



**UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE**

**SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT TEAMS' UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPERIENCES  
OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE**



**UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE**

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## ABSTRACT

South Africa's education system has undergone dramatic changes in the last decade resulting in an increase in the levels of stress reported by educators. Changes, such as the implementation of Inclusive Education as well as the new culture of human rights in schools, have created extra responsibilities for educators. Today, educators don't just have to adjust to these changes, but also have to deal with a rise in learners experiencing barriers to learning and a variety of problems displayed by school learners.

This study explored the understandings and experiences of School-Based Support Teams (SBST) of inclusive education in the Western Cape. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative case study design was used. The researcher found it advantageous to use the qualitative research case study design because it enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of educators.

The participants in this study were twenty educators who serve as members of the SBST in a special and public ordinary school. Participants reported that they experienced success in the implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) in their schools. These include established teamwork, increased access and participation, improved teaching practices as well as the provision of assistive devices. Participants reported positive gains during the implementation, they also reported challenges. These include lack of capacity, lack of resources, problem behaviours, unrealistic workloads and lack of support.

This study concludes that if the School Based Support Team is critical in the implementation of IE in South Africa, the Department of Education as well as the schools need to rethink these roles or develop a Human Resource Development Strategy that will empower educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to play the role. Secondly, the Department of Education should seriously consider ways in which educators can be protected from perpetrators. Lastly, based on the lived experiences of the SBST in the study, educators should continue with the good work but be allowed to provide support in ways that work within their capacity and broader socio-cultural contexts.

## DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I BABALWA RULWA-MNATWANA (3212165) declare that this dissertation: **SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT TEAMS' UNDERTSANDINGS AND EXPERIENCES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE** is my own work and has not been submitted previously for any degree at any university. I declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature ..... Date .....



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I thank the Almighty God, for giving me the strength, power and grace to go through this learning process. He gave me a trusted lift from the beginning to the end of the road.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, my dearest husband and my two sons, Athenkosi and Cwangco.

Thank you for your love, patience and support during the long hours I spent working on this dissertation.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

APA	American Psychiatric Association
CSEE	Centre for the Study of Inclusive Education
DBST	District Based Support Team
DoE	Department of Education
EADSNE	European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education
EFA	Education for All
EWP 6	Education White Paper 6
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IE	Inclusive Education
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ILST	Institutional Level Support Team
INDS	Integrated National Disability Strategy
ISEC	Inclusive and Support Education Congress
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NCESS	National Committee for Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs Services
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SBST	School Based Support Team
SNE	Special Needs Education
SSRC	Special Schools and Resource Centres
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1994, the apartheid system had rendered every aspect of South African life unequal on the basis of race. For example, educational provision for Blacks and Whites was carried out under different departments with the latter receiving a better share of the budget. This duality of provision perpetuated white supremacy by giving white children better education than that given to the other races, resulting in a system which entrenched gross educational disparities and inequalities between racial groups (Naicker, 2000:28).

Teacher training was also affected by these adverse inequalities. They were trained in racially and ethnically separate colleges and universities. This was coupled with a system of positions which allocated trained teachers for different racially and ethnically segregated schools. For the black population, education opportunities were extremely limited, not only in higher education opportunities, but also in the curriculum (Wade, 2000:121). In the context of different and unequal provision of quality education, the logical assumption was that black teachers were not adequately trained to provide quality education as envisaged by UNESCO (2005). Given this state of affairs, it makes sense for one to wonder how much and how far the majority of black teachers who were trained under apartheid education were adequately prepared to provide education for learners who are experiencing difficulties in learning.

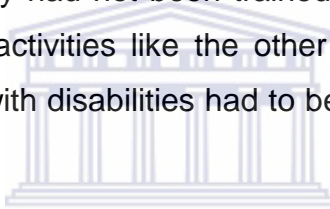
Since 1994, one of the central foci of the transformation process from an apartheid society to a democratic society in South Africa has been the emergence and development of a new education policy which includes all learners, (Lomosky & Lazarus, 2001:303). The 1994 democratic elections marked an end to the apartheid education system and ushered in new changes. These changes included, amongst other things, the creation of a single education system and the development of a policy that is committed to human rights and social justice. Such commitment is evident in key documents (Stofile, 2008:1), such as:

- The White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (Department of Education, 1995) which discusses the importance of addressing needs of learners with special needs in both special and public ordinary schools;
- The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996) which compels public schools to admit learners and to serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way;
- The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Ministerial Office of the Deputy President, 1997) which recommends specific action that will ensure that people with disability are able to access the same rights as any other citizen in South Africa; and
- The National Commission on Special Educational Needs and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services Report (Department of Education, (1997), which identified barriers that lead to the inability of the education system to accommodate diversity.

All of the above legal frameworks are based on international human rights agreements, such as the Salamanca Statement, which supports the development of an education system that recognises a wide range of diverse needs and ensures a wide range of appropriate responses (UNESCO, 2005). These frameworks articulate the goals of equity and the rights of all learners to equal access to educational opportunities. The South African Government's commitment to social justice and "education for all" led to the development of a policy on inclusive education and training (Hay, Smith & Paulsen, 2007). This policy is entitled: Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001), and it was released in 2001. Inclusive education (IE) emanated from the Dakar Framework for Action adopted by a World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 2000. Through EFA, different countries committed themselves to provide all children at primary school age with free and compulsory quality education by 2015. The Education

White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), advocates that all children and youth can learn and need support.

Although the legislation made inroads into the transformation of the South African education system, the question is whether educators in classrooms are prepared to implement the changes implied by IE (Hay, Smith & Paulsen; 2007:303). Makoelle (2012:93) claims that the state of inclusive pedagogy in South African schools remains bleak and teachers are in the dark about what constitutes an inclusive education in the South African context. This is despite policy changes since the advent of the new educational dispensation in 1994. Stofile (2008), in her study reported that when inclusive education policy was introduced in the pilot projects schools in one province in South Africa , some teachers resisted because of uncertainty about what they were supposed to do. Others felt they had not been trained to teach children who were not able to participate in learning activities like the other children in their classes. Many teachers thought that children with disabilities had to be taught by teachers with special qualifications.



According to Stofile (2008), teachers felt that inclusive education was an extra burden because they did not understand that it was an integral part of the existing curriculum. These are not unusual reactions to the introduction of a new policy. Experiences in other countries around the world have shown that teachers and all of the role players in the education system need to understand and support a new policy in order to put it into practice successfully (Christie, 2008). For this reason, one of the biggest challenges of preparing teachers for IE is to help them to understand what it is, and how to put it into practice in their own classrooms and schools.

Paulsen (2005) conducted a study in the Western Cape investigating sources of occupational stress for educators with specific reference to inclusive education philosophy. The study found that a lack of appropriate professional training, specifically where teachers are required to implement new practices with inadequate on-going training in order to meet the needs of increasingly diverse population, is a particular source of stress (Paulsen, 2005:81).

Findings from other research show that there could be positive aspects as well as challenges facing educators involved in IE. A study conducted by So in Macao (2005) found that educators have great enthusiasm towards IE and are optimistic that their classes have learners who need special training. This author indicated that when educators come across any problems in teaching learners, they make use of their spare time to read relevant books and to ask specialists for advice so as to increase their knowledge in the field in order to do their best in IE (So, 2005:132).

## **1.2 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS**

The vision of the Education white Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) is to strengthen support services through, among others, the establishment of School Based Support Teams. These teams have been established in many primary schools in provinces like the Western Cape in South Africa. Research reports in the province reveal that the District Based Support Teams struggle to provide effective support to learners and educators. The first question is why has it been so hard to provide effective support? The second question is what can be done about this situation? The answers to these questions can only be provided by educators that serve in SBST. It is envisaged that this study will provide the answers. This study seeks to explore the understandings and experiences of School Based Support Teams of the implementation of inclusive education in their schools. This will include but is not limited to the exploration of their successes and challenges in implementation of IE. In order to achieve the above aim, the study sought answers to the following main questions:

- What are the School-Based Support Teams' understandings of Inclusive Education?
- How do School Based Teams implement Inclusive Education?
- What are the School-Based Support Teams' experiences of Inclusive Education?

### 1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The implementation of IE occurred in a context of many fundamental changes. These changes included the radical restructuring of the provincial departments of education and the review of the original Revised National Curriculum Statements to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements. The restructuring process in the Western Cape involved the reconfiguration of mega-districts into circuits and changes in the curriculum content. As a learning support educator, I experienced organisational turbulence relating to the restructuring process. This included changing curriculum policies and participating in newly established support structures. I also observed that although several attempts were made by the National Department of Education to support, control and monitor the implementation process, there were variations in the way different schools implemented the policy. This experience prompted my interest in understanding other educators' understandings and experiences of implementing IE. My interest in this topic was also triggered by the research reports that claim that inclusion had been relatively successful in some schools and less so in other schools (Department of Education, 2002; Makoelle, 2012; Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Stofile, 2008). Some of these reports claimed that there were marked failures and successes at the end of the implementation process.

My interest was further extended when I was appointed permanently as the head of department in a school and one of my responsibilities was to support educators in implementing the curriculum, and educational policies including IE policy. My main objective in conducting this study is to inform the implementation processes and Human Resource Development strategy about the possibilities, complexities and dynamics in the contexts where IE is implemented. It is envisaged that the findings of this study will inform further development of inclusive education policy in the Western Cape, pre-service training of educators by Higher Education Institutions as well as the roll-out plan for the implementation of the existing policy.

It is envisaged that the findings of this study will inform further development of the IE

policy in the Western Cape, moreover it will also inform institutions of higher learning about the type of pre-service training to be implemented in schools. The aim is to give a better understanding of how participants view IE.

## 1.4 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

It is important for the researcher and the readers to have a clear understanding of the key terms/concepts which will be utilised throughout this study. These key terms and concepts used are explained in the following paragraphs.

**Experiences:** the term 'experience' refers to the events or series of events unusual or exciting participated in or lived through (Heart of Wisdom, 2002). Swart and Green, 2001:45) define experience as a process of gaining knowledge or skills over a period of time through seeing and doing things rather than through studying, it can be someone's experiences of new ideas or ways of life they are exposed to.

**Educator:** the term 'educator' in this study refers to any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons at an education institution or assists in rendering education services provided by or in an education department (Merriam, 2000). According to the Department of Education (1997) an educator is a person whose work involves educating others at all levels of education, in any type of education and training context including formal and informal.

**Learners :**The term 'learners' refers to any person ranging from the phase of early childhood development to the phase of adult education, who is involved in any kind of formal or informal education and training activity or any person who receives or is obliged to receive education ( South African Education and Training,2000).

**Learners experiencing barriers to learning:** The concept 'learners experiencing barriers to learning' refers to those learners with impairment and those categorised as having special educational needs and/or experiencing barriers to learning such as socio-economic conditions, attitudes, inflexible curriculum, language skills and communication , inaccessible and unsafe environment and so forth (Department of



Education, 2001).

**Public Ordinary School:** The term 'public ordinary school' in this study refers to a regular school that integrates learners with special educational needs (Department of Education, 2005).

**Special School:** A special school is a school that caters for learners labelled as having special educational needs. Education in this school involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures and adapted materials.

**School-Based Support Teams:** The concept of SBST is not new in South Africa. Various forms of teacher support or teaching assistance teams have been developed to assist schools in addressing problems (Engelbrecht et al, 1999). These teams are generally regarded as an important strategy for delivering support to students in their local schools and communities (UNESCO, 2001). The support teams were originally conceived of as a system of support from a team of class teachers experiencing teaching difficulties in relation to special educational needs (SEN) (Creese, et al 1997). The model was that individual teachers would request support from a team, which usually included the senior coordinator, a senior teacher and another teacher.

The Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) uses the term Institutional Level Support Teams for the SBST. The composition of these teams is outlined in the Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the implementation of IE: District Based Support Teams (Department of Education, 2005). According to these guidelines, these School-Based Support teams include but are not limited to: educators with specialised skills and knowledge in areas such as learning support, life skills /guidance or counselling. These educators serve in this team on a voluntary basis because of their interest. The school management team members such as the principal, heads of departments and deputy principals are expected to be part of the team. According to the Conceptual and Operational Guidelines (Department of Education, 2005: 36), non-teaching support staff or care-taking staff and learner representatives,

particularly from the senior phase in primary school, and in secondary schools should be included in this team.

In terms of the roles and responsibilities of these teams , UNESCO (2001) indicates that they are expected to provide direct support to the class educators and indirectly to the learners to avoid the need to refer students outwards to specialist services. In addition, these teams are supposed to provide a facility for educators to exchange ideas, air feelings and work on problem solving around issues relating to the educators' work in the classroom. In South Africa, the primary functions of these teams include:

- The coordination of learner, educator and curriculum development and support in schools;
- The identification of the needs of the school and barriers to learning;
- The development of intervention strategies to address the needs and barriers to learning;
- The identification and organisation of resources needed to address the needs of the school; and
- The monitoring and evaluation of the intervention strategies implemented by the school (Department of Education, 2005).

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

As a researcher I choose a research paradigm that allows for the in-depth understanding of educators' experiences of implementing inclusive education policy. Qualitative research has an advantage of employing inductive research strategy that can facilitate such understanding (Merriam, 1998:200). The relevance of this methodology in the context of the parameters of this study lies in its capacity to facilitate an in depth understanding of the participants and the knowledge and experiences in implementing IE in primary schools.

An interpretivist approach was used in an attempt to capture the participants' perspectives of implementing inclusive education policy in primary schools. Two schools were identified from the Metropole East Education District in the Western Cape

Province. The schools were selected from twenty primary schools in the Khayelitsha area.

The participants in this study comprised twenty educators who serve in the School Based Support Teams in public ordinary and special schools. For the purpose of this study the researcher used semi-structured interviewing because it allows the interviewer to probe and gain information. One of the advantages of semi-structured interviews is that “a comprehensive database can be accumulated thus establishing a holistic picture of the program” (Patton, 1998:200).

## **1.6 OUTLINE OF THESIS CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1 presents the background of the study, the aims, research questions, clarification of concepts and a summary of methodology.

Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to the study by discussing the historical development of IE globally and in South Africa.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, research approach, research design in this study. It elucidates the sampling method used, characteristics of participants, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: presents and discusses the findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Provides the conclusion and the recommendations based on the findings of the study.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provides the background to the thesis, the aim of the study, the research questions and the summary of the research methods used in the study. The next chapter focuses on the literature relevant to the study. 2

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 provides an introductory background to the study. This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the study. This chapter presents the conceptual framework and discusses theories that underpin inclusive education (IE). Secondly, it discusses the historical development of IE globally and in South Africa. Finally, this chapter discusses the debates pertaining to inclusive legislation and policies and the findings from previous research relevant to the study.

### **2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Inclusive education has become an “international buzzword” that is characterised by a number of contentious definitions (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandou, 2011; Green, 2001; Lawson, 2005; Miles & Singal, 2010; Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Stofile & Green, 2014, Swart & Pettipher, 2005). These authors claim that it means different things to different people in different contexts. Because there is no common definition of inclusive education, Armstrong et al, (2011: 29) warns that it may end up meaning everything and nothing at the same time.” Dyson (1999) attributes this lack of a common definition to the discourses that have framed IE. This section explores some of the definitions of IE that can be found in literature.

#### **2.2.1 Definition of inclusive education**

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they have (UNESCO, 1994:61). According to Miles (2000), IE is concerned with removing all barriers to learning and development, and increasing participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation. Miles asserts that this is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children. This definition emphasises the removal of barriers and increasing participation. Lawson (2005:1)

focuses on the participation of all learners. This author argues that IE can be used to mean many things including ‘the placement of learners with special education needs in public ordinary schools; the participation of all learners in the curriculum and social life of public ordinary schools; and the participation of all learners in learning which leads to the highest possible level of achievement’.

In their report, Miles, Ainscow, Kangwa, Kisanji and Lewis (2008:7), view IE as a process of increasing participation and achievement of all learners in their local schools, with particular reference to those groups of learners who are at risk of exclusion, marginalisation or under-achievement. Daniels (2000), Nind, Sheehy and Simmons (2007) believe that IE is concerned with the well-being of all learners. Barton (2005c) Clough and Corbett (2006), describe inclusive education as a process of increasing the participation of learners in reducing their exclusion from the curricula, cultures and communities of the neighbourhood mainstream centres of learning. Booth (2008:34) describes IE as a process relating to the principles involved in increasing a school’s capacity to respond to learner diversity and promote greater participation for all learners. Pandor (2004:7) is of the view that IE is a celebration of diversity, concerning a school culture which welcomes differences and recognises individual needs; involving the identification and minimizing of barriers to learning.

Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:8), state that IE is about developing inclusive community and education systems which “ must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their learners, accommodating all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions”. Furthermore, inclusive education is about responding simultaneously to students who all differ from each other in important ways, some of which pose particular challenges to the school (Department of Education, 2005). It is not only about maintaining the presence of the learners in school but it is also about maximising their participation Barton (2003a). He further states that IE is about contributing to their realisation of an inclusive society with the demand for a rights approach as a central component of policy-making.

Ainscow (1999) asserts that IE is fundamentally about how we understand and engage

with difference in ways that are constructive and valued. It is a public process of naming and celebrating differences and engaging with the identification of what it is we value about one another. This involves doing justice to the difference between pupils, utilising these differences and approaching such factors as a resource, an opportunity for learning and not a problem to be fixed or excluded, thus becoming a crucial dimension of an approach that is working toward IE Ainscow, (1999).

The Education White Paper 6, on 'Special Needs Education-: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System" (Department of Education, 2001:3) provides a comprehensive definition of IE. This paper defines inclusive education as:

- A process of increasing access and the participation of students in schools, and reducing their exclusion from cultures, curricula and communities of local centres of learning;
- A system that acknowledges that all learners can learn and that all learners need support;
- A system that acknowledges and respects difference in children whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status ;
- A system that acknowledges that learning occurs in the home, and the community, in informal contexts, as well as within formal contexts.

Although there appear to be different views about what IE is, it is generally agreed that IE has its origins in the human rights pronounced in the United Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (UNESCO, 2005) which states that:

Everyone has the right to education....Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary Education shall be compulsory. Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace, (Article 26- Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

There are misconceptions among people about what IE calls for. According to Ntombela and Raymond (2013: 10), it is “generally assumed that inclusion refers only to a small number of learners with severe, organic disabilities already identified for special services.” Although different authors define IE differently, removing barriers to learning and increasing participation seem to be common in their views. Green (2001: 4) identified a) the commitment to building a more just society b) a commitment to building a more equitable education system and c) a conviction that extending the responsiveness of public ordinary schools to learner diversity as commonalities in the way people describe IE. In an attempt to describe IE, Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006: 15) developed a typology of six ways of thinking about IE. These include: Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as “having special educational needs”; inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion; inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion; inclusion as developing the school for all; inclusion as “Education for All”; and inclusion as a principled approach to education and society.

This study adopts the definition presented in Bogdan and Biklen. (2011: 128), that assert:

that inclusive education is a fundamentally about all learners rather than just about disabled learners), (b) is fundamentally about striving to make all learners' experiences with schooling inclusive and participatory rather than exclusionary and marginalizing (rather than just being concerned with where particular learners are physically placed), and (c) is concerned with aspirations for democratic and socially just education, and therefore fundamentally concerned with interrogating the cultural practices of schooling (rather than just seeking to prescribe procedural, techno-rational definitions of inclusive schooling to be implemented.

## **2.2.2 Barriers to learning and development**

The term “barriers to learning and development” was coined by the National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) (Department of Education, 1997) to broaden the scope of needs from the disabled few, to other learners, whose special needs often arise as a result of impediments to learning and development (Department of Education, 1997). The term “barriers to learning” is a preferred concept to explain why some learners experience difficulties in learning. It replaces the term “special needs” which locates the problem within the learner, rather than the entire system (Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller, 2009).

Barriers to learning refer to difficulties that arise within an education system as a whole and the learning site (Department of Education, 2001; 2005; Ntombela & Raymond, 2013; Stofile, Raymond & Moletsane, 2013). These barriers have been identified and may lie within the curriculum, the centre of learning, the system of education, and the broader social context. This prevents both the system and the learner needs from being met (Department of Education, 2005). The implication that the term ‘barriers’ carries is that in order to provide sustained effective learning the education system must be able to accommodate a diverse range of needs amongst the learner population (Department of Education, 1997; 2001; 2005).

The key barriers found in the system include: socio-economic conditions, attitudes, inflexible curriculum, language skills and communication, inaccessible and unsafe building environments, inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services, lack of enabling and protective legislation and policy, lack of parental recognition and involvement, disability and the lack of human resource development strategies (Department of Education, 1997; 2001). Bornman and Rose (2010: 29) classify barriers to learning as follows:

- Policy barriers which refer to the limitations of societies and support systems;
- Practice barriers which include unwritten rules and routine with families, schools and communities that may limit opportunities for participation;



- Attitudinal barriers which include the opinions or beliefs that negatively affect participation;
- Knowledge and skills barriers which refer to inadequate knowledge and skill levels of teachers, therapists, District Based Support Teams, and Institutional Level Support Teams that limit opportunities for participation;
- Physical barriers which refer to physical access and the freedom to move about, and
- Personal barriers which reside within the child or his personal circumstances.

Researchers who write about barriers to learning acknowledge that barriers may arise from a number of sources. These may be intrinsic or extrinsic to learners. Intrinsic barriers include physical, sensory and neurological impairments, chronic illnesses, psychological disturbances and cognitive differences (Department of Education, 1997; Stofile, Raymond & Moletsane, 2013; Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller, 2009). Extrinsic barriers are those factors that arise outside the learner. These can be located in the educational, social, cultural, political and economic contexts. Family dynamics (neglect, violence, divorce), school organisation (management, policies, cultures, practices) and curriculum (content, teaching methods, learning environment, assessment) may all constitute barriers to learning. Literature acknowledges that barriers to learning are as a result of a complex interplay of learners and their contexts.

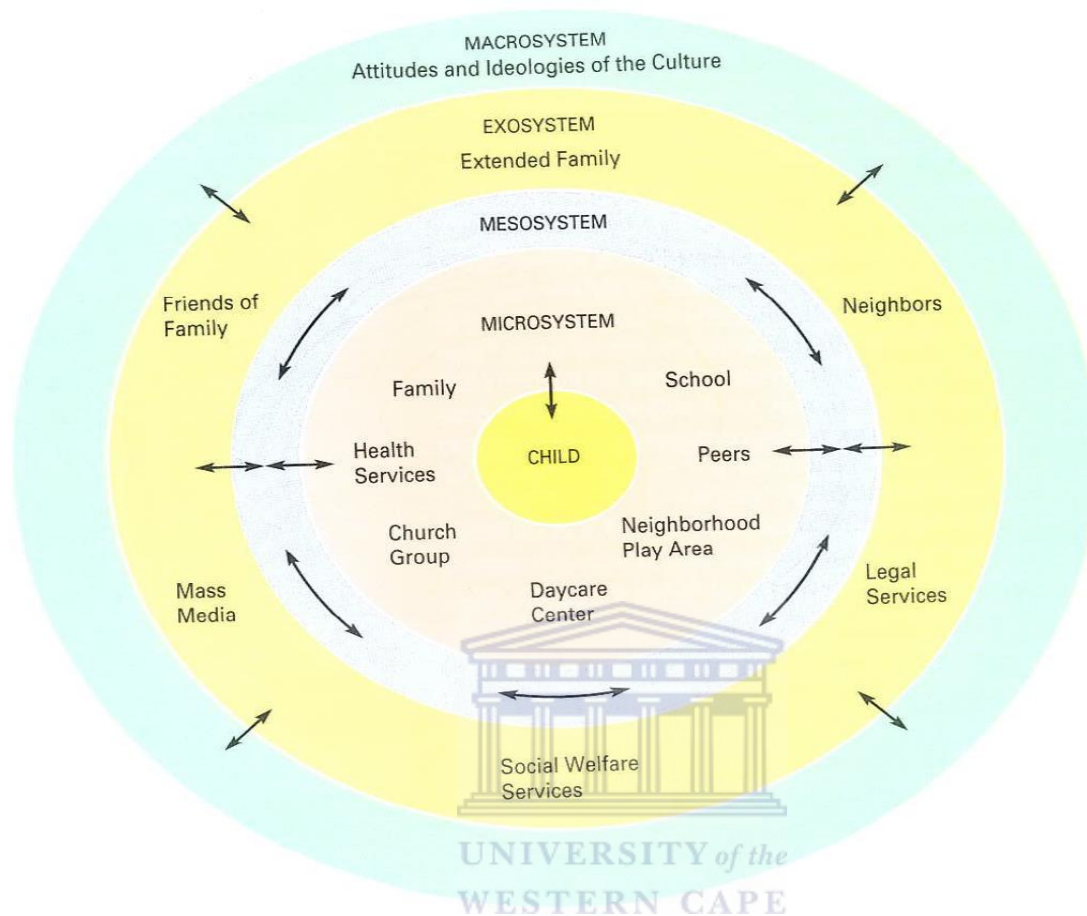
Systems theory is a useful way of understanding the complex interactions in education, schools and classrooms that can lead to learning difficulties (Green, 2001). There are a number of versions of systems theory; inclusive education framework incorporates ideas from Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory. In his Ecological Systems Theory, Bronfenbrenner argues that the child is embedded in multiple layers of contexts that influence his/her development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner proposed that human development is influenced by factors operating at different systems levels within a broad, ecological structure. These different levels exert a reciprocal influence on one another.

Each person is significantly affected by interactions among a number of overlapping ecosystems, namely, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1973). The bio-ecological theory suggests that the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems impact the child in different ways with the mutual influence on the child strongest at the micro level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The micro system entails the structure that is closest to the child e.g. family, peer group, classroom, neighbourhood, and sometimes a church. It contains the factors within a child's immediate environment. These factors directly affect the child, and, in turn, may be affected by the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The mesosystem refers to the connection between the microstructure for example the connection between the child's teacher and parent. It encompasses "the interrelations of two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations between home, school, and neighbourhood peer groups)" (Bronfenbrenner 1979:25).

The exosystem refers to the structure that impacts on the child's mesosystem and therefore has ripple effects on the child. It includes all the external networks, such as community structures and local educational, medical, employment and communications systems which influence the microsystem. The exosystem consists of settings "that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect , or are affected by, what is happening in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner 1979:25).

The macrosystem refers to the broad institutions of the culture or subculture such as economic, political, educational, social and legal systems that implicitly or explicitly influence particular roles, activities, social networks, and their interrelations (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).



**Figure 2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model Source (Bukatko & Daehler, 1995: 62)**

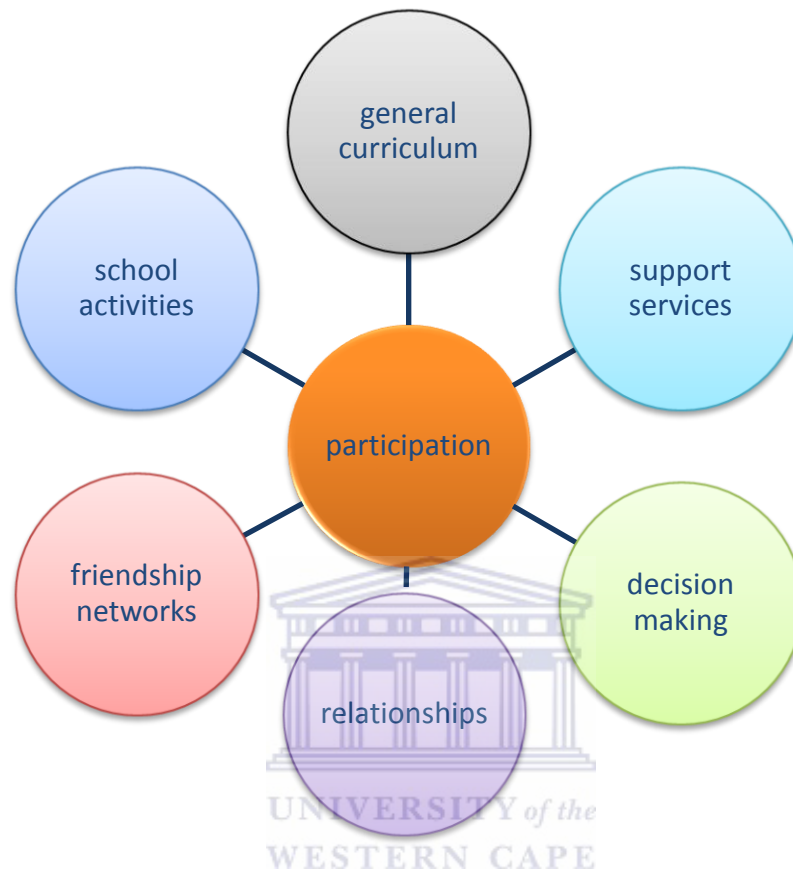
### **2.2.3 Access and participation**

Access and participation are the main concerns of the Millennium Development Goals (Singal, 2008). Inclusive education implies the promotion of equal participation and non-discrimination (Bornman & Rose (2010). According to Stofile, Linden and Maarman (2012) participation and access are closely inter-related. In a sense, these two notions in learning cannot be separated. These authors further argue that participation cannot take place when access is prohibited. Stofile and Green (2014: 266) define participation in school contexts as the right to be in the local school or class attended by grade level

peers where everyone has access to responsive support services. Wade (2009) on the one hand, posits that access in a school context means more than a right to be in a school. It means participation in the general education curriculum and instruction. Koster, Nakken, Pijl and Van Houten (2009) define social participation as those interactions and friendship networks, playing together. According to Bornman and Rose (2010: 21) participation “implies that an individual is purposefully involved in activities and experiences across home, school and community environments”. Wade (2009) argues that access in a school context means more than a right to be in a school or class attended by grade-level peers. It also means participation in the general education curriculum, instruction and contexts.

Todds (2007), acknowledges that the term “participation” is difficult to define, but there is a growing understanding that it is a process of actively taking part in different spheres of societal life. Moreover in a school context participation involves learners, and parents playing a central role in decision making, learning and in the development of schools. The author argues that one of the major goals of IE is to increase learner participation in learning. This implies that learners need to share in decision making about how to meet their learning needs. In summary access and participation are closely interrelated in the sense that participation cannot be separated. Participation cannot take place when access is prohibited, and access means a great deal more than permission to be present in the classroom (Stofile & Green 2014).

In this study, access to education means the ability to have equal opportunity in education regardless of ability, class, gender, sexual orientation, race and background (economic, social, political, cultural). Participation in a school context in this study means active engagement in six domains. These include general curriculum, school activities (social, cultural, educational, religious, and physical), relationships, friendship networks, support services, and decision making. Figure 2.2 presents the six participation domains.



**Figure 2.2: Participation Domains**

## 2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

IE is theoretically situated within a discourse of democratic education (Urban, 2013, Jonsson, 2012). According to Urban (2013), IE and democratic citizenship education demands the full acceptance and participation of all members of society, and each cannot realize its full potential without the other. Grossman (2008: 45) contends that these concepts “share a common ethos and language based on concerns for human rights...and a sense of community”, but their discourses remain disconnected. Drawing on theories of democratic citizenship education, IE envisions a socially democratic educational setting that fosters the development of a community of learners, attempts to balance the unity and diversity of democratic citizenship, and adopts a curriculum that is

flexible, participatory, and accessible to learners of all abilities (Urban, 2013: 13).

As Slee (2001: 173) argues, IE is not a technical issue: “It speaks to the protection of rights of citizenship for all”. According to Cummings, Dyson and Millward (2003: 49), inclusive schooling focuses on more than “educational outcomes as attainments”; it works toward a “form of education which will be participatory and democratic in itself.” Ntombela and Raymond (2013) also assert that inclusive education embodies the principles of equality, access, equity and participation. In other words IE challenges structural inequalities that lead to the violation of human rights and the exclusion of many children from participation. IE is informed by the social model of disability, and the human rights model.

### **2.3.1 Human rights model**

The human rights approach to education is interested in the role of education in securing the rights in education and rights through education (Tikly & Barrett, 2011: 5). According to these authors these rights include the “enactment of negative rights such as protection from abuse, as well as positive rights such as celebration and nurturing of learner creativity, use of local languages in schools, pupil participation in democratic structures and debate.” The separation of learners with barriers from others can be viewed as infringing on their rights to equality and human dignity (Hay & Malindi, 2005). IE in South Africa is framed within a human rights discourse (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). The Salamanca Statement of 1994 articulated the relationship between rights and IE, by reaffirming the education of all learners in the regular education system:

- It is believed that every child has a fundamental right to education:
- The unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs of every learner must be recognised in the practise of education:
- Learners experiencing barriers to learning and development must have access to regular schools that would be made to accommodate them in a child centred pedagogy that will meet their needs: and

- Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all: moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994:8).

Proponents of IE like Hay and Malindi (2005) regard inclusive education as concerned with children's rights, including the rights to equality, human dignity and education. These rights are enshrined in the South African Constitution. Section 10, of the South African Constitution states that everyone has a right to human dignity and respect. According to this clause, no one should discriminate against another because of his or her race, colour or appearance. With regard to children, the constitution states that every child has a right to family or parental care and appropriate care if and when such child should be placed in an alternative environment (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Section 28 (1) further prohibits anyone from maltreating, abusing, degrading or placing the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development, in any form whatsoever (RSA, 1996). In addition, section 29, states that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education. Everyone further has the right to further and higher education, which the state must make progressively available and accessible (RSA, 1996). The Centre for the Study of IE claims inclusive education is a 'human right' (CSIE, 2002). According to Runswick-Cole and Hodge (2009), UNESCO invoked a Human Rights Action Plan which suggests that:

- Educational policies should promote a rights-based approach.
- The learning environment should enable the practice of human rights in the whole school community.
- Teaching and learning should be holistic and reflect human rights values.
- Education and training of school personnel should allow them to transmit human

rights values.

### **2.3.2 Social model of disability**

Inclusive education involves a fundamentally different way of thinking about the origins of learning and learning difficulties and the restructuring of schools (Mittler, 2006). This suggests a shift from within the child's view to a social model. The social model is "rooted firmly in the human rights paradigm, arguing for inclusion and the removal of all barriers that hinder full participation of individuals with disabilities" (Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 4). According to Lang (2001), the social model arose in response to the critique of the medical model of disability which labels and excludes disabled people. Social model is based on the proposition that it is society and its institutions that are oppressive, discriminatory and disabling and attention needs to be focused on the removal of barriers to the participation of disabled people in the life of society (Mittler, 2006: 3). According to Lang (2001: 3), a central principle of the social model is that

irrespective of the political, economic and religious character of the society in which they live, disabled people are subject to oppression and negative social attitudes that inevitably undermine their personhood and their status as full citizens.

The social model of disability proposes shifts away from focusing on the deficits that relates to physiological and cognitive abilities to the ability of society to systematically oppress and discriminate against disabled people, and the negative social attitudes encountered by disabled people throughout their everyday lives. Disability is therefore situated in the wider, external environment, and is not entirely seen as a consequence of individual deficiencies.

According to Gleeson (1999), the social model views disability as a social construct created by the interactions of the disabled with a physical and social world designed for non-disabled living. It is important to note that social models do not deny impairment, but rather put the emphasis on the social aspects of the world that can be changed (Leicester, 1999; Armstrong and Barton, 1999; Gleeson, 1999). Leicester (1999) makes the following distinction between the 'creationist' social models and the 'constructionist'



social models. In 'creationist' models, disability is described as: the material product of societal developments within a particular historical context and the units of analysis are disabling barriers, physical, structural and institutional, and relations of power, whereas 'constructionist' models describe disability as the product of societal development within a specific cultural context where the units of analysis are cultural values and representations.

Both versions of the social model require the removal of barriers and practices serving to exclude people with disabilities, and the reconstruction of the environment to more fully include them.

The human rights, social model of disability and democracy in education are different and yet they are linked. They all focus on the need to acknowledge, recognise and respect human rights. The study therefore, deemed it appropriate to combine these theories to frame the study. The human rights model advocates for the recognition of learners rights. The social model of disability on the one hand identifies factors that contribute to the violation of disabled children's rights. The democratic education also focuses on the rights of learners to access and participation in education.

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## **2.4 DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION INTERNATIONALLY**

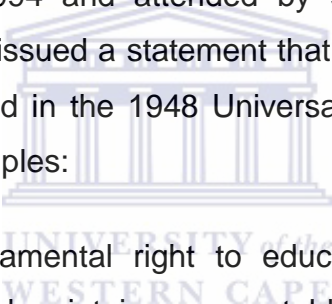
### **2.4.1 How did inclusive education philosophy start?**

As indicated earlier, after decades of segregation of learners with disabilities, there has been a significant shift from special education to inclusive education globally (Polat, 2011; Mittler, 2006). IE has emerged as a worldwide movement that seeks to challenge unjust, discriminatory and exclusionary practices thus ensuring that all learners are afforded equal opportunities. The inclusive education philosophy suggests conceptual shifts in terms of values and practices. This involves the processes of changing values, attitudes, policies and practices.

According to Mittler, (2006) and Polat (2011:51), the on-going journey toward securing basic education for all in the world started with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights by the United Nations (1948) which affirmed inclusion in education as a human right. This was followed by a number of key declarations, such as : The Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), The World Declaration Education for All (World Conference on Education for All, 1990), The Salamanca Statement and Action Framework on Special Needs Education (World Conference on Special Needs Education, 1994), The Dakar Framework for Action (World Education Forum, 2000), The Education for All (EFA) flagship, Education for Persons with Disabilities: Toward inclusion (UNESCO, 2010) and the convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2007).”

The Salamanca conference marked a major milestone in ensuring that governments commit themselves to the Education for All initiative. It was organised by UNESCO and the Spanish government in 1994 and attended by 92 government representatives (Mittler, 2006). The conference issued a statement that re-affirms the right to education of every individual, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This includes the following principles:

- 
- Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,
  - Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,
  - Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs (UNESCO, 2000).

Different countries committed themselves to the development and implementation of IE. This was to be achieved among others, by the development of IE policies. The move toward inclusive education requires schools to reflect inclusive policies, beliefs and values, and development of teacher skills and knowledge to address the learning needs of all students (Carrington & Robinson, 2004).

#### 2.4.2 What are the indicators of inclusive education?

To meet the diverse needs of learners, IE proposes eradication of exclusionary school policies, cultures and practices. The development of inclusive policies, cultures and practices is regarded as indicators of the development of IE. The indicators are termed Index for Inclusion. Carrington and Robinson (2004) regard Index for Inclusion as one resource that can facilitate such change in school culture, policy and teaching practice. Polat (2011) describes the Index for Inclusion as a resource to support inclusive development in schools. Booth and Ainscow (2002) describe index for inclusion as a practical guide that offers schools support for self-review, planning and development of IE in schools. It was first published in 2000 to support the development of schools in England. It later attracted interest from other countries and thirteen years later various editions have been translated into forty languages (Carrington & Robinson, 2006). The process of developing index for inclusion involved “in-depth analysis of review and experiences of key stakeholders on barriers and obstacles to educational access, participation and achievement as well as an investigation into ways in which such barriers can be reduced or eliminated for all students” Polat (2011: 50).

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Booth, Ainscow and Kingston (2006) posit that the most important aim of the index is to bring a deeper understanding to the school of what aspects they should be concentrating on when they want to embark on a process of inclusive school development. The index for inclusion contains 70 indicators for development, organised along three dimensions of improvement: policies, practices and cultures ((Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan & Shaw, 2000). Each indicator is given meaning by challenging questions which prompt a detailed review of the setting and provide ideas for action. According to Sayser (2014: 28), Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan & Shaw (2000), Booth, Ainscow and Kingston (2006) the Index for Inclusion does not offer a blueprint, but is both flexible and context-friendly. These authors claim that it involves overlapping dimensions of school life: school culture, policy and practice, as depicted in Figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3: Index for Inclusion (Booth, Ainscow & Kingston, 2006)**

Carrington and Robinson (2006) suggest four principles to support the development of a more inclusive school community. These include: (1) developing a learning community incorporating a critical friend; (2) valuing and collaborating with parents and the broader community; (3) engaging students as citizens in school review and development; and (4) support teachers' critical engagement with inclusive ideals and practices. The authors describe how the principles can work in concert in a school community.

## **2.5 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Prior to the 1994 national democratic elections, the South African Department of Education was split into 18 racially divided education departments (Hay, 2000: Western Cape Education Department, 2002). This produced a dual system of education that included a mainstream component and a special education component (Naicker, 1999, 2000). This system resulted in a number of learners, especially Black learners, being excluded from the mainstream of education (Carrim, 2002). Special education was not only recognised according to racial segregation; there was segregation on the basis of learner disability as well.

Learners with disabilities/difficulties had to obtain their education from special schools which provided special resources, adaptations to the curriculum, and different assessment strategies to assist them in their learning. Learners with disabilities were referred to as learners with special education (Muthukrishna, 2002; Van Rooyen & Le

Grange, 2003; Western Cape Education Department, 2002). Thus, disabled learners were labelled, categorised, and stigmatised; leading to them having low self-esteem (Western Cape Education Department, 2002).

Responding to the Salamanca Statement and framework on special Needs education, the South African government has promulgated acts and policies promoting the inclusion of learners with special needs in education. Among these is the Education White Paper No.1 of 1995 which highlights the importance of addressing the needs of learners with special needs, both in special schools and in public ordinary schools (Department of Education, 1995; RSA, 1995). In 1996, the South African Schools Act was passed, stating that principals should allow parents the right to decide where they wish their learning disabled children to be placed (RSA, 1996; van Rooyen & Le Grange, 2003). The international guidelines that provided the overall framework for policy development in inclusive education include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the child (United Nations, 1989), the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Disabled Persons (United Nations, 1993) and the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011: 357). According to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1994), the Salamanca Statement succeeded in reminding governments that children with difficulties must be included within Education for All and also provided a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas and experiences and how that challenge has been met across the world.

This movement proposed the merging of special and mainstream education and suggested that there should be only one unified education system. Research studies have shown that different countries have formulated and developed inclusive education policies (Zimba, Mowes & Naada, 2007; Stofile & Green, 2007; Johnstone, 2007).

In 1997 the National Commission on special needs Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) were appointed to “investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in education and training in South Africa” (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker &

Engelbrecht, 1999:56; Department of Education, 2001:90, Pettipher 2000:23, UNESCO,2003:4). They produced a report namely, Quality Education for All, which describes special needs as barriers to learning and development, and asserts that “all learners have a right to access both basic and quality education without discrimination of any sort”; and that “no learner may be denied admission to an ordinary school on any grounds, including grounds of disability, language, learning difficulty or pregnancy” (Department of Education, 1997:44).

They argued that a range of needs existed among all learners, which must be met if effective learning and development are to be sustained (Department of Education, 1997). Furthermore, their report argued that the education system should address those factors that lead to the failure of the system to accommodate diversity, or which lead to learning breakdown (Muthukrishna, 2002:17). According to Miles et al (2003:76), this was the first report to challenge the conceptualisation of special needs in South Africa, and it came to be seen internationally as an example of the way in which the special needs agenda has the potential to transform the whole education system. Naicker (1999:26) suggests that, “....it is important that the majority of educationists in mainstream education take ownership of the management of diversity”. The higher Education White Paper produced in 1997, suggests the identification of inequalities based on racial, gender, and disability discrimination or disadvantage (Department of Education, 1997). In August 1999, the Ministry of Education released the “Consultative Paper No1 on Special Education. Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, First Steps” (Department of Education, 1999) this paper suggested a move away from using segregation according to disability. This policy has outlined six strategies or levers for establishing an IE and training system.

The first strategic lever is the implementation of a national advocacy and information programme in support of the inclusion model. The second lever is the conversion of special schools into resource centres. The IE policy proposes converting these schools into resource centres as part of its integrated strategy. The staff members of these schools are to be gradually integrated into District-Based Support Teams to support

Institutional Level Support Teams and neighbourhood schools. In addition, special schools are expected to provide advice to neighbourhoods and share resources (Department of Education, 2001; 2005).

The third aspect of the policy's strategy is the establishment of full service schools. The Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) argues for the need to establish thirty "full service schools" in South Africa as part of its short term goals. The Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education: Full Service Schools (Department of Education, 2005) defines a "Full Service School" as a public ordinary school which provides quality education for all learners and students by meeting the full range of learning needs in an equitable manner.

The fourth strategic intervention is the establishment of District Based Support and Institutional Level Support Teams. According to this policy the primary function of these teams is to build the capacity of Institutional Level Support Teams through training, evaluation of programmes and assessment (Department of Education, 2001; 2003; 2005). These teams are to comprise special educators, psychologists, remedial/learning support educators, curriculum specialists, administration experts and so on. Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) also proposes the establishment of support teams at school level.

The fifth strategic initiative is the general orientation and introduction of management, governing bodies and professional staff to the IE model and the targeting of early identification of disabilities for intervention in the foundation phase.

The sixth approach in this strategy is the mobilisation of approximately 280 000 disabled children and youth of compulsory school-going age who are outside of the school system (Department of Education, 2001).

## **2.6 FACTORS THAT FACILITATE OR CONSTRAIN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

### **2.6.1 Factors that facilitate the implementation of inclusive education**

In their study, Koay, Lim Sim and Elkins (2006) posit that the success of IE depends heavily on the perceptions and attitudes of educators within public ordinary schools toward learners with special needs/barriers to learning. These authors state that positive perceptions and feelings on the part of educators tend to encourage successful inclusion. Some survey studies have shown that educator acceptance or resistance to the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning into mainstream classrooms is related to the knowledge base and experiences of educators (Stoler, 1992; Taylor, Richards, Goldstein & Schilit, 1997).

The results of the study conducted by Koay, Lim, Sim and Elkins (2006) reveal that as educators gain more experience and knowledge with learners with barriers to learning, they become more positive in their perceptions and beliefs about including these learners. They also found that the educators who had received the most training and experience in special needs have the most positive views and perceptions about IE.

According to Luseno (2001), the educator's success in educating students in inclusive classrooms seems to be influenced by their, the educators' knowledge of the characteristics of children with disabilities, the special education laws, strategies for assessing the learners' needs, and strategies for teaching exceptional learners in inclusive settings (Luseno, 2001).

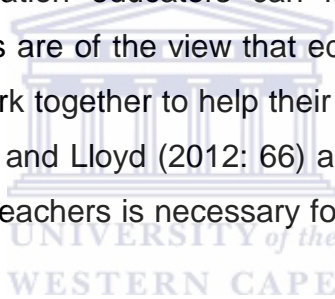
Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) claim that the successful implementation of IE depends on educators' willingness to include students in their classrooms, the perceived effects of inclusion on the general education classroom environment, and perceptions about the needed resources in order to implement inclusion effectively.

Stofile (2008: 82) summarised the key variables that lead to experiences of success as follows:



- Commitment to the philosophy of inclusion
- Content of the curriculum
- Attitudes towards inclusion
- Capacity to address the diverse needs of learners
- Support of learners and teachers in implementing inclusion
- Implementation context
- Collaboration between departments

Caputo and Langher (2014) argue that cooperative teaching and collaboration between mainstream and special education educators can lead to experiences of greater accomplishment. These authors are of the view that educators need to be encouraged to share responsibilities and work together to help their students gain the full benefits of an inclusive classroom. Walton and Lloyd (2012: 66) also assert that collaboration and participatory teamwork among teachers is necessary for the effective implementation of inclusion in schools.



### **2.6.2 Factors that constrain the implementation of inclusive education**

Research shows that educators are struggling to adjust to the “new way of doing things and they are suffering because of the overload they have”, (Hay, 2003:135 as well as Walton & Lloyd, 2012). Another challenge is that educators have differences in their training backgrounds, level of education, and remuneration (British Columbia Teachers Federation, 2004; Cook et al.2004). Stofile and Green (2007) as well as Walton and Lloyd (2012) claim that lack of appropriate pre- and in-service training and preparation for inclusive classrooms constrain the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. .

According to Caputo and Langher (2014) lack of support to successfully integrate students with disabilities into the general education classroom leads to negative

attitudes, which can constrain the implementation of IE. In terms of the implementation of inclusive education in special schools, special education educators are likely to face “challenging situations such as excessive amounts of direct contact with children, a perceived lack of job success, programme structure, and work overload, scarce collaboration with colleagues, and lack of administrative and parental support” (Caputo and Langher, 2014: 1).

Bornman and Rose cited in Donohue and Bornman (2014) cite general lack of support and resources as well as negative attitudes toward disability as contributing to the inability of the system to implement IE in South Africa. There is also a challenge of strict adherence to a particular curriculum as opposed to adapting a more flexible implementation of the curriculum (Cook et al., 2004). Educators have to decide whether to use mainly unstructured interventions or a combination of more structured teacher-directed teaching interventions. At the same time, they have to decide on how to organise their daily activities, and decide whether the activities should be fairly unstructured and flexible or they should be predictable daily routines (Cook et al., 2004).

As mainstream classroom educators are responsible for teaching a diversity of learners with a wide range of achievement levels, inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning further increases variance in achievement, as well as in behaviour problems, requiring these educators to direct more attention to their specific needs. The biggest challenge reported is that in the absence of increased time to devote to individual learners, and a continued press to improve average achievement of the class, mainstream classroom educators recognise that the educational needs of the learners with or without barriers to learning are likely to suffer (Salend & Duhaney, 1999).

The South African education system has a large percentage of overcrowded classes which is faced with a number of challenges which may jeopardize the implementation of IE (Hay & Malindi, 2005). These challenges are as follows:

- A large percentage of overcrowded classes which are not in line with the national norm of 1:40 for primary schools or 1:35 for secondary schools. Despite efforts

from provincial education departments, this problem continues without an imminent solution;

- Under-qualified educators that do not have the capacity to implement IE well. Huge efforts are under way to improve these educators' qualifications, but only time will tell whether this improvement will have a bearing on inclusive classrooms.
- Capacity education managers to implement inclusive education in a coordinated focused way. It appears as if many provincial managers do not have adequate backgrounds to manage this complex process:
- Change overload that educators are experiencing. The stream of new policies seems never-ending, and is affecting educator morale:
- Remnants of the dual system are still operational in combination with the new IE system. Special classes at public ordinary schools still exist, and the majority of special schools have not been transformed into resource centres yet.  
(as cited on <http://www.isec2005.org.uk/isec/abstracts/papers-h/hay-j.shtml>).

## 2.7 CONCLUSION

There have been major transformations in the education system in South Africa. The system moved from a segregation system during the apartheid era to a unitary system after the democratic elections in 1994. It is crucial that all stakeholders in the education system are able to adapt and adjust to these changes in order to provide quality education for all as stated in the Salamanca Statement and the education White Paper 6.

IE implies a sense of belonging and acceptance and therefore has to do with how educators and the system respond to individual differences. It is important to realize that renewal and change must be coordinated, comprehensive and efficient. It must present a clear strong moral imperative to promote the quality of life of the learner with specific

needs in order to become part of the mainstream education communities. Regardless of the unique characteristics of children with barriers to learning, IE implies that all learners should have access to the core curriculum. The learners' individual differences, needs, abilities and capacities, as well as the notion that all learners learn in different ways, should be treated with respect.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter reviewed the conceptualization of Inclusive Education, its theoretical underpinnings and findings from previous research in other countries and in South Africa. This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology for the study. This includes the examination of the broad methodological orientation as well as the different data collection methods and techniques that were employed in the study. The chapter further explains the procedures followed during field work and in the analysis of data. The chapter concludes with the discussion of ethical considerations and guidelines followed in gathering data.

### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.2.1 Research Approach**

The research method chosen for this study has emerged from the researcher's orientation and the aim of this study. In an effort to understand the School Based Support Teams' understandings and experiences of implementing IE, a qualitative research approach was adopted. This approach was regarded as more appropriate for the study as it allows the researcher to understand the participants' personal experiences. A qualitative research process involves taking people's life experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them. Yates, Partridge and Bruce (2012) define qualitative research as a phenomenographic approach that explores variations in people's experiences of their world. According to Guba and Lincoln (2000), a qualitative research approach allows multiple views of reality and also allows for the exploration of experiences as interpreted by educators.

Merriam (2008) claims that a qualitative research approach is useful not only in providing descriptions of complex phenomenon, but also in developing a conceptual framework to explain the phenomenon. This approach was chosen because of its ability to present a holistic picture on the lived experiences of the participants in the study.

This method is useful when collecting rich descriptions of experiences and the meaning they attach to reality (Yates et al, 2012). It is due to the aforementioned idea that this method is relevant in this study, since the design of this study has a small sample and aims at in-depth description of teachers lived experiences in the classrooms.

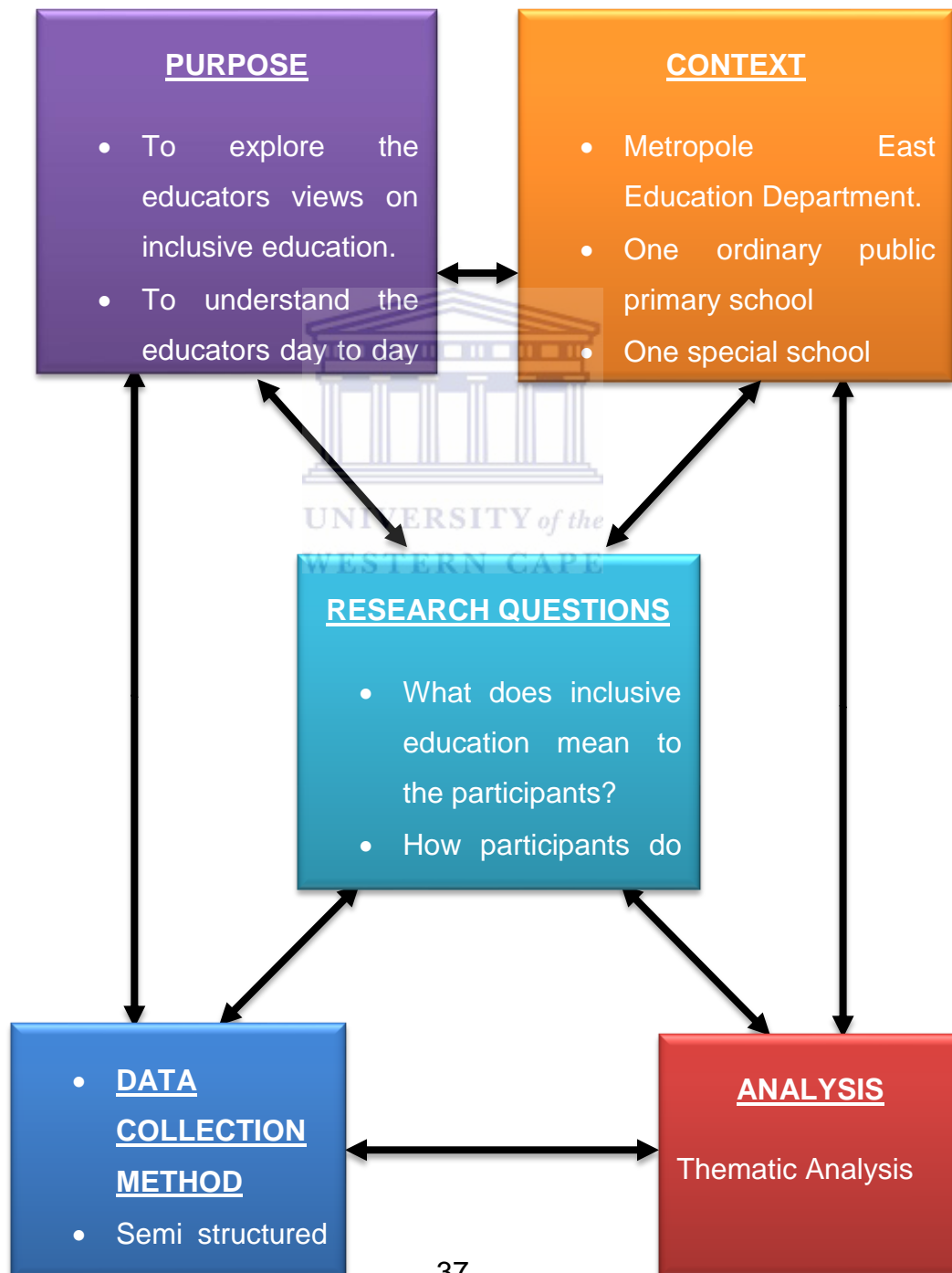
### **3.2.2 Research Design**

The research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. It involves planning, visualising of data and the employment of this data in the research project as a whole (Leedy, 1993). Mouton (2001) on the one hand describes a research design as a plan or 'blueprint' of how the researcher intends conducting research. Not all researchers embrace the research design as it is described. Some researchers propose designs that are more open, fluid and changeable (Durrheim, 2006). These authors claim that some qualitative designs cannot be given in advanced; it must emerge, develop, and unfold. Durrheim (2006: 37) suggests that in developing a research design the researcher must make a series of decisions along the following four dimensions: the purpose of the research, the paradigm informing the research, the context or situation within which the research is carried out, and the research techniques employed to collect the data.

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative case study design was used. Stake (2005) describes a qualitative case study design as an approach that facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This, according to the author, ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood.

The researcher found it advantageous to use the qualitative research case study design because it enables the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of educators and allows the researcher to understand the participants' personal experiences. Through the qualitative case study design the research

attempted to understand the educators' experiences of IE in their classrooms. McMillan and Schumacher (2007) describe qualitative case study design as the research design that allows the researcher to remain receptive to new ideas, issues and undercurrents emerging in the study. This design was relevant for this study because it produces an opportunity to explore the experiences of educators in a specific context.



## **Figure 3.1 A summary of the research design**

### **3.2.3 Research Sites**

The study was conducted in two schools, situated in the Khayelitsha area in the Western Cape. These schools are among the twenty eight primary schools in the nodal areas that were targeted by the National Department of Education to implement IE. The township consists of one bedroom houses built by the city council. Although these houses in the township are solid structures, some have suffered noticeable deterioration. Substandard dwelling units (shacks built on narrow tracks) have developed rapidly around the case study schools. The poor housing conditions of the people living in this area, is probably the most visible sign of low income levels. This area is characterized by a high rate of migration. The majority of learners in this area are raised by grandparents or neighbours as their parents either stay in the big cities or in the townships, either in, or seeking employment.

One school is a public ordinary school with a population of one thousand two hundred learners and thirty two educators and the other one is a special school with a population of four hundred learners with twenty nine educators including supporting staff like a school counsellor and a psychologist. The special school is in the process of being converted to a resource centre and the other school is in the process of being converted to a full service school.

The reason for the selection of these schools is that I have access to them and they have been nominated by the National Education Department to field test IE in my district. A second reason is that these schools have been previously trained to implement IE. It is assumed that the chosen schools will be in a position to provide valuable information on educators' experiences of inclusive education in their classrooms.



### **3.2.4 Sampling**

Sampling is the use of a subset of a population to represent the whole population. Different approaches to sampling exist in research, with two of the approaches being probability and non-probability sampling (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of probability sampling is the generation of data that can be generalised to the population and this is therefore more often used in quantitative studies (Merriam, 2009 & Maree, 2007:172).

As the purpose of the study was to establish the participants' understanding and experiences of IE, purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is a selection criterion that guides the researcher to choose participants who have the appropriate personal experiences and characteristics essential for uncovering the appropriate knowledge for the study (Merriam, 2009). According to de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2006: 202) it "is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher ", in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic representative or typical attributes of the population. One public ordinary school and a special school in Khayelitsha were selected from the Metropole East Education District, because they were identified and chosen by the Department of Education as a full service school and a resource centre. The researcher did not encounter any difficulties during the sampling process. All educators participated fully in the selected schools.

### **3.2.5 Participants**

The participants in this study were twenty educators (10 from each school) who are class educators and serve as members of the School Based Support Team and teaching in the selected two schools. All these participants are employed by the Western Cape Education Department. The rationale for choosing members of the School Based Support Teams is that they have received orientation from the National Department of Basic Education on the philosophy of inclusive education as well as the roles and responsibilities of School-Based Support Teams. A second reason for choosing them has to do with the fact that there was evidence that they were already implementing inclusive education in their schools. All the members of the School Based Support Teams in these schools were invited to participate in the study and all of them

agreed to take part in the study. Before the commencement of the study, permission to conduct the study was granted by the University Ethics Committee, the Western Cape Department of Education as well as the school principals. The participants were approached individually. The purpose of the research was explained and they were informed about their voluntary participation and their rights to withdraw from the study. The information included in the following table depicts the biographical characteristics of the participants in the study.

**Table 3.1: A summary of biographical characteristics of the participants**

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<b>TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN YEARS</b>	<b>PHASE TAUGHT</b>
P1	Female	4	Foundation Phase
P2	Female	15	Intermediate phase
P3	Female	7	Senior phase
P4	Male	12	Intermediate phase
P5	Female	27	Foundation Phase
P6	Female	10	Foundation Phase
P7	Female	20	Intermediate phase
P8	Male	5	Intermediate phase
P9	Female	2	Intermediate phase
P10	Female	23	Foundation Phase
P11	Female	6	Intermediate phase
P12	Male	3	Senior phase
P13	Female	17	Foundation Phase
P14	Female	12	Intermediate phase
P15	Female	22	Foundation Phase
P16	Female	10	Intermediate phase
P17	Female	14	Senior phase
P18	Female	9	Foundation Phase
P19	Female	5	Intermediate phase
P20	Female	22	Intermediate phase

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

The research methods used in this study were consistent with the qualitative approach. These were focus group interviews and individual interviews.

#### **3.3.1 Interviews**

The qualitative interview is a frequently used data collection method in qualitative research Mouton (2001). Interviews can be described as a process of learning about people's views and their lived experiences. Miller (2011) describes interviewing as "a two-way conversation" with the purpose of obtaining rich descriptive data about how the participant perceives reality based on their beliefs, opinions, views and ideas. This is in line with purpose of this research project. Interviews vary in their degree of structure, and the quality and nature of the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Holstein & Gubriun, 2011).

Interpretivist researchers reject the notion that there is only one truth and therefore employ the technique of in-depth interviewing to gain insight into many lived experiences (subjective truth) which people hold as their realities (Miller & Glassner, 2011). They approach the interview with research participants as partners participating in an active process of creating understanding (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Holstein & Gubriun, 2011:150). It focuses on the "meanings that people attribute to their experiences and social worlds" (Miller & Glassner, 2011: 133).

The advantage of using interviews is that although a semi-structured interview guides the interview by providing broad discussion categories for the interaction between the researcher and the participant, it allows the researcher freedom to explain terms and adapt questions to suit individuals' abilities and understanding (Maree, 2007:87).

Furthermore, interviewing allows for the researcher to probe during questioning in order to obtain more details during the research process (Maree, 2007). Before collecting the

data, the interview schedule was piloted with one public ordinary and one special school. The purpose of this exercise was to assess if there were ambiguities in the research questions as well as the extent to which participants could respond to the research questions. It was realised that some participants in the pilot were not comfortable in expressing themselves in English and some needed more probing questions. This gave the researcher the opportunity to refine questions, to ensure that probing questions were included in the interview guide and to translate the interview schedule into isiXhosa.

Before the commencement of the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and the rights of participants. The participants completed the consent forms. The researcher then sought permission to record interviews from the participants. The interviews in the study were conducted in both isiXhosa and English. The interviews were conducted after school in a classroom and this took forty five minutes per participant.

### **3.3.2 Focus Group Interviews**

Focus group interviews can be described as group discussions covering a central topic. According to Maree (2007:90) the focus group interview has many positive outcomes, especially in alignment with the ideas of social constructivism and interpretivism. The relevance of focus group interviews in this study is clearly stated by Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robin (2012) who assert that focus groups provide access to group meanings, processes and norms. In other words, data that is generated by using focus groups can provide information about how these groups construct meaning and what norms are held by the group.

Using focus group interviews in this study assisted in eliciting information about School Based Teams' shared experiences of implementing IE. Similarly, Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2010) support the view that focus groups yield a collective rather than individual view of the phenomenon under investigation. The following are some of the advantages of using focus group interviews which are mentioned by Bloor et al (2012)

that triggered my interest in using focus groups in the study;

- Participants feel more relaxed and less inhibited in the presence of friends and colleagues.
- Participants may feel empowered and supported in the co-operation in the co-presence of those similarly situated to them.

For the purpose of the study the researcher conducted four focus groups. Each group had five participants. Focus group discussions were scheduled to be conducted for a duration of ninety minutes. The following were the questions asked

- What does inclusive education mean to you?
- How do you implement inclusive education in your school?
- What challenges do you experience in implementing inclusive education?
- What successes do you experience in implementing inclusive education in your school?


The main challenge that the researcher experienced during interviews was that not every individual participated during the research sessions. Some participants chose to keep quiet not sharing their views. Some participants talked too much not giving other participants the opportunity to express their views. To deal with this challenge the researcher organised individual interview sessions to give those participants the chance to express their views about the four questions that are asked to the focus group.

The focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim from the interview voice recordings. The transcripts were sent back to the groups for verification. Although it took longer to get the transcripts ready for analysis the process was regarded as useful as some participants added more information. It was deemed necessary to conduct individual interviews as a follow up to the focus groups.

### **3.3.3 Individual Interviews**

Twenty participants were interviewed individually. The interviews were conducted in English and isiXhosa to accommodate every participant. The interviews were conducted in the classrooms that were identified by the participants. The decision to conduct interviews in the school environment was to accommodate the participants. It was envisaged that individual interviews would allow participants freedom to report those experiences they would not have wanted to share in the focus group. Individual interviews lasted for forty five minutes. Participants gave permission for recording the interviews. The interview period took longer than planned because some participants had to attend to the cases referred to them and some attended in-service training workshops.

## **3.4 DATA ANALYSIS**



Data analysis is a systematic process of selecting categorizing, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting data to provide explanation of a single phenomenon of interest (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997: 67). It refers to transforming the data with the aim of extracting useful information and facilitating conclusions. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns, or themes within data (Brown, 2006:15). A theme captures something important about data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within a data set. Thematic analysis organises and describes the data in rich detail and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998, 23). According to Henning (2005:104) thematic analysis allows the researcher to reduce, condense and group the content. Thematic analysis approaches the deconstruction of research data with the purpose of identifying themes, categories and patterns in the data (Patton, 1987). The following is a detailed discussion of procedures of the data analysis used in the study.

Before the process of data analysis began, the researcher transcribed all data collected

during interviews verbatim; thereby providing texts to be subjected to the data analysis process. The transcripts were returned to the participants to check for the accuracy of the statements. A meeting was held with the four focus groups and the transcripts were read to them. There were incidences where participants wanted to add more information and this was granted by the researcher. In terms of the individual interviews only fifteen participants responded.

The first step in thematic analysis was carried out through actively reading and re-reading through the transcribed data and assigning codes to the content as suggested by Patton (1987). The researcher identified the units of analysis and words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs that capture participants' understandings and experiences of IE. The researcher therefore engaged in a process of dividing the data into "units of meanings" (Henning, 2005:102) and assigning codes according to what the researcher found significant about the words in the utterances of the research participants. Some researchers refer to this process as 'open-coding' and this process usually requires more than one reading of the text.

The second step started with the thematic analysis of the data, also referred to by some researchers as 'axial coding' (O'Leary, 2010:257). This requires that the researcher starts to make meaning of the text by identifying recurring codes and codes that are linked together because of the constructed overlapping meaning as interpreted by the researcher (O'Leary, 2010:257). It involved re-reading the transcripts together with the codes ascribed to sections of data during the first process and grouping codes with similar themes into categories. This step is called a one or two word summary. The researcher made a list of all codes, looking for similar coding. The aim was to reduce the list of codes down to a smaller and more manageable number. The researcher made constant comparisons that meant that she had to go back to the original data to look for the same coding.

Thirdly, the researcher grouped the themes under the same codes. Fourthly, the researcher repeated the same process, looking for new emerging themes and constant comparisons. Finally, the researcher wrote up the narrative from the themes, sub-

themes and codes, whilst keeping in mind the purpose of the research, as well as the research questions (O'Leary, 2010).

### **3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

In addressing credibility, researchers try to demonstrate that a true reflection of the phenomenon under investigation is presented (Shenton, 2004). Merriam in Shenton (2004) describes credibility as congruency of the findings with reality. To ensure rigour and credibility in this study, the interview schedule was piloted with four educators. The purpose was to check the appropriateness of the questions. No changes were made in the schedule. During interviews transcripts were sent back to the participants to confirm accuracy. Of the total number of transcripts 95% were returned with minor corrections.

### **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics are the bases upon which the researcher ought to evaluate his/her conduct. The researchers are obligated to behave in a professional and responsible way. Ethics usually deal with beliefs concerning what is right or wrong, appropriate, inappropriate, moral or immoral (McMillan & Schumacher 1997).

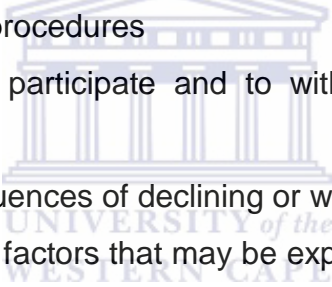
The participants were not in any way forced to participate in the study. They were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without having to specify any reasons for doing so. The participants were informed that the information they gave would be treated anonymously and remain confidential.

It was explained to the participants that anonymity is guaranteed on the consent form and they were not forced but agreed to participate in the study. It was further explained that the consent forms and the interview schedule would not be linked in any way; therefore, the responses they give on the interview schedule would be anonymous. They were made aware that the researcher's supervisor would see the data but their names would not be linked to their responses to the interview schedule.



The study posed no foreseeable risk of physical, psychological or emotional harm to the participants. The participants did not have to pay for taking part in the study, financially or in any way. The researcher explained that participation in the study would benefit the participants in that they would bring to the surface the challenges they encounter, which would be anonymously communicated by the researcher, to the schools management systems; and the district support team if there was a need. This would be done in the form of a report. This would then assist in the provision of special education support services, if necessary.

According to the American Psychiatric Association (2000), prospective research participants should be given information about the nature and purpose of the research project, as well as about aspects of the research process and the potential risks concerning participation, such as

- 
- Expected duration, and procedures
  - The right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once participation has begun.
  - The foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing.
  - Reasonable foreseeable factors that may be expected to influence willingness to participate, such as risks, discomfort, or adverse effects.
  - Any prospective research benefits.
  - Limits of confidentiality.
  - Incentives for participation.
  - Whom to contact regarding questions about the research participation rights, and.
  - Possibility of publication.

This is referred to by Allan (2008) as informed consent. These provide opportunity for the prospective participants to ask questions and receive answers before they consent to participation. All of the above aspects were included in the letter of consent. Although prospective research participants were identified and approached through a process of purposive sampling, their participation was encouraged to be voluntary.

Confidentiality was explained verbally to all participants during the initial part of interviews. Further guidelines about confidentiality were described in the consent forms to the participants before the commencement of the research study. The methods used to ensure confidentiality, as well as the process of data storage and dissemination after the conclusion of the study, were discussed with the participants. Identifying information that could link the collected data with the participants was omitted from the study and codes were used to identify the participants in the research process. Access to the raw data was limited to the researcher, which further ensured that the research participants shared experiences remained confidential.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This purpose of this chapter was to provide a detailed description of the research context, paradigm, design and methodology of this study. The main aim was to provide information about the methods of data collection and analysis used in the study. The final section of this chapter described the steps that the researcher took during this study to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical way and that the research findings are trustworthy within the research context. The following chapter provides a discussion of the findings of this study

# CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three discusses the methodology that was used to collect the data. This chapter presents the descriptive analysis of the data collected in the study by drawing on the responses from individual and focus group semi-structured interviews. These findings are organised under the two main research questions, which cover the educators' understandings of inclusive education, their challenges as well as their successes of implementing Inclusive Education. The themes and categories that emerged are presented under each research question.

## 4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Twenty participants were interviewed in this study. The following research questions guided the investigation.

- What are the School Based Teams' understandings of inclusive education?
- How do School Based Teams implement inclusive education?
- What are the educator's experiences of inclusive education?

### 4.2.1 Educators' understanding of Inclusive Education

The interviews explored the participants' understandings of the concept of inclusive education. Twenty participants responded to this question. During data analysis it was interesting to note that the public ordinary school participants and special school participants' responses were very similar. Also, there were no differences between male and female responses. It is also worth explaining that although educators had different

teaching experiences, there was no significant difference in their responses. It was deemed not necessary to divide the responses according to the school type, teaching experience and gender in this study.

Four themes and categories identified during the process of analysis are provided in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 A summary of categories that emerged**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Participants' responses</b>
Inclusive education as a process of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process of modifying the curriculum</li> <li>• Process of renovating the school buildings</li> <li>• Process of involving parents in education</li> </ul>
Inclusive education as an approach to teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodate a variety of learning and teaching styles</li> <li>• Uses ability grouping strategies.</li> <li>• Ensures social and academic interactions</li> <li>• Uses different teaching methods</li> </ul>
Inclusive education as support for all learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodates all learners</li> </ul>
Inclusive education as placement of learners with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placement of learners who experience learning difficulties in the public ordinary schools</li> <li>• Integrates learners in the mainstream</li> </ul>

#### **4.2.1.1 *Inclusive education as a process of change***

Twenty participants described IE as a process of modifying the curriculum. Of the twenty participants, ten participants from the special school regarded IE as a process of developing a different curriculum that will be suitable for disabled learners. This seems to suggest that whilst these participants asserted that all learners must learn in the same learning environment, these learners should not be exposed to the same curriculum. Ten public ordinary school participants on the other hand, were of the view that learners experiencing barriers to learning must be exposed to the same national curriculum.

*Inclusive education means that the curriculum must be modified in such a way that every learner can be exposed to it. (Participant 17)*

In addition, all twenty participants described IE as a process of renovating school buildings to accommodate wheelchair users. This includes the building of ramps and the installation of lifts. The participants were more concerned about the physically disabled learners who might have limited access to other school buildings and facilities. This shows that participants' understanding of inclusive education is limited to the provision of physical access for learners with physical disabilities.

Furthermore, seven participants viewed IE as a process of involving parents in their children's education. Parental involvement for them means the establishment of daily routines for the time to study at home, supporting and monitoring homework, as well as supporting learning. Participants believed that parents who read to their children provide stimulating experiences that contribute to student achievement. One participant claimed:

*Inclusive education means that parents should also be involved in the education of their children by involving their children in activities outside of school that contribute to an overall developmental process and also parents should participate in school related decisions e.g. collaborating with the teachers to set realistic goals for learners. (Participant 13)*

This view is also supported by Unesco (2003) which believes that IE is a process of change in an inclusive education which means achieving the goals set and adopting more inclusive ways of thinking and working. Inclusion should be linked to the mission of the education system at large and not to a specific group such as disability or a certain ethnic group. (Fines, 2002 cited by UNESCO 2003). According to Fine (2002), if inclusion is not connected to the mission of the education system, the stake holders might not be willing to devote their time to the process that does not seem to make any contribution to development in general. This means that there should be strong support demonstrated by leaders and governors.

#### **4.2.1.2 Inclusive education as an approach to teaching**

Most participants acknowledged that all learners are unique and that they must be understood and treated as such. Participants claimed that learners learn differently and therefore a variety of teaching methods must be used to cater for their learning needs. The following excerpt provides evidence of that:

*Inclusive education means that teachers include a variety of learning options to suit the different learning styles and abilities. The teachers take into consideration the fact that each learner is unique and different but they are needed to be treated equally and valued in the same way as others. (Participant 7)*

In addition, the notion of IE is understood as an approach that provides opportunities for academic and social interactions. In other words, IE is viewed as an approach that enables learners with disabilities to work together with the so called normal learners in academic projects and social activities.

As one participant describes:

*Inclusive education is an approach that seeks to address the learning needs of all children; it also looks into educational transformation and provides all students with opportunities for academic and social interactions. (Participant 4)*

The participants' views are congruent with the Education White Paper 6's position that

IE is essentially about supporting all learners irrespective of their abilities. This view is also supported by Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006: 25) who believe that IE is about the processes of restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality.

#### **4.2.1.3 Inclusive education as support for all learners**

Fifteen participants described IE as an education system that accommodates all learners in public ordinary schools. According to the participants these learners must be treated equally and be given human respect and dignity. As one participant describes:

*Inclusive education is a system of education whereby learners are accommodated in one environment, not discriminated against and are all treated equally and given human respect and dignity. (Participant 16)*

In addition to the above statement, IE is understood as a system which eradicates segregation of learners experiencing barriers to learning. In other words IE is that which challenges discrimination within the public ordinary school. As one participant elaborated:

*Inclusive education is a system that eradicates the system of segregating learners experiencing barriers to learning from public ordinary school to special school. (Participant 3)*

Contrary to the above statement, four participants viewed IE as a system that labels learners according to categories of disabilities like physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. They explained that these learners are identified in their classrooms by teachers and after that those learners identified have to be referred to a certain class in order to respond to their barriers to learning. As one participant describes:

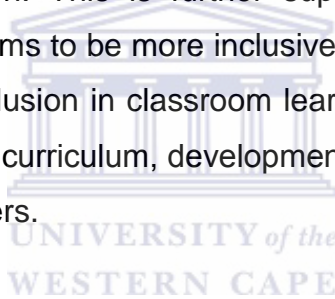
*Inclusive education is a system that labels learners. These learners are identified by educators as struggling learners in their classrooms. After being identified educators have to refer these learners to attend a certain class within the school in order to*

*respond to their educational needs but not in their class grade that is why I personally say inclusive education is a system of labelling learners.(Participants 9)*

Two participants regarded IE as a support system where struggling learners receive support that enables them to acquire skills like reading and writing. As one participant explains:

*Inclusive education is a system of supporting learners who were identified by teachers in the classroom to attend unit class or LSEN class in my school to assist learners to improve in skills like reading and writing.(Participant 19)*

According to Davis (2003) support in education is central to IE. The classroom is not the context in which the inclusion of learners is implemented. All activities taking place in the classroom need to be supportive to learners in their learning process, especially peer and teacher in interaction. This is further supported by Morgan (1998) who expressed the view for classrooms to be more inclusive and a need to develop teaching practises that lead to social inclusion in classroom learning activities. These eventually lead to increased access to the curriculum, development of a child's independence and equal opportunities for all learners.



#### **4.2.1.4 Inclusive education as placement of disabled learners**

Ten participants from special schools described IE as placement of disabled learners in mainstream classrooms. The participants further indicated that after a certain period of time the learner who is not showing improvement undergoes a certain assessment by the department for placement in the schools of skills and special schools. As one participant describes:

*Inclusive education is about placement of learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms with the necessary required support and assistance, this placement is done after an identification process by the educator in the classroom then other assessments are done by psychologists from the department to recommend further placement outside the school to schools of skills and special schools. (Participant 10)*



Twenty participants in the study described IE as a process of integrating learners with disabilities in a mainstream learning environment irrespective of their diverse abilities. As one participant indicated:

*Inclusive education means a process of catering for all learners, no matter what barriers these learners have. (Participant 18)*

Both public ordinary and special school participants started with the assertion that IE is about integrating learners with disability or those categorised as special educational needs in public ordinary schools. While their understandings form part of IE philosophy, the limited understanding could have serious implications for the way IE will be implemented in these schools. One may regard this as a narrow view of IE. Ainscow, Booth, Dyson (2006: 15) questions the “usefulness” of an approach to IE that focuses on a “disabled” or special needs part of them and ignores all the other ways in which participation for any student may be impeded or enhanced. These authors propose the replacement of notions of special educational needs with barriers to learning. This does not redirect attention to the segregation of learners with disabilities whose rights have been violated.

Da Costa (2003) acknowledges that in South Africa there is a gap between conceptualizing IE and understanding how to implement it in the day to day life of the school which is apparent not only among teachers, but at all levels of the system. While it is acceptable to accommodate diverse understandings, there is a potential danger. The danger is to think that IE is a reform of special education (Barton, 2003a)

The problem with diverse understandings has to do with the possibility of framing the structures, policies, cultures and practices according to these understandings. Some of the cultures and practices might still be perpetuating the inequities that gave rise to the exclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning. Stofile (2008) warns that in a context like South Africa, where exclusion and discrimination is deeply entrenched, allowing different interpretations might be dangerous because proponents of specialised education might deliberately mask special education practices by using IE concepts. This could be tantamount to what Slee (1998: 131) describes as a “linguistic adjustment

that presents a politically correct façade to a changing world”. As indicated earlier Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2011) argue that inclusion may end up meaning everything and nothing at the same time. What came from the participants is that it is crucial that School Based Support Teams be given adequate opportunities to learn about and fully understand their roles and the fundamental principles underlying IE.

#### **4.2.2 Implementation of Inclusive Education in Schools**

Participants were asked to explain how they implement IE in their schools. Participants from the public ordinary school indicated that they were expected to teach and address the needs of learners who experience difficulties in their classrooms. They also claimed that they had an added responsibility of providing support directly to educators by giving advice on the support strategies to be employed in the classroom. These participants also reported that they facilitate the provision of emotional, social and educational support from other stakeholders. Some participants indicated that they are expected to give advice on the selection and requisition of Learning and Teaching Support Materials for the school. Most participants claimed that they organise capacity-building workshops for educators and parents. These workshops are run by experts from the community, the district and Institutions of Higher Learning. Participants indicated:

*I have to teach and support learners in my classroom and after school I sit in the School Based Support Team meeting to discuss how the case can be handled by the referring teacher (Participant 7).*

*We are expected to address the social related problems that are referred by the educators. Sometimes we address problems of literacy and numeracy (Participant 6).*

*As a coordinator of the School Based Support Team I liaise with the social workers or psychologist to address issues that relate to their expertise. For instance learners that are not coping in our classes as well as those that have been raped are assessed by the psychologist. (Participant 10)*

Participants from special schools indicated that their responsibilities are threefold. They teach disabled learners in their classes, they feed those learners who are suffering from cerebral palsy and they have to develop Individualised Education Plans. Over and above this work, participants claimed that they had to support other educators by doing demonstration lessons and advising them on the support strategies. As the excerpts show:

*In our school we teach, feed learners” and support other educators. This is what inclusive education policy expects us to do (Participant 20).*

*The School Based Support Team deals with behavioural problems, absenteeism and learners who have been identified by teachers in the classrooms (Participants 13).*

*As a School Based Support Team we assess learners for placement in skills programmes (Participants 19).*

In summary, it seems that the way special schools' School Based Support Teams implement IE is different from that of the public ordinary school. The roles and responsibilities of the School Based Support Teams in the public ordinary school involved teaching, identification, assessment and the referral of learners who perform poorly as well as assisting other educators who experience difficulties in supporting learners in their classroom. Special school's School Based Support Teams' roles on the other hand, include teaching disabled learners, the development of Individualised Education Plans, feeding and dressing learners who have not developed these care skills. They also support other educators. While it is not the purpose of this study to make judgements about the extent to which these teams implement IE, it is worth noting that the special school support team continues with the roles they played in special education. The public ordinary school to some extent performs the role outlined in the Education White Paper 6.

### **4.2.3 Experiences of Inclusive Education**

In this study, the experiences of inclusive education are consisted both successes and challenges of inclusive education.

#### **4.2.3.1 Successes of inclusive education**

Most participants reported experience of successes during the implementation of IE. Four key areas emerged from their responses and these include increased access and participation, improved teaching practices, established teamwork as well as the provision of assistive devices. Table 4.2 presents the summary of categories and the responses.



**Table 4.2 A summary of categories and participants responses**

Categories	Participants' responses
Improvement of access and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in learner performance</li> <li>• Improved participation in class activities</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducive environment for all learners</li> <li>• Respect for all learners</li> <li>• Every learner attends school they are not kept at home</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive admission policy formulated</li> <li>• Inclusive assessment policy formulated</li> <li>• Physically disabled learners are accommodated</li> <li>• School buildings are renovated to accommodate all learners</li> </ul>
Establishment of teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the School Based Support Team</li> <li>• Co-teaching in classes</li> <li>• Working with parents</li> <li>• Improved working relations with administrators</li> </ul>
Improvement of teaching practises	Curriculum differentiation is implemented
Provision of assistive devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing aids and tape recorders are used during lesson presentation</li> <li>• Wheel chairs, adapted computers and intercom</li> </ul>

#### **4.2.3.1.1 Improvement of access and participation**

Five participants from the public ordinary school were impressed with their successes in teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning. Participants felt that learners who were referred for additional support were integrated into the mainstream classes because of the improvement in their academic performance. They claimed that these learners acquired knowledge during support sessions and as a result their participation in class activities improved. As participants explained:

*I am very impressed with the outcomes of implementing inclusive education because learners are improving in the classroom because of the strategies of inclusive education and its systems. (Participant 5)*

Three public ordinary school participants claimed that through their advocacy campaign for inclusion, some learners with disabilities in their community applied for admission to their school. Participants reported that they were no longer kept at home as before. Some of the participants reported that they have created environments that are conducive for learning and through their commitment they were able to address the needs of all learners in their classes. Some participants indicated that their school has revised their admission policy to increase access to all learners irrespective of disability. One participant claimed that the introduction of IE assisted her school in developing assessment policies that are inclusive. As participants explained:

*As an educator I congratulate the fact that inclusive education prepared our school to become a conducive environment for all learners irrespective of their abilities'. (Participant 14)*

*I am very grateful for implementing inclusive education in my school now we are able to admit every learner regardless of disability. Our admission policy has been revised. (Participant 11)*

*As an educator I have not been able to accommodate learners that perform below their grade in my assessment. The school has at least developed an assessment*

*policy that explains what educators can do if learners cannot read or write.  
(Participant 9)*

Ten public ordinary school participants mentioned that their school had made renovations to school buildings to accommodate learners who use wheel chairs. They reported that since their school was built thirty years ago after the introduction of IE policy in schools, their school took the initiative to improve access to their school building by providing for example; ramps, adapted toilets and speaker systems in some classes where needed. As participant one explained:

*Since my school was built before the integration of the education system and the introduction of inclusive education, it was the old style building that doesn't accommodate physically disabled learners but after the policy of inclusive education my school renovated the school building to accommodate everyone. (Participant 12)*

#### **4.2.3.1.2 Improvement of teaching practises**

Six participants from the public ordinary school felt that the implementation of IE enabled them to plan lessons that accommodate all learners in their classrooms. They attributed this to the curriculum differentiation training they attended. These participants reported that they felt obliged to accommodate different learning styles and learner pace. Furthermore, participants acknowledged that they gained skills, knowledge, and confidence on their own by being able to demonstrate curriculum differentiation in their classrooms. They also claimed that when implementing differentiation there was an enormous decrease of behavioural problems displayed by learners in their classrooms.

As participants explained:

*As an experienced teacher of eighteen years, I regard inclusive education as an eye opener to me because now I'm able to plan my lessons that accommodate every learners need in my classroom. I am also able to accommodate different learning styles to suit the learner needs. (Participant 20)*

*I normally get frustrated when it comes to writing of exams by learners experiencing barriers to learning. This inclusive education program has made our job easier than before, as educators we now do things differently, record findings, support and do the intervention where needed. As educators we have moved away now from labelling learners now that we understand that each learner is different from each other and they learn differently. (Participant 14)*

One participant indicated that they were better equipped to intervene with the learners in mainstream classes because they were provided with a tool that guides you on how to support learners experiencing barriers in each focus area. One participant explained:

*I am so pleased with the implementation of inclusive education because now our learning support advisor has given us the tools that we can use in our school to do interventions rather than before whereby the educator was expected to think for a tool, it is working because it is adapted from the national curriculum statement. (Participant 13)*

According to Mentis, Quinn, Ryba (2005) and Westhood (2008), differentiation refers to doing things differently to target the observed differences among learner behaviour and learning patterns. A differentiated curriculum is regarded as a programme of activities that offers a variety of activities for students who differ in abilities, knowledge and skills. In a differentiated curriculum, teachers offer different approaches to *what students learn, how students learn and how students demonstrate what they have learned*, (Department of Education,2003). Westhood (2008) suggests that in order to achieve optimum learning in an inclusive classroom, educators must implement differentiated strategies.



#### **4.2.3.1.3 Establishment of teamwork**

Seven participants highlighted that team-building was one of the successes in their schools. These participants described a team as a group of people made up of individuals who each contribute their individual knowledge and skills. They reported that they were able to establish a functional School Based Support Team within their school setting. The participants claimed that teamwork was the initiative of inclusive education policy. According to the participants, they supported other educators in their school because of the training they received from the district. Most participants reported that the District Based Support Teams facilitated good working relations among staff members, administration and parents. The schools have developed cultures which promote a sense of belonging and connectedness especially with parents and where everyone feels as if they are treated as valued individuals. Most participants indicated:

*We are able to identify the needs of the learners and support other colleagues in our school because of training we received from the district. (Participant 7)*

*In our school now we have a great improvement in parental involvement; at least now parents understand that learners can learn differently". (Participant 4)*

*Inclusive education has helped us to have a strong administrative team which is supported with records of interventions done in the classroom. All the paperwork and supporting documents are now available. (Participant 19)*

According to the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), one of the key levers of IE is the establishment of Institutional Level Support Teams and the District Based Support Teams. One of the benefits of working together as a team involves the sharing of individual perspectives, experience, and skills that can be utilised to solve complex problems.

This policy assumes that the team work will facilitate the provision of appropriate support for educators and learners in a school environment. The above statement has been supported by Raymond (2008), who argues that IE cannot be achieved by individuals. This author believes that it is necessary to build a team of teachers, parents

and professional bodies to work together in meeting the needs of learners in an inclusive setting. Park, Henkin and Egley (2005: 462) posit that the success of school reform depends, in part, on the effectiveness of teacher teams. These authors claim that “teams can be places where teachers establish and strengthen dispositions required for positive change and innovative approaches to the solution of complex problems.”

#### **4.2.3.1.4 Provision of assistive devices**

Two participants from the special school were impressed with the fact that the school had been provided with appropriate assistive devices like hearing aids for learners who need them, tape recorders that they use during lesson presentation, adapted computers for learners with visual disabilities, wheelchairs for physically disabled learners, and walkers as well as standing frames to assist those with physical challenges. One participant explained:

*I feel very proud about inclusive education because now we have devices like ramps, wheelchairs, speakers, adapted computers, recorders and the intercom at school”. (Participant 20)*

According to the assistive devices Act 1998 (Reid, 2001), the term “assistive device” means a piece of equipment or product system whether modified or acquired commercially that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. According to Muthukrishna, Hill and Hall (2005)), teachers do not need to wait for learners to be assessed instead they need to bring specific devices into their classrooms.

According to Jendren (2008) and Reid (2001) assistive devices increases the use of learners’ senses and personal independence. This enables learners experiencing barriers to learning to engage in activities with their peers. Kingdom, (1995) believes that assisting devices are fundamental in the implementation of inclusive education because learners are able to engage in activities with their peers as well as other

learners who experience barriers to learning. According to this author, the use of assistive devices grants autonomy to learners as they possess a sense of control over decision making. Jendren, (2008) also argues for the use of assistive devices to accommodate learners who experience difficulties in performing tasks. This author identifies the use of computers for learners who struggle with writing.

#### **4.2.3.2 Challenges of implementing inclusive education**

While participants reported positive gains during the implementation, they also reported challenges. This section presents the challenges experienced by School Based Support Teams during the implementation of inclusive education. These include lack of capacity, lack of resources, problem behaviour, unrealistic workloads and lack of support. Table 4.3 presents a summary of categories that emerged as well as participants' responses.



**Table 4.3: A summary of categories and participants responses**

Categories	Participants' responses
Lack of capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of understanding of how to implement inclusive education</li> </ul>
Limited resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate assistive devices</li> </ul>
Problem behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruptive learners in the classrooms</li> </ul>
Unrealistic workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional administrative work</li> <li>• Big classes</li> <li>• Overcrowding</li> </ul>
Lack of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Protection</li> </ul>
Language of teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language of learning and teaching as a barrier</li> </ul>

**4.2.3.2.1 Lack of capacity**

Most participants from the public ordinary school indicated that they were unable to teach learners experiencing barriers to learning because they were not trained to implement IE and to teach learners that perform below the grade. Consequently, learners' educational needs and the needs of their colleagues were not adequately addressed. More specifically, participants indicated that they did not think they were adequately skilled to support other educators when they themselves experienced difficulties in their classrooms. Participants felt that they did not have adequate knowledge about when and how referrals should be done to the district officials and social workers. These participants explained:

*I really do not think I am skilled enough to support my colleagues. I also experience problems in my own classroom. (Participant 10)*

*We did training that adequately prepared us for the job we are expected to do in our team. (Participant 17)*

*I feel that I cannot provide the support learners need because I don't have sufficient knowledge about learning disabilities. (Participant 13)*

These findings show that having educators who do not feel they have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively teach learners in inclusive classrooms creates an inevitable barrier to the implementation of IE. The findings also suggest that while the establishment of School Based Support Teams is an essential component in the implementation of IE, policy assumes that once established, these teams will automatically know what to do.

Moreno (2007: 172) contends that “teaching challenging content to learners who bring very different experiences to the classroom depends on the capacity of practitioners to create diverse learning experiences and connect to what students know and how they effectively learn. According to Stofile (2008), Stofile, Raymond and Moletsane (2013) the success of any public policy, including IE policy, rests on the capacity to implement it. These authors further argue that without the necessary skills and knowledge, educators are likely to feel less confident about their ability to effectively include learners with diverse needs. This will also affect their confidence in supporting other educators. This resonates with the NCNET and NCESS report (Department of Education, 1997) which argues that if capacity is lacking then the teaching and learning will not be effective.

There is a general view that formal training is an important factor in improving educators' views and actions toward the implementation of inclusive education (Mentis, Quinn & Ryba, 2005). According to Brian and Ryba (2005), without a coherent plan for educator training in the educational needs of learners with barriers to learning, attempts to include them in regular schools will be difficult. The NCSNET and NCESS Report

(Department of Education, 1997) argued that the absence of on-going services training and upgrading training of teachers often leads to a lack of innovative practices in the classroom. Walton and Lloyd (2012) also affirm that a lack of appropriate pre and in-service training and preparation for inclusive classrooms constrain the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. .

This resonates with Donald and Hlongwane (2003), Hay (2003), Luseno (2000) Salend and Duhaney (1999) who argue that effective implementation of inclusive programmes requires that the educators know the characteristics of children with disabilities, the special education laws, strategies for assessing the learners needs, and strategies for teaching and structuring instruction to individual learner needs, if they are to successfully educate exceptional learners in inclusive settings. Johnstone and Chapman (2009) indicate that any innovation increases the complexity of educators' work lives because they are expected to learn new content, teach and assess differently or use different teaching materials. These authors' view is that complexity can be altered by providing educators with sufficient training that allows them to master, and feel confident about the new approach advocated.

UNESCO (2005) rejects claims for the need for special skills and expertise, viewing them as misconceptions. UNESCO argues that these claims are obstacles to adopting an inclusive approach. While UNESCO's position cannot be dismissed I do think an inclusive approach needs to be mediated to participants in order for them to understand and this can be done through training but should not be limited to training.

#### 4.2.3.2.2 *Lack of support*

The participants viewed support as critical for the implementation of inclusive education. Fourteen participants indicated that they did not get support from parents, school management teams and experts from the Department of Education. This, according to the participants, made it impossible to effectively provide support to learners who experience barriers to learning and to other educators as expected by the Education White Paper 6. The participants expressed the need to receive psychological and educational support from different stakeholders. Some of the participants claimed that they suffered from secondary trauma because of the cases they listened to during their School Based Support Team meetings. They felt that they could have been provided with counselling services by the psychologists or school counsellors after the meetings. One participant expressed that:

*Our job as School Based Support Teams is hectic. We need counselling services sometimes. We listen to serious cases and we are sometimes traumatised.*  
(Participant 8)

The majority of the participants expressed the need to be protected from the threats they were subjected to by the perpetrators who did not want them to report and refer cases of neglect, and physical and sexual abuse to the social workers. As participants explains:

*I feel that the Department of Education does not support or protect us from hostility when we report cases of abuse to social workers. We stay with the perpetrators in our communities and there are possibilities that we could be killed when we report crime. I sometimes wonder whether this is really our responsibility to listen to some of these cases.* (Participant 9)

*I need administrative support, parental support, and support from experts in the Department of Education and School Management Teams in order to do what is expected of us in assisting our learners in the classrooms.* (Participant 9)

The majority of participants from the public ordinary school also indicated that they need

assistance from professional experts (e.g. medical practitioners, psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, etc.) to effectively deal with the physical and psychological problems experienced by learners and educators. While one should not under-estimate the teaching experiences of participants and their passion for supporting learners and educators, it is clear from these findings that this responsibility is quite challenging.

The results of this study confirm what is already known, that the lack of on-going support does not lead to effective implementation.

The need for protection and psychological support by participants in the study stands out as a critical issue to be explored by policy makers. Policy seems to assume that School Based Support Teams are adequately skilled to address the complex social problems that South African learners and educators experience. The participants' experiences of threats and secondary trauma reveal that the well-being of the members of School Based Support Teams is under siege. School Based Support Teams, unlike psychologists and social workers, are ordinary teachers who have not been trained in the ethics and strategies of addressing sensitive psychosocial problems. It is not surprising that they would feel traumatised and overwhelmed by some of the cases they seek to address. Supporting members of these teams through debriefing sessions becomes critical if they have to provide support to other people.

These findings resonate with other research studies. The study conducted by Stofile (2008) showed that lack of support for the implementation of IE can impact negatively on the implementation process. A study by Dreyer (2008) on the provision of learning support in an inclusive system concluded that support aimed at addressing barriers to learning in mainstream schools is not effectively implemented. According to Caputo and Langher (2014), Donohue and Bornman (2014) lack of support to successfully integrate students with disabilities into the general education classroom leads to negative attitudes, which can constrain the implementation of inclusive education. Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moola and Sylvester (2014: 1) posit that in order to ensure learner success, education support services must be strengthened and placed at the centre of



teaching-learning relations as a key strategy for addressing challenges to teaching and barriers to learning.

According to Beyer, Boyer and Gillespie (2009) it is imperative to think about different ways to support teachers in coping with the challenges of inclusive classrooms. Many researchers support Beyer et al and argue that some countries have addressed the issue of support through task force; long term professional development and even short term pay incentives. Support in IE is described as a complex and multi layered phenomenon (Boyer, 2011). Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009) contend that while IE has been accepted, the reality is that South Africa, as a developing nation, is not equipped with resources and facilities required to meet the needs of inclusion. In reality if positive results are to occur for both educators and learners, better monitoring and support should be provided. Johnstone and Chapman (2009) support the idea of continuous support for implementers and they argue that one-off workshops with little or no follow-up support usually do not yield to widespread implementation.

#### **4.2.3.2.3 Unrealistic workload**

The unrealistic workload emerged as a challenge to the participants' roles in School based Support Teams. The participants felt that the implementation of IE is an additional workload because of its call for addressing the needs of learners who experience learning difficulties. They indicated that in their school ever since they were nominated as members of the School Based Support Team, numbers of learners in need of support in the classrooms have increased. They claimed to have received many referrals from the classroom teachers, which has led to feelings of being overloaded. According to the participants, School Based Support Teams were expected to lead the process of developing Individual Support Plans for learners who performed poorly academically. One participant explained:

*I am becoming negative towards inclusive education. It makes our work as educators more difficult and more stressful. We are expected to help other educators to develop individualised support plans. This is not an easy process.*

*(Participant 11)*

*I have an overcrowded class. This is overwhelming and stressful and I am expected to serve in this structure as well. (Participant 10)*

Most participants claimed that they attempted to meet all the learners' needs with limited time for consultation as well as serving in a School Based support Team. They indicated that they felt overstretched. Participants attributed their frustration to the Department of Education's pressure to produce good literacy and numeracy results. Some participants confessed that they wanted to resign from the school Based Support Team. As participants explains:

*I think inclusive education itself is a barrier to teaching. I am expected to give individual attention for each learner experiencing barriers to learning without being given the tools to support those learners in my classroom. (Participant 7)*

*To be honest I want to resign from this team. It's too much. I have to improve my learners' literacy and numeracy results. There is just no time for meetings and trying to solve problems. (Participants 15)*

Given the South African Department of Education's call for good literacy and numeracy results, it is not surprising that participants felt that serving in another structure like School Based Support Team adds more responsibility. Hay and Malindi (2005) acknowledge that overcrowded classes may jeopardize the implementation of IE. Dupoux, Hammond, Ingalls and Wolman, 2006; Hay and Malindi, (2005) assert that the inclusion of learners with barriers to learning into mainstream classrooms could be regarded as an additional burden, especially in the context of large class sizes. It is often argued that IE does not add new responsibilities but rather requires a different way of thinking and creativity in organising teaching. As Bartlett (2007) and Veen, Slegers and van der Ven (2007) note, teachers are expected to be more involved in activities in the school and outside their classrooms. This extension of their roles and responsibilities is a barrier to effective teaching and therefore to implementation of IE.

#### **4.2.3.2.4 Language of teaching and learning**

Thirteen participants indicated that the language of teaching and learning is a challenge to the effectiveness of the implementation of IE especially when English is a medium of instruction. This, according to the participants, poses a challenge to the learners and parents whose mother tongue is isiXhosa. These learners experience challenges in learning other subjects because they do not understand the medium of instruction. Parents also experience challenges in supporting their learners because they do not understand the language of instruction. This situation has led to the increase of learners who are referred to the School Based Support Teams. One participant explained that:

*Learners we teach do not benefit much from the curriculum because they receive their education in their second language and so they need lots of support.*

*(Participant 5)*

In support of the participants' view, Ntombela and Raymond (2013), Department of Education (1997) argue that mismatches between learners' home language and language of teaching and learning have serious implications for learning. This resonates with Stofile, Raymond and Moletsane (2013); Department of Education (1997) who assert that learners who have limited ability to understand and communicate through the language of teaching and learning are likely to experience difficulties in learning. Brocke-Utne (2000: 15) regards the imposition of a second or third language as a "violation of the structure of thinking." This suggests that learners will not have the tool for thinking that is required in learning.

#### **4.2.3.2.5 Problem behaviours**

The participants regarded problem behaviours as a huge challenge in their classrooms. These include bullying, truancy and failure to complete tasks. Participants indicated that some learners' behaviours made it impossible to manage classrooms. This in return, made it difficult to teach all learners in the classroom effectively. These participants felt that the strategies they advised educators to use to address problem behaviours were

not effective. As one participant explains:

*Learner discipline is a problem especially the ones who are cognitively challenged, they tend to lack discipline and behaviour by disturbing others in the classroom.*  
(Participant12)

Lim (2006) supports the view that learner behaviour in an inclusive classroom can create a challenge for teachers. According to Hallahan and Kauffman (2004), learners who experience barriers to learning tend to have emotional problems and poor self-concepts. This sometimes leads to rejection by their peer group which could lead to exclusion. Many of the behaviours that have caused concern to the participants include shouting in class, bullying, hurting others, and failure to complete tasks, are the result of conditioning and/or the result of inappropriate behaviour modelled by other peers in the learner's environment. Bartlett (2007), Slegers and Van der Ven (2007) support that, teaching learners with behavioural challenges can be a burden to some teachers especially if they are not fully trained to deal with those challenges. Bornman and Rose (2010) also acknowledge that challenging behaviour is a major obstacle to independent living and educational and employment opportunities.

#### **4.2.3.2.6 Limited and inappropriate resources**

Although participants acknowledge the availability of resources in their schools, they claimed that these were inadequate and sometimes inappropriate for the learners in their contexts. They reported the shortage of appropriate instructional materials needed for teaching learners with disabilities. These include mathematics and science kits for each class, computers, software, food, graded readers, a professional nurse who can administer medication and sanitary pads. Participants indicated that this constrained their efforts in teaching learners effectively. As participants indicated:

*In theory, inclusive education is a fantastic idea; but the reality of the classroom dictates what can be done. There are not sufficient resources to make it work, although perhaps this will only improve when there is more awareness and visibility.*  
(Participant 1)

Bornman and Rose (2010: 247) acknowledge that one of the greatest challenges that face many schools is that the resources to accommodate children with disabilities are not in place, which leaves teachers to cope on their own. These authors argue that in order to make inclusion a reality, appropriate resources should be provided. Ntombela et al (2013) also appeals for the provision of materials that are appropriate to the learners' cognitive level, curriculum content, learning environment, learners' language proficiency and socio-cultural identities. Tikly and Barrett (2011) regard different kinds and levels of resource inputs as critical for enabling educators to provide effective intervention. One may argue that the provision of adequate and appropriate resources does not guarantee successful inclusion. Tikly and Barrett (2011: 9) further argue that "learning materials do not work in isolation to enhance learning outcomes but rather are dependent on and need to be compatible with teachers' pedagogical practices, professional values and language proficiency.



### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

The findings in this study reveal that School Based support Teams had negative and positive experiences during the implementation of IE. The positive experiences shed light on the possible strategies that can be used to develop functional and effective School Based Support Teams. The negative experiences suggest that the IE policy's assumption that educators can play a role of teaching in their classrooms as well as supporting teaching and learning at the level of the school is unrealistic and therefore, rethinking of the role of this team is necessary. The following chapter makes recommendations based on the findings of the study.

# **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

As outlined in the previous chapters, this study explores educator's understandings and experiences of Inclusive Education, examining particularly the challenges and the successes of implementing IE. Chapter 4 presented a descriptive analysis of data. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings described in the previous chapter. In order to bring the discussion into perspective, this chapter begins with a summary of findings and proceeds to the discussion under two topics: Educator's challenges and successes of implementing inclusive education.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.2.1 Educators' understanding of Inclusive Education**

As indicated in the findings chapter, participants in this case study have different understandings of what IE means and how it should be implemented. Some of the understandings show that participants have not shifted from the medical model or explanations of special education. In order to avoid confusion, it is recommended that the districts and the schools organise colloquia where the common meaning of IE is negotiated. This can be done in schools by clustering schools and sharing the information.

## **5.2.2 Successes of implementing Inclusive Education**

Participants reported that they experienced success in the implementation of inclusive education in their schools. These include established teamwork, increased access and participation, improved teaching practices as well as the provision of assistive devices. These experiences are described in detail in Chapter 4 and are summarised in the section below.

### **5.2.2.1 *Established teamwork***

Participants in this study reported that through their service in the School Based Support Team, they establish good relationships with other educators and parents. They claimed to have established a solid team and they worked together harmoniously. Through this practise, teachers indicated that they gained a better understanding of leaners' needs and they could more easily identify learner's needs and support them. In order to sustain these working relations, it is recommended that the School based Support Teams ensure that all members including the new members understand what their role is and what their responsibilities are. It is also recommended that School Based Support Teams continue to create environments where problem-solving and decision-making are done in a collaborative and participative manner.

### **5.2.2.2 *Increased access and participation***

Participants felt that through their engagement in advocacy for IE, their schools managed to encourage parents to bring learners with disabilities into their schools. They further claimed that their schools developed inclusive assessment policies. The participants reported that they made efforts to motivate learners and parents to participate in school activities. They also celebrated the fact that IE prepared their school to become more conducive for all learners irrespective of their abilities. If IE on is desirable in schools, it is recommended that more inclusive policies be developed in the

school, and inclusive cultures and practices be created in order to increase access and participation.

### **5.2.2.3 *Improved teaching practises***

In this study, participants were satisfied with the training they received on curriculum differentiation strategy. Participants indicated that the strategy enabled them to intervene in the public ordinary schools. While a school that reaches this milestone has much to celebrate, it is necessary to maintain or even continuously improve the status of IE. It is recommended that on-going professional development opportunities are provided to the entire school staff to update and enhance teaching strategies in working with diverse students. Secondly, when new staff members join the School Based support Team, it is recommended that they be orientated on the school's inclusive practices and expectations to enhance implementation. Lastly, applicants for positions within the schools should declare their position on IE and should be provided with information about the schools commitment to IE practices.

### **5.2.2.4 *Provision of assistive devices***

In this category, participants felt very proud of IE because the schools have devices like wheelchairs, adapted computers recorders and intercoms. They felt that the availability of the above devices like recorders makes their lesson presentations more easily understood by learners especially those who are partially hearing impaired. Some felt that the availability of adapted computers accommodates those learners with visual impairments.



## **5.2.3 Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education**

### **5.2.3.1 *Lack of capacity***

Some participants claimed that they were not adequately trained to implement IE; as a result they lacked the skills and knowledge of how to fully implement IE. Specifically, they indicated that they experienced difficulties in teaching learners that perform below the grade with other learners as well as supporting and addressing the needs of their colleagues. Based on this finding, it is recommended that school districts, in collaboration with educator training institutions provide School Based Support Teams with in-service training to enhance their knowledge of strategies that relates to their role and teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning. Further training on IE needs to be provided to bring about a mind shift and the acquisition of new skills for educators. Educators should also take responsibility for keeping themselves abreast with the latest developments in inclusive practices through upgrading and reskilling courses.

### **5.2.3.2 *Challenging behaviours***

Participants regarded discipline in their classrooms as challenging. They indicated that some disciplinary and behavioural problems make it difficult for them to manage the class activities. Instead of teaching, participants reported that they are sometimes restricted to addressing behavioural issues in the classroom. It is recommended that behaviour management strategies be implemented in schools and these should focus on identifying specific situations that trigger the behaviour.

### **5.2.3.3 *Language of teaching and learning***

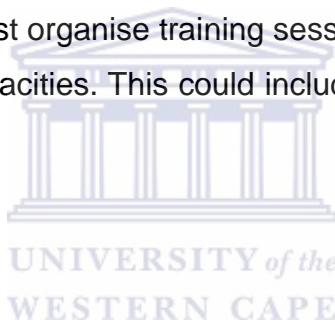
Teachers indicated that the language of teaching and learning militated against the implementation of IE in their schools. Participants reported that some of their learners were denied access to the curriculum content and could not participate in class activities because they did not understand the language of instruction. It is recommended that the school governing bodies and school management teams establish language enrichment programmes to enhance the acquisition and development of the language of teaching and learning.

### **5.2.3.4 *Lack of support***

The participants viewed support as critical for the successful implementation of IE. They claimed that they did not get psychological, educational, administrative and parental support from experts. This, according to the participants, limited their ability to provide effective support to educators and learners. Continuous professional development is recommended for the structures like School Based Support Teams and other relevant stake holders to empower them to perform their roles effectively. It is also recommended that the District Based Support Teams establish structures that can provide psychological support for the traumatised members of the District Based Support Teams. In terms of the threats for reporting crime, the school should liaise with the community policing forums so that incidences of this nature are curbed. It is also important and beneficial to have on-going monitoring and review to determine how policies are being implemented on the ground. This would help in detecting challenges and becoming aware of what works in terms of implementing polices.

### **5.2.3.5 *Unrealistic workload***

Participants claimed that they were often stressed because of the workload they have in their classrooms. According to the participants they were expected to teach, write reports about each learner and to have an individualised support plan for each learner. Some participants felt that IE is a barrier on its own because educators are expected to include learners experiencing barriers to learning in classes with big numbers. To alleviate this problem, it is recommended that the schools find creative strategies for dealing with large classes. In terms of the increase in numbers that are referred to the School Based Support Teams, educators should be encouraged to address problems in their own classrooms and provide evidence of the intervention strategies they have employed. It is also recommended that School Based Support Teams in collaboration with District Support Teams must organise training sessions to address the needs of the educators and to build their capacities. This could include the explanation of the referral process to be followed.



### **5.2.3.6 *Limited resources***

Participants mentioned their schools have inadequate resources. They reported the shortage of appropriate instructional materials needed for teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning. It is recommended that the school should raise funds in order to be able to buy resources that will assist in improving teaching and lowering learner's barriers effectively in the classroom. It is difficult to implement IE if the vital resources are not available. It is therefore important that the Department of Education provides these for the smooth implementation of IE. It is recommended that teacher development should include training on the use of resources.

#### 5.2.4 Limitations and Implications for Future Research

It is important to note that this study was conducted in the mid years of implementing inclusive education in South Africa. It is anticipated that there might be further changes in policies and practical implementation of IE. An on-going study to develop best practice models for the implementation of IE in resource constrained settings is recommended. Based on the findings of this study, the following are limitations and implications for future research.

This study is limited in scope, as only two schools were sampled. It may be helpful to determine if the experiences of School Based Support Teams in this study are similar to those responding to the same issues in other similar schools in the Western Cape Province and in South Africa as a whole. Another limitation of this study is that the sample size was small, which makes it difficult for the findings to be generalized to the whole population of educators working in schools where IE is being implemented in South Africa.

The researcher recommends that for future research on this topic and/or relevant topics, the sample size should be bigger. It might also be helpful to conduct a study on the challenges of inclusion, taking into account type and severity of the learner disability. In-depth qualitative studies that would look specifically at the factors that have shaped the educators experiences could be informative. A study by Lieber *et al.* (2000) found that inclusion was a success where school principals initiated inclusive programmes.

Therefore, further focus on the characteristics of principals could throw insight onto inclusion. All participants in this study were working at the primary school level. It may be interesting and beneficial to determine if educators working at the high school levels have similar experiences about IE. As there is little research addressing the effectiveness of inclusion in the Western Cape Province, it is suggested that this area is researched in the near future. It is crucial to determine if educating learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms has quantifiable benefits for educators and for learners with and those without barriers to learning. It might also be interesting to consider the participants level of education.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

The study found that most educators have different experiences of IE. Some educators have not been trained in inclusive and special education especially those educators with less than five years teaching experience. Some educators felt incompetent and some felt the education system is failing to provide the necessary support needed to perform their functions. Knowledge of change management is an important ingredient if we are to be successful in our attempts at educational transformation.

The School Based Support Teams' positive experiences suggest that they can make a difference in schools if appropriate support and continuing professional development are provided. The findings also revealed challenges that cannot be ignored if these teams are to provide effective support to learners and educators. The Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) assumes that educators who serve in the School Based Support Teams would have expertise in learning support and counselling, however, the lived realities in the study reveal that educators in both contexts do not have the capacity to perform the stipulated functions.

Although one cannot generalise, the findings are alarming. Of concern is that if educators continue performing counselling roles they were not trained for, they might do more harm to the learners or other educators they seek to support. It can be argued that educators are expected to perform six roles which include pastoral care. The reality in South Africa is that the teacher pre-service training curriculum does not include counselling modules and ethics. Given the complex social problems learners experience in their communities, it would be dangerous to think that educators can address these problems without the guidance and support of experts that are trained in the area.

The findings revealed the dangers that School Based Support Teams are exposed to when reporting cases of abuse, neglect and crime. It is often argued that it is illegal for

educators not to report crime. The study argues that failure to provide protection is detrimental to the educators.

This study concludes that if the School Based Support Team is critical in the implementation of IE in South Africa, the Department of Education as well as the schools need to rethink these roles or develop a Human Resource Development Strategy that will empower educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to play the role. Secondly, the Department of Education should seriously consider ways in which educators can be protected from perpetrators. Lastly, based on the lived experiences of the School Based Support Teams in the study, educators should continue with the good work but be allowed to provide support in ways that work within their capacity and broader socio-cultural contexts.



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## **APPENDIX A: Permission Letter to the Western Cape Department of Education**

University of the Western Cape  
Robert Sobukwe Drive  
Bellville  
7535  
14 November 2014

Sir/ Madam

### **Re: Request for permission to conduct research in your school**

I am a Masters in Education student at the University of the Western Cape, conducting a research project titled: **'School- Based Support Teams' understanding and experiences of inclusive education in the Western Cape'** I would like to explore the School Based Support Teams' understandings and experiences of inclusive education.

I humbly request your assistance in this research project by being granted permission to conduct my study in your school. The participants in my study will be members of the School Based Support Team. They will be required to participate in individual interviews that are expected to last between 45 to 60 minutes after school.

Please note that:

- The schools and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The teachers will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The schools' or the participant's identity will not be divulged under any circumstance.

- There is no right or wrong answer.
- All teachers' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstance, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Digital recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in the Universities locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed by means they deem fit.



Thanking you,

Yours faithfully

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B. Rulwa - Mnatwana

0734842181

babalwarulwa@gmail.com

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Supervisor: Dr.Sindiswa Stofile

021 959 2925

sstofile@uwc.co.za

**APPENDIX B: Consent Form for a Western Cape Department of Education**

If permission is granted to conduct the research in the District schools, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, ..... (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project within the schools in the Western Cape District. I understand that teachers are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/2014



## APPENDIX C: Letter to the Principal

University of the Western Cape  
Robert Sobukwe Drive  
Bellville  
7535  
14 November 2014

Sir/ Madam

### **Re: Request for permission to conduct research in your school**

I am a Masters in Education student at the University of the Western Cape, conducting a research project titled: **'School- Based Support Teams' understanding and experiences of inclusive education in the Western Cape'** I would like to explore the School Based Support Teams' understandings and experiences of inclusive education.

I humbly request your assistance in this research project by being granted permission to conduct my study at schools in your district. The participants in my study will be special school teachers from two schools in the district. They will be required to participate in individual interviews that are expected to last between 45 to 60 minutes after school.

Please note that:

- The schools and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The teachers will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The schools' or the participant's identity will not be divulged under any circumstance.

- There is no right or wrong answer.
- All teachers' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstance, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Digital recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in the Universities locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed by means they deem fit.



Thanking you,

Yours faithfully

---

B. Rulwa - Mnatwana

0734842181

babalwarulwa@gmail.com

---

Supervisor: Dr.Sindiswa Stofile

021 959 2925

sstofile@uwc.co.za

## APPENDIX D: Consent Form for a Principal

If permission is granted to conduct the research in the District schools, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, ..... (Full Name)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project within the schools in the Western Cape District. I understand that teachers are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/2014





## **APPENDIX E: Letter to a member of School Based Support Team**

University of the Western Cape  
Robert Sobukwe Drive  
Bellville  
7535  
14 November 2014

Sir/ Madam

### **Re: Request for permission to conduct research in your school**

I am a Masters in Education student at the University of the Western Cape, conducting a research project titled: **'School- Based Support Teams' understanding and experiences of inclusive education in the Western Cape'** I would like to explore the School Based Support Teams' understandings and experiences of inclusive education.

I humbly request your assistance by being a participant in this study. The interview will be conducted in your school premises at your convenient time. The interview is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes

Please note that:

- The schools and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The teachers will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The schools' or the participant's identity will not be divulged under any circumstance.
- There is no right or wrong answer.

- All teachers' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstance, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Digital recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in the Universities locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed by means they deem fit.



Thanking you,

Yours faithfully

---

B. Rulwa - Mnatwana

0734842181

babalwarulwa@gmail.com

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Supervisor: Dr.Sindiswa Stofile

021 959 2925

sstofile@uwc.co.za

## APPENDIX F: Consent Form for a Member of School Based Support Team

If permission is granted to conduct the research in the District schools, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, ..... (Full Name)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project within the schools in the Western Cape District. I understand that teachers are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/2014



## APPENDIX G: Interview for School Based Support Team Members

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on your understandings and experiences of implementing inclusive education. To ensure anonymity, you are not required to write your name on the questionnaire. Please answer all the questions as accurately and fully as you can.

**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY PLACING AN (X) IN THE RELEVANT BLOCK/S OR WRITING YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.**

### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA



1. Age:  20 -30yrs  30-40yrs  40-50yrs  50 and over
2. Gender:  Male  Female  Declined
3. Teaching experience:  less than 5years  5-10years  10-20years  more than 20 years.
4. Number of years at this school:  less than 5 years  5-10 years  10-20



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4. What challenges do you experience in implementing inclusive education?

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5. What success do you experience in implementing inclusive education?

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6. What challenges do you experience in teaching learners experiencing barriers in your class?

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7. What challenges do you experience in in facilitating support for your colleagues in your school?

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8. What successes have you experienced in teaching learners experiencing barriers in your class?



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9. What successes have you experienced in facilitating support for your colleagues in your school?

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