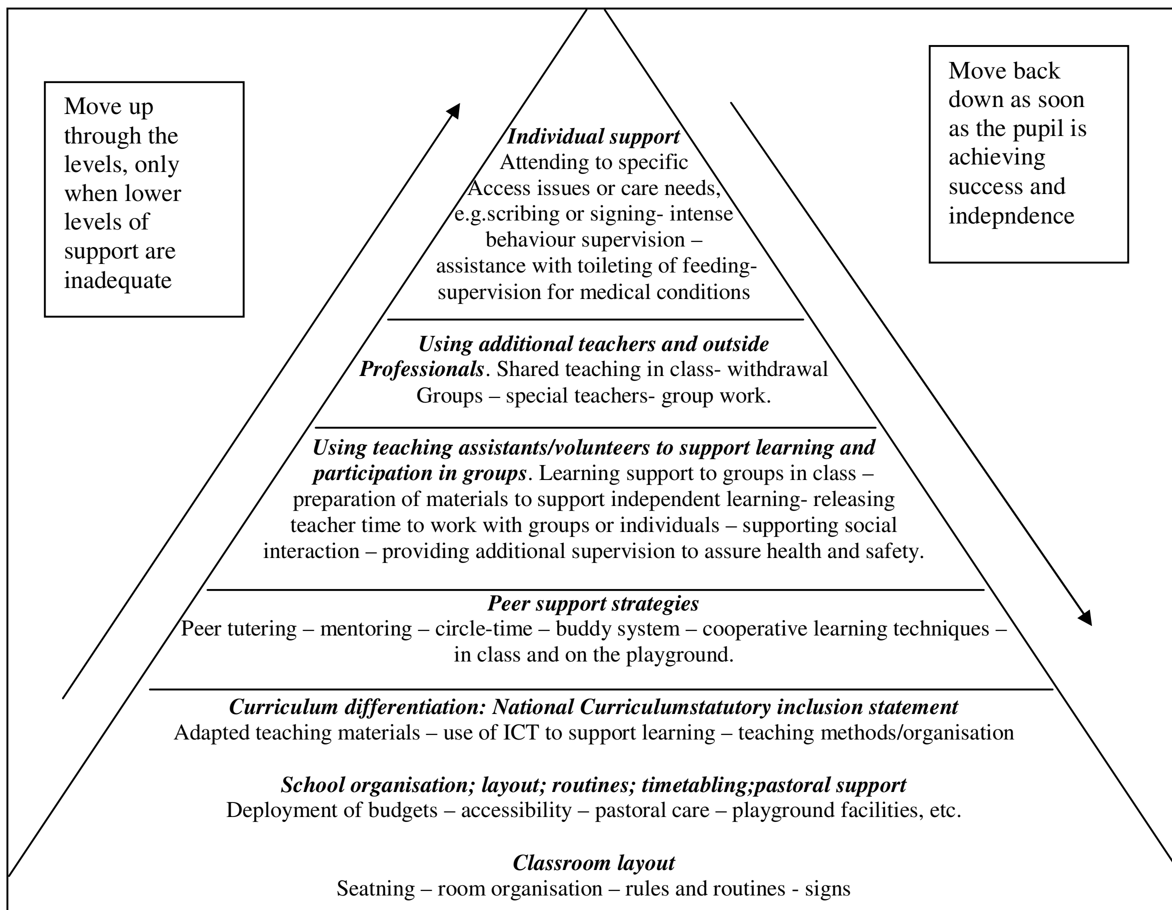


FIGURE 2.4: LEVELS OF SUPPORT

(Source: Gross, 2002: 85)

These variants correlate well with the report on learning support provision by Pijl and Meijer (1997: 11) and Hegarty (2002: 166) as referred to in the previous section entitled: **Learning Difficulties**. It is also clear that local contexts and traditions have an influence on the actual provision of learning support. The provision of extra support for learners experiencing barriers to learning to ensure effective education is proposed within the framework for action of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994. [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/011/01176/17625eapdf]). Therefore many countries have adopted some learning support strategy as an option to service delivery as part of revised education policies.

The variation of strategies to provide support services promotes the concept of a continuum of support. However, there are also those who advocate full-inclusion (Ahuja, 2002). According to this view, specialised services are brought and delivered to the learners by support personnel within the class context. Learners are thus not withdrawn (excluded for certain periods of time) to receive support (Ahuja, 2002: 80). There is also the curriculum view of providing learning support within the classroom context. This view suggests that an inclusive curriculum would address the needs of all the learners. Such a curriculum embraces educational diversity and

recognises the heterogeneity of educational needs of all the learners, including learners who experience barriers to learning (Tilstone *et al*. 2000: 12; Vislie, 2003; Stakes & Hornby, 2000; Sands *et al*., 2000; Ainscow, 2001). It supports the notion that inclusive education is built on the philosophy that all children can learn and that they need to be supported in their learning.

Nonetheless, the form of how learning support is delivered within an inclusive education framework remains a highly debatable issue. In the quest to constantly seek ways to advance in their field, a number of professionals have been adopting a critical perspective. They are continually questioning theories and assumptions (Ahuja, 2002: 80). The advocates for full inclusion, as well as those in favour of the "pull-out" model of service delivery, present arguments based on social, legal and educational practice to support their respective perspectives (Walther-Thomas *et al.*, 2000: 2; Ahuja, 2002: 79-80; Gross, 2002: 104).

The more radical perspective is concerned with the way in which learners are identified as having special needs and thus continues to explain learning difficulties in terms of child-centred characteristics (Ahuja, 2002: 80). According to Walther-Thomas *et al.* (2000: 3) the inherent philosophical and structural differences between full inclusion and the pull-out models make it difficult to assess the legitimacy of either perspective. However, they (Walther-Thomas *et al.* 2000: 3) argue that as inclusion is practised poorly in so many schools, it becomes easy to understand why caring and concerning advocates speak out against full inclusion.

The following table (Table 2.1) provides a brief comparative description of the proponents of full inclusion and that of a continuum of services:

TABLE 2.1: PROPONENTS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Proponents of full inclusion	Proponents of a continuum of services
-Full inclusion is a civil right of learners experiencing barriers to be educated alongside their peers. -Full inclusion reduces stigma of being educated separately or withdrawn for support. -Full inclusion is more efficient, because learners do not lose valuable time in the mainstream class by being withdrawn to support, causing the school day to become fragmented. -Full inclusion promotes equality.	-A continuum of service options is necessary to ensure that learners experiencing barriers receive "appropriate education". -The mainstream classroom may also be stigmatising when learners experiencing barriersto learning have to receive physical therapy or having to read at grade levels below that of their peers. -Mainstream educators are not ready for full inclusion and generally feel that they are inadequately trained, or do not have enough time or resources to include learners experiencing barriers to learning. -Mainstream classrooms may not have sufficient resources to provide for learners experiencing barriers to learning, and they are concerned that specialised needs will go unmet. -Research evidence does not support the superiority of full inclusion and the notion that parents prefer provision through a continuum of support.

(Adapted from Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000: 22-24)

The question arises as to whether or not a continuum of services only perpetuates and expands special education as a professional field (Vislie, 2003: 20), or whether it is adding to the quality of education for all.

2.5.2 Reconceptualising learning support in schools

Historically the support of learners experiencing barriers to learning and participation is embedded in the medical model. This model (2.2.1.1) based individual needs on categories that located deficits within the individual, and then suggested some curative interventions provided by specialists to help them "fit in".

In recent years, education systems have explored different ways in responding to the needs of learners experiencing learning difficulties and other barriers (Moran & Abbot, 2002: 162). Table 2.1 depicts the differences in approach to the provision of learning support:

TABLE 2.2: RECONCEPTUALISED PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNING SUPPORT

Medical approach to learning support	Inclusive approach to learning support
- Focus on the learner - Assessment of learner by specialist - Diagnostic / prescriptive outcomes - Individualised learner programme - Placement in appropriate programme	- Focus on the classroom - Examine teaching/learning factors - Collaborative problem-solving - Strategies for teachers - Adaptive and supportive mainstream classroom environment

(Adapted from Porter, 1997: 72)

From a human rights perspective, it is recognised that all learners have diverse learning needs. Teachers and support staff are therefore increasingly expected to meet these changing needs and to work flexibly in a variety of settings with learners who have diverse needs (Capper, Frattura & Keyes, 2000: 38). As a consequence inclusive education is largely dependent upon a reconceptualisation of teaching roles and responsibilities (Rose, 2001: 147). This reconceptualisation of roles and responsibilities are directly related to inclusive practices that enable all learners to participate (Moran & Abbot, 2002: 162). **Learning support reconceptualised, is thus committed to an inclusive definition of learning support to refer to all activities and practices used in response to the diverse needs of all learners, the staff and the whole school as a system.**

It is therefore imperative that this reconceptualisation be encapsulated within a whole-school development approach from an eco-systemic perspective. A number of factors concerning the provision of education for all relate to the way schools operate as a whole. Stakes and Hornby (2000: 117) argue that these issues need to be addressed through the development of a whole school policy on establishing inclusive practices. According to Cheminais (2001: 3) the Index for Inclusion, (Booth *et al.* 2000) may be a valuable tool to support schools in establishing their current position in relation to inclusive culture, policy and practice. The Index for Inclusion is a "unique set of materials designed to support schools" in a process of developing inclusive schools (Vaughan, 2002: 197). It promotes inclusive practices to the advantage of all learners.

An important factor in promoting inclusive practices in schools is the inclusion of all concerned with the provision of support to learners experiencing learning difficulties. Collaboration among all concerned is important for providing the best possible support to these learners. The following section will explore ways in which teams collaborate in order to provide the necessary support in addressing the needs of learners.

2.5.2.1 Collaboration

Moran and Abbot (2002: 162) contend that "the most critical strategy for creating successful learning experiences for all, regardless of barrier, is teamwork". Researchers are generally in agreement about the potential of collaboration in group context regarding support in and for schools (Swart & Pettipher, 2005; Engelbrecht, 2004; Dyson, 2005; Gerschel, 2005; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Creese, Daniels & Norwich, 1997).

According to Engelbrecht (2004: 248) the term "collaboration" is frequently used to describe "professional interactions or discussions about emerging ways to support schools, teachers, children and their families". Schools are increasingly "developing innovative support structures and collaborative teams to realise inclusion through policies and practices to empower adults and learners alike" (Gerschel, 2005: 75).

Terminology regarding teams vary and include terms such as multidisciplinary teams (Dyson, 2005) collaborative teams (Gerschel, 2005), mainstream assistance teams (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000) and teacher support teams (Creese *et al.* 1997). They all, however, provide consultative support to teachers in addressing the needs of learners. Nonetheless, Engelbrecht (2004: 248) distinguishes between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaboration.

Multidisciplinary collaboration implies that professionals from different disciplines and perspectives each contribute their own unique perspectives and information, while maintaining independence within the group. They also provide support independently to the client and although team members recognise the importance of each member's contribution, ultimately very little collaboration takes place. Although **interdisciplinary collaboration** correlates with the way multifunctional teams function, group members are "willing to share their separate plans with one another in their efforts to develop and work toward a collective goal of service and coordination" (Engelbrecht, 2004b: 250). Research shows that interdisciplinary cooperation amongst professionals in consultation with parents and, in some cases, with the learner, is a major feature in determining support for learners (CSIE, 2005. [http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/sie/intperi.htm]). Vislie (2003: 29) observed similar results in a study comparing the state of inclusion in a number of countries. **Trans-disciplinary collaboration,** on the other hand, is the most collaborative of the three. According to Engelbrecht (2004: 250) "professionals perform their related tasks interactively and each member uses his and her particular skills – they share their expertise and ideas, and support one another". These teams may be constituted by the mainstream class teacher or referring teacher, learning support teacher, teacher aids and other

specialists. Other specialists include related service personnel such as a speech and language specialist, occupational therapist, adaptive physical education teacher, school nurse (Grenot-Sheyer *et al*. 1996: 12), school psychologist, social worker and families (Tilstone *et al.* 2000: 66; Friend & Bursuck, 1999: 33). In trans-disciplinary collaboration, a designated member or members carry out the actual intervention, with the support services being provided by the other team members. Regarding schools, this is usually the teacher. Usually these collaborative teams provide formal statements of special educational needs and provision on how it is to be addressed (Dyson, 2005: 65; Sacker, Schoon & Bartley, 2001: 260; Hegarty, 1994: 90). Learners accordingly receive support, based on their needs as identified on their individual education plan (IEP) (Grenot-Sheyer *et al*. 1996:12).

Collaborating teams should constitute the practical embodiment of a school's commitment to provide education for all. They present an "indirect mechanism for supporting learners, through supporting teachers in a setting in which knowledge and understanding may be shared and developed with professional peers" (Creese *et al*. 1997:13). Swart and Pettipher (2005: 19) contend that collaboration is an important support strategy for inclusive education. Engelbrecht (2004: 250-252) asserts that the concept of trans-disciplinary teamwork transcends professional boundaries. It embodies a commitment to "teach, learn and work together across discipline boundaries to implement a unified intervention plan".

2.5.2.2 Role of the mainstream teacher

The traditional role of mainstream teachers is being challenged by the shift from the medical model to a human rights approach, which advocates the education of learners who experience barriers to learning within the mainstream classroom. As indicated before, mainstream teachers are now faced with the challenge to address the diverse needs of all learners (Sands *et al.* 2000: 4). They are the first responsible professionals who have the most detailed knowledge of the learners' needs in the classroom. Mainstream teachers are therefore most likely to bring a learner who they suspect to be experiencing barriers to the attention of other professionals (Friend & Bursuck, 1999: 30).

According to Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996: 59) mainstream teachers are largely responsible for the success of inclusive education. Successful inclusion requires of teachers to be increasingly responsive to the principles and demands of inclusion. Tilstone *et al.* (2000:47) argue that teachers need to be flexible, basing their practices on sound evidence, reflection and self-evaluation in order to teach learners with diverse needs. Rose (2001: 148) suggests that for inclusion to be achieved, teachers have to move away from the dependency upon support systems currently provided in schools, and instead accept the responsibility for educating all

learners. However, if teachers are expected to identify and meet the whole range of diverse needs in the mainstream, they are also entitled to support (Halliday, 1998). In the most effective inclusive schools, support services therefore work to empower the school-based personnel to "solve their own problems" through ongoing in-service training (Evans, 2004: 34).

In the Indian experience of inclusive education in Delhi, it was found that inclusion was most successful in those classes where both the mainstream and the special education staff were committed to the idea. However, success is also influenced by several other factors, such as the number of learners in the mainstream class, accommodation, correct timetabling and the availability of learning material. Most importantly, however, the success was determined by the "attitude and sensitivity of the mainstream teacher and the special education teacher when joint and mutually acceptable perception emerged between the two" (Kavoori, 2002: 121). With regard to attitudes of teachers in the UK, Mittler (2000: 134-5) states that most teachers in mainstream schools support the principle of inclusion, but many have doubts about whether it would work in their school. Teachers are also much more positive about inclusion of learners with sensory or physical impairments than those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, or severe learning difficulties. He proposes that class teachers have less positive attitudes than principals, but admits that much depends on the credibility of visiting specialist support personnel. It was also found that support for inclusion generally increases once teachers have directly experienced such arrangement, and if they feel that the scheme has the full support of the principal and local authorities.

Inclusion thus implies that all teachers are responsible for the education of all learners. However, Mittler (2000: 11) argues that this entitles them to expect and receive appropriate training and continuing professional development. They also deserve support from the school principal and senior management, governing body, learning support staff at school, as well as from support services external to the school. Inclusive education and the provision of learning support should also be clearly expressed in the whole school development plan.

2.5.2.3 The role of the learning support teacher

Inclusive education implies the identification and minimising of barriers to learning, and the promotion of participation within the mainstream class. It is about maximising resources to support learning and participation of all learners (Salmon, 2003: 14). However, some argue that the provision of learning support should be the responsibility of the mainstream class teacher, while others believe that specialists should work directly with learners experiencing barriers to learning. Another group argues that for some special educational needs (barriers to learning),

specialist facilities should be provided. The result is that approaches to the provision of support vary widely and is further influenced by variations in context (Florian *et al.* 2004: 117).

Both Ainscow (2001:2) and Slee (2001:121) show concerns with the narrow perception of inclusive education and the constriction thereof to the theoretical straightjacket of Special Educational Needs. Conversely, Vislie (2003: 30) is of the opinion that including more learners who experience barriers to learning into the mainstream, will not change the status of inclusive education. She believes that although different designs were put into practice since the 1970s, these efforts have actually expanded special education thinking and practices into the mainstream education.

In the following section results from a four-country study and others (Symeonidou, 2002; Layton, 2005; Florian, 2005) on the role of learning support teachers will be discussed. The role of the learning support teacher which has evolved from special education is still vague, which allows the growing debate to identify a role within the new context and practice of inclusive education.

a) Different terminologies

Terminology used to refer to specialists in the field of learning support provision varies from country to country. The terms "inclusion support teacher" (Grenot-Scheyer *et al.* 1996: 10), Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) (Gerschel, 2005) and 'inclusion co-ordinator' (Thomas, Walker & Webb, 1998:3 5) are also used in some literature. This person is responsible for the organisation of assessment, while arranging support needed and monitoring learner progress. A learning support teacher or another staff member may fulfil this role, provided that he/she has particular expertise in the designing and implementation of individualised adaptations in the curriculum and instruction of learners experiencing barriers to learning (Grenot-Scheyer *et al*. 1996: 10). Nonetheless, for a common understanding the term "learning support teacher" will be used. However, terminology from different countries will also be used in an attempt to indicate the general trend of change in terminology.

b) Changing roles and functions

Various attempts have been made to explore the roles of the learning support teacher (Layton, 2005; Frankl, 2005; Gerschel, 2005; Ellis & Tod, 2005). Nevertheless, the full-scale analysis of the implementation of inclusive education and the models used in four different countries provide valuable insight into the role and functions of the learning support teacher (Hegarty, 2001) The study compares the roles of learning support teachers in mainstream schools in

England, Spain, The Netherlands and Australia. It revealed that the common important feature of all four is that their current position evolved from a long tradition of separate special education systems and specialist teachers (Crowther, Dyson & Millward, 2001: 86; Emanuelsson, 2001: 135). This tradition found its roots in the medical model referred to earlier.

Regarding the provision of learning support services, Symeonidou (2002: 150) speaks of the "individual learner view" as opposed to the "curriculum view". The "individual learner view" expected the learning support teacher to provide specialised, and in many cases, individualised support; either within the mainstream class or in a "special class". The assumption is that "special" learners need "special" teaching. This encouraged the idea that while "normal" learners can benefit from mainstream schooling, it is more effective to place "special" learners together and provide them with the best possible treatment by specialists.

However, the response toward special needs by means of enhancing mainstream teaching, tends to deem the medical model redundant. According to Symeonidou (2002: 151) this "curriculum view" is based on the assumption that any learner may experience difficulties in school. Therefore the curriculum must be adapted in a way to respond to all learners in the class.

This new approach to learners experiencing barriers in the mainstream, places the role of the learning support teacher in a totally new framework. Consequently, the role of the learning support teacher has gradually metamorphosed into its current form as a response to these challenges (Crowther *et al.* 2001: 86; Symeonidou, 2002: 151). According to Forlin (2001: 83), support teachers traditionally provided assistance by withdrawing learners to small groups, or by engaging them in individual "remedial" programmes. However, as this practice is constantly being challenged, support teachers are now expected to play a more proactive role in establishing inclusion in schools. They are increasingly expected to provide professional guidance and support for mainstream teachers, enabling them to implement modified programmes in the regular classroom (Symeonidou, 2002; Florian, 2005). According to Layton (2005: 54), Special Education Coordinators (SENCO) in England are appointed to coordinate provision for learners experiencing barriers to learning in the whole school.

According to Dyson and Millward (1997: 59) special educators and special needs resources are increasingly being deployed to support the full range of learners' needs. In addition to learning support teachers, countries also appoint teaching assistants as a means of assisting with the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream classes (Moran & Abbot, 2002: 161). Although the role of teaching assistants does not form the focus of this section, it is important to note its relevance regarding the role of the learning support teacher. In England,

particularly, it is the responsibility of the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to manage the functions of the teaching assistants (Gerschel, 2005: 70).

Changed national education policy and curricula that promote education for all and advocate inclusive education systems inflate the need for change. Symeonidou (2005: 152) argues that being a learning support teacher cannot be seen as just another way of being a remedial teacher, offering a remedial curriculum via remedial approaches. There is, however, still considerable variation concerning the role played by learning support teachers internationally, nationally and at local levels. This transition to the new role differs according to the national and educational context (Forlin, 2001: 83; Symeonidou, 2005: 152).

In Canada special class teachers and resource teachers have been reclassified as method and resource teachers (M&R teachers). Their role was redefined so as to emphasise collaboration and peer support to mainstream teachers (Porter, 1997: 74). According to Forlin (2004: 186-7), Australia has an extensive Visiting Teacher network through the Centre for Inclusive Schooling. The role of these "special education teachers", also referred to as a "learning support teacher" by Carrington and Robinson (2004: 145), is becoming consultative and collaborative. The French integration assistants are expected to support the child in "academic, social and moral development and to attend to the child's motivation and socialisation" (Ebersold, 2003: 99). The reaction of the UK was to appoint a SENCO in every school. The SENCO's are not to carry out additional one-to-one remedial teaching. They are appointed as catalysts, facilitators and managers to support mainstream teachers in carrying out their responsibilities, whilst accommodating the great diversity of learner needs (Mittler, 2000: 4; Shuttleworth, 2000: 17). At an UK school the term "special needs and special needs coordinator" was dispensed in favour of "learning support and learning support coordinator", the rationale being that it is more user friendly and reflects a commitment to an inclusive definition of learning support. The definition of Booth, Ainscow *et al.* (2000) as cited by Salmon (2003:14) refers to learning support as "all activities that increase the capacity of a school to respond to pupil diversity". The argument is that the focus on meeting the needs of learners with very varied learning styles transcends a narrow definition of learning support.

c) Regulations regarding provision for learning support

The role of learning support teachers is fast becoming the focus of regulation and guidance for policy makers. Policy makers are faced with the daunting task to manage education reform in respect of special needs provision (Dyson & Millward, 1997: 61; Porter, 1997: 68). A further contributing factor is a growing concern over the quality and consistency of learning support

provision to learners experiencing barriers to learning (Dyson & Millward, 1997: 59; Crowther *et al*. 2001: 86). As this concern grows, there is a growing urgency for special educators to become part of the ongoing dialogue in mainstream education that will lead to schools in which all learners succeed (Zigmond & Baker, 1997: 107).

In comparing the role of support teachers in England, The Netherlands, Spain and Australia, Emanuelsson (2001: 135) draws the conclusion that the similarities are more striking than the differences between the roles of support teachers at an international level. The roles appear to be **closely related to the reconstruction of educational systems**. These systems are increasingly focusing on including all learners in the mainstream. However, once learners are identified as "different", they become a problem to the teacher in the mainstream class. Labelling the learner as having "difficulties" tends to seek the problem within the learner. Consequently it becomes easy to transfer the responsibility to specialists trained to deal with the problems exhibited by the learner. This trend is in conflict with the policies of inclusion as adopted by the countries in the reported study. Regulations suggest a need for collaboration among everybody responsible for schoolwork and teaching.

d) Learning support within a whole-school approach

Learning support as reconceptualised (as discussed in 2.5.2 and Table 2.2) within an inclusive education approach, places the focus of support within a whole-school context, thus making it the responsibility of all concerned. This approach to the provision of learning support is to support the mainstream school programme, *i.e.* the class teacher, principal, learning support teacher and other role-players to achieve the goals of inclusive education. This approach recognises that barriers are contextual and exist in the specific classroom, pertaining to the specific teacher, specific learners and the curriculum, lesson plans and instructional strategies employed by the teacher (Porter, 1997: 72).

Learning support within a whole school approach "requires a collaborative and consultation-based service delivery approach" (Porter, 1997: 73). The section on collaboration is discussed in more detail in 2.5.2.1 of this chapter. This section is concerned with the role of learning support teachers regarding learning support delivery in schools.

The learning support teacher has a significant role to play regarding consultations and in sharing their expertise to help mainstream teachers address the diverse needs of the learners in their classes. This coordinating and consultant roles of the learning support teachers are seen as important aspects of their role in schools. Mittler (2000: 91) describes the role of the learning

support teacher as that of a facilitator and manager. It is someone who has to support mainstream colleagues in meeting the needs of all the learners in their class. Nevertheless, questionnaire responses from the four countries reveal that mainstream teachers are not all prepared to collaborate with learning support teachers. In refusing to collaborate, they are holding on to the medical model. According to Mittler (2000: 91), the introduction of learning support teachers was greeted with a sigh of relief by mainstream teachers that someone will suggest instant solutions or at best “remove certain children from the classroom of even from the school as a whole”.

As the diversity of the role widens, learning support teachers are required to take on new challenges. This correlates with the findings of Cowne (2005: 67) that the role of SENCO’s in the case of England is rapidly becoming a managerial post that requires dealing with whole-school issues. As the role of learning support teachers evolves, so does the need for training to improve knowledge, skill and confidence. Cowne (2005: 67) is of the opinion that effective management and school systems will largely assist in supporting this role.

The introduction of teaching assistants in schools brought about an additional source of support in schools. In some instances, this translates into additional **managerial responsibility** for the learning support teachers. Gerschel (2005: 75) sees the learning support teacher as central in managing teaching assistants, but realises that to be effective they need a strong voice in senior management and decision-making. Based on research in two Greenwich schools, Gerschel (2005: 75) proposes the following functions to be included within the management portfolio of learning support teachers:

- taking the lead in the development of collaboration policies, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of teachers, teaching assistants and managers;
- devising improved teaching assistant recruitment strategies;
- developing skills in teachers regarding planning with, leading and guiding teaching assistants;
- introducing innovative methods to deploy teaching assistants in order to match skills and needs to make the best use of resources;
- regularly and constructive meetings with teaching assistant teams;
- organising the induction and continuing professional development of teaching assistants;
- developing and promoting effective communication systems within teaching assistant teams and between teachers and teaching assistants;
- empowering senior and middle management with skills to recognise good learning support;

- developing a monitoring and accountability system for learning support;
- monitoring the progress of individual students, as well as the evaluation of teaching assistants, teaching strategies and grouping arrangements;
- developing teaching assistant skills that could be shared with other schools, working closely with the local education authority.

Gerschel (2005: 70) does, however, realise that in order for learning support teachers to fulfil this role, they will need to be trained. From a whole-school development perspective, Mittler (2000: 91) argues that the role of the learning support teacher must be fully understood and supported by the school principal, senior staff and school governing body.

2.5.2.4 Teaching assistants

Policy changes and the implementation of inclusive education brought about many challenges concerning the support of those previously excluded from the mainstream education system. One way of addressing the needs of both teachers and learners is to employ additional adult support in the form of teaching assistants. It is acknowledged that the literature consulted also uses the terms classroom assistants (Moran & Abbot, 2002; Tilstone *et al.* 2000: 61), instructional aides (Grenot-Scheyer *et al.* 1996:13) and learning support assistants (Gerschel, 2005: 69; Thomas, Walker & Webb, 1998: 160; Jones, Jones & Szwed, 2001: 20). Terminology such as non-teaching assistant, special support assistant and educational support assistant is also used when referring to people who support learners in the classroom (Tilstone *et al.* 2000: 61). Therefore, to avoid confusion, the term “teaching assistants” (Lovey, 2002; Gerschel, 2005; Kay, 2002; Watkinson, 2002) will be used throughout.

Teaching assistants played a vital role in developing inclusive practices in Northern Ireland (Moran & Abbot, 2002: 161). In an evaluation of the Pathfinder Project in the UK, Butt and Lance (2005: 144) reported that eighty-seven percent of primary school teachers agree that teaching assistants allow them more time to teach. It is thus commonly agreed that the role of support staff in schools has increased significantly due to the larger class sizes and ever-increasing complexity of the primary curriculum (Kay, 2002: vii).

Nonetheless, increasing amounts of research is directed at good practice regarding teaching assistants (Gross, 2002: 100). Historically speaking, teaching assistants mostly used to work with learners who underachieve, or who have defined special needs. They are encouraged to provide “on-the-spot-differentiation” (Thomas *et al.* 1998: 164). However, currently the roles of the teaching assistant are defined as fourfold: 1) supporting the learners, 2) the teachers, 3) the school and 4) the curriculum (Gerschel, 2005: 69).

Notwithstanding the result of the inefficient clarification of roles and responsibilities, the teaching assistants can become a "convenient device by which the teacher who is responsible for the child's learning can avoid having to adapt their curriculum delivery…" (Gross, 2002:101). Tilstone *et al.* (2000:61) argue that there is a fine line between exploiting teaching assistants and properly involving them in the learning process of learners. Therefore it is important for teachers to realise that they are ultimately responsible to induce learning in their classes, and that this responsibility can be shared with the teaching assistant.

According to Tilstone *et al*. (2000: 61), teaching assistants are employed in a number of ways. Some are designated as individual support for named learners. Others are employed for general support in the classroom. Some work part-time with more than one learner, while others work with individuals, and some with small groups. Teaching assistants are expected to support learners and teachers, but are often unqualified with no career structure or pay scale (Moran & Abbot, 2002: 163; Tilstone *et al.* 2000: 61; Lovey, 2002: 15; Kay, 2002: vii). It thus stands to reason that there is sufficient evidence that teaching assistants are poorly used, with few positive outcomes for learners' attainment and inclusion (Gross, 2002: 100). Therefore researchers (Gerschel, 2005; Butt & Lance, 2005; Moran & Abbot, 2002) consider issues such as recruitment, job descriptions, deployment, and the roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants crucial in addressing the needs of all learners.

While the Pathfinder Project explored the role of the teacher to manage teaching assistants (Butt & Lance, 2005), Gerschel (2005) examined the role of the learning support teacher in managing teaching assistants. According to Gerschel (2005:70) the following two factors are essential in the management of teaching assistants:

1. a viable organisational structure within the school, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities or teaching assistants, their managers, including the learning support teacher, and the teaching staff with whom they work, and
2. active support, training and direction for schools from local education authorities.

In their evaluation of the Pathfinder Project, Butt and Lance (2005: 148) report that there is mutual respect between teachers and teaching assistants. It is also possible to expand their roles, and in so doing, adress problems related to communication, specifically regarding planning. This project not only proved to reduce the workload of teachers, but also made the roles of teaching assistants more prominent, enabling them to adopt more effective working practices.

The role of the teaching assistant can make a significant contribution to the development of a positive learning environment.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Inclusive education cannot be isolated from the social context. In some countries, it is linked to fundamental democratic reforms in an attempt to create better, more inclusive societies. From the literature it is clear that Education for All enjoys an international high profile in numerous international organisations, and that it is high on the agenda of most countries in the world. As a result we are currently experiencing a global trend in educational transformations aimed at including all learners, or at least most learners, in the mainstream school.

However, the movement towards inclusive education and the surrounding debate has generated diverse interpretations, definitions and, subsequently, responses among the parties concerned. Mitchell (2005: 13) states that "inclusive education exists in historical contexts in which vestiges of older beliefs co-exist with newer beliefs", including societal contexts and cultural values. This situation is clearly revealed in the literature pertaining to countries with a high level of human development, as well as those with medium and low levels of human development (2.2.3 & 2.2.4) in this literature review. This is evident from the range of provisions made for learners experiencing barriers who have been included in mainstream classes worldwide.

It is further concluded that although there is a strong rhetorical move away from the medical model, much of the support provided still relies on traditional IQ tests to classify and place learners appropriately. This gap between policy and practice creates a major cause of concern for the advocates of inclusive education who reject the use of IQ scores for placement. At the same time, parent and advocacy groups are concerned, because the use of IQ scores to categorise and determine learning support provision may in fact disqualify learners with learning difficulties.

The curriculum view of providing learning support in the mainstream is intensifying. This way of looking at inclusive education encourages the notion that the curriculum can be adapted to respond to all learners' needs in the classroom. Although learning support teachers have their roots in the medical paradigm, it has gradually metamorphosed in response to inclusive education. As learning support teachers are increasingly adopting this new framework, they could be useful towards the transition to more inclusive practices in schools. The coordination of the provision of learning support in the mainstream is currently an important aspect of the learning support teachers' role.

The focus is on moving away from individual or group withdrawal, in favour of collaboration among everybody responsible for schoolwork and teaching. A holistic approach to inclusive education implies cooperation among professionals with a view to providing meaningful

education for all. It is indisputable that not only the role of the learning support teacher is changing, but also that of the mainstream class teacher and other professionals.

As education systems are being reconstructed and the role of learning support teachers evolves, many attempts are aimed at defining the role of the learning support teacher. Cowne (2005) for example, reports on attempts to define the role of learning support teachers in terms of responsibilities and competencies. From the preceding discussion it is clear that learning support teachers can play a vital role in establishing inclusive schools. However, Emanuelsson (2001: 136) contends that the regulations are rather weak in identifying the mandate and status of the learning support teacher in schools

In conclusion, the literature clearly reveals the need for guidelines to implement inclusive practices within an ecosystemic approach that acknowledges the interdependence of sub-systems within the school and broader context. This ecosystemic approach will allow insight into, and an understanding of those learners experiencing barriers to learning holistically and in context. It will further be possible to view schools as systems with various sub-systems in constant interaction with one another, impacting on the provision of learning support within the school as a whole. Finally, it will provide the necessary insight to understand how schools as systems interact with the broader social context.

The following chapter provides an overview of the developments towards inclusive education in South Africa. Chapter 3 should be read against the background of international developments towards inclusive education and the provision of learning support.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter expands on the South African journey towards an inclusive education system, as referred to in 2.2.4. The post-apartheid era in South Africa is characterised by the South African Constitution and a strong desire to establish a democracy in which human dignity, freedom and equality are acknowledged. Engelbrecht (2006: 254) asserts that "the increase in inclusive education practices internationally, has profoundly influenced" educational transformation in South Africa. However, to conceptualise inclusive education in South Africa it is imperative to understand the contextual factors that shaped, and continue to shape, education in this country. This includes the move away from the medical model of perceiving special needs to a "human rights approach within the social context in which life is lived out" (Engelbrecht, 2006: 254). It is therefore important to take cognisance of a brief historical synopsis of learning support service delivery in South Africa. This background is essential for understanding the development (evolution) of special education and the provision of learning support services within an inclusive education system from a human rights perspective.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES BEFORE 1994 AND BEYOND

The history of education in South African is characterised by extreme neglect and lack of provision for the majority of learners along racial divisions, which is further exasperated by special needs also fragmented by legislation that separated learners on the bases of special needs and disability (Engelbrecht, 2006: 256; Engelbrecht *et al.* 2002: 63; Naicker, 1999a: 28; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 303; Du Toit, 1996: 7; Donald, 1996: 72). Porteus (2003: 13) aptly contends that the South African Education system of the apartheid era was remarkable for its purpose that was to racially and culturally segregate its population based on the construed ideology of Christian National Education. The education system of the time was "perhaps one of the most acute examples of systemic social exclusion" (Porteus, 2003: 13). Following is a brief discussion on the development of educational transition, from a racially influenced medical model regarding the provision of education support services in South Africa to a more equitable human rights model in which diversity is celebrated. Table 3.1, at the end of this section, gives a

summative presentation of how legislation and policies evolved and contributed to the transition in educational support provision in South Africa.

It is recognised that several authors captured the history of education and educational support services of South Africa, some of which are cited in this section. However, the work of Naicker (1999) is used as a basis to discuss the development of educational support services provision and delivery in the South African context. Naicker (1999a: 28-38) distinguishes four phases in the history of special education support services in South Africa.

3.2.1 Absence of provision

The **first phase** was characterised by superstition and according to traditional tribal customs, children who were different or born with some disability, were killed at birth. Consequently there was no intervention for people with special needs (Naicker, 1999a: 29; Du Toit. 1996: 8).

3.2.2 The late 19th century – 1963

The **second phase** introduced the provision of support for special needs. This stage is constituted by four stages:

- **Stage One**: Church and private provision, and the racist nature of the state. The church mainly initiated this support. The state only became involved in special education in 1900 when it recognised the existence of only the white church-run schools. At this time, the Union Education Department could establish "vocational schools" and "special schools" for white children. No official provision was made for formal education for the black populations of this country, and consequently not for any special education. However, churches established a number of schools to address this void (Du Toit, 1996: 9; Engelbrecht, Howell & Bassett, 2002: 61). Government legislation (Act 29 of 1928) provided the first signal of the model of special education in South Africa based on the medical model. This model assumes that the learners are deficient and that the deficiencies are pathological, a viewpoint that was strongly influenced by medical thinking (Naicker, 1999a: 30).
- **Stage Two**: Development of tests as a precursor to institutional special education and education support services. This stage witnessed the development of the first intelligence tests in the 1920s. According to Naicker (1999a: 30) the development of tests continued in white education and was followed by implementation in schools. It was the Individual Scale of General Intelligence for South African Schools that was used until the mid-1960s. Naicker (1999a: 30-31) contends that this was the "precursor of categorization,

labelling and the exclusive special education system, since IQ tests were later used not only for whites but for all children to assess 'intelligence' in children and place them in special programmes."

- **Stage Three**: The genesis of the medical model. At this stage the Vocational Education and Special Schools Act (1928) and the Special Schools Amendment Act (1937) were introduced, which made it compulsory for white "deviate" children to attend special classes (Behr, 1988: 123). It proposed a medical and mental diagnosis and treatment model for special education. This model presupposes that disability is only associated with impairment or loss within the individual. No attempt was made to establish the deficiencies of the system. During this era specialised education for whites expanded both quantitatively and qualitatively. Legislation was replaced and amended as additional categories of disabilities were created (Du Toit, 1996: 10).

3.2.3 1963-1994

Phase three is also subdivided into four stages.

- **Stage One**: The evolution of the concept "education support services". The first stage in which psychological services were introduced can be seen as most potent precursor to the education support services that evolved at a later stage. It is marked by the promulgation of Act No. 39 of 1967 for whites and the consequent development of the School Psychological and Guidance Services of the Education Department in the Transvaal (a former province of South Africa). An elaborate system of child guidance clinics was established. Each clinic served a group of schools and was supported by a multidisciplinary team consisting of clinical psychologists, vocational guidance psychologists, orthodidacticians, speech therapists, sociopedagogic psychologists and occupational therapists. These specialists did intellectual, scholastic and emotional assessment of learners and provided help in the form of psychotherapy, pedotherapy and speech therapy. These clinics were also concerned with identifying and guiding learners with learning deficits, cultural deprivation and behavioural problems (Behr, 1984: 122-123).
- The policy of separate development of the time caused major discrepancies along racial lines. According to Hofmeyr and Buckland (1992: 21) the decades of apartheid education and rising numbers of learners have further resulted in gross inequalities and huge backlogs in the provision of education in general. With regard to education support services, the provision of psychological services was limited to the four white Education Departments. However, while the Department of Bantu Education did establish a section

with psychological services, it was restricted to assessing all learners in Form 1 and Form 111. Psychological services were also established for coloureds, but remained restricted to school guidance. School Psychological Services in Indian Education focused mainly on assessment and placement of learners who needed special education (Behr, 1980: 252).

- **Stage Two**: Segregated education departments in control of special education and education support services provision and **Stage Three**: The Bantustan or "homeland" phase. These two stages show further evidence of education support services being provided along the racial lines of separate development that perpetuated the disparities in education support services. While remarkable advances were made in the provision of specialised education for whites, severe discrepancies were witnessed in both the quality and quantity of such provision for the black populations (Engelbrecht *et al.* 2002: 63). These discrepancies were documented in reports resulting from investigations such as the "Report of the Work Committee: Children with special educational needs" (1981) and "Education for the black disabled" (1987). Research findings also emphasised the problems in the field of specialised education (Du Toit, 1996: 11).
- **Stage Four**: The turning point. The fourth stage marks a turning point towards a new dispensation for education in South Africa. Influential reports regarding the future of special education were published in the Educational Renewal Strategy as early as 1991 (Du Toit, 1996: 14). The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) was conducted between December 1990 and August 1992 as a project of the National Co-ordinating Committee (NECC). The NEPI report on Support Services accordingly transpired as a result of the objective to interrogate policy options in all areas of education within the framework derived from the ideals of the broad democratic movement of the time. Prof. Jakes Gerwel, Chairperson of the NEPI Executive Committee, in the foreword to the report states that "the report does not constitute a model for a new education system, nor even a set of recommendations for a more equitable dispensation…" [it is an] "…analysis of feasible options for the short to medium-term future." It should, however, be seen as a foundation to building a more legitimate and efficient education system for a democratic and prosperous South Africa (Department of Education, 1992).

Among the other support services, it was found that special education too, was seriously peripheralised from mainstream education and undermined through lack of adequate resource allocation. Services were fragmentised in terms of the apartheid structures. The report further established the existence of inequalities of service provision in terms of race, class, and geographic location.

Further developments at this stage include the publication of the department of education's report on learners with special educational needs and the ANC's policy framework for education and training in 1994 (Du Toit, 1996: 14).

3.2.4 The new democracy and the development of inclusive education

Phase four witnessed the unification of 17 education departments. The new democracy had the daunting task to eradicate the disparities so evident in the previous phases. According to Sehoole (2003: 40), the challenges and the struggle to dismantle the apartheid education system, and to replace it by a democratic social order, were simultaneously a struggle to establish a system that would allow more extensive participation by different stakeholders.

In 1996 The National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) were appointed by the ministry of Education. They were to conduct intensive research with a view to providing services that would benefit all South Africans. Because of the close relationship between special needs and support, it was decided to undertake a joint investigation to address the diverse needs of learners within the entire education system. Over a period of one year they consulted widely with key stakeholders in education. Major proclamations and other documents issued during the period of transformation had to be considered. Among others, these included the New South African Constitution (1996), the White Paper on Education and Training (1995) and the Integrated Disability Strategy Document (1997). The work of NCSNET and NCESS culminated in a report entitled: Quality Education for all: Overcoming barriers to learning (Department of National Education, 1997; Naicker, 1999a; Naicker, 2005; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). Table. 3.1 provides a synopsis of the documents that affected the provision and delivery of support services in South Africa from pre-1994 to 2005.

In defining their strategy towards an integrated education system within the South African context, the NCSNET/NSESS report (Department of Education, 1997: 55) states:

> The separate systems of education which presently exist ("special" and "ordinary") need to be integrated to provide one system that is able to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of the learner population. Within this integrated system, a range of options for education provision and support services should be provided. Learners should have the ability to move from one learning context to another, e.g. from early childhood education (ECD) to general education and training (GET), from specialised centre of learning to an ordinary centre of learning, or from a formal to a non-formal program. The system of

> education should be structured in such a way that, irrespective of the learning context, opportunities for facilitating integration and inclusion in all aspects of life should be provided.

In this report, the joint NCSNET and NCESS recognised the need for all learners to gain access to a single education system. The report established that barriers to learning may be located within the learner but may also exist within the centre of learning, the education system, or the broader social, economic and political context. They have therefore moved away from the notion that disability was only a matter of an individual loss or impairment. In creating a framework for the future regarding the infusing of "special needs" and support, the report state that:

> Support services should move away from only supporting individual learners to supporting educators in the system so that they can recognise and respond appropriately to the needs of all learners and thereby promote effective learning. In order for this to happen, the ability to address diversity and minimise, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development must be structured into the system and be integral to its development (Department of Education, 1997:58).

The above culminates in the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education. This paper presents practical ways to implement an inclusive education and training system. However, according to Van Rooyen and Le Grange (2003: 155), White Paper 6 can be interpreted in various ways, depending on the individual's frame of reference. It is therefore constituted by multiple discourses. Nevertheless, since the publication of the Education White Paper 6, the Department of Education has embarked on attempts to provide conceptual and practical guidelines for implementing inclusion in schools.

TABLE 3.1: SYNOPSIS OF KEY POLICIES AND POLICY SHAPING DOCUMENTS AFFECTING THE PROVISION AND DELIVERY OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Policy and policy shaping documents regarding the provision of support for learners experiencing barriers to learning
Pre-1994 period
• Education system governed by separate pieces of legislation based on education services for the four population groups defined under the 1950 Population Registration Act.
• Schooling system further fragmented by separate legislation governing a "mainstream" system and a secondary "specialized" system.
• Limited provision of education support services in White schools (1967) with limited initiatives for Indian and Colored learners after 1967.
• Almost no provision of education support services for African learners.
1992: National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI): Support Services
1993: National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI): The Framework Report and Final Summaries. A project of the National Education Co-ordinating Committee
1994: Policy Framework for Education and Training (African National Congress)
1995 – White Paper 1 on Education and Training and South African Schools Act (1996)
• Provides comprehensive framework for transformation of education system into single system that integrates notions of and Training. Outlines principles based on fundamental human rights and non-discriminatory practices in education.
• Also recognizes the inequalities experienced by learners with "special needs" and the provision of education support services.
• SA Schools Act removes separation of schooling on the basis of race and creates single system for all learners.
1996 – Constitution of South Africa
• Recognizes basic human rights for all citizens of South Africa, including the right to basic education, and including adult basic education.
• Also includes equality clause that recognizes the need for measures to address previous inequalities and protects citizens from unfair discrimination on a number of grounds, including disability.
1997 - White Paper for an Integrated National Disability Strategy
• Rejects traditional "medical model" of disability and argues for a social model which recognies disability as human rights and development issues
• Provides framework for changes needed in all areas of government responsibility, including the provision of education support services as well as employment and training opportunities for learners with disabilities.
1997 - National Commission on diverse Special learning needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services
• Report to Minister that outlines steps towards the restructuring of the education system to meet the full range of diverse needs with a single system.
• Provides a framework for the selling up of education support services that are equitable and appropriate to meeting the needs of learners and the system, including individuals with disabilities.
2001 - Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education
• Provides a framework for the building of an Inclusive Education and Training system.
• Conceptual and operational guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education.

2005 - Working documents that transpired from White Paper 6
• Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for District-Based Support Teams
• Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for Full-Service Schools
• Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
• Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes

(Adapted from: Engelbrecht *et al*., 2002: 65)

Since the proclamation of Education White Paper 6, several research initiatives were undertaken. Among the vast array of research some are those that indicate the extent to which inclusive education is implemented in South Africa (IDASA, 2007; Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006; Engelbrecht, 2006; Hay, 2003), attitudes of teachers and support services staff regarding changing roles (Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff & Swart, 2001; Eloff & Kriel, 2005; Engelbrecht, 2004; Green, 2004).

It is clear that the policy framework in the new South Africa is now firmly in place and in need of a lengthy period of consolidation and implementation (Harber, 2001: 86). There are however, great concerns around the gap between policy and implementation of inclusive education in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2006:255; IDASA, 2007; Harber, 2001:86). Armstrong *et al.* (2000: 11) argue that where the call for inclusive schools and practices is met in universalistic rather than political terms, "no serious challenge is made to the conditions under which discriminatory and exclusionary practices operate", as is also the case in South Africa where inclusion was taken on from a wider socio-political position. Fleisch (2002: 11) is of the opinion that the nature of political change in the South African context mandated change from the centre to support and compel schools to improve.

However, according to Engelbrecht (2006: 255), despite the fact that resources being distributed more evenhanded across schools, a general lack of resources and institutional capacity (in terms of both administrative systems and suitably qualified teachers) still hampers the successful implementation of the new education policies. Other influencing factors are issues relating to quality education, efficacy and the morale of teachers when it comes to implementing the new policies (Loebenstein, 2005: 73-84). Inclusive of the above, Harber (2001: 86) proposes eight specific barriers that are responsible for the gap between current educational policies and the implementation thereof. These are:

1. Deep-rooted and persistent nature of old values and behaviours based on inequality, such as racism, sexism and discrimination against people with disabilities.
2. The patchy and inconsistent nature of professionalism amongst South African teachers
3. Low morale amongst teachers

4. Teacher identities and priorities at odds with the direction of educational reforms
5. The over complex, centralised and rushed nature of some of the reforms themselves
6. The complex linguistic heritage
7. The extreme resource disparities between schools
8. Insufficient in-service teacher education and doubts about the nature and quality of initial teacher education

It is important to understand that the roots of special education theory in South Africa, as it was practised internationally, were based on the **medical model**, as discussed earlier. While South Africa was in the midst of the democratisation process in all spheres of life, the international debate on special educational needs brought about a reconceptualisation of special needs and the provision thereof. These international influences formed an important base for the research, consultation and recommendations of the NCSNET/NCESS investigation.

The complexity of the South African situation, however, was increased by the concurrent political changes in the country (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 16). The shift from apartheid education and special education towards outcomes-based education (OBE), and a policy for developing an inclusive education model, brought about "a different set of **human rights** based theories, assumptions, models and practices" (Naicker, 1999a: 14).

From the historical overview it is clear that the way in which education support services have functioned in the past cannot be reconciled with the philosophy of inclusive education. Cited by Hay (2003: 135), Dessent (1987: 80) strongly stated, "support services have failed to address the major issues which underpin their current roles". Hay is also of the opinion that it is especially true of the psychological services that has been driven by the "locomotive of placement". Referring to the well-known 1959 verdict that "separate education is not equal education" in the Brown *vs.* Board of Education court case in America, Hay (2003: 135) contends that the placement locomotive have received an enormous blow. It did not only mark a turning point for the direction special education in America would take towards the latter half of the twentieth century. It has also significantly influenced and challenged educational thinking and discourse on the notion of "separate but equal" in South Africa on a very broad level.

Whereas the first step was to protect the rights of all learners to education, recent years have witnessed a further subtle paradigm shift. There is a growing emphasis on the need to ensure social justice for all learners with the focus on developing autonomy. Dyson and Forlin (1999: 31) are of the opinion that the

role of inclusion to support a child's educational right, may however be affected by the inequitable implementation of policy, the changing roles of educators, and educators' concerns and beliefs about the underlying philosophy of such a paradigm shift.

As South Africa has taken up the challenge of inclusive education as part of the wider political restructuring programme, it recognised that inclusive education is much wider than the reform of special education. Inclusive education is regarded as a moral issue of human rights and values and therefore an integral part of creating an inclusive society (Meijer, Pijl & Hegarty, 1997: 151). Consequently, inclusive education has major implications for the philosophical views (paradigms) of educators and support staff. It is therefore important to take cognisance of the shifting of paradigms as discussed in chapter two. The adoption of the broad vision of Education for All reflects a shift in paradigm from one that supports the rights of learners with disabilities to one that focuses on all learners vulnerable to exclusion and exclusionary pressures (thus not only on disability) in education (Muthukrishna, 2003: vii). Naicker (2005: 244) argues that the intention of the government is to creating a pedagogy of possibilities in terms of race, ability, interest, intelligences and learning styles. With the emphasis on equity, quality and access, South Africa thus included the notion of "education for all" in the overall social, political and economic transformation (Dyson & Forlin, 1999: 39). It would thus be ignorant to suggest that inclusive education can be restricted to what Slee (2001: 121) refers to as the "theoretical straightjacket of special educational needs". The development of an inclusive education system must consequently be aimed at enabling schools to provide for all learners, including those experiencing barriers to learning (Department of Education, 2001; Landsberg, 2005: 68).

Schools may find ways to practise this new dominant paradigm in providing quality education for all. However, as the products of discrimination are dismantled, theorists are faced with the dilemmas and complexities of replacing the tools developed within the parameters of the now redundant medical model. This dilemma is witnessed in 2.3 where in some countries, such as New Zealand and Canada, parents and advocacy groups contest the legality of the provision of learning support on the basis of categorisation which is linked to funding, and subsequently excludes those that would have benefited from the previous system. Clark *et al.* (1998: 169) argue that the system has to consider the fact that learners come from diverse backgrounds and consequently respond differently to the available educational provision. In order for inclusive education to be successful, it is therefore imperative to provide tools and resources, over and above those that are currently available in schools.

Inclusive education further reflects a paradigm shift towards systemic change (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 306; Engelbrecht, 1999: 3). The literature (Engelbrecht, 1999: 4; Naicker, 1999b:

23; Hay, 2003: 135; Donald *et al.* 2002: 55) claims a strong move to view education of learners, particularly those with special needs, from an **ecosystemic perspective**. This new developmental trend in thinking about the provision of learning support is by nature holistic (Lewis, 1998: 103). It challenges the current understanding of special needs and brings about a total new conceptualisation of special needs education and education support services (Hay, 2003: 135). The ecosystemic approach to educational support services provides an understanding of the continuous, dynamic interaction between the multiple contextual influences in the educational process. Subsequently this approach also challenges the inflexible educational organisational systems within these schools that fail to respond with significant insight to all learners' needs.

The South African response to educational restructuring embraces this systemic model. Education White Paper 6 argues for the need to transform the entire education system in order to tackle barriers to learning and development that any learner might encounter in a life-long learning career. The emphasis is on those groups of learners who have been, or continue to be, disadvantaged in terms of educational provision (Department of Education, 2005a: 1). In line with the ecosystemic model, the policy recognises that barriers are located within the systems and subsystems of the broader education system. It further acknowledges a constant interaction between these systems. The consequences of these interactions have a profound impact on the education of learners who experience barriers to learning. The ecosystemic approach suggests that the response to "educational failure would be to interrogate and reform those characteristics of schools rather than the characteristics of children" (Dyson & Millward, 1997: 53). Spady (1998: 7) suggests that systemic changes are changes in entire systems of thinking and behaviour in organisations. Changes in the functioning of major social and organisational functional entities, as well as the roles and responsibilities people assume, are crucial.

The Department of Education's response is to make a concerted effort to the development of an

> education and training system which will promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society (Department of Education, 2001: 5).

It is clear that systemic transformation of the education system in South Africa is necessary if the gap in policy and practice is to be narrowed. However, as this theoretical-philosophical reconceptualisation invades educational practices, teachers and support services personnel are grappling with the new way of education support delivery (Hay, 2003: 135).

3.3 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Based on 2003 statistics, national data reveals that 82 030 learners with special educational needs (LSEN) are accommodated in 402 schools for LSEN across the country (Department of Education, 2005d: 19). However, the 2006 statistics saw an increase in learner numbers to 86 143 with a decrease in available institutions at 397 (Department of Education, 2008: 29). Regarding the mainstream, the LSEN referred to in the statistics obtained from a snap survey conducted in 2003, are those still accommodated in a separate class at a mainstream school (Western Cape Education Department, 2003; Department of Education, 2005: 15-17). The survey specifically requested learner information needed for Special Needs Education (SNE) as "full-time classes for learners who experience barriers to learning and not remedial learners in the mainstream" (Western Cape Education Department, 2003b: 3).

For 2003 the only province mentioned to have LSEN included in the different grades, is North West province (Western Cape Department of Education, 2003b: 17). The national education statistics for 2006 however, show in Table 9 that there are many more regions that have integrated learners who experience barriers to learning (SNE) into the mainstream (Department of Education, 2006: 18). This has direct implications for the provision and delivery of learning support in mainstream schools.

The literature further reveals several categories used to distinguish disabilities. These are sight, hearing, physical, mental, multiple and those not specified (Department of Education, 2001: 14). Many of these learners are accommodated in special (LSEN) schools for specific disabilities. According to the national statistics 0.6% of the total learner population were in special schools in 2006 (Department of Education, 2008:3). However, there is a significant mismatch between the needs of, and provision for learners with barriers to learning. According to the Education White Paper 6, this is a direct result of the "previous apartheid policies that allocated facilities on a racial basis" (Department of Education, 2001: 14).

Contrary to the national commitment to move away from the discriminatory medical model, it is regrettable to note that the Department of Education still uses medical terminology in official documentation when referring to learners experiencing barriers to learning. This use of terminology associated with the medical model is in direct opposition to the policies and intentions of the government to promote an inclusive education system. The 2006 education statistics use the terminology "special needs education" (SNE) as apposed to LSEN in the 2003 national statistics. This is not a move away from medical terminology. Nonetheless, since

learners with learning difficulties (referred to as "remedial learners in the mainstream") do not constitute one of the categories of "disabilities" mentioned, it is logical to conclude that it is not recognised for the purposes of statistics. The survey specifically asks for "full-time classes for learners who experience barriers to learning and **not** remedial learners in the mainstream" (Western Cape Education Department, 2003a: 3).

On the other hand, South Africa opted to introduce an outcomes-based curriculum that emphasises common citizenship in the quest towards inclusive education. According to Naicker (1999a: 90) this new curriculum was introduced in the interest of all South Africans as a move away from the apartheid education system. He further argues that inclusive education is implicit in outcomes-based education. One of the similarities Naicker (1999a: 92) identifies holds especially true for learning support, which is "an assumption that all learners can learn and succeed, but not necessarily at the same pace and on the same day". Outcomes-based education essentially addresses the education system in order to enable and encourage all learners to achieve essential outcomes within a single system that accommodates the needs of all learners.

The restructuring of the education system forms part of the broader aim of democratisation in South Africa. Transformation and change therefore focus on the full range of education and training services. According to the Department of Education (2001: 26) these include national- and provincial education departments; further and higher education institutions; mainstream and special schools; **education support services**; curriculum and assessment; education managers and educators; and parents and communities. It is thus clear that in the restructuring of the education system the Department of Education strives to address external barriers listed in Chapter 1.4.

3.4 RESTRUCTURING OF SUPPORT SERVICES

The restructuring of education in South Africa is a conscious and a systematic effort to address the weaknesses of the past. In the quest for quality education for all, South Africans have to contemplate and deal with the many barriers created by the apartheid policies of the past (Fleisch, 2002: 195; Donald *et al.* 2002: 18). Accordingly, the restructuring of educational support services inevitably suggests a reconceptualisation and redefinition of "special educational needs" (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 305).

The literature (NEPI, 1992; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001; Donald *et al.* 2002; Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff & Pettipher, 2002) is clear on the extensive need for providing support services on an equitable basis to all learners. According to Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001: 305) between 40 and

50% of learners in mainstream schools have special needs that require additional learning support over and above that provided in the classroom. These learners find themselves in the mainstream class by default and a lack of adequate services. Thus the provisioning of support services to the majority of learners in South Africa has been grossly neglected and teachers had to cope with multiple and diverse learning needs (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 305). This situation has been exacerbated by large classes, racially-based discrepancies in teacher:learner ratios and a large number of unqualified teachers (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 304).

Subsequently, the priority of educational policy development was to redress inequalities and deficiencies of the past. In addressing these inequalities, the Department of Education published major policy and policy-shaping documents, as mentioned earlier. These documents are all directly or indirectly concerned with the provision of educational support and the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning (Landsberg, 2005: 62). The transformation to a unified general education system is therefore also a move away from a segregated special education system to one where special needs and support services shift from the periphery, to become centrally infused in the mainstream education system (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 305).

Inclusive education suggests that the mainstream teacher be responsible for supporting specific and developmental needs of learners. This is in line with the curriculum view of learning support provision as proposed by Vislie (2003). The vision of the National Department of Education is to strengthen the education support services from within and outside schools. The establishment of a co-ordinated education support service "along a continuum from national through to provincial departments of education, through to schools, […], which is sensitive to and accommodates diversity, with appropriate capacities, policies and support services" is proposed (Department of Education, 2001: 30). This seems to correlate with the suggested options of the NEPI report on Support Services (1992: 78-79). Of the three suggested options for the conceptualisation of Special Educational Needs (SEN), SEN was conceptualised as a continuum involving intrinsic and extrinsic factors. This conceptualisation encapsulates the first two options, *i.e.* severe and chronic SEN only, and SEN as entirely intrinsic. It also

> acknowledges and accepts the relativity of SEN; the degree to which SEN is a product of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and is, therefore, a joint responsibility of ordinary and special education; and that the extent of the need in South Africa is considerable (Department of Education, 1992:78-79).

The proposed support system for the new South Africa is based on a systemic approach whereby district- and institution-based support teams focus on supporting the personnel instead of face-to-

face interventions with individual learners (Department of Education, 2001: 47; Engelbrecht *et al.* 2001: 80). It is further proposed that the new inclusive education and training system will spread education support services in line with the needs of LSEN. According to the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001:15), education support services will be categorised and provided for by providing low-intensive support in ordinary mainstream schools and moderate support in full-service schools. High-intensive education support will continue to be provided in special schools.

Although policy documents give significant direction for transformation and change, Waghid and Engelbrecht (2002: 24) draw the conclusion that the current system still neglects learners who experience barriers to learning. In an analysis of the relevant documents, Engelbrecht *et al.* (2001: 82) argue that no specific support strategies are provided to ensure the successful implementation of inclusion. However, the National Department of Education is in a process of drafting documents to provide guidelines for inclusive learning programmes and a national strategy for screening, identification, assessment and support. As these documents are in drafting stage and still considered working documents, they cannot be cited or quoted at this stage. However, the documents are available on the following website of the Department of Education: [http//www.education.gov.za/dynamic/dynamic.aspx?pageid=326&dirid=4].

Each of the nine provincial education departments is responsible for policy implementation accepted by the National Department of Education. The provinces are responsible for administrative support, development of human and technical resources, distribution of finances, employment of educators, admission of LSEN, etc. (Landsberg, 2005: 63). However, the provinces differ in available resources and human capital and are therefore not on the same level of implementation. The National Department of Education (2005b: 6) recognises this impediment and suggests that the guidelines should not be a blueprint for practice, but allow flexibility and responsiveness to specific needs.

3.4.1 Current and existing learning support services provision at district level

Provinces are divided into several districts. Each district has to appoint a district support team responsible for the management of inclusive education within the district (Department of Education, 2002: 98; Department of Education, 2001: 8; Landsberg, 2005: 63).

The Department of Education (2005b: 9) acknowledges that countrywide there are some districts that currently have no meaningful support provision. This situation exists predominantly in rural

and historically disadvantaged areas. However, where there is support, some or all of the following is included:

- Classroom-based support:
    - direct learning support to learners with SEN;
    - training and ongoing support of teachers to respond to learners' needs;
    - curriculum development to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are responsive to different needs;
    - provision of teaching and learning materials and equipment to facilitate learning for all learners.
- Support for social/contextual factors:
    - various psychological, social and physical health interventions to address particular problems, or to promote the health of members of the school/educational institutional community.
- Other forms of support are organisational and administrative support to schools.

Several years after the first democratic elections, district support is still provided in a rather fragmented and unco-ordinated way in all of the nine provinces. In some provinces support is provided through a district centre that integrates the various kinds of support. In other instances, support is provided through separate structures within the Department of Education, which either work together, or not. For example, some of the support is being provided by "school clinics/support centres", other aspects by officials from the Department's head office, or by "circuit managers" or specialised "subject advisors" (Department of Education, 2005a: 10).

3.4.2 Learning support services provided at school level

According to the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education of 2001, all educational institutions should establish an institutional-level support team (ILST). In the Western Cape this team is also referred to as Teacher Support Teams (TST) and Education Support Teams (EST) (Western Cape Education Department, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the terminology used in the Education White Paper 6 on special needs education is employed. The ILST is responsible for co-ordinating learner and educator support services. They are to provide support by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs (Department of Education, 2001: 29). Provincial education departments provided schools with guidelines for the implementation of these support teams at school level (Landsberg, 2005: 67; Western Cape Education Department, 2003a).

The institutional-level support team comprises teachers available, but should include a learning support teacher, referring teacher, principal, member of the school assessment team, etc. Each member has a specific responsibility towards the team (Landsberg, 2005: 67). The team is collectively responsible for suggestions to support the learner, while the referring (responsible) teacher has to implement strategies suggested (Landsberg, 2005: 67; Western Cape Education Department, 2003a: 14).

The ILST is to be supported by the district-level support team (DBST) established at district offices. According to Education White Paper 6, the "district support teams will provide the full range of education support services, such as professional development in curriculum and assessment, to these institutional-level support teams" (Department of Education, 2001: 29). The newly implemented ILST has a profound impact on the traditional role of the mainstream teacher.

3.4.3 Challenges to the role of mainstream teachers

Traditionally teacher training divided teachers into ordinary mainstream teachers and teachers with specialised knowledge and skills to teach learners who experience barriers within a specialised setting. As a consequence, the perception was created that special educators and related professionals were the only knowledgeable persons fit to assess, identify and treat learners experiencing barriers to learning (Naicker, 1999a: 32; Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 5).

However, the policy of inclusion and the application thereof inherently imply a move away from separate systems for mainstream and special education. Although traditionally mainstream teachers are not trained to teach learners who experience barriers to learning, this transition requires them to accept these learners in their mainstream classes. Mainstream teachers should therefore accept responsibility for all learners in their class, including those who experience barriers to learning (Donald *et al*. 1997: 20; Landsberg, 2005: 68). According to Oswald, Ackerman and Engelbrecht (2000: 316) this requires radical adaptations of views, attitudes and approaches concerning teaching. The role of the mainstream teacher has changed from transferring knowledge to practising learner-centred teaching (Landsberg, 2005: 67-68; Department of Education, 2001: 19). Meijer and Stevens (1997: 124) contend that the way teachers perceive and experience their role and responsibilities will inevitably affect educational transformation.

Meaningful educational transformation in South Africa cannot be achieved only through the implementation of a new policy. It is essential to understand the importance of teachers'

perceptions and attitudes in this process of transformation. According to Mittler (2000: 135), teachers' perceptions and attitudes are fundamental in their response to a new policy. While organisational and structural change may be a positive experience for some teachers, others may harbour a negative attitude, causing them to act with resistance (Oswald & Engelbrecht, 2004: 21). Researchers have established that in order for inclusive education to be successful, teachers need time, ongoing support and in-service training (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff & Pettipher, 2002: 175). According to Halliday (1998: xiv) teachers who are expected to identify and meet the whole range of special needs in the mainstream are entitled to support. In the most effective inclusive schools, support services work to empower the school-based personnel to "solve their own problems" through ongoing in-service training (Evans, 2004: 34).

However, the democracy and thus the policies on inclusive education in South Africa, are still relatively young. Consequently, despite the commitment made by government, Oswald and Engelbrecht (2004: 26) found that the "traditional conservative attitudes, values, beliefs and practices still prevail on the ground level in schools and classrooms". Interviews were generally met with resistance, cynicism and a lack of commitment. Oswald and Engelbrecht (2004: 27) contend that a profound paradigm shift is still needed for meaningful educational change in South Africa.

Researchers are in agreement about the impact of teacher attitudes on the success of inclusive education and the role it plays in training programmes (Oswald & Engelbrecht, 2004; Kavoori, 2002; Singh, 2002; Mittler, 2000). Oswald and Engelbrecht (2004: 27) suggest that a realistic approach to educational transformation in South Africa is necessary. During this period willing and active participation of all the role-players is indispensable for sustained change

3.4.4 Challenges to the role and function of support services staff

Historically learning support services staff provided special education in order to "fix" the learner and alleviate their differences. The interventions by specialists were thus aimed at removing the deficiencies from within the learner (Naicker, 1999a: 31; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001: 305; Engelbrecht, 2004: 22; Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 5). It is thus clear that the old medical paradigm manifested itself in the roles and actions of educators and professionals, as well as in the segregated structure of the previous education system (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 5).

In order to achieve the goal of inclusive education in South Africa, it is critical to orientate and train education support staff in their new role in support provision. The Education White Paper 6

envisions that support services staff be trained to support all learners, teachers and the system as a whole, to meet the full range of needs. The training should focus on the

> development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners; on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs; and on adaptation of and support systems available in the classroom (Department of Education, 2001:19).

Since the curriculum is central to inclusion, successful inclusion requires a major reorientation from a special needs perspective as well as that of teacher training in general (Naicker, 2005: 247). It is therefore apparent that the changed philosophy of inclusive education should lead to transformation in service delivery in practice. Nonetheless, Hay (2003: 136) argues that regrettably this has not yet happened in South Africa, and that most of the support services are still rendered within the "old, exclusive (placement) education paradigm, which is certainly not supportive of inclusive education". Swart and Pettipher (2005: 6) agree in arguing that the medical model is still "deeply ingrained in the thinking of generations of teachers, parents, professionals and legislators". Although it is generally accepted that the medical model is discriminatory and limiting, it will not change rapidly.

3.4.5 Teaching assistants

The WCED is currently in a process of deploying teaching assistants in some primary schools in the Western Cape. This strategy is aimed at improving literacy and numeracy levels in the foundation phase of certain schools. The schools will be responsible for designing and implementing a quality supervision system, but teaching assistants must be under the direct supervision of a qualified teacher. Teaching assistants will perform a variety of duties, including consolidating and reinforcing learning (Western Cape Education Department, 2006).

3.4.6 Whole-school evaluation

The Department of Education (2006) has embarked on a strategy to hold schools accountable for their performance. The rationale behind the whole school evaluation process is that school improvement becomes the responsibility of the school, as much as of the department of education. However, central to this process is the "common understanding of inclusivity and human rights underlying the principles for school improvement and quality education" (Department of Education, 2006: 5). The areas for evaluation allows for the whole school in ensuring that all learners' needs are addressed. These areas are:

- Basic functionality of the school.

- Leadership, management and communication.
- Governance and relationships.
- Quality of teaching, learning and educator development.
- Curriculum provision and resources.
- Learner achievement.
- School safety, security and discipline.
- School infrastructure.
- Parents and community.

This whole-school approach can allow schools to systemically address the needs of all learners within the broad concept of barriers to learning and development. One way of ensuring quality of teaching, learning and educator development is to present workshops and other in-service training sessions initiated by the Education Department. However, in a recent report on Whole School Evaluation it is stated that the focus area: quality of teaching and learning and educator development as an area of serious concern. One of the reasons for this statement is that it was found that the intended cascading of information and knowledge provided through in-service training does not take place. It was also found that there are no "measures in place at schools to follow up on the progress of the implementation of any new developments"(Western Cape Education Department, 2007: 2). From the literature review on the establishment of inclusive schools in 2.4 it appeared that the provision for learners who experience barriers to learning relates to the way schools operate as a whole. Inclusive education is therefore not focused on special needs education, but rather on the development of a whole-school policy and practices for inclusive education. Consequently a whole-school approach is needed to implement inclusive educational practices.

3.5 WCED MODEL FOR LEARNING SUPPORT

The Directorate Special Education Needs of the Western Cape regards learners with special educational needs (LSEN) as learners who experience barriers to learning and development. These learners need additional support to what is usually offered in ordinary mainstream schools. These may either be learners who are gifted and in need of an enriched curriculum, or they may be learners who experience severe learning and developmental barriers.

In an inclusive education system it is desirable that the curriculum would not create barriers to learning, but rather break down whatever learning barriers are experienced by learners. It is, however, important to take cognisance of the fact that the curriculum alone is unable to prevent or break down learning barriers (Western Cape Education Department, 2000). According to the

WCED, the Learning Support Model steers away from stigmatising learners. It also wants to ensure that schools do not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against any learner on the grounds of disability (Western Cape Education Department, 2000).

Although inclusive education implies that all learners should be educated in the mainstream class, it is recognised that "some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of support to develop to their full potential" (Department of Education, 2001: 16). In this respect the model proposed and implemented by the WCED complies with the statement that "an inclusive education and training system is organised so that it can provide various levels and kinds of support to learners and educators" (Department of Education, 2001: 16).

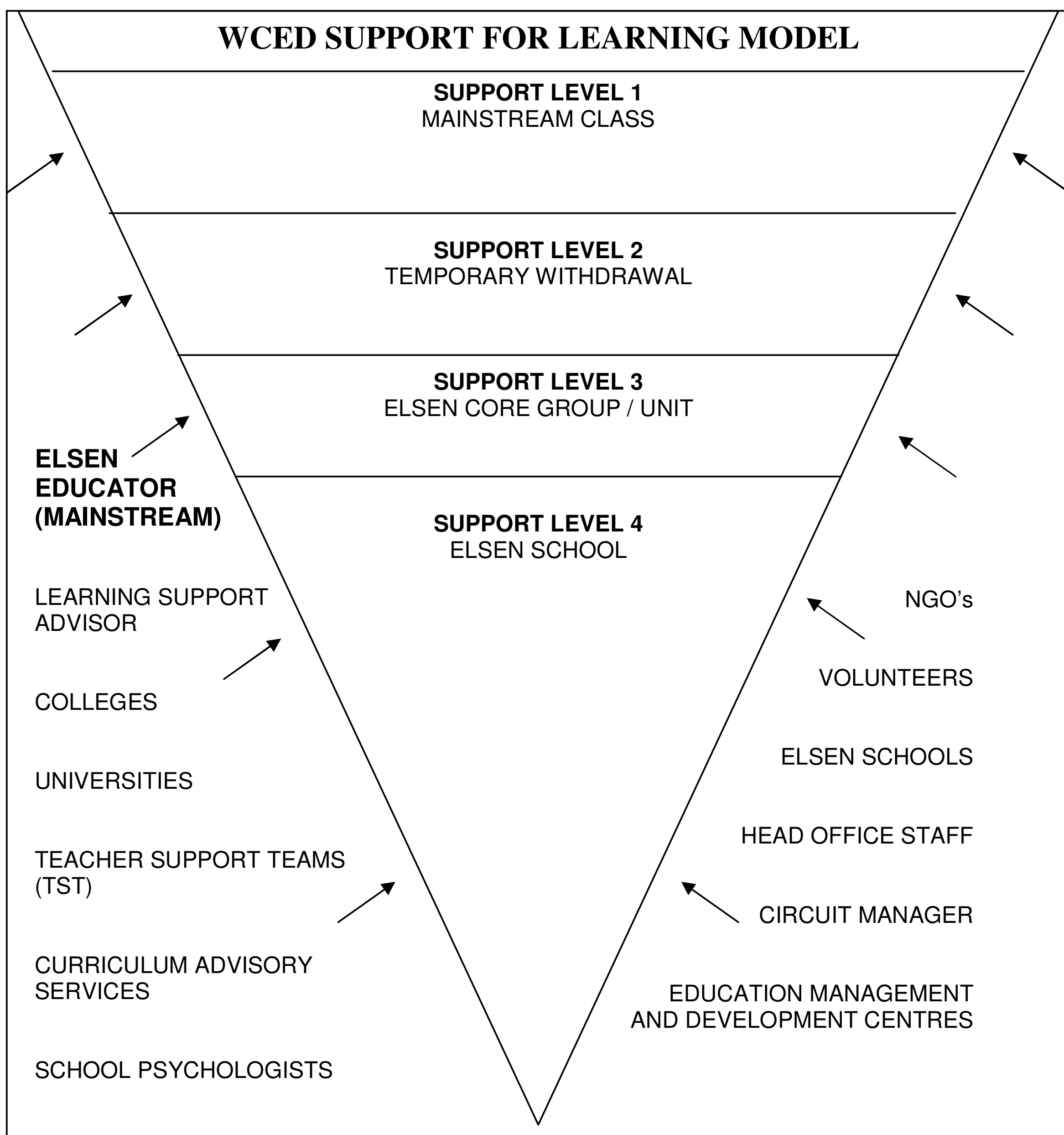


FIGURE 3.1: WCED SUPPORT FOR LEARNING MODEL

The following description of the learning support model is based on a paper presented by Dr. M.J Theron, Director: Special Education Needs, WCED, at a conference held in March 1999.

In **support level one** every effort should be made to accommodate and provide for learners experiencing barriers in the mainstream. This implies training and support for the mainstream teacher. For this purpose the WCED intended to eventually provide at least every primary school in the province with a learning support teacher post. In addition, an institutional-level support team (ILST) must be established as soon as possible. It should be noted here that the WCED opted for using the term Teacher Support Teams (TST), and more recently that of Education Support Teams (EST), as opposed to Institutional-Level Support Team (ILST) appearing in the Education White Paper 6. The acronym, TST, is still widely used in schools, and was therefore employed in the questionnaires and focus-group interviews. However, for the purposes of this dissertation the terminology used in the official documents of the National Department of Education will be adhered to. Furthermore, the school clinics, school media services, curriculum advisors, special schools, education development centres and volunteers can play a vital role in supporting the mainstream teacher on this first level of support.

At **support level two** the learning support teacher may periodically withdraw learners experiencing barriers to learning from the mainstream for individual or small-group support. These learning support teacher posts are not new. The teachers come from the former special, adaptation and remedial classes. It is proposed that these teachers be trained for their new function by the multidisciplinary teams at the former school clinics (before the inception of the EMDC's).

Support level three makes provision for the establishment of a class for learners with LSEN at mainstream schools. These classes will replace the existing special, adaptation and remedial classes. It will provide for all learners with a need for specialised support. However, unlike past practice, these learners have to return to the mainstream as soon as they are ready.

An extension of this support level is the establishment of ELSEN (Education for learners with special educational needs) units, each consisting of two or more ELSEN classes. These units will accommodate learners identified as candidates for ELSEN schools located far from their homes. At the same time they will be part of the mainstream school. The advantages are that it is cost effective and learners would not have to be transported over long distances with additional cost implications.

At **support level four** provisions are made for learners who cannot progress in any of the other levels. They are to be accommodated at separate schools for LSEN. However, the objective of the school should be to return these learners to the mainstream as soon as desirable. ELSEN schools should also become resource centres to assist learners experiencing barriers as well as learning support teachers in the mainstream.

The learning support model makes provision for support by tertiary institutions, community institutions, the WCED head office and other departmental officials, ELSEN schools, learning support advisors, psychologists and curriculum advisors. In addition to the appointment of school-based learning support teachers, the WCED appointed learning support advisors to manage the implementation of the learning support model and support learning support teachers. These learning support advisors are to be based at existing school clinics (Western Cape Education Department, Vacancy list 2/98). These newly appointed officials were to be trained regarding their new roles within the learning support model (WCED, 1999). With the establishment of the Education and Management Development Centres (EMDC) or districts as referred to in the Education White Paper 6, the function of the school clinics changed to becoming a service point of the EMDC. Currently learning support advisors are office-based at the district offices (EMDC).

According to Theron (1999: 6), the aims of this new model of learning support are primarily to:

- give all learners equal educational opportunities within an inclusive system;
- prevent learning difficulties and offer all learners optimal learning opportunities, as far as practically possible;
- enhancing progress in school and offer opportunities for lifelong learning;
- eventually offer effective education to all LSEN; and
- use all available resources to the best effect.

This model of learning support resembles a continuum of support of the models used in the USA, UK and New Zealand, as mentioned in Chapter 2.2.3 and 2.5.1. According to the presentation of the model in Figure 2.3 it can be deducted that the WCED learning support is based on the model used in the USA. These countries are classified as High Human Development countries according to the UN Human Development Index. According to this Index, South Africa falls in the category of Low to Medium Human Development. Nonetheless, support for learners and support and training for mainstream and learning support teachers are built into the learning support model. However, there seem to be no real mechanisms envisioned for supporting schools as a whole.

3.5.1 The role of the learning support teacher

The introduction of the WCED's learning support model gave rise to the establishment of learning support teachers in some primary schools in the province. As mentioned earlier, this staff comes from the special, adaptation and remedial classes of the previous dispensation.

The shift from the medical model to a human rights model, within a systemic developmental and support approach has profound implications for the delivery of learning support in South Africa. As paradigms include a mindset about the world that is constructed around our evaluative judgements, and consequently also our practices, a shift in paradigm can be experienced as overwhelming. The changing role of support professionals is further complicated by the South African context with its multiple and simultaneous changes. To assist in the quest for quality education for all through an ecosystemic approach, the function of the ILST is to co-ordinate learner and educator support services at an institutional level (Department of Education, 2001: 29).

The rationale for the learning support model implemented in the Western Cape is that it should facilitate participation, inclusiveness and flexibility. It is thus based on a combination of providing support within the mainstream, as well as withdrawing learners in small groups for additional support when necessary (WCED, 2000).

It is important to take cognisance of the current developments and investigation of support services delivery in the province. These developments are in line with the vision of the National Education Department to create an inclusive education system as set out in Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001).

However, learning support teachers at some schools in the province currently provide learning support at school level. Some of the duties encapsulated in the current job description (Western Cape Education Department) of the school-based learning support teacher are to:

- Withdraw learners with SEN in small groups (maximum of 8 learners) from the mainstream class to teach and give specific support in Literacy and Numeracy.
- Support and empower mainstream teachers to:
  - adapt the curriculum;
  - develop relevant programmes and material; and
  - support learners experiencing barriers in the classroom context through
    - collaborative teaching in the mainstream class;
    - workshops / information sessions with the staff;

  - inclusive education.
- Give support to parents of LSEN.
- Execute any relevant task (with the focus on learning support) within the ability of the teacher.

It is further expected that only learners referred through the ILST be withdrawn for additional support by the learning support teacher.

As a consequence the challenge for learning support services lies in moving away from the narrow focus on specific categories of disabilities, and turning to a more ecosystemic approach to providing learning support within an inclusive educational setting. The interventions therefore have to be targeted at the support system / programme and not at the disability.

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on learning support service provision and delivery in the South African context. A brief historical overview depicted the developments of the educational transformation with specific reference to the restructuring of the support services since the NEPI Report in 1992. Reference was made to current learning support service provision, on district as well as at school level. The Model of Learning Support adopted by the WCED was described as a response to provide quality education for all learners within an inclusive educational system. It was pointed out that the role of the learning support teacher adds to an understanding of learning support services delivery in some mainstream schools in the Western Cape.

It can be concluded that the educational restructuring in the South African context has taken big strides to close the gap between local and international trends. It is clear that the challenge of addressing special needs within an inclusive education framework cannot be seen as being separate from the broader challenges to transform the whole education system. This is particularly important, since special needs are generally "related to environmental disadvantage or external factors including poverty; lack of awareness and access to educational, medical and healthcare facilities; and exposure to political violence" (Landsberg, 2005: 16).

The implementation of an outcomes-based curriculum demands the continuing development and training of mainstream teachers to enable them to address the diverse needs of all learners in the mainstream class. Learning support services provision and delivery is the cornerstone of successful inclusive education, and therefore requires the retraining of mainstream teachers and current support personnel. It further intensifies the need for collaboration between mainstream

and learning support teachers, as it can be seen as an important strategy for supporting the policy of inclusive education.

Finally, literature recognises the existence of a gap between policy and practice within the South African context regarding inclusive education and the provision and delivery of learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in the mainstream. It acknowledges that a period of consolidation and implementation is necessary to start the long process of closing the gap between policy and practice.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study grew out of a desire to make a positive contribution to the implementation of the policy of inclusive education and the development of learning support structures in a rapidly developing new democracy. As a mainstream- and special school teacher and learning support advisor of several years, the researcher agrees with Wong, Pearson and Lo, (2004:263) that teaching learners who experience barriers to learning in the mainstream implies the use of a support approach that includes adaptive and supportive services on various system levels. The eco-systemic theoretical approach of this study acknowledges the dynamic interactions of the multiple systems at school level involved in establishing effective learning support structures in this country.

In order to achieve the research aim of this study (as discussed in chapter 1) the researcher has to determine the best way to do it. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to discuss the research design and methodology in more depth.

4.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN

4.2.1 Research Paradigm

Mertens (2005:7) defines a paradigm as “a way of looking at the world. It is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and actions”. This definition links to that of Lewis and Kuhn as discussed in 2.2.1. As discussed in Chapter 1, this research study is located in a pragmatic paradigm. Various researchers (Mertens, 2005:26&294; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:16; Patton, 2002:71; Clarke, 1999:89; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) present pragmatism as the underlying philosophical framework for the mixed methods design. Pragmatists reject the notion that social science can only access the “truth” about the real world through the use of a single scientific method. Neopragmatists went further to emphasise the “importance of common sense and practical thinking” (Mertens, 2005:26).

As pragmatism is not committed to any one philosophy and reality, it allows the researcher to use “multiple methods, different world views and different assumptions as well as different forms of data collection and analysis in a mixed methods study” (Creswell, 2003:12; Patton,

2002:71). This argument is clearly reflected in the ontology, epistemology and methodology of the paradigm.

4.2.1.1 Ontology

Ontological questions are concerned with the nature of reality (Mertens, 2005:8; Patton, 2002:134). According to Mertens (2005:27), the ontology of pragmatists are concerned with *effectiveness* rather than finding some "true" condition in the real world. Pragmatists therefore assert that effectiveness be used as criteria for judging the value of research. Answering the research question is therefore the central concern of pragmatists.

According to Creswell (2003:11) the ontology of pragmatists arises out of actions, situations and consequences. The focus of this research study as mentioned before is the evaluation of the establishment of a learning support model (action), in some primary schools in the West Coast/Winelands district (situations) and the provision of learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning (consequences). Pragmatists view the research question as central to the study (Mertens, 2005:294; Creswell, 2003:11; Patton, 2002:135). This study seeks to answer questions relating to the efficacy and constraints of service delivery within the learning support model. Pragmatism therefore allows researchers to use various approaches to understand the problem and generate solutions (Mertens, 2005:294; Creswell, 2003:12).

4.2.1.2 Epistemology

The epistemology of a study explains how knowledge is produced and it is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how we know what we know (Mertens, 2005:8; Patton, 2002:134). This study is based on the pragmatic assumption that collecting and analysing diverse types of data will best provide an understanding of the research problem. The epistemology of pragmatists thus allows the researcher freedom to study what is of interest and of value. She may also use different ways to study the phenomenon, which is, in this study, the learning support model under investigation (Mertens, 2005:27). Pragmatism allows the researcher to use different worldviews and different assumptions. Therefore this study will draw on the underlying philosophical assumptions of both constructivism and postpositivism.

However, as this is an evaluation study, it is necessary to recognise the limitations of pragmatism. According to Kazi (2003: 17-18) pragmatists may concentrate so much on the expressed needs of the participants and "therefore fail to capture the effectiveness of the programme in a more comprehensive way". This may happen if the researcher becomes essentially methodologically driven or considers feasibility to be the main criteria.

The mixed methods approach allows the researcher to draw from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions to inform the research (Creswell, 2003:12). Data will be collected sequentially. Greater priority will be given to qualitative data collection and analysis.

The first phase will consist of questionnaires collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. The results will be used to inform the second phase, which will be an in-depth qualitative inquiry in which semi-structured interviews will be used to collect data from participants.

Questionnaires with both open- and close-ended questions as well as semi-structured focus group interviews will be used to collect qualitative data. The epistemological assumptions, on which qualitative methods are based, are constructivist in nature (Creswell, 2003:20). The epistemological assumptions that therefore guide much of the data collection and analysis of this study are interpretive/constructivistic. The ontology of constructivism is that reality is socially constructed. Knowledge is therefore also produced through social interaction (Mertens, 2005:14). According to Flick (2004:90), social constructivism is defined as "knowledge constructed in processes of social interchange". Social constructivism is often combined with interpretivism. According to Mertens (1998:11) the constructivist paradigm grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and other German philosophers' study of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of interpretive understanding or meaning. It provides a theoretical framework with special reference to context and original purpose (Patton, 2002:114). It is largely used in the humanities (such as education) and emphasises detailed examination of text as found in conversation (interviews), written words (questionnaires) or pictures to ascertain meaning embedded in the text (Neuman, 2000:70).

The interpretive constructivist paradigm as discussed by authors such as Flick (2004), Creswell (2003), Neuman (2003) and Mertens (1998) provides the premise for analysing and interpreting data collected through open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews in this study. In reference to Schütz (1962), Flick (2004:89) argues that social reality is based on the epistemological assumptions that "facts only become relevant through their meaning and interpretations". These facts can be interpreted either in isolation or within its particular context. Constructivist epistemology and the empirical research based on it thus assume that knowledge is constructed and that facts only become relevant as they are interpreted within the context they occur. Accordingly the basic assumptions that guide the interpretive constructivist paradigm are that knowledge and meaning are socially constructed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that are prevalent in individuals' lives. This allows the researcher to consider the specific contexts, in which the teachers live and work in order to understand their historical and cultural settings (Flick, 2004:90; Creswell, 2003:8-9; Mertens, 1998:11). The

interpretive constructivist paradigm is thus generally used to interpret meaning from a certain standpoint or situation.

Flick (2004) presents the flow of how knowledge is constructed diagrammatically in figure 4.1. The presentation below demonstrates how the experience people have in their specific situation (context) leads to the construction of concepts and knowledge as they experience it. This is then used to interpret their experiences or to understand and attribute meaning to it.

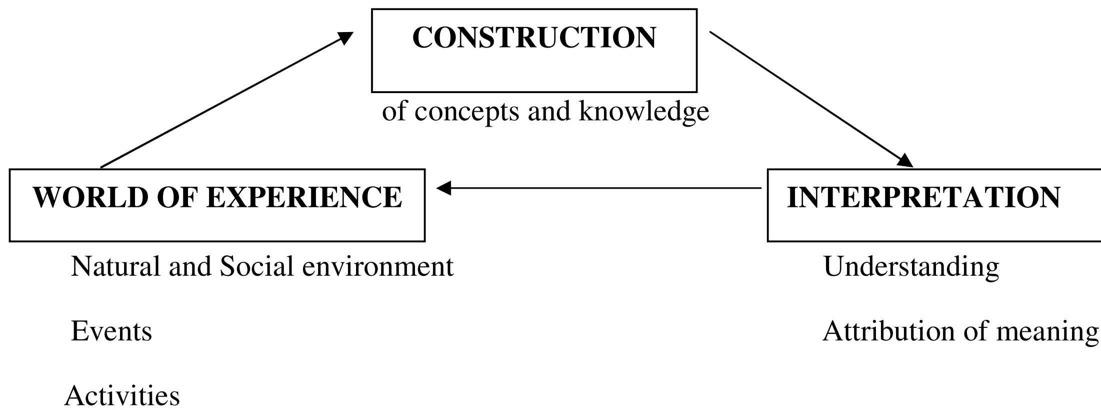


FIGURE 4.1: CONSTRUCTION AND INTERPRETATION AS MEANS OF ACCESS TO THE WORLD OF EXPERIENCE

(Flick, 2004:90)

The qualitative aspect of this study is therefore done from the premise that "each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other " (Crotty, 1998: 58 cited by Patton, 2002: 97). The study hence acknowledges the multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others within the model of learning support service delivery being researched (Creswell, 2003: 8; Patton, 2002: 97).

Post-positivist epistemological assumptions inform the quantitative methods used in this study. The ontological assumption of postpositivism is that reality exists within a certain realm of probability. Mertens (2005:11) contends that post-positivism furthermore "argue that [reality] can be known only imperfectly because of the researcher's human limitations". The epistemological assumption of post-positivism thus recognises that the researcher's "theories, hypotheses, and background knowledge" may influence what is observed during the study (Mertens, 2005:11).

According to Creswell (2003:7) postpositivists study problems that reflect a need to examine causes that influence outcomes. A major focus of quantitative research is that it relies on measurement to compare and analyse different variables (Bless *et al.* 2006:43). However, in

accord with the mixed methods approach that guides this research, Patton (2002:92) refers to the following assertion by Campbell (1999):

> Postpositivism … recognizes that discretionary judgement is unavoidable in science, that proving causality with certainty in explaining social phenomena is problematic, that knowledge is inherently embedded in historically specific paradigms and is therefore relative rather than absolute, and that all methods are imperfect, so multiple methods, both quantitative and qualitative, are needed to generate and test theory, improve understanding over time of how the world operates, and support informed policy making and social program decision making.

According to Williams (2003:18) postpositivists ascribe to the notion that the "principal objections to positivism and interpretivism can be overcome by methodological pluralism." This notion provides additional impetus for the use of the mixed methods approach of this study. Nevertheless, one of the key assumptions of postpositivism relevant to this study is that information is collected on instruments completed by the participants. The strategy of inquiry that informs the quantitative methodological part of this study is a survey that includes both close-ended and open-ended questions in a questionnaire. Quantitative data collected will be analysed using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2003:20).

The pragmatic paradigm allows the researcher to use a mixed methods design. By using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the researcher can generalise findings to the population and develop a detailed view of the learning support model from the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2003:22).

4.2.2 Mixed Methods Research Design

A research design addresses the design of a strategy for finding answers to the inquiry. According to Merriam (1998:1) the choice of a research design requires an understanding of the philosophical foundations underlying the type of research. The design of research should follow a logical pattern. The best way to design research according to Babbie and Mouton (2001:72-73) is to allow the study to conform to the four elements that are standard to all forms of empirical research. These are the research problem, research design, empirical evidence and conclusions.

Taking both contentions into consideration, the research design of this specific study is diagrammatically presented in Figure 4.2.

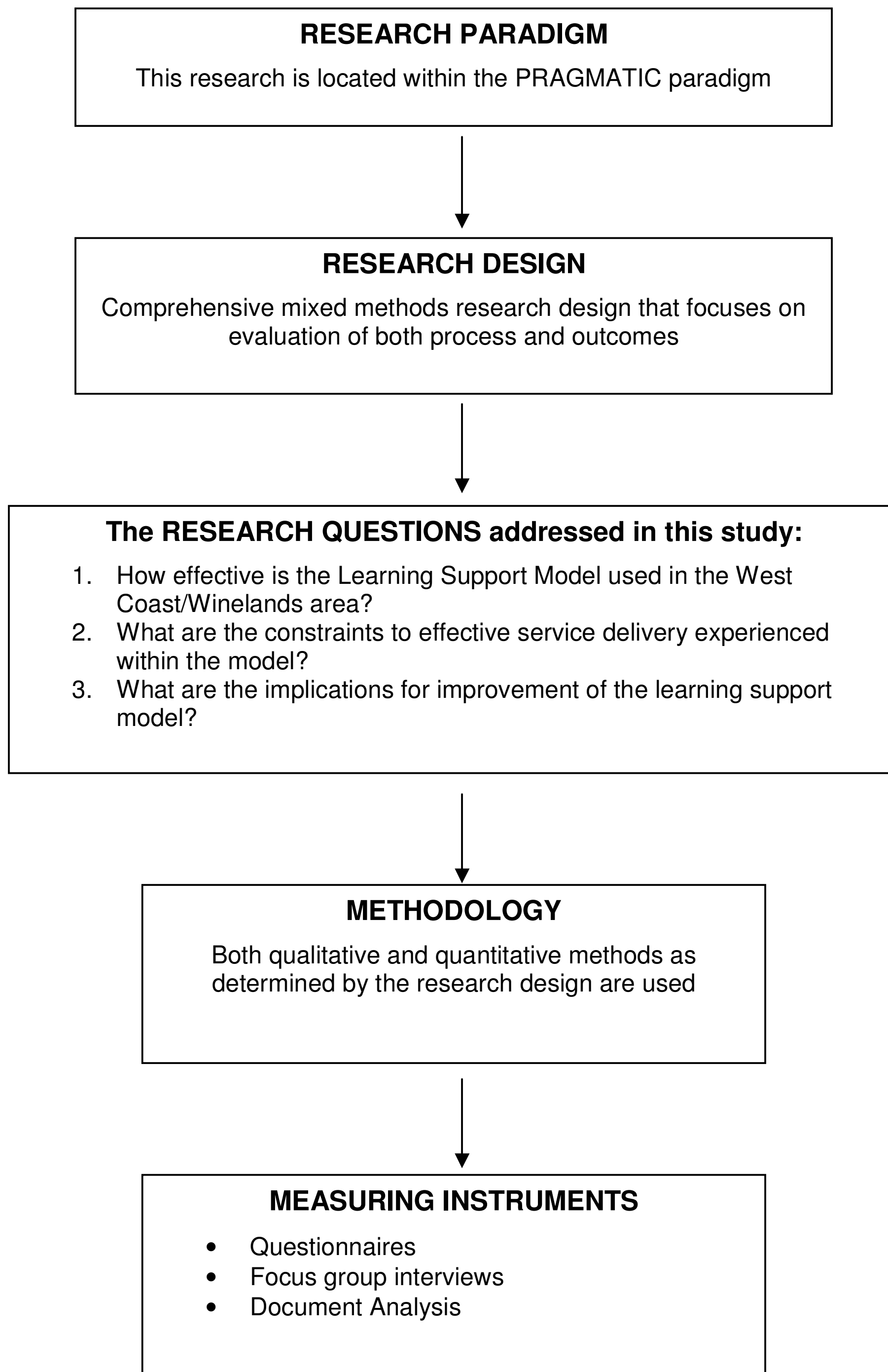


FIGURE 4.2: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

(Adapted from Mouton, 2001:47& 49)

The research questions to be answered by this study are thus evaluative in nature. To answer these questions, a comprehensive evaluation research study is designed that focuses on both process and outcomes evaluation. Researchers (Neuman, 2003:24; Patton, 2002:159; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:335; Clarke, 1999:1) are of the opinion that evaluation research typically measures the effectiveness of a program, policy or way of doing. As the purpose of the research study is to evaluate the efficacy and constraints of the learning support model introduced in the

West Coast/Winelands, evaluation research is the apparent choice of research design. A mixed method research design, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to generate data, was employed in this study (Brannen, 2005; Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Clarke, 1999; Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

There are several reasons for conducting a mixed method research. According to Brannen (2005:175) the current trend towards evidence-based practice strongly supports the use of working both quantitatively and qualitatively. This trend in social research suggests an increased convergence between the two fundamental research paradigms, *i.e.* the traditional positivist / postpositivist and constructivist research paradigms. Brannen (2005:183) suggest that the mixed methods approach be used as an approach to address a "variety of questions posed by the research investigation that, with further framing may lead to the use of a range of methods" in a single study. Mertens (2005:293) is also of the opinion that the use of the mixed methods design may enrich the ability of the researcher to draw conclusions about the problem. According to Patton (2002:68) evaluation researchers may find the mixed methods design particularly beneficial in that it allows them to use "any and all data that will help shed light on important evaluation questions". Thus making the study practical and contextually responsive. Clarke (1999:41) conversely cautions evaluators to gain insight into understanding under what circumstances to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches into a single study.

The purpose for using a mixed method approach in this study is specifically to enable the researcher to triangulate (seeking to corroborate data from different designs, looking at the same phenomenon) data generated by qualitative and quantitative methods. The question of validity and reliability of using a mixed methods design is addressed in 4.4.5. By using a mixed method design, the researcher can generalise findings to the population and develop a detailed view of the learning support model from the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2003:22). It will further allow the researcher to expand understanding of responses from the different sources of enquiry.

Several researchers (Patton, 2002:68; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:14; Brannen, 2005:174; Clarke, 1999:37) allude to the debate on the "long-standing methodological paradigms war". According to Patton (2002:69), this philosophical debate enters research and evaluation in arguments regarding the goals of empirical studies and opinions of what constitutes good research. The two competing paradigms differ in that the quantitative experimental methods are used to generate and test hypothetical-deductive generalisations while the qualitative and naturalistic approach focus on inductively and holistically understand human experience and construct meanings in context-specific settings (Patton, 2002:69).

The mixed methods design, as proposed by several researchers (Patton, 2002; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, Creswell, 2003; Mertens, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Brannen, 2005; Clarke, 1999), proposes the mixing of methodologies as needed and appropriate. As research is increasingly becoming interdisciplinary, complex and dynamic, many researchers need to complement one research method with another to allow the researcher to best answer specific research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:15). Patton (2002: 71) contends that the mixed methods approach increases the "concrete and practical methodological options available to researchers and evaluators".

The goal of the mixed methods design is thus not to replace either the quantitative or qualitative research design. However, researchers (Clarke, 1999:35; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) are in agreement that it allows them to "draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies"(Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:15). Williams (2003:19) asserts that the critique and counter-critiques of the two extreme positions "did much to clarify their potential and limitations and paved the way to methodological pluralism". With regard to evaluation studies, Clarke (1999:86) suggests that evaluators have to a great extent already started to build bridges between the two research paradigms and are "increasingly adopting diverse methods in tackling evaluation problems". Evaluators collect data by making extensive use of a wide variety of well-established social research methods. According to Clarke (1999:86), mixed methods research designs are now an "established feature of programme evaluation research and policy evaluation studies".

In conclusion, the researcher agrees with Patton (2002: 68) as he contends that researchers should rather "adopt a stance of methodological enlightenment and tolerance, *i.e.* that methodological orthodoxy, superiority, and purity should yield to methodological appropriateness, pragmatism and mutual respect". Clarke (1999:62) furthermore argues that the evaluator needs to be "situationally responsive and methodologically flexible".

4.3 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The research in this study is done within a pragmatic paradigm, using a mixed methods research design in order to evaluate the learning support model currently used in the West Coast/Winelands district of the Western Cape.

The face of educational evaluation processes, internationally have changed over the years from countries focussing on monitoring and steering their education systems to comparative evaluation from the perspective of decision-making (Bonnet, 2004:179). According to Bonnet

(2004:180) the most recent shift is that the European Union became aware of the potential benefits of using indicators from comparative evaluation studies to steer and monitor education. The focus of this evaluation is not specifically comparative. However, the findings and recommendations will be mapped against international trends regarding the provision of learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools.

As the learning support model is already implemented it is most appropriate to use process evaluation / programme monitoring (see Fig. 4.3) to conduct this research. According to Patton (2002:159) the aim of this type of evaluation is to elucidate and understand the internal dynamics of how a program operates.

Many definitions of evaluation have been proposed. According to Mertens (1998:219) the one that persisted over time is the following:

> Evaluation is the systematic investigation of the merit or worth of an object (program) for the purpose of reducing uncertainty in decision making.

Patton (1997:23) proposes the following broader definition:

> Programme evaluation is the systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future planning.

Clarke (1999:2) contends that the different definitions of evaluation presents it as a "form of applied social research, [with] the primary purpose [] to study the effectiveness with which existing knowledge is used to inform and guide practical action". According to Shaw (1999:22) evaluation theorists, Campbell and Scriven, "emphasise evaluation as a search for effective solutions to social problems". However, the stance of Lincoln and Guba as referred to by Shaw (1999:39) correlates well with the qualitative aspects of this study. Guba and Lincoln place relativism alongside constructivism. According to them reality is created by people as they attempt to make sense of their surroundings (context or world of experience). Evaluation through the lenses of the constructivist makes use of hermeneutic (eliciting and refining constructions, also defined as the study of interpretative understanding or meaning) constructions in order to achieve more informed and sophisticated constructions (Shaw, 1999:39). This correlates with the assertion of Davidson (2005:88) that the constructivist/interpretist view of evaluation is that deriving evaluative conclusions is a sensemaking process in which many stakeholders participate. According to Mertens (1998:222) evaluators have discovered that the use of

objective social science methods (the quantitative methods) was not enough to ensure effect on public policy and social program decisions.

One of the most important rules in evaluation is to "never draw a conclusion based on a single piece of evidence" (Davidson, 2005:55). Researchers (Clarke, 1999:73; Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, 1999:254; Weiss, 1998:136) accordingly assert that multiple measures are useful in covering the various dimensions of the programme under evaluation and allows the strengths of one measurement to compensate for the weaknesses of another. According to Von Kardorff (2004: 137) there is a "growing need for scientifically underpinned proof of effectiveness, efficiency, quality and acceptance of [] programmes and measures in all areas of society". According to Patton (2002:252) evaluation has a practical mandate to collect the most relevant information possible. This mandate is in line with the pragmatist stance of this study.

4.3.1 Purpose Statement

The purpose statement establishes the direction of the research and orientates the reader to the central intent of the study (Creswell, 2003:87). The purpose of this sequential mixed methods study is to evaluate the learning support model that was introduced in primary schools in the Western Cape with specific reference to schools within the West Coast/Winelands district. It is noted here that the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) opted to use the terminology: education and management development centre (EMDC), as opposed to the term: district, as used in the official documents of the National Department of Education. For the purpose of the study the researcher will adhere to terms used nationally. This research is necessary to establish successes and constraints with the aim to improve practices. Evaluation research (sometimes referred to as program evaluation) refers to research purpose rather than a specific method. Rutman defines program evaluation as making "… use of scientific methods to measure the implementation and outcomes of a program for decision-making purposes" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:335). He further describes a program to be any intervention aimed at meeting some recognised social need or to solve an identified problem. Evaluations attempt to measure effectiveness of a program, policy or way of doing something and for this they may use several research techniques (Neuman, 2003:24).

However, the Hawthorne effect must be considered to have an influence on the results of the evaluation. This effect may be present in any study involving human participants (Rossi *et al.* and 1999:254). The researcher takes cognisance of the fact that the conducting of interviews, together with the contextual factors surrounding it may influence the results obtained. Rossi *et al.* (1999:254) describes the Hawthorne effect as the gross effect of the intervention as the

combination of the effects of the intervention. The results measured are thus not just the effect of the intervention but "of everything done to the targets involved". Intervention can therefore not be seen as separate from the context.

Mouton (2005:8) proposes the following decision model for selecting an evaluation approach:

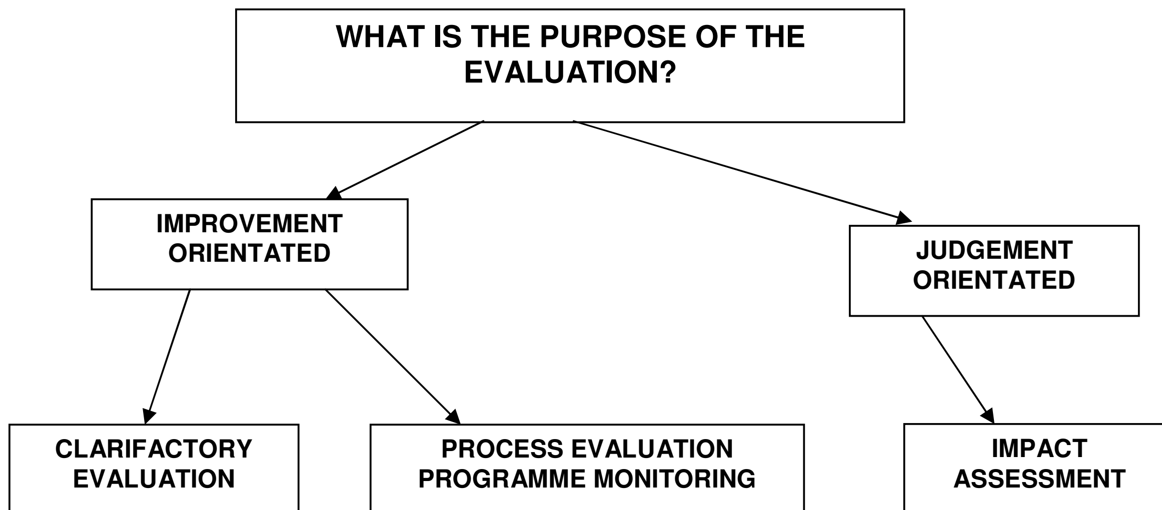


FIGURE 4.3: DECISION MODEL FOR SELECTING AN EVALUATION APPROACH

(Mouton, 2005:8)

The following questions (based on Mouton, 2005:8) regarding process will be asked:

- Is the intervention being implemented according to design?
- Is there sufficient capacity and infrastructure to deliver the intervention to the target group?
- Is the intervention being properly managed and are all systems working?
- How does the target group (s) respond to the intervention?

This learning support model is implemented only in the Western Cape and not in all primary schools yet. Therefore, it is important to identify problems with implementation as well as to identify possible changes for improvement and/or possible adaptations to the model. The recommendations will be aimed at improved practices and a better understanding of the dynamics within the learning support model as well as the whole school as an educational system.

In addition, questions addressed through programme monitoring will further illuminate concerns regarding the learning support model implemented in the different schools. Regarding programme monitoring the following questions (based on Mouton, 2005:8) will be asked:

- Do all members of the target group (intended beneficiaries: learners experiencing barriers to learning) receive intervention?
- Is the intervention being properly implemented across all sites (schools)?
- Are the intended outputs and immediate outcomes being realised?
- Are there other unintended outcomes?

4.3.2 Evaluation objectives

As illustrated in Figure.4.3 process evaluation / programme monitoring is improvement-orientated. The rationale for conducting this study was to illuminate achievements as well as to offer judgements by using evaluation research and to provide recommendations for improvement of service delivery at levels one and two of the learning support model. In the scope of this evaluation, documentation and participant views were explored to establish if:

- The learning support model is being implemented according to design
  - Are learners from special- and adaptation classes integrated into the mainstream classes and do they receive the same curriculum
  - To establish if only one term (learning support teacher) is used to refer to previous remedial-, special- and adaptation class teachers based at schools.
- The schools have sufficient capacity and infrastructure to deliver learning support (intervention) to the learners experiencing learning difficulties (target group).
  - Is there a classroom available for small group withdrawal?
  - Is there a functional school based support team (ILST)?
- The learning support model (intervention) is properly managed and if all systems are working at support levels one and two
  - Are learning support facilitators and co-ordinators (learning support advisors) appointed to manage and support school-based learning support teachers?
  - Are the needs of the intended beneficiaries (learners experiencing learning difficulties in mainstream schools) met through:
    - Learning support provided by the mainstream teacher within the mainstream class.
    - Collaboration between learning support- and mainstream teachers.
    - Periodic withdrawal for additional support by the learning support teacher.
- The learners (target group) respond positively to the learning support (intervention).

Since evaluations are typically conducted on programs designed to help the oppressed it seems to be inevitable that the relation between the program and access to resources can set the stage for conflict. House, as quoted by Mertens (1998:219), captures the essence of evaluations in recognising that the different interests to be served might conflict with one another. This results in "pluralist conceptions of evaluations in which multiple methods, measures, criteria, perspectives, audiences and interests are recognized".

In the attempt to evaluate the WCED Model for Learning Support, the above-mentioned scenario can be addressed within the pragmatic paradigm that is sensitive to and allows for multiple perceptions and interpretations.

In the past a great deal of research focussed on the effects of 'integration' on the persons who experienced neurological barriers, deinstitutionalisation, *etc.*, however, according to Pijl *et al.* (1997:17-19) there is a growing focus on the quality of life as an outcome measure. As the learning support received by learners experiencing learning difficulties invariably have an effect on the quality of their lives, improvement-oriented evaluation is imperative.

According to Babbie and Mouton (1998, 2001) improvement-oriented evaluation ask the following questions:

1. What are the programme's strengths and weaknesses?
2. Has the programme been properly implemented?
3. What constraints are there on proper implementation?
4. Are the programme recipients responding positively to the intervention?
5. If not, why not?

The research anticipates addressing these questions through data collected with the help of questionnaires and interviews.

4.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996:13) state, "scientific methodology is a system of explicit rules and procedures upon which research is based and against which claims for knowledge are evaluated". These authors also contend that this system is not unchangeable or infallible. The rules and procedures are constantly improved as researchers search for new means of "observation, analysis, logical inference, and generalization".

The research methodology that guided this study was determined by the mixed methods research design using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This pragmatic approach

combine different paradigms and methods in order to meet the practical demands of the situation (Lucke, Donald, Dower & Raphael, 2001:123). It enabled the researcher to better understand the research problem and to “best convey the needs of a marginalised group” (Creswell, 2003:100). In this study, the marginalised group refers to learners experiencing learning difficulties in mainstream primary schools. The mixed methods research design made it possible to be “practical, contextually responsive and consequential” (Lucke *et al.* 2001:123).

Process evaluation verifies what the programme is and whether it is delivered as intended to the targeted recipients. It also addresses issues about effectiveness of the programme and service delivery. Programme monitoring gathers information on programme outputs with the aim to improve programme performance. This comprehensive evaluation research thus focuses on both process and outcomes of the learning support model. The questions addressed in this research are elaborated on in 4.3.1 in the purpose statement.

As the methodology was based on a sequential mixed methods approach, this evaluation was done in three phases. Phase one consisted of a literature review. Phase two focussed on both quantitative and qualitative aspects (through questionnaires containing both close- and open-ended questions) and phase three focused on more qualitative aspects (through semi-structured focus-group interviews) to inform this study.

4.4.1 Research Population and Sample

Research population is the technical term used for the larger group from which the sample is drawn. Sample is a technical term that refers to a smaller subset drawn from the population (Punch, 2003:36).

According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:99) a well-defined population is one that is described absolutely accurate. The broader population on which this research focuses include mainstream teachers and learning support teachers in all primary schools in the WCED that have a learning support teacher (stationary or itinerant).

The sample was drawn from the geographical area of the West Coast/Winelands district. The reason for including all schools with a learning support teacher was that sample-population relationship is important regarding the representation (Punch, 2003:38). By selecting a representative sample the research results could be generalised regarding the population. Other reasons for selecting the specific sample were:

- The researcher has been working in the specific district since the implementation of the WCED suppport for learning model.

- The region consists of urban as well as rural and semi-rural areas.
- The schools are representative of three of the previous education departments (Dept. of Education and Training, House of Representatives and House of Assembly).
- To have information-rich cases, which could provide valid knowledge and meaningful insights.

The researcher is of the opinion that this selection will ensure a representative sampling population of the schools in which the WCED learning support model is being implemented. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998: 63-65) assert that the more representative the sample is, the greater is the probability that the research findings will have "population external validity".

To ensure a representative sample it is essential to have a complete and correct sampling frame (Bless, *et al.* 2006:100). The sampling population was determined by using the non-probable as well as probability sampling methods (Bless *et al.* 2006; Neuman, 2003:213; Patton, 2002:230; Mouton, 2001:166; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998:75-76). Bless *et al.* (2006:101) assert that non-probability sampling is adequate for homogeneous groups (such as identified above) and enlarging the sample may enhance that representivity. Therefore, the sampling population was drawn from all primary schools that are situated within the boundaries of the West Coast/Winelands district and have the services of a learning support teacher (stationary or itinerant.

Motivation for the choice of sampling method lies encapsulated in the mixed methods approach that guides this research. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used but greater priority was given to the qualitative side of the research. While qualitative inquiry typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples, quantitative methods typically make use of larger samples selected randomly. Patton (2002:230) argues that not only are the sampling techniques different but the logic of each approach also differs because of the difference in purpose of the strategy. Probability sampling, which is based on mathematical theory, is the primary method used by quantitative researchers (Neuman, 2003:218; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:166). Qualitative researchers focus on non-probability sampling methods. They seldom determine the size of the sample in advance and have limited knowledge about the larger population (Bless *et al.* 2006:101; Neuman, 2003:211)

The sampling method for collecting data through questionnaires was purposive as well as the quota types of non-probability sampling. According to Neuman (2003:213), the non-probable purposive sampling method "uses expert judgement in selecting cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind". The cases selected are especially informative. Babbie and Mouton

(2001:166) argue that the purposive sampling method may be used to "study a small subset of a larger population in which the subset are easily identified". In this research the larger population included all primary schools in the Western Cape that have a learning support teacher (stationary or itinerant).

Patton (2002:230) also refers to the purposive sampling method as purposeful sampling. The purposeful sampling provides information-rich cases for in depth study. Information-rich cases allowed the researcher to learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the study, *i.e.* efficacy and constraints of the WCED learning support model. Studying these cases yielded insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalisations.

According to Bless *et al.* (2006:106) quota sampling is the non-probability equivalent of stratified sampling. While the purpose was to draw a sample with the same proportions of characteristics as the population, the sampling procedure relies on accidental choice. Therefore since the desired number of participants from the mainstream was to have one teacher from each of the phases at primary school level (the foundation-, intermediate- and senior phase), the principal was requested to ask any one teacher from each phase to voluntarily complete the questionnaire. Hereby a representative quota of mainstream teachers is selected.

The systematic sampling method was used for selecting participants for the third phase of data collection. The researcher decided to systematically select four (4) schools from the research population to take part in the focus-group interviews. The reason for only selecting four schools lies embedded in the notion, as mentioned above, that qualitative inquiry typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples. However, to ensure a fair distribution in terms of the vast geographical area of the West Coast/Winelands, two (2) schools were selected from the southern part (urban and semi-rural), which includes circuits 1-4 and two (2) schools from the northern part (rural and semi-rural), circuit 5-9 of the district. Eight names were selected from the schools' staff lists to voluntary take part in the focus group interviews. Interviews were held at the relevant schools. A fifth focus group was systematically selected from learning support teachers in circuits 3 and 4. The reason for this decision is that learning support teachers are widely dispersed over the vast geographic area of the district. Circuits 3 and 4 are in close proximity and allowed learning support teachers to travel within a radius of 1-13 kilometres to the interview venue at a school in circuit 4.

Bless *et al.* (2006:108) contends that although the aim of sampling theory is to reproduce the characteristics of the population as close as possible, three types of sampling errors may occur. Therefore it must be recognised and presumed that one or more of the errors may occur in this

study. According to Bless *et al.* (2006:108) these include errors due to 1) the chance that one element and not another has been included, 2) bias in selection which may not be deliberate and 3) the non-responsive error. Reasons for the non-responsive error varies from unavailability of respondents due to illness or other factors, participants cannot be located due to change in address, name or even death. Respondents may also be absent at the time of data collection or may even refuse to collaborate.

Approval and permission for doing the research in the schools mentioned with the identified respondents was sought from the WCED (see Appendix B). Verbal permission was also sought from teachers who participated in this study.

4.4.2 Data Collection Methods

The Data Collection Plan is presented in the following table:

TABLE 4.1: DATA COLLECTION PLAN

Focus of the study	Data collection strategies of methods and techniques	Key research questions
1. Establishing the purpose and rationale for the policy of inclusive education and the learning support model	1. National and provincial policies and other relevant documents 2. Other relevant literature regarding inclusive education and the learning support model	1. What are the international trends towards inclusive education and support? 2. What is the national policy on inclusive education? 3. How does the WCED propose this policy be implemented?
2. Implementation of the Learning Support Model	1. Questionnaires administered to learning support teachers and mainstream teachers 2. Focus-group interviews with mainstream and learning support teachers	1. Are learners who experience barriers to learning integrated into mainstream classes? 2. Does the learning support teacher withdraw learners for additional support? 3. Do learners receive support in the mainstream class 4. Are learning support teachers supported and trained by the department? 5. What is the interaction between learning support teachers and mainstream class teachers? 6.What kind of support does the mainstream class teacher provide?
3. Support delivered	1. Questionnaires administered to learning support- and mainstream teachers. 2. Focus-group interviews with mainstream and learning support teachers.	1. What are the views of the relevant partners on the process of inclusion and delivery of learning support within the model?

4.4.2.1 Literature Review

This comprehensive literature review focussed on aspects relevant to the study, *i.e.*:

- Inclusive education and the provision of learning support from an international perspective
- The development of learning support delivery in South Africa
- Changed roles regarding learning support delivery in mainstream schools
- The provision and delivery of learning support from an eco-systemic perspective within a whole school approach

Data collected through a comprehensive literature review provides the foundation for contributing to the existing knowledge base on learning support provided in mainstream schools. Collecting current data for this specific study through the mixed methods approach followed the literature review. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to achieve a holistic perspective of the learning support model and improve quality and reliability of the data.

Scientific research is a collective effort of many researchers who share their results. The prevalent assumptions are that knowledge accumulates and that we learn from and build on what others have done (Neuman, 2003:96). The literature review combined features of self-study-, context-, historical- and integrative reviews as classified by Neuman (2003:97). For this purpose the following types of documents were used: books, academic journals, dissertations, education policy reports, media reports and the internet.

4.4.2.2 Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were designed (one for learning support- and one for mainstream teachers) to address questions posed by evaluation studies as discussed in 4.3.1 of this chapter (see Appendici C & D). The pragmatic paradigm within which this study is conducted is sensitive to and allows for multiple perceptions and interpretations. The questions asked by evaluation studies, as discussed in the section on evaluation objectives in 4.3.2, served as a guide for the design of the questionnaires. The questions were specifically formulated to elicit information about implementation of the learning support model and delivering of learning support at support levels one and two of the WCED learning support model as described in chapter 3 (3.5). The questionnaires consisted of two sections. Section one sought personal information related to background variables such as gender, age, qualifications and teaching experience. Section two focused on aspects related to implementation and functioning of the learning support model in the school. This section also included open-ended questions that explored views and opinions of teachers about their own levels of confidence and competence regarding the teaching of learners

experiencing barriers to learning. Teacher perceptions regarding effectiveness and quality of learning support provided were also explored. Questions were included to examine how the target group (specifically those learners that are withdrawn for additional support) responds to the intervention. It is important to note that section one of the questionnaires was the same for both mainstream- and learning support teachers. The questions for section two differed for the two questionnaires.

The questionnaires were developed within the framework of the survey method (Fink, 2003b; Fink, 2003c; Neuman, 2003; Punch, 2003; Patton, 2002; Mertens, 1998) as to establish proper implementation, efficacy and constraints of the WCED learning support model. Surveys produce information that is inherently statistical in nature (quantitative). However, both closed- and open-ended questions were included in the questionnaires to include responses of a more qualitative nature.

According to Clarke (1999:69) questionnaires are "capable of producing large quantities of highly structured, standardized data." The responses of the closed questions were pre-coded to speed up the process of transferring data for computer analysis with the SPSS data analysis program.

The use of open-ended questions allowed the researcher to pose questions that incorporate beliefs, opinions, characteristics, etc. about the implementation and efficacy of the learning support model (Neuman, 2003). Open-ended questions focus mainly on establishing perceptions of mainstream and learning support teachers regarding effectiveness and quality of learning support rendered in mainstream primary schools within the West Coast/Winelands district (Western Cape). Questions to establish their own understanding of and ability to support learners within an inclusive education system were also included. These questionnaires therefore collected quantitative as well as qualitative data.

A **pilot study** was conducted to ensure that "poorly framed questions or badly structured questionnaires" do not discourage respondents (Clarke, 1999:69). The original questionnaire was completed by three learning support teachers and three mainstream teachers from three different schools in the Paarl / Wellington region, a senior manager of the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES) component of the West Coast/Winelands district and a statistician from Stellenbosch University.

The participants in the pilot study reported some errors of typographical nature, which were corrected. The statistician proposed some formatting and codification of the questions. Other errors included were corrected as follows:

1. Clarity regarding the codes: Corrected by explaining the purpose of codes in the meetings with teachers.
2. Reference to levels of support was omitted: Questions were then reorganised to enable the researcher to categorise questions according to level of support, ie. FIRST LEVEL OF SUPPORT and SECOND LEVEL OF SUPPORT.

The numbering of question 1.5.1 was changed to 1.5 and then read: 1.5 Are you currently studying?

YES	1
NO	2

3. This influenced the rest of the questions that followed. The numbering of question 1.5.2 was changed to 1.6 which then read:

1.6 If YES in 1.5 mark one of the following with an X appropriate block: What do you study?

Inclusive Education	1
Special Education	2
Mainstream Education : Specify: ________________	3
Other (Specify): ________________	4

4. Questions 1.7.2 and 1.7.3 (1.6.2 & 1.6.3) were amended to include a column for NONE experience:

The numbering changed as a result of correction in point 3 & 4 above.

1.6.2 Learning Support Experience:

	None	**0-1 years**	**2-5 years**	**6-10 years**	**More than 10 years**
Adaptation-/Special class	1	2	3	4	5
New learning support model	1	2	3	4	5
Other – specify: ________________	1	2	3	4	5

1.6.3 Special school experience	None	0-1 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
	1	2	3	4	5

5. The wording of question 2.5 on the questionnaire for mainstream teachers was changed from: If answered YES in 2.4 EXPLAIN what you do. The corrected wording read as follows:

2.5 Explain your answer in 2.4.

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Questions 2.9 and 2.10 were added to fill a void identified by the researcher. The questions included influenced the numbering of the rest of the questionnaire and read as follows:

Do you think that the principal has an important role regarding effective support provided to learners experiencing barriers to learning?

YES	NO	NOT SURE
1	2	3

2.10 Explain your answer in 2.9:

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Question 2.12 was added to the mainsteam teachers' questionnaire:

2.12 What does she/he do to support you?

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

8. Questions 2.16 and 2.17 were added to the mainstream questionnaire:

2.16 Mark the correct answer with an X in the appropriate block:

I would prefer that the learning support teacher provide support to our school.

Full time	1
Itinerant	2

2.17 Explain your answer in 2.16:

……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

Corrections to section two of the questionnaire for learning support teachers:

9. Question 2.5 was added:

2.5 Motivate your answer in 2.4.

……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

10. Question 2.14 was added to the questionnaire for learning support teachers:

2.14 How would you describe the co-operation of the mainstream teachers?

Very good	1
Good	2
Acceptable	3
Weak	4
Very weak	5

11. Questions 2.15 and 2.16 was added to the questionnaire of learning support teachers and read as follows:

Does the school have adequate space for the withdrawel and teaching of small groups?

YES	1
NO	2

2.16 Motivate your answer in 2.15:

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

12. An extra column was added to include the answer DON'T KNOW to question 2.25:

2.25. Does the mainstream teacher continue supporting learners who are no longer withdrawn?

YES	NO	SOME-TIMES	DON'T KNOW
1	2	3	4

13. A row of cells to indicate the answer was omitted from question 2.37 at first and now added to read:

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN

2.37: Mark both answers with an X in the appropriate block:

	YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
I can develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP).	1	2	3
I have already helped mainstream teachers to develop an IEP for a learner.	1	2	3
The TST is responsible for developing IEP's.	1	2	3

Any uncertainty regarding interpretation of certain questions were thus eliminated. This pilot study helped to ensure validity of data collected through the questionnaires.

Learning support teachers were purposefully selected as a sample. Of the 60 learning support teachers attached to 87 primary schools only 43 were reached to provide them with a questionnaire (see Appendix C). This resulted in questionnaires administered to only 63 schools in the West Coast/Winelands district. Permission was sought from the head of the Specialised Learner and Educator Services (SLES) component of the district to make use of a time-slot to explain the questionnaire to the learning support teachers at an LSEN circuit meeting with the learning support advisors. These meetings were held in all nine circuits of the district. Some teachers were absent from these meetings therefore only 43 questionnaires were distributed among learning support teachers. Due to time constraints and vast distances, this was the only opportunity to reach these teachers. The teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire at

home and return it to the learning support advisor for the specific circuit within a week. The completed questionnaires were collected by the learning support advisors and brought to the researcher on their next visit to the district. Forty one (41) of the forty three (43) respondents returned the completed questionnaires.

Questionnaires for **mainstream teachers** (see Appendix D) were distributed to the schools with the help of learning support teachers. A letter accompanied the questionnaire to the principal explaining the procedures to be followed. A quota sample of mainstream teachers at the same school as the learning support teachers, one from each phase in the primary school, *i.e.* the foundation-, the intermediate and senior phase was identified by the principal to complete the questionnaires. One hundred and sixty five (165) of the one hundred and eighty nine (189) questionnaires distributed, were completed and returned.

4.4.2.3 Semi-structured focus group interviews

Interviewing is a research method widely used by evaluators (Clarke, 1999:71). Patton (2002:385) defines a focus group interview as "an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic". Interviewing is useful for gaining insight and understanding of how people view the program and to capture their individual perceptions and experiences (Clarke, 1999:73). Patton (2002:386) further argues that although this type of interview is not a problem solving or decision-making session it does allow respondents to "hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own responses as they hear what other people have to say". This allows the researcher the opportunity to directly observe the social processes and dynamics of group interaction (Patton, 2002:386; Clarke, 1999:77).

The aim of focus group interviews is to gain high-quality data from participants within a social context. Recently the use of focus group interviews increased. Researchers assert that there is no fixed size for a focus group interview. However, many (Patton, 2002:385; Clarke, 1999:77) suggest a number of participants from six to twelve. The groups of concern to this study were: (1) mainstream teachers and (2) learning support teachers. In this evaluation study, the focus group interview can elucidate and illuminate the learning support model's strengths, weaknesses and needed improvements (Patton, 2002:388). Considering the fact that focus group interviews last one to two hours, it can produce a great deal of qualitative data in a relatively short period of time.

An interview guide (see Appendix E) consisting of topics to ensure that the interviewer addresses the same themes in all the interviews (Patton, 2002:343; Clarke, 1999:74) were compiled. The interview guide provided a framework within which the interviewer can "develop

questions, sequence those questions, and make decisions about which information to pursue in greater depth". It also allowed the researcher to "keep the interactions focussed while allowing for individual perspectives and experiences to emerge" (Patton, 2002:344).

Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with systematically selected participants from the schools in the West Coast-Winelands district that has a learning support teacher. These interviews were recorded with permission from the participants. None of the participants objected to the recording of the interviews. Two main groups, one consisting of systematically selected mainstream teachers at four different schools and one consisting of a random selection of learning support teachers, was interviewed.

Four separate interviews were conducted with the mainstream teachers at their respective schools. Each focus group (FG 1-4) consisted of 6-8 mainstream teachers. These were systematically selected (every 5th or 6th person) from a stafflist with the help of the principal. Each interview lasted about one hour. Only six of the eight learning support teachers (FG 5) who were selected turned up for the interview session. This interview was held at a school centrally within the reach of all selected participants.

Data collected through the questionnaires in the second phase of data collection informed the interview guide and open-ended questions in the semi-structured interviews that were designed elicit more qualitative information (Oishi, 2003:176; Clarke, 1998:72). This enabled the interviewer to explore in some depth the opinions, expectations and actions of the participants. According to Patton (2002:341) the purpose of interviewing "aims to capture the perspectives of program participants, staff and others associated with the program". It was therefore the obligation of the evaluator to provide an environment within which the participants could respond comfortably, accurately and honestly.

4.4.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data by consolidating, reducing and interpreting verbal accounts, observations and information from documents (Merriam, 1998:178). Data analysis was done quantitative (descriptive and inferential numerical analysis) and qualitative (descriptive and thematic text) (Creswell, 2003:220). Data from both quantitative and qualitative sources were therefore organised and analysed to reveal information gained through the data collection phases.

4.4.3.1 Document Analysis

The major education policy- and policy informing documents such as the NEPI Report (1992), the NCSET and NCESS Report (1997) and those that are mentioned in Table 3.1 provide a framework in which to understand the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. The proceedings of the WCED Conference on Support for the School as an Organisation (Theron, MJ. 1999) and other departmental publications provide specific insight into the establishment of the learning support model currently operative in the Western Cape. These documents form the background against which data collected through the questionnaires and focus group interviews can be analysed and interpreted.

4.4.3.2 Quantitative data analysis

Mouton (1996:161) describes this part of empirical research as the stage where the researcher, through the application of various statistical and mathematical techniques, focuses separately on specific variables in the data set. Subsequently, collected data was coded, entered and cleaned to give meaning to the results / give answers to the research question (Fink, 2003; Neuman, 2000). The SPSS data analysis computer programme (Mouton, 2001: 79) was used in analysing the quantitative data. However, although the SPSS program was used for frequency analysis, priority was given to descriptive statistics of the qualitative data.

4.4.3.3 Qualitative data analysis

The process of analysing qualitative data involves making sense out of textual data. This was done within the constructivist paradigm discussed in 4.2.1.2. According to Creswell (2003:198) qualitative data analysis is a “continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study”. The researcher followed the process proposed by Creswell (2003: 199) to analyse the qualitative data from both the open-ended questions in the questionnaires as well as the focus group interviews separately:

Firstly the data was organised and prepared the data for analysis by translating the recordings of semi-structured focus group interviews.

The researcher then read through all the data (questionnaires and interviews independently from each other) to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on it’s overall meaning.

This was followed by a detailed analysis with a coding process. The text (the trancribed interviews and qualitative responses from the questionnaires separately) was then organised into categories Eg. large classes, differentiation and Teacher Support Teams. The researcher then constructed themes that captured recurring patterns and then grouped it finding commonalities

and differences essential to the study, Eg. Support provided at level one of the learning support model.

Coding was then used to describe the schools that participated in the focus group interviews as School 1, School 2, School 3, and School 4. The group of learning support teachers are just referred to learning support teachers. The focus groups were further identified by referring to the focus group by the number of the group and the lines in the transcript (Eg. FG 2, 30-35). There were thus 5 focus groups that particitped in the semi-structered interviews.

The themes and subthemes that appeared as major findings were then discussed as separate sections for example: Major theme: support on level one of the learning support model and subtheme: 1) effective functioning of the Teacher Support Team and the role of the principal and 2) in-class support provided to learners and teachers. The themes displayed the multiple perspectives of the participants and are supported by specific evidence from the raw data (verbatim transcriptions from interviews, eg. FG 2, 5-12). The themes were therefore presented in a detailed discussion in the form of a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis.

The final interpretation and integration of the data is presented in Chapter 6. This discussion reflects the meaning derived from a comparison of the findings with information gleaned from the literature.

As data analysis is a reflective activity it required of the researcher to maintain record of the analytic process. Therefore the audiocassettes and transcriptions are kept safe if need be reviewed. The reason for the researcher to do the transcribing of focus group interviews herself was to ensure accuracy and to take advantage to immerse herself in the data (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004:193).

4.4.4 Data consolidation and interpretation

The results of both qualitative and quantitative data were integrated in the interpretation phase in Chapter 6.

4.4.5 Validity and reliability

The quality of any research study depends to a great deal on the reliability of the methods used and the validity of conclusions drawn (Silverman, 2005:209). Validity and reliability in the field of social science research is a very contentious issue. The following definitions of validity and reliability by Hammersley (1992 & 1990) are presented by Silverman (2005:210): Validity is defined as "…truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social

phenomena to which it refers" and "reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions". Mertens (2005: 77) takes it further and distinguish the three kinds of validity for the purpose of evaluation studies as discussed in 1.7.

The researcher acknowledges the current highly controversial debate around the definition of validity of scholarly work that contains more than one methodology. Recently researchers have proposed different sets of terminology for the use of mixed methods studies. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) suggested the term "inference quality" and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) propose the term "legitimation" as opposed to the validity. However, according to Dellinger and Leech (2007:315) the concept of validity in mixed methods research has yet to be defined. They argue that in mixed methods research the researcher can "appreciate and use multiple forms of evidence to integrate others' research and inferences and the varied meanings found in them". This allows mixed method researchers to "make judgements about the meaning of data on the basis of its usefulness and interpretation and the consequences of these uses and interpretations" (Dellinger & Leech, 2007:315). According to Messick (1995:741), as refered to by Dellinger and Leech (2007:316), the principles of validity does not only apply to

> interpretive and action inferences derived from test scores as ordinarily conceived but also to inferences based on any means of observing or documenting consistent behaviour or attributes…This general usage subsumes qualitative as well as quantitative summaries.

Qualitative research places a great trust on the personal integrity of the researcher. Qualitative methods rely heavily on the skill, competence and rigor as well as personal circumstances of the researcher. It does, however also include a variety of checks on how the evidence is collected, such as detailed recording and checking of data (Patton, 2002:14; Neuman, 2000:125). In this study validity and reliability is ensured in the steps set out in 4.4.3.3 on qualitative data analysis. The researcher also has to frequently reflect about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study.

According to Neuman (2000:125) "all social researchers want to be fair, honest, truthful and unbiased in their research activity". Due to the highly subjective position the researcher finds her in, extra precaution will be taken not to influence the outcome of the study. Silverman (2005:211) cautions qualitative researchers of the problem of anecdotalism. This problem may occur when the researcher finds it difficult to convince herself (and the audience) that her findings are genuinely based on critical investigation of all the data and do not depend on a few well-chosen examples. One way of overcoming the problem of anecdotalism in this study was to

include not only one or two schools, but all schools that have a learning support teacher in the sampling population and rigorous analysis of the raw data.

Quantitative research addresses the issue of integrity and objectivity by relying on objective technology, such as numerical measurement, standard techniques and statistics. According to Patton (2002:14) validity of quantitative research depends on careful instrument construction to ensure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity of the instrument (questionnaires) and data collected was tested in a pilot study where the researcher ensured that the questions were formulated in a way to ensure that it measured what it is supposed to (see 4.4.2.2). In order to pursue an objective interpretation of the data, the data from the questionnaires was subjected to statistical analysis with the SPSS data analysis computer programme.

In this mixed methods study the researcher's goal is to increase validity by employing different data collection and analysis methods (Koro-Ljungberg, 2004: 604) ensuring that the research activities are dependable and credible. Therefore both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to do so.

However, Patton (2002:433) contends that there are no absolute rules to ensure validity and reliability, except to "do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study".

A multi-site quantitative and qualitative methodology was used. Although multiple data collection strategies were used, qualitative methods were predominant in the interpretive constructivist paradigm (Mertens, 2005 & 1998). For the purposes of evaluating the WCED learning support model, data collection included both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (semi-structured focus group interview) methods.

Traditionally research methodologies were designated as either qualitative or quantitative. However, several attempts have been made to "sublate the divide between the two strategies" (Scott & Usher, 1996:59). There are several types of triangulation that can be applied to social research (Neuman, 2003:138; Patton, 2002:247). These include triangulation of measures, triangulation of observers, triangulation of theory and triangulation of method. For the purpose of this study, the triangulation of method was used. Triangulation does not only allow the researcher to use both quantitative and qualitative research methods. It is also a way of establishing reliability and validity of the data collected (Patton, 2002:247). Campbell and Friske first used this concept of triangulation in 1959. However, it was only recognised as a legitimate

methodology decades later when researchers recognised that the limitations and biases of a single method could be neutralised or cancelled with triangulation of data sources and analysis. According to Neuman (2003) both methods have its strengths and limitations and that the best research often combines features of each. The two methodological approaches to research are complementary rather than competing (Kelle & Erzberger, 2004; Hill & Newmark, 2003:63). Newman and Benz (1998:19) too, argue that the concept of multiple methodologies in research is not new as in "1970, Mouly alluded to multiple-perspective research as: the essence of modes in scientific research method…" They further argue that

> If we accept the premise that scientific knowledge is based upon the verification methods, the contributions of information derived from qualitative (inductive) and quantitative (deductive) perspectives can be assessed. It then becomes clear how each approach adds to our body of knowledge by building on the information derived from the other approach (Newman & Benz, 1998:19-29).

The motivating factor for qualitative research is theory building and that of quantitative research is theory testing. Therefore the qualitative part of this study was conducted to discover and understand the practice of learning support delivery and the views of the teachers involved (Merriam, 1998:11). Qualitative data emphasised individual descriptive data. Therefore semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted. Quantitative research methods produce data in the form of numbers. Quantitative information concerning the learning support model was gathered from teachers (both mainstream- and learning support teachers) through questionnaires. The focus group interviews (qualitative measure) complemented the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires (Hill & Newmark, 2003:63). It is thus clear that neither approach, on its own, encompass the whole of research. Both were needed to conceptualise research holistically (Newman & Benz, 1998:20). As this evaluation research was based on both quantitative and qualitative methods limitations and biases of a single method could be counterbalanced or avoided in order to provide a holistic understanding.

As teacher attitudes and perceptions informed a major part of the research, greater priority was given to the qualitative form of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical guidelines in research are needed to guard against possible harmful effects of research (Mertens, 1998). Concern with ethical issues should be anticipated as early as writing a research proposal and then considered throughout the research process (Creswell, 2003:62).

According to Merriam (1998:213) ethical codes deal with the "weighing of cost and benefits of an investigation, with safeguards to protect the rights of the participants". It also involves collection, analysis and presentation of research findings.

For this evaluation the guidelines include among other, consent from the Department of Education (see Appendix B) as well as from the participants in this study. It also included respect for the participants and the sites for research, confidentiality, ensuring that procedures are reasonable, non-exploitive, carefully considered and fairly administered. The researcher accepted the responsibility to make good ethical decisions with regard to issues that arise from the analyses and interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data. Feedback will take the form of a dissertation available to participating schools and the WCED. In the writing of this dissertation unbiased language will be used to avoid discrimination on the bases of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability or age. The researcher further guarded against suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings to meet her own needs or the needs of any other possible audience (Creswell, 2003:62-68; Neuman, 2003:302).

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter gives an account of the research design and methodology used in the conduct of the study. Emphasis is placed on evaluation as purpose of the research. The scope this study is set out in the issues addressed in 4.3.2 in the evaluation objectives. Furthermore, an explanation is given on how validity and reliability of the research will be ensured as well as the ethical guidelines that steer the research. The results of the data collected will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 the research design and methodology of this study was discussed. This chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. First the data from the two questionnaires (for learning support and mainstream teachers) is analysed and discussed. Following this is an analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data[3] derived from the focus group interviews. In this chapter the views and opinions of learning support and mainstream teachers are explored on order to answer the research questions posed in the previous chapter.

As mentioned in 4.4.2.2, questionnaires were distributed to a sampling population drawn from all primary schools situated within the boundaries of the West Coast/Winelands district where the services of a learning support teacher (stationary or itinerant) are available. The four primary schools that took part in the focus group interviews were systematically selected from this sample. Due to the apartheid history (as discussed in Chapter 3) these schools present with certain common concerns. However, each school has its own unique context and character. All four schools are struggling to address the needs of their respective learner populations, as discussed later in 5.3.1. Learning support teachers were randomly selected to take part in a separate focus group interview (4.4.2.3). The data from all five focus groups is integrated in 5.3.

5.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA (QUESTIONNAIRES)

5.2.1 Background Information

5.2.1.1 Gender

Figure 5.1 clearly reflects that there are more (92%) female learning support teachers than male learning support teachers (8%). This distribution is also evident of the gender distribution of mainstream teachers (Figure 5.2) who took part in this survey where the majority are female, 71% and the males only 29%.

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[3] Since the dominant language of the respondents (Afrikaans) differs from the language of this text (English), the qualitative responses from data are translated (with the original Afrikaans in brackets) where examples are used to illustrate views and opinions of respondents.

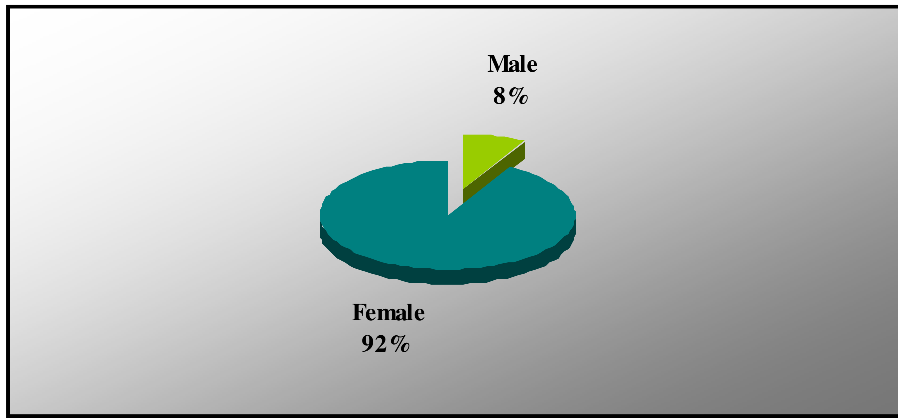


FIGURE 5.1: GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

(N = 39)

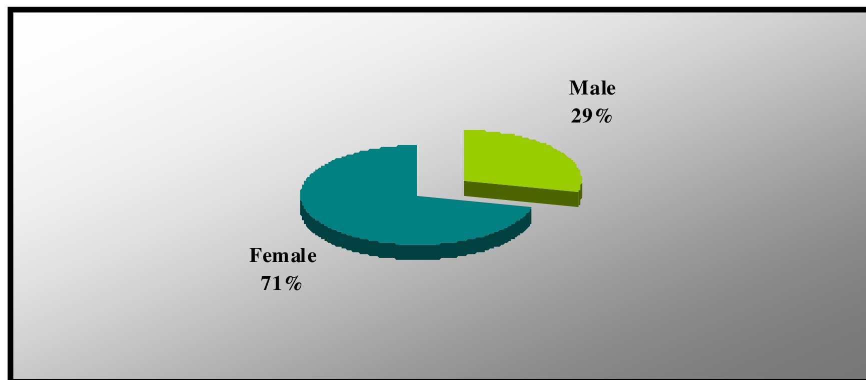


FIGURE 5.2: GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

(N = 161)

5.2.1.2 Age distribution

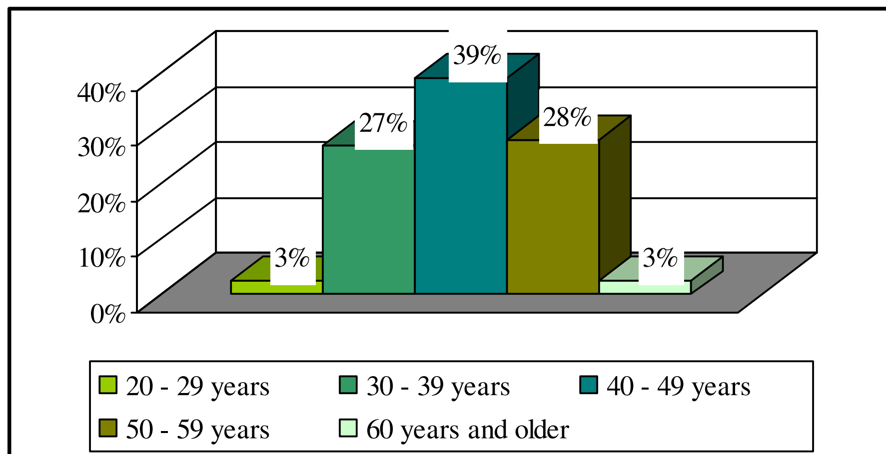


FIGURE 5.3: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

(N = 40)

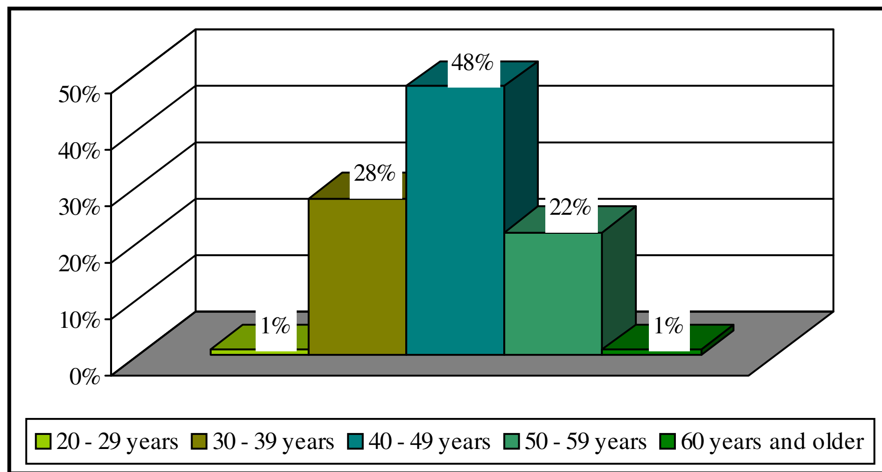


FIGURE 5.4: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

(N = 163)

The figures above show that the majority of the participants of both learning support and mainstream groups fall within the age group of 40-49 years. Both figures display a normal distribution curve where the smallest numbers of participants are on either side of the distribution curve.

5.2.1.3 Highest Qualification

TABLE 5.1: QUALIFICATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

(N = 38)

Qualification type	Learning support teachers	
	Count	%
Certificate in Education	14	10%
Diploma in Education	80	56%
First Baccalaureus degree	15	10.2%
Postgraduate Certificate in Education	2	1.3%
Baccalaureus in Education	8	5.2%
Advanced Certificate in Education	10	7%
B Ed	11	7.3%
Postgraduate Diploma in Education	3	2%
Master's Degree	1	1%
Total	**144**	**100%**

TABLE 5.2: QUALIFICATION OF MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

(N = 144)

Qualification type	Mainstream teachers	
	Count	%
Certificate in Education	14	10%
Diploma in Education	80	56%
First Baccalaureus degree	15	10.2%
Postgraduate Certificate in Education	2	1.3%
Baccalaureus in Education	8	5.2%
Advanced Certificate in Education	10	7%
B Ed	11	7.3%
Postgraduate Diploma in Education	3	2%
Master's Degree	1	1%
Total	144	100%

Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 indicate that the highest qualification of most learning support (68%) and mainstream (56%) participants is a diploma in education. The highest level of education, according to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), of the learning support teachers who participated in this study, is a B Ed degree (level 6), and for mainstream teachers a Master's degree on level 8.

5.2.1.4 Qualification in Learning Support

TABLE 5.3: LEARNING SUPPORT QUALIFICATIONS

Learning Support Qualification	Learning support teachers	
	Count	%
Diploma in Remedial Teaching	8	20%
Fourth year in remedial teaching	14	34%
Diploma in Learning Support	3	8%
Fourth year learning support module	1	2%
Further Diploma in Education (Learning Support)	1	2%
Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)	4	10%
B Ed (LS)	1	2%
B Ed Hons (LS)	2	5%
Other	11	27%
None	6	15%

TABLE 5.4: LEARNING SUPPORT QUALIFICATIONS

Learning Support Qualification	Mainstream teachers	
	Count	%
Diploma in Remedial Teaching	6	3.9%
Fourth year in Remedial Teaching	16	10.2%
Diploma in Learning Support	2	1.5%
Fourth year learning support module	1	1%
Further Diploma in Education (Learning Support)	4	2.6%
Advanced Certificate in Education (LS)	5	3.4%
B Ed (LS)	---	---
B Ed Hons (LS)	2	1.4%
Other	17	11.0%
None	102	65.0%
Total	155	100%

According to Table 5.3 and Table 5.4 only 15% of learning support participants have no specific learning support qualification, as apposed to 65% of mainstream participants who have no specific learning support qualification. Table 5.3 further indicates that 54% of learning support participants has either a diploma or a fourth year remedial education qualification, while only 14% of mainstream respondents have this qualification (Table 5.4). With regard to learning support, Table 5.3 shows that 8% of learning support participants have a diploma in learning support, in contrast to only 1,5% mainstream respondents in Table 5.4. It is, however, clear that at least 24% of mainstream participants who took part in this survey do have a formal qualification in either remedial or learning support education.

5.2.1.5 Further studies

TABLE 5.5A: ARE YOU CURRENTLY STUDYING? (LST)

(N = 38)

Currently studying?	Learning support teachers	
	Count	%
Yes	8	21%
No	30	79%
Total	38	100%

TABLE 5.5B: ARE YOU CURRENTLY STUDYING? (MST)

Currently studying?	Mainstream teachers	
	Count	%
Yes	24	15.4%
No	132	84.6%
Total	156	100

The survey, according to Table 5.5a, shows that a higher percentage of learning support teachers (21%) than mainstream teachers (15,4%) in Table 5.5b are furthering their studies.

TABLE 5.6A: IF CURRENTLY STUDYING, WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING? (LST)

(N = 5)

Type of study	Learning support teachers	
	Count	%
Inclusive Education	2	40%
Special Education	2	40%
Mainstream Education	---	
Other	1	20%
Total	5	100%

TABLE 5.6B: IF CURRENTLY STUDYING, WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING? (MST)

(N = 24)

Type of study	Mainstream teachers	
	Count	%
Inclusive Education	2	8.3%
Special Education	2	8.3%
Mainstream Education	12	50%
Other	8	33.4%
Total	24	100%

More learning support teachers (80%) are currently furthering their studies in inclusive- or special education, in contrast to mainstream teachers where only 16,6% are studying in the field of inclusive or special education. According to Table 5.6b, 50% of mainstream teachers in this

survey are furthering their studies in mainstream education while none of the learning support teachers do the same (Table 5.6a).

5.2.2 Teaching experience

5.2.2.1 Mainstream experience

TABLE 5.7: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN MAINSTREAM (LST)

Phase	Learning support teachers							
	0-1 year		2-5 Years		6-10 Years		More than10 years	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Foundation Phase (N = 33)	1	3%	12	37%	5	15%	15	45%
Intermediate Phase (N = 20)	4	20%	8	40%	8	40%	---	---
Senior Phase (N=8)	3	38%	5	62%	---	---	---	---
Other(N = 5)	1	20%	2	40%	---	---	2	40%

Table 5.7 indicates that most (N=33) learning support teachers have experience in the foundation phase while fewer (N=8) have 2-5 years experience in the senior phase.

TABLE 5.8: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN MAINSTREAM (MST)

Phase	Mainstream teachers							
	0-1 year		2-5 Years		6-10 Years		More than 10 years	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Foundation Phase (N = 75)	5	6.7%	7	9.3%	8	10.6%	55	73.4%
Intermediate Phase (N = 92)	3	3.3%	15	16.3%	14	15.2%	60	65.2%
Senior Phase (N = 73)	5	6.8%	12	16.4%	13	17.8%	43	59%
Other (N = 9)	3	33.3%	2	22.2%	1	11.2%	3	33.3%

Mainstream teachers who responded to the questionnaire have mainly foundation (N=75) and intermediate phase (N=92) teaching experience. A smaller percentage have experience in senior phase (N=73), or other (N=9).

5.2.2.2 Learning support experience

TABLE 5.9A: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN LEARNING SUPPORT (LST)

Phase	Learning support teachers									
	None		0-1 year		2-5 years		6-10 Years		More than 10 years	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Adaptation/Special Class (N = 28)	1	4%	4	14%	10	36%	2	7%	11	39%
New Learning Support Model (N = 34)	---	---	3	9%	17	50%	11	32%	3	9%
Other (N = 3)	---	---	2	67%	---	---	1	33%	---	---

TABLE 5.9B: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN SPECIAL SCHOOL (LST)

Phase	Learning support teachers									
	None		0-1 year		2-5 years		6-10 years		More than 10 years	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Special School experience (N = 27)	21	78%	3	11%	2	7%	---	---	1	4%

It is noticeable that 50% of learning support participants has 2-5 years experience in the WCED learning support model (Table 5.9a). According to this survey (Table 5.9a), the majority of learning support teachers come from the previous system of adaptation and special classes, while only 1% report not to have any such experience. Table 9b indicates that the majority (78%) of learning support participants has no experience of a special school while 11% have 0-1 years experience in a special school.

TABLE 5.10A: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN LEARNING SUPPORT (MST)

Phase	Mainstream teachers									
	None		0-1 Year		2-5 Years		6-10 Years		More than 10 years	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Adaptation /Special Class (N = 98)	80	81.6%	8	8.2%	2	2%	6	6.1%	2	2%
New Learning Support Model (N = 76)	66	86.8%	2	2.6%	2	2.6%	5	6.7%	1	1.3%
Other (N = 29)	26	90%	0	0%	1	3.5%	2	6.5%	0	0%

According to Table 5.10a, only 98 mainstream participants responded to the question relating to experience of the previous system of adaptation and special classes. The survey indicates that 81.6% (Table 5.10a) of these respondents have no experience of teaching in this system. Most mainstream teachers (86.8%) responding to this question in Table 5.10a indicated that they had learning support experience in either the previous and current models of support.

TABLE 5.10B: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN SPECIAL SCHOOL (MST)

Phase	Mainstream teachers									
	None		0-1 year		2-5 years		6-10 years		More than 10 years	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Special School experience (N = 115)	109	95%	0	0%	3	2.5%	0	0%	3	2.5%

According to Table 5.10b, most mainstream (95%) participants reported not having any experience of teaching in a special school.

5.2.3 Policy

5.2.3.1 Education White Paper 6

TABLE 5.11: LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS AND EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6

Questions on White Paper 6	Learning support teachers						
	YES		NO		UNCERTAIN		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
I am aware of White Paper 6 on Special Education Needs	41	100 %	---	---	---	---	41
I am acquainted with the content of White Paper 6 on Special Education Needs	30	75%	1	3%	9	22 %	40
I have a copy of White Paper 6	30	77	8	20	1	3%	39
There is a copy of White Paper 6 at school	36	92%	1	3%	2	5%	39

According to Table 5.11, it is clear that 100% of learning support participants were aware of Education White Paper 6. The survey, however, indicates that 77% of learning support participants reported that they had a copy of White Paper 6 while only 75% said that they were acquainted with its content. According to 92% of the learning support participants, schools had a copy of White Paper 6, while 5% were uncertain.

TABLE 5.12: MAINSTREAM TEACHERS AND EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6

Questions on White Paper 6	Mainstream teachers						
	YES		NO		UNCERTAIN		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
I am aware of White Paper 6 on Special Education Needs	127	82.4%	6	3.9%	21	13.7%	154
I am acquainted with the content of White Paper 6 on Special Education Needs	72	48.9%	29	19.8%	46	31.3%	147
I have a copy of White Paper 6	71	48.6%	67	45.9%	8	5.5%	146
There is a copy of White Paper 6 at school	134	84.8%	2	1.3%	22	13.9%	158

Table 5.12 indicates that, in contrast to learning suppor participants, only 82% of the mainstream respondents reported that they were aware of Education White Paper 6. However, the survey shows that while 48% reported to have a copy of White Paper 6, only 48% said that they were

acquainted with the content of the White Paper on Special education needs. This is significantly less than the percentages for learning support teachers. Nonetheless, 84.4% of the mainstream participants reported that the school did have a copy of the mentioned White Paper.

5.2.3.2 WCED Learning Support Model

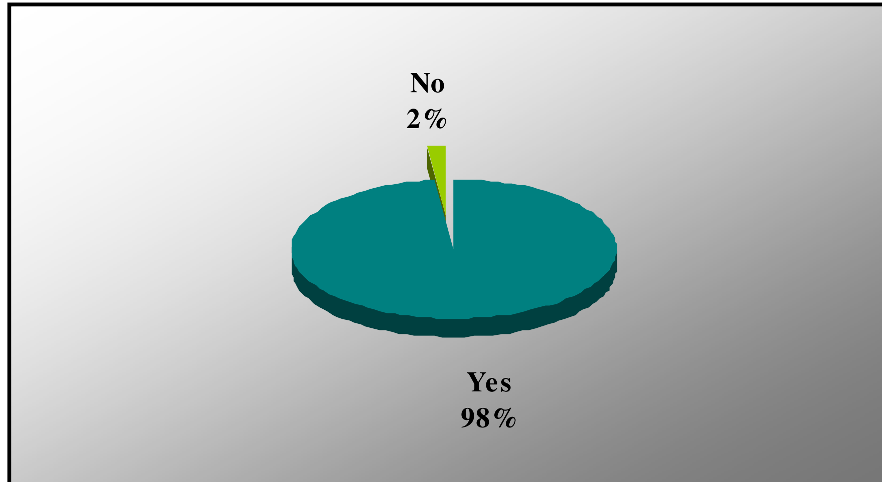


FIGURE 5.5: DO YOU KNOW THE WCED MODEL OF LEARNING SUPPORT? (LST)

(N=41)

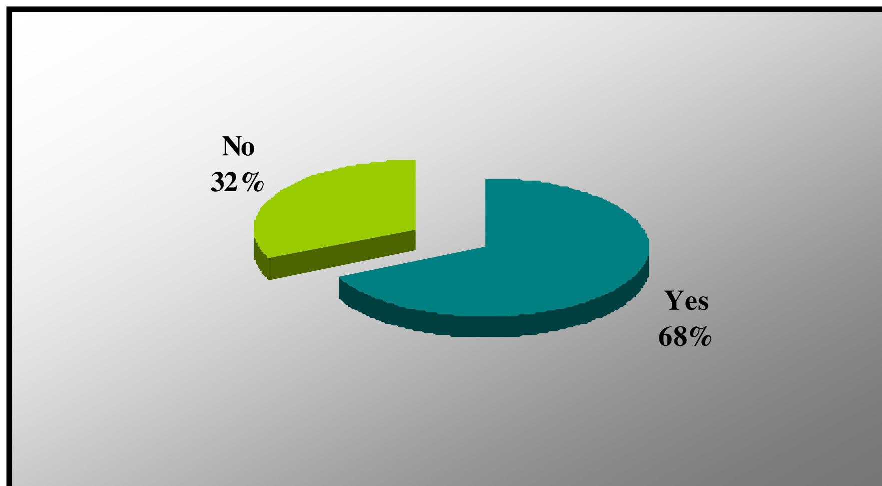


FIGURE 5.6: DO YOU KNOW THE WCED MODEL FOR LEARNING SUPPORT? (MST)

(N = 154)

While only 68% of mainstream participants (Figure 5.6) reported that they knew the learning support model of the WCED, 98% of the learning support participants (Figure 5.5) reported that they knew the WCED Learning Support Model.

a) Teachers` own perceptions of competence

TABLE 5.13: CONFIDENCE LEVELS OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS AND COOPERATION FROM MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

Questions on confidence and cooperation	Learning support teachers						
	GOOD		AVERAGE		BAD		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Do you feel well equipped for your task?	24	59%	17	41%	---	---	41
Do you have enough confidence to empower mainstream teachers in a work session?	21	51%	20	49%	---	---	41
Do you get cooperation from the mainstream teachers?	18	44%	22	54%	1	2%	41

It is clear from Table 5.13 above that 59% of learning support teachers feel well-equipped for their task. However, fifty-one percent (51%) of the learning support participants feel confident enough to empower mainstream teachers through workshops, while 49% report not having the confidence to do so. The survey further shows that only 44% of the learning support participants reported that they had the cooperation of mainstream teachers, while the majority (54%) reported that they did not have such cooperation. It is further indicated that only 2% sometimes get cooperation from mainstream teachers.

TABLE 5.14: CONFIDENCE LEVELS OF MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

Questions on Confidence	Mainstream teachers						
	YES		NO		SOMETIMES		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
I have adequate confidence to support learners experiencing serious barriers to learning in my class.	59	38%	35	23%	60	39%	154
I can develop an individual education plan (IEP)	41	28%	49	33%	58	39%	148
The learning support teacher helped me to develop an IEP for a learner	45	31%	76	52%	25	17%	146
The TST is responsible for developing IEP	60	42%	23	16%	60	42%	143

According to Table 5.14, only 38% of the mainstream participants had the confidence to address serious barriers to learning in their classrooms, while 39% only sometimes felt confident enough to do so. The survey further indicates that 52% of the mainstream participants reported that the learning support teacher did not help them in developing support programs for learners experiencing serious barriers to learning. Only 28% of the respondents in Table 5.14 reported that they could develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Forty-two (42%) of the mainstream teachers are of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the TST to develop IEPs.

b) In-service training and support by ELSEN advisors

TABLE 5.15: IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

	ALWAYS		SOMETIMES		NEVER		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Is the in-service training provided by the ELSEN Advisors relevant?	22	54%	18	44%	1	2%	41
Do you get the opportunity at school to give feedback of in-service training?	20	49%	19	46%	2	5%	41
Do you get the opportunity at school to empower mainstream teachers regarding the teaching of learners who experience barriers to learning?	22	55%	15	38%	3	7%	40
Do you attend staff development sessions at school?	28	68%	13	32%	---	---	41

It is interesting to note that while 54% of the learning support participants (Table 5.15) reported that they experienced the in-service training by LSEN advisors as relevant, 44% experienced this training to be relevant only sometimes, while 2% felt that it was never relevant. While 49% reported that they gave feedback to the school about in-service training, 55% reported that they got the opportunity to empower mainstream teachers regarding the teaching of learners who experience barriers to learning. Five percent (5%) said that they never got the opportunity to give feedback of in-service training and 7% never empowered mainstream teachers in addressing barriers to learning. Of the 41 respondents who answered this question (Table 5.15), 64% reported that they attended staff development sessions at school, while 32% only attended these sessions sometimes.

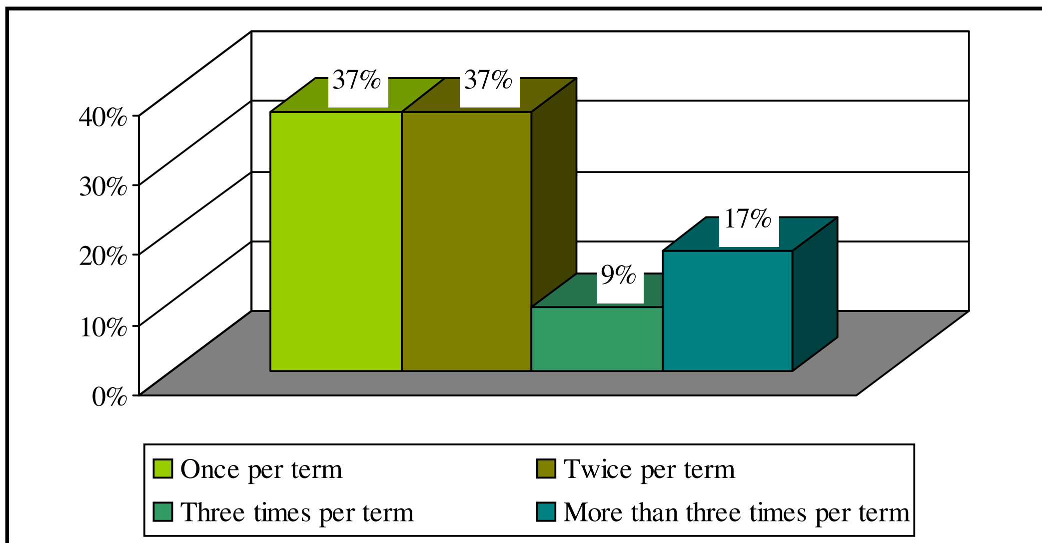


FIGURE 5.7: HOW OFTEN DOES THE ELSEN ADVISOR VISIT YOUR SCHOOL? (LST)

(N = 41)

The discrepency in terminology refered to in Chapter 1.9.10 is also evident here. As the WCED learning support model (Chapter 3.5) use the terminology “learning support advisor”, this is the term that will be used in this section. Learning support teachers reported in Figure 5.7 that the learning support advisor generally visited their schools once (37%) or twice (37%) per term, while 17% of the participants reported three visits, and 9% reported more than three visits per term.

Learning support teachers had to explain in their own words how they experienced the support provided to them by the learning support advisor. However, the responses rather reflected how they experienced the advisor. The content analysis (see 4.4.3.3) of the responses to this open-ended question (Questionnaire 1, question 2.8) to the learning support teachers produced various opinions. Learning support teachers generally experienced the learning support advisor as supportive, motivating, helpful, providing new ideas, relevant, honest, positive and friendly. They encouraged learning support teachers and always had advice on how to handle difficult situations in the school. Learning support teachers experienced the advisor as understanding and always available. They further showed a personal interest in the learning support teacher. However, there were those who experienced the advisor as too vague at times, expecting too much, and they felt that not enough support was provided.

Nonetheless, the overall indication is that learning support teachers had a positive experience of the learning support advisor.

5.2.4 First level of learning support

5.2.4.1 Knowledge of first level of support

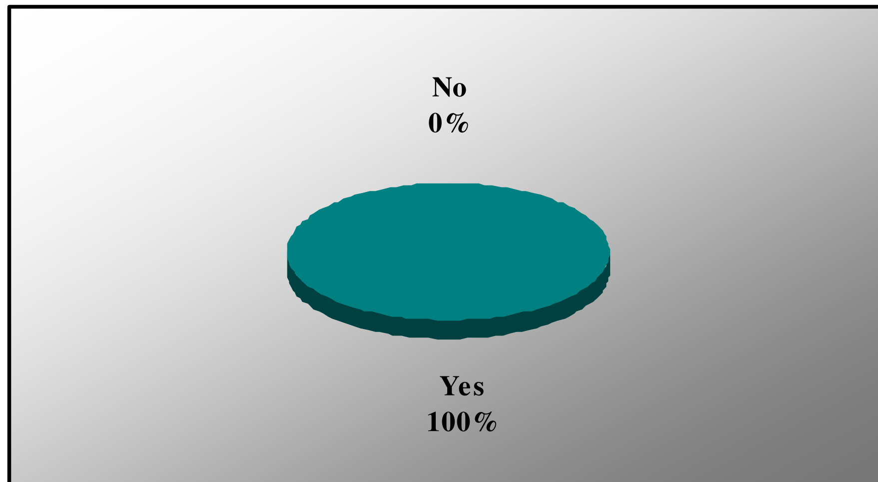


FIGURE 5.8: DO YOU KNOW THAT THE FIRST LEVEL OF SUPPORT HAS TO TAKE PLACE IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASS? (LST)

(N = 39)

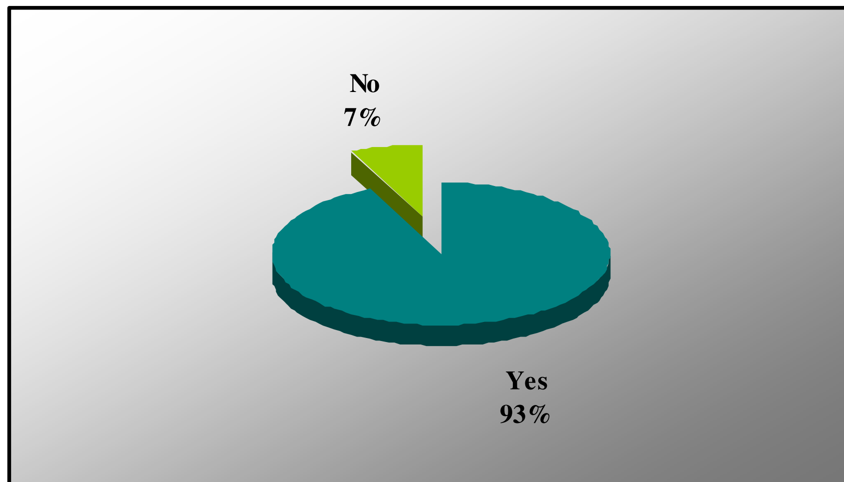


FIGURE 5.9: DO YOU KNOW THAT THE FIRST LEVEL OF SUPPORT HAS TO TAKE PLACE IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASS? (MST)

(N = 162)

Figure 5.8 indicates that all learning support participants (100%) know that the first level of support has to take place in the mainstream classroom. Only 93% of the mainstream participants (Figure 5.9) reported that they knew that the first level of learning support had to be provided in the mainstream classroom.

5.2.4.2 Provision of learning support in mainstream classrooms

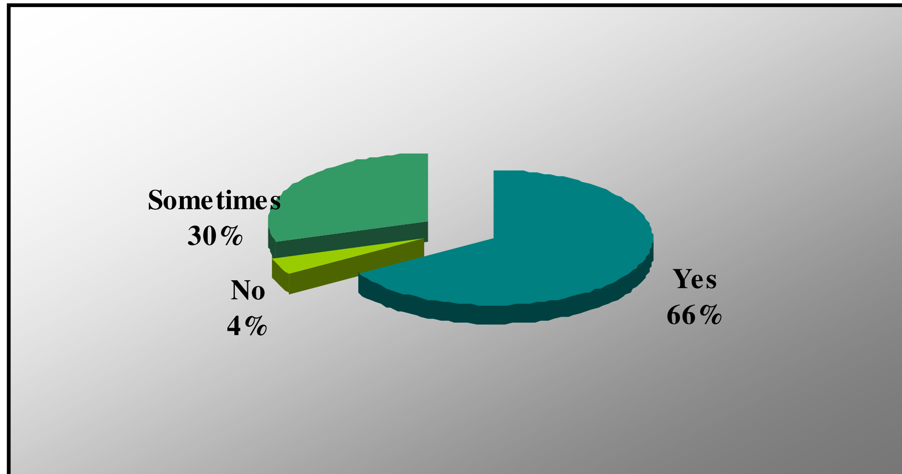


FIGURE 5.10: DO YOU ADAPT YOUR LESSON PRESENTATIONS AND ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING? (MST)

(N = 163)

Mainstream teachers in Figure 5.10 reported that 66% of them adapted lesson presentations and assessment for learners who experienced barriers to learning in their classes. Thirty percent (30%) only did it sometimes, while 4% reported that they made no provision for learners experiencing barriers in their classrooms. It is thus clear that only 66% reported to provide regular learning support at the first level of the model.

Mainstream teachers were asked (Questionnaire 2, question 2.4) to motivate their answers depicted in Figure 5.10. In the content analysis to this open-ended question the first four themes, although not specifically asked, were identified as: large classes, limited time, workload and lack of knowledge and training. These themes indicate why teachers do not, or only sometimes, make provision for learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classes.

Respondents reported that they found classes too large to provide any substantial support, and even if they attempted to provide support, it was very difficult. Participants further argued that they did not have the time, due to subject or learning area teaching, to provide any additional support to those learners who struggled. Although mainstream teachers realised the value of making adaptations to accommodate all learners, they found lesson preparation and administrative duties time consuming. In addition to this, they still had extra-mural activities, such as sport and cultural activities to attend to. While mainstream teachers indicated that they wanted to help learners, they did not feel qualified to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in the mainstream class. They also found it difficult to identify learning problems in order to provide the appropriate support. Some indicated the need for training. The lack of

knowledge and training may be the reason for the observation of one respondent that *"there are no learners with learning barriers"* ["Het nie leerders met leerstoornisse nie"] in her/his class.

Still in response to the motivation for results in Figure 5.10, the types of support provided by mainstream teachers were mentioned. These included differentiation, individual support and allowing learners extra time to complete their work. Teachers also reported reading questions and instructions to the learners, as well as providing more assessment opportunities and giving additional activities to these learners. Some teachers provided extra language and mathematics lessons during or after school.

Mainstream teachers reported that they made use of differentiation and simplified the work to the levels of learners experiencing barriers to learning. Differentiation was interpreted and approached in various ways. Some teachers made use of homogeneous group work to support learners to progress at their own pace. They generally grouped learners according to their academic performance and then simplified activities to a more concrete level for learners who struggle. Some of them did not report to group learners, but simplified work for individual learners in the class. In other cases the teacher provided individual support at the teacher's table. However, differentiation was also approached from an inclusive education perspective. Teachers reported taking into account learning styles when activities are planned. Furthermore, lesson planning and assessment were planned in advance on different levels to accommodate all learners in the class. Learning material was adapted and intervention plans are built into lesson plans.

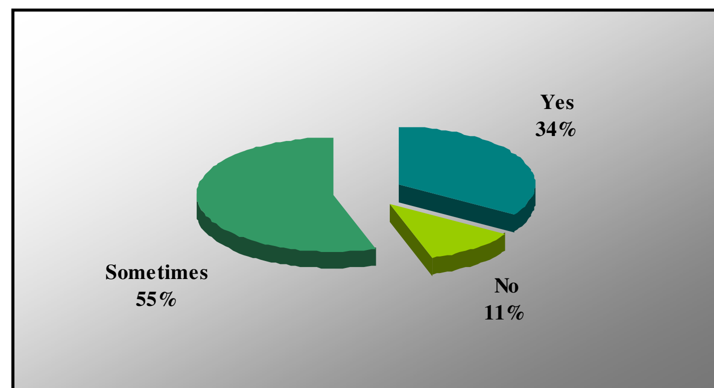


FIGURE 5.11: DO YOUR STRATEGIES BENEFIT THE NEEDS OF ALL THE LEARNERS IN YOUR CLASS? (MST)

(N = 163)

In Figure 5.11 only 34% reported that they believed that their strategies benefited all learners in the classroom, while 55% reported that the learners only benefited from their efforts sometimes, and 11% believed that the strategies they used did not benefit all the learners in their classes.

Although 66% of mainstream teachers (Figure 5.10) provided strategies to support learners experiencing barriers to learning, most of them (55%, as seen in Figure 5.11) felt that learners only sometimes benefited from these strategies.

Mainstream teachers were asked (Questionnaire 2, question 2.7) to motivate their quantitative responses in Figure 5.11. Reasons stated by these respondents show commonalities with the motivations for the answers to Figure 5.10. The themes thus identified include class size, qualification and training, administrative workload, lack of resources and socio-economic circumstances.

According to these qualitative responses to Figure 5.8, class sizes were seen as the most overwhelming reason and suggested that it have an influence on the success of intervention in the mainstream class. Participants reported class sizes of up to 56 learners, which did not always make it possible to attend to those who need additional support. Learners who struggled in class tended to "disappear" in the crowd. Teachers were of the opinion that there were those who absolutely needed individual attention, which was not possible in the large class. The teachers were of the opinion that these learners would be better catered for in a special class.

Participants with multigrade classes (more than one grade in a class, e.g. Grades 2&3 combined) reported that the workload was too much, which did not allow them to differentiate much in these classes.

According to Table 5.4 and Table 5.10a, the mainstream participants in this study had very little training and teaching experience of learning support. Therefore it comes as no surprise that they generally do not consider themselves as competent to provide such support to learners in their classes. They are of the opinion that their limited training causes uncertainty with regard to identifying and addressing the needs of all their learners.

Time available in their busy schedule and administrative load of teachers are also used as reasons why support is not always effective on level one of the learning support model. Mainstream teachers feel that they have a work schedule and learning programme to follow, which does not always allow *time to work with those learners who should actually be in a special class* ["Inklusiewe onderwys vereis dat daar soms leerders in die klas is wat eintlik in 'n spesiale klas

hoort. Met die groot getalle leerders in die klas is daar nie altyd tyd om met diesulkes te werk nie…"].

Some participants are of the opinion that a lack of resources impedes their efforts in addressing the needs of all the learners. This makes it difficult to try out new strategies as learners also react differently every day.

Some participants indicate socio-economic circumstances, very low scholastic levels and lack of parental involvement as factors responsible for a low level of success with intervention. Participants are of the opinion that the multi-levels in their classes are due to many learners who have scholastic backlogs as the result of disadvantaged circumstances. There are learners who struggle and in addition do not receive support at home. It is therefore clear that these teachers locate the problem within the learner, which corresponds with the medical view to learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Participants provided various other opinions as to why the strategies they use to support learners at level one of the learning support model are not always successful. These include that an increase in learners who need additional learning support from one year to the next is observed. Another is of the opinion that some learners do not really benefit in the mainstream and should receive individualised support outside the mainstream class. To illustrate this, one response was that "*some learners have already reached their ceiling*" ["Daar is geen vordering by leerders wat hul plafon bereik het nie"]. This is again evident of a medical model perspective of some teachers.

Only one participant reported on the benefit of having teaching assistants in the class. It was interesting to note that some participants referred to the second level of support in answering this question. They referred to the learning support teacher withdrawal system whereby identified learners are taken out of the classroom for additional support in literacy and/or mathematics.

a) Support from the TST and Assessment Committee

TABLE 5.16: SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Questions support and encouragement	Learning support teachers						
	YES		NO		SOMETIMES		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
The assessment committee provides support to learners regarding alternative assessment	8	21%	14	37%	16	42%	38
There are regular TST meetings where the needs of learners are discussed and recommendations made	28	68%	2	5%	11	27%	41
I get sufficient support from the TST	22	55%	4	10%	14	35%	40
The principal supports and encourages the TST	27	66%	4	10%	10	24%	41

TABLE 5.17: SUPPORT RECEIVED

Support received	Mainstream teachers						
	YES		NO		SOMETIMES		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
The assessment committee provides support to learners regarding alternative assessment	68	44%	44	28%	44	28%	156
There are regular TST meetings where the needs of learners are discussed and recommendations made	124	77%	11	7%	26	16%	161
I get sufficient support from the TST	100	64.6%	12	7.7%	43	27.7%	155
The principal supports and encourages the TST	121	78%	8	5%	26	17%	155

While 44% of mainstream teachers (Table 5.17) report that the assessment committee provides support for learners regarding alternative assessment, only 21% of learning support teachers

(Table 5.16) reports the same. Forty-one percent (41%) of learning support teachers in Table 5.16 report that the assessment committee sometimes provides for such learners. It is further interesting to note in Table 5.16 that 68% of learning support teachers report regular TST meetings, while 77% of mainstream teachers in Table 5.17 report that TST meetings are held regularly. According to Table 5.16, 55% of learning support participants who answered this question are of the opinion that they get regular support from the TST, while 66.6% of mainstream teachers according to Table 5.17 report the same. According to Table 5.16, sixty-six percent (66%) of the learning support teachers report that the principal supports and encourages the TST, while 78% of mainstream participants in Table 5.17 reports the same.

5.2.4.3 Importance of principal's support

a) Responses from learning support teachers:

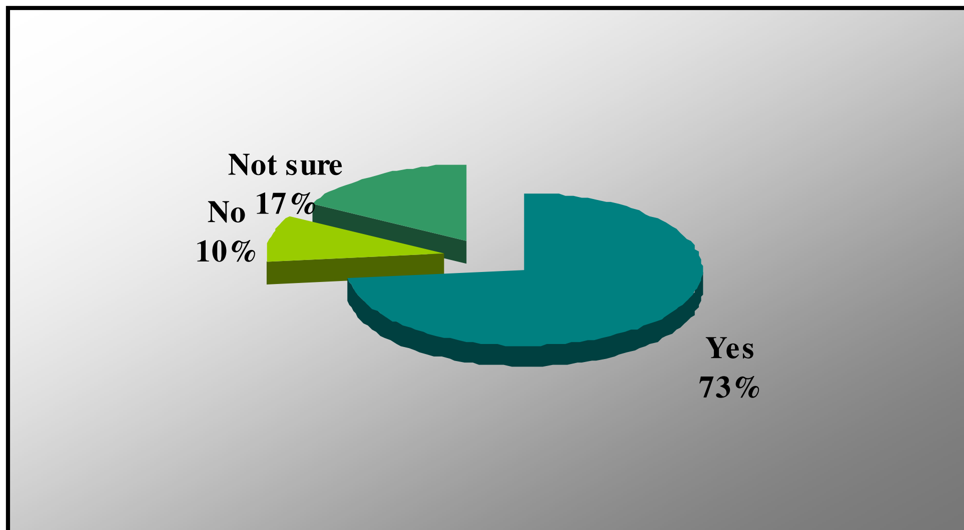


FIGURE 5.12: DO YOU THINK THAT THE PRINCIPAL HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE REGARDING EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF THE TST? (LST)

(N = 41)

b) Responses from mainstream teachers:

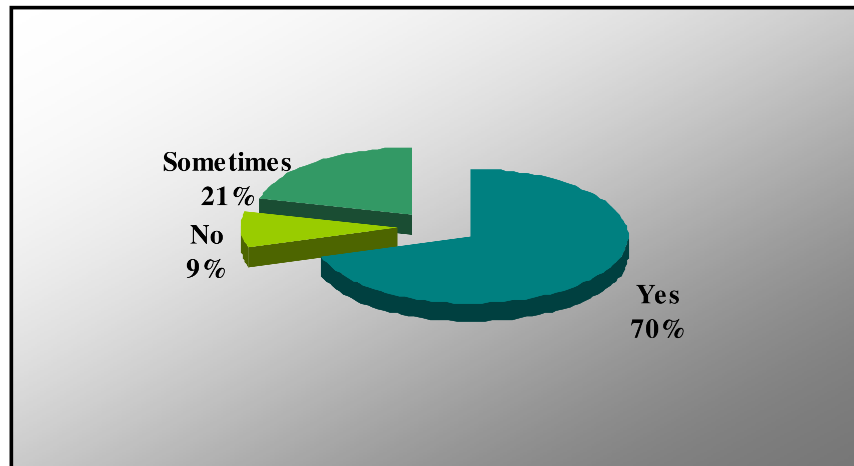


FIGURE 5.13: DO YOU THINK THAT THE PRINCIPAL HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE REGARDING EFFECTIVE SUPPORT PROVIDED TO LEARNERS EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO LEARNING? (MST) (N = 159)

The graph above (Figure 5.12) depicts that 73% of learning support teachers think that the principal has an important role regarding the provision of effective learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning. Seventy percent (70%) of the mainstream participants in Figure 5.13 share this opinion. The percentage of participants who do not think that the principal has a role to play regarding the provision of effective learning support is 10% for learning support teachers (Figure 5.12) and 9% for mainstream teachers respectively (Figure 5.13).

Both mainstream (MST) (Questionnaire 2, question 2.10) and learning support teachers (LST) (Questionnaire1, question 2.11) were asked to motivate their opinions regarding the importance of the role of the principal concerning the provision of learning support. The responses of both groups of teachers reflect personal experiences in the schools where they work. The overarching theme that emerged from the qualitative responses is that the role of the principal is very important in promoting the functioning of the TST and the provision of learning support.

Both mainstream- and learning support teachers are of the opinion that it is important that the principal shows interest, is in control, supports the functioning of the TST and monitors support of learners. All participants, in one way or another, stress the important role the principal plays with regard to learning support provision in the school. They are of the opinion that as authoritative figure in the school, he/she has a marked influence on how any programme is supported and implemented by the rest of the staff. If the principal does not show any interest, the staff may think that it is not that important. It is therefore clear that the principal's interest

level and motivation of the TST has a definite influence on how effective the TST is at the school.

5.2.4.4 Support provided by the learning support teacher

a) Responses from learning support teachers:

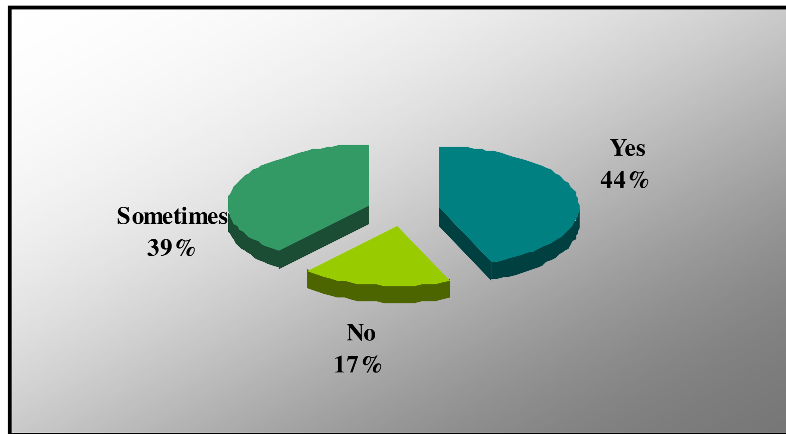


FIGURE 5.14: DO YOU SUPPORT MAINSTREAM TEACHERS IN THEIR CLASSES?

(N = 41)

b) Responses from mainstream teachers:

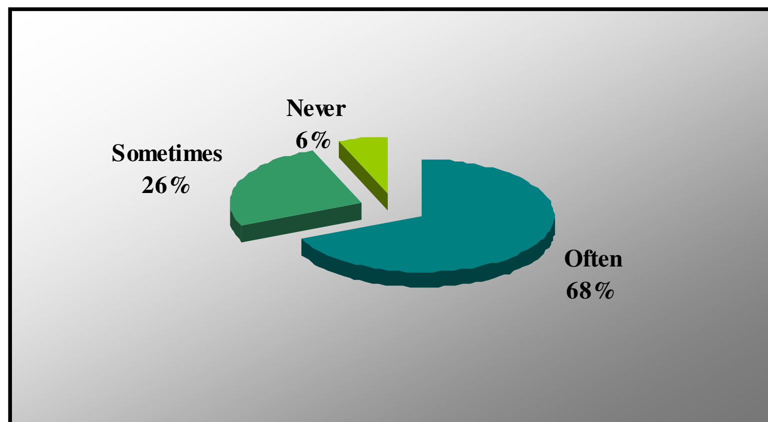


FIGURE 5.15: HOW OFTEN DOES THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER PROVIDE YOU WITH SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN YOUR CLASS?

(N = 163)

The graphs (Figures 5.14 and 5.15) above show some correspondence in the results to the question regarding support provided by the learning support teacher. Most learning support teachers (44%) in Figure 5.14 and mainstream teachers (68%) in Figure 5.15 report that support takes place often, while a minority (17% learning support and 6% mainstream teachers) report that no support is provided to mainstream teachers by learning support teachers.

TABLE 5.18: WHAT PHASE ARE YOU CURRENTLY TEACHING?

(N=148)

Phase	Mainstream teachers	
	Count	%
Foundation Phase	56	40%
Intermediate Phase	78	52%
Senior Phase	58	40%

Table 5.18 indicates a reasonably even distribution among the foundation and senior phases, with 12% more teachers teaching in the intermediate phase. Since most mainstream teachers report good support from the learning support teacher, it can be inferred that this support is generally evenly spread across the phases in the school.

5.2.4.5 Type of support provided to mainstream teachers

With regard to the type of support provided by learning support teachers, the responses of both groups (mainstream [Questionnaire 2, question 2.12] and learning support teachers [Questionnaire 1, question 2.13]) corresponded. However, although this question relates to the first level of support in the mainstream class, it is striking that many of the mainstream participants refer to the support provided at the second level of the learning support model, i.e. withdrawal of small groups for additional support.

Nonetheless, from both groups the main themes that emerged from the open-ended question responses (as strategies of support to mainstream teachers) were that the learning support teacher compiled resource files, and help teachers with programmes and differentiation. Furthermore, they consult with class teachers and parents, and give input at TST meetings. Learning support teachers report that they do diagnostic testing of learners' scholastic ability and handle referrals to special schools.

In the resource files learning support teachers provide the staff with activities, worksheets and other learning material that can be used to support learners who experience learning barriers in their classes. These materials focus on activities that would help the teacher to address the needs of slower learners, such as simple reading passages.

Learning support teachers report that they help mainstream colleagues to develop support programmes and to adapt the work for the learners. This includes showing them how to simplify the work for learners. They also give their professional input at TST meetings regarding the support that teachers can give to learners in their classes. Some report that they present work

sessions where the learning support teachers provide specific guidelines for addressing barriers to learning.

Both groups report that the learning support teacher consults with mainstream teachers and parents on a regular basis, in person and regarding the term reports of learners. She/he also provides the mainstream teacher with a written report on learners' progress. The learning support teacher also gives advice with regard to specific cases, and when asked to do so by mainstream teachers.

The learning support teacher is to inform her own support by diagnostically testing the learners referred to her/him. Alternatively it is done at the request of mainstream teachers. Furthermore, learning support teachers are responsible for handling the referrals of identified learners to special schools. They are also responsible for obtaining external help from the school psychologist, social workers, etc. when necessary.

Although a response from some learning support teachers is that there is not enough time to provide support in the mainstream class, some report on physically providing help in the classroom. It is, however, striking that none of the mainstream participants mentions such support.

Learning support teachers do, however, report that they provide moral and emotional support to mainstream teachers and motivate them.

5.2.4.6 Implementation of recommendations

The following two questions in Questionnaire 1, question 2.14, were asked to ascertain if mainstream teachers recognise and utilise the source of support in the learning support teacher at their school. The open question that followed determined if and how advice and recommendations provided are followed up.

TABLE 5.19: ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Questions on advice and recommendations	Learning support teachers						
	OFTEN		SOMETIMES		NEVER		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Do mainstream teachers ask for your advice and support out of their own?	26	63%	15	37%	---	---	41
Do you follow-up on the implementation of recommendations you make?	20	49%	20	49%	1	2%	41

The data in the Table 5.19 above reveals that although 63% of mainstream teachers seek advice from learning support teachers, the implementation of this advice occurs in only 49% of the cases. Forty-nine percent (49%) of learning support teachers report that they only follow up sometimes, while 2% never follow up on their advice and recommendations.

When asked how they follow up on the advice and recommendations to mainstream teachers in the open question (Questionnaire 1, question 2.14), it was clear that learning support teachers do not all use the same strategies to do so. According to the responses it is clear that learning support teachers do not all use the same strategies to follow up on their advice and recommendations. Follow-up generally occurs through informal conversations with teachers, the principal and parents. Some learning support teachers do class visits and informal monitoring. Others make use of more structured ways to follow up on implementation through weekly reports and discussions with phase and grade leaders. Some regularly monitor forms in the learners' profiles, which include intervention forms.

Learning support teachers generally follow up on the advice and recommendations they provide to mainstream teachers by having informal conversations with teachers, the principal and parents to monitor the learners' progress. In these conversations they can determine whether recommendations were of any help, or not.

Another way to monitor the implementation of support to teachers is to do class visits and informally monitor learners' books. During these visits the learning support teachers would in passing ask the teacher if a learner's parents had been contacted, or if all the forms had been completed for referral.

Learning support teachers also report more structured ways of following up on implementation. They report that they have grade and phase meetings where the learners' progress is discussed. The following is an example of such a response: *We have progress monitoring meetings every*

quater where recommendations can be monitored and addressed ["Ons het vorderingsbesprekings elke kwartaal waar die aanbevelings gemonitor en aangespreek word"].

There are learning support teachers who regularly monitor the learners' profiles to see whether the intervention forms have been completed according to requirements. As one of the respondents stated: C*ontrol intervention pages, section B, in learners' profile*s. *Monitor learners' progress* ["Kontroleer intervensieblad- Afdeling B. Let op na vordering van leerders"].

Some respondents mentioned the importance of a good trust relationship and the need to be tactful in fear of being seen as a policeman. ["Sal taktvol uitvra. Moet baie versigtig wees. Neem lank om goeie vertrouensverhouding op te bou. Wil nie as polisieman gesien word nie"].

5.2.4.7 Operation of mainstream teachers

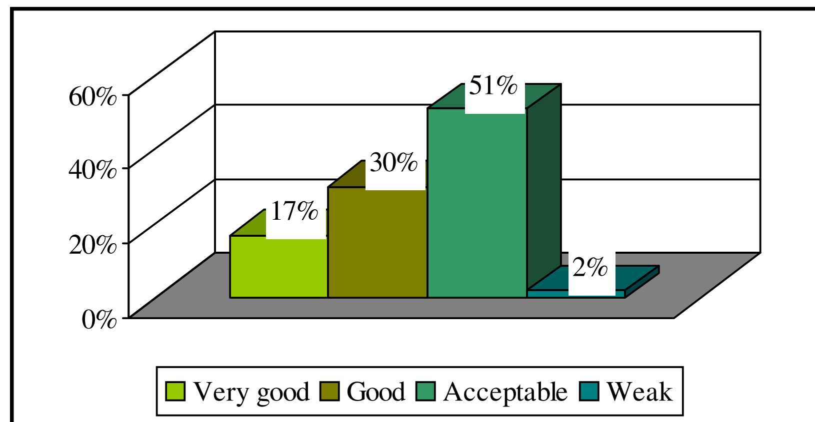


FIGURE 5.16: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE COOPERATION OF THE MAINSTREAM TEACHERS?

(N = 41)

This question in Figure 5.4 was asked to determine opinions of learning support teachers on how they experience the cooperation of mainstream teachers with whom they work. While only 17% report that they receive very good cooperation from mainstream teachers, the majority (51%) experience cooperation as just acceptable. A mere 2% report that the cooperation is poor.

5.2.4.8 Information and training feedback to schools

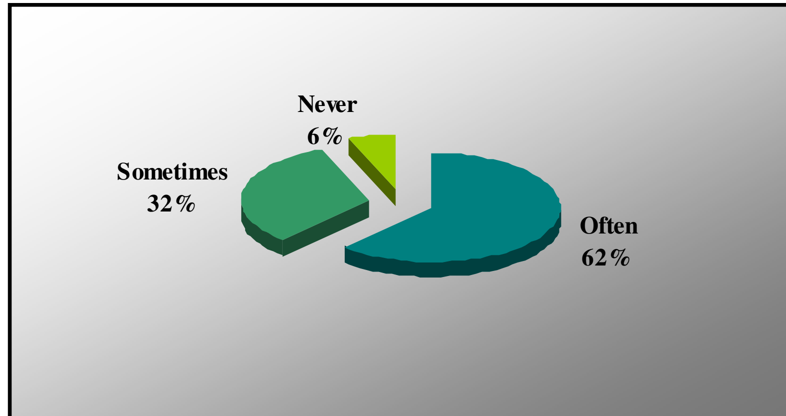


FIGURE 5.17: HOW OFTEN DOES THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER GIVE FEEDBACK OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING HE/SHE HAS RECEIVED?

(N = 160)

The response to Figure 5.17 indicates that 62% of mainstream teachers report that learning support teachers often give feedback to the staff of in-service training they have received. While 32% report that feedback is only given sometimes, 6% report that they never receive any feedback.

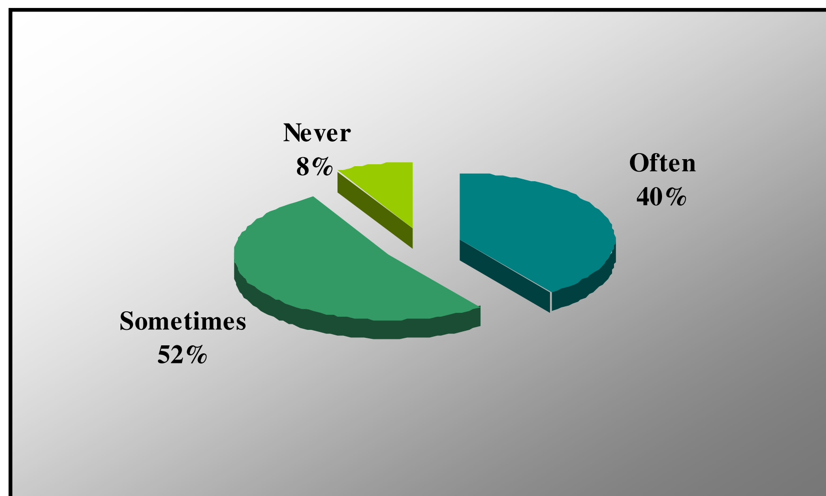


FIGURE 5.18: HOW OFTEN DOES THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EMPOWER THE STAFF REGARDING LEARNERS EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO LEARNING?

(N = 159)

According to Figure 5.18, it is reported by 52% of mainstream participants that the learning support teacher only sometimes gets the opportunity to empower them regarding learners experiencing barriers to learning. Forty percent (40%) reported that the learning support teacher

always gets the opportunity to empower them, while 8% reported that such opportunity is never given.

5.2.5 The second level of learning support provision

5.2.5.1 Number of schools served

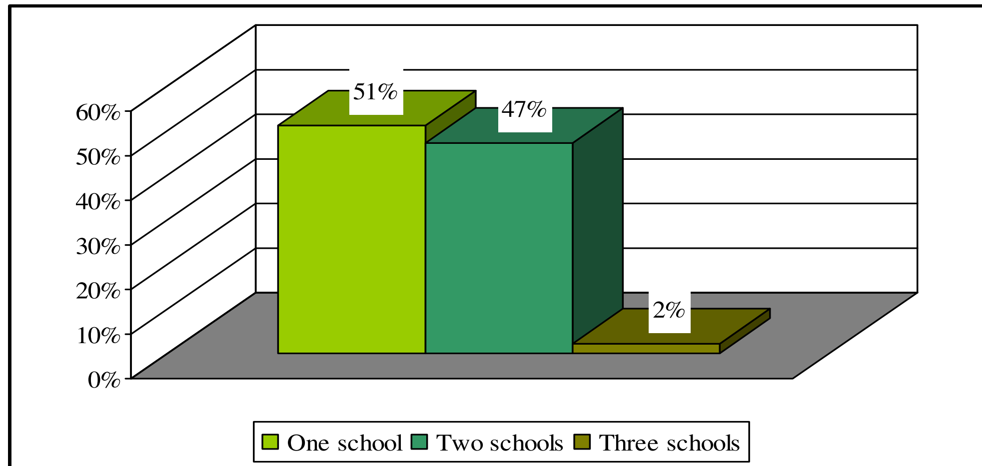


FIGURE 5.19: HOW MANY SCHOOLS DO YOU SERVE?

(N = 41)

According to Figure 5.19, fifty-one percent (51%) of learning support participants serves only one school, while 47% serve two schools and only 2% serve three schools.

5.2.5.2 Influence of number of schools served

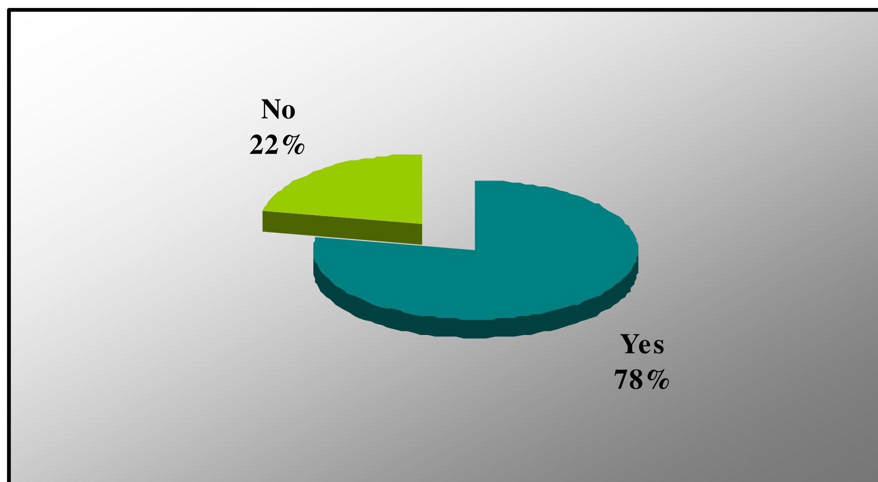


FIGURE 5.20: DO YOU THINK THAT THE SUCCESS OF LEARNING SUPPORT IS INFLUENCED BY HOW MANY SCHOOLS YOU SERVE?

(N = 36)

Figure 5.20 indicates that 78% of the 36 learning support participants who answered this question think that the number of schools they serve influences the success of their learning support.

5.2.5.3 Full-time or itinerant learning support teacher preference

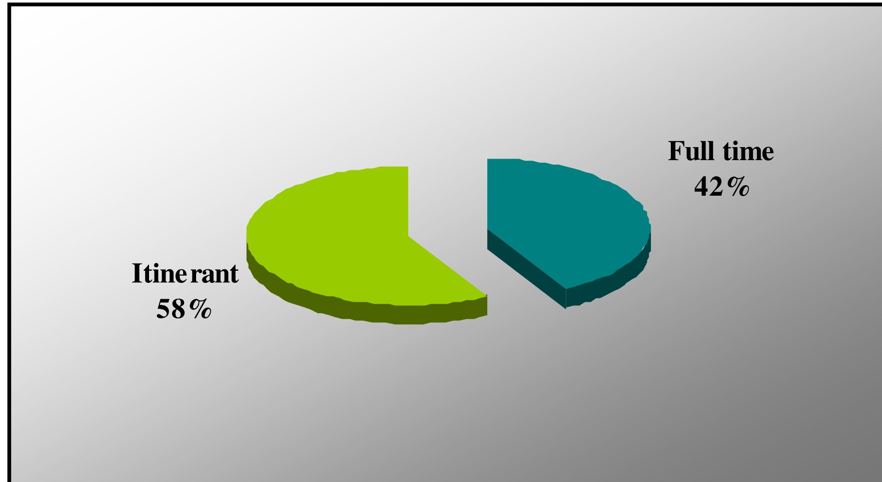


FIGURE 5.21: IS THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER IN YOUR SCHOOL FULL TIME OR ITINERANT?

(N = 16)

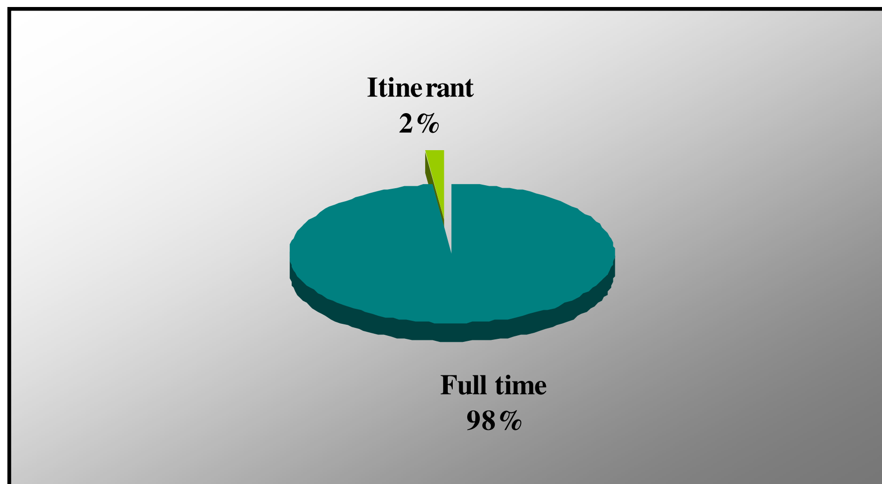


FIGURE 5.22: WOULD YOU PREFER FULL-TIME OR ITINERANT SUPPORT FROM THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER AT YOUR SCHOOL?

(N = 153)

Mainstream teachers who responded to the question depicted in Figure 5.21, reported that 42% have a full-time learning support teacher at their school, while 58% reported that their school has the service of an itinerant learning support teacher. Of the 153 mainstream participants who

answered the question depicted in Figure 5.22, 98% would prefer a full-time learning support teacher at their school.

It is clear that learning support teachers are of the opinion that their service delivery is influenced by the number of schools they serve. When asked to motivate their preference the themes emerging from the open-ended questions (Questionnaire 1, question 2.5) of learning support teachers, were that the need for learning support is too high, ineffective support in mainstream classes and that itinerant service delivery does not allow enough time for effective support. As a consequence most learning support teachers feel that their efforts would have a stronger impact if they had to provide learning support at only one school. This observation corresponds with the 98% of mainstream teachers (Figure 5.22) who would prefer a full-time learning support teacher at their school, as well as the 78% of quantitative responses (Figure 5.20) that indicated that the number of schools they serve have an influence on the success achieved. The following are examples of responses to this question:

Response 1: There are too many learners with reading problems. Between the two schools I serve, there are more than 1000 learners. Too many to be itinerant. ["Te veel kinders met leesprobleme. Tussen my twee skole is daar oor 'n 1000 kinders. Hopeloos te veel om te hanteer"].

Response 2: There are too many learners who need support. I currently work with 140 learners. 100 in one school and 40 in the smaller school. The waitinglist for the bigger school is long. ["Daar is te veel leerders wat hulp nodig het. Ek werk tans met 140 leerders. 100 in een skool en 40 in die kleiner skool. Baie op waglys van groter skool"].

Response 3: *The fact that I serve only one school, learning support is more effective*. ["Omdat ek slegs een skool bedien, kom leerondersteuning tot sy reg"].

Response 4: There is too little support in the class to follow up on my support. There is too little reading done in class to reinforce my little input. ["Daar vind te min ondersteuning in die klas plaas om my werk op te volg/te versterk. Daar word te min gelees en vaslegging in die klas gedoen om my bietjie insette te versterk"].

Response 4: At schools with many learning barriers, there are more learners who need help. Too few days, too little time, not effective support, slow progress of learners ["By die skole waar die 'barriers to learning' groot is, is daar meer kinders wat hulp benodig. Te min dae, te min tyd, nie effektiewe ondersteuning, stadige vordering by leerders"].

5.2.5.4 General way of working:

TABLE 5.20: WHAT IS THE GENERAL WAY OF WORKING?

	Learning support teachers	
	Count	%
Do you have a core group? (N = 33)	8	24%
Do you withdraw learners from the mainstream? (N = 41)	39	95%
Are all the referrals for support done through the TST? (N = 39)	33	85%

In Table 5.20 it is reported that 24% of the learning support teachers still have a core group of learners who need a high level of learning support. This group, remaining with the learning support teachers for instruction, either for the whole day, or for the biggest part of the school day, is referred to as a core group. In the pre-inclusion era this would be referred to as a special or adaptation class. According to the table above (5.20), 95% of the respondents withdraw learners from the mainstream for additional support at level two of the learning support model. However, only 85% report that all the learners they support at level two, are referred through the TST.

5.2.5.5 Availability of adequate space

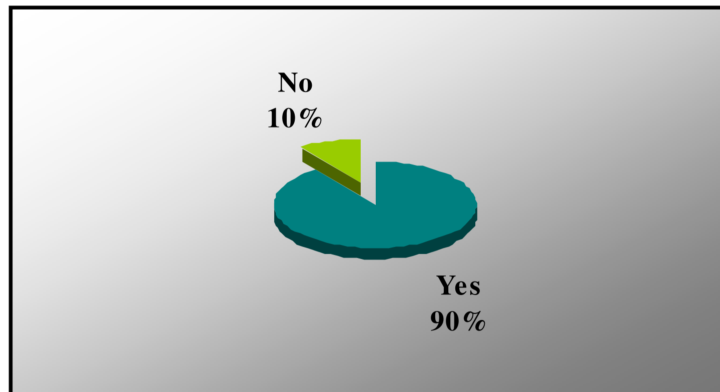


FIGURE 5.23: DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE ADEQUATE SPACE FOR THE WITHDRAWAL AND TEACHING OF SMALL GROUPS?

(N = 41)

Figure 5.23 depicts that only 10% of the learning support participants do not to have adequate space for the withdrawal of learners at level two of the learning support model. Ninety percent (90%) of the participants answered “yes” to this question.

5.2.5.6 Grades benefiting from withdrawal on level two:

TABLE 5.21: WHAT GROUPS DO YOU CURRENTLY TEACH?

(N = 39)

Groups	Learning support teachers	
	Count	%
Grades 1-7	16	41%
Grades 2-7	4	10%
Grades 1-3 (Foundation Phase only)	10	27%
Grades 2-5	1	2%
Grades 4-6 (Intermediate Phase only)	1	2%
Grades 1-6 (Foundation and Intermediate Phase)	5	13%
Other	2	5%
TOTAL	39	100%

Learning support teachers are appointed at some primary schools (see 3.6; Chapter 3). According to Table 5.21 above, most (41%) learning support teachers withdraw groups of learners from Grades 1-7. Twenty-seven percent (27%) report that they only withdraw learners in the Foundation Phase, i.e. Grades 1-3. The responses reveal that 13% withdraw learners from Grades 4-6 (Intermediate Phase) only, and 10% withdraw learners from Grades 2-7.

5.2.5.7 Focus of support on level two:

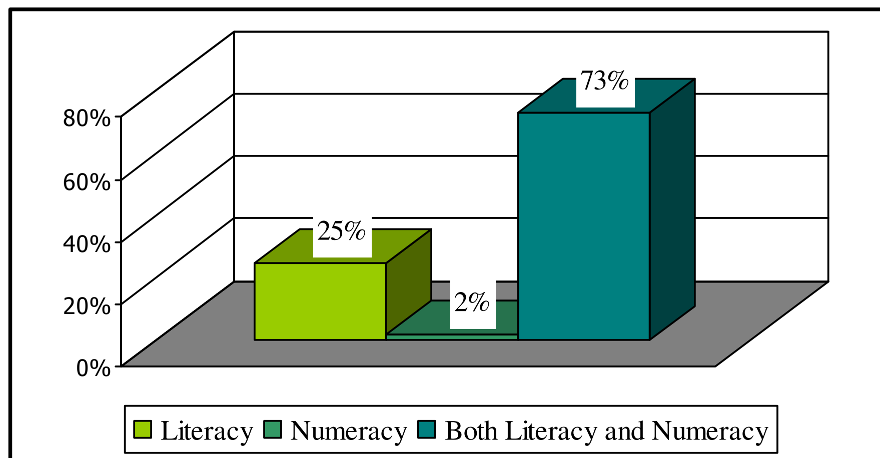


FIGURE 5.24: WHAT IS YOUR FOCUS IN LEARNING SUPPORT?

(N = 41)

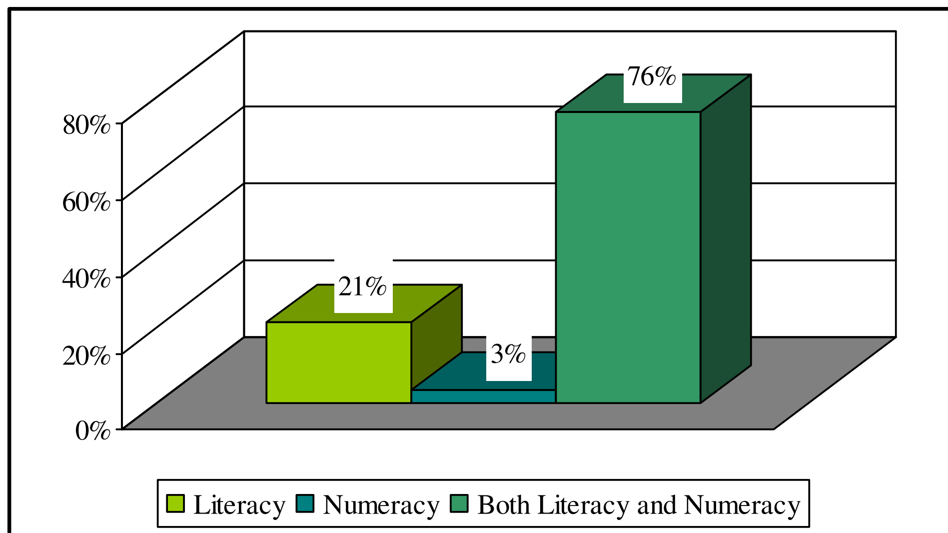


FIGURE 5.25: LEARNERS RECEIVE SUPPORT IN…?

(N=160)

The quantitative results (Figure 5.24 & 5.25) to this question reveal a close correlation between learning support and mainstream teachers. Most (73%) of the learning support teachers and most mainstream teachers (76%) reported a focus on both literacy and numeracy. Both learning support (25%) and mainstream participants (21%) said that support is focused on literacy only, while 2% and 3% respectively report a support focus on numeracy only.

5.2.5.8 Experience of success

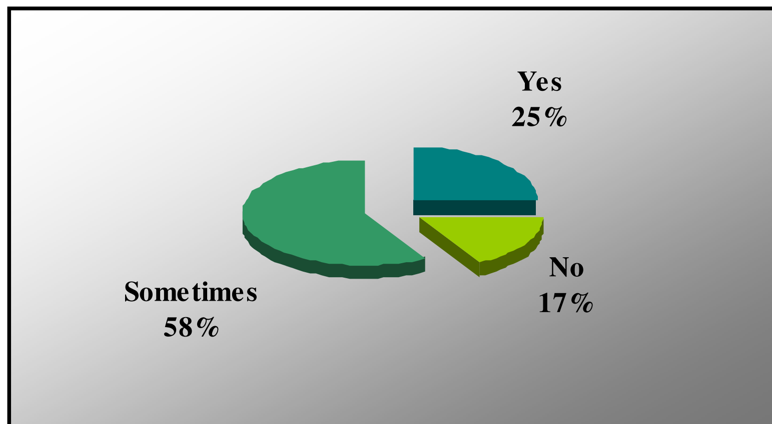


FIGURE 5.26: DO YOU THINK THAT THESE LEARNERS ALSO EXPERIENCE SUCCESS IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASS? (LST)

(N = 40)

According to Figure 5.26, only 25% learning support participants think that learners also experience success in the mainstream class. While 58% say that success is only experienced sometimes, only 17% do not think that learners experience success in the mainstream class.

Learning support participants were asked (Questionnaire 1, question 2.23) to motivate their answers depicted in Figure 5.26. The following themes were identified: large classes, teachers' lack of patience and time, intellectual capacity of learners, administrative load and little differentiation, the low levels of learners' self-confidence and socio-economic circumstances. The following are examples of such responses:

> Respondent 1*: Tasks are not differentiated; large classes; a lot of admin – these learners cannot reach their full potential in the mainstream class.* ["Take word nie gedifferensieer nie; groot klasse; baie admin – hierdie leerders kan nie hulle volle potensiaal in 'n hoofstroomklas bereik nie"].

> Respondent 18*: Teachers in the mainstream don't always have the patience or time to only attend to specific learners.* ["Opvoeders in hoofstroom het nie altyd geduld of tyd om net aan spesifieke leerders aandag te gee nie"].

> Respondent 36*: Some learners really have a limited intellectual capacity and a chance for true success is small.* ["Sommige van hierdie leerders beskik regtig oor beperkte intellektuele vermoëns en kanse op ware sukses is maar skraal"].

> Respondent 27*: Disappears in class setting. Confidence is not built, belittled among classmates.* ["Verdwyn in klasopset. Selfvertroue word nie opgebou nie, afgekraak tussen ander klasmaats"].

> Respondent 29*: It depends on the type of learning disability, or type of learning barrier (socio-economic) etc. Some barriers can be fixed. Some cant'.* [original response in English].

5.2.5.9 Progress with support provided:

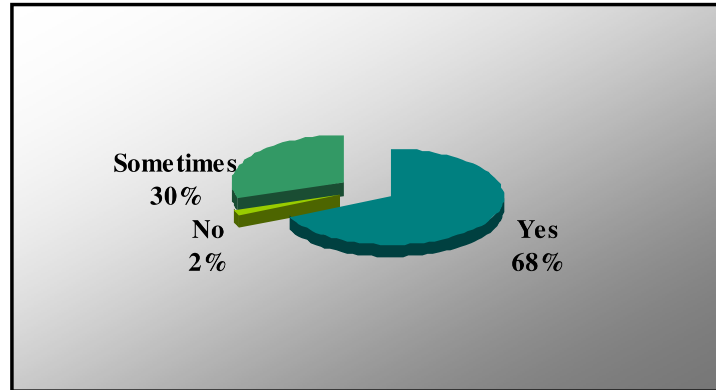


FIGURE 5.27: DO THE LEARNERS THAT YOU SUPPORT SHOW ANY PROGRESS? (LST) (N = 41)

In Figure 5.27 there are 68% of learning support participants who indicate that learners show progress with additional support. However, 30% say that progress can be reported only sometimes, while only 2% say that there is no progress.

5.2.5.10 Reasons for progress or lack thereof

The content analysis (Questionnaire 1, question 2.20) shows that the reasons given by learning support teachers for the minimal (sometimes) improvement of academic performance vary. The following are examples of responses received from learning support teachers:

> Respondent 26*: Some learners' backlogs are too big. Learners who are severely mentally challenged show no improvement.* ["Sommige leerders se agterstand is te groot om in te haal. Leerders wat verstandelik erg gestremd is, toon ook geen vordering"].

> Respondent 22*: All learners do not have the same drive. Some progress well. Others show little progress. Some don't progress at all.* ["Alle leerders nie ewe gedrewe nie. Sommige vorder fluks. Ander vorder min. Sommige vorder glad nie"].

> Respondent 29*: As itinerant support I have little time. I make very little difference in academic subjects but I do feel that I make a difference regarding the emotional level of learners as I try to build them from within!.* ["Daar is te min tyd as rondreisende ondersteuning. Ek maak maar min verskil met akademiese vlakke, maar ek voel 'n groot verskil is gemaak aan die emosionele vlak van die kinders omdat ek hulle van binne probeer opbou!"].

TABLE 5.22: WITHDRAWING OF LEARNERS

Questions on withdrawing	Mainstream teachers						
	YES		NO		SOMETIMES		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Does the learning support teacher withdraw learners from your class for extra support?	123	76%	30	19%	9	5%	162
Does this support make any difference in the progress of the learners?	88	63%	11	8%	41	29%	140
Are all the learners that are withdrawn referred by the TST to the learning support teacher?	94	66%	33	23%	16	11%	143

Figure 5.26 above shows that 68% of learning support teachers are of the opinion that the learners they withdraw, show progress. This corresponds well with the opinion of mainstream teachers in Table 5.22, of whom 63% of the 123 whose learners are withdrawn, report that the support of the learning support teacher makes a positive difference in the learners' progress. According to Figure 5.27, thirty percent (30%) of the learning support teachers and 29% of mainstream respondents (Table 5.22) believe that these learners only show progress sometimes, while 2% of the learning support teachers (Figure 5.27) and 8% of the mainstream teachers (Table 5.22) are of the opinion that there is no progress attributed to their support at the second level of the learning support model.

Of the 143 mainstream teachers who responded to the question (Table 5.22) whether all learners are referred through the TST, only 66% answered "yes". Twenty-three percent (23%) said "no" and 11% reported that referral by the TST only happens "sometimes".

Respondents were asked (Questionnaire 2, question 2.18) to provide reasons why learners are not referred through the TST. The following reasons emerged as themes to this open-ended question: There are too many learners who need additional support and the learning support teacher's groups are full, or the learning support teacher is itinerant. Other reasons given are that the mainstream teachers are not competent to help the learners and that learners from Intermediate and Senior Phases are not withdrawn for additional support. In some cases where the TST does not function, the class teachers take it upon themselves to refer the learners. Mainstream respondent 63 states that the school decided to refer learners in the Foundation Phase to the learning support teacher only because of the big need, and that she also serves other schools. The

learning support teacher in this case, however, is involved by supporting the teachers ["Die OLSO opvoeder is fisies betrokke by grade 1-3. As gevolg van ons skool se groot leerdertal en die feit dat sy ander skole ook bedien bemoeilik haar taak om die senior fase ook te ondersteun. Sy is egter aktief betrokke by die ondersteuning van die teikenopvoeders in die fases"].

TABLE 5.23: WHAT IS YOUR OPINION REGARDING THE SUPPORT LEARNERS RECEIVE FROM THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER?

(N = 156)

Type of study	Mainstream teachers	
	Count	%
Learners who receive support show a general improvement in academic performance	68	43.7%
There is a minimal improvement in academic performance	84	53.8%
It seems as if the support does not result in any academic improvement	4	2.5%
Total	156	100%

The responses from Table 5.23 shows an inconsistency with the data retrieved from the second question in Table 5.22. According to the responses in Table 5.23 the majority of learning support teachers (58%) are of the opinion that learners who experience success with withdrawal only sometimes have the same experience in the mainstream class. This directly corresponds with the observation of mainstream teachers (Table 5.23), of whom 53.8% are of the opinion that the progress is minimal. However, 25% of the learning support participants (Figure 5.26) and 43.7% mainstream participants (Table 5.23) think that these learners show a general improvement in academic performance. Only 17% learning support (Figure 5.26) and 2.5% mainstream participants (Table 5.23) are of the opinion that learners do not experience success in the mainstream class.

5.2.5.11 Measurement of scholastic improvement

In an open-ended question (Questionnaire1, question2.21) learning support teachers were asked how they measured scholastic improvement of learners they withdraw for additional support on level two of the learning support model. The following themes that were identified include that they generally make use of formal continuous assessment and diagnostic testing to inform their own planning, or through informal observations of learners' schoolbooks. Some of the responses were:

Respondent 1*: Progress is measured through demonstrated accomplishment of learners in assessment (continuous), appropriate tests, oral questions and answers.* ["Vordering word gemeet deur bewese prestasie van elke leerders d.m.v assessering (deurlopend; toepaslike toetsies; mondelinge vrae en antwoorde"].

Respondent 9*: I believe in diagnostic evaluations (e.g. writing a paragraph about a picture). The most valuable is my interaction with the learners. I only use formal assessments (tests) where necessary.* ["Ek glo in diagnostiese evaluerings (bv. Skryf paragraaf oor prent) en observasies. Die waardevolste aanduiders is my interaksie met die kinders. Ek gebruik slegs formele assessering (toetsings) waar nodig"].

Respondent 31*: My own observations, assessment, reactions of learners and feedback from the class teacher.* ["My eie waarneming, assessering, reaksie van leerders, terugvoering van klasopvoeders"].

5.2.5.12 Termination of support at level two

When learning support teachers were asked when support on the second level of the model is stopped, the following themes emerged from their answers to this open-ended question (Questionnaire1, question 2.24):

1. It generally seems that learning support on level two is terminated when learners can cope with work on the grade level and demonstrate learning outcomes for that specific grade as seen in the following examples:

   Respondent 5*: When learners have reached the outcomes of the specific grade.* ["Wanneer leerders die uitkomste van die betrokke graad bereik"].

   Respondent 11*: When learners can work on the level of the class. When learners also show progress in their reading and phonics. Also when learners start reading with comprehension.* ["Wanneer leerders op die vlak van die klas kan begin werk. Wanneer leerlinge in hulle lees en klanke ook goeie vordering toon. Ook wanneer leerlinge met begrip begin te lees"].

2. After a certain time-frame of 2-3 years, whether the learner progresses or not, as seen in the following responses:

   Respondent 8*: After 2 years of learning support or when the learners achieved the learners conform to the requirements of the assessment standards for the specific grade.* ["Na 2 jaar leerondersteuning of as die leerder voldoen aan eise van ASS'e vir graad"].

Respondent 10*: When the teacher feels that there is enough progress or when it is clear that the backlog is too big* ["Wanneer onderwyser voel die leerder het voldoende gevorder of wanneer dit duidelik is dat agterstande te groot is vir tempo van vordering"].

3. Another reason for the termination of this level of support is positive feedback from the mainstream teacher, or when a learner leaves the school or refuses the support of the learning support teacher, e.g.:

Respondent 20*: When the teacher mentions it, I agree and the codes [report] are good. Have to be certain.* ["Wanneer opvoeder dit noem, ek saam stem, as kodes goed is. Moet doodseker wees"].

Respondent 31*: When a learner leaves the school, sometimes he does not give his cooperation at all. When the class teacher and I agree that classes should be terminated.* ["As leerder skool verlaat, soms as hy geensins wil saam werk nie. As ek en die opvoeder meen lesse kan gestaak word"].

5.2.5.13 Continued support in the mainstream class

The following graph (Figure 5.28) depicts the opinions of learning support teachers, as to whether they think that support is continued in the mainstream class after termination of support on level two of the model.

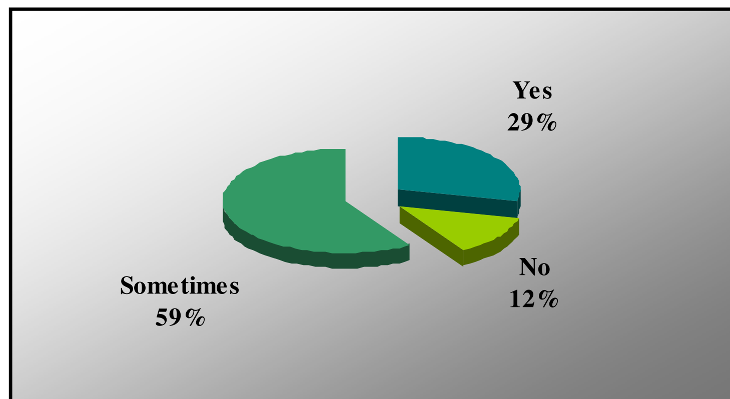


FIGURE 5.28: DOES THE MAINSTREAM TEACHER CONTINUE SUPPORTING LEARNERS WHO ARE NO LONGER WITHDRAWN?

(N = 41)

Only 29% of the 41 respondents who answered this question are of the opinion that the mainstream teacher supports learners who are no longer withdrawn. The majority (59%) report that these learners are only supported sometimes, while 12% are of the opinion that they get no further support from the mainstream teacher.

The reasons given (Questionnaire1, question 2.26) by the majority of those who are of the opinion that learners only sometimes receive continued support in the mainstream, correlates with the themes derived for support provided only sometimes on level one (5.2.6.6), as discussed earlier. These include large classes, time available, admin/workload and qualifications. It is also indicated that at the same school some teachers do provide continued support, while others do not, or only provide support sometimes. The following responses are examples of the opinions of learning support teachers:

> Respondent 3*: Some teachers continue with support in the class while others don't. Apparently it is too much effort and extra planning.* ["Sommige opvoeders gaan voort met ondersteuning in klasverband. Ander doen dit egter nie. Skynbaar te veel moeite en ekstra beplanning"].

> Respondent 9*: Some teachers will attend to minor problems. Others are just not interested because they say its too much work or they pretend that there is nothing wrong with the child. They even make up lies and say that the child did not do the work / book given away* ["Sommige opvoeders sal aandag gee aan klein uitvalle wat leerder nog toon. Ander stel net nie belang nie, want hulle sê dis te veel werk of hulle maak of die kind niks makeer nie. Hulle maak selfs leuens op en sê die kind het nie die werk gedoen nie / boek weg gegee"].

> Respondent 14*: Teachers are overloaded with lots of work and large classes. No extra time left.* ["Opvoeder is oorlaai met baie werk en groot klasse. Nie ekstra tyd oor"].

While this is the case for some teachers, it is reported that some other teachers do incredible work in supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning as illustrated in the following responses:

> Respondent 1*: Learners are identified for a special school in or before Grade 7. There are regular discussions about learners' progress; also discussions with learners. Grade 7 teachers do incredible work – mathematics, assignments; some of them have learning support qualifications* ["Leerders is reeds in/voor gr.7 geïdentifiseer vir 'n spesiale skool. Gesprekke oor leerders se vordering vind gereeld plaas; ook gesprekke met leerders. Graad 7 hoofstroomopvoeders doen ongelooflike werk – wiskunde en take; van hulle beskik oor leerondersteuningskwalifikasies"].

> Respondent 22*: Mainstream teachers will take learners who still struggle for extra lessons after school* ["Hoofstroomopvoeders sal leerlinge wat nog sukkel namiddae vir ekstra klasse neem"].

5.2.5.14 Support for the mainstream teacher

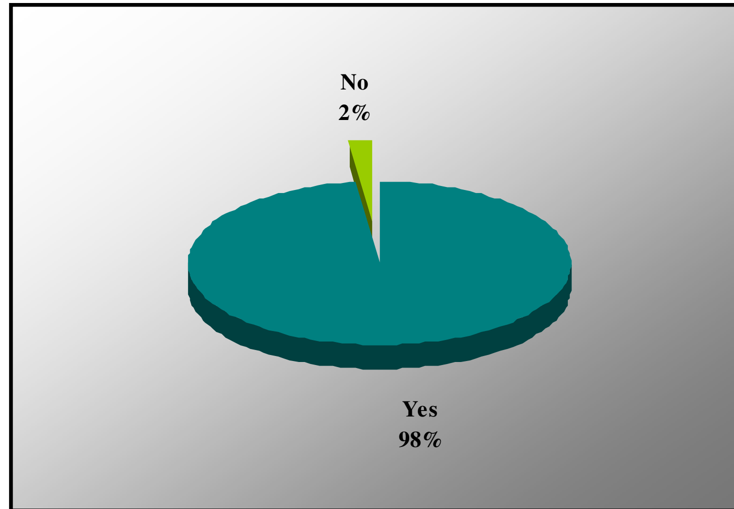


FIGURE 5.29: DO YOU SUPPORT TEACHERS TO CONTINUE SUPPORT IN THE CLASS?

(N = 40)

Figure 5.29 shows the response of learning support teachers when asked if they support the mainstream teachers to continue supporting learners who are no longer withdrawn.

Irrespective of the data revealed in Figure 5.28 and the qualitative responses following it, 98% (Figure 5.29) of learning support participants indicates that they do support mainstream teachers to pursue support in class. This response can be verified with data revealed previously in Figure 5.15, stating that 68% of the mainstream teachers indicate that they often get support from the learning support teacher.

The support provided to the class teacher by the learning support teacher, regarding those learners who specifically no longer receive level two support, correlates with support provided in general for level one support (5.2.4.2). The themes identified as support given to teachers at this level include the adaptation of the curriculum and the development of special programmes. Learning support teachers also report providing teachers with alternative learning material, including programmes with worksheets, sources with remedial activities and having a resource file available. Some of the participants provide the mainstream teacher with advice, consult with parents and arrange for assessment. One respondent says that they do demonstration lessons. Another respondent reports that she/he repetitively does diagnostic testing.

The following response to question 2.28 (Questionnaire 1) comprehensively incorporates the major themes:

Respondent 1*: I adapt the curriculum; compile relevant programmes and material, cooperative learning, support parents, arrange for learners to be tested to identify specific areas of need.* [“Pas die kurrikulum aan; stel relevante programme en materiaal saam; meewerkende onderrig; ondersteun ouers; reël ook dat leerders getoets word om spesifieke uitvalle te identifiseer en as sodanig aan te spreek”].

5.2.5.15 Collaborative planning

According to Figure 5.30 below, only 12% of learning support teachers plan with their mainstream colleagues, and 49% only sometimes.

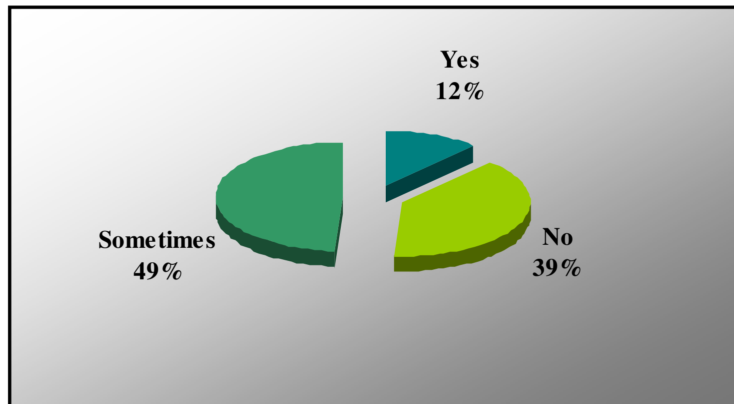


FIGURE 5.30: DO YOU PLAN WITH THE MAINSTREAM TEACHERS?

(N = 41)

The major themes that emerged from the responses to the open-ended questions (Questionnaire 1, question 2.30) that support the quantitative data in Figure 5.30 include:

Learning support teachers who are working in two or more schools find it difficult to plan with their mainstream colleagues. They do, however, report that they try to plan according to the contexts used in the mainstream class. Some learning support participants discuss the gaps in learners’ learning with the mainstream teachers and plan accordingly. Another reason for not planning with mainstream colleagues is that they do not work on the level of the learners. Mainstream teachers’ work through the learning outcomes and assessment standards more quickly. One of the participants is of the opinion that it is easier to plan with foundation phase teachers than with intermediate and senior phase teachers, while another reports to prefer planning with other learning support teachers. There is also the opinion that mainstream teachers should ask for help in planning for learners experiencing barriers to learning. It is also reported that mainstream teachers plan on their own, using tips and advice from the learning support teacher. The following are examples of these responses:

Respondent 3*: Since I am itinerant it is difficult to plan with the mainstream because planning is usually done when I'm not at the particular school* ["Aangesien ek rondreisend is, is dit moeilik om saam met hoofstroomopvoeders te beplan omdat beplanning gewoonlik geskied op dae wanneer ek nie by die betrokke skool is nie"].

Respondent 20*:Our concepts correspond, and I find out what they do during the year and what they would like me to focus on, but I work much slower* ["Ons konsepte stem ooreen, en ek sal wel by hulle uitvind gedurende die jaar waaraan hul wil hê ek moet aandag gee, maar ek werk baie stadiger"].

Respondent 19*: They plan alone – I do however give advice. Some feel that the learner should not be treated separately* ["Hulle beplan self – gee wel wenke. Sommige glo dat die kind nie apart behandel moet word nie"].

5.2.6 The third and fourth levels of support

5.2.6.1 Introduction

Although the focus of this evaluation is on levels one and two of the learning support model, it is recognised that the activities on levels three and four have direct consequences for level one and two. For this reason the opinions regarding support on level three and four were sought from both mainstream and learning support teachers in the questionnaires.

5.2.6.2 Support for learners on waiting lists

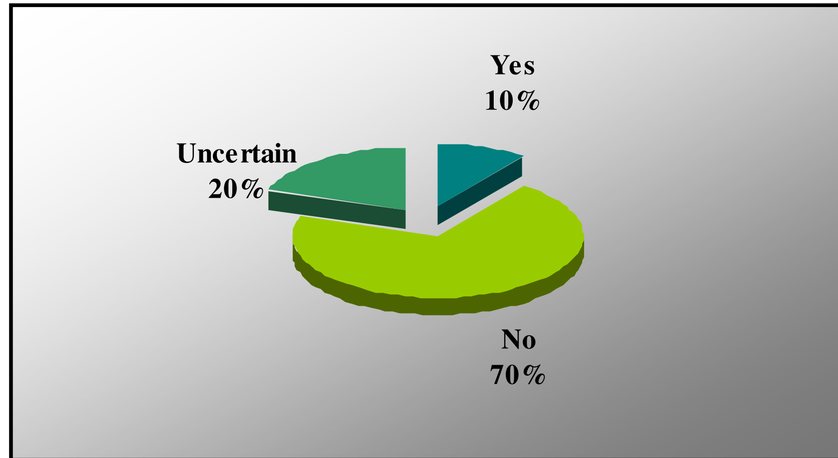
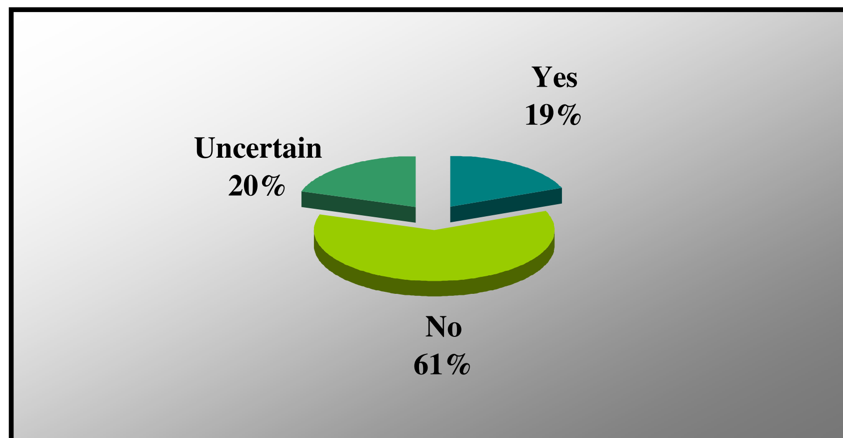


FIGURE 5.31: DO YOU THINK THAT THERE IS ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS ON THE WAITING LISTS OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS OR ELSEN UNITS? (LST)



(N = 41)

FIGURE 5.32: DO YOU THINK THAT THERE IS ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS ON THE WAITING LISTS OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS OR ELSEN UNITS? (MST)

(N= 154)

The graphic responses above were elicited regarding support to learners whose names are on a waiting list of a special school.

There is a significant correspondence between the responses from both groups. An overwhelming response from both learning support (70%) (Figure 5.31) and mainstream participants (61%) (Figure 5.32) indicates a lack of adequate support for learners that qualify for support on level three of the learning support model. Ten percent (10%) of learning support participants in Figure 5.31 and 19% of mainstream participants in Figure 5.32 are of the opinion that there is adequate support for these learners, while 20% of both groups are uncertain.

There is a general consensus among learning support teachers that not enough is done to provide support for those learners who qualify for level three support in the learning support model. The major themes identified from the qualitative responses of both groups (Questionnaire 1, question 2.33 and Questionnaire 2, question 2.22) as reasons for the quantitative responses, are that learners tend to be left to their own fate, special schools are full and too far away and mainstream teachers lack qualifications and training regarding barriers to learning. Following are some of the responses captured by the themes:

> LST Respondent 16*: Many learners who are on the waiting lists for too long tend to drop out. Accommodation in special schools is limited* ["Baie leerders is te lank op waglys, sodoende verlaat hulle die skool/'drop out'. Spesiale skole se akkommodasie is beperk"].

> MST Respondent 130*: The teachers are not trained to support learners effectively. They need special attention.* ["Die opvoeders is nie opgelei om aan die leerders genoegsame hulp en ondersteuning te bied nie. Hulle agterstande en vordering het spesiale aandag nodig"].

> LST Respondent 21*: Schools are far, financial problems, transport* ["Skole is ver, finansiële probleme, vervoer"].

> MST Respondent 62*: Special schools must be brought back and more must be built. Learners who urgently need help wait too long for placement, if it happens* ["Spesiale skole moet terug gebring word en meer moet gebou word. Leerders wat hulp dringend nodig het, wag te lank om geplaas te word, indien dit gebeur"].

> LST Respondent 25*: Mainstream teachers do not feel equipped en that it someone else's responsibility* ["Opvoeders voel hulle is nie opgelei nie en voel dis iemand anders se verantwoordelikheid"].

It is clear that many of the mainstream respondents agree with the comments made by learning support teachers above. However, they also feel that "learners get lost in the mainstream and just drift along". Some suggest that a full-time learning support teacher might alleviate the problem while another suggests two learning support teachers, one for the Foundation Phase and one for the Intermediate and Senior Phase. One respondent is of the opinion that there are far too many learners who under-achieve academically because learners are promoted with support. While some teachers try to help these learners, many do not feel confident enough or equipped to provide specialist support. Although schools are aware of long waiting lists at special schools, some respondents report that a lot of effort is put into establishing contact with parents and

completing the appropriate documentation. The class teachers work closely with the learning support teacher in this regard. On the other hand some parents refuse permission to apply for special school placement, or financial constraints and distances from special schools hinder the process.

a) Confidence and competence to support level three and four needs

The following questions were asked to determine the levels of confidence of both learning support and mainstream teachers to support learners with serious barriers to learning.

TABLE 5.24: SELF PERCEIVED CONFIDENCE OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

Questions on confidenc	Learning support teachers						
	YES		NO		UNCERTAIN		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
I have adequate confidence to support learners with serious barriers to learning.	30	75%	3	7.5%	7	17.5%	40
I have adequate confidence to support mainstream teachers who support learners on the waiting lists of special schools	31	77.5%	1	2.5%	8	20%	40

TABLE 5.25: SELF PERCEIVED CONFIDENCE OF MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

Questions on IEP`s	Mainstream teachers						
	YES		NO		SOMETIMES		TOTAL
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
I have adequate confidence to support learners experiencing serious barriers to learning in my class.	59	38%	35	23%	60	39%	154
I can develop an individual education plan (IEP)	41	28%	49	33%	58	39%	148
The learning support teacher helped me to develop an IEP for a learner	45	31%	76	52%	25	17%	146
The TST is responsible for developing IEPs	60	42%	23	16%	60	42%	143

According to Table 5.24 a significantly high percentage of learning support participants feel confident enough to support learners experiencing serious barriers to learning, as well as helping

support teachers to do the same. However, 17.5% were uncertain about their own ability to support these learners and 20% were uncertain about their ability to support teachers. While 38% of mainstream participants (Table 5.25) feel confident enough to support learners who experience serious barriers to learning, only 28% report to be able to develop individual education plans. Fifty-two percent (52%) report that they do not receive help from the learning support teacher to develop an IEP, while 42% are of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the TST to develop such plans.

When learning support teachers were asked how they support mainstream teachers to address serious barriers to learning in their classes, the following themes were identified:

Some learning support teachers report to help teachers to develop an IEP, others say that they do it themselves and give it to the teachers. They provide practical help and support. One respondent reports that these learners are placed in a core group (level 3) while another says that they are withdrawn in a small group more often and for longer periods, or supported individually. One participant reports to emphasise keywords, enlarge question papers, provide study buddies and do alternative assessment for these learners. Besides working on the learners' level, some participants say that they give a lot of love, attention and support to promote the experience of success. Some seek external help like getting the school psychologist to test the learners and try to get them into a special school. Some report to have discussions and counselling sessions with parents, giving them advice.

The content analysis of the reasons provided by learning support teachers for the strategies they apply, reveal various responses. Nonetheless, many of the participants are of the opinion that these learners generally have a low level of self worth and therefore they want them to enjoy school and feel that they can also achieve success, they build their self-confidence. One participant boldly reports that if she/he takes the learners out of the class, the mainstream teachers complain less. Another participant feels that it is her/his God-given responsibility to help in reducing barriers to learning. One participant is of the opinion that it is a risk supporting these learners, since the school has no special services, such as therapy.

5.2.6.3 Support from district level

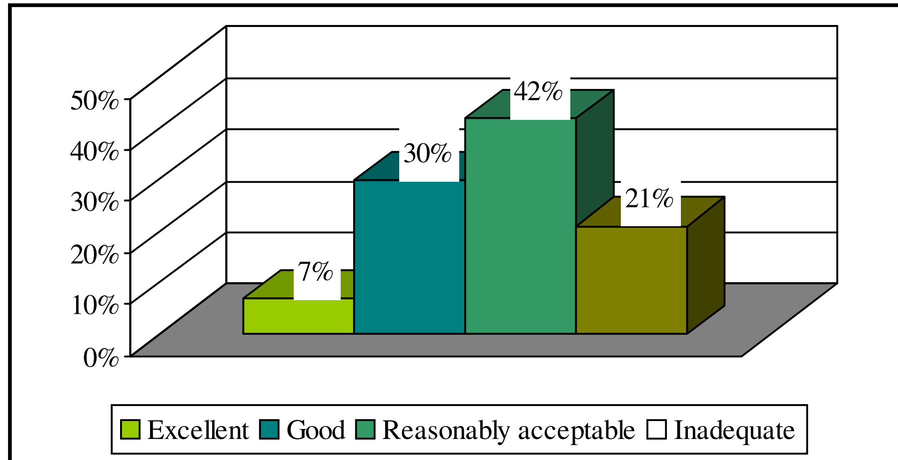


FIGURE 5.33: HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE THE SUPPORT OF THE MULTI-FUNCTIONAL TEAM AT YOUR SCHOOL?

(N = 159)

Figure 5.33 shows that most (42%) mainstream teachers experience the support they get from the multifunctional team of the district only as reasonably acceptable, and 21% feel that it is inadequate. Thirty percent (30%) report to have good support from this team while only 7% are willing to say that they receive excellent support.

Varied reactions were elicited from mainstream participants as they motivated the data portrayed in Figure 5.33. The two major themes that emerged were:

1. Most of the mainstream participants are of the opinion that although the multifunctional team visits them on a regular basis (2-3 times per year), it is too seldom and not always very constructive. The participant's criticism varies from making remarks about documentation not being in order and not giving advice to too little or no follow-up. Some are of the opinion that the learner is not central to recommendations and that teachers are only criticised. One person responds that they are sometimes not in touch with a learner's ability. Another feels that there is no support; only monitoring and moderation take place. One participant feels that not enough time is spent on the development of teachers regarding curriculum planning and assessment. It can be argued that the overall theme here is that teachers feel that their needs are being ignored.
2. Those participants who are more positive report a generally good relationship between the school and the team. They report that they receive good service, guidance and support and that the team members act very professionally towards the teachers.

> Members of the team are always available and willing to help. Some report regular visits, workshops and handouts given by the multifunctional team.

One participant captures the essence of multifunctional support in suggesting that the team should communicate with *all the educators because it's about the whole school*.

5.2.7 Efficacy of the learning support model

The following are responses to the question whether participants think that the learning support model is to the advantage of all learners.

5.2.7.1 Responses from learning support teachers

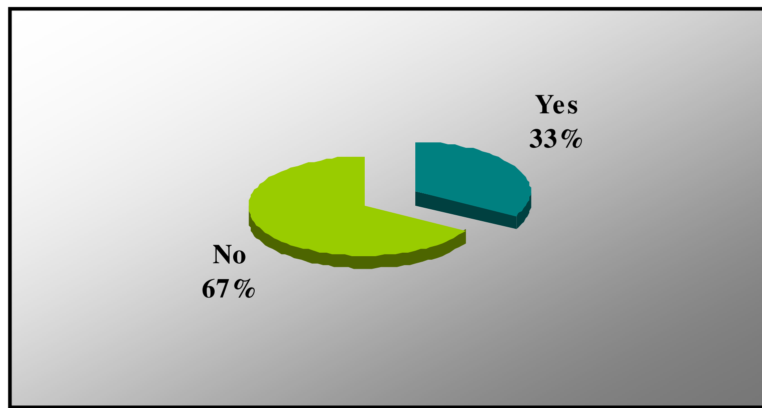


FIGURE 5.34: DO YOU THINK THAT THE LEARNING SUPPORT MODEL IS TO THE ADVANTAGE OF ALL LEARNERS? (LST)

(N = 40)

5.2.7.2 Responses from mainstream teachers

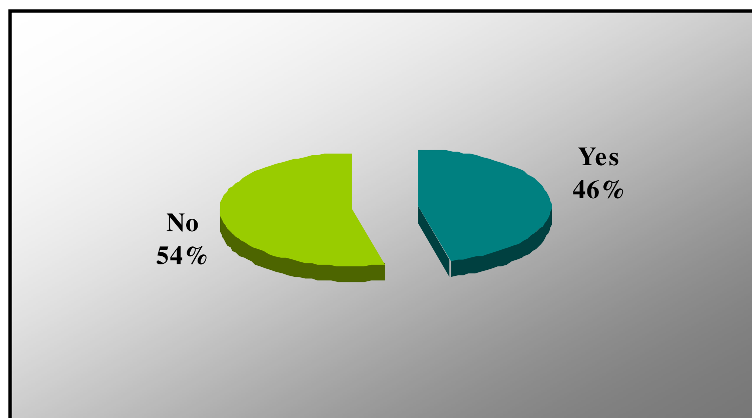


FIGURE 5.35: DO YOU THINK THAT THE LEARNING SUPPORT MODEL IS TO THE ADVANTAGE OF ALL THE LEARNERS? (MST)

(N = 153)

Most learning support participants (67%) in Figure 5.34 and mainstream participants (54%) in Figure 5.35 do not think that this support model is to the advantage of all the learners. However, more mainstream teachers (46%) than learning support teachers (33%) who responded to this questionnaire are of the opinion that the learning support model is adequate.

When requested to motivate these opinions in Questionnaire 2 (question 2.27), many of the responses from the mainstream participants (MST) correlate with that of learning support teachers (LST) in Questionnaire 1 (question 2.39). Those participants who have positive experiences of the learning support model are of the opinion that it is a "good thing". They feel that if it is applied correctly, all learners can be helped, even the more able learners. It is also argued that learners now receive support in class where it did not happen in the past and that this support can only benefit the rest of the class. Following are some of the responses of those who are of the opinion that the model can work:

> LST Respondent 1*: It can, but it must be implemented correctly. Sometimes mainstream teachers are sceptical about the model* ["Dit kan, maar dit moet reg geïmplimenteer word. Soms is hoofstroomopvoeders skepties teenoor die model"].

> LST Respondent 20*: If it is applied correctly. Learners who are high risk must not slip through* ["As dit reg toegepas word. Leerders wat hoërisiko gevalle is, moet nie ongesiens verbyglip met die model nie"].

> MST Respondent 24*: If the class teachers cannot solve the learner's problem then he/she gets additional support in the LSEN class. For more serious problems the learner can be referred to a special school/class where his needs can be addressed.* ["Indien die klasopvoeder nie die leerder se probleem kan oplos nie, kry die leerder verder ondersteuning by die OLSO-klas. Vir meer ernstige probleme kan leerder na 'n spesiale skool/klas verwys word waar aandag aan sy probleem gegee word"].

> MST Respondent 46*: It is to the advantage of all learners because the interventions are kept on record from Grade 1 to Grade 7. As soon as he/she progresses the learner is monitored with more advanced work* ["Dit is tot voordeel van alle leerders want die intervensies word op rekord gehou van gr.1 tot gr. 7 sodra hy vorder word hy/sy gemonitor om gevorderde werk te doen"].

> MST Respondent 62*: As the weaker learners improve with the support, the general standard of the class is also raised* ["Soos die swak leerders presteer met behulp van ondersteuning, kan algemene standaard in klas ook styg"].

However, some responses reflect a less positive picture. From the responses of both learning support and mainstream teachers it is clear that some are of the opinion that too much emphasis is placed on academic performance, while other aspects, like vocational skills development and the emotional wellness are neglected. It is argued that learners who experience barriers to learning are not adequately instructed in the mainstream class. Therefore, since they cannot progress academically, they are also not trained for the world outside world. For this reason respondents call for the return of the special class or full-time teachers for learners experiencing specific barriers to learning. This opinion is clearly demonstrated in the following responses:

> MST Respondent 66*: I feel that the learning support in Senior Phase is a mockery.It is because of the system that we have so many learnin support learners in our classes these days. I would rather see the old special classes return where learners can be taught skills.* ["Ek voel dat die leerondersteuning van die senior fase 'n klug is. Dit is a.g.v. die stelsel dat ons deesdae met so baie LOS (leerondersteuning) leerders in ons klas sit. Ek sou liewer wou sien dat ons na die ou spesiale klas terugkeer en die leerders vaardighede aanleer"].

> MST Respondent 89*: What really will be an advantage is a permanent adaptation class. In our rural schools there are many learners who struggle to learn in the mainstream* ["Wat wel tot voordeel sal wees, is 'n permanente aanpassingsklas. In ons landelike skole is daar so baie leerders wat sukkel om in die hoofstroom te leer"].

One mainstream teacher's response (MST Respondent: 155) drastically suggests in medical model terminology that *learners who are not educable should be removed from the system* ["Meer leerders kan betrek word, veral vanaf gr.1. Leerders wat glad nie leerbaar is nie, moet uit die sisteem gehaal word"].

While some mainstream teachers are of the opinion that one learning support teacher per school is not enough, some learning support teachers feel that the need is very big and that being itinerant limits their ability to help all learners who need assistance. The following is such a response:

> LST Respondent 7*: There are so many learners in intermediate- and senior phase who also needs help but does not receive it because LSEN teachers are itinerant* ["Daar is so baie leerders in intermediêre fase en senior fase wat ook ondersteuning benodig, maar wat dit nie ontvang nie, omdat die OLSO-opvoeders rondreisend is"].

> Some mainstream teachers do not consider themselves qualified to give specialised support, as seen in the following response:

MST Respondent 109*: …help must be provided for those who are slower. Mainstream teachers don't have the qualifications and do more damage than good. Where are our specialists?* ["Ons moet aanvaar dat almal nie ewe vinnig leer. Hulp moet aangebied word vir diesulkes. Hoofstroomopvoeders met geen kwalifikasies doen meer skade as goed. Waar is ons spesialiste?"].

Both learning support and mainstream teachers are of the opinion that not enough is done for learners with behavioural problems, and concentration and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders. The marked need for learning support is exacerbated by the unfavourable bad socio-economic circumstances. Both groups display a concern that the more able and gifted learners are neglected, as seen in the following examples:

LST Respondent 29*: What is happening to the more able child? Are they not being dragged down? God has given us all talents – what about theirs?* [original text].

MST Respondent 34*: Class teachers give too much attention to the weaker learners. The more intelligent learners are often neglected. Crowded classes also make it difficult to attend to all* ["Klasopvoeders moet te veel aandag aan swakker leerders gee. Skrander leerders word dikwels afgeskeep. Oorvol klasse maak dit ook onmoontlik om by almal uit te kom"].

MST Respondent 31*: If learners with learning barriers can receive special help at school (adaptation classes of the past) then the mainstream teacher can give much more attention to mainstream learners* ["As leerders met leerstoornisse spesiale hulp by die skool kan kry, sal die hoofstroomopvoeders baie meer tyd kan gee aan leerders wat in die hoofstroom is (aanpassingsklasse van destyds)"].

Other concerns of mainstream teachers include class size, time, workload and language barriers as one respondent's reactions indicate:

MST Respondent 159*: Teachers are not specialized to help learners. School has Xhosa speaking learners – language is a big headache. Can't always accommodate all.* ["Opvoeders is nie gespesialiseerd om leerders te help nie. Skool sit met Xhosa sprekende leerders – taal is groot kopseer. Kan nie altyd almal akkommodeer nie"].

MST Respondent 40*: Because classes are crowded, and we still have to ensure that all assessment standards are completed. The time available also makes it difficult because of learning area instruction.* ["Omdat ons klasse te vol is en ons nog seker moet maak dat alle

assesseringstandaarde voltooi word. Die tydsbesteding bemoeilik ook taak a.g.v. leerarea onderrig"].

Some mainstream teachers are concerned that with the withdrawal system learners who are withdrawn for level two support miss work done in class. Another feels that when the weaker learners are withdrawn, she/he can pay more attention to the average and above average learners, who are in fact the "leaders of the future".

While some mainstream teachers are of the opinion that the model at least tries to help, others feel that the learners who need the help do not appreciate it. However, only one mainstream participant referred to the waiting list for special schools:

> MST Respondent 83*: Learners who are waiting for placement at a special school are not always accommodated in large class groups* ["Leerders wat wag vir plasing in 'n spesiale skool word nie altyd in groot klasgroepe geakkommodeer nie"].

One participant was of the opinion that help from the EMDC officials is needed:

> MST Respondent 125*: Learners differ from each other. They are sometimes so diverse that it is not possible to develop individual programmes for every one. Therefore we need a lot of help from the LSEN teacher and officials of the clinic* ["Leerders verskil so van mekaar. Leerders verskil egter soms so uiteenlopend dat dit nie altyd fisies moontlik is om vir elkeen 'n indiwiduele program saam te stel nie. Ons het dus baie hulp van die LO opvoeder en kliniekbeamptes nodig"].

5.2.8 The role of the learning support teacher

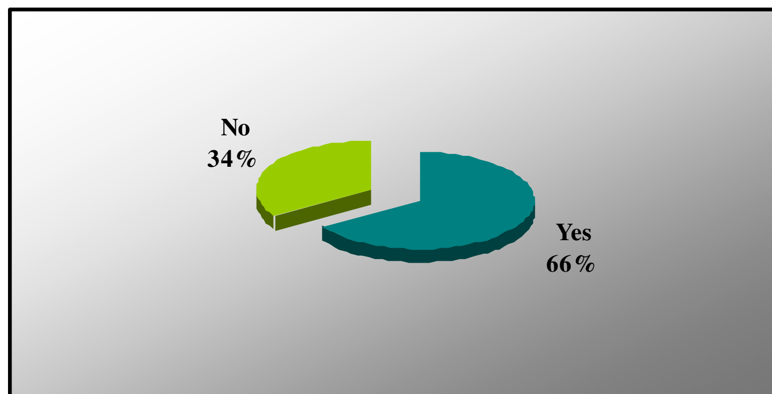


FIGURE 5.36: DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AS THE LEARNING SUPPORT COORDINATOR AT THE SCHOOL/SCHOOLS WHERE YOU WORK?

(N = 41)

Learning support teachers were asked (Questionnaire 1, question 2.40) if they consider themselves as the coordinator of learning support at the school.

Figure 5.36 above depicts that two thirds (66%) of the learning support respondents consider themselves to be the coordinator of learning support in the schools where they work.

In the content analysis of the open-ended responses (Questionnaire 1, question 2.41) I distinguish between those who consider themselves the coordinator of learning support in the school, and those who do not. The themes that emerged from responses of learning support teachers who do not consider themselves as coordinators of learning support came from schools that have a well-functioning TST, or where they argue that it is the responsibility of the principal to plan and coordinate learning support in the school, as the following responses indicate:

> LST Respondent 1*: The TST has a coordinator who is well equipped for this task. We work close together* ["Die OOS-span het 'n koördineerder wat ten volle toegerus is vir hierdie taak. Ons werk baie nou saam"].

> LST Respondent 31*: I am of the opinion that the principal as authoritative figure should coordinate and execute the plan* ["Ek meen die hoof behoort as gesagsfiguur die plan te koordineer en uit te voer"].

> LST Respondent 37*: Teachers react better when instructions come from the office* ["Opvoeders reageer beter wanneer opdragte vanaf die kantoor gedoen word"].

There are also those learning support teachers who say that serving more than one school makes it difficult to coordinate learning support in a school, as indicated by the following response:

> LST Respondent 3*: Because I am itinerant, it is difficult to be the coordinator. I feel that there are others who can fulfil this role* ["Omdat ek rondreisend is, is dit moeilik om as koördineerder op te tree. Ek voel ook dat daar ander kundiges by skole is wat hierdie rol kan vervul"].

The themes that emerged from responses of learning support teachers who consider themselves as coordinators of learning support are generally those who feel that it is expected of them, because they are qualified to do so as one of the respondents states:

> LST Respondent 24*: Everything is expected of me regarding more time, slow learners, monitoring of home visits, intervention. I then give feedback to the principal* ["Alles word

van my verwag t.o.v meertyd, stadige leerders, monitering van huisbesoeke, intervensie, ek doen weer terugvoering aan die prinsipaal"].

LST Respondent 27*: Everybody is so busy with their own work and other activities. If I don't call a meeting every two weeks, it will never happen* ["Almal te besig met hul eie werk en ander bedrywighede. As ek dit nie saamroep en bepaalde (vasgestelde) datums twee-weekliks maak nie, sal dit nooit plaasvind nie"].

LST Respondent 36*: I am supposed to have the most knowledge and experience regarding learning support* ["Ek is veronderstel om die meeste kennis en ondervinding t.o.v. leerondersteuning te hê"].

The responsibilities mentioned by these learning support teachers include the calling and chairing of TST meetings, testing and grouping learners, providing activities, supporting teachers and managing referrals of learners to hospitals, therapists, social workers, school psychologists and special schools. One reports keeping all records and reports of learners and consulting with parents.

5.3 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA (focus group interviews)

5.3.1 Introduction

The qualitative data collection method of focus group interviews followed sequentially on the questionnaires. As stated in the introduction, the schools that took part in the focus group interviews were randomly selected from primary schools that have the service of a learning support teacher in the West Coast/Winelands area. Although these schools share certain commonalities, each has its own unique context and character, as seen in the description of the schools below:

School 1 (FG:1) is a large rural school, situated within a small rural town. As the school offers Grades 1-9, the school accepts learners in Grade 8 from smaller neighbouring schools. Most parents work as farm labourers. Besides a minority of parents who work in the few business enterprises in town, many parents rely on seasonal farmwork. The seasonal workers are prone to unemployment, which sometimes leads to parents migrating to another town for work. Learners are then usually taken out of school. The school caters for a very small group of Xhosa first language learners. These parents prefer their children to be educated in Afrikaans to learn the dominant language of the area. According to the principal, this affords them better employment

prospects in the area. Generally most parents battle with poverty, illiteracy and sub-economic conditions. The school has the service of an itinerant learning support teacher who visits the school on four school days per week, serving one of the nearby smaller schools one day per week.

School 2 (FG: 2) is a large rural school, close to two major industrial operations. Although about 60% of the parents have a regular annual income, almost 40% rely on seasonal work in the fishing and steel industry. Therefore for some periods of the year the unemployment rate is quite high. According to the principal, 40-60% of the population served by the school live in RDP housing[4], while a smaller percentage living around the school, who are fairly well off. Although the dominant language of learning and teaching is Afrikaans, the school offers Xhosa first language from Grade 1 to Grade 3. The school previously had an adaptation class. The school is now served by a full-time learning support teacher who was previously appointed in the mainstream.

School 3 (FG: 3) is a small rural school, situated near a small rural town. Learners come from surrounding farms where most parents work as farm labourers. Most parents battle with poverty, illiteracy and socio-economic deprivation. However, the school has recently been identified as a no-fees school and the parents therefore do not have to pay school fees. The school is situated in an area identified as one with a very high occurrence of foetal alcohol syndrome. The school has the service of an itinerant learning support teacher who visits the school every second week for the whole week. This arrangement was reached between the two schools served by the learning support teacher and herself, in an attempt to improve service delivery and eliminate some constraints that accompany itinerant service delivery. However, the current learning support teacher is a substitute for the learning support teacher who was seconded to work as a learning support advisor at district level.

School 4 (FG: 4) is situated in a large semi-urban town, serving a very diverse population – from the most advantaged to the most disadvantaged, with a few in between. Only a very small percentage of the parents struggle with unemployment. The school, however, has a fairly high percentage of learners from single parent families. The school offers both Afrikaans and English as language of learning and teaching. According to the principal, there are Xhosa first language learners, but they are only admitted to the school if they can speak or at least have some understanding of one of the two languages offered by the school. The school previously had a

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[4] RDP housing: Low cost housing provided as part of the SA governments' Reconstruction and Development Programme to address the housing needs of the poor.

full-time learning support teacher, but is now sharing the post with another school in the neighbourhood.

Learning support teachers (FG: 5) who took part in the focus group interview work in rural and semi-urban schools. Although 8 learning support teachers were selected randomly to participate in the interview, only 6 could attend. Four of these teachers serve only one primary school while 2 provide learning support itinerantly to two primary schools. They were all previously either adaptation or special class teachers, while one was a remedial teacher based at the school. The composition of the focus groups was discussed in 4.4.2.3.

In analysing and interpreting the views and opinions of mainstream and learning support teachers who took part in the focus group interviews, specific recurring themes were explored in more detail. The procedure followed in analysing and interpreting the interviews is discussed in detail in 4.4.3.3. The themes emerged directly as questions to the objectives as discussed in 4.3.2. These themes are discussed under the following headings:

5.3.2 Implementation of the learning support model

Two schools (2 & 4) previously had an adaptation class, while the other two schools (1 & 3) did not have any support services provided to them in the past. With the advent of the learning support model, itinerant learning support teachers were appointed to serve the latter two schools. The fulltime adaptation class post at school 4 is now being shared as a learning support post with a neighbouring school. School 2, which had an old adaptation class, now has the full time service of a learning support teacher within the new structure.

All four schools report not having a core group that receives full-time learning support. All the learners who were in the adaptation classes under the previous dispensation have been integrated into the mainstream.

The teachers at the four schools in question generally refer to the teachers who provide additional support as the learning support teacher or the ELSEN teacher. Some are more familiar, in that they use the first name, e.g. Miss Norma[5].

5.3.3 Support on level one of the learning support model

This theme consists of the following two sub-themes: (1) Effective functioning of the TST and (2) The role of the principal in class support provided to learners and teachers.

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[5] Miss Norma: this is a pseudonymn

5.3.3.1 Effective functioning of the Teacher Support Team and the role of the principal

Three of the mainstream teachers' focus groups (FG) indicated that they have a functioning TST at their school. They report to have fairly regular meetings where they discuss and seek solutions to the problems teachers experience in class. Sometimes these meetings cannot take place due to other activities, such as sports or cultural events that take precedence over the TST meeting. At one school it seems as if the TST never meets, although teachers try to help the learners. The following response explains the situation:

As a result of many factors. We have … at the moment, we practise sport. We have cultural activities and many times in the afternoon, like today, you are taken away and you cannot do what you're supposed to do. We have for example divided the Grade 1 teachers in to help with the Grade 4s, but we have so many children who need help in our own classes that we cannot get to it. So there are many things that play a role (FG 2, 30-35)[6].["As gevolg van klomp faktore. Ons het… op die oomblik oefen ons sport. Ons het kultuur en baie keer in die middae sonder dat jy bewus is dat, soos bv. nou vandag word jy weg gehaal van jou klas af en dan kom dit wat jy veronderstel is om te doen..er..er..realiseer nie. Ons het bv. ons graad ene ingedeel by graad 4 om daar hulp te verleen maar met so baie kinders wat ons in ons eie klasse moet help dat ons nie daarby kan uit kom nie. So daar's 'n hele klomp faktore wat , wat 'n rol speel."]

Although the first three groups could explain the way the TST functions at their school, the other one seemed to have a misunderstanding of the role of the TST members. They also see it as the role of the learning support teacher. After the interviewer had clarified the role of the TST, the following response was given:

Are the parents also involved? Who is going to the work at the end of the day? (FG 2, 54-55).["Is daar ouers betrek ook? Wie gaan aan die einde van die dag die werk doen?"]

After the interviewer had reminded the group about the first level of support in the mainstream class and the consultative role of the TST, one respondent of this specific focus group said that one of the teachers was planning to take some learners after school for basic Afrikaans and Mathematics one day in the week.

The **learning support teachers'** group indicated that in theory, the TST works wonderfully, but that there are many impeding factors that make it difficult to be effective in practice. Instead of acting as a consultative and collaborative team seeking the best possible solutions, learning support teachers experience it as a session for giving advice. Others are of the opinion that TST

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[6] FG: Focus Group followed by the number of the group and the lines in the transcript.

is viewed as an automatic referral to the learning support teacher for withdrawal. The general opinion is that the TST does meet, but not as regularly as it should. One of the respondents remarked that she knows it is not right, but when a teacher comes to see her about a child, she *quickly assesses him and gives the teacher advice or support material* and then withdraws him/her. She admits that the child is not referred through the TST, because …*if I have to wait on them…I can't. It gets me on my nerves if I first have to go through them. It takes too long* (FG 5, 318-322). ["…voordat die kinders na my toe kom… as die juffrou kom dan assesseer ek hom vinnig, kyk wat hy kan doen en dan stuur ek iets vir die juffrou terug en sê : doen dit, probeer dit en …uhm…dan vat ek hom maar weer. Maar dit gaan nie deur die TST nie want as ek op die TST moet wag….ek kan nie. Dit maak my heeltemal op my senuwees as ek eers deur hulle moet gaan. Dit vat te lank"]

With regard to the role of the principal, teachers generally agree that both the principal and the senior management team play an essential role in the provision of learning support. However, while some say that they are part of the TST, others are sceptical about their real contribution, as one respondent remarked: *He must be involved. Is involved … must be involved are two different things* (FG 4, 299-300). ["Hy moet betrokke wees. Is betrokke, moet betrokke wees is twee verskillende woorde"]

The opinions of learning support teachers on this topic reveal that they regard the principal and senior management team as vital for the functioning of the TST in providing learning support in the school. One respondent described the principal as the "driving force". Another exclaimed her delight and surprise that the principal asked for a plan of action when he first met her, and that he in fact monitors the use of the reading period at the school. Another explained how she put the senior staff through a "course" about what she does, and that she now has their full support.

5.3.3.2 In-class support provided to learners and teachers

Various responses were obtained to the question if and how learners are supported on the first level, namely in-class support, of the model. These ranged from groups of learners receiving help after school, the use of a resource file compiled by the learning support teacher, the differentiation of tasks and assignments, scaling down and using different strategies. However, whereas foundation phase teachers are more inclined to differentiate, intermediate and senior phase teachers tend to focus on their specific learning area content. They are more inclined to report that they provide additional support after school to the "more-time learners", and that they use the scheduled reading period. One group referred to using the Masifunde project, which is an initiative of the WCED to address the low literacy and numeracy levels as established through the national systemic evaluations in the province.

Class size appeared to be a major concern when teachers were asked about support provided at the first level of support in the mainstream class. Teachers generally preferred to give examples of how well they could work when they had a smaller class group. One such example is:

Can I use a practical example? Last year we had 50 learners in the gr.4 class and we could appoint an extra teacher. The class was divided and I only had 25 learners in my class. For the first time in 30 years I enjoyed my work. The current gr. 5 teachers are so proud of that group this year. Especially their reading, English too…But this year again one of the teachers had to go and we were not awarded another post. So, this year again I have 52 learners to which I have to adapt again… (FG 3, 69-78).[Ek kan net 'n praktiese voorbeeld noem. Ons het verlede jaar 50 leerders in die gr.4 klas gehad en toe het ons 'n ekstra juffrou gehad by die skool. Toe word die gr.4 klas opgedeel, toe sit ek met 25 kinders. Seker die eerste keer in 30 jaar wat ek skool hou wat ek 'n klas van 25 gehad het. Ek het lekker gewerk. Ek ….daai gr.5 onderwysers spog nou met daai kinders. Veral hul lees is so fantasties. Die Engels ook. Die onderwyser se die die eerste keer dat hy kinders kry wat so lief is vir lees wat so graag engels lees, en so aan. Maar weer vanjaar is ons mos nou…moes een onderwyser weg gaan en ongelukkig is ons toe nie 'n pos toegeken nie nou sit ek vanjaar met 52 leerders wat nou weer vir my 'n groot aanpassing weer vir my is. Ek het nou verlede jaar so lekker gewerk. Dit was hemel op aarde, …](FG 3, 69-78).

One group of mainstream teachers felt particularly strong about disciplinary problems caused by large classes and the fact that corporal punishment is not allowed. They are of the opinion that it disempowered them in comments like: *… they're scared of nothing any more…they are undisciplined …* (FG 4, 140-142) [Ek wil met [vorige spreker] saam stem. Dis ook nou dat die lyfstraf uit is, daar is nie 'n lekker…die kinders skrik vir niks meer. Met lyfstraf uit by die skole, outomaties is daar nie lyfstraf by die huis nie en jy kan sien die kinders….hulle skrik nie meer nie, hulle is ongedissiplineerd….] *; … It is one or two that disrupts the class. And it is because you can do them nothing and it's particularly those who have learning problems. They cause disturbances and negatively affect those who want to work …* (FG 4,154-159).["As daar een of twee outjies wat die klas omverwerp. Maar juis omdat jy aan hulle niks kan doen en hulle ook die is wat leerprobleme het, dis juis hulle. Dan verooraak hulle die steurnisse. Die outjies wat wil werk word daardeur nadelig beinvloed"]

Socio-economic factors that contribute to learning difficulties at school are a concern of teachers who feel that they have to "be everything". Many parents are illiterate and cannot help their children with schoolwork at home. While some parents try to help despite their limitations, there are those who do not give their cooperation.

Teachers also argue that although they try to support learners who experience learning difficulties by working on their level, in the end these learners have to be assessed against the assessment standards of the specific grade.

Some of the participants were of the opinion that the more able learners were neglected when teachers attempt to provide adequate support to those who need it, and when they had to attend to administrative responsibilities. The following response serves as an example:

It's an injustice to that child, miss…OK the stuff work but is there not something that you can work well with that middle class child and then you can with that..the child that …the top children that you not really attens to? We neglect those children [comments from others in the group]. Those children are neglected (FG 2, 261-264). ["En dis 'n onreg teenoor daai kind, juffrou. …OK die goed werk maar is daar nie iets waar jy met daai middelklas kind lekker werk en dan kan jy met daai….die kind wat nou…die top kinders waaraan jy nou rêrig kan aandag gee nie? Ons verwaarloos daai kinders. [tussen pratery] Daai kinders word verwaarloos"]

During this discussion the interviewer tried to establish to what extent the learning support teacher provided support to mainstream teachers at this level. Participants constantly referred to withdrawal at the second level of the model as support provided by the learning support teacher. Some participants, however, mentioned that the learning support teacher compiled a resource file that they could use, and that they could, at any time, approach her for advice or resources with a specific problem they encountered.

One of the learning support teachers described in broad detail how she assessed all the learners' reading levels with the help of mainstream teachers, and then proceeded to implement a support programme during the reading period. Some nodded in agreement. However, the general way of supporting mainstream teachers is by providing advice and learning material. It was also generally agreed that only certain teachers would take the initiative to ask for advice. One respondent made the remark that some still need to make a mind shift.

Another concern, especially in the intermediate and senior phase, is that teachers do not differentiate, and do not work on the levels of the learners. Mainstream teachers are quoted in saying that *…I have to finish my work…* (FG 5, 134) when confronted with the fact that they work above the learners' level. Learning support teachers experience this as very frustrating. One learning support teacher comments that although she can see progress, mainstream teachers still tend to think that they *can do nothing*. She indicated that she would want them to get rid of the word "nothing", because it breaks down what she has achieved with the learner (FG 5, 145-148).

5.3.4 Support on level two of the learning support model

At the time of the focus group interviews the learning support teachers in the area under research were busy with a trial of supporting learners in the mainstream class with the focus on the so-called "middle group" that could make a positive difference to the scores attained in the national systemic evaluations.

Generally mainstream teachers were not in favour of learning support teachers working to support learners this particular way. They prefer that the learning support teacher withdraw learners from their classes for additional support. The following responses are examples of their opinions:

> *I liked it more when they withdrew learners from the classes. I could then see a change in that child. It is very difficult when you have 42 learners in the class. The class is full and the children are disturbing and then you still have those that must receive special attention. They used to have a book in the past in which I could also work. Now you have to go on your own. But she does help a lot when you go to her…but that was in the past. I am very honest now if I say I forget of that child, do you understand? But when she withdrew the child you were always aware of that child (FG 4, 78-87).* ["Ek het meer gehou daarvan toe sy die kinders ontrek het uit die klasse. Dan kon ek sien daar's 'n verandering in daai kind. Dis baie moeilik as mens sit met 42 kinders. Die klas is vol en die kinders is woelig ook en jy moet nog 'n kind of twee of drie na kyk wat nog spesiale aandag moet kry. Want dan kyk jy….hulle het 'n boekie in die verlede gehad. Dan bou jy daarop ook. Nou moet jy maar op jou eie aan gaan. Maar sy help baie. Bv. as jy na haar toe gaan en se [naam van opvoeder] ….maar ek sal se in die verlede as die kind uhm..uhm..ek se sommer eerlik dan vergeet ek van hom. Ek is nou sommer dood eerlik, verstaan? Maar as jy die kind sommer help en dan….maar….met die dat sy gedurig die kind ontterk het ….jy's totaal bewus van daai kind elke dag"]

Another respondent reacted as follows:

> *Then I say: miss, this group that you take now, what do you do with them?And she explained to me and I told her that I'm not going to let them go out of my class again. It is my best group and I feel equipped to take them further. You can take the group that needs learning support (FG 3, 199-203).* ["Dan sê ek: juffrou, hierdie groepie waarmee juffrou nou besig is, wat doen u met hulle? En sy't aan my verduidelik, toe sê ek: nee juffrou, ek gaan nie weer die span uit my klas uit laat gaan nie. Dis my beste groep en ek voel

gemagtig daartoe om vir hulle verder te neem. Vat maar die spannetjie wat leerondersteuning nodig het”]

It is clear that teachers are of the opinion that they could see improvement when the learning support teachers withdrew learners for additional support. However, there is also a need for constant interaction with the learning support teacher, as shown by the following response:

> *I would prefer the teacher telling me more often, sir I did this with your children and on that ground you can do this with them. You can perhaps do this with that group.. We have to differentiate. If I don’t do it, I goining to put that child in another world. So that interaction is necessary. Maybe not just on a weekly basis but even a daily basis also …now I can highlite those names and see if if I can’t…do work on a higher level with them (FG 3, 209-215).* [“Ek sou verkies dat die juffrou meermale moet sê, mnr. dit het ek met jou kinders gedoen en op grond hiervan kan u hiermee verder gaan. U kan miskien met daai spannetjie dit doen. Ons moet mos differensieër. As ek nie dit gaan doen nie dan gaan ek daai kind in ‘n ander wêreld plaas. So daai wisselwerking is nodig. Miskien nie net op ‘n weeklikse basis nie sommer op ‘n daaglikse basis ook….nou kan ek net daai name highlite en kyk of ek nie meer uhm hoër graad werk kan doen met hulle nie”]

One participant from another group was of the opinion that the interaction was *“better and more effective when they worked directly with our children”* (FG 4, 46-47). However, interaction and cooperation has to come from both sides. Some participants reported that where the learning support teacher does not withdraw learners from their phase, they go to him/her and ask for advice and work that they could do. In another case the teacher turns to her colleague in a lower grade to help her.

With regard to the project, one learning support respondent said, … *it was good but not necessarily the need of the school* (FG 5, 87-88).

The fact that some schools only have the service of an itinerant learning support teacher affects the support he/she can provide to teachers and learners. As one respondent put it: …*it would be ideal if we could have a permanent learning support teacher. The learners get support for one week, but for a whole week there is nothing…and then it takes time for the teacher to get her stuff ready…I think it’s too far apart…* (FG 3, 21-26). Another one felts that the learning support teacher only comes in three days a week, and that the large classes do not allow mainstream teachers to focus on those who need help. The teacher argued: *now I work with him in a class of 42 … it is an injustice …* (FG 4, 97).

At one school where there is a full-time learning support teacher, there was a concern that the school is quite large and needed a considerable amount of support. The suggestion was made to appoint more learning support teachers at a school, e.g. one for each phase. As learning support teachers who were interviewed basically focus on the foundation phase, it is clear that teachers in the intermediate and senior phases also need additional support.

One of the focus groups displayed considerable concern about support provided at high schools. The participants' concern is that learners who used to receive learning support up to Grade 7 and have to leave for high school, become drop-outs, because there is not continued support for them.

Learning support teachers who work as full-time teachers at one school are of the opinion that service provision of this nature is very advantageous. The reasons provided vary from being part of the staff and developing good relationships, and being able to supply information almost immediately, to adapting the programme when necessary and paying immediate attention to problems as they arise. To the question of whether the learners make better progress, one response was that learners need to get used to a support teacher in order to learn better. The teacher's continual presence helps in this regard. Learning support teachers who work as itinerant teachers are of the opinion that it is a positive aspect to be part of a team, and still be able *to sometimes do my own thing* (FG 5, 46). However, there are times, especially during the recent teacher strike and after school vacations, when she experiences a need to be at one school for a longer period of time. Another participant said that she does not have a problem working itinerantly, but is concerned about the learners. The following excerpt explains why:... *because after 3 days when I get to the school, especially those that we work with, I have to go back and can perhaps only start the next day with something new I want to teach them* (FG 5, 57-60). Another concern is that learners with learning difficulties are confused by the fact that the learning support teacher and the mainstream teacher work on the same level with them. The respondent is of the opinion that learners feel more *at ease with her and are much more self-assured* (FG 5,69-70), and that mainstream teachers do not give learners the recognition for what they can master.

Mainstream teachers from these focus groups described the referral process as time-consuming, delaying the provision of support or placement in a special school. As one respondent said: ... *and all these steps if you want to refer a child. The many forms. You sometimes feel that you're walking right into a dead-end. You're only human and sometimes get despondent and at the end the teacher referred so many children and it takes months. By the time the child goes, the child who needed help in the beginning of the year, then it almost does not benefit the child any more"*

(FG 4, 191-196). [“… en al hierdie klomp stappe as jy ‘n kind moet verwys. Die klomp vorms. Jy voel somtyds jy loop jou vas in ‘n doodloopstraat. Nou jy’s ook maar net mens en dan raak jy moedeloos en op die ou einde het die juffrou al klomp kinders verwys en dis maande….by die tyd dat die kind gaan, die kind wat hulp nodig het aan die begin van die jaar, dan baat dit mos amper nie meer vir die kind nie].

The participant went even further and actually highlighted the great disparities that still exist in South African schools where parents from more affluent communities have the financial means to provide private support from professionals.

The participants generally agree that the learning support teacher does not withdraw learners who should receive support on levels 3 and 4 of the learning support model. At one specific school, due to the distance from the nearest special school and other factors, some learners who need a high level of support are accommodated in the mainstream class. One of the respondents made the following comment: *Yes, but miss but for those… the handicapped children did not go to the LSEN teacher. She did not work with them. She worked with the group 3 child and that handicapped child is out and out a group 4 child* (FG 1, 422-425). [“Ja, maar juffrou vir daai…die gestremde kinders wat die skool hier gehad het, hulle het nie na die OLSO juffrou toe gegaan nie. Sy’t nie met hulle gewerk nie. Sy’t net daai groep 3 kind gewerk. Daai gestremde kind was mos nou uit en uit ‘n vlak 4 kind”] It was further noted that the learning support teacher did not support the mainstream teacher in this case.

The waiting lists of special schools are long, with the result that these learners must be accommodated in the mainstream school. They do not feel qualified to support learners who have specific conditions, e.g. foetal alcohol syndrome or Down’s syndrome. One group particularly highlighted the need for other specialised services. The following interview extract illustrates a level of frustration with the situation:

… and many times you can see the child has a problem but you don’t know…I talk about myself. I don’t have the necessary knowledge to really help that child with … uhm ... alcohol syndrome or the child who is mentally handicapped … because those children really need specialised attention. Then I also just want to say. I have a problem with the department. The department of educations’ courses that I…I’ve mentioned it a few times already. When are they [the education department] going to get to the point that they going toget such specialised people… we don’t need to have them in the school. They can come out to the school… (FG 2, 184-192). [“en want baie kere sien jy die kind het ‘n probleem maar jy weet nie. ….Ek praat van myself. Ek het nie daai nodige kennis om daai…uhm …alkohol sindroom kind rêrig te help nie

of die kind wat verstandelik gestremd is nie want daai kinders makeer rêrig waar…gespesialiseerde aandag. Dan wil ek nou net dit ook by sê. Ek het 'n probleem met die departement. Die departement van onderwys se kursusse, wat ek …ek het dit nou al 'n paar keer genoem. Wanneer gaan hulle nou by die punt kom waar hulle sulke gespesialiseerde mense….Ons hoef nie sulke mense in die skool te hê nie, maar wanneer daai mense kan uit kom en vir ons kom …"]

According to the participants, although parents now accept that their children receive support from the learning support teacher, there are still some parents who perceive this support as sending the child to the adaptation class, and are therefore very reluctant to give their cooperation.

Learning support teachers too are of the opinion that the need is so big and that they cannot manage to help everybody though they try, so that some learners get 'lost' in large classes. There is the opinion that many learners struggle in their present grade because *they are too easily moved along …* (FG 5, 94-95) as a result of the progression policy of the education department. Learning support teachers, especially those occupying a full-time position at one big school, feel the overwhelming need for additional learning support teachers to help them address the needs of the school. They feel that schools are more inclined to advertise and fund additional posts for other learning areas; and although they realise the need, schools are not prepared to spend money on an additional learning support post.

5.3.5 Opinions about inclusive education

From the interviews it was clear that many mainstream teachers' understanding of inclusive education is limited to learners who have high level of support needs. This is experienced as overwhelming, and in addition the large classes, limited resources and a lack of qualifications make it difficult to deal with such learners. The responses also highlighted concerns about ramps, space for wheel chairs in already over-crowded classrooms and the reactions of the other learners in the school. Some raised the concern that it is a "money saving thing" and that learners are "dumped" in the mainstream, regardless of whether teachers can cope or not. Respondents are of the opinion that it looks good on paper, but falls flat when it has to be implemented.

However, participants feel that it might work if schools were afforded additional support in the form of financial and human resources to provide for learners identified with a need for high-intensive education support (see 3.4) but are still in mainstream schools. One group explained how they have to pay for an additional teacher from their school funds to help support learners

with a high level need for intervention. They would expect the department of education to meet them at least halfway to pay for such additional human resources.

Some of the participants were very outspoken with regard to the rights of the learners and how their [teachers'] rights are being disregarded. The feel that most of the learners in their classes need additional support and that the situation has a negative effect on teachers' health. The argument was raised that while the new South African constitution protects the rights of children, those of teachers are being ignored.

Generally, learning support teachers are of the opinion that the implementation of inclusive education in schools is failing due to various reasons. These include the fact that schools do not have the "finances and manpower" to make it work and the opinion that it "looks good on paper but at the end it again becomes the problem of the learning support teacher". Learning support teachers have consensus in that they "feel sorry for the learners" because mainstream teachers do not differentiate, and although they try, they are not equipped to implement inclusive education. The other reason why teachers struggle is that apparently learners "remain in the mainstream too long before being placed in a special school" and that "learning support teachers do not always feel empowered to support the teacher". On the other hand, they observed that once a learner's name is on the waiting list of a special school, "teachers don't work with the child anymore". Learning support teachers are of the opinion that mainstream teachers generally are overwhelmed and have a negative perception and attitude towards inclusive education.

5.4 SUMMARY

Chapter 5 provided an analysis and interpretation of data collected sequentially through questionnaires and focus group interviews. The data was collected from a sampling population that consisted of schools that have the services of a learning support teacher and are situated in the West Coast/Winelands region of the Western Cape. The purpose of this sequential mixed methods evaluation was to determine the views and opinions of mainstream and learning support teachers regarding the efficacy of the learning support model currently used in the region.

From the preceding analysis and interpretation of the collected data it can be argued that learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools are not effectively supported through the learning support model as it is currently implemented. This lack of support relates to contextual factors within schools, as well as within the education system. Examples from the data include examples of contextual factors within the school as ineffective teaching strategies, such as lack of differentiation and support to learners, which again, amongst others, relate to the

knowledge and training of mainstream teachers. Examples of systemic factors impeding on the support of these learners include the current teacher-learner ratio (1:39) in primary schools, as well as the medical model terminology used in official documents.

In the next chapter the results obtained through the two research methods are integrated and discussed.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

"Programme evaluation is the systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future planning" (Patton, 1997: 23).

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 2 and 3 the researcher argued that inclusive education was adopted internationally as a move away from the narrow medical model to a social and human rights approach to the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning. It was also established that countries differ regarding their implementation strategies and models of support for inclusive education in schools. A vast range of historical and contextual factors influences the understanding, philosophy and implementation of inclusive education and although countries are increasingly complying with legislation regarding inclusive education, there still is a significant divide between policy and practice. This gap is the result of numerous barriers arising from a variety of educational and societal issues. A review of the literature further revealed that South Africa, having introduced inclusive education as part of its wider democratisation process, shares commonalities with international trends regarding policy and implementation of inclusive education. However, when the South African context is taken into consideration, unique challenges to the implementation of inclusive education can be identified. Chapter 3 therefore provides the immediate background to this study.

In this chapter data from the two methodologies used in this sequential mixed methods research design will be integrated and discussed in response to the following research questions:

- How effectively is the learning support model being used in the West Coast/Winelands area?
- What constraints to effective service delivery are experienced within the model?
- What are the implications for the improvement of the learning support model?

In answering the research questions, the research results will be discussed according to the themes identified as evaluation objectives in 4.3.2. Findings from the research will be mapped

against international trends and local national initiatives regarding the implementation of inclusive education and the provision of learning support, as revealed in the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study. In so doing, the findings are located within the ecosystemic theoretical framework that guides this study (1.4), with specific reference to Figure 1.3.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.2.1 Implementation of the learning support model

6.2.1.1 Introduction

The rationale for the implementation of the specific learning support model in the Western Cape (as discussed in Chapter 3) was to facilitate participation, inclusiveness and flexibility (WCED, 2000). Therefore learners in the special and adaptation classes were to be integrated into the mainstream classes where they would receive the same curriculum as learners in the mainstream, while being included in the social circles of their peers. Learners experiencing barriers to learning are to be supported through a four-tiered learning support model resembling support models used in countries with a high level of human development, as revealed in 2.2.3. The following section explores the implementation of this learning support model.

6.2.1.2 Core groups

According to responses from learning support teachers in Table 5.20, 24% of them still harbour a core group that remains with them either for the whole day or part of the school day. From the document analysis in 3.3 it is also clear that the National Department of Education has an expectation that schools still have learners in a special or adaptation class (Western Cape Education Department, 2003:3). This can be ascribed to the previous medical model approach to education, as well as to the historical imbalances of the past. Each of the nine provincial education departments is responsible for policy implementation. As the provinces differ in terms of the availability of resources and human capital, they are not on the same level of implementation. For this reason the National Department of Education (2005b:6) only provides guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education to the provincial departments, allowing flexibility and responsiveness to specific needs. Nevertheless, the 2006 Education Statistics show an increase in learners integrated into mainstream classes (3.3).

However, special classes and segregation are not unique to the South African context. Discussions in previous chapters (2.2.3 and Figure 2.2) made it clear that many countries with a high level of human development, in spite of their well-established and well-resourced special education system, and an equally well-resourced mainstream education system, still practise

segregation. At the same time poorer countries with a medium and low human development level show a large incidence of segregation. The emphasis of Education for All in these countries (2.2.4) is on providing education to those who were formerly denied access to schooling due to their disability, social status, geographic location and gender disparities. The alternative would be to relocate learners from special schools to mainstream schools, as happens in countries with a high level of human development. In these countries locational and social integration form the major focus of inclusive education. However, with the help of UNESCO (2.2.4), some of these countries have introduced support staff and resource rooms at mainstream schools to assist in the implementation of inclusive education.

Due to the apartheid legacy, the South African context was characterised by several racially divided education departments. This was characterised by the racially motivated policy of separate development that resulted in remarkable advances in the provision of specialised education for whites, with severe discrepancies in both the quality and quantity of such provision for the black populations (Engelbrecht *et. al.,* 2002: 63). Moreover, different departments controlled special education and the provision of education support services. It can therefore be argued that South Africa exhibits characteristics from countries with a high, as well as those with a medium to low level of human development (2.2.2).

When 24% of learning support teachers report that they still have a core group, it is therefore imperative to take cognisance of the influence that the deeply rooted medical model and racial divides of the past still have on current perceptions and practices. The data further revealed that teachers experience work overload, large classes and a lack of knowledge and support that reinforce these exclusionary perceptions and practices.

6.2.1.3 Terminology

Responses from both the questionnaires and the focus-group interviews revealed that teachers use the terms "learning support teacher" or "LSEN teacher" to refer to the teacher providing additional learning support in the school. No one used the terminology "remedial, special or adaptation class teachers", which is associated with the medical model that categorises and locates deficits within the learners, and translates into curative interventions (2.2.1.1). However, although the term "Learners with Special Educational Needs" (LSEN) is generally accepted by the department of education, and the title of Education White Paper 6 refers to "Special Needs Education", this terminology perpetuates perceptions ingrained into the medical model. Most recently, the Department of Education (2008) opted to use the term Special Needs Education (SNE) with reference to learners experiencing barriers to learning and their teachers (3.3). Prevalent terminology contradicts the whole notion of using "barriers to learning and

participation" to refer to internal as well as external systemic barriers learners face in mainstream schools (1.9.11).

Alternatively, the term "Learning Support Teacher" is consistent with the use of the term proposed in the discussion of the learning support model (3.5). It is further also consistent with the terminology used by the Department of Education (1997:vii) and the general international trend to use different terminologies such as "inclusion support teacher"; Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO); learning support teacher and inclusion co-ordinator" (2.5.2.3). This change in terminology signifies the move towards a more socially acceptable and human rights perspective of the support provided to learners who experience barriers to learning and participation.

According to the literature review (3.5) the learning support teacher posts proposed for schools in the Western Cape will not be new, but will be utilising teachers from the former special, adaptation and remedial classes. According to Table 5.9a the majority of learning support teachers come from this previous system. It is also revealed that the WCED intends to eventually provide every primary school in the province with at least one learning support teacher post (3.5). However, according to the data in Figure 5.19, there are currently only 51% of learning support respondents who serve only one school, while the rest work itinerantly, 47% of which serve two schools and 2% three schools. According to the qualitative responses it is clear that both mainstream and learning support teachers are of the opinion that the need need for learning support is very high and that support provided in the mainstream class is not enough. They argue that itinerant learning support service delivery does not allow enough time for effective support.

As this learning support model was implemented in 1999, it is currently in its 10th year of implementation, and yet only 68% of mainstream respondents reported that they know the learning support model of the WCED. It is of further interest to note that 2% of the learning support respondents reported that they do not know the WCED learning support model (Figures 5.5 & 5.6). This data has serious implications for support and training regarding the learning support model as suggested in Chapter 3.5.

Although it was not the purpose of this study to do a formal discourse analysis of the verbal data, it is apparent from the data of both groups (learning support and mainstream teachers) that the discourse amongst teachers is still dominated by a medical model perspective. Although accepted terminology is used, the participants' language is interspersed with medical rhethoric such as "us / I" and "them". They frequently refer to "those children" and learning support as a mockery as they call for a return of the special and adaptation classes.

6.2.2 Sufficient capacity and infrastructure to deliver learning support (intervention) to the learners experiencing learning difficulties (target group)

6.2.2.1 Adequate space for withdrawal

It is clear that in order to facilitate participation, inclusiveness and flexibility, the learning support model must make provision for providing support within the mainstream, in combination with the withdrawal of learners in small groups for additional support when necessary (WCED, 2000) (3.5.1). It is recognised in Chapter 2.4.2 that the withdrawal of learners from the mainstream class is met with considerable critique from the advocates of full inclusion. However, it does offer a strategy to organise the provision of learning support on a continuum within the school such as, for example, in the USA as depicted in Figure 2.3. The learning support teacher may thus periodically withdraw learners experiencing barriers to learning from the mainstream for individual or small group support on the second level of support. For this to happen, the learning support teacher needs adequate space at the school for the second level of support provision. While the majority of learning support teachers in this study were of the opinion that they have adequate space for withdrawal, only 10% responded with a NO to this question, as depicted in Figure 5.23.

6.2.2.2 Institutional level support teams

In order to strengthen the provision of support in educational institutions, Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001:29) requires the establishment of Institutional Level Support Teams (ILST) to support the teaching and learning process. This is in line with the international trend regarding the potential of collaborative support within schools. The literature review (2.5.2.1) revealed that various terminologies are used to refer to such collaborative teams, such as multidisciplinary teams, collaborative teams, mainstream assistance teams and teacher support teams. The WCED opted for the terminology: Teacher Support Teams (TST), and more recently for Education Support Teams (EST) (3.4.2). With regard to the implementation of the learning support model it is stated that institutional-level support teams (ILST) must be established as soon as possible (3.5). According to the discussion on the role of the learning support teacher, it is expected that only learners referred through the ILST be withdrawn for additional support (3.5.1).

The analysis of both the questionnaires and the focus-group interviews made it clear that although schools have established ILSTs which works remarkably well on paper, they do not function effectively. While 95% of respondents reported that they withdraw learners from the mainstream for additional support at level two of the learning support model, only 85% report that all the learners they support at level two are referred through the ILST (Table 5.20).

Impeding factors that prevent the ILST to meet regularly include the following: ILST members are ordinary mainstream teachers who are also expected to perform extra-curricular duties. In most cases it seems that the learning support teacher plays an important role. However, data analysis suggests that there are a few **misconceptions** about the role of the ILST. Instead of being a collaborative forum with teachers supporting one another other in order to support the teaching and learning process as proposed in Education White Paper 6, some learning support teachers feel that they are responsible for giving all the advice. Nonetheless, data from both focus-group interviews and the survey indicates that the majority of respondents feel that they do get support from the ILST as shown in Tables 5.16 and 5.17. According to the content analysis of the learning support teachers' focus-group interview, the ILST has become a vehicle through which mainstream teachers can refer learners for automatic withdrawal. This might be linked to the fact that 38% of the mainstream teachers who took part in the survey do not consider themselves equipped to address barriers to learning in their classes (Table 5.14) and that data in Table 5.4 reveals that 76% of mainstream respondents have no remedial or learning support qualifications. However, this will be discussed further in the next section, as it has a bearing on support provided at level one of the learning support model.

6.2.3 Management of the learning support model as intervention

6.2.3.1 The role of the principal

The principal has a vital role to play regarding the provision of quality education for all learners in the school (2.4.2.1). As the role of the ILST is to support the teaching and learning process, it is imperative that the principal support its function. It is also the principal's responsibility to ensure that the senior management team and school governing body take ownership and support changes towards the development of an inclusive ethos in the school.

The importance of the role of the principal was reiterated in the data analysis. There was general consensus that the principal and senior management team play an essential role in the provision of learning support. One respondent aptly described the principal as the "driving force" behind the ILST. The majority of the respondents (Figure 5.12 & 5.13) are of the opinion that the principal has a vital role to play in ensuring that effective learning support is provided to learners experiencing barriers to learning. The qualitative responses to the questionnaires as well as the respondents in focus-group interviews made it clear that, teachers follow the example of the principal as the authoritative figure in the school. If the principal is unconcerned about the functioning of the ILST and the support provided by the learning support teacher, the staff will follow suit. However (according to Tables 5.12 & 5.13), there is some discrepancy in the opinions of learning support and mainstream teachers regarding the support provided by the

principal. Mainstream teachers are more inclined to say that the principal supports the ILST. Learning support teachers, who are dependent on the effective functioning of the ILST for the provision of support on level two of the learning support model, are less inclined to hold this opinion. As one respondent said in the focus group interview, she cannot wait for the ILST to meet before she helps a learner, because it takes too long.

The literature review indicated that teachers are much more positive about inclusive education and support for learners who are in need of additional support if the principal has a positive attitude towards inclusive education (2.5.2.2).

6.2.3.2 Learning support advisors

In Chapter 1.9.10 reference is made to the discrepency in terminology. Learning support facilitators (refered to as learning support advisors in the WCED learning support model) and co-ordinators were appointed in January 1999 and based at the local district office to manage the implementation of the learning support model. They were directly responsible to support and manage the function of school-based learning support teachers. According to a WCED circular (Training October /1/99) a Training Programme for Learning Support was offered to train the newly appointed staff with regard to their new roles within the learning support model.

As discussed earlier (3.5), school clinics were changed to function as service points with the advent of the EMDCs (district offices), and the staff was incorporated within the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES) component that functions as one leg of the EMDC. The vast West Coast/Winelands area currently has 9 learning support advisors (also refered to as LSEN advisors), each supporting and managing learning support teachers as well as learning support provision in mainstream schools in a circuit.

According to the survey (Table 5.15), 54% of the learning support respondents are of the opinion that the in-service training provided by learning support advisors are relevant, while 44% feel that they only sometimes benefit from this training. With regard to support, there is some variation in the number of visits to schools (Figure 5.7). This may be attributed to the vast area and long distances of especially the northern part of the district, as can be seen in Appendix A. However, the qualitative responses reveal that learning support teachers are generally positive regarding the support they receive from the learning support advisors in the area.

Learning support advisors are also part of a district support team, also refered to multi functional teams (see Fig 5.33). With regard to the district team as a whole, varied responses were received from respondents to the survey. The 2-3 times a year that they visit the schools are experienced

as inadequate and not always constructive, because the focus tends to fall on documentation rather than on support, with few follow-up visits. However, where there is a positive relationship, teachers were more positive towards the service provided. One response of importance was a request that the team should communicate with “all the educators because it’s about the whole school”.

6.2.4 Provision of support on level one of the learning support model

The intended beneficiaries of the learning support model are learners who experience learning difficulties in mainstream schools. The literature review (3.5) indicated that training and support for the mainstream teacher are envisioned for the first level of support. This support is to be provided by the learning support teacher, the ILST and officials based at the district offices and institutions outside of the education department.

According to the literature review (3.5.1) part of the function of the learning support teacher is to support and empower mainstream teachers to address the needs of all learners in the mainstream class. This approach acknowledges that the **system needs support** to address the needs of all learners in a school, particularly those experiencing barriers to learning. This approach is also aligned with the changing role of learning support teachers internationally (2.5.2.3). Enhancing mainstream teaching through the curriculum view of learning support can ensure that the needs of all learners who may experience difficulties in school are addressed. Therefore, not only does this system require learning support teachers to change, but the traditional role of mainstream teachers are challenged internationally as countries reconstruct their education systems in order to establish an inclusive education system (2.4). Teachers are now increasingly expected to accept a responsibility for educating all learners. However, the literature is also very clear that in order for this to happen, teachers are entitled to support through ongoing in-service training.

6.2.4.1 Support at level one of the learning support model

According to the survey (Table 5.18) the majority of mainstream respondents come from the intermediate phase, while the foundation and senior phase were represented by 40% in both cases. Although the first level of support in the learning support model has to take place in the **mainstream class** (Figure 5.9), only 93% of the mainstream respondents reported to know this. It was further established that a mere 38% of the mainstream respondents have the confidence to address barriers to learning in their classrooms (Tables 5.13 & 5.14). However, the survey revealed that 66% of these respondents do adapt lesson presentations and assessment for learners who experience barriers to learning in their classes, but only 34% believe that their strategies

benefit all learners in the classroom, with 55% reporting that the learners only sometimes benefit from their efforts.

Data from the open-ended questions in the survey and the content analysis of the focus group interviews (5.3.3.2) correlate in that the types of support provided by these teachers varied from groups of learners receiving help after school and teachers using of a resource file compiled by the learning support teacher, to differentiation of tasks and assignments, scaling down, and using different strategies. However, the focus-group interviews made it clear that foundation phase teachers are more inclined to differentiate, while intermediate and senior phase teachers tend to focus on their specific learning area content in order to complete a set amount of work. In the focus-group interviews the learning support teachers shared this concern about teachers in the intermediate and senior phase not differentiating and the fact that they work on the levels of the learners.

6.2.4.2 Barriers experienced by mainstream teachers

Both the qualitative responses in the survey, as well as those from the focus-group interviews revealed an array of reasons why teachers experience difficulty in addressing the needs of all learners in their classes. The problems are mainly due to large classes of up to 55 learners per class, insufficient time for providing additional support to those who struggle, the fact that many mainstream teachers do not have the relevant qualifications and knowledge to address specific barriers, and a heavy workload due to administrative responsibilities and extra-mural duties. This finding is consistent with the literature review (2.2.3) in confirming that in addition to legislation, mainstream schools need material and human resources to provide learning support suitable for each learner's special needs. The countries from the OECD study (referred to in Figure 2.2) that provide additional resources for learners experiencing learning difficulties in mainstream schools are Canada, Spain and the UK, followed closely by Poland and Turkey. The literature review confirms that in countries like Greece, minimal support is provided in mainstream classes where there is a lack of additional resources. Italy addressed the problem of large classes by enrolling learners who experience barriers to learning in a mainstream class only if the number does not exceed 20 learners. For every two learners with "special needs", a support teacher is provided in the mainstream. In addition, a support teacher is appointed in each class with up to four learners who need additional support. However, these are all examples of countries with a high level of human development, in contrast to the situation in the majority of schools in South Africa. In the focus-group interviews with mainstream teachers this was confirmed by their responses, indicating that they are of the opinion that socio-economic factors contribute to learning difficulties in school. Teachers have to cope with learners whose parents

battle with poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and generally adverse socio-economic circumstances.

The literature has nonetheless indicated that when teachers have the full support[7] of the principal and the local authorities, their support for inclusion escalated (2.5.2.2). This is confirmed by the data in 5.2.4.2 where the qualitative responses indicate the importance of the principal's role in the provision of learning support. It is further substantiated by the literature review in 2.4.2.1.

6.2.4.3 Qualifications of mainstream teachers

Research has indicated that many teachers are not ready or qualified to address the intense demands of the diverse classrooms of today (2.3). This notion was confirmed in the current study. The survey revealed that the majority of mainstream respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49 years (Figure 5.4), and that the majority of them do not have any formal training in either learning support or remedial teaching. This data is highly relevant, seeing that the open-ended questions of the survey (Table 5.14) and the focus-group interviews revealed that mainstream teachers generally do not feel equipped or qualified to teach learners experiencing learning difficulties, because they had received their teacher training before the policy of inclusive education was introduced.

However, the survey shows that 16.6% of the mainstream teachers are currently enrolled for courses to improve their qualifications, specifically in learning support or remedial education (Table 5.6b). According to the literature review, the success of inclusive education depends largely upon the nature and degree of teachers' commitment and goodwill. This, in turn, is greatly influenced by the context in which they work.

[7] Support: refers to the provision of learning support from a whole school perspective.

6.2.4.4 The role of the learning support teacher

The literature review (2.5.2.3) revealed that although research established that the role of the learning support teacher varies among different countries, it is generally accepted that their role has also changed in response to the quest for inclusive education. They are now increasingly expected to provide professional guidance and support for the mainstream teacher, enabling them to implement modified programmes in the mainstream classroom, as is also expected from learning support teachers who render a service in the learning support model in the West Coast/Wineland area. In fact, England has appointed a Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to co-ordinate provision for learners experiencing barriers to learning in the whole school.

In this current study all learning support respondents (100%) reported to be aware of the fact that the first level of support needs to take place in the mainstream classroom. However, while the majority (59%) of the respondents (Table 5.13) indicated that they feel well-equipped for their task, only 51% indicated that they feel confident enough to empower mainstream teachers through workshops. The researcher is of the contention that this data should be viewed against the information supplied in Table 5.9a, showing that the majority of learning support teachers come from the previous system of adaptation and special classes.

Nonetheless, both mainstream and learning support teachers who responded to the survey (Figures 5.14 & 5.15) admitted that support is provided. This was further confirmed by the outcomes of focus-group interviews with both groups of respondents. Data from the survey regarding the types of support provided to mainstream teachers was also confirmed by focus-group interviews with both mainstream and learning support teachers. The data reveals that the changed role of the learning support teachers and services rendered by them through this model corresponds with international trends described in the literature review (2.5.2.3). On this first level of support provided by the learning support teacher, the emphasis is on collaboration and consultation, where teachers share their expertise to help mainstream teachers in addressing the diverse needs of the learners in their classes. However, the survey also revealed that the learning support teacher is still expected to test learners, and is generally responsible for the development of support programmes that mainstream teachers can use in their classes. Both the survey and the focus-group interviews revealed that teachers are generally feel overwhelmed as they struggle to address the diverse needs of all learners in their classes. Learning support teachers report that one way of supporting mainstream teachers is by offering them moral support and motivation.

Figure 5.36 of the survey depicts that the majority of learning support respondents see themselves as the co-ordinators of learning support in the schools where they work. However, they report to do so because it is expected of them, given that they are considered qualified to do the work. In cases were they do not co-ordinate learning support, there either is a functional ILST, or they work as itinerant learning support teachers.

6.2.4.5 Collaboration between mainstream and learning support teachers

The ILST is the structure, recognised in the learning support model, through which teachers collaborate as a collective to support the teaching and learning process. Nonetheless, consultation and collaboration with mainstream teachers on an individual or group basis are essential elements of support on level one of the leaning support model. From the four-country study (2.5.2.3) it was found that mainstream teachers are not all prepared to collaborate with learning support teachers. The literature also revealed that mainstream teachers were relieved when learning support staff was appointed, because they saw it as an instant solution to their "problems".

In this study the majority of learning support teachers reported that they do not have the co-operation of all the mainstream teachers. The focus-group interview with learning support teachers confirms this in that they report that only some teachers co-operate. On the other hand, both the survey and the focus-group interviews revealed that not all learning support teachers help mainstream teachers to develop support programs. This further corresponds with data referred to above in 5.2.4.5 & Figure 5.16 as well as the fact that not all learning support respondents consider themselves well equipped for their task.

The literature review (2.5.2.2) revealed that in the experience of India, mainstream teachers' attitudes and co-operation depended on the credibility of specialist support personnel. It is further agued by Flavell (2001:23) that the learning support teacher needs to respect the professionalism of the mainstream staff, and work on developing ways of monitoring and evaluating the inclusion process. The reactions of learning support respondents confirm that maintaining a good and professional relationship with mainstream teachers is important. Therefore they report to monitor support very subtly in order not be experienced as policing the process.

6.2.5 Provision of support on level two of the learning support model

6.2.5.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 (3.5) describes support at level two as the level where the learning support teacher may periodically withdraw learners for additional support, individually or in a small group. This practice of withdrawal is consistent with the way education systems around the world, more specifically countries with a high level of human development (2.2.2 & 2.4.2), respond to addressing diverse needs of learners. According to the literature review (1.2 & 2.5.1) learners who experience barriers to learning and development are entitled to additional support beyond the classroom. These may be learners who are gifted and in need of an enriched curriculum, or it may be learners who experience severe learning and developmental barriers.

6.2.5.2 Full-time or itinerant learning support teacher

Although the WCED envisioned that each school should have a learning support teacher, the statistics show that almost half of the current group of learning support teachers in the West Coast/ Winelands area serves two or more schools (5.2.5.1). While 98% of the mainstream teachers would prefer one or more full-time learning support teacher at their school, the opinions of the majority of learning support respondents correlate with this perception of need, in that they could achieve more success in schools if they were employed full-time at one school only.

In both the survey and the interviews teachers offered various reasons that are also consistent with data from the literature review. As mentioned previously in this chapter, if schools are to provide learning support suitable for each learner's needs, they require additional human and material resources. However, the literature also revealed that mainstream teachers experience the learning support teacher as someone who will "take away their problems" (Mittler, 2000: 91). It can also deduced from this current study that such need exists, because mainstream teachers made it clear that they are not qualified and do not have enough knowledge or confidence to support learners in their classes, apart from the other barriers they experience as mainstream teachers. This position was discussed earlier in this chapter (6.2.4.2 & 6.2.4.3).

6.2.5.3 Focus of support

Statistical data from the survey (Table 5.21) indicate that learning support teachers do not have the same focus regarding groups that they support. The majority withdraw learners from grade 1-7, while 27% withdraw learners from the foundation phase only. Mainstream respondents in the focus-group interviews confirmed this in reporting that intermediate and senior phase teachers feel neglected. In some cases concerned teachers from these phases report that they feel free to

ask the learning support teacher for help and support material. This is confirmed by learning support teachers in the focus-group interview.

Although the job description of learning support teachers (3.5.1) prescribe that they should support learners in literacy and numeracy, some focus only on literacy, and a small percentage (2%) only on numeracy. The majority, however, do focus on both literacy and numeracy during withdrawal periods.

6.2.5.4 Neglect of the gifted learner

Mainstream respondents from both the survey and the focus-group interviews raised the concern that there is so much emphasis on the learners experiencing barriers to learning, that the other learners in need of enrichment are being neglected. According to the literature review (3.5), and as mentioned above, provision should be made for learners who may be gifted and in need of additional enrichment. However, none of the learning support teachers mention support to such learners.

6.2.5.5 Response to diversity through testing and segregation

This learning support model makes provision for support in a four-tiered continuum of services for learners who experience barriers to learning. This is in line with findings in the literature review that inclusive policies generally make provision for additional support outside the classroom for placement in special settings (2.4.2) Regardless of the definition of inclusive education (1.9.5) and the associated move away from the medical model, school systems still respond to diversity in schools by testing learners for purposes of segregation. Testing, whether diagnostic or formal, labels the learner with the aim of differentiating teaching and learning (curriculum segregation), or placing the learner in a special school (organisational segregation). Although South Africa has introduced an outcomes-based curriculum (3.2.4), which allows learners' performance to be measured against learning outcomes, while providing teachers with specific assessment standards, it is evident from both the survey and interviews that learners are still "tested" to a large extent. According to the literature review, one of the barriers responsible for the discrepancy between policy and the implementation of inclusive education is the "deep-rooted and persistent nature of old values and behaviours based on inequality such as racism, sexism and discrimination against people with disabilities" (Harber, 2001: 86).

On the other hand, the literature review (2.3) highlighted that learners with learning difficulties in the mainstream have to compete with standards-based measures of achievement, as is the case in South Africa with the recent systemic evaluations done in schools. This conjures up thoughts that inclusive education is placed in opposition to systemic evaluations. In addition to referral

from the ILST, learning support teachers therefore generally test learners diagnostically to determine levels and areas of support needed, sometimes at the request of individual teachers. However, mainstream teachers in both the survey and focus-group interviews complained that the referral process is cumbersome, with specific reference to placement in a special school, and that once tested, learners might not even be placed due to various factors, of which long waiting lists is the main reason. Teachers generally show high levels of frustration due to factors already mentioned in this chapter (6.2.4.2).

6.2.6 The learners (target group) respond positively to the learning support (intervention)

6.2.6.1 Introduction

The evaluation of a programme is discussed in Chapter 4 (4.3). Effectiveness of a programme or intervention is ultimately measured by the success of the outcomes. In this study the outcomes of the learning support model (intervention) will indicate if support is successful or not. The following section will discuss findings retrieved from the survey (both the quantitative and qualitative responses) and the focus-group interviews to ascertain whether learners benefit from the intervention they receive.

6.2.6.2 Experience of success at level two of the learning support model

According to the responses represented in Figure 5.27 and Table 5.22, the majority of learning support and mainstream teachers are of the opinion that learners who receive support in small groups generally show progress. However, when asked whether learners also experience success in the mainstream class, 58% of the learning support teachers were of the opinion that these learners only sometimes experience success. During the focus-group interviews learning support respondents confirmed this. The majority are very concerned about learners experiencing barriers to learning, and about the fact that mainstream teachers are inclined not to acknowledge small successes, which is detrimental to learners' self esteem. However, this finding could also be correlated with teachers' levels of qualifications and perceptions of their own competence to support learners, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Nonetheless, 43.7% of the mainstream respondents in Table 5.23 are of the opinion that these learners show a general improvement in academic performance, while only 25% of learning support respondents in Figure 5.27 shares this opinion.

6.2.6.3 Barriers to academic progress

In the data analysis various barriers were identified as reasons for minimal improvement in academic performance. These barriers seem to correspond with barriers experienced by mainstream teachers on level one, as discussed above in 6.2.4.2. However, learning support

teachers added the following factors that also surfaced during the focus group interview: teachers' patience and time available; learners' intellectual capacity and little differentiation done; learners' low levels of self-confidence and the poor socio-economic circumstances of many learners.

Mainstream teachers in the focus groups further stressed the need for specialised support to be readily available to schools. They attribute the situation to the lack of specialised qualifications and knowledge to support learners with specific needs.

6.2.6.4 Measurement of scholastic improvement and termination of support on level two

Learning support teachers participating in the survey reported that they measure the scholastic improvement of learners who are withdrawn for additional support by continuous assessment, diagnostic testing and informal assessment through observations, and by optaining feedback of learners' progress from the mainstream teacher. Both groups taking part in the focus-group interviews confirmed the testing of learners as being a mode of measurement (5.2.5.11).

Support through withdrawal is generally terminated when learners are able to cope with work on the grade level and demonstrate learning outcomes for that specific grade. Support is also terminated when positive feedback is obtained from the mainstream teacher, or after a period of two or three years. However, support at this level is also terminated when a learner refuses additional support, shows little or no progress, or is accepted at a special school (5.2.5.12). The situation with the latter two groups who are generally accommodated in the mainstream class is discussed in the next section.

6.2.7 Learners identified for Special School placement

6.2.7.1 Introduction

Although the focus of this evaluation is on level one and two, some learners are identified for placement in special schools who are still accommodated in the mainstream class. Data from the survey and responses from the focus-group interviews about inclusive education (5.3.5) will be integrated in this discussion.

The literature review (2.2.2) indicated that most countries still apply a dual system of education provision. Although most learners with mild learning difficulties are accommodated in mainstream schools, learners with moderate, severe and profound learning difficulties are placed in special classes or special schools. In South Africa, due to the socio-political history, some districts have no meaningful support for learners experiencing learning difficulties, particularly in rural and historically disadvantaged areas.

The West Coast/Winelands district does have special schools. However, mainstream teachers find the referral procedure time-consuming with regard to the administrative requirements and the delay in providing support or placement in a special school. In the focus-group interview respondents highlighted the economic disparities that still exist in South African schools. In more affluent communities parents have the financial means to acquire private support from professionals.

6.2.7.2 Support for learners who qualify for support on level three of the learning support model

Data from the survey pointed out that a significant number of learners with high-level intensity support needs find themselves in the mainstream school. There are many reasons for this situation. The major factors are long waiting lists at special schools; vast distances to special schools, and the fact that parents in some cases insist that their children be accommodated in the mainstream school. Some respondents argue that the policy of promoting learners with their age cohort allows learners to be promoted regardless of academic performance. Although parents may want their child to go to a special school, some feel that these schools are too far way and that it also has financial implications. As seen in the description of schools that took part in the focus group interviews, many parents battle with poverty and adverse socio-economic conditions.

The qualitative responses from the survey reflect a bleak portrait of the situation regarding learners whose names are on a waiting list of a special school. They are socially included, but enjoy very little academic support. Teachers are of the opinion that too much emphasis is being placed on academic performance and that emotional wellness and vocational skills that could prepare them for life, are neglected. Some of the respondents from both the survey and the interviews would prefer the special class to be re-instituted. There is still a very strong medical perspective focusing on the needs of these learners; hence the drastic statement by one respondent from the survey, saying that "learners who are not educable should be removed from the system".

Responses from both research methods and both groups (mainstream and learning support teachers) (5.2.6.2; 5.2.7; 5.3.4 & 5.3.5) confirm that there is a lack of adequate support for those learners with a high-level need for support in the mainstream class. Most of these learners are only socially included because mainstream teachers do not feel confident enough or qualified to provide the specialist support that they believe these learners in their classes need. The data also revealed that learning support teachers generally do not withdraw these learners for additional support on level two. Some learning support teachers are neither qualified nor competent to help mainstream teachers in addressing these learners' needs. However some provide some form of

support. From the survey, as well as from the interviews, it is clear that learners who are eligible for support on levels three and four are grossly neglected in the mainstream class. The literature review (2.2.3) indicates that countries with a similar learning support model have a well-established and well-resourced special education system adjacent to an equally well-resourced mainstream education system, enabling them to provide the necessary support. Most of these countries provide additional financial and human resources to assist mainstream teachers in providing adequate educational support to all learners.

6.2.8 Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education

The literature revealed the important role of mainstream teachers in establishing inclusive educational practices (2.5.2.2). It was, however, also established that even in countries with a high level of human development, mainstream teachers are more positive about the inclusion of learners with sensory or physical barriers than those with emotional, behavioural, or severe learning difficulties. Teachers' perceptions are also influenced by several other factors, such as the number of learners in the mainstream class, adequate accommodation, timetabling and the availability of learning material.

Data retrieved from this current study (5.3.5) confirms the findings in the literature review. However, it was also established that although the South African concept of "barriers to learning and development" is much broader than the traditional view of special needs, many mainstream teachers' perceptions of inclusive education were limited to the inclusion of learners who would qualify for placement in special schools. Therefore their objections include the physical accessibility of schools as a whole, as well as already over-crowded classes, limited resources and a lack of qualifications. However, this notion is not overrated, taking into consideration that the current available third and fourth level of support (special schools) has very long waiting-lists and that these learners, as seen from the above discussion, have to be accommodated in the mainstream class without significant support. Teachers therefore, perhaps rightfully so, feel that inclusive education looks good on paper, but essentially, learners are "dumped" in the mainstream as a money-saving strategy with little regard for the "rights of the teacher".

6.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter the research findings are discussed and integrated. The discussion followed the themes identified as evaluation objectives for this study (4.3.2). Throughout the discussion the researcher mapped the research findings against international trends and local national initiatives regarding the implementation of inclusive education and the provision of learning support.

In line with the ecosystemic theoretical framework that guides this research, it is evident from the findings that the research reveals the impact of the global- and macrosystems on the microsystem (Fig. 1.3). It further acknowledges the effects of the contextual factors on the periphery of the microsystem on the learning support delivery in the school. The discussion also recognises the interrelatedness of the subsystems within the school as microsytem.

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as from the literature review, reveal that this learning support model is clearly a model borrowed from countries with a high level of human development, as classified by the UN. These countries have a well-established and well-resourced special needs education system, parallel to an equally well-resourced mainstream education system.

South Africa, with its legacy of apartheid that was based on and thrived on racial discrimination, inequality and social injustices, is struggling to transform the system for learners experiencing barriers to learning from a medical model perspective to a human rights and social model approach. At present the learning support model is the responsibility of learning support advisors who are officials in the SLES component of the WCED's West Coast/Winelands district, while inclusive education is still the responsibility of a separate directorate in the national and provincial education departments. According to the UN classification, South Africa is a country with a low to medium level of human development country. The vast discrepancies among schools in this country do not allow for this model to be accepted unconditionally, and without a concerted effort to provide the necessary support systems for this continuum of service provision.

Although the literature review showed that the national department of education envisions a systemic approach to the improvement of the education system and support thereof, much of it is still in draft form – more than a decade after the advent of the new democracy.

The data indicates that learning support advisors were appointed to manage and support the implementation of the learning support model. Adaptation, special and remedial class teachers were utilised as learning support teachers in the new model of service delivery. While most of these teachers serve one school, some new appointments were made, and these persons mainly work as itinerant learning support teachers serving two or more schools. A significant percentage of learning support teachers still has a core group. By treating this group of learners as a separate class, elements of the previous system are in effect combined with the new learning support model. However, the data revealed that the term "learning support teacher" or "ELSEN teacher" is commonly used to refer to school-based support teachers. However, the terminology

"Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs (ELSEN)" is indicative of a medical model perspective. The terminology "Learning support teacher", on the other hand, is in line with the international trend in the change of terminology, which is indicative of a move towards a human rights and a social model regarding the support of learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Although the schools that took part in the survey and focus-group interviews all have the service of either a full-time or itinerant learning support teacher, a significant number of mainstream teachers said that they do not know the learning support model. However, during the interviews it became clear that teachers do know the levels of support provided. This has implications for advocacy of the learning support model in mainstream schools.

With regard to the capacity and infrastructure for delivering support in the new learning support model, only 10% of the learning support respondents reported not having adequate space to withdraw learners for support on level two. The data collected revealed that the ILSTs at schools are established as proposed in the Education White Paper 6, as well as being a prerequisite for the learning support model. However, the data also revealed that it does not function effectively. It showed that meetings are held irregularly, and even when there is an ILST meeting, it is not a collaborative search for the best possible solutions to address learners' needs. Learning support teachers experience it as an advice-giving session, or merely a referral procedure for withdrawal. It was also found that not all principals support the functions of the ILST. Mainstream teachers who find that the principal supports the efforts of the ILST and the learning support teacher are generally more positive towards supporting learners who experience barriers to learning in their classes.

The literature review and the data from this study further revealed the importance of a professional relationship between learning support and mainstream teachers, and their collaboration to provide adequate support to those learners who need it. However, learning support teachers do not have the co-operation of all mainstream teachers in the school. Although it was found that teachers do attempt to support learners, and the findings show that foundation phase teachers generally used differentiation, working on the levels of their learners, this seldom happens in the intermediate- and senior phases. Teachers are also torn between the policy of inclusive education and the need to produce improved results in the systemic evaluations conducted by the department of education.

The data (Table 5.3) revealed that most (65%) mainstream teachers have no formal qualification to provide support to learners who experience learning difficulties. They therefore do not feel

competent to provide the specialist support needed. Apart from the need for specialised support in the form of therapists, the data revealed a need to have at least one learning support teacher per school, as was the initial intention with the learning support model. Mainstream teachers argue that in their attempts to help learners who struggle, the more able learners are neglected. Large classes and a lack of financial and human resources, among other factors, aggravate this situation. In addition to the challenge of providing the relevant and adequate support, there is also a need to provide in-service training to teachers who had their initial teacher training in the now redundant medical model.

It is clear from the data that contrary to the move away from the medical model, learners are still being tested with the prospect of curriculum or organisational segregation. However, this echoes data from the literature review, showing that parents of learners in wealthier countries are increasingly demanding that their children be "labelled", making them eligible for additional and specialised support provided through an intricate funding system.

Learners who receive additional support through withdrawal show minimal academic progress. The research findings show that mainstream teachers, although supported by learning support teachers, do not always support these learners in their classes. It is reported that they work on different levels, so that progress cannot take effect. Many reasons, including lack of qualifications and other factors already mentioned, are supplied. The data revealed that support on level two is generally terminated when learners can cope with work in the mainstream class. Additional support is also terminated after two or three years if there is no significant scholastic improvement.

Because of a lack of support on level three and four of the learning support model in a country that does not have the same special education system as those that opted for a continuum of services, many learners in the study who were identified for placement are accommodated in the mainstream class. Teachers feel ill-equiped to support these learners and get little help from learning support teachers or from the district officials. These learners are ultimately only socially included in the mainstream class while awaiting an opening at a special school. Some of these learners never get placed, and subsequently leave school when they reach school leaving age.

Opinions of inclusive education among mainstream teachers were generally infused with the perception that learners who are eligible for support in special schools must now be accommodated in the mainstream class, regardless of whether they have the qualifications, infrastructure or adequate support. Some of the learning support teachers seemed to share this opinion. They argue that the policy looks good on paper, but is not well implemented because

mainstream teachers do not and cannot provide the needed support. Neither do some of them feel confident enough to do so, or even to support mainstream teachers with learners who have a high level support need. This has major implications for the narrowing of the divide between policy and the implementation of inclusive education.

These findings recognise the need for adaptations with the view to successfully implementing inclusive education through a continuum of services, in a country that does not have the resources of those from whom this learning support model was adopted. In the next chapter recommendations will be made to improve current practices regarding the provision of learning support through this learning support model within a whole-school approach from an ecosystemic perspective.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Inclusive education is much bigger than special education and should thus not be limited to learners with disabilities and their teachers (Slee, 2000: 121).

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study originated from a desire to make a positive contribution to the implementation of the policy of inclusive education and the development of learning support structures in South Africa as a developing democracy. The literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 explored ways in which several countries address the issues of inclusive education and learning support provision. The ecosystemic theoretical approach used in this study acknowledges the dynamic interactions of the multiple systems at school level and the valuable contribution it can make towards establishing effective learning support structures in this country.

This chapter will provide concluding statements and recommendations, with the aim to improving current learning support practices within a whole-school approach from an ecosystemic perspective. These recommendations are based on the research findings as discussed in the literature review and Chapter 6.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study made use of an ecosystemic theoretical approach to the provision of learning support in an inclusive education system and the research is located in the pragmatic paradigm. An evaluation of the learning support model currently used in the West Coast/Winelands was conducted. The pragmatic paradigm allowed the researcher to design a comprehensive mixed methods study to answer the research questions posed in Chapters 1 and 4. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data. The measuring instruments used to collect data consisted of questionnaires, focus-group interviews and document analysis.

In Chapter 2 the international movement towards inclusive education as well as the associated paradigm shift was discussed. This chapter explored the global trend in educational transformation aimed at including all learners in the quest toward Education for All. The ways countries with a high and medium to low level of development address issues of inclusive

education and the provision of learning support was explored. The literature review incorporated a discussion on learning difficulties, as the learners who experience learning difficulties constitute the largest proportion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools. Chapter 2 further considered international perspectives on inclusive education and their influence on approaches to support learners with diverse abilities within an inclusive educational setting. Finally, the changing role of mainstream teachers and support services staff in response to the diverse needs of all learners was addressed from a whole school perspective.

The literature review in Chapter 3 specifically focussed on South Africa's journey towards an inclusive education system. The contextual factors that shaped the educational transformation as part of the democratisation of the country was discussed in a historical overview of the development of education support services before 1994 and beyond. This provided a background for understanding the development of special education and the provision of learning support services from a racially segregated medical model to that of an inclusive education system from a human rights perspective. Towards the end of this section, the gap that exists between current policy and implementation thereof is raised as an issue of concern. This was followed by a discussion of the implementation of inclusive education as well as the restructuring of support services that is aimed at providing support based on a systemic approach. The literature review revealed current and existing provision of learning support services at district and school level. This is followed by a discussion on the changed roles of mainstream and support services staff with regard to inclusive education. Finally this chapter provides a description of the WCED learning support model as well as the rationale for implementing this model.

Chapter 4 gives an in depth account of the research design and methodology used in the conduct of the study. The research design is diagrammatically presented in Figure 4.2. This is followed by a discussion on the research process and the rationale for using a comprehensive evaluation approach that focus on both process and content. A data collection plan is set out in Table 4.1 and discussed in detail. This is followed by an account of how the researcher planned to analyse and interpret the collected data. Furthermore, an explanation is given on how validity and reliability of the research will be ensured as well as the ethical guidelines that steer the research.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of data collected sequentially through questionnaires and focus group interviews. The analysis and interpretation of the data collected through questionnaires was done first followed by an interpretation of the data collected though the semi-structured focusgroup interviews. The SPSS data analysis computer programme was used in analysing the quantitative data. The section allocated to the focus group interviews gives a description of each of the four schools that participated. This is followed by a thematic

discussion and interpretation of the interviews related to the implementation of the learning support model as well as views on support provided on the first two levels of the model. Views of the focus group consisting of learning support teachers were incorporated in this discussion and interpretation of verbal data. Finally an account is given on the views of the participants on inclusive education.

In Chapter 6 data from both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were integrated and discussed thematically in response to the initial research questions as set out in Chapter 1. The findings from the results is further mapped against international and local national initiatives regarding the implementation of inclusive education and the provision of learning support, as revealed in the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study.

In this final chapter of the study concluding statements are made. This is followed by a set of 26 recommendations based on the research findings as discussed in the literature review and Chapter 6. These recommendations are structured according to the ecosystemic model proposed in figure 1.3. The aim of these recommendations is to improve current learning support practices within a whole-school approach from an ecosystemic perspective. Finally a model for improved learning support service delivery is proposed and diagrammatically presented.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this current research confirmed that adaptive and supportive services are needed to address the needs of all the learners in mainstream primary schools. With regard to the research questions that guided this study, the researcher came to the following conclusions:

1. The data analysis in Chapter 5, along with the discussion in Chapter 6, revealed that the learning support model used in the West Coast/Winelands area does not provide effective learning support to all learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream primary schools from the perspective of the learning support and mainstream teacher.
2. Various constraints contributing to above-mentioned conclusion were identified by the research. These constraints include among others the following:
   - Deep-rooted and persistent nature of old values and behaviours based on the medical model.
   - Over crowded classes
   - Lack of teacher competence and confidence to teach learners who experience barriers to learning

- Inadequate human and financial resources
- Ineffective Institution Level Support Teams
- Poor collaboration between mainstream and learning support teachers particularly in intermediate and senior phases
- Long waiting lists for special school placing

3. Findings from this research indicate that the perceptions of mainstream and some learning support teachers regarding inclusive education are limited to the inclusion of learners who would qualify for placement in special schools to be accomodated in mainstream schools. This is in direct opposition to the South African concept of "barriers to learning and development" which is much broader than the traditional view of special needs.
4. Learning support is generally perceived by mainstream teachers as the responsibility of the learning support teacher. It became clear that the provision of learning support is not viewed systemically as a whole-school concern as defined by Booth *et al*. (2000:21) in Chapter 1.9.7.
5. The collected data mapped against the literature review implies a need to re-address the needs of all learners and overcoming constraints revealed by this evaluation research. The implications for the improvement of the learning support model therefore are that learning support should be addressed from within a whole-school approach, taking into consideration local contextual factors impacting on the school.

The emphasis of this chapter is on making recommendations to improve current learning support practices. The recommendations (7.4) are presented in an ecosystemic theoretical framework to a whole-school approach.

South Africa has adopted the broad concept of barriers to learning and development, which confirms the notion that inclusive education transcends the traditional concept of special education needs from a medical model perspective. This is pointing toward a human rights view to inclusive education. The emphasis of inclusive education in South Africa is therefore on redressing the past, equity and access in education. Every learner has the right to education. No country can afford to recklessly go about the concept of inclusive education. Therefore, if inclusive education is to be effectively implemented in this country, the government has the obligation to provide additional human and financial resources.

The researcher is of the opinion that the learning support model currently used in the WCED could be seen as a suspension bridge between traditional forms of exclusion on its way towards

full inclusion. It should be seen as part of the transformation process of the education system in South Africa while issues presented as recommendations in this chapter are addressed.

The planned provision of strategies and resources to implement inclusive education in context will eventually close the divide between policy and implementation. Inclusive education must accordingly not be perceived as an event, but rather a process that gradually unfolds as these strategies and resources are put in place. The debate on inclusive education must therefore continue and be kept alive for the benefit of all learners.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 (1.4) it was noted that the education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (Department of Education, 2001: 7) recognises that while barriers to learning may arise from a range of factors from within the learner (internal), there are factors in the system (external) that may contribute to creating a range of barriers to learning and development. This notion further recognises the interconnectedness of the different systems involved in providing quality education to all learners. It is also acknowledged that South Africa has opted for a systemic approach to the restructuring of the education system. Therefore, in addressing the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning and development, cognisance must be taken of all the contextual factors involved in the provision of learning support, as they relate within the school as a system.

7.4.2 The learning support model

The data obtained from the research gives a clear indication that the learning support model used in the West Coast/Winelands district of the Western Cape shows compelling similarities with those of countries with a high level of human development. The literature revealed that countries with a high level of human development have thus far dominated much of the international debate on inclusive education. The introduction of this learning support model confirms this, together with the statement made by Muthukrishna (2003: vii) that "that paradigms, theories, policies and practices of the north are transferred to the south without considering its own special set of systems". South Africa, because of its socio-political context, displays vast disparities regarding the socio-economic contexts of the different communities it serves. Therefore South Africa cannot adopt a foreign learning support model without providing additional support to sustain learning support delivery in schools, taking into consideration their particular contexts. A

learning support model should therefore acknowledge the acute discrepancies inherited in terms of existing quality and quantity of learning support provision as the result of our history.

The recommendations proposed will be presented within an ecosystemic framework as discussed in Chapter 1. Chapter 1 (Figure 1.3) presents an ecosystemic model for the provision of learning support within a whole-school approach.

7.4.3 The global system

It is recognised that international perspectives and trends regarding inclusive education and support thereof on the global systemic level has a significant impact on, and transcends into the South African education system. It is, however, imperative that the diverse nature of the South African context be considered when specific practices are adopted as discussed in the previous paragraph.

7.4.4 The macro system

The subsystems within the macro system of the South African education system are responsible for development and implementation of policy. These subsystems are dynamically interacting on a continuous basis.

South Africa has introduced inclusive education as part of the restructuring of the education system as a whole. The NCSNET/NSESS report (Department of National Education, 1997: 55) recognised that the former separate education systems ("special" and "ordinary") needed to be integrated to provide one unified system in order to acknowledge and respond to the diverse needs of learners. This is evident from the unification of racially and ethnically segregated education departments of the past. However, on both national and provincial levels, separate directorates are still responsible for mainstream education and inclusive education. It seems that the rhetoric was adapted to correspond with the new paradigm. These structures are duplicated at district levels in the form of Curriculum Services and Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES), as it is known in the Western Cape Education Department. This is a perpetuation of the dual education system, consisting of mainstream and special education that was based on the medical view of education. The literature revealed that when special education provision is administered separately from the mainstream education system, it is difficult to achieve significant inclusion.

Recommendation 1: There should be one unified directorate responsible for delivering the curriculum in an inclusive education system.

On the contrary, the researcher acknowledges that there should be supportive structures to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education. Therefore:

Recommendation 2: There should be trans-disciplinary collaboration and reflective practices between the directorates of curriculum services and that of SNE. It is necessary to diminish the divide between policy and implementation as identified in the literature and confirmed by the data retrieved from this research. One such practice identified in the research is the use of medical terminology and practices perpetuated in official national documentation.

Recommendation 3: The terminology "learners experiencing learning difficulties in the mainstream" should replace medical model terminology "remedial learners in the mainstream" and "learners with special education needs (LSEN)". As learning difficulties represent but one range of barriers, this terminology is more in line with the broad concept of "barriers to learning and development" accepted in the Education White Paper 6.

Although South Africa has opted for an outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum, which is in essence an inclusive curriculum, it is the responsibility of the SLES component to ensure inclusive practices and provision for learners experiencing learning difficulties and other barriers to learning and development as defined in the Education White Paper 6. In reality, it is the responsibility of the SLES component to ensure the implementation of Education White Paper 6. This may in part also account for the discrepancy between the policy and the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa.

Recommendation 4: The implementation of Education White Paper 6 should not be the exclusive responsibility of any one directorate, but rather that of the education system and its officials as a whole.

7.4.5 The micro system

7.4.5.1 Introduction

The school is presented as the micro system of the broader education system. There are several subsystems operating within the school system. The mainstream classroom, as one of these subsystems, is at the centre of the school. As seen in Figure 1.3, there is a constant vibrant interaction between the classroom and the other subsystems within the school.

Recommendation 5: The Department of Education should take into account the contextual factors impacting on individual schools when planning programmes to develop inclusive schools. The literature made it clear that the cascade model of training and empowering is

ineffective. It is therefore advisable to focus training and support on individual schools to ensure efficacy and sustainability.

7.4.5.2 The periphery

The contextual factors encapsulated on the periphery of the school as a system are important. As revealed in Chapter 5, many schools are confronted with diverse barriers and adverse socio-economic circumstances. There are schools that have to cope with learners living in adverse circumstances with little or no supportive structures. The research established that teachers battle with the management of discipline in schools, the effect of foetal alcohol syndrome on the situation in the classroom, and effective teaching.

Recommendation 6: It is imperative that the influences of local community structures and organisations, as well as the effect of the family and peer groups on creating and/or alleviating barriers to learning and development are acknowledged in ILST discussions and recommendations.

Recommendation 7: Schools should establish relationships with community structures and organisations to be co-opted on ILSTs when the need arises, and to foster co-operation with these structures on the periphery.

7.4.5.3 Learning support provision in the mainstream class

According to Education White Paper 6, the mainstream class teacher is the primary human resource to achieve the goal of an inclusive education and training system. It is also the mainstream teacher who has to provide learning support on level one of the learning support model. However, research has shown that although mainstream teachers attempt to support learners who experience learning difficulties in their classes, the majority are not appropriately qualified, nor do they have enough confidence to address barriers to learning in their classes. This finding has serious implications for pre- and in-service teacher training. Most teachers currently in service had training that was based on a medical model perspective, which accounts for their low levels of confidence in addressing the needs of all their learners.

The current research has confirmed findings from the literature review that South African teachers still hold on to traditional beliefs and practices on school level. It is clear that these conservative attitudes have an impact on how they view their own role with regard to addressing the needs of all their learners in an inclusive education system.

Recommendation 8: Teachers still need to make a profound paradigm shift if meaningful transformation is to be achieved.

These findings have serious implications for the implementation of inclusive education in the midst of limited human and financial resources. It has become essential that mainstream teachers receive continuous, relevant in-service training to enable them to address the diverse needs of the learners in their classes. Currently only a small percentage of mainstream teachers further their studies in the field of inclusive education.

Recommendation 9: Incentives (for example, study leave) from the department of education should be provided to encourage mainstream teachers to obtain qualifications in inclusive education and related fields.

Recommendation 10: The department of education should make a concerted effort to provide in-service training to mainstream teachers. Although all teachers need such training, the findings show a greater need in Intermediate and Senior Phases. Therefore training should focus on supporting the Intermediate and Senior Phases, as these are the teachers who experience more difficulty in addressing the diverse needs in their classes. This training should be a collaborative strategy, planned and implemented by both Curriculum Services and SLES, and initiated at national level. This will ensure that the effort is not experienced as an add-on by teachers, but rather as the implementation of Education White Paper 6 and part of the restructuring and democratisation of the education system. This training should not be provided according to the cascading model where individual teachers are trained and expected to empower the rest of the staff at their respective schools. Training should be provided to all the teachers in their school context. This training should take on different forms where teachers can learn from each other as well as from other professionals.

Recommendation 11: Training should cultivate positive perceptions in mainstream teachers about their own abilities to address barriers to learning in their classes.

Recommendation 12: A follow-up programme for the implementation and monitoring of support is essential for all training.

7.4.5.4 Sustainable institution level support teams

Although the WCED has embarked on the establishment of Institution Level Support Teams (ILST) at schools in the province, this was the responsibility of the SLES component. The ILST is intended to be a team that collaboratively co-ordinates learner and educator support services in schools. According to the literature, collaborating teams should constitute the practical embodiment of a school’s commitment to provide education for all. However, the research revealed that although there are attempts to meet regularly, many contextual factors make

effective functioning very difficult. This proves to be true of the larger schools, but particularly of smaller, rural schools where the ILST constitutes the whole staff.

Recommendation 13: There is an urgent need to sustain ILSTs with continued and regular support and training by the WCED as an education department in the form of a district-based support team, as stated in the Education White Paper on building an inclusive education and training system. This function should not be relinquished to any one directorate, for this will perpetuate the belief that the ILST is another form of special needs provision, which is contrary to the aims of inclusive education and the broad, all encapsulating concept of “barriers to learning and development”.

7.4.5.5 Teaching assistants

The literature revealed that countries making use of a continuum of support increasingly address the need to support the implementation of inclusive education by appointing teaching assistants. Mainstream teachers in schools welcome teaching assistants, as they allow them more time to teach large classes and to address the diverse needs of all learners.

The WCED recently appointed teaching assistants in some schools in the province to support teachers of grade one classes. In the light of the barriers teachers experience in performing their task, the appointment of teaching assistants can be a valuable resource in providing support in inclusive classrooms.

Recommendation 14: At least one teaching assistant per class should be appointed on primary school level.

However, limited financial resources in a country with a low to medium level of human development may make it difficult to provide such support to all mainstream classes. Therefore it becomes imperative for mainstream teachers to be skilled in strategies that would enable them to teach multi-level classes as suggested in this chapter (7.4.5.5).

7.4.5.6 Class size

The current research revealed that teachers experience large classes as the overwhelming reason why they are not successful in providing support in the mainstream classes. Overcrowded classes make it difficult for the teacher to attend to the needs of all learners, especially those who are on a waiting-list of a special school. Italy, in their quest to include all learners, only allows a learner with special needs if the class does not exceed 20 learners. Spain provides a 25% reduction in class size and the services of a support team to schools that accept learners with serious barriers to learning.

Recommendation 15: If inclusive education is to be implemented successfully, it becomes imperative that the current teacher-learner ratios be lowered to allow teachers space and opportunity to provide the necessary support in increasingly complex and diverse mainstream classes.

7.4.5.7 Learning support provision through withdrawal

The learning support model makes provision for the learning support teacher to periodically withdraw learners from the mainstream class for individual or small group support. This practice is still exercised in many countries that provide a continuum of support. However, recent literature (Slee, 2001) argues that this amounts to a perpetuation of the traditional special needs framework. Although it is supposed to support inclusion, the argument is posed that withdrawal of learners from the mainstream classroom constricts inclusive education and perpetuates the medical model. Nonetheless, the literature review in 2.4.2 identified the provision of additional learning support outside the mainstream classroom as necessary to support the implementation of inclusive education. It was further established that in order to manage the provision of learning support from a whole school perspective, schools will need some guiding principles.

In a country like South Africa that lacks the well-resourced dual education systems of the more affluent countries, withdrawal may be the support that schools and teachers desperately need to cope with the broad concept of barriers to learning. The current research revealed that amidst the demands of large classes and adverse socio-economic circumstances, teachers welcome the support offered by a learning support teacher. In the absence of the necessary support, learners experiencing learning difficulties are denied access to the curriculum, and are only socially included.

Recommendation 16: It is advisable to provide every primary school with at least one learning support teacher post, as was initially envisioned by the WCED.

However, the following factors are important for the success of support through withdrawal:

- Learning support should not be seen as the sole responsibility of the learning support teacher.
- Mainstream teachers must accept the fact that they have to address the diverse needs of their learners on the first level of support in the learning support model.
- Mainstream teachers must be skilled and able to adapt their planning and lesson presentations and to devise strategies for addressing the multi-levels in their classrooms.
- It is essential that mainstream teachers be supported regarding methodology and implementation of support strategies.

- There should be regular interaction between mainstream and learning support teachers to ensure sustained collaborative support to learners.

7.4.5.8 The changing role of learning support teachers

The current job description of learning support teachers (3.5.1) reflects a changed view of their responsibilities. In addition to providing support to learners in small groups, they are now expected to support and empower mainstream teachers to adapt the curriculum and to develop relevant programmes and material. They are also expected to provide in-service training to mainstream teachers regarding teaching strategies that promote inclusive education and address the needs of all learners.

This new approach to the provision of learning support is underscored by the international trend, which increasingly expects the learning support teacher to provide professional guidance and support for the mainstream teacher, enabling them to implement modified programmes in the mainstream classroom. They are seen as instrumental in establishing inclusive schools. In some countries the learning support teacher is appointed with the sole purpose of co-ordinating the necessary provision for learners experiencing barriers to learning in the whole school.

Recommendation 17: Learning support teachers should embrace this new way of service delivery with a view to promoting inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms.

Recommendation 18: The role of the school-based learning support teachers need to be reconceptualised as of one of co-ordinating support services delivered, and supporting of mainstream teachers in their efforts to address barriers to learning in their classrooms.

The research revealed that although teachers do request help, learning support teachers are very careful not to harm relationships with mainstream teachers in their endeavour to ensure implementation of support strategies (5.2.4.6). The researcher is of the opinion that this situation is directly linked to the fact that the learning support teacher is currently on post level one. However, if learning support teachers are to co-ordinate learning support in the school and support and train mainstream colleages, she/he will have to have more authority. Therefore, in recognition of the changed role and job description of learning support teachers, the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation 19: Learning support teachers should be promoted to post level two, which will acknowledge the essential role they play in schools and provide them with the authority to manage the implementation of learning support in mainstream classes.

7.4.5.9 Continuous planned training and support for learning support teachers

A significant percentage of learning support teachers appointed in the new model in the WCED are former special, adaptation and remedial teachers. The data revealed that only 59% of learning support teachers feels well equipped for their task. Almost half (49%) of the learning support respondents do not feel confident enough to empower mainstream teachers through workshops.

Recommendation 20: A comprehensive strategy is needed to train and support learning support teachers who come from the old system.

Recommendation 21: A sustained provincially and district co-ordinated program for in-service training and support for personal development and growth are needed for all learning support teachers in the field.

7.4.5.10 The role of the principal in learning support provision

Data from this current research confirmed that the school principal plays a crucial role regarding the provision of quality education for all learners. It is therefore imperative that the principal as manager and authoritative figure in the school, together with the learning support teacher, senior management team and the governing body, ensure that all learners have access to the whole school and all activities provided by the school. In the quest to implement inclusive education the principal needs to be actively involved and supportive of the development and implementation of a plan (Refer to recommendations 24 - 26) to ensure that all learners' needs are addressed. The diagram in figure 1.3 clearly depicts the school's culture and norms at the centre of the leadership and management of the school. It is thus clear that the provision of learning support from a whole school approach will be determined by the extent to which every learner is valued. It is further evident in the literature that providing quality learning support invariably contributes to the provision of quality education for all in the whole school.

Recommendation 22: All school principals, as managers, should be trained to understand the principles of Education White Paper 6.

Recommendation 23: Principals should be empowered to manage school reform that will ultimately culminate in an inclusive school.

7.4.5.11 Whole school development

An inclusive school amounts to more than merely accepting learners who were previously excluded from mainstream schooling. In the South African context it implies opening the doors to and accepting all learners, regardless of barriers to learning. These barriers consist of a range of circumstances that in the past prevented learners from attending school, or specific schools.

These barriers are stipulated in Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001:17-18). It has thus become essential that schools re-examine what they offer to learners they admit. The literature revealed that establishing effective inclusive schools implies comprehensive planning and adequate provision of learning support and resources.

The data from this study confirmed research findings in the literature review that adequate and properly managed learning support generally leads to the improved academic performance of learners. This has important implications for the improvement of literacy and numeracy attainment levels required by the national curriculum. It is therefore imperative that the provision of learning support be managed strategically as part of the overall school improvement process.

A whole-school perspective of learning support provision further challenges schools to respond positively to diversity, and to celebrate and nurture individual differences. Schools therefore need to totally reconsider their ethos regarding the provision of quality education for all learners in the school. A starting point would be to focus and guide an ecosystemic approach to developing and nurturing more inclusive practices in schools as learning organisations.

The department of education has introduced a directorate for quality assurance responsible for supporting schools in whole-school development. Nine focus areas were identified to help schools develop a whole-school improvement plan. The following two recommendations relate to the development and implementation of such a plan.

Recommendation 24: The provision of learning support should be fundamental in the whole-school improvement plan of all schools in order to reduce the percentage of learners who fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills before they leave primary school.

Recommendation 25: Every school must develop a policy regarding the provision of learning support as an integral part of whole-school development. The WCED learning support model and current job description of learning support teacher should be used as a framework to develop a learning support policy that considers the specific needs and context of the school.

Recommendation 26: This policy should include the following aspects:

- Recommendations to encourage the development of good practice in the organisation and provision for learners experiencing barriers to learning, and the delivery of the curriculum to them
- The roles of all staff members, learning support teacher, teaching assistants, senior management team and governing body

- The roles of the ILST, assessment committee and other relevant committees in the school
- Detailed procedures for identifying, assessing and planning programmes to address barriers to learning
- Providing a copy of the learning support model to illustrate the continuum of support delivery
- Guidelines for fostering a relationship with parents
- Guidelines for involving community structures

It should be the responsibility of all teachers to be aware of the requirements of this policy and to discuss it with colleagues.

In the light of the data gleaned from the literature review and from this mixed methods research study, the researcher would like to propose the following model for the improvement of learning support service delivery at the micro-level within a whole-school approach from an ecosystemic perspective.

7.5 A PROPOSED MODEL FOR IMPROVED LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICE DELIVERY

Training should ideally be done on an individual school level and not through the cascade model that only empowers a few. It was further revealed in the literature (3.4.6) that the cascading model is ineffective. The school as microsystem must accept responsibility and ownership of learning support delivery. The proposed model should be implemented with all the said recommendations (7.4) in mind. Additionally, it is imperative that the implementation of the model should take cognisance of the contextual factors impacting on the specific school.

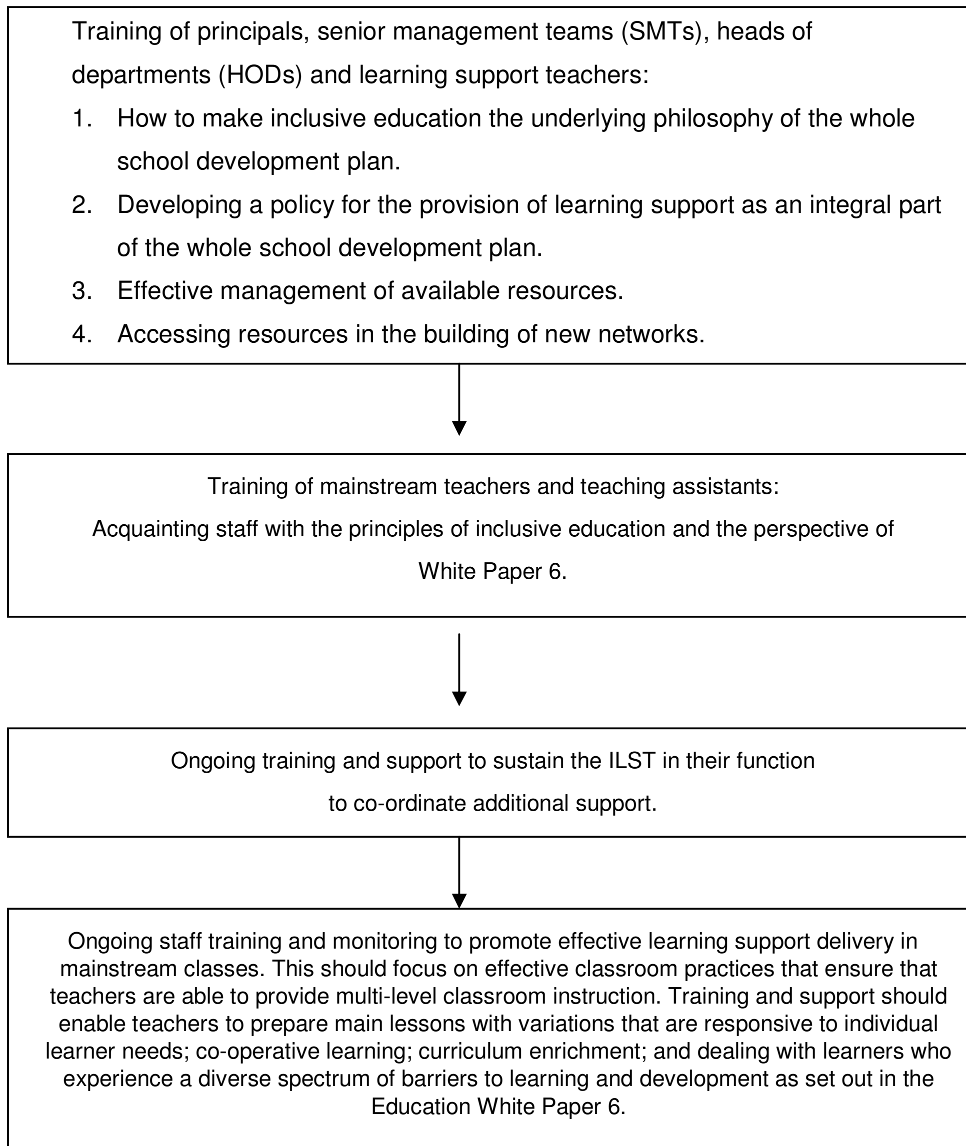

FIGURE 7.1: A PROPOSED MODEL FOR IMPROVED LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter provides a comprehensive list of recommendations with a view to improving learning support delivery within the existing learning support model currently used in the West Coast/Winelands area. These recommendations transpired out of an extensive research into the available literature and a “mixed methods” research design applied in this study. The proposed model for improved learning support service delivery is a culmination of the recommendations made in this chapter.

Although the focus of this model is on learning support provision and delivery, the researcher is of the opinion that schools can address the needs of all learners successfully through this model. In the process schools can improve the academic achievement levels of all learners. This systemic approach to the provision of learning support at the micro-level of the education system

is in line with the systemic approach the department of education has embarked upon to restructure the entire South African education system.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The debate on inclusive education and provision made to support implementation thereof is relatively young in South Africa, compared to countries in Europe, Scandinavia, Northern America and Australia. Literature on inclusive education is thus largely based on and influenced by experiences of these countries. Literature on inclusive education in the countries with a low to medium level of human development is very limited and mainly based on research initiated by international organisations like UNESCO. There is, however, literature available taking the specific South African context into consideration.

The researcher had the desire to map the current learning support model of the WCED against international and local support models. One of the limitations of this study was that there is very little literature available on countrywide provincial structures that provide learning support to learners experiencing learning difficulties in mainstream primary schools.

The study covered a vast geographical area with big distances between schools. Strategies were devised to decrease possible limitations in terms of time and finances that the vast distances could pose. The researcher obtained permission from the head of the SLES component to address learning support teachers at their circuit meetings. At these meetings the questionnaires were discussed and disseminated. Learning support teachers also agreed to dispatch questionnaires among mainstream teachers at the schools where they work. Learning support advisors agreed to collect questionnaires and return them to the researcher at the next advisors' meeting. Almost all learning support teachers of the district could attend, with the exception of a few individuals. This accounts for a significant return of questionnaires. The limitations of the instruments were minimised by conducting a pilot study on the questionnaires.

Another limitation of this study relates to the impact of learning support provided on the scholastic progress of learners. This study only tested the opinions of learning support and mainstream teachers. These opinions are based on the teachers' experiences and conceptualisation of what learning support and inclusive education entails.

The recommendations made in 7.4 and the proposed model in 7.5 should by no means be interpreted as all-inclusive. It should, however, be regarded as a positive contribution to the implementation of the policy of inclusive education and the establishment of learning support structures in the context of the rapidly developing new South African democracy.

Themes that go beyond the parameters of the current study have emerged from this study, and justify further research. The scope of this study attended to the evaluation of the learning support model. The focus was specifically on level one and two of the learning support model. The primary respondents were mainstream and learning support teachers. However, the following themes, although relevant to the provision of learning support through a continuum of support, were not addressed in the current study:

- The role of other support services (e.g. school psychologists and therapists)
- The provision of support to learners whose names are on waiting-lists of special schools
- Neglect of gifted and more able learners
- The role and involvement of parents
- The role of community support structures
- The development and support from full-service schools
- Special schools as resource centres for mainstream schools.
- The discrepancy between the policy of inclusive education and the education departmental systemic evaluations.

The above-mentioned topics justify further research in the quest to overcome barriers to learning and support in schools, with the aim to provide adequate learning support from an ecosystemic perspective.

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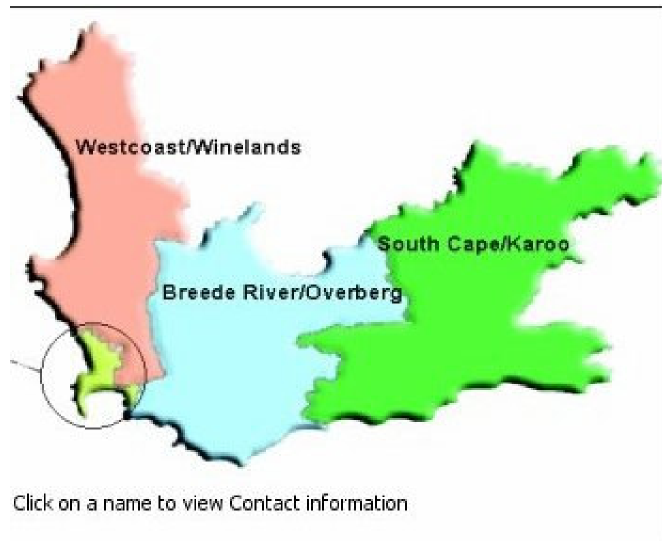
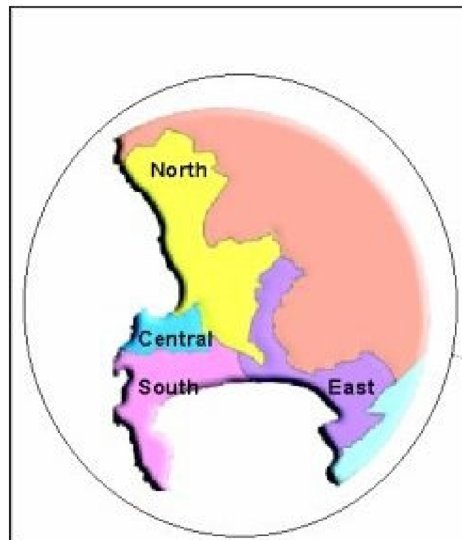
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:MAP OF THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRES



1. Rural EMDC's



2. EMDC'S in the metropole

APPENDIX B:PERMISSION FROM THE WCED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Navrae
Enquiries **Dr RS Cornelissen**
IMibuzo

Telefoon
Telephone **(021) 467-2286**
IFoni

Faks
Fax **(021) 425-7445**
IFeksi

Verwysing
Reference **20041213-0047**
ISalathiso

Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mrs Lorna Dreyer
7 Upper Burg Street
WELLINGTON
7655

Dear Mrs L. Dreyer

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: AN EVALUATION OF A LEARNING SUPPORT MODEL IN THE WESTCOAST/WINELANDS AREA.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in 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. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **26th March 2007 to 21st September 2007.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2007).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as submitted to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

    The Director: Education Research
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 26th March 2007

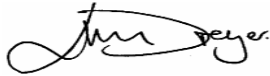
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

Thank you very much for your willingness to complete this questionnaire. It forms part of the research requirements for study purposes. The study focuses on the evaluation of the learning support model currently used in the Western Cape.

GENERAL

1. Please answer **all** the questions.
2. The questionnaire must be completed in **ink**.
3. Some questions require that you mark your answer with an **"X"** in the appropriate block.
4. There are also questions that are supplied with space to **write** down the answers.
5. Please answer the questions as **honestly** as possible.
6. The questionnaire is anonymous and will be treated as **highly confidential**.

Thank you



Lorna M Dreyer

SECTION 1
PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please mark the correct answer with an **X** in the appropriate block.

1.1 **Gender:**

Male	1
Female	2

1.2 **Age:**

Mark the correct answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:

20 – 29	1
30 – 39	2
40 – 49	3
50 – 59	4
60 and older	5

1.3 **Qualifications:**

Please indicate only your **highest** qualification with an **X** in the appropriate block:

Qualification	NKR NQF	Code
Certificate in Education	5	1
Diploma in Education	5	2
First Baccalaureus degree	6	3
Post Graduate Certificate in Education	6	4
Baccalaureus in Education (B Ed)	6	5
Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)	6	6
B Ed (Hons)	7	7
Post Graduate Diploma in Education	8	8
Masters Degree	8	9
Doctorate	8	10

1.4. **Learning Support Qualification (Here may be more than one answer)**

Diploma in remedial teaching	1
Fourth year in remedial teaching	2
Diploma in Learning Support	3
Fourth year learning support module	4
Further diploma in education (Learning Support)	5
Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)	6
B Ed (LS)	7
B Ed Hons (LS)	8
Other: Specify:______________________	9
NONE	10

1.5.1 Are you currently studying?

YES	1
NO	2

1.5.2 If YES in 1.5.1 mark one of the following with an **X** appropriate block:

What do you study?

Inclusive Education	1
Special Education	2
Mainstream Education : Specify: ____________ ____________	3
Other: Specify: ____________ ____________	4

1.6 Mark your years of experience with an X in the appropriate block:

1.6.1 **Mainstream Experience:**

	0-1 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Foundation Phase	1	2	3	4
Intermediate Phase	1	2	3	4
Senior Phase	1	2	3	4
Other – specify: ____________ ____________	1	2	3	4

1.6.2 **Learning Support Experience:**

	None	0-1 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Adaptation-/Special class	1	2	3	4	5
New learning support model	1	2	3	4	5
Other – specify: ____________ ____________	1	2	3	4	5

1.6.3 **Special school experience**	None	0-1 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 2

2.1 Mark all the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	**NO**	**UNCERTAIN**
a) I am aware of White Paper 6 on Special Education Needs.	1	2	3
b) I am acquainted with the content of White Paper 6 on Special Education Needs.	1	2	3
c) I have a copy of White Paper 6.	1	2	3
d) There is a copy of White Paper 6 at school.	1	2	3

2.2 Do you know the WCED model for learning support?

YES	1
NO	2

2.3. How many schools do you serve?
Mark the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

One school	1
Two schools	2
Three schools	3

2.4 Do you think that the success of learning support is influenced by how many schools you serve?

YES	1
NO	2

2.5 Motivate your answer in 2.4.

____

____

____

2.6 Do you know the **FIRST LEVEL** of support has to take place in the mainstream class?

YES	1
NO	2

2.7 Mark all the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	GOOD	**AVERAGE**	**BAD**
a) Do you feel well equipped for you task?	1	2	3
b) Do you have enough confidence to empower mainstream teachers in a work session?	1	2	3
c) Do you get cooperation from the mainstream teachers?	1	2	3

2.6 Mark all the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	ALWAYS	SOME-TIMES	NEVER
a) Is the in-service training provided by the ELSEN advisors relevant?	1	2	3
b) Do you get the opportunity at school to give feedback of in-service training?	1	2	3
c) Do you get the opportunity at school to empower mainstream teachers regarding the teaching of learners who experience barriers to learning?	1	2	3
d) Do you attend staff development sessions at school?	1	2	3

2.7 How often do the ELSEN advisor visit your school?
Mark the answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:

Once per term?	1
Twice per term?	2
Three times a term?	3
More than three time per term?	4

2.8 Explain in your own words how you experience the support of the ELSEN advisor:

____

____

____

____

2.9 Mark all the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	NO	SOME-TIMES
a) The assessment committee provide support to learners regarding alternative assessment	1	2	3
b) There are regular TST meetings where the needs of learners are discussed and recommendations made.	1	2	3
c) I get sufficient support from the TST.	1	2	3
d) The principal supports and encourages the TST.	1	2	3

2.10 Do you think that the principal has an important role regarding effective functioning of the TST?

YES	NO	NOT SURE
1	2	3

2.11 Explain your answer in 2.10:

____

____

____

2.12 Mark the answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:
Do you support mainstream teachers in their classes?

YES	1
NO	2
SOMETIMES	3

2.13 Specify the support you give to mainstream teachers:

____

____

____

____

____

2.14 Mark the answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	OFTEN	**SOME-TIMES**	**NEVER**
a) Do mainstream teachers ask for you advice and support out of their own?	1	2	3
b) Do you follow-up the implementation of recommendations you make?	1	2	3
c) How do you follow up on the implementation of recommendations?			

____

____

____

2.15 How would you describe the co-operation of the mainstream teachers?

Very good	1
Good	2
Acceptable	3
Weak	4
Very weak	5

THE **SECOND LEVEL** OF SUPPORT IS THE PERIODIC WITHDRAWAL TO THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS FOR EXTRA SUPPORT.

2.14. What is you general way of working?
Mark the answer with an **X** in the appropriate block

	YES	**NO**
a) Do you have a core group?	1	2
b) Do you withdraw learners from the mainstream?	1	2
c) Are all the referrals for support done through the TST?	1	2

2.15 Does the school have adequate space for the withdrawal and teaching of small groups?

YES	1
NO	2

2.16 Motivate you answer in 2.15:

____

____

____

2.17. Which groups do you currently teach? **(MARK ONE ONLY):**

Grade 1-7	1
Grade 2-7	2
Grade 1-3 (Foundation Phase only)	3
Grade 2-5	4
Grade 4-6 (Intermediate Phase only	5
Grade 4-7 (Intermediate and Senior Phase)	6
Grade 1-6 (Foundation and Intermediate Phase)	7
Other: Specify: ____ ____ ____	8

2.18 What is your focus in learning support? **(MARK ONE ONLY)**

Literacy	1
Numeracy	2
Both literacy and numeracy	3

2.19 Do the learners that you support show any progress?
Mark the answer with an **X** in the appropriate block

YES	NO	SOME-TIMES
1	2	3

2.20 Please motivate your answer in 2.19:

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

2.21 How do you measure progress?

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

2.22 Do you think that these learners also experience success in the mainstream class? Mark the answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:

YES	**NO**	**SOME-TIMES**
1	2	3

2.23 Please motivate your answer in 2.22:

………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………….
……………………………………………………………………………………….

2.24 When do you stop the support of learners in small groups?

………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

2.25 Does the mainstream teacher continue supporting learners who are no longer withdrawn?

YES	**NO**	**SOME-TIMES**	**DON'T KNOW**
1	2	3	4

2.26 Please motivate your answer in 2.25

……………………………………………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………

2.27 Do you support teachers to continue support in the class?

YES	NO
1	2

2.28 What do you do to support the mainstream teacher?

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

2.29 Do you plan with the mainstream teachers?

YES	NO	SOME-TIMES
1	2	3

2.30 Please motivate your answer in 2.31:
……………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

THE **THIRD AND FOURTH LEVELS** OF SUPPORT IS PROVIDED IN ELSEN UNITS AND ELSEN SCHOOLS.

2.32 Do you think that there is adequate support for learners on the waiting lists of special schools or ELSEN units?

YES	1
NO	2
UNCERTAIN	3

2.33 Why do you think this way? Explain:
……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

2.34 Mark both answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	**NO**	**UNCERTAIN**
a) I have adequate confidence to support learners with serious barriers to learning.	1	2	3
b) I have adequate confidence to support mainstream teachers to support learners on the waiting lists of special schools.	1	2	3

2.35 What strategies do you use to support learners who experience serious barriers to learning?

____

____

____

____

2.36 Explain why you do it:

____

____

____

____

2.37: Mark both answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	**NO**	**UNCERTAIN**
a) I can develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP).	1	2	3
b) I have already helped mainstream teachers to develop an IEP for a learner.	1	2	3
c) The TST is responsible for developing IEPs.	1	2	3

2.38 Do you think that the learning support model is to the advantage of **all the learners**?

YES	1
NO	2

2.39 Please motivate your answer in 2.38:

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

2.40 Do you consider yourself as the co-ordinator at the school/schools where you work?

YES	NO
1	2

2.41 Please motivate your answer in 2.40:

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

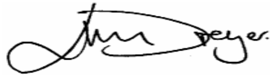
APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

Thank you very much for your willingness to complete this questionnaire. It forms part of the research requirements for study purposes. The study focuses on the evaluation of the learning support model currently used in the Western Cape.

GENERAL

1. Please answer **all** the questions.
2. The questionnaire must be completed in **ink**.
3. Some questions require that you mark your answer with an **"X"** in the appropriate block.
4. There are also questions that are supplied with space to **write** down the answers.
5. Please answer the questions as **honestly** as possible.
6. The questionnaire is anonymous and will be treated as **highly confidential**.

Thank you



Lorna M Dreyer

SECTION 1
PERSONAL INFORMATION

1.1 **Gender:**
Please mark the correct answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:

Male	1
Female	2

1.2 **Age:**
Mark the correct answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:

20 – 29	1
30 – 39	2
40 – 49	3
50 – 59	4
60 and older	5

1.3 **Qualifications:**
Please indicate only your **highest** qualification with an **X** in the appropriate block:

Qualification	NKR NQF	Code
Certificate in Education	5	1
Diploma in Education	5	2
First Baccalaureus degree	6	3
Post Graduate Certificate in Education	6	4
Baccalaureus in Education (B Ed)	6	5
Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)	6	6
B Ed (Hons)	7	7
Post Graduate Diploma in Education	8	8
Masters Degree	8	9
Doctorate	8	10

1.4. **Learning Support Qualification (There may be more than one answer):**

Diploma in remedial teaching	1
Fourth year in remedial teaching	2
Diploma in Learning Support	3
Fourth year learning support module	4
Further diploma in education (Learning Support)	5
Advanced Certificate in Education (LS)	6
B Ed (LS)	7
B Ed Hons (LS)	8
Other: Specify:__________________	9
NONE	10

1.5.1 Are you currently studying?

YES	1
NO	2

1.5.2 If YES in 1.5.1 mark one of the following with an **X** appropriate block:

What do you study?

Inclusive Education	1
Special Education	2
Mainstream Education : Specify: ______________________________ ______________________________	3
Other: Specify: ______________________________ ______________________________	4

1.6 Mark your years of experience with an X in the appropriate block:

1.6.1 **Mainstream Experience:**

	0-1 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Foundation Phase	1	2	3	4
Intermediate Phase	1	2	3	4
Senior Phase	1	2	3	4
Other – specify: __________________________ __________________________	1	2	3	4

1.6.2 **Learning Support Experience:**

	None	0-1 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Adaptation-/Special class	1	2	3	4	5
New learning support model	1	2	3	4	5
Other – specify: __________________________	1	2	3	4	5

1.6.3 **Special school experience**	None	0-1 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
	1	2	3	4	5

1.7 What phase are you currently teaching? (Mark one or more.)

Foundation Phase	1
Intermediate Phase	2
Senior Phase	3

SECTION 2

2.1 Mark all the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	**NO**	**UNCERTAIN**
a) I am aware of White Paper 6 on Special Education Needs.	1	2	3
b) I am acquainted with the content of White Paper 6 on Special Education Needs.	1	2	3
c) I have a copy of White Paper 6.	1	2	3
d) There is a copy of White Paper 6 at school.	1	2	3

2.2 Do you know the WCED model for learning support?

YES	1
NO	2

2.3 Do you know that the **FIRST LEVEL** of support has to take place in the mainstream class?

YES	1
NO	2

2.4 Do you adapt your lesson presentations and assessment for learners who experience barriers to learning?

YES	1
NO	2
SOMETIMES	3

2.5 Explain your answer in 2.4.

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Mark the answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	**NO**	**SOME-TIMES**
2.6 Do your strategies for the needs of all the learners in your class?	1	2	3

2.7 Please motivate your answer in 2.6:

………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

2.8 Mark all the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	**NO**	**SOME-TIMES**
a) The assessment committee provide support to learners regarding alternative assessment.	1	2	3
b) There are regular TST meetings where the needs of learners are discussed and recommendations made.	1	2	3
c) I get sufficient support from the TST.	1	2	3
d) The principal supports and encourages the TST.	1	2	3

2.9 Do you think that the principal has an important role regarding effective support provided to learners experiencing barriers to learning?

YES	NO	NOT SURE
1	2	3

2.10 Explain your answer in 2.9:

____

____

____

2.11 How often does the learning support teacher provide you with support for learners who experience barriers to learning in your class?

OFTEN	1
SOMETIMES	2
NEVER	3

2.12 What does she/he do to support you?

____

____

____

2.13 How often does the learning support teacher give feedback of in-service training she/he has received?

ALWAYS	1
SOMETIMES	2
NEVER	3

2.14 How often does the learning support teacher have the opportunity to empower the staff regarding learners who experience barriers to learning?

ALWAYS	1
SOMETIMES	2
NEVER	3

THE **SECOND LEVEL** OF SUPPORT IS THE PERIODIC WITHDRAWAL TO THE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER FOR EXTRA SUPPORT.

2.15 Mark the correct answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:
The learning support teacher at my school is ….:

Full time	1
Itinerant	2

2.16 Mark the correct answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:
I would prefer that the learning support teacher provide ....support to our school.

Full time	1
Itinerant	2

2.17 Explain your answer in 2.16:

____

____

____

2.17 Mark all the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	**NO**	**SOME-TIMES**
a) Does the learning support teacher withdraw learners from your class for extra support?	1	2	3
b) Does this support make any difference in the progress of the learners?	1	2	3
c) Are all the learners that are withdrawn referred by the TST to the learning support teacher?	1	2	3

2.18 If the answer is NO in 17.c), what do you think the reason is?

____

____

____

2.19 The learners receive support in....: **(MARK ONE ONLY.)**

Literacy	1
Numeracy	2
Both literacy and numeracy	3

2.20 What is your opinion regarding the support learners receive from the learning support teacher?

Mark the answer with an **X** in the appropriate block:

Learners who receive support show a general improvement in academic performance.	1
There is minimal improvement in academic performance.	2
It seems as if the support does not result in any academic improvement.	3

THE **THIRD AND FOURTH LEVELS** OF SUPPORT IS PROVIDED IN ELSEN UNITS AND ELSEN SCHOOLS.

2.21 Do you think that there is adequate support for learners on the waiting lists of special schools or ELSEN units?

YES	1
NO	2
UNCERTAIN	3

2.22 Why do you think this? Explain:

……………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

2.22Mark all the answers with an **X** in the appropriate block:

	YES	**NO**	**UNCERTAIN**
a) I have adequate confidence to support learners experiencing serious barriers to learning in my class.	1	2	3
b) I can develop an individual education plan (IEP).	1	2	3
c) The learning support teacher helped me to develop an IEP for a learner.	1	2	3
d) The TST is responsible for developing IEPs.	1	2	3

2.24 How do you experience the support of the multi-functional team at your school?

Excellent	1
Good	2
Reasonably acceptable	3
Inadequate	4

2.25 Motivate your answer in 2.24:

____

____

____

2.26 Do you think that the learning support model is to the advantage of **all the learners**?

YES	1
NO	2

2.27 Please motivate your answer in 2.26:

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Do you still have a core group at the school or are all the learners placed in the mainstream?

2. How do you refer to the teachers who are responsible for additional learning support at your school?

3. Is there a classroom available for the withdrawal of small groups?

4. Do you think that the TST is functioning optimally at your school? Let's talk about it. Why do you think so? The role of the principal?

5. Do you support learners who experience difficulties in your class? What do you experience as problems in this regard?

6. Does the LSEN teacher help you in order for you to support the learners in your class?

7. Do you think that the learners who are withdrawn progress better as a result of the support that they receive?

8. What is your general feeling about inclusive education? (Remember that the first level of support has to take place in the classroom)

9. Do you think that the learning support model is effective regarding the support provided to learners? (Let's talk about it)

THANK YOU FOR YOU PARTICIPATION