

**ASSISTING TEACHERS TO SUPPORT MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY  
DISABLED LEARNERS IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN  
ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLICY OF INCLUSION**

by

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**submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION,**

**in the subject**

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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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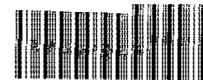
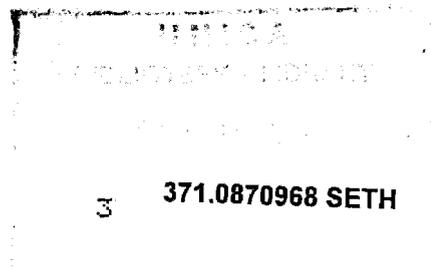
## DECLARATION

I declare that **Assisting teachers to support mildly intellectually disabled learners in the foundation phase in accordance with the policy of inclusion** is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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**ABSTRACT**

**Title:** Assisting teachers to support mildly intellectually disabled learners in the foundation phase in accordance with the policy of inclusion

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**Degree:** Doctor of Education

**Subject:** Special Needs Education

**At:** University of South Africa

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Mildly intellectually disabled (MID) learners, in South Africa, experience a great deal of discrimination. For the Black MID learner, the situation has been the worst in that even at a time when their white counterparts received education in separate schools, nothing of the sort existed for them. Most of them found themselves in ordinary schools, a situation described by many authors as "mainstreaming by default".

The new education dispensation of 1994 brought along with it the need to begin looking at ways in which these learners are to be accommodated in the education system. However, such accommodation is made difficult by the fact that teachers are not familiar with ways of catering for diversity in the classrooms.

An investigation was undertaken of the phenomenon *mild intellectual disability*. The characteristics of these learners were studied, in order to understand how these characteristics impact on their learning. The teaching principles and learning principles that make it easier for them to learn were studied. Most of these learners experience problems with reading, writing and mathematics.

Existing educational programmes in developed and developing countries were examined, together with aspects of those programmes that might be of use in South Africa. A closer look was taken at provisions for these learners in South Africa before the new dispensation.

An empirical study was undertaken to investigate what manifestations these learners display, how they are assisted once they are identified and to establish if teachers receive any support from parents, school management teams and the Department of Education. Finally, it was investigated if methods used for Outcomes-Based Education can be used to accommodate MID learners.

Implications were then tabled on three levels, namely, the macro level, which is the provincial level, where decisions regarding educational policy and legislation for the Province are made, the meso level, which concerns implementation at the district level, and the micro level, which is the school itself. This level concerns the teacher's task in the classroom.

Finally, a training manual for school support teams was designed, tested and finalised as a document to be used in assisting teachers to support MID learners.

## KEY TERMS

**Foundation phase:** grades reception to three.

**Inclusion:** the policy of accommodating a diversity of needs in all schools.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP):** a written statement describing the intervention programme designed to meet the learner's individual needs.

**Learners with special educational needs (LSEN):** learners with barriers to learning and development.

**Learning difficulties:** difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics.

**Mildly intellectually disabled learners (MID):** learners with below average intellectual functioning but higher than the severely intellectually disabled. These are learners who are characterised by poor memory, poor recall, poor attention, high rate of forgetting and so on.

**Outcomes-based education:** a learner-centred approach, in which outcomes are set up for learners to achieve. This is the focus of the new educational dispensation.

**School support teams:** team of teachers to assist other teachers in dealing with LSEN and MID in the ordinary schools. Their main responsibility is to work hand in glove with other teachers to identify learners who experience learning difficulties with the view to designing intervention programmes for individual learners.

**Teacher:** a person who is charged with the responsibility to cause others to learn. It is a synonym for educator.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Isaiah 40:31**

**But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.**

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**And finally, to God, the Creator, who gave me the strength, health and wisdom to pursue this study to its conclusion.**

Mosima Sethosa  
Pretoria  
June 2001

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my only son,  
**Kegomoditswe,**  
who forbore neglect,  
so that attention could be given to this study,  
and for whom this study must serve as an  
inspiration for hard work.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Education is a universal phenomenon. All communities endeavour to educate their young and their disabled at one stage or another. While traditional communities educate their young in survival skills such as hunting, fishing, preparing food and caring for the young, communities with highly developed technologies educate their young in those technological skills that enable them to cope skilfully as adults in a world in which increasingly complex technologies are becoming an indispensable part of everyday life. Joshua (1995:5) adds that education is a basic human right, and that education enables people to contribute to the development of their communities and their nation.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 1993a:53), "education is a capacity building activity which sustains and accelerates development through promoting income distribution, empowering women, improving knowledge and skills as well as increasing productivity and capacity to address wider social issues". This statement supports the assertion that education and development are inextricably linked (Pillay 1990:36).

Ashman and Elkins (1994:2) view education as a whole-of-life process that involves planned and unplanned activities and experiences that enables people to develop and learn through interaction with the culture and society in which they live. On the other hand, Kunutu (1996:263) says that "education is a deliberate and conscious activity through which culture is formally transmitted". This kind of education comprises activities and experiences at all stages of development in life, from infancy through to old age, and is also the kind of education that applies to the disabled.

Education for the disabled is also a universal phenomenon among human beings. Ainscow (1994:3), however, notes that education for the disabled differs from country to country. While

many cultures have been historically aware of the needs of the disabled, the realisation that the disabled also need quality education is a comparatively recent phenomenon. An examination of the history of how disabled people have been treated in many cultures and civilisations reveals that our contemporary awareness of the need to educate disabled people has been preceded in many places by varying degrees of ill treatment of the disabled. Such ill-treatment has included extermination of the disabled, hiding them away or otherwise banishing them from the mainstream of social, cultural and economic activity (Allen 1992:56).

While education for the disabled before 1930 was segregated from general education and advocates of the disabled were satisfied that they were receiving more or less adequate education, the 1980s saw the emergence of the movement towards mainstreaming in the United Kingdom and the establishment of the Regular Education Initiative (REI) in the United States of America (Archer & Green 1996:125). Contemporary awareness of the needs of the disabled and increased sensitivity to their plight led to the formation of advocate groups in many countries (Alkins & Litton 1994:4), which have worked and lobbied for the rights of the disabled, including the right to education.

In South Africa, the disabled (including the mildly intellectually disabled) have been the victims of a great deal of discrimination and prejudice – and these factors have prevented them from enjoying equal opportunities in all spheres of life (UNICEF 1993a:79). The lot of the disabled in South Africa improved in 1992 with the advent of the Disability Rights Charter, which was drawn up by Disabled People of South Africa (DPSA) in conjunction with Lawyers for Human Rights. “The charter calls for the rights of disabled people to mainstream education with personal assistance where necessary, appropriate assistive technology and specialised teaching” (UNICEF 1993a:70).

Mazurek and Winzer (1994:xxix) are of the opinion that “in any society, attitudes and values are fashioned by the prevailing culture, government, religion, and economic conditions, and education in general tends to reflect the political and legal foundations on which that society is built”. The policy of apartheid in South Africa created a situation in which education in general, and education for the disabled specifically, has not developed to the same extent for different

racial groups. The enormous disparities created by the apartheid government pervade the education system at all levels and in all forms (Sethosa 1991:15; UNICEF 1993a:69). These disparities and the inequities which are based on racial discrimination are structural and deeply rooted in the whole of South African society (UNICEF 1993b:1). Because of this history, education has not been able to meet the needs of the majority of disabled African people.

During the apartheid era, the black disabled (with particular reference to mildly intellectually disabled learners) were accommodated in ordinary schools – even at a time when their white counterparts were receiving education in segregated settings (Sethosa 1991:17). Donald (1994:14) and the National Policy Education Investigation document (NEPI 1992:32) refer to this type of placement as “mainstreaming by default” because it is a consequence of the fact that no services are provided for the disabled. Green (1991:84) and Baine (1993:213) call the same situation “involuntary mainstreaming”. Gwalla-Ogisi (1990:276) adds that the mainstreaming of Africans in South Africa “is a matter of convenience with no consideration of educational improvement or innovation”. It is therefore clear that black children with special educational needs deserve the attention of educational planners in order to assist them to receive equal opportunities in education and to ensure that they develop their potential optimally.

## **1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **1.2.1 Learners who experience barriers to learning and development (Learners with special educational needs)**

Before explaining who learners who experience barriers to learning and development or learners with special educational needs are, it is important to explain what the term special educational needs means.

The term special educational needs refers to difficulties and challenges that learners experience, which must be addressed for effective learning to take place (South Africa, Quality Education for all 1997:2). According to the Salamanca Statement (1994:6) special educational needs develop as a result of disabilities and learning difficulties.

The terms learners with barriers to learning and development (LBLD) and learners with special educational needs (LSEN) are used interchangeably to mean one and the same thing. The terminology evolved through the years and through the processes that unfolded regarding the whole question of special needs in South Africa. The South Africa, Consultative Paper no 1 on Special Education (1999:7) refers to all forms of education that respond to the needs of learners with special needs as *education for learners with special education needs (ELSEN)*. However, the South Africa, Education White Paper no 5 (2000:7) acknowledges the contradiction that exists in that while it is recognised that barriers exist within the learning system, yet learners are still referred to as “learners with special educational needs”. This seems to suggest that problems lie solely with the learners. It is for this reason that the White paper has adopted the terminology “barriers to learning and development”.

Barriers to learning and development are defined by South Africa, Quality Education for all (1997:v) as “:those factors which lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, which lead to learning breakdown or which prevent learners from accessing educational provision...”. The South Africa, Consultative Paper no. 1 on Special Education acknowledges that learners with barriers to learning and development are learners who experience learning difficulties which make it impossible for them to learn effectively and that such difficulties “arise from a range of factors including physical, mental, sensory, neurological, and developmental impairments, psychosocial disturbances, cognitive differences, particular life experiences or socio-economic deprivation” (South Africa, Consultative Paper no. 1 1999:3).

The term *Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN)* refers to learners with one or more of the following impairments: visual, hearing, physical, mental, behavioural and emotional, the gifted, children from poor backgrounds, children who are/were politically disadvantaged, children from cultural backgrounds which are different from the dominant culture of the school in which they learn, and children who speak a language which is different from that of the dominant language of the school in which they are accommodated (Gauteng Department of Education 1996:1). The South Africa, Department of Education Policy Document, Grades R to 3 (1997:22) adds an all embracing dimension, namely that LSEN “include learners with special academic and learning problems, physical problems, emotional concerns and particular social

needs. The term “disabled learners” refers specifically to those learners with severe and chronic physical disabilities, moderate and severe mental handicap as well as multiples of these conditions”.

To this list, The Salamanca Statement adds street children and working children, children from linguistic, ethnic and cultural minorities and children from marginalised and disadvantaged groups (Salamanca Statement 1994:6). Point 3 of the Salamanca Statement (1994:6) posits the guiding principle that schools should “accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions”. These learners have to be provided for through the policy of inclusive education.

In South Africa, a terminology somewhat different from that used overseas has been adopted because of the recommendations of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS). As one looks at how the NCSNET/NCESS describe *barriers to learning and development* in the lives of disabled learners, one realizes that this model is radically different from the medical model that sought to see what is wrong with the learner rather than what is wrong with the environment.

While it is obvious that LSEN present with a wide range of barriers and difficulties, this study will only focus on a particular sub-section of these learners namely, those who are mildly intellectually disabled.

### **1.2.2 Inclusion**

In the Republic of South Africa, there is a tendency to use the term “inclusive education” to refer to inclusion. However, internationally, the term inclusion is used.

As international pressure to recognise the human rights of the disabled increases (Salamanca Statement 1994:vii), advocates of such rights are no longer satisfied with the fact that the disabled receive “some form of education”. They demand something far more substantial and

meaningful for the disabled. Specifically they demand that the disabled be accepted and educated in the same educational settings as their non-disabled peers – *without any form of discrimination*. In short, they advocate *inclusion*.

Forlin, Hattie and Douglas (1996:199-200) are of the opinion that “the movement towards inclusion rather than segregated education has resulted from considerable world-wide importance placed on the rights of the child, regardless of a disability, to receive an appropriate education along with his/her peers”. The development of an international human rights culture has been stimulated and inspired by the covenants, charters and declarations of the United Nations after World War II. Over the years, these various documents and declarations have motivated concerned individuals in various countries to develop their own codes and regulations with regard to disability. Thus, Winzer (1996:170) states that “inclusion is at one and the same time a reform movement, a reflection of civil rights, a philosophy, and a practice”. According to Burden (1995b:22), specific principles that underlie inclusion are usually built into the bill of rights and governmental policies of a given country. Sims (1995:5) adds that an increased sensitivity towards issues of human rights has prompted governments throughout the world to recognise that people with disabilities are entitled to the same rights and the same status as their able-bodied peers in the community.

**Inclusion** may be defined as “the practice of educating all students, including students with disabilities, in regular education and regular classes” (Block 1994:16). This inclusion, according to Friend and Bursuck (1999:4), has to be implemented irrespective of the severity of the learners’ disabilities and also irrespective of whether the learners are able to meet prevailing curricular standards or not. Gauteng Department of Education (1996:1) adds that “inclusion in its pure form should be defined as a warm, embracing attitude, accepting and accommodating another human being unconditionally, thus expressing the human element within every individual”.

In the words of Bender, Vail and Scott (1995:87) “inclusion generally means ending all special education placements for all students”. Woelfel (1994:48) sounds a word of warning when he adds that “inclusion is a way of meeting a child’s special needs in a regular, age-appropriate

classroom, with the school providing a full continuum of support services and no prerequisite for admittance". According to Bradley and Switlik (1997:7), inclusion means maintaining an open-door policy to all learners – regardless of their abilities or disabilities. This kind of inclusiveness inevitably reflects the heterogenous make-up of the society which schools serve. Inclusion most certainly does not mean the "dumping" of students with disabilities in regular classes. Rather, it means "providing all students with appropriate educational programs geared to their abilities and needs with supports and assistance as needed to ensure success" (Block 1994:16).

The issue of support is clarified by Snell and Raynes (1995:104) when they state that "inclusion refers to the practice of supporting students with disabilities in meeting their identified learning and social needs within their neighborhood schools, within general education, alongside their nondisabled peers".

Jenkinson (1997:140) is of the opinion that inclusion implies that all children, no matter how severe or intense their disabilities appear to be, should be accommodated in that school which they would have attended had they not been disabled. Furthermore, the philosophy that underlies the policy of inclusion is that "schools have a responsibility to meet the needs of all children, and that teachers should be able to differentiate and adapt curriculum and instructional strategies to suit the differing needs and abilities of each child in the classroom" (Jenkinson 1997:140). Casey (1994:14) adds that "this inclusion philosophy seeks to break down the dichotomy between 'normal' and 'special' and to focus on the adaptation and modification of curricula and instruction rather than on segregation of services and the consequent emphasis on differences".

The issue of diversity is also discussed by Giangreco, Baumgart and Doyle (1995:274) when they state that inclusion, "though prompted by the needs of students with disabilities, has been a movement designed to reconstruct classes so that all children representing the range of diversity present in our communities are welcome and provided with an appropriate, meaningful education". They go on to add that for inclusion to succeed, it is necessary for professionals, families, learners, community members to work together towards common goals.

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According to Burden (1995a:45) inclusion “developed in reaction to those approaches that were believed to be discriminatory towards people who were classified as ‘not normal’ (disabled and disadvantaged) and affects issues concerning the handicapped, racial and gender differences, language and cultural differences, physical appearance (e.g. obesity), socio-economic factors, et cetera”. This view is echoed by Karaggianis, Stainback and Stainback (1996:3) when they state that inclusion is “the practice of including everyone - irrespective of talent, disability, socio-economic background or cultural origin”.

The disabled and the disadvantaged in the above context includes learners with mildly intellectual disability. Alper (1996:5-6) views inclusion as being advantageous to all learners, *with* or *without* disabilities. He reasons that inclusion confers the following advantages on learners *with* disabilities:

- Disabled learners are presented with opportunities for social integration and this allows them to improve their communication and social skills and this may result in friendship between disabled and non-disabled learners.
- Learners with disabilities are provided with appropriate models of behaviour and can therefore observe and imitate socially acceptable behaviour from their non-disabled peers.
- Teachers often develop higher expectations and standards of performance for learners with disabilities and they are taught age-appropriate functional component of academic content, which may never be part of their curriculum in segregated settings.
- Inclusion increases the probability that disabled learners will continue to participate in a variety of integrated settings throughout their lives.

He cites the following advantages for learners *without* disabilities:

- Non-disabled learners may serve as peer tutors during instructional activities.
- Non-disabled learners may play together with disabled ones during breaks, and may also play the “buddy role” in the bus and on the playground.

- Non-disabled learners may learn a great deal about human exceptionality, individual differences (diversity) and tolerance. They learn that even when they are disabled, their peers also have positive characteristics and abilities.
- Exposure to learners with disabilities may lead to a definite career choice towards specialised education on the part of non-disabled learners and accurate information regarding disabilities is accessible.
- Inclusion prepares non-disabled learners to deal with a wide variety of individuals in life (Alper 1996:5-6).

In 1994 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) strongly urged countries to provide for their disabled learners in mainstream educational settings (Salamanca Statement 1994:ix). UNESCO's affirmation of inclusive education for disabled learners means that inclusive education for disabled learners is now the international norm – even though many countries still practise idiosyncratic approaches because of their cultural traditions and financial constraints.

Although the terms **inclusion**, **integration** and **mainstreaming** are sometimes used interchangeably, one realises (if one analyses the terms closely) that they are somewhat different. **Integration** (which is used in most cases by literature from United Kingdom) and **mainstreaming** (which is used mostly in literature from the United States of America) are more or less synonyms – and that both terms are rather different from **inclusion**. Little (1992:11) is of the opinion that “the concepts represented by these different terms become confused as a result of using words which mean different things to different people, or the same thing regardless of which words are used”. The disadvantage of this kind of semantic confusion is that it can easily become a barrier to effective communication and relevant action. What is meant by **inclusion** has already been explained above. **Integration**, according to O'Hanlon (1993:7), is a type of education in which disabled learners are provided with education that meets their special needs in ordinary schools rather than in special schools.

According to Leadbetter and Leadbetter (1993:11), “integration is what goes on when educators seek to provide special needs pupils with a learning environment which most closely matches

the child's needs and which is as near to a normal school environment as possible". Knoll and Meyer (1987:48) however warn that integration can only work if teachers, learners, the community and policy makers are all committed to the ideals of integration. Howard, Williams, Port and Lopper (1997:7) further clarify this notion when they state that "integration occurs when children with special needs are placed in specialised separate classrooms within a public school". While these learners then have the opportunity of interacting with learners without disabilities, they are still viewed as different since they have their own programmes, their own classrooms and their own recesses.

Stainback and Stainback (1990:226-228) have the following to say about the advantages of integration:

- Students tend to learn more when they are provided with appropriate educational programs in integrated settings.
- Attitudes towards learners with disabilities may change in integrated settings where learners are given an opportunity to interact, communicate, understand, respect and be sensitive to individual differences and similarities.
- Students are prepared for integrated community living, because to be accepted in the community, and in the workplace, the disabled need to learn how to function in the "real" world.
- Integration avoids the ill effects of segregation in the sense that lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation and lack of positive expectation for achievement are discouraged.
- Integration provides equality since education and inclusion are basic human rights, separate can never be equal and as such, all children must of necessity be part of the community and education mainstream.

The following are the disadvantages of integration as envisaged by Casey (1994: 31):

- For some disabled children, the lack of individual attention may be detrimental and so is the absence of medical and paramedical services.

- It is more difficult to develop appropriate programs in integrated settings where you might have several learners with multiple disabilities in one class than to try and provide support services in segregated settings for one type of disability only.
- Not all teachers in integrated settings have specialised training.

Advocates for the disabled learners are in favour of the term **inclusion** rather than the term **integration** because the term **integration** focuses on placement only and does not suggest other crucial features of integration such as, for example, the kind of integration that takes place during assembly or breaks or extramural activities – or indeed whether integration actually occurs in classes as well as in the curriculum (Lewis 1995:4). Advocates advance the argument that integration can only take place after segregation has been the educational norm. On the other hand, inclusion is in essence a policy which accepts the differences between learners even before they begin formal education (O'Hanlon 1993:8), thereby accepting that diversity is a fact of life.

Various commentators warn that the term **integration** has a loaded meaning in South Africa. Csapo (1996:34) and Partington (1991:16) agree that *integrated education* in South Africa has two meanings. It means, in the first instance, the unimpeded admission of the four racial groups into the same schools, and, in the second instance, the integration of disabled learners into the mainstream of education.

**Mainstreaming** on the other hand implies that students with disabilities are to be educated in the same mainstream setting alongside non-disabled peers (Ysseldyke & Algozzine 1990:255). According to Burden (1995a:48), “mainstreaming may be defined as a technique which tries to make this embracing possible, but only accepts the other in the mainstream on condition of the extent to which he/she can be made to fit in”. This means, according to Friend and Bursuck (1999:3), that these learners are placed in general education settings “only when they can meet traditional academic expectations with minimal assistance, or when those expectations are not relevant (for example, participation in recess or school assemblies) in order to have opportunities for social interaction”.

Howard et al (1997:6) explain that “mainstreaming is when children who have a disability participate in programs designed for typical children in areas where their disability does not affect their performance as compared to the majority of their peers”. Alper (1996:10) adds on this by stating that “mainstreaming refers to providing individualised special education services to students with disabilities while they remain in general education settings for the majority of the school day”.

The advantage of such an arrangement, according to Allen (1992:69), is that because it gives non-disabled learners opportunities to interact with their disabled peers, such non-disabled learners are likely to be more tolerant and sensitive to disability in their later years, and have a greater understanding and respect for those who are less able. Archer, Green and Pooler (1992:13) add that “a mainstream model offers benefits of socialization and the opportunity to learn to handle real life rather than a protected environment”.

### **1.2.3 Mild intellectual disability (MID)**

Before the definition of mild intellectual disability is given, it is necessary first to define intellectual disability in general.

The American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) of 1992 – as quoted by Falvey, Grenot-Scheyer, Coots and Bishop (1995:1) and Thomas, Correa and Morsink (1995:335) – define intellectual disability as follows:

Mental retardation refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterized by significantly subaverage intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work. Mental retardation manifests before age 18.

*Mental retardation* (as is called in the United States of America) may also be referred to as *intellectual disability*. A disability results when an impairment persists and thus interferes with a person's ability to perform certain skills and tasks or participate in certain activities and roles. Thus, Briggs and Potter (1995:189) understand disability as being a reflection of the consequences of an impairment. Therefore, "a person is disabled to the extent that impairments prevent him or her from exhibiting skills needed to meet normal expectations for roles, tasks and activities in a particular situation" (Nixon II: 1991:13). In addition Kisanji (1995a:93) regards intellectual disability as an inability to function in a particular socio-cultural context. On the other hand, Ashman and Elkins (1994:5) define a handicap as a disadvantage for the individual which results from an impairment or disability. They argue that such a disadvantage sometimes limits and even prevents fulfilment of a role that is "normal" for an individual.

Because this study focuses mainly on the mildly intellectually disabled and not on intellectual disability in general, a definition of mild intellectual disability will now be provided. Sethosa (1991:2) offers the following definition of the mildly intellectually disabled learner: "the mildly mentally handicapped child refers to the child whose level of intellectual functioning is regarded as below normal, but is higher than that of the severely or profoundly mentally handicapped child". Such learners are referred to by Patton, Blackbourn and Fad (1996:99) as the "six-hour retarded child", simply because their intellectual disability is only apparent and prominent during school hours. Such learners are able to cope with tasks at home without appearing to be intellectually disabled. Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy (1998:189) explain this by saying that the discrepancy for individuals with mild intellectual disability is relatively subtle – a discrepancy that may not be readily apparent in casual interactions such as those carried out in a non-school setting.

While there are a number of factors that cause mild intellectual disability in learners, *poverty* and *heredity* are the most important causative factors. It is commonly assumed that mild intellectual disability is caused by socio-economic deprivation (Allen 1992:12 ; Sethosa 1991:47). It is for this reason that Patton, Blackbourn and Fad (1996:95) write: "in situations where children do not have adequate nutrition, access to health care, exposure to stimulating educational opportunities, or positive influences or role models who value education, it may be very difficult for them to

learn well at school.” To accepted causative factors such as malnutrition and poverty, Nkabinde and Ngwenya (1996:36) add diseases like *tuberculosis* and *pneumonia* as well as *traffic accidents* as causes of mild intellectual disability. Nkabinde (1993a:21) also refers to socio-political conditions as another cause of academic impoverishment in learners, while Kriegler and Farman (1994:6) add environmental deprivation and cultural deprivation to the list of causes that induce mild intellectual disability.

In their discussion of heredity, Hewett and Forness (1984:126) suggest that mild intellectual disability results from an interplay of factors in which heredity sets limits on intellectual potential. According to Sarason and Sarason (1989:476), between 50 and 80 percent of the variation in intellectual factors is caused by inheritance – while the remainder are caused by environmental influences. We may therefore speculate (if one accepts these findings) that differences in genetic inheritance may be a more significant factor than environmental differences in the determination of intellectual capacity.

Mildly intellectually disabled learners should not be regarded as a homogenous group. This is why Hagerty and Abramson (1990:52) state that “mildly handicapped students are a heterogeneous group whose shared characteristic is their inability to fully benefit from the existing regular education”. Ashman (1994:436) warns that intellectual disability is not a single problem because it is not caused by a single biological or social factor. He goes on to argue that while it seems that disabled people have some features in common, it is important to note that those with intellectual disability are as diverse as any other group of individuals in society.

#### **1.2.4 The foundation phase**

The foundation phase refers to the first four years of schooling, that is grades reception, one, two and three (Department of Education Policy Document Grades R to 3 1997:9). These years of schooling (formerly grades one, two or sub-standards A, B and standard one) were also known as the junior primary school phase. Pupils in these grades range from six to nine years of age.

During the foundation phase, the learner develops in totality, that is, as a physical being who develops control over his or her gross and fine motor coordination; as a psycho-social being who is able to control his or her emotions, and as a cognitive being who is able to comprehend the world around him or her (Davis 1994:9-12). Furthermore, Davis (1994:9) notes that there are many factors which may positively or adversely influence development and that one of these may be the teaching skills of the junior primary school teacher.

The foundation for schooling is effectively laid in grade 1. This is the reason why Gumede (1993:5) regards this time as the critical stage for promoting an interest in education, developing positive attitudes towards school and developing a positive self-concept. If a child fails at this stage, he or she will be adversely affected and may even drop out of the schooling system before ever having had an opportunity to explore his or her learning potential (Joshua 1995:10). It is for this reason that UNICEF (1991:61) regards universal access to primary education, particularly junior primary education, as important: it is the primary means whereby society meets the needs of children in their formative years and provides a basis for life-long performance and learning opportunities. These formative years are also the years of self-discovery in which different activities – both within and outside the classroom – imbue the child with a sense of who he or she is (Gordon & Browne 1996:241)

Primary school teachers, especially foundation phase teachers, have always (more than anyone else) been aware of the fact that some learners experience noticeable problems with reading, writing and spelling (Gulliford 1988:83). Gumede (1993:7) adds that a high percentage of failure in the first year of schooling, probably shows that a large number of school beginners cannot cope with the demands of the curriculum which is basically about learning the basic learning programmes, including learning to read. In addition to problems with reading, writing and spelling, the mildly intellectually disabled learner may also experience problems in the following areas:

- paying attention to the important aspect of a task for an extended period of time
- attending to the important aspect of the task
- transferring and generalising skills learned to new situations

- acquiring information through incidental learning
- remembering information that has just been taught
- using and understanding language...(Salend 1994:78).

The percentage of failures alluded to above may be caused by the fact that mildly intellectually disabled learners have traditionally been placed in ordinary classes. Because the curricula in mainstream education are not designed for mildly intellectually disabled learners, they are inappropriate for them. The high drop-out might also be caused by the placement of most mildly intellectually disabled learners in ordinary schools when these learners have not been diagnosed as mildly intellectually disabled in order to facilitate appropriate intervention (Sethosa 1991:19).

### **1.2.5 Teacher (educator)**

A teacher is also known in South African educational circles as an educator. The South Africa, Employment of Educators Act 86 of 1998 defines an educator as “any person who teaches, educates and trains other persons or provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and educational psychological services at any public school, further education and training institution, departmental office or adult basic education centre”.

The South Africa, Norms and Standards for Educators (2000:12-13) also terms the teacher an educator and refers to the seven roles associated with competencies for educators. According to South Africa, Quality Education for all (1997:vi), 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”. This of necessity covers educators who are responsible for educating learners with special educational needs (LSEN), including those with mild intellectual disability (MID).

From the definitions given above, it is clear that “educator” is a broad term. On the other hand, “teacher” refers to someone whose sole responsibility it is to teach. Pearsall (1998) in The Oxford Dictionary of English, defines a teacher as someone who teaches, or who causes someone

to learn or understand something. For the purpose of this study, the terms teacher and educator mean someone who teaches, to the exclusion of those who do therapy.

The Salamanca Statement (1994:27) refers to educators as teachers, and goes on to state that pre-service training programmes for teachers are important because such teachers are provided with a positive orientation towards disability, thereby developing an understanding of what they can achieve with LSEN, including MID in schools, given the locally available services and resources. Furthermore, the Salamanca Statement (1994:27) views the recruitment of teachers with disabilities as an important factor in that such teachers will serve as role models for learners with disabilities, which are in most cases lacking so that these learners should have somebody to look up to and emulate.

For these teachers to succeed in their endeavours to help LSEN and MID, pre-service training has to be supported by in-service training, in which teachers already in the field of education are familiarised with LSEN and MID. Thus, according to the Salamanca Statement (1994:28), “the major challenge lies in providing in-service training to all teachers, taking into account the varied and often difficult conditions under which they serve”.

#### **1.2.6 Educational support services**

Any service aimed at, firstly, assisting learners to cope with the process of learning, in order for them to reach their full potential, and secondly, at assisting educators to cope with the process of educating learners comprises “support”. Such services are rendered by support personnel, who are defined by South Africa, Quality Education for all (1997:vi) as “persons from various disciplines and walks of life who provide a wide range of services and support based on knowledge and skills they have acquired” and who may include one or more of the following: remedial educators, sign language interpreters, social workers, nurses, doctors, community workers, educational psychologists, speech therapists and occupational therapists.

The support service was formerly known as the education auxiliary services (Kapp 1991:349).

The South Africa, White Paper no 5 (2000:15) has a strong belief that the key to reducing learning difficulties lies in a “strengthened support service” and this is the reason why the establishment of strong district support teams (DST) and strong school support teams (SST) features high on their agenda of transforming special needs education (South Africa, White Paper no 5 2000:27-28). Furthermore, the Salamanca Statement (1994:31) adds that the “provision of support services is of paramount importance for the success of inclusive education policies”.

### 1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

What constitutes “normal” development has always been a controversial issue because what is “normal” for one child may not necessarily be so for another child. “In addition to culturally defined differences in what is considered normal, there are individual differences among children. No two children grow and develop at the same rate, even within the same culture” (Allen 1992:2). This suggests that there will always be learners who are significantly different from others.

In spite of this caveat, one must emphasise the fact that mildly intellectually disabled learners differ from ordinary children in the learning process. It is for this reason that people who are responsible for the education of mildly intellectually disabled learners have to know exactly *how* and *where* to lead such learners.

The statistics in South Africa are as follows: in 1990 approximately 25 000 white children were accommodated in 1 860 special classes and schools. During the same period only 70 special classes for mildly intellectually disabled learners existed for blacks. These 70 classes accommodated only 1 300 learners (Donald 1996:72 & Donald 1994:13). From the above statistics, we may deduce that most black mildly intellectually disabled learners in South Africa have been accommodated in mainstream education.

According to Gearheart & Litton (1979:36), thirty out of every thousand people are intellectually disabled. If this number is further subdivided according to severity of disability, twenty five of them are *mildly* intellectually disabled, four are *severely* intellectually disabled and one is

*profoundly* intellectually disabled. These figures were used by Sethosa (1991:17) to estimate the number of black mildly intellectually disabled learners. Sethosa calculated that if the total number of black learners at schools was 6 million in 1990, and if one accepted the figure of twenty five pupils per thousand, one would arrive at an estimated figure of 150 000 mildly intellectually disabled learners in 1990. This figure coincides with the estimation made by the Human Sciences Research Council in 1987 when they projected that there would be 158 430 mildly intellectually disabled black learners by 1990 (HSRC 1987:63). As there were only 70 special classes for blacks in 1990, most of the mildly intellectually disabled learners must have been accommodated in the mainstream of education (if they were in the schooling system at all).

In a study entitled “Guidelines for the accommodation of Black mildly mentally handicapped children in the education system of the Republic of South Africa” Sethosa (1991: 20), identified the need for guidelines for the accommodation of mildly intellectually disabled learners, especially for the black learners. The reason was the fact that at that time, a model was not available for the Black population group to cater for such learners. It is important to point out that the guidelines, as envisaged by the said study, were never implemented, owing to the democratic process which begun in 1994, and the subsequent processes of looking afresh into special educational needs in South Africa as a whole. The current study, on the other hand, seeks to assist teachers to support the mildly intellectually disabled learners from an “inclusion” perspective.

The call for inclusive education is an international trend. The South Africa, South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (see Chapter 3, Section 12 sub-section 4) requires that the “Member of Executive Council must, where reasonably practicable, provide education for learners with special education needs at ordinary public schools and provide relevant educational support services for such children”. This act, paves the way in that it constitutes a description of the principle of inclusion.

The South Africa, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (see Chapter 2, Section 9, sub-section 1-5) further protects LSEN and MID in that it guarantees that they are entitled to enjoy equal rights with the ordinary population in the eyes of the law. The Act further

guarantees that no citizen shall be discriminated against on various grounds – and these grounds include *disability*.

In spite of the legislation which protects the disabled in South Africa, many problems for the disabled still exist. These problems are:

- The pupil-teacher ratio is still extremely unfavourable. This makes it difficult and even impossible for the mildly intellectually disabled learner to be adequately catered for in the ordinary schools.
- Although Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes-Based Education were phased in for Grade one in 1998, some teachers are not familiar with ways of using them to accommodate diversity in the classrooms.
- Facilities for the disabled are still very inadequate or even non-existent in certain communities.
- Not all teachers are properly qualified.
- There is a high drop-out rate among mildly intellectually disabled learners which is aggravated by the fact that mildly intellectually disabled learners are frequently not properly directed and so often end up by dropping out of school.
- Parents are not fully utilised in the education process.

These difficulties suggest that it is imperative for concerned educators and policy makers to investigate ways and means whereby teachers of such learners can be assisted to support these learners to achieve their highest potential within inclusive environments – despite all the problems that exist.

#### **1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem which the researcher will investigate relates to ways and means of assisting teachers to support mildly intellectually disabled learners in the foundation phase in the light of the policy of inclusion.

This main problem generates the following sub-problems:

- Who are the mildly intellectually disabled learners? What are their characteristics and how do these characteristics interfere with their learning? How can mildly intellectually disabled learners be assisted in spite of these characteristics?
- What is the situation in other countries (developing and developed) with regard to the inclusion of the mildly intellectually disabled?
- What implications does the policy of inclusive education have for mildly intellectually disabled learners and their education in the South African context?
- How can an accessible and enabling environment be created in which all learners (with particular reference to those with mild intellectual disabilities) succeed at their own rate?
- What should the role of parents be in supporting learners with mild intellectual disability?
- What should the role of teachers be in managing classes and supporting mildly intellectually disabled learners within inclusive settings?
- What specific learning principles are applicable to the mildly intellectually disabled?
- What teaching principles are applicable in the assistance of the mildly intellectually disabled?
- What programmes will be most effective in accommodating the mildly intellectually disabled?
- How can Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) be used to accommodate mildly intellectually disabled learners?
- What should the role of the Department of Education together with School Management Teams (SMT) be in supporting these learners?
- Which training guidelines and support should be given to teachers to enable them to accommodate diversity in the classrooms?

## **1.5 PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The main purpose of the study is to develop a training manual for School Support Teams, hereinafter referred to as SST, which specifies ways and means which teachers could use to

support the mildly intellectually disabled learners in accordance with the policy of inclusive education. The value of this study could therefore be that it aims to identify and describe ways and means for teachers to support mildly intellectually disabled learners in inclusive settings. Teachers are generally able to offer successful intervention if they base their intervention on sound principles and strategies of support.

While this study was undertaken to develop a manual on the basis of which teachers will be able to offer support to the mildly intellectually disabled learners, such a manual can only be developed through systematic research.

The main purpose of the study is therefore:

- to explain who the mildly intellectually disabled learners are, what their characteristics are and how these characteristics interfere with learning. It is only once these characteristics are known that ways and means of supporting these learners may be devised. The researcher will discuss various teaching and learning principles in an attempt to identify specific principles that will make learning effective on the part of mildly intellectually disabled learners.
- to investigate to what extent mildly intellectually disabled learners are accommodated in inclusive settings in other countries. The researcher will look closely at the best practices in both developing and developed countries in the search for programmes that might be of use in South Africa.
- to study programmes for the mildly intellectually disabled learners in South Africa which were in place both before and after the 1994 transformation process in education. The researcher will do this with a view to establishing whether some of the former practices may still be useful in South Africa. Outcomes-based education (OBE) will also be examined and its implications for teaching the mildly intellectually disabled learners in an inclusive setting within the South African context. The purpose in doing this will be to suggest how an accessible and enabling environment may be created in which all learners, including those with mild intellectual disability, can learn at their own pace and so be successful.

- to draw up a training manual for SST which teachers can use to support mildly intellectually disabled learners within the policy of inclusive education in the ordinary classroom.

## 1.6 FIELD OF STUDY

The terminology used to study learners with special needs (namely the retarded, the handicapped, the disabled and those with special educational needs) seems to have evolved over the years. The field of this study has for a number of years been known in educational circles in South Africa – and even internationally – as *orthopedagogics* (Du Toit 1991a:3-4). The advent of “inclusion” as an international trend in catering for the needs of the disabled has generated a new terminology in this field – which is now called *special needs education* (Salamanca Statement 1994:5; South Africa, White Paper no. 5 2000:4).

As was already mentioned, this study deals with learners with special educational needs, with special reference to mildly intellectually disabled learners. According to the South Africa, Consultative Paper no. 1 (1999:1), there is a need to develop a capacity within the education and training system which will be responsive to diversity and which will therefore facilitate the inclusion of all learners. This study therefore looks at ways and means within the parameters of special needs education to assist and support mildly intellectually disabled learners within an inclusive setting.

The South Africa, Consultative Paper no. 1 (1999:7) uses the term *special education* to refer to all forms of special education located within ordinary and special school settings. The field of this study is therefore special needs education.

It is important to note that special needs education, is an interdependent discipline which is related to other educational disciplines. Du Toit (1991a:16-17) points out that special needs education has to, from time to time, rely on other part-disciplines of pedagogics such as, for instance, didactic pedagogics, psychopedagogics. It should even – when necessary – cross disciplinary borders and utilise the findings of medical, sociological and legal disciplines to

acquire a deeper understanding of the learners whom it is trying to assist. It is important to note that the term *pedagogics* has been changed to *education* – in keeping with developments in international education.

## **1.7 METHOD OF STUDY**

A combination of methods will be used in this study. This study will include a literature survey which is both descriptive and comparative in nature. The study is descriptive in the sense that the mildly intellectually disabled learners will be described, and it is comparative in the sense that policies about inclusion from different countries will be compared. The empirical investigation will be undertaken by means of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews which will be used to elicit information from three categories of teachers, (firstly) to interrogate teachers who have mildly intellectually disabled learners in their classes (some by default) in selected ordinary schools. The same questionnaires and semi-structured interviews will (secondly) be applied to teachers in schools for the severely intellectually disabled – teachers who also teach mildly intellectually disabled learners who find themselves in such schools because of a lack of facilities for such learners. The same questionnaires and semi-structured interviews will (thirdly) be applied to teachers in schools with special classes that are specifically dedicated to mildly intellectually disabled learners.

The questionnaires and semi-structured interviews shall be used to gather the necessary data from teachers from different kinds of schools. Such schools will include rural (farm) schools, urban schools, township schools, informal settlement schools, former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools, former Transvaal Education Department (TED) schools, and special schools. Questionnaires will be used to collect responses and respondents will remain anonymous. This will ensure the anonymity of respondents and confidentiality of responses. For this reason, tape recordings will not be used.

A manual for training School Support Teams (SST) will be designed with the main aim of providing teachers with strategies and approaches necessary to support learners with mild intellectual disability.

## 1.8 ORGANISATION OF STUDY

The study will be organised in the following way:

- Chapter one is an orientation towards the study.
- Chapter two outlines the phenomenon of *the mildly intellectually disabled learner*.
- Chapter three investigates the policy of *inclusive education* of educating the mildly intellectually disabled in developed and in developing countries.
- Chapter four describes programmes for teaching mildly intellectually disabled learners in South Africa both before and after the 1994 transformation of education.
- Chapter five explains the empirical research design.
- Chapter six provides the results of the investigation, the analysis and interpretation of results, and implications derived from theory (the literature study) and practice (the empirical study), for assisting teachers to support mildly intellectually disabled learners in the foundation phase in the light of the policy of *inclusive education*.
- In chapter seven, the training manual for SST is outlined as a way of assisting teachers to support mildly intellectually disabled learners in the ordinary classroom.
- In chapter eight, the research programme is summarised, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made.

## 1.9 SYNTHESIS

Education for the disabled differs from country to country. In South Africa, education for the disabled, including the mildly intellectually disabled, was given a tremendous boost when the Disability Rights Charter of 1992 was proclaimed. This charter called for the same rights for the disabled population as those enjoyed by others in the country.

A number of countries have made strides in providing for the disabled, including the mildly intellectually disabled. In keeping with developments in the international arena, South Africa embarked on a process of making provision for the disabled, including the mildly intellectually disabled, in inclusive settings. The appointment of the National Commission on Special Needs

in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) were steps in this direction. The recommendations of the NCSNET and the NCESS of 28 November 1997 culminated in the South Africa, Consultative Paper no 1 of 30 August 1999, and the South Africa, White Paper no. 5 of 24 March 2000, which initiates the policy of inclusion.

These recommendations are in keeping with the South Africa, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which guarantees equality before the law for all citizens, and the South Africa, South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which guarantees the right to education for all learners, including the mildly intellectually disabled.

There is a need to develop a training manual for SST, whereby teachers may be assisted to support mildly intellectually disabled learners within the policy of inclusive education. This is necessary in order to avoid mainstreaming by default – which was a prominent feature in the system of education especially for the previously disadvantaged communities. In that system special provisions for mildly intellectually disabled learners were non-existent.

The manual will be arrived at after a number of steps. The first step will be an explanation of the phenomenon of *the mildly intellectually disabled learner*. This will be undertaken in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE PHENOMENON: THE MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED LEARNER**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

It has been postulated that thirty people in every thousand are intellectually disabled, and twenty five of these thirty are mildly intellectually disabled (Gearheart & Litton 1979:36). This means that the mildly intellectually disabled learners constitute the majority of the intellectually disabled population. The fact that mildly intellectually disabled learners make up the majority of intellectually disabled learners is emphasised by Artiles, Csapo and De Lorenzo (1995:41) when they state that “if we consider that those with mild disabilities comprise the majority of all special education populations, we can assume that a significant number of individuals in the developing world suffer from ‘mild intellectual disability’”.

One needs to be reminded that our estimates about intellectual disablement in black communities probably approximates to the situation in the developing world. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF 1993a:50) offers the following explanation: “among urban whites, the causes of disability are similar to those of First World countries. However, this differs markedly from the situation among Africans and coloureds where environmental causes are most prevalent, a situation comparable to that of other Third World countries”. Children in Third World countries are especially vulnerable to biological and environmental stressors that cause disabling conditions such as mild intellectual disability. As stated above, the issue of mild intellectual disability is compounded by poverty, malnutrition, traffic accidents, diseases and socio-political conditions (cf section 1.2.3).

The fact that many school drop-outs are mildly intellectually disabled is noted by Marfo (1986:6): although socio-economic, cultural, and motivational factors may be the leading factors associated with school drop-out, it is highly conceivable that children with mild unnoticeable

disorders account for quite a sizeable proportion of children who drop out of school in the early grades". These "mild unnoticeable disorders" include mild intellectual disability. Donald (1993:146) also pinpoints recurrent school failure and drop-out as indicators of possible existence of mild intellectual disability.

According to Ashman (1994:467), learners with mild intellectual disability are usually impossible to diagnose before they enter the school system. Learning problems and persistent academic achievement problems only become apparent after a learner enters the school system and when he or she begins to fall behind, sometimes failing and frequently repeating grades (Artiles, Csapo & De Lorenzo 1995:48; Heward & Orlansky 1988:99). According to Reschly (1990:83): "students classified as mildly mentally retarded typically have experienced prolonged and severe achievement problems. Studies of mildly mentally retarded students indicate that most have repeated grades at least once, sometimes twice, and most have been placed in regular education remedial options." The problem of the repetition of grades is also noted by Jones (1992a:4). In the same vein, MacMillan, Gresham, Siperstein & Bocian (1996:162) write: "children with mild mental retardation have intellectual limitations that manifest in inefficient learning of academic material and subtle social learning problems that do not carry over into the domain tapped by extant adaptive behavior scales".

The mildly intellectually disabled individuals progress through the same hierarchy of stages of cognitive development, but they do so at a slower rate than the average individual (Perry, Pasnak & Holt 1992:273). This assertion is confirmed by Jones (1992b:141) when he states that "mildly mentally retarded individuals progress at one-half to three-fourths the rate of their average intelligence peers; they appear to have a higher 'forget rate' and they do not reach the academic levels of average non-handicapped peers". Brimer (1990:24) agrees that mildly intellectually disabled learners grow at a rate of 50 to 75 percent of the growth rate of average individuals.

Jones (1992b:145) further explains that,

in general, mildly retarded children enrolled in the primary grades (1st-3rd) will be functioning at preschool and readiness levels; intermediate age-grade level

mildly retarded students will be at primary grade level just beginning academics; and junior high age-grade level mildly retarded students will focus on functional academics rather than academic skill foundations.

Vasa and Steckelberg (1987:99) state that for individuals to be considered intellectually disabled, their performance in the areas of *intelligence, academic achievement* and *adaptive behaviour* have to be significantly below the average of their peers. Furthermore, they emphasise that if individuals are to be considered to be mildly intellectually disabled, they have to obtain scores that fall at least two standard deviations below the mean in *all* the three areas mentioned above. A deviation in only one or two areas provides insufficient grounds for classifying an individual as intellectually disabled.

In agreement with Macmillan and Hendrick (1993:26) the researcher postulates that no single category of exceptional learners has elicited so much controversy as have mildly intellectually disabled learners. One of the reasons for this state of affairs is that whereas the disability of other categories of exceptional learners such as the deaf, the blind and the physically disabled is evident to almost everybody, learners with mild intellectual disability do not exhibit readily apparent physical characteristics.

Black mildly intellectually disabled learners are in most cases referred to special schools for the severely intellectually disabled because of their poor performance in ordinary schools (Mashigo 1992:15-16). This happens because there is an enormous lack of facilities and properly trained teachers in black communities. Children are left to fail and repeat up to four times. By then the learner is too old for any kind of meaningful assistance because the learning programmes and activities at special schools for severely intellectually disabled learners are not designed for their needs, and, in addition, teachers at such schools only receive training in the handling of the severely intellectually disabled and not the mildly intellectually disabled (Mashigo 1992:19). The danger in such cases – according to Mashigo (1992:24) – resides in the fact that a lack of any adequate understanding and knowledge about such learners on the part of teachers may lead them to assume that the learner is merely “lazy” and does not want to exert himself or herself. This

may even lead to the self-fulfilling prophesy, where learner fails because he or she is expected to do so.

## **2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED LEARNERS**

While mildly intellectually disabled learners, (hereinafter referred to as MID learners), are characterised by certain traits that are peculiar to this group of learners, it should be understood that not all learners in this category will display exactly the same characteristics. Because each individual is unique, even people who are diagnosed on rational grounds as belonging to a particular group will be different from each other. Intellectually disabled learners will differ considerably in the extent to which they reflect characteristics of intellectual disability, and this applies equally to the mildly intellectually disabled (Sethosa 1991:57).

### **2.2.1 Physical characteristics**

According to Ndurumo (1993:231),

physical growth in educable mentally retarded approximates that of average children. This is because these children come from sub-standard homes where environmental factors rather than organic factors have a more significant effect. Thus one can expect only little deviation from normal physical growth in these children.

Cartwright, Cartwright and Ward (1989:239) observe that MID learners are indistinguishable from other youngsters in the motor domain. There are however a number of MID learners whose physical problems are due not only to environmental factors but also to other factors which impede physical growth and development. Such factors include diseases, heredity (genetic make-up), accidents, the consequences of the family having a low socio-economic status, the consequences of poverty and deprivation, the occupational level of parents, a lack of intellectual, aesthetic and other stimulation, malnutrition, and variations in child-rearing practices and styles (Sethosa 1991:46-54).

While late developmental milestones are not easily observable in these learners, they may do poorly in tests that measure motor skills (depending on the measure of coordination and understanding required by the skill being measured). What this means in practice is that the more complicated the skill being tested, the more pronounced will be the learner's inability to execute that skill (Du Toit 1991c: 306).

### **2.2.2 Emotional characteristics**

If one compares them to other learners, the MID learners may appear to be emotionally immature because they appear to be anxious, nervous and easily distractible (Stakes & Hornby 1996:9). Such learners tend to be characterised by helplessness and outer-directedness (Du Toit 1991c:307). In addition, they have a poor self-image and tend to be obsessed with their inability to do things (Stakes & Hornby 1996:9). This in turn generates poor levels of motivation, and that in turn creates and perpetuates a vicious cycle of (1) inability (2) failure (3) decreased motivation (4) further failure – and so on (Du Toit 1991(c):308). Most learners with mild intellectual disability have a poor self-concept. This is caused by continuous experiences of failure which in turn cause these learners to entertain a low expectation of success. Nielson (1997:71) attributes their low self-esteem to the rejection and criticism which these learners experience more frequently than learners who are successful.

These learners are characterised by poor motivation. Motivation may be defined as the ability to initiate behaviour, and direct it towards a goal. Motivation is a measure of the arousal, strength and conscious direction of a person's behaviour towards attaining a particular goal. It may be either *extrinsic* (encouraged from outside), or *intrinsic* (encouraged from within the individual) (Gloeckler & Simpson 1988:154). Motivation in the MID learners may be influenced by factors such as anxiety, self-concept, teacher expectations, incentives for learning and so on (Smith, Finn & Dowdy 1993:52).

### **2.2.3 Social characteristics**

According to Taylor, Stenberg & Richards (1995:97), "individuals' social and personal characteristics relate directly to their adaptive behaviour – that is their ability to adapt appropriately to their environment". Learners with mild intellectual disability experience

difficulties in adapting to their environments. Their relationships with others in social situations depend on whether they are accepted or not – and they are usually rejected because of their immature behaviour. Nielson (1997:71) asserts that, in most cases, the social behaviour of MID learners is not commensurate with their physical age. In the words of (Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward 1989:238) their social and other behaviour corresponds to that of non-disabled learners who are younger in chronological age than that of their non-disabled peers

MID learners have problems in understanding and utilising interpersonal problem-solving strategies. Because they fail to comprehend sequential and causal connections in a series of interactions, they may misinterpret situations. Jones (1992b:147) explains this clearly when he writes: “mildly retarded individuals experience deficits in both cognition and language which significantly reduces their functioning level and rate of acquisition of social skills.”

#### **2.2.4 Cognitive and learning characteristics**

In the cognitive sphere, the MID learners are characterised by delayed intellectual development. This in turn leads to a diminished rate of learning because some of these learners operate at half to three quarters of the speed of non-disabled learners (Jones 1992b:141).

Learning and cognition are related in the sense that for one to learn properly, one needs the cognitive capacity to do so. According to Gloeckler and Simpson (1988:153), “learning is the relatively permanent alteration of internal structures that is evidenced by changes in overt behaviour that is attributable to environmental influences and that cannot be accounted for solely on the basis of growth and maturation”. Because learners with mild intellectual disability have problems in the cognitive sphere, they do not have the cognitive capacity to learn, and therefore find it difficult to engage in the learning process.

There are a number of factors in the **cognitive and learning domain** which profoundly affect MID learners. They are:

#### **2.2.4.1      *Problems of attention***

According to Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:173), “attention can be defined as selectively focusing the senses on external stimuli”: this selective focusing enables an individual to process the information which he or she receives. The ability of MID learners to focus their attention is inconsistent and variable (Bender 1992:116) because they are highly distractible and also because they tend to pay attention to the peripheral events in their environments rather than focusing on the situation to which they should be paying attention (Radabough & Yukish 1982:3, Jones 1992b:141, Du Toit 1991c:309).

“Individuals with mild mental retardation show deficient performance, because they pay attention to fewer dimensions and because they have difficulty identifying certain relevant dimensions used during discrimination exercises” (Taylor, Stenberg & Richards 1995:96). Such individuals tend to concentrate on distractions rather than on the task at hand. In addition, because of their intellectual difficulties, they learn more slowly than their age peers (Casey 1994:79; Ndurumo 1993:229).

Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:95) explain that a learner has to be able to *attend* to a task before he or she can begin to learn it, and this is where the mildly intellectually disabled experience problems. MID learners are deficient in performance because they have great difficulty in focusing their attention continuously on a given task. Because these learners are often exposed to difficult tasks, their problems are exacerbated. It is accepted that the inability to focus attention inhibits a child's capacity to learn (Casey 1994:80).

#### **2.2.4.2      *Memory problems***

According to Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:45), “memory is the ability to store and recall information”.

MID learners are unable to remember learning material which has already been presented to them (Radabough & Yukish 1982:4). Their deficiency in memory capacity is manifested in their inability to recall what they learn at school (Scruggs & Mastropieri 1992:390). This state of

affairs is aggravated by their difficulties in devising, absorbing and applying learning strategies and their inability to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant stimuli. It is also aggravated by their difficulty in organising information in such a way as to facilitate later retrieval (Meese 1994:20).

MID learners are especially noted for their short-term memory deficits (Nielson 1997:71). Their inability to use rehearsal strategies in an automatic way reduces the amount of information that they can store in their long-term memory (Jones 1992b:142; Du Toit 1991c:310). While their main problem is how to store information in long-term memory, they seldom have difficulty remembering information once they have been successful in storing information because they have used efficient rehearsal strategies (Taylor, Stenberg & Richards 1995:96). Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:96) explain that the deeper the level of processing required, the greater is the likelihood that the MID learner will experience memory problems.

The rate at which learners forget what they learn is directly linked to the level at which they are able to recall what they have learnt. MID learners tend to forget sooner than their non-disabled counterparts (Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward 1989:236) because they are unable to follow simple instructions and may fail to perceive logical or sequential connections in the work being demonstrated. This invariably leads to forgetting (Stakes & Hornby 1996:8). MID learners experience difficulty with recall because they organise information poorly. Because their input is chaotic, their recall and retrieval is chaotic as well. New information tends to confuse them, and thus they accord preference to old information (Du Toit 1991c:310).

#### **2.2.4.3 *Rate of learning and level of learning***

Because MID learners take longer to learn than their non-disabled counterparts, they may avoid tasks which they perceive as demanding; they may gravitate towards tasks that are routine and undemanding – such as cleaning up and giving out books (Stakes & Hornby 1996:7; Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward 1989:235). As such, it may be said that their rate of learning is low as compared to that of other learners in the classrooms.

MID learners will not necessarily reach the same levels as their non-disabled counterparts. This is because they are only able to perform tasks that are straightforward in nature. As Jones

(1992b:143) puts it: “symbolic thought, as exemplified by introspection and hypothesizing, is restricted.” They may however excel in other areas such as arts and athletics (Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward 1989:236). They may have few interests other than sports, and they may show little or no originality in their work because they have limited experiences from which to draw (Stakes & Hornby 1996:8).

#### **2.2.4.4      *Transfer of information and generalisation***

MID learners often have trouble transferring information from one situation to the other. A skill or concept that was learned and applied appropriately in one situation may all of a sudden be applied inappropriately if the new situation has only slightly changed (Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward 1989:236). Du Toit (1991c:310) writes about this kind of learner: “what he has learned in one situation does not serve him in subsequent situations.” Radabough and Yukish (1982:3) add that in order to be able to transfer successfully, it is necessary to develop a strategy with which to attack new stimuli. This, such learners do not seem able to do.

MID learners also have problems with generalisation in the sense that they have problems in applying learned information to new but similar situations and solving new problems on the basis of previous learning (Taylor, Stenberg & Richards 1995:96 & Nielson 1997:71). “Generalisation refers to the transfer of skills or concepts learned in specific settings to other unrelated settings over time” (Casey 1994:80). It also refers to the ability to discriminate relevant dimensions of the similar stimuli rather than the stimuli themselves (Radabough & Yukish 1982:3).

#### **2.2.4.5      *Concrete versus abstract learning***

MID learners tend to do better in tasks that are straightforward and concrete rather than abstract (Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward 1989:236). This is because, according to Radabough and Yukish (1982:4), they are unable to develop a strategy for applying the known to the unknown.

#### **2.2.4.6      *Incidental learning and discrimination***

MID learners do not acquire information that is peripheral or incidental to the main point of attention (Jones 1992b:143). This is because they seem to be unable to handle more than one

piece of information at the same time. Consequently, information which is not directly linked to the task being learned may not be acquired (Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward 1989:236).

According to Radabough and Yukish (1982:3), “discrimination is the ability to locate relevant dimension or dimensions of a given stimulus” and the MID learners have difficulty in isolating the relevant dimensions of both visual and auditory stimuli.

#### **2.2.4.7      *Learning set***

*Learning set* refers to a systematic method of arriving at solutions to problems. These learners find it difficult to benefit from experience and their ability to generalise is poor. It takes more time for them to form learning set and thereby systematically arrive at a solution to the problem at hand (Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward 1989:236 & Jones 1992b:143). Radabough and Yukish (1982:5) add that these learners almost always expect to fail rather than to succeed. They therefore do not attempt to solve tasks when the problems are presented because if one does not attempt a task, one cannot fail in performing it. For them it means “when a task is not attempted there can be no failure” (Radabough & Yukish 1982:5).

According to Kops and Belmont (1985:8), “this view suggests that poor achievement in school may be related not only to specific cognitive dysfunction (e.g. perceptual, memory) but more fundamentally, to the failure to actively develop and pursue a goal-directed strategy or method of solution”.

#### **2.2.4.8      *Language difficulties***

Cognitive abilities are highly correlated with language ability. Cartwright, Cartwright and Ward (1989:237) are therefore of the opinion that since these learners have weak intellectual skills, they will invariably experience problems with language. They may also possess a poor vocabulary which is characterised by the use of words instead of sentences when speaking. Thus they rarely contribute to discussions and prefer to engage in inconsequential chatter or repetitive speech patterns (Stakes & Hornby 1996:8).

Learners with mild intellectual disability acquire language skills in the same order as do students without disabilities. The only difference is that language development as a whole may appear to be slower for them (Taylor, Stenberg & Richards 1995:97). MID learners present with a high incidence of speech abnormalities (articulation problems being the most prominent) (Casey 1994:78).

Pinnell (1989:162) points out that MID learners who are from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are often linguistically inhibited and frequently do not have the confidence to display even that level of linguistic competence which they possess.

### **2.2.5 Academic characteristics**

Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:47-50) and Stakes and Hornby (1996:7) note that MID learners experience problems in the acquisition of academic skills and attainments such as reading, writing, and mathematics. These are referred to in Outcomes-Based Education (OBE)

#### **2.2.5.1 Reading**

Reading is a process which is interactive in nature – an activity in which bottom-up and top-down processes operate. “The bottom-up process focuses on decoding print and learning the sounds that letters make in different configurations to recognise words. The top-down process is concerned with meaning and the reader generating predictions and reading to confirm or disprove hypotheses” (Schulz & Carpenter 1995:214). It may therefore be confirmed that the bottom-up process is the decoding or identification of print while the top-down process is the comprehension or understanding of the text.

Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:149) suggest that MID learners have below-average **reading** abilities which are characterised by a lack of readiness skills. They also have problems in a number of other areas including word analysis (they are prone to reverse letters), phonetic skills, comprehension on all levels (i.e. the literal, interpretive and critical levels), and problems with

pronunciation. MID learners experience problems in one or more areas of reading such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, as will be explained below.

Authors such as Meese (1994:22), Gloeckler and Simpson (1988:212-214), and Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:217) agree that language is made up of the following dimensions: **phonology**, which refers to the ability to detect units of meaningful sound in spoken language; **morphology**, which is concerned with recognition of the smallest units of meaningful language such as, for instance, suffixes and prefixes; **syntax**, which refers to the ability to cluster words into meaningful phrases on the basis of sentence structure; **semantics** or **content**, which refers to the ability to remember new items vocabulary, to understand figurative language and comprehend what is being read, and **pragmatics** or **function**, which refers to the usage of language within a given social context – as exemplified in verbal and non-verbal messages, the logical presentation of ideas, appropriate responses, fluency of delivery and so on.

For the MID learners, problems in reading are manifested in poor word analysis, poor word recognition skills and poor comprehension abilities (Smith, Finn & Dowdy 1993:149). In addition, these learners experience difficulties with regard to phonology, morphology and syntax – as exemplified by their incorrect pronunciations, poor grasp of word constructs, and poor word combinations. MID learners experience semantic problems because they often fail to understand and differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They also fail to understand verbal utterances and non-verbal cues (Meese 1994:22).

#### **2.2.5.2 Writing**

Because written language skills affect all areas of the curriculum at schools, Salend (1990:344) is of the opinion that these skills have to be conscientiously taught. Meese (1994:262) is emphatic of the fact that “adequate written expression requires a solid foundation in oral language, reading, and written language skills such as spelling and handwriting”.

With regard to **written language**, Meese (1994:22), explains that MID learners have difficulty in remembering the written equivalent for sounds. This is a cognitive aspect of language. These

learners experience difficulties because they produce faulty sentence structures because of their limited vocabulary; they also have problems with punctuation and use words wrongly. According to Meese (1994:249), **spelling** is a process that impact on both writing and reading because, while reading is a process of decoding information, spelling is a process of encoding information. Spelling is difficult for most learners (and even more so with the mildly intellectually disabled) because “rather than recognise letter patterns and combinations and their corresponding sounds, as when decoding words while reading, the student must recall and encode the correct sequence of letters when spelling” (Meese 1994:249). **Handwriting** on the other hand is the *mechanical* component of written language and it requires both motor skills and cognitive functioning (Smith, Finn & Dowdy 1993:194). The MID learners have problems with speed in writing, with legibility and with fluency. Legibility is concerned with clarity and the correctness of the letters that are formed. Legibility includes variables such as the spacing of letters, the evenness of lines, slant, size, the proportion and alignment of letters. Fluency refers to the speed with which learners write; it is measured in terms of how many letters a learner can produce per minute (Salend 1990:359-360).

#### 2.2.5.3 *Mathematics/Arithmetic*

According to Meese (1994:281), problems in **arithmetic/mathematics** might be related to inefficient execution of arithmetic operations. The following general arithmetic problems, which are described by Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:233-235), are even bigger problems for the mildly intellectually disabled:

- **Mathematics anxiety**

Mathematics anxiety can be described as the intense fear or dislike for mathematics. It is in most cases related to the ways in which mathematics is taught and the demands which are made on the learner. Faulty teaching methods, such as a lack of variety, an emphasis on memorisation, an emphasis on speed and heavy homework loads, all cause intense mathematics anxiety in MID learners.

- **Gender, mathematics myth and bias**

Because there is a myth that men, including male learners, are better than women, including female learners, at mathematics and computational tasks, this widely believed fantasy may

become a self-fulfilling prophesy and thus cause problems and failure for female learners in arithmetic, mathematics, science, etc. Since this myth affects non-disabled learners, one would expect that it would adversely affect female MID learners even more than their male counterparts. Teachers may unknowingly, even through their messages reinforce certain behaviours with regard to mathematics and science.

- **Instructional routines**

Instructional routines such as mere drill and the repeated practice of computational skills do not ensure that learners will *understand*. They therefore do not ensure the acquisition of learning and problem-solving skills. Drill without any acquisition of meaning leads to further problems since the skills seemingly thus acquired cannot be applied in practice.

- **Compressed curricula**

Compressed curricula in which the lower grade learners are taught abstract and advanced mathematical concepts while being overloaded with work are problematic because they do not take into account the learner's readiness for learning. This affects the MID learners more than the non-disabled learner.

### 2.3 TEACHING THE MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED LEARNER

A number of principles are applicable in teaching. While these principles are important in the education of learners in general, they are even more important in the education of learners with mild intellectual disability. The **educational principles** described below were recommended for the education of the mildly intellectually disabled, both in special classes attached to ordinary school in the former Transvaal Education Department (TED) and in level classes in the former Department of Education and Training (DET). These principles are also applicable in an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) classroom. They reflect the special instructional and learning needs of MID learners. The principles are important because they explain how one may assist MID learners despite their disabilities. Most characteristic problems that affect the lives of these learners may be alleviated or (in certain circumstances) even eliminated if teachers take these educational principles into consideration when teaching the mildly intellectually disabled.

### **2.3.1 Teaching principles for assisting mildly intellectually disabled learners**

These teaching principles have been used for some time and are still being used in many schools and classes for teaching MID learners. They enable these learners to learn effectively despite their problems. A number of authors and sources outline these principles. They are: Du Toit (1991c: 312-314), Department of Education and Training (DET), Teacher's Guide to Level Classes: Languages (s.a: 27-32), DET, Teacher's Guide to Level Classes: The World of the Mildly Intellectually Handicapped Pupils (s.a: 4), DET, Teacher's Guide to Level Classes: Formative Subjects: History with Geography included, Science with Hygiene included, Religious Education (s.a: 15-19) & South Africa, Department of Education, Curriculum 2005: Questions and answers for learners, educators, parents and governing bodies: (1997:6-19).

#### **2.3.1.1 Individuality**

It was mentioned earlier in this study (cf section 1.2.3) that MID learners should not be regarded as a homogenous group. In fact, diversity is as common among these learners as it is in any other group of learners. The *principle of individuality* means that every learner is seen and appreciated as an individual. It also means that each learner has his or her own talents or unique problems, causes of intellectual disability and different ways of approaching the process of learning. This educational principle takes the individuality of the learner into account as a vital factor in teaching and learning. Even in a situation where instruction is given in a group situation, the individuality of the learner still should be a paramount consideration because instruction is planned to accommodate each learner's individual needs (Du Toit 1991c:312, Teacher's guide to level classes: The world of the mildly intellectually disabled s.a :4, Teacher's guide to level classes: Languages s.a:27).

In an OBE classroom, the individuality of the learner is catered for through outcomes which are tailored to accommodate individual learners. The learner is at the centre of the process of learning but at the same time free to progress towards the mastery of outcomes at his or her own rate.

### **2.3.1.2      *Totality***

MID learners generally have problems with generalisation and the transfer of information from one situation to another (cf section 2.2.4.4) They tend to see information or learning material in isolation – without seeing the totality. The *principle of totality* ensures that the learner receives instruction in its totality and not in isolation. The matter has to be presented as a meaningful whole – especially because the MID learner has problems in discerning the relationships between things and has problems in integrating facts and details (Teacher's guide to level classes: Languages s.a:28).

Because these learners are better able to remember information presented as a meaningful whole, it is necessary for the teacher first to discuss the content in totality, and then follow that by an analysis of the whole and a discussion of the details. In this process it is important for the teacher always to keep referring to the place and significance of each detail in the totality of the material (Du Toit 1991c:312).

In an OBE classroom, learning matter is presented as a meaningful whole and learners are encouraged to apply the skills that have learnt to solve real world problems.

### **2.3.1.3      *Motivation***

MID learners are sometimes poorly motivated (cf section 2.2.2). This is sometimes explained by the learner's poor intrinsic motivation which has been caused by a long history of failure. Because of this, the learner has little desire to learn due to the fact that he or she has so often been humiliated by failure in the past. This aversion to learning breeds a negative self-concept. Encouragement in a form of extrinsic motivation such as stars, praise and privileges are frequently used to counteract this sense of failure and helplessness. Correct responses are immediately reinforced with, for example, praise. Renewed motivation may rekindle the learner's desire to learn. The basic desire to learn is there but it is overlaid by enormous negativity and therefore a lack of motivation (Du Toit 1991c:313, Teacher's guide to level classes: The world of the mildly intellectually disabled s.a:4, Teacher's guide to level classes: Languages s.a:30).

In OBE, learners take responsibility for their own learning and thereby they are motivated to learn.

#### **2.3.1.4      *Reduction of subject matter***

Because MID learners are characterised by a slow rate of learning and a lower level of learning (cf section 2.2.4.3), a carefully rationalised reduction of the volume of subject matter enables them to grasp what they have to learn. All subject matter that is inessential and confusing should as far as possible be omitted. The number of concepts presented in one period should be limited so that not too much is crammed into one period. The reduction of content ensures that learners are confronted with what they are able to manage (Du Toit 1991c:313).

In OBE, this principle is taken care of through outcomes that enable learners to work at their own pace and different ways, and according to their individual abilities and levels of development.

#### **2.3.1.5      *Task analysis***

MID learners have memory problems (cf 2.2.4.2). Task analysis is accommodative of these learners since the educational aims are analysed and divided into smaller component steps. This enables the learner to learn a certain aspect of the learning matter systematically, and then the next aspect (which is related to the previous one) – until such a time as the whole content has been mastered. The effectiveness of this principle resides in the fact that the separate steps in the learning process are logically linked together until all the learning matter is understood (Du Toit 1991c:313).

Outcomes have to be reached systematically. Learners do not only have to gain knowledge, but also have to understand what they learn, so as to develop appropriate skills, attitudes and values during the learning process.

### **2.3.1.6      *Emphasis***

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the MID learners is the fact that they are unable to readily differentiate between relevant and irrelevant matter. Because of this, it is difficult for them to pay attention when they have to (cf section 2.2.4.1). For this reason, a clear emphasis is deliberately placed on those aspects that need to be learned. The attention of the learner is then carefully drawn to these relevant portions of learning matter. Because the discrimination of MID learners is poor (cf section 2.2.4.6), these learners have to be guided to discriminate between what is relevant and what is not. The teacher does this by carefully drawing to those portions of learning matter that *have to be learned* (Du Toit 1991c:313).

In an OBE classroom, teachers and learners *focus* on certain pre-determined results or outcomes which are to be achieved at the end of the learning process.

### **2.3.1.7      *Purposefulness***

Instruction should not merely keep the learner busy. It should be purposeful in the sense that it should impart skills which the learner may then later transfer to other situations. The educator must know exactly what he or she wants to achieve with each learner. The so-called “hit and miss” methods are not effective or productive and should be replaced with purposeful planning and instruction (Teacher’s guide to level classes: Languages s.a:29).

Instruction in an OBE classroom is purposeful in the sense that outcomes are determined by relevant, real life needs and are necessary to ensure integration of knowledge, competencies and orientations needed by learners to become thinking, competent and responsible future adults. All these principles are sound guidelines for teachers in their attempt to support MID learners. They are, however, not presented to teachers in a structured form and teachers have difficulty in putting them into practice amidst the daily struggle in classes with large numbers of learners, which are more often than not, include learners with behaviour problems.

### **2.3.2 Learning principles for the mildly intellectually disabled learners**

These are principles that help learners in their engagement in the process of learning. These principles may also be referred to as learning strategies. Salend (1990:85) says that “learning strategies are techniques, principles or rules that will facilitate the acquisition, manipulation, integration, storage and retrieval of information across situations and settings”.

#### **2.3.2.1 *Experiencing success***

The many failures these learners have experienced in the past lead them to *expect* to fail in the future. It has already been mentioned that they are unable by themselves to arrive at any systematic way of solving problems (cf section 2.2.4.7), and this leads them to avoid tasks for fear of failure. If learners are made to experience graded measures of success, this will go a long way in encouraging changes of attitude in them. The learner should be guided so that he or she reaches his or her outcomes successfully (Du Toit 1991c:313).

Learners experience success in an OBE classroom when outcomes are achieved, albeit at a slower pace by others.

#### **2.3.2.2 *Fixation in memory***

Although MID learners are characterised by a high rate of forgetting (see section 2.2.4.2), they can be given opportunities for the fixation of material in their memories if the teacher uses the technique of *repetition*. Problems arise because the short-term memory of MID learners is limited. Because of this, they are easily confused by new information. In such circumstances, creative and carefully graded repetition serves to improve their retentiveness. Fixation in memory of necessity leads to mastery. The matter is mastered over a period of time with experience and carefully designed repetition – rather than through mere mechanical memorisation. They then retain facts more effectively and meaningfully because they are able to link them to their existing store of knowledge and understanding (Du Toit 1991c:313).

In an OBE classroom, learners are given a chance to practice the skill until it is mastered. Such skills are then applied to real-life situations. This practice is of necessity accompanied by

meaning and understanding. This is due to the fact that it is easy to remember something that is meaningful.

### **2.3.2.3      *Regularity***

MID learners experience the world as threatening since they are unable to order their learning time or content and make associations and generalisations (cf section 2.2.4.4). *Routine* in the scheduling of activities enables the learner to do what needs to be done without him or her feeling confused or threatened. Routine and regularity help the learner to feel safe and secure (Du Toit 1991c:313).

Learning activities are structured in such a way that they are not threatening to learners. In addition, these activities are not bound by rigid time-frames. Such activities must ensure that learners feel good about themselves and are thus not afraid to try new things in and out of the classroom.

### **2.3.2.4      *Verbalisation***

These learners experience problems with using language (cf section 2.2.4.8). The teacher verbalises his or her actions and the actions of the learners. He or she does this by using words that the learner understands. This helps to fix the attention of the learner on relevant information. The learner is encouraged to verbalise his or her actions and so regulate his or her actions by utilising language as a medium of thought (Du Toit 1991c:314).

In nurturing and supporting learners, teachers verbalise the activities, thereby encouraging learners to be innovative and creative. The development of language and vocabulary is encouraged through verbalization.

### **2.3.2.5      *Concreteness***

The need to concretise matter is necessitated by the fact that these learners, in most cases, never reach any concrete operational level of cognitive development – or any abstract or formal operational level for that matter. They tend to be bogged down in tasks that are straightforward

and concrete in nature (cf section 2.2.4.5). When real life examples are brought into the class or they are taken to real life outside the classroom, the subject matter is *touched, seen and heard*. This helps because these learners' thought processes depend on contact with concrete objects. Abstract concepts may only be introduced when it is obvious that they already possess the necessary insight (Du Toit 1991c:314).

In OBE, this principle goes hand in glove with experiential learning, where the experiences that learners bring into the classroom are utilized to enable them to learn

### **2.3.2.6      *Demonstration and experimentation***

MID learners are led towards finding solutions through demonstration because the teacher demonstrates and handles concrete examples while the learners look on. After the demonstration, the learner is given a chance to experiment with the concept and demonstrate to others. Educational excursions are valuable tools for leading mildly intellectually disabled learners through observation and demonstration towards experimentation – which in turn will lead to a logical and final deduction or solution (Teacher's guide to level classes: formative subjects s.a :17).

Learners are active participants in an OBE classroom. They demonstrate and experiment.

### **2.3.2.7      *Independent activity***

This has to do with the learner doing activities on his or her own. As the learner is assessed as an individual, the teacher goes on to give each learner activities that are in keeping with his or her particular level of ability. Success in so far as independent activity is concerned, will of necessity increase self-confidence in the learner. It will at the same time stimulate readiness to venture independently (Teacher's guide to level classes: Formative subjects s.a :15).

The main aim of OBE is to enable learners to achieve the outcomes, develop appropriate skills, attitudes and values and thereby become independent, creative and critical individuals who are able to solve problems with confidence

### **2.3.2.8      *Participation (self-activity) and experience***

The more the MID learner participates actively and independently (cf section 2.3.2.7) in the learning situation and in handling the learning matter by means of demonstration and experimentation (cf section 2.3.2.6), the more meaningful and understandable it becomes. True experience involves observation of an event which is concretised, involvement in the event, and familiarity with the event. The facts and information that the learner gathers through his or her own exploration and active participation are more valuable and are remembered for much longer than information that is simply memorised. This in actual fact means that a learner is better able to learn when he or she plays at shopping or visits a real shop than when he or she listens to facts about to selling and buying (Teacher's guide to level classes: Languages s.a:31).

Active participation is an integral part of an OBE classroom. The learners in an OBE classroom are able to participate and work with others.

### **2.3.2.9      *Methodicalness: Proceeding from the known to the unknown, proceeding from the easy to the difficult***

It is important that any new knowledge that is imparted to the learner be based on previously known information. Instruction starts with the existing knowledge of the learner. New work is introduced step by step through task analysis (cf section 2.3.1.5). Each new step is based on previous steps.

Whenever he or she imparts new knowledge, the teacher should take care to start off with relatively easy matter before proceeding to the more difficult matter. This will create confidence on the part of the learner, and he or she will then be able to understand and deal with *the difficult matter as well*. In addition, this implies that instruction should progress from:

- coarser or larger detail to finer or smaller detail
- simple to complicated
- familiar to unfamiliar
- general to specific

- concrete to abstract
- observation to concepts
- reality to symbols (Teacher's guide to level classes: Languages s.a:29, Teacher's guide to level classes: Formative subjects s.a:19)

This principle also applies to an OBE classroom where the basis of the learning activity is prior knowledge of the learner.

#### **2.3.2.10 Socialisation**

MID learners are often characterised by social behaviour that may be regarded as inappropriate (cf section 2.2.3) and by a poor self-concept (cf section 2.2.2). When teachers assist these learners, they should create group situations in which MID learners may learn appropriate behaviour through observation of their "normal" peers – apart from being taught appropriate behaviour directly and sympathetically. Most learners, including the mildly intellectually disabled, learn through interaction with other people – but especially with their peers. For this reason, a pleasant and stimulating relationship with peers and teachers is conducive to learning and inevitably teaches social skills and better achievements in the classroom (Teacher's guide to level classes: Languages s.a:31).

Learners in an OBE classroom are groomed individuals, who, in addition to being able to work independently, are able to work with others. Such learners are able to communicate freely with others in their quest for knowledge.

These principles, if applied properly, will enable teachers to support the MID learners in the ordinary classrooms.

#### **2.3.3 Teaching strategies for the mildly intellectually disabled learners**

The document entitled "Curriculum 2005: Foundation phase learning programmes: planning and implementation guidelines" is a joint venture of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE)

and the Gauteng Institute for Curriculum Development (GICD). According to this document, any learner who experiences barriers to learning is a learner with special needs. This includes learners who are *slow* in their approach to learning. Teachers themselves are encouraged to find alternative ways of helping such learners instead of hoping that someone else will. *Progress maps* are used to identify the level at which the learners are functioning in order to structure activities accordingly (Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) & Gauteng Institute for Curriculum Development (GICD)1998:7-9).

The following points about progress maps are important to note because they also apply equally to mildly intellectually disabled learners:

- Progress Maps show us the path along which learners develop and acquire skills. They are not intended to show you where the learner should be in a particular grade, but rather what the progression of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values should look like through the foundation phase.
- Progress Maps allow a teacher to locate each individual learner on his/her own learning path.
- Progress Maps give the teacher an idea of where the learners are headed. They are an aid to the teacher in terms of the activities and experiences she plans for each learner in her class, including learners with special leaning needs (GDE & GICD 1998:21).

According to Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1990:186), teaching strategies that work for non-disabled learners also work for the mildly intellectually disabled because these learners do not necessarily learn in different ways: instead they learn at a different rate or pace. While Bowd (1986:61-62) is of the opinion that planning instruction for MID learners involves most of the basic principles that apply to the teaching of all learners, he goes on to highlight the following as being the most important ones because *all* children learn effectively when:

- they experience success. Because MID learners in particular have experienced failure at some stage in their lives, an experience of success gives them a reason to go on.
- the things they learn are considered to be of use and are relevant to the world outside of the classroom (i.e. everyday life).

- they are involved through doing and through being practically involved. They have to manipulate and explore in order to gain “hands on experience”.
- the problem they are working on has several solutions rather than just one correct answer.
- the activities they are engaged in incorporate a number of curriculum areas rather than just one curriculum area at a time.

In addition, according to Stakes and Hornby (1996:43), Piaget’s stages have the following implications for teaching MID learners:

- In terms of teaching strategies and the ability to learn, the mental age of a learner is more important than his or her chronological age.
- There is also a need for MID learners to begin their learning from the concrete. The teacher should introduce any conceptual thinking slowly by using concrete examples to facilitate internalisation.
- The teacher should accompany explanations by offering concrete experience. MID learners need to understand not only what has been learned, but also *how* it was done.
- A record needs to be kept of the developmental progress of the learner.
- Correct and skilful verbal techniques are crucial for successful interaction between teacher and learner.

#### **2.3.4 Preconditions for teaching the mildly intellectually disabled learners**

It was mentioned above (cf section 2.2) that MID learners, in addition to experiencing problems in the cognitive, social and physical spheres, also experience difficulties with academic skills such as listening skills, reading, writing, spelling, handwriting and mathematics. Before looking at kinds of skills and how they should be taught in the academic area, it is imperative for teachers to take a closer look at the preconditions that have to be satisfied even before the actual learning begins.

Instruction in the classroom is sometimes not directly related to the daily tasks and demands that learners encounter and have to cope with in their non-classroom environment. MID learners have difficulties generalising knowledge they have learned in the classroom to what they encounter

outside the classroom (cf section 2.2.4.5)). This makes it necessary for them to learn most skills in the community – where they will ultimately be expected to perform the skills which they are taught (Baine 1993:218).

Learners learn effectively where they feel respected. This can only happen in a classroom or school that has abolished the “deficit model”, the model which is concerned with the learner’s weaknesses rather than with his or her strengths. Alternatively, programmes have to build on a learner’s existing strengths and capabilities (Lipsky & Gartner 1992:6).

Learners have to be actively engaged in the process of learning (cf section 2.3.2.8). The learner is not a funnel into which the school pours knowledge. Learning is a process of discovery in which the learner is equipped to confront the environment with competence, mastery and a feeling of confidence. Because learners learn throughout their life times, they have to be taught correctly from the beginning. What learners learn on one day is built on what they have experienced and learned before (cf section 2.3.2.9). Thus when a learner fails, explanations have to be sought in the *school’s* inability to engage the learner in the act of learning (Lipsky & Gartner 1992:7-8).

All these techniques are feasible if there is an agreed sense that “all children belong” and that all of them are accepted in the community of learners. In such environments, diversity is valued and regarded as a challenge to provide all learners with opportunities to learn (Stainback & Stainback 1992:34-35).

In addition, Burrello and Lashley (1992:82) explain that there has to be an acceptance that *everyone* in the school is responsible for the education of *all* learners, and that learning and teaching is not only the responsibility of a select few. Everyone has to be focused on meeting the needs of all learners. All educators should have the skills and the knowledge to support all learners, and all learners are able to benefit from the learning environment.

### 2.3.5 Parental involvement

In spite of all the above, it needs to be said that no teacher effort or school programme, no matter how elaborate, can succeed without the cooperation, involvement and support of the parents (Thomas 1996:96). Thus it may be said that an engaged relationship between the school and the home is one of the most important ingredients for the successful education of learners with special needs, with special reference to the mildly intellectually disabled (Thomas 1996:95). In fact, in South Africa, parental involvement is endorsed by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. Throughout the Act, reference is made to the rights and responsibilities of parents with regard to the education of their children.

#### 2.3.5.1 *Parents as natural educators*

It is traditionally and naturally the responsibility of the parents to rear and educate their children from birth up to the time when informal education is supplemented by formal education (Berger 1983:47). This is because the home is in itself a learning centre in which children learn to talk without formal instruction, and in which they learn as they interact with siblings and other members of the family. Learning at home is an intriguing activity rather than a difficult and cumbersome one – and a parent may teach reading at home without being aware of it, as when reading stories to children (Berger 1983:122).

Such a relationship not only benefits the school, but benefits the parent as well. In such a working partnership, the parent may be empowered to develop their own skills and understanding as they support their own children through the schooling process (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht 1999:56).

While working with parents of MID learners may be a rewarding experience for the teacher, it can also be a difficult and daunting task because these parents, like all other parents, may be either cooperative, supportive and grateful for all the help they receive from the school – or totally uncooperative (Thomas 1996:98).

Thomas (1996:98) warns that “one potential barrier the teacher must consider in establishing this working relationship is the feelings of inferiority that parents may experience” because parents may see themselves working with a professional who is more knowledgeable and educated in the field of special education than they are and they may thus tend to withdraw. Thus, when working towards an acceptable relationship, teachers must ensure that whatever procedures they adopt, they must remain aware of and respectful of parental sensitivities; they must also be tactful and avoid patronising and arrogant attitudes (Thomas 1996:98).

### **2.3.5.2 *Parents as volunteers***

One way of involving and utilising parents in the school is by getting them to become volunteers. Extra help may be more readily obtainable from parents who are occupied with home management than those who are in full-time employment (Berger 1983:136).

Berger (1983:141-142) also says that the teacher and the volunteer have the following responsibilities towards each other:

- **Teachers’ responsibility to volunteers**
  - Teachers must make volunteers feel welcome.
  - They must explain class routine, rules and regulations.
  - They must introduce volunteers to resources in the school.
  - They must describe their expectations from the participation of volunteers.
  - They must give recognition and reinforcement.
  - Issues to be clarified must be attended when classes are not in session.
  - They must appreciate, respect and encourage the participation of volunteers.
  
- **Volunteers’ responsibility to teachers**
  - The volunteers must be dependable and punctual.
  - Privileged information is to be kept confidential and not to be discussed outside of the school.
  - They must plan responsibilities for class in cooperation with teachers and not take over from the teacher.

- They must cooperate with staff and welcome their supervision.
- They must be ready to learn.
- They must enjoy themselves.
- They must be fair, consistent and organised.

#### **2.3.5.3 Further suggestions for parental involvement**

According to *The Sunday Times*, “ReadRight, putting kids at liberty to succeed” of 4 June 2000 (page 1), there are a number of ways in which parents, including grandparents, may be involved in the education of their children, and these include learners with mild intellectual disability. These ways are:

- Parents, grandparents and caregivers who do not work may be invited to tell stories to young children. This could be treated as part of oral culture.
- Sharing stories from different cultures is a good way of exposing children to other cultures and helping them to develop a pride in their own culture, as well as tolerance and understanding of other cultures.
- Parents, grandparents and caregivers may be invited to tell children about special holidays and ceremonies practised in different cultures.
- Introducing different traditional food may also be used to teach children about different cultures. Different traditional foods may be brought to the school to show to the children and raise funds at the same time.
- Parents and grandparents may be interviewed. In this way they can be drawn out to tell interesting stories about their families. This may encourage children to draw up family trees.
- Parents and grandparents from different areas, provinces and countries may be invited to tell children about their specific area, province or country of origin. In this way children will learn about geography.
- Parents and grandparents may be invited to listen to children reading.

#### **2.3.5.4 Parent support groups**

Sometimes parents need assistance to raise their disabled child who may be a MID learner. This assistance is more valuable if it comes from people who have gone through the process of raising

a disabled child themselves (Shore 1986:119). Support groups may be of assistance in helping parents to work through a range of emotions and reactions such as denial, anger, hopelessness, exhilaration, relief and so on (Shore 1986:119).

Shore (1986:121) is of the opinion that professional organisations that offer services to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs should be made known to parents. Such contacts give parents a chance to share their concerns, struggles and successes with people who may be able to identify with their situation, and even share day-to-day triumphs with people who understand the significance of those triumphs (Shore 1986:121).

## 2.4 SYNTHESIS

The MID learner is the learner who, experiences learning difficulties at school. Even though these learners present with no deviations in their physical growth, they may experience problems in other spheres of life. Emotionally, they may be immature when compared to their peers, while socially they may be rejected because of problems with regard to interpersonal relations. Cognitively, they may be late in learning academic knowledge because of a number of reasons such as inability to pay attention, poor memory, a slow rate of learning, a low level of learning, a high rate of forgetting, poor recall, problems with transfer of information, dependence on the concrete mode of learning, an inability to acquire incidental information, an inability systematically to arrive at solutions to problems and poor discrimination. They may also encounter problems in reading, writing and mathematics.

In spite of all this, it must be emphasised that MID learners, like all other learners, *are* able to learn reading, writing and mathematics if the appropriate strategies and approaches are used with them. If sound teaching and learning principles are used, these learners will be able to progress reasonably and learn things that will be of use in their everyday life.

Such learning matter is taught as an integrated whole in order to avoid confusing them. If the teacher reduces the learning matter into manageable sections, the learner will be afforded the opportunity to experience success and be motivated to exert himself or herself. Extrinsic

motivation is an invaluable instrument for encouraging these learners to learn. Their attention may be drawn to specific learning matters by deliberately placing emphasis on matter to be learned. Through meaningful repetition, the learner is given an opportunity to fix the information in his/her memory. Another useful method is that of proceeding from the concrete to the abstract, from the known to the unknown, from the easy to the difficult. They also learn effectively when they manipulate the learning matter both as individuals and in groups.

Intervention programmes initiated by the school have to receive appreciation and support from parents if they are to be successful. The role played by parents in the education of children can never be underestimated. The schools must build on that foundation prepared by the home and establish a relationship in which learners can learn effectively.

Having said the above, regarding the MID learner, the researcher would like to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that this study is not focussing in-depth on a particular issue, but rather, an attempt is made to integrate as many aspects of the MID learner as possible.

In the next chapter, a closer look will be taken at the way in which developed and developing countries provide for their MID learners.

## CHAPTER THREE

### INCLUSION AND MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED LEARNERS IN DEVELOPED AND IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Education and provisions for the disabled differ from country to country because the way in which such services developed historically vary from one country to another. While most developed countries could develop their own initiatives, developing countries have had to rely (in the beginning at least) on churches for provision of such services. Another factor which contributed to differences in development was that financial support for such initiatives came from different sources in different countries. While most developed countries are financially independent, developing countries have had to rely on handouts and financial assistance from other countries.

In addition, the causes of disabilities differ from country to country. Causes of disability in developed countries are in most cases organic in origin. Disability in these countries is caused by: (1) endogenous factors such as the single gene abnormalities which are the cause of abnormalities such as tuberous sclerosis and neuro fibromatosis; (2) inherited metabolic disorders which present as abnormalities such as phenylketonuria and galactosaemia; (3) genetic accidents such as those exhibited in abnormalities like Down's Syndrome, Klinefelter's Syndrome and Turner's Syndrome; (4) exogenous conditions such as problems during either prenatal, perinatal or postnatal periods (Sethosa 1991:54-56). In contrast to this, disability in most developing countries is caused predominantly by factors associated with poverty such as malnutrition, disease, injuries in war, etc. In developing countries, these causes occur *in addition to* the causes that have been mentioned as primary causes in developed countries.

Differences in policies for providing for learners with special educational needs also differ from country to country. While countries with well-defined and well-funded resources tend to have clearly defined and specific policies and regulations and well-established structures to assist the disabled,

countries with ill-defined policies, poorly funded initiatives and vague, outdated, inappropriate or even sometimes even non-existent regulations present a picture of confusion in which one finds people doing whatever they personally think is right for the disabled. They might even ignore (or be unaware of) the fact that disabled learners need special attention in the form of relevant curricula and relevant educational strategies.

In South Africa the picture has changed in recent years because of the historical legacy of different approaches to educating the mildly intellectually disabled learners and the more recent policy of inclusion. It is necessary at this stage to examine teaching approaches for learners in countries which practice a policy of inclusion.

### **3.2 EDUCATING LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WITHIN THE INCLUSION SITUATION**

In many developed countries, education for children with disabilities was initiated by individuals and by charitable organisations. While subsequent government intervention was designed to support all such voluntary efforts, governments later became involved in the creation of a national policies which dictated how public and voluntary agencies might work as partners to ensure that all children receive appropriate education (Ainscow 1994:3).

Desai (1995:23), Ainscow (1994:5-6) and Casey (1994:20) contend that legislation with regard to the disabled in many countries was largely inspired by the United Nations Declaration of Disabled Persons (1975), which culminated in the United States of America in the passing of Public Law 94-142, namely, Education for all Handicapped Children's Act of 1975 and the 1981 Education Act in England and Wales (the latter basically formalised the recommendations of the Warnock Report that had been published in 1978). Both acts sought to establish policies about children with special needs. In addition, the International year of the Disabled in 1981, inspired many individuals and communities to revisit and to rethink about ways in which their disabled were being provided for (Jenkinson 1997:25).

Developed countries have also experienced problems – despite the fact that their circumstances might have seemed conducive to the development of programmes for the disabled. The movement towards integration together with the *de facto* existence of segregated special education in such countries often leads to the creation of “two tracks”. One may speculate, in other words, that parallel but separate segregation and integration policies may exist in such countries (Ainscow 1994:7).

### **3.2.1 Australia**

#### **3.2.1.1 *Historical background***

Swan (1994:352) elucidates the fact that “special education in Australia was pioneered by voluntary nongovernment organizations”. Eventually the government got involved by providing grants and later on by assuming greater responsibility. Swan (1994:352) explains the fact that the pattern of provision for learners with special needs in Australia followed that which was already in use in Great Britain.

#### **3.2.1.2 *Legislation***

“Throughout Australia the Australian Commonwealth Schools Commission has supported integration of students with special needs into the ordinary school since the early 1970’s” (Wade & Moore 1992:5). Governmental legislation also played an important role in general and educational provision for the disabled, including the mildly intellectually disabled in Australia. Evert (1996:20) states that “in 1985 the Australian Government introduced the access and equity policy as a key component of their social justice strategy”. The main focus of this policy was to grant equal access to all members of the Australian population, who might, for one reason or another, have faced barriers and disadvantages as a result of their race, inadequate income, gender, religion, culture, language and disability. This policy was followed up with the Disability Services Act of 1986 (Casey 1994:20).

The Discrimination Act of 1991 stipulates that all learners with disabilities be given total access to facilities (Casey 1994:19). The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act was passed in 1992

to provide comprehensive protection for people with disabilities (Casey 1994:20). According to Campbell (1994:21), it also focuses strongly on issues of access and equity. The same act, explains “education as an area of life in which discrimination on the grounds of disability is unlawful” (Campbell 1994:21). These acts, of necessity, cater for mildly intellectually disabled learners as well.

### 3.2.1.3 *Educational programmes*

According to Ward (1993:132), once the learners are identified, steps are then taken to ensure that appropriate therapy is given and that parents are given the information they need. In addition, “early intervention combined with attendance at integrated nurseries and pre-schools has created favourable conditions for integrating or mainstreaming children with moderate-mild degrees of intellectual disability”. It is for this reason that most such learners are retained within the regular primary schools at least until later years when the curriculum in such schools begins to create difficulties for them (Ward 1993:132).

There has also been a shift away from “pull out programmes” to provision of “in class support”, especially with regard to the mildly intellectually disabled. According to Linfoot (1993:76), “to help meet the problems for students and teachers associated with integrated models of teaching, special and mainstream personnel are receiving inservice training in using the processes of *collaboration* and *consultation*, to assist them in developing teamwork skills for planning and implementing appropriate special education programs”. While the role of the classroom teacher is to implement programmes in the classroom, the role of the special education teacher is to provide support and assistance for teachers and teams and facilitate co-teaching. According to Linfoot (1993:77), collaboration and consultation create an environment in which the needs of both learners and teachers alike are taken into account and in which lines of communication are opened up.

Ward (1994:34) writes that a number of authors have “identified a wide range of problems which may be seen as barriers to the provision of appropriate and effective programmes for children with special educational needs”.

One of the persistent problems in Australia is a lack of enabling legislation. Forlin and Forlin are of the opinion that “although all states in Australia appear committed to inclusion in principle, there are currently no legal mandates to formalise inclusion policies”. They also note that “without the establishment of suitable law to support the devolution of responsibility to local school-based decision making groups, the inclusion of children with a disability into regular classes will rely increasingly on decisions undertaken by individual schools” (Forlin & Forlin 1996:183-184).

One of Australia’s successes is noted by Bailey (1992:20) when he states that “regardless of the fact that Australia does not have any enabling legislation, there does appear to be a nation-wide commitment to the principle of mainstreaming”. If the policy of inclusion is to succeed, the whole nation must support it – from policy makers right down to teachers and learners in classrooms.

The issue of legislative provisions is reiterated by Bain (1992:85), who states that “the gap between the aspirations of special education policy and the realities of practice is a consistent source of discord for parents of exceptional children, special educators and advocacy groups”. Forlin and Forlin (1996:185) are of the opinion that “successful inclusion will depend not only on quality programs with adequate support, but also on appropriate legislation to ensure equity”. Quality programmes are programmes that render assistance in those specific areas where learner weaknesses have been identified.

Bain (1992:85) draws attention to another problem, namely that expenditure on special education does not measure up to even the most conservative estimates. Bain (1992:86) explains that Australian estimates do not include learners that are “learning disabled” since such learners are not recognised as needing special funding. It should not be assumed that such learners are simply an unrecognised group that nevertheless receive appropriate education. It would seem, therefore, appropriate to speculate that the mildly intellectually disabled learners fall into this category of learners since both the mildly intellectually disabled and the learning disabled both make up the category of so-called mildly disabled learners

In the province of New South Wales, Casey (1994:43) identifies the most prominent feature of education for the disabled as being a focus on enhancing the effectiveness of preventing disability.

Early identification is viewed as important. They also attempt to upgrade the basic diagnostic and intervention skills of support teachers. After the first three years of schooling, learners are screened to determine the effectiveness of intervention.

According to Marks (1993:162) and Casey (1994:44), education for the disabled in Victoria is articulated in the five guiding principles for the province:

- Every child has the right to be educated.
- Learners should not be categorised.
- Resources and services should – as far as possible – be school-based.
- Decision-making is collaborative.
- All learners can learn and can be taught.

Educational support is one of the ingredients for successful inclusion, and Fields (1993:14) has noted that such support in Australia is only provided in larger population centres and that it is severely limited in rural areas. “Educational support” in this instance refers to assistance given by therapists and psychologists, who, despite the fact that they are not directly involved with the learner in the classroom, can be immensely helpful.

Casey (1994:45) explains that **Integrative Support Teams** are based in schools and are made up of parents, advocates (where appropriate), class teachers, principals and learners (where appropriate). The team’s responsibility is to identify the educational needs of learners, to determine the level of appropriate support that is required, to provide details of programmes of assistance, and to review the progress made by the learners from time to time.

#### **3.2.1.4      *Aspects of programmes that might be of use in South Africa***

The practice of early identification, which is followed up by early intervention and parent assistance in the form of appropriate therapies, is important. The provision of in-class support and in-service training for all mainstream personnel through the process of collaboration and consultation helps to develop teamwork skills for the purpose of inclusion. Integrative Support Teams may be utilised for

this purpose as well. The importance of enabling legislation and the use of quality programmes and educational support, can never be underestimated. Fortunately, in South Africa, the issue of enabling legislation was addressed through the recommendations of the NCSNET and NCESS (cf section 1.2.1), which culminated in the Green Paper, Consultative Paper no. 1 of 1999 and the White Paper no. 5 on special needs of 2000.

### **3.2.2 New Zealand**

#### **3.2.2.1 *Historical background***

“In New Zealand part of the recent debate has focused on whether more legislation is required to make the shift towards integration more effective or whether the needs of special students can be met in various forms of ‘mainstreaming’ through ‘consensus decision making’” (Wade & Moore 1992:7).

#### **3.2.2.2 *Legislation***

As is the case in Australia, government legislation in New Zealand has paved the way for equal treatment of the disabled. The recommendations of the Picot Taskforce (named after its chairperson) were subsequently expressed in the government White Paper called *Tomorrow's Schools* and in the Education Act of 1989 (Mitchell 1996:55). Mitchell further clarifies the issue when he states:

As far as special education is concerned, the original intent of the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms was to disburse responsibility among several different agencies, all under the general oversight of the Minister of Education. Boards of trustees were charged with ensuring that their school's policies and practices sought to achieve equitable outcomes for all students, irrespective of their ability or disability.

The outcomes have to be equitable in the sense that they have to be the same for all learners. While some learners may achieve the outcomes earlier than others, the most important accomplishment of this system is that the mildly intellectually disabled will not necessarily be disadvantaged and so achieve inferior outcomes merely because of their disability.

The Education Act of 1989 removed the exclusion that was placed on people with special educational needs in 1964, including those with mild intellectual disability (Wade & Moore 1992:8). Ballard (1990:114) states that this act brought into law “the commitment of the state to educate all children and the right of every person to free enrolment and free education at any state school”. The importance of this legislation, according to Goff (1990:6), resides in the fact that it required change in the way that educational institutions thought about learners with special needs. Formerly the pace of inclusion had been dependent on the comfort level of those concerned.

Further legislation according to Mitchell (1996:63) is as follows :

Section 57 of the Human Rights Act of 1993 prohibits educational establishments from refusing or failing to admit a student with a disability; or admitting such a learner on less favourable terms and conditions than would otherwise be made available, except where that person requires special services or facilities that in the circumstances cannot reasonably be made available”. In addition, “the *National Education Guidelines* ..., inter alia, requires each board of trustees, through the Principal and staff, to analyse barriers to learning and achievement, develop and implement strategies which address identified learning needs in order to overcome barriers to students’ learning, assess student achievement, maintain individual records, and report on student progress.

### 3.2.2.3 *Educational programmes*

There has been a definite shift in recent years from the use of conventional definition to an emphasis on a non-categorising needs-based approach in which children are seen first before their exceptionality (Mitchell & Brian 1994:421).

While special education facilities have always been in existence in New Zealand to cater for children with hearing, visual, physical, and intellectual disabilities, those children who were classified as “mildly intellectually handicapped” were catered for in separate special classes in regular primary, intermediate and secondary schools (Ballard 1990:113). Conway (1991:274) noted the disadvantages

of this system: the fact that teachers in such classes may well be untrained in special education; they may also have to work without programming and curriculum support and without the help of any kind of programming and curriculum documentation.

Smith (1992:391) notes that the programmes being operated by the Intellectually Handicapped Society centres for the mildly intellectually disabled are in certain instances being phased out in favour of the integration of mildly intellectually disabled learners into community-based programmes and support for their parents at home. In these community based programmes, “groups of four to six children are assigned to one teacher, and children are regularly assessed on various developmental scales in order to determine broad teaching goals. Broad goals are broken down into smaller steps and goals are discussed in detail with parents, who are encouraged to continue group programmes at home” (Smith 1992:391).

According to Casey (1994:40), eight broad areas of learning exist; they are: “The Arts; English; Health and Physical education; Languages other than English; Mathematics; Science; Studies of the Society and Environment; Technology”. In such circumstances, different outcomes are achievable for different learners and the challenge facing teachers is to make the outcomes accessible to all learners – including those with mild intellectual disability.

Pinnell (1989:165) explains that the Reading Recovery Program in New Zealand was developed for the purpose of assisting poor readers, namely those who “may be attending to and using a narrow range of strategies and applying their knowledge in rigid ways” (as is known to be the case with the mildly intellectually disabled learners). Furthermore, Pinnell, Fried and Estice (1990:283) add that the Reading Recovery Program is an early intervention program, which is meant for learners who experience difficulties – especially during first grade and during their first year of instruction in reading. These learners receive individualised daily lessons by a specially trained teacher.

This programme, which is delineated by Pinnell (1989:166-170), begins by teaching students the following strategies:

- Early strategies of operating on print, e.g. reading from left to right, reading word by word.

- Self-monitoring, e.g. reading and watching if what one is reading makes sense.
- Cross-checking, e.g. checking information that learners bring into the text.
- Searching for cues and searching for meaning.
- Self-correction and the correcting of one's own errors.

The programme is individualised by:

- *roaming around*. The teacher and the learner explore what the learner already knows.
- *the lesson framework*. Each learner rereads several familiar stories.
- *staff development*. When teachers learn something new, they implement it in their teaching.
- *something extra*. The programme is not an end in itself; it has to be used in conjunction with other classroom activities.

A number of models for assisting mainstream teachers is in existence in New Zealand. They are The Resource Teacher Model, the function of which is to provide and administer programmes for LSEN in regular classrooms; The Method and Resource Teacher approach, which assists both learners and teachers in the effective implementation of programmes in regular classes; Consulting Teachers, who support teachers directly through a collaborative process of sharing skills, development and problem-solving, and, finally, Teacher Assistance Teams, which operate within the school to help teachers to develop appropriate programs for LSEN (Moore, Glyn & Gold 1993:194).

The *people first* movement in New Zealand empowers people who have disabilities to take complete control of their lives. Ballard (1990:120) notes: "in the area of intellectual disabilities the *people first* movement is an increasingly influential organisation of people who have a disability and who are impacting on service providers and on political and economic decisions that affect them."

#### 3.2.2.4 *Aspects of programmes that might be of use in South Africa*

The needs approach, which is non-categorising in nature, in which learners are valued as human beings above their exceptionality is acceptable. Aspects of the Reading Recovery Program (strategies such as, for example, operating on print, self-monitoring, cross-checking, searches for cues, and self correction) may also be useful in South Africa for the mildly intellectually disabled learners. In

addition, the stages of reading in which a learner begins with working with letters, writes a passage or story and only then reads a familiar and later a new unfamiliar book, may be useful. The models for assisting mainstream teachers such as Resource Teacher Model, the Method and Resource Teacher Approach, Consulting Teachers and Teacher Assistance Teams – although they are good approaches – might be too costly, especially for the poorer provinces in South Africa.

A number of problems identified in the New Zealand system (such as lack of resources, large classes, inappropriately trained teachers and lack of external support services) are also evident in South Africa. If these are problematic in New Zealand, they surely pose an even bigger problem in South Africa as a developing country with limited resources.

### **3.2.3 Canada**

#### **3.2.3.1 *Historical background***

Prior to 1986, provisions for learners with special educational needs were not a priority in Canada. Such learners were provided for in separate services and under other legislation (OECD 1995:96). To make matters worse, there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes exceptionality in Canada. Because of this, a child who is classified as disabled in one province may not necessarily be classified as such in another province (Winzer 1994:372)

The statistics in Canada reveal that 23-26% of learners with special educational needs are educated in separate settings (Winzer 1996:171). One may explain this by saying that the policy of inclusion is dependent on policy at provincial and district level.

Children with mild disability are not counted in special education statistics since they do not receive any special funding and are not categorised as having learning disabilities (Winzer 1994:371). The advantage of this is that mildly disabled learners are labelled less and their educational programmes are determined by their individual characteristics rather than by membership in a given category. This in turn means that there is less stigmatisation because fewer labels are applied and there is a move towards the adoption of non-categorising approaches (Winzer 1994:374; Klassen 1994:31).

### **3.2.3.2      *Legislation***

The legislation which regulates the lot of the disabled in Canada is the Amendment to the Educational Act of Ontario (Bill 82) of 1980. This piece of legislation influenced provincial and territorial legislation across the whole of Canada. The specificity of the law, however, differs from province to province: while some provinces offer minimal rights for most students to attend school, others offer full inclusion in regular classes. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) is quite specific with regard to exceptional students in that it guarantees the right to education and equality without discrimination on the basis of disability (Crealock 1996:13-14; Hegarty 1993:47). An amendment in 1985 prohibited any kind of discrimination on the basis of mental or physical disability (Horrocks 1993:38). The main thrust of the charter is the fact that it provides constitutional rights and freedom to learners with special needs, including those with mild intellectual disability (Black-Branch 1993:135).

The following Canadian achievements are worth noting (Bunch 1994:32) :

- Despite problems that are discussed elsewhere, most schools and most provinces have adopted a policy of inclusive education.
- In the midst of segregation, some individuals in the education field are creating pools and channels for inclusion.
- Teacher preparation programmes are slowly recognising the need to prepare all teachers, and not simply a few specialists, to manage an increase in diversity in regular classroom situations.

### **3.2.3.3      *Educational programmes***

According to Bowd (1992:19): “the term integration is commonly employed in Canada to describe the placement of exceptional children in settings which foster interaction between them and their nondisabled peers. These settings are usually identified as regular classrooms within neighbourhood schools.”

One of the most prominent programmes in Canada is the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) system. This is a supplemental communication system used in addition to the naturally acquired speech and vocalisation present in learners. This system was introduced into schools to assist some of the mildly intellectually disabled learners and those with limited verbal skills (Snyder, Freeman-Lorentz and McLaughlin 1994:14-15). AAC involves aids, symbols, head nods, facial expressions, eye gaze, techniques and strategies that are used to supplement the development of language and communication in children.

In addition, programmes are being created to accommodate the special needs of individual learners. According to Steyn (1989:363), these programmes offer remedial education in basic school subjects, while offering social skills such as self-help skills and skills for the development of basic language.

In the province of New Brunswick, and the School District 12, special education teachers are classified as Methods and Resource teachers (M & R teachers), and their role is to assist and educate the classroom teacher to develop strategies and activities by means of which the inclusion of exceptional learners will be supported in the regular classroom. M & R teachers are not regarded as experts who take responsibility for any difficulties that the regular teacher may experience. Rather, they are regarded as experts who know how to assist the teacher to find workable solutions to whatever problems may arise in their classes (Porter 1997:74-75).

According to Porter (1997:78-79) the following strategies are being used by the M & R teachers for teacher support:

#### **1. Problem-solving teams**

In such teams, the M & R teachers assist colleagues by generating alternatives for helping students. The teacher then selects whatever options might be promising. The advantage of this approach is that it gives fellow teachers opportunities of providing direct and practical assistance in the form of collaboration.

## **2. Inclusive curriculum and instructional strategies**

In this strategy, M & R teachers design meaningful activities which attempt to involve all learners. As such, there are no different, separate and special strategies for the disabled. While they acknowledge that the disabled, including the mildly intellectually disabled, may need more time and practice, the same activities are used for all learners.

## **3. Multi-level instruction**

While one main lesson is presented to all learners, variations are included which are responsive to individual learner's needs. The main concepts of the lesson are then identified. Various learning styles are expected and learners demonstrate their understanding in different ways according to their capabilities. Evaluation is such that the ability levels of all learners are accommodated.

All the above instructional strategies are used to complement one another.

### **3.2.3.4 *Aspects of programmes that might be of use in South Africa***

The fact that some provinces have accepted the policy of inclusion is commendable. The education of all teachers, and not only specialists, with regard to diversity is praiseworthy. The passage of enabling legislation is notable. One might detect in this the implication that there should be legislation on the national level if there is to be uniformity at the provincial level and regulation of what takes place in the provinces. A programme which is remedial in nature and which at the same time offers social skills such as self-help and skills for the development of basic language, may be helpful.

A number of strategies (such as problem-solving and multi-level instruction) may be beneficial. Getting parents involved through integrative support teams may be an appropriate way of drawing parents in so that they become active in the process of educating their children. The system of Augmentative and Alternative Communication may be helpful to learners who are non-verbal in their approach to learning.

The necessity for *prevention* can never be overemphasised. Prevention is as important as early identification and early intervention. These aspects have already been identified in the Department of Education (Consultative paper no. 1 of August 1999) in South Africa as well.

### **3.2.4 United States of America (USA)**

#### **3.2.4.1 *Historical background***

In the USA, the National Association of Retarded Children, which subsequently became the National Association of Retarded Citizens, was instrumental in generating a campaign which made Americans much more aware of the plight and needs of the intellectually disabled in the 1950s. It is generally accepted that the Kennedy Foundation, and the members of President John Kennedy's own family, had a powerful effect on public opinion because of their visible and public acceptance of their own disabled family member (Allen 1992:56).

#### **3.2.4.2 *Legislation***

While the Handicapped Children Early Education Assistance Act of 1968, PL 90-538, improved both early intervention and early assistance to the disabled, the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1973, PL 93-112, reduced discrimination against the disabled and therefore gave the right to equal access to education, jobs and so on.

The most important legislation affecting the disabled in the USA was the Education of All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975, PL 94-142, which was hailed as a major step in upholding the constitutional rights of citizens with disabilities (Nixon II 1991:vii; Ysseldyde & Algozzine 1990:10). This piece of legislation was amended by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, PL 101-476 (Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz 1998:2), and given additional force by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (Smith 1998:31). This legislation gave civil rights to individuals in private employment and all public service transportation and accommodation were required to be made accessible to the disabled (Allen 1992:43).

### **3.2.4.3 Educational programmes**

Programmes for the mildly intellectually disabled in the USA placed an emphasis on the Three Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic.

#### **(1) Teaching listening skills**

Listening is important because it is our means of receiving oral information. From a superficial point of view, listening may seem to be a simple process of transmission of information from the ear to the brain. But, as Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:180) explain, it involves a number of skills such as auditory acuity, auditory memory, attention to auditory signals, sound discrimination and listening comprehension.

For the mildly intellectually disabled, listening is one of the most important skills that can be acquired since it is a prerequisite for the development of other faculties in which they experience problems such as writing, mathematics and learning in general.

#### **(2) Teaching reading**

According to Radabough and Yukish (1982:40), “learning to read is an important skill that enables individuals to interpret ideas and information presented through printed media” and deficits in this skill may be a major disadvantage and disappointment for learners. On the other hand, good reading puts the learner at an advantage in acquiring information – even in other subjects (Smith, Finn and Dowdy 1993:143).

There are a number of approaches which are used for teaching reading:

- **The whole language approach**

This approach operates on the principle that reading, writing, speaking and listening are integrated

and interrelated processes (Radabough & Yukish 1982:46). Reading is therefore not taught separately, but as part of the overall language process which includes language, literacy, content learning and comprehension (Smith, Finn & Dowdy 1993:152). Thus, for the mildly intellectually disabled, reading is learned for the purpose of developing all language skills – and not just for reading per se.

According to Salend (1990:319), this approach employs the learner's language experiences in and outside of the school to increase their reading and writing abilities. The emphasis here is on meaning rather than on learning decoding skills, and learners are given relevant and functional materials to read from. This technique for reading for meaning is recommended by Smith, Finn & Dowdy (1993:153). A class that uses this kind of approach will be stocked with books of varying degrees of difficulty and content.

Another emphasis in this approach is on breaking down artificial barriers between reading, writing and speaking (Smith et al 1998:390). In the words of Meese (1994:206): "rather than breaking reading and writing skills into separate component skills, whole-language proponents maintain that all skill instruction must be integrated with the literature being read."

- **The language experience approach**

Because this approach depends on the language of the specific reader, it enables them to concentrate on the reading act only when reading – instead of trying to understand the language in the text and words which are not in their vocabulary. This is why Salend (1990:320) emphasises that "language experience approaches are highly individualized; they use students' interests, hobbies, and experiences to compose their reading materials". This approach is furthermore based on the belief that learners can think about, talk about and write about what they read. Thus, for the mildly intellectually disabled, it is important that emphasis first be placed on the act of reading before any attempt is made at understanding language usage.

According to Salend (1990:320), “language experience approaches are highly individualized; they use students’ interest, hobbies, and experiences to compose their reading materials”. This approach is based on the belief that if learners can think about something, talk about it, explain it, and write about it, they can also read (Salend 1990:320). Schulz and Carpenter (1995:222) explain that “the essential characteristics of the language experience approach is that students learn to read or improve their reading by using material that they have dictated and the teacher has written it down”.

- **The phonetic approach**

According to Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:150), “the goal of phonics instruction is for students to be able to ‘consistently use information about relationship between letters and sounds and letters and meanings to assist in the identification of known sounds and to independently figure out unfamiliar words’”. This approach allows learners with phonic skills problems to read words that they have never encountered before because they are able to independently blend letters and letter groups and sounds to form words. Mildly intellectually disabled learners should be helped to construct meaning by seeing letters, sounds and words in conjunction and in combination with other letters, sounds and words. Seeing letters, sounds and words in isolation does not help them to make progress.

There are a number of phonetic approaches that are useful for teaching the mildly intellectually disabled how to read. First and foremost, the development of word recognition skills is important. Salend (1990:316) says that “word recognition, the ability to establish the relationship between the printed word and its correct pronunciation, is an important component of reading comprehension”.

Phonetic approaches are also known as a *developmental reading programme*. These programmes are made up of, firstly, the *code-emphasis approach*, or the bottom-up theory, which begins with letters and letter sounds. In this approach, learners learn to make letter-sound associations while at the same time learning essential phonic skills. This helps them to become independent readers by unlocking the codes. Secondly, the *meaning-emphasis approach*, or the top-down theory, begins with those words which learners often use. Because such words are familiar to learners, they recognise them

easily. Words are learnt by sight and as whole units, and meaning and context clues are used to identify unfamiliar and unknown words (Meese 1994:208-209).

- **The sight word/whole word approach**

Learners are taught to see words as a whole unit at an automatic level. Drill, repetition and practice are frequently used in order to fix such words in the learners' memory banks for instant recognition. This approach is generally used for high-frequency words and non-phonetic words (Rief & Heimburge 1996:321). It is important that drill, repetition and practice be accompanied by meaning.

“Whole word approaches help students make the link between whole words and their oral counterparts” (Salend 1990:318). Furthermore, words may be taught either within sentences or passages, or in isolation. Meaning is emphasised. Learners may be helped if the teacher reduces the number of words to be learned in a given time, by the spacing of practice sessions, by providing opportunities for overlearning and by giving more frequent reinforcement.

### **(3) Teaching writing**

Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:193) warn that “written language is not a simple skill, but is a combination of myriad subskills, including 1. appropriate verbal concepts in receptive and expressive oral language, 2. the ability to read, 3. the ability to spell, 4. the ability to write legibly and 5. the ability to transform ideas into logical, understandable information”.

According to Meese (1994:262), “adequate written expression requires a solid foundation in oral language, reading, and written expression skills such as spelling and handwriting”. This calls for programmes for the mildly intellectually disabled that will instruct them, firstly, in fluency, which refers to the number of words and sentences learners write; secondly, in syntax, which refers to using more complex sentence structure such as subordinate clauses and appositives, and, finally, in vocabulary, which refers to word choices and the use of increasingly more mature words (Meese 1994:262).

The task of writing, which involves deciding what to write about and how to express those ideas, is a struggle for most people. This is even more so for learners with mild intellectual disabilities. These learners need to be taught how to generate ideas, organise their thoughts and plan before writing.

### Stages in the process of writing

According to Salend (1990:345-351) and Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:211-212), writing is made up of four stages, namely, planning, drafting, revising and editing, and finally publishing:

- During the first stage of *planning*, the learner determines the purpose of the writing task, he or she generates and groups ideas and plans how the content will be presented to the reader. Mildly intellectually disabled learners will invariably use the knowledge-telling strategy. They will tell all the information they have on the topic without screening for irrelevant details and without ordering the content sequentially. This indicates that the teacher should help with the planning.
- During the second stage of *drafting*, the plan is transformed into sentences and paragraphs. An attempt is also made to establish a relationship and order between the sentences and the paragraphs. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are also considered. In the case of the mildly intellectually disabled learner who has problems in this area, the teacher may ask questions which will steer the learner in the right direction, or he or she may even offer suggestions and alternatives.
- In the third stage of *revising and editing*, additions and deletions are made to ensure that the content is in keeping with the learner's initial objectives. A learner might review a sample paper with a view to identifying good points and problems that the reader might experience. At this stage, the learner also makes corrections. In the case of mildly intellectually disabled learners, each learner's paper might be revised in order to give suggestions and alternatives.
- Finally, the final document is produced, and feedback is provided. It is important that comments should start off with the positive aspects, especially in the case of the mildly intellectually disabled learner who may be so frustrated by his or her errors that he or she may lose the courage to continue. This does not mean, however, that mistakes have to be ignored. On the contrary, while they have to be pointed out, care should be taken that the

errors which are dealt with are within the learner's repertoire, and that they will facilitate learning if pointed out.

#### (4) Teaching spelling

Spelling requires of learners to recall and decode the correct sequence of letters. According to Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:204), teaching spelling takes place through the use of high-interest activities, an emphasis on familiar words, the use of high frequency words, the use of whole-word study and the daily testing of learners. For the mildly intellectually disabled learners, this means that the teaching of spelling should begin firstly with words that are of interest to the learner, and secondly with words that are familiar to the learner. This kind of success will encourage the learner. At a later stage he or she may proceed to words that are unknown.

#### Approaches to spelling

A number of approaches to the teaching of spelling are outlined by Salend (1990:253-256). They are as follows:

- There is the **rule-governed approach**, in which learners are taught basic spelling rules with the hope that learners will apply such rules to the spelling of unfamiliar words.
- There is the **cognitive approach**, in which the teacher starts off by writing a spelling word, pronouncing it, and then discussing its meaning. Learners are then requested to complete the spelling grid by reading the word in the first column, recording the number of syllables in the second column, dividing the actual word into syllables in the next column, breaking the word into root and suffix, writing the suffix in the fourth column and writing the root in the fifth column. Mildly intellectually disabled learners may only go up to the second or third column – depending on their level of development.

- There is the **whole word approach**, which is an alternative to the rule-governed approach. In this approach the focus is on the whole word and multisensory activities are used to discern the meaning.
- There is the **test-study-test approach** in which learners are given a pretest on a list of words, which they then study. After that they continue to study the words they misspell; they then take a posttest to assess mastery. In the case of mildly intellectually disabled learners, three (3) words may be studied per day instead of long lists. Spelling might also be individualised. Those words that have been mastered will then be removed from the individual lists and replaced with new and unknown ones.
- There are **corrected test methods**, in which learners correct their own spelling errors with the assistance of the teacher. In the case of the mildly intellectually disabled learners, the teacher may write the correct spelling on the learner's paper next to the incorrectly spelled letter so that the learner may make corrections.
- There are **word study techniques** which have five steps namely, verbalising the word, writing and saying the word, comparing the written word to the model, tracing and saying the word, writing the word from memory and checking it. In the case of the mildly intellectually disabled, it is clear that these steps would have to be repeated a number of times until words are mastered.

##### (5) **Teaching handwriting**

The following definition of handwriting is offered by Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:194): "Handwriting is a mechanical component in written language." While Radabough and Yukish (1982:98) are of the opinion that handwriting is often wrongly perceived as a simple motor skill that requires limited cognitive functioning, a close look may enable one to realise that handwriting is a complex process that involves both the muscle and the mind – and the coordination of the two.

According to Schulz and Carpenter (1995:224), "handwriting is the most concrete of the language arts; it can be observed, evaluated, and used to provide a permanent record of the child's efforts". For this reason, Salend (1990:360) suggests that handwriting instruction should be part and parcel of the school curriculum, a prerequisite for which will be instruction in skills such as fine motor,

visual motor and visual discrimination skills. The initial activities with mildly intellectually disabled learners would therefore include cutting, tracing, colouring, finger painting, copying shapes and so on. Directionality such as up and down, left and right, bottom, top and centre, across, middle and around, et cetera, should also be developed.

Handwriting is basically a perceptual motor skill that requires the person writing to know what is to be written, understand how to translate that information into letters and words, and form those letters and words in such a manner that someone else can read and comprehend the information (Smith, Finn and Dowdy 1993:194). For mildly intellectually disabled learners, the teaching of written language is aimed at enabling them to understand what is to be written, how that information is to be translated into meaningful letters and words.

According to Meese (1994:257), “the goal of handwriting is for students to produce legible written communications fluently”, which learners must do through the maintenance of good pencil and paper grip and slant, the production of letters that are of correct size and shape, the alignment of letters on the baseline and the maintenance of proper spacing between the letters and words. Furthermore, handwriting instruction starts off with the learning of uppercase and lowercase manuscript and an emphasis on starting points and directions for letters. Learners practise by initially tracing the whole letter. They later trace a faded model of the letter and then copy letters with a view to subsequently producing such letters independently.

The teacher should also model and physically show learners how to form letters. This should be accompanied by verbal descriptions (Salend 1990:367). Copying is also another form of instruction. In copying, learners are first trained in near-point copying. They copy models which are placed on their desks. This is followed by far-point copying in which the model to be copied is placed away from the learner (Salend 1990:370).

It should be noted that the instruction mentioned above has to be preceded by the establishment of handedness. While it is a well-known fact that most people are right-handed, learners should not be forced to be right-handed when they are left-handed as this will lead to severe anxiety and subsequent problems in the process of learning (Smith, Finn & Dowdy 1993:196).

## **(6) Teaching mathematics/arithmetic**

According to Schulz and Carpenter (1995:244), “a knowledge of mathematics and the ability to apply it are essential to being able to function in a society”. It is a well-known fact that all learners, including learners with mild intellectual disability need instruction in mathematics to enable them to function efficiently and effectively in life.

### Instructional approaches for mathematics

The first step in the teaching of mathematics, before problem solving is begun, should be the understanding of numbers. In this area, manipulatives are very useful because they are objects that appeal to several senses, and learners can touch, rearrange them and so on (Schulz & Carpenter 1995:263).

- **Basic number facts**

Basic number facts consist of one-to-one correspondence, which teaches readiness skills, numeration (which is an understanding of cardinal numbers), seriation, which is an understanding of the fact that objects can be arranged by attributes such as length, height and weight, and place value, which teaches regrouping (Meese 1994:299-301; Schulz & Carpenter 1995:263-265).

- **Basic facts and operations**

Basic facts and operations consist of addition, which is the joining of one or two sets; subtraction, which becomes easy once addition is mastered; multiplication, which is a fast way of adding the same numbers time and again; and division, which is the inverse of multiplication (Meese 1994:304-310).

- **Essential concepts and skills**

Essential concepts and skills are necessary if learners, especially mildly intellectually disabled learners, are to function successfully and independently. They need to master decimals and fractions. “An understanding of fractions is necessary if students are to share items equally with one another, measure materials/ingredients for a hobby, project or recipe, or to solve a ratio problem” (Meese 1994:317). On the other hand, decimals represent fractions with denominators of 10, 100 and later 1000 (Meese 1994:318).

- **Functional mathematics**

*Functional mathematics* refers to concepts such as money, measurement and time. One never ceases to need mathematics in life because it is required in many areas of life. Money has to be used in its real form, that is, as coins and notes. The teacher asks the learners to compile a personal budget and then go out to markets to simulate food purchases. Measurement begins with pouring water and sand. Cooking activities may be used to improve measurement. Time measurement begins with a sequencing of events. *Telling the time* is equal to using the clock correctly, but it has to be preceded by concepts such as *earlier, later, tomorrow, yesterday* and so on (Schulz & Carpenter 1995:275-279).

- **Word problems**

Word problems are, for example presented in this way: “Mary has two sweets, Bob gives her two more sweets. How many sweets does Mary have?” In solving such a problem, the first step is to determine if the “big number” is given. If it is given, it means that subtraction should be used. If the big number is not given, it means that the operation is either addition and multiplication (Meese 1994:321).

The teaching of mathematics for the mildly intellectually disabled is made up of the teaching and learning of basic concepts which are aimed at the acquisition of problem-solving skills. According to Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:268-274), the following aspects have to be taught/ learned:

- **Manipulatives** can be used for the acquisition of computational skills. This is done (for instance) through the sharing of birthday sweets equally in a given class.
- **Computation skills** help learners to understand the logic in processes underlying computations. This is done through the teaching of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
- **Estimation** enables learners to estimate the reasonableness of their responses. This is aimed at developing the habit of examining responses to determine the extent to which the responses are related to the problem in hand.
- **Place value** is taught through a focus on units. Place value represents the way in which a number is represented (in values of units, tens, hundreds, thousands and so on).

For mildly intellectually disabled learners, the teaching of manipulatives and computational skills is important in that it lays the foundation for the acquisition of other mathematical skills. If a learner can successfully divide an apple equally among ten classmates, he might be in a position to divide twenty rand equally among classmates when real computation begins.

#### 3.2.4.4 *An individualised education programme (IEP)*

##### (1) **What is an IEP?**

An IEP is a written statement describing the special education and related services specifically designed to meet the needs of the learner with disabilities. Such a plan spells out an extensive and intensive programme of individualised instruction which is designed to eliminate or compensate for the obstacles to learning that stem from a learner's disability (Turnbull et al 1995:74; Hallahan & Kauffman 2000:33).

##### (2) **An IEP should include the following:**

The following components of an acceptable IEP are outlined by Thomas (1996:71) and Smith, and by Finn and Dowdy (1993:101):

- A statement of the learner's present level of educational performance. This includes the learner's academic achievement, social adaptation, prevocational and vocational skills, self-help skills and psychomotor skills. This statement will indicate the strengths the learners possesses, what the learner can do, the skills which the learner has mastered in order to build on them, and the weaknesses and skills not mastered so that these may be remediated.
- A statement of annual goals that describes the educational performance to be achieved by the end of the school year in the light of the programme. This will reflect what the learner is expected to achieve and is a statement of what the teacher predicts the learner will do under the aegis of the educational programme.
- For each annual goal, a statement of short-term instructional objectives, written in measurable terms. This will show the steps that have to be taken to reach the annual goals; they are sequential and relevant to the goal.
- A statement of specific services required by the learner – including all special education and related services needed to meet the learner's unique needs, speech therapy, occupational therapy and so on. Any special material and media used in intervention are also listed.
- The date for the initiation of the IEP together with the date for termination of the plan. This is necessary because the an IEP only lasts for one year.
- A description of the extent to which the learner will participate in mainstream education programme.
- A justification of the type of placement envisaged for the learner.
- A list of individuals who are responsible for the implementation of the IEP.
- Evaluation procedures and schedules for determining progress towards achieving goals. This is a statement of the extent to which goals have been reached, what has been learned and how well has it been learned.

### **(3) The IEP process**

According to Smith, Finn and Dowdy (1993:107), the IEP process may be summarised as follows:

<b>1. Child find activities</b>
<b>2. Screening</b>
<b>3. Assessment of strengths and needs</b>
<b>4. Design Individualised Education Program (IEP)</b>
<b>5. Placement decision</b>
<b>6. Implement IEP</b>
<b>7. Evaluate program</b>

#### **3.2.4.5 *Aspects of programmes that might be of use in South Africa***

Listening skills are important for the oral transfer of information. While the use of writing in the life of learners can never be underestimated, spelling is important because it enables learners to put their thoughts into words on paper. On the other hand, handwriting is a manifestation of the amount of language acquired. The teaching of mathematics is valuable because it prepares the learners for life and life in today's world is heavily dependent on mathematics. Some of these programmes, especially with regard to reading, writing and mathematics have already been in use in South Africa in the former Transvaal Education Department (TED). An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is an instrument that may be of considerable use in intervention with the mildly intellectually disabled.

#### **3.2.5 United Kingdom**

##### **3.2.5.1 *Historical background***

In the United Kingdom, as is the case in other parts of the world, Croll and Moses (2000:59) explain that "a major theme of current thinking about special educational needs is that of inclusion: the education of all children, whatever their difficulties, within the same neighbourhood schools". Previously, the term 'integration' was used to describe the move towards educating all children in mainstream school. More recently, the term 'inclusion' is increasingly being used.

There is also a realization that, although inclusion is desirable, certain factors work against it. For instance, the involvement of learners with disabilities in ordinary school is limited by the following:

Firstly, the absence of specialist services and expertise in ordinary schools and  
Secondly, the failure of ordinary schools to adapt to the abilities and interests of all pupils (Swann 1987:xiii).

Swann (1987:xiv) is of the opinion that even if the above situation prevails, it is necessary to "encourage the development of an education system which responds flexibly to children's abilities and interests and backgrounds and which does not devalue pupils on these grounds".

### **3.2.5.2      *Legislation***

In the words of Pearson and Lindsay (1986:3-4) the 1944 Education Act "was the first British legislation to include special education within the general duties laid down for local education authorities: 'to afford for all pupils opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities and aptitudes and the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school' ".

Special education in the United Kingdom was governed by Sections 33 and 34 of the 1944 Education Act. Children were placed under several categories, for which separate provisions were made (Swann 1987:179). The responsibility for educating these children was transferred from the health authority to the education authority in 1971 as Bibby and Lunt (1996:1) explain. This was made possible by the implementation of the 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act, which added the responsibility of educating the mentally handicapped, who had previously been regarded as ineducable and were subject to provision by the health authorities (Pearson & Lindsay 1986:4).

The Warnock Report, an outcome of an inquiry into special educational needs was tabled in 1978. The report came at a time when most Western countries were considering greater integration of pupils with handicaps into ordinary schools. Bibby and Lunt (1996:5) draw attention to the fact that the report recommended the abolition of categories of handicap since there was a recognition that

these handicaps resulted from an integration of factors within the child and factors within the child's environment. This report had a direct bearing on the 1981 Education Act, because the Act became the legislative embodiment of the recommendations of the Warnock Report (Bibby & Lunt 1996:7).

Swann (1987:179) says that the advent of the 1981 Education Act saw a steady progress towards a more rational, effective and caring system for special education. The 1981 Education Act, shifted the emphasis from the disability to the child's educational needs. Thus, a child with special educational needs was defined as a child with "significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age or who has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools for ...children of his age" (Swann 1987:180).

The main change that came about with the 1981 Education Act as seen by Lloyd-Smith (1992:12) was the move away from a conceptual framework which sought to identify and define children in terms of their deficits in favour of a framework based on the concept of needs. Furthermore, Lloyd-Smith (1992:12) points out that an accompanying important factor is that some of the problems for children are perceived to have been caused by the environments in which children find themselves. Another key feature of this act as identified by Croll and Moses (2000:9), was the abolition of the statutory sub-categories of handicap which dominated the provision of special educational needs since the 1944 Education Act.

According to Swann (1987:180), in keeping with this Act, assessment was no longer meant to allocate children to categories, but rather as "a means of arriving at a better understanding of a child's learning difficulties for the practical purpose of providing a guide to his education". Furthermore, the Department of Education and Science Circular 1/83 also points to the fact that the child's needs depend on both the child's personal characteristics and on the child's environment. Thus it is important to assess the child and his environment together with the interrelationship between the two (Swann 1987:180), in trying to provide for children with special educational needs.

The next most important piece of legislation was the 1993 Education Act. The definition of a child with a learning difficulty as outlined and envisaged in circular 1/83 is articulated by the 1993

Education Act (Dean 1996:2). Dean (1996:3) noticed that this Act was a development towards integrating children with special needs into ordinary schools, which had been gradually taking place since the Warnock Report and the 1981 Education Act.

The definitions of special needs have been re-enacted without modifications in the Education Act of 1993 (Bibby & Lunt 1996:7) as follows:

"A child has a learning difficulty if :-

- a) he has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age,
- b) he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools, within the area of the local authority concerned, for children of his age, or
- c) he is under the age of five years and is, or would be if special educational provisions were not made for him, likely to fall within paragraph (a) or (b) when over that age".

As Dean (1996:9) explains, the 1993 Education Act and the Code of Practice go further to urge the School Governing Body to see to it that all teachers are aware of the importance of identification and provision for those, with special needs, and the non-teaching members of the school are aware of the needs of children with special needs and how to deal with them. Furthermore, the Code of Practice "makes it very clear that parents should be involved in all the decisions made about children with special needs" (Dean 1996:19).

The Education Act of 1993 requires the Secretary of State to issue a code of practice - to guide Local Education Authority and School Governing Bodies as to their responsibilities (Croll & Moses 2000:11). The main aim of the Code of Practice was to address some of the criticisms that were directed against the 1993 Act. The Code of Practice attempts to clarify responsibilities in order to reach a clearer definition of special educational needs.

The fundamental principles of the Code of Practice are that:

- "The needs of all pupils who may have special educational needs must be addressed, and that there is a continuum of needs and a continuum of provision.

- Children with special educational needs require the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced curriculum, including the National Curriculum.
- The needs of most children will be met in mainstream schools without a statutory assessment or a statement. All children with special educational needs, including those with a statement, should be educated in mainstream schools, where appropriate and in accordance with the wishes of parents.
- SEN provision may be necessary for children before the age of 2.
- The knowledge, views and experience of parents are vital in securing effective assessment and provision" (Bibby & Lunt 1996:13).

### Statements

According to Croll and Moses (2000:138), a Statement is issued on the basis of need rather than for the sake of placement.

The original intention of Statementing was

- a) to aid and encourage integration
- b) to guarantee that a child with significant special educational needs should receive adequate provision irrespective of the type of school to be attended.

Unfortunately, due to the fact that Statementing goes hand in hand with 'extra' provision, there is a tendency for schools to push for Statements for children who would otherwise never be considered for special education placement. The motivation being the allocation of additional resources. Thus, "the number and proportion of pupils with Statements in mainstream schools is not an indication of commitment to integration or inclusion but rather an indication of an aspect of resource allocation" (Croll and Moses 2000:138).

### Contents of a Statement.

"A statement must describe all the child's special educational needs and specify provisions for these needs" (Bibby & Lunt 1996:85) A statement is further divided into 6 parts as outlined by Bibby and Lunt (1996:86-90):

Part 1 - Introduction: The child's particulars, names, address and parents

Part 2 - Special Educational needs: The child's learning difficulties are outlined

Part 3 - Special Educational provision: has 3 restrictions, namely,

3.1 Objectives, which the special educational needs provision for the child should meet.

3.2 Educational provision, to meet needs and objectives - appropriate facilities, equipment, staffing arrangement, the curriculum and any appropriate modifications needed to meet the objectives.

Other services such as speech therapy are listed under this subsection if needed or required.

3.3 Monitoring, arrangements for monitoring the child's progress are specified.

Part 4 - Placement: The Local Education Authority requests parents to indicate preference for a school and the LEA is then obliged to name the school preferred by parents unless if the school is not suitable given the needs of the child or unless the school is incompatible with the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources.

Part 5 - Non-educational needs: Non-educational needs such as remedial education, drugs and medicine, aids such as spectacles or hearing aids are stipulated.

Part 6 - Non-educational provision: Provision to be made available by district health authority, social service authority is specified under this section.

According to Swann (1987:180), a Statement has the force of law once it is made and the education authority has an obligation to provide what it specifies. The 1981 Education Act subsequently gave parents extensive new rights to be involved in the process of assessing and preparing a Statement for their child. Parents are to be informed even before the child is assessed and they have a right to be present during such an assessment (Chazan, Laing & Davies 1991:134). Chazan, Laing and Davies (1991:134) further argue that it is an accepted fact that although most parents may not have the experience of presenting what they know about their children in terms acceptable to professionals who are involved, "no one can deny that parents know a great deal about their child".

The Special Education Needs Tribunal (the SEN Tribunal) was set up by the 1993 Education Act to hear appeals by parents against LEA decisions with regard to Statements (Bibby & Lunt 1996:124). This was to ensure that children with Statements do receive proper provision from the local education authority.

### **3.2.5.3      *Educational Programmes***

The following teaching approaches are outlined by Dean (1996:80-87):

#### **1. Working in small steps (Small-step approach):**

Objectives for children with learning difficulties have to be incremental in nature. "Children with learning difficulties need some work that is addressed particularly to their individual difficulties and that is broken down into small steps which can be seen to be taken" (Dean 1996:80).

Dean (1996:82) argues that this approach has the advantage for the slow leaning child that it can ensure success if the steps are well planned. Targets are set for learners and these targets may be set by collecting the child's errors so that correction of these errors is targeted. Errors in calculation may point to lack of understanding of some aspect of mathematics, which will then need to be targeted. Errors in spelling may arise from lack of knowledge of spelling rules and as such the children will be helped to recognise the rules.

#### **2. Practice activities:**

Enough practice needs to be given for activities such as reading and mathematics. New skills also need to be practiced. "A really slow learner needs many repetition of the same material before it becomes his or her own and the teacher needs to think of a variety of ways of practising the same learning" (Dean 1996:82).

#### **3. First hand experience:**

Children need first hand experience to understand the language of others, be it spoken or written. First hand experience takes place through the presentation of opportunities for seeing and handling things, visits to various places. These experiences need to be focussed and at the same time the

teacher should be clear about what he hopes the children will gain from their personal observations, including those with learning difficulties.

#### 4. Collaborative work:

Children need an opportunity to work as part of a group especially those with learning difficulties. Group work has an advantage in that it gives intellectual stimulation for all and also in that support is also available from other members of a group.

#### 5. Children's response to work:

The amount of time children spend on a task has to be increased to enable those with learning difficulties to learn. Instructions may be put down in writing, or on a tape recorder for such learners to remember what instructions were given.

#### 6. Reading Recovery Programme:

This programme, which was developed by Marie Clay in New Zealand has been tried with considerable success in parts of the United Kingdom. This programme is discussed in detail in section 3.2.2.3. on educational programmes in New Zealand.

7. In addition, children with reading problems, writing problems, spelling problems and mathematical difficulties are also assisted in the following ways as outlined by Dean (1996:151-152):

Reading- different approaches to the teaching of reading are used.

Writing - the skill of writing is practiced to enable children to form letters properly.

Spelling - children learn phonics and the rules for spelling. Furthermore use is made of multi-sensory approaches, such as saying and writing the words.

Mathematics - mathematics is related to everyday life.

Assistance is also offered to teachers through support teaching. The term remedial teaching has given way to support teaching in keeping with development in special education (Chazen, Laing & Davies 1991:126)

The following are some of the types of support offered to teachers to enable them to cope with children with special educational needs as explained by Chazan, Laing and Davies (1991:127-129):

1. In class support:

A teacher supports another in the classroom. The two teachers work together, planning and following up the lesson content. The support teacher has access to all the resources and materials required and works together with the class teacher to adapt materials for particular children in the classroom. The teachers collaborate and co-operate, while recognising each other's expertise. Responsibilities are allocated between the two teachers. It does not necessarily mean that the support teacher has to always work with children with difficulties, the reversal of roles may be appropriate at times. Later the support teacher can hand over responsibility to the class teacher and move on to support another teacher in the next class.

2. Curriculum development support:

The support teacher is responsible for development of curriculum or even consider curriculum content in order to accommodate those with learning difficulties. This is to enable all children to have access to the broad base of knowledge as envisaged by the National Curriculum. Such a teacher also looks at strategies for presenting information effectively to all children. The presentation of a particular topic in order to benefit even those with special needs may be helpful for the whole class.

3. Tutorial Support:

This type of support teacher is concerned with helping individual children and may even withdraw such children if it is considered necessary. Such a teacher is able to diagnose the nature of children's difficulties and at the same time offer additional teaching and practice to overcome the difficulties. Tutorial teaching is seen by many as a direct response to educational needs.

4. Individualising learning:

Individualised learning is indispensable, especially for children with special educational needs. Chazan, Laing and Davies (1991:153) are of the opinion that "the extent of individualization of the programme depends, however, on what they are doing (or supposed to be doing) when they are working in this way. If pupils are faced with learning demands which are interacting, carefully

chosen to build on their existing knowledge and relevant to their stage of development, then the learning is individualized. If, however, the learning demands are virtually the same for all of the class and do not necessarily meet individual needs, then individualization of programmes has not been achieved".

Individualized learning does not necessarily mean that one adult works with one child, although this may apply for other children. "Individualized learning does, however, involve an individually prepared programme of work based on what the child securely knows, as there is no point in building skills on insecure foundations". Once such programme is prepared, there is a chance of success as the teacher and the child have access to a sequence of activities, which are carefully chosen to develop and establish proficiency (Chazen, Laing & Davies 1991:154).

Furthermore, Chazen, Laing and Davies (1991:154) argue that developing an individualized programme is not an easy task as it involves a detailed observation, assessment of needs and learning strategies, assessment of current learning of understanding and steps to be followed in the acquisition of the required skill. Once developed, such a programme should save time. The teacher is not solely responsible for developing such a programme since specialists such as speech therapists, educational psychologists occupational therapists may also be involved.

#### 5. Breakthrough to literacy:

Another approach used in the United Kingdom is that of Breakthrough to literacy. "This approach aims to teach both reading and writing in a way which closely resembles children's own spoken language and which enables them to construct their own material for reading." Word banks are provided, which contain words that children know and many wish to use in their writing. Children then select words to form sentences which reflect what they wish to say (Chazen, Laing & Davies 1991:166). This approach is especially helpful for those whose language development is slow. These children build their own word banks at their own speed (Chazen, Laing & Davies 1991:167).

#### 6. Primary Initiatives in Mathematical Education (PrIME)

The main aim of PrIME is to develop teachers' understanding of mathematical activities with the view that once teachers have this understanding, they are in a position to impart it to children.

Chazen, Laing and Davies (1991:167) have noticed that although children with special needs are not singled out as a target for such a programme, an acknowledgement exists that there are children who have problems coping with mathematics and there is a need to reach such children.

#### **3.2.5.4      *Aspects of programmes that might be of use in South Africa***

The aspect of acquainting school governing bodies with the importance of identification and provisions for learners with special needs is important. A statement, which describes the learner's needs together with provisions needed to cater for the identified needs is almost similar to the concept of an Individualised Education Plan as used in the United States of America and might be useful in South Africa.

Teaching approaches such as small steps, practice activities, first hand experience, collaborative work and programmes for children who struggle with reading, writing and mathematics are already in use in this country. The Reading Recovery Programme is the same as discussed under New Zealand (cf section 3.2.2.3), aspect of which may be useful in South Africa as outlined earlier (cf section 3.2.2.4).

Support for teachers is an important element of intervention to assist learners with barriers to learning and development. Teachers are to be supported, in class, in curriculum development and in trying to individualise learning for all learners as is the case in the UK. Programmes such as Breakthrough to literacy may be useful in teaching reading and writing.

### **3.3      EDUCATING LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WITHIN THE INCLUSION SITUATION**

In developing countries, most of which are still struggling to institute universal primary education, funds are lacking. Because most of these countries have not attained literacy for the masses, they regard specialised educational services as a luxury they cannot afford (Partington 1991:10). Donald (1994:1) also noticed that "in developing countries resource limitations have generally resulted in the demand for basic education taking precedence over special educational needs". The irony of the

above statement is the fact that the incidence of disability that causes special needs is higher in developing countries than it is in technologically advanced countries.

It is important to note that Marfo (1986:4) states that reliable statistics are not readily available because of the limited research being done in the area of disability in developing countries. Statistics that are available are only global estimates. "Survey data and statistical estimates on the incidence of disability indicate that developing regions of the world account for over 70% of the world's total population of the disabled persons." In 1975 it was estimated that approximately 75% of the world's disabled 490 million people lived in developing countries. By 1981 the number had risen to 514 million disabled people – and these still live in developing countries. It was predicted then that by the end of the 20th century, approximately 80% of the disabled population would be located in developing countries. Statistics and estimates of this kind also indicate the situation of the mildly intellectually disabled population.

Many children in developing countries are disabled because of infections such as encephalitis and meningitis, persistent and severe malnutrition, iodine deficiency, head injuries and various injuries which are the result of armed conflicts, civil wars and violence (Mittler 1993:5). To this list, Donald (1994:1) and Marfo (1986:4) add *poverty* and all its social manifestations, associated health risks, inadequate health care, poor housing, poor drinking water, improper hygiene, inadequate nutrition, illiteracy, limited access to services and overcrowded and under-resourced basic education. These factors give rise to special needs.

All of these factors, referred to by Sethosa (1991:47) as cultural-familial causes of disability, affect the mildly intellectually disabled learner. According to Donald (1993:146-147), these factors are manifested through two major indicators, namely, the *drop-out rate* as a result of non-achievement, and *school failure rate* brought about by an inability to cope with school work. Marfo (1986:6) is of the opinion that while these learners do not exhibit any outwardly obvious physical and sensory abnormalities, their mild intellectual disability does affect their capacity to learn and even perform age-appropriate skills.

According to Mittler (1993:5), the proportion of the world's disabled children in developing countries is on the increase because advances in health care and primary prevention enable children to survive who previously would have died at birth or during the first few months after birth. This means that many children who survive, nowadays present with some mild intellectual disability – while yet other children manifest other forms of moderate to severe and profound disability.

In many developing countries only a few “normal” pupils attend school at all. Classes are as big as 100 pupils in certain areas. In such circumstances, it is not surprising to find that some schools refuse to accommodate severely disabled learners or that some parents prefer to simply keep their children at home (Mittler 1993:8). In spite of this, the mildly intellectually disabled, who are in any case difficult to identify, have in most cases found placement in ordinary classes in ordinary schools (Sethosa 1991:17). Abang (1992:16) and Kisanji (1995a:106) state that in most developing countries special schools have always been in existence to serve those with severe and multiple disabilities and those whose disability is easy to identify (such as the blind, the deaf and the physically disabled). They furthermore state that those with intellectual disability, especially those with mild intellectual disability and learning disability, are difficult to identify. It is therefore tempting to speculate that such learners are accommodated in ordinary schools – simply because it is not easy to identify them as having any kind of disability.

A cause for hope is that developing countries, including parts of South Africa where conditions approximate to those in developing countries, have an opportunity of avoiding the mistakes that have been committed by developed countries when they set up special schools. Most of the developing countries, including most communities in South Africa, never really had special schools because of financial constraints. This makes it possible for them to adopt a policy of inclusion right from the beginning. By doing this, they can avoid the expensive enterprise of transforming special schools so that they become inclusive schools (i.e. what most developed countries are having to do at present).

### 3.3.1 Nigeria

#### 3.3.1.1 *Historical background*

Special education in Nigeria arose out of the humanitarian endeavours of missionaries, voluntary and philanthropic organisations and individuals (Adima 1992:38). Abang (1992:14) notes that the development of special education was largely pioneered by missionaries whose aim was to teach and train those with disabilities to read the Bible and learn skills that would make them as self-reliant as possible.

Most children with disabilities in Nigeria are identified by paediatricians during hospital and clinic visits. What happens unfortunately is that some children's problems are not identified until they start with school and begins to show signs of an existing problem. In such instances teachers refer these children to the diagnostic centre. By the time a child is sent to a diagnostic centre, the problem may be so advanced that treatment and learning support are either difficult or impossible (Abang 1994:78).

Usoro (1994:20) mentions that many unsympathetic critics in this country are criticising the fact that resources are being spent on the education of the disabled, including the mildly intellectually disabled, while "normal" school leavers roam the streets. They maintain that the government's limited resources should be spent on the non-disabled rather than on the disabled, some of whom, in their opinion, might not even be able to make a contribution socially, economically or otherwise. Children with learning disabilities, including those with mild intellectual disability, are regarded as children with hidden disabilities and since they have no obvious or outwardly observable disability to distinguish them from normal children they are not classified as truly handicapped in Nigeria (Usoro 1994:20).

### **3.3.1.2      *Legislation***

The most important legislation which provided for the education of the disabled in Nigeria was the National Policy on Education of 1977, which was reviewed in 1981. This legislation created opportunities for the disabled to develop their full potential in *ordinary* schools since there were no special schools (Niemand & Van Tonder 1989:328). Some sections of the act are likened to the famous American Public Law 94-142 (Abang 1994:81) since various sections make particular reference to integration. In the words of Abang (1992:15) and Bokare (1992:256), integration is not only desirable; it is also the most realistic form of placement for the disabled since such children are eventually expected to live normal lives in ordinary society.

### **3.3.1.3      *Educational programmes***

In spite of the above, mildly intellectually disabled learners are educated as ordinary learners in regular primary schools because there are no special schools and special programmes for them. Primary education starts for all learners at age 5 or 6 and continues through to 12 years of age. Niemand and Van Tonder (1989:323) state that the objectives of primary education in Nigeria are the following:

“to prepare pupils for life [and] give those with potential the opportunity for progressing to secondary school level”.

They assert that the primary school curriculum aims at realising these objectives and also at “assisting the child in self-discovery,

helping the child to build up healthy relations with fellow pupils,  
promoting individual and national efficiency at the economic level,  
promoting effective citizenship,  
nurturing a consciousness of national unity,  
encouraging social and political maturity,  
creating a scientific and technological consciousness”.

These objectives of necessity also apply to the mildly intellectually disabled learners since such learners are in most cases found in ordinary classes.

The objectives determine the curricula and syllabi for primary education, which are uniform in nature and place an emphasis on fundamental skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Additional subjects are local or regional languages, Civics, Natural History, Geology, Arts and Crafts. However, the teaching of English and Arithmetic absorbs most teachers' and learners' attention since it is a prerequisite for the Primary School Leaving Certificate (Niemand & Van Tonder 1989:323). No specific programme exists solely for the mildly intellectually disabled learners and it is therefore safe to speculate that mainstream programmes are used for all learners.

#### **3.3.1.4        *Aspects of programmes that might be of use in South Africa***

The importance of emphasising the Three Rs is clearly evident since it is a prerequisite for certification. Whatever programmes are used should be practical. They should teach reading, writing and arithmetic/mathematics in addition to self-help, self-development and the development of citizenship skills. The issue of certification after primary school may be beneficial in South Africa. However, the full use of a mainstream programme might be problematic if it is not adjusted to suit the needs of all learners.

### **3.3.2   Kenya**

#### **3.3.2.1        *Historical background***

In 1964, the Kenya commission of education was given a mandate to investigate the formulation and implementation of national policy with regard to the educational needs and capacities of children (Ndurumo 1993:14). Ndurumo (1993:15) explains that it was evident from the report of the commission that the commissioners realised that children whose disabilities are less severe are able to participate and benefit in regular education and classes *provided their teachers are given proper training*. This is the reason why one of the recommendations of the commission identified the need for education and training for children with mild impairments as well as for those with severe impairments. It also identified the fact that teachers in regular schools needed to be trained in disability so that they would be able to cope effectively with the mildly intellectually disabled who, in any case, were all placed in ordinary schools.

### 3.3.2.2 *Educational programmes*

According to Bondesio (1989:290), the main objective of primary education, which includes education for the mildly intellectually disabled, is to give the learner a fundamental education in literacy, numeracy, manual dexterity and knowledge of the world in general. Uitto (1989:62) believes that “the objectives of the educational policy are spelled out as the provision of equal opportunities for all, the enrichment of the heritage, the production of skilled manpower to meet the growing and changing demands of the economy”.

An example of the programme that is in use in Kenya is given by Chage (1988:96). A school was established in Karatina, in one of the Kenyan provinces, in 1979. A number of intellectually disabled learners shared facilities with non-disabled pre-schoolers from the same community. The school curriculum is such that it trains the intellectually disabled, be they mildly or severely disabled for integration into the ordinary stream of education and the community, for successful further training, and for easier acceptance for on-the-job training. The programme at the school is made up, firstly, of academic training, in which learners acquire academic skills that are needed for independent survival, and, secondly, of pre-vocational training which places an emphasis on activities for daily living such as cooking, sewing, woodwork, and arts and craft, and, finally, of vocational training which aims at preparing learners for a self-reliant life in which they will earn a decent living through an income-generating job.

Chage (1988:98-99) provides detailed descriptions of the actual programmes which consist of animal husbandry projects in which the learners rear goats, rabbits and cows (to provide food for the school) and poultry (to produce eggs for the school), and an agricultural project which focuses on crop production. These programmes encourage learners to learn how to farm since the community in Karatina depends mostly on agriculture for survival. The programme is organised in the following way. Firstly, all learners, both disabled and non-disabled, work on the school farm. Secondly, individual school plots are allotted to each child. Thirdly, extension of the agricultural training is given in individual home plots. One striking feature of this programme is the fact that parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of their children in these plots by encouraging and supervising the children even in the absence of the school instructor.

An Assessment and Resource Centre was started in 1984 (Kisanji 1993:163). This centre, among other things, provides support to children with special educational needs, who are integrated in ordinary schools.

### **3.3.2.3      *Aspects of programmes that might be of use in South Africa***

An important aspect of the Kenyan programme is that training for academic skills is coupled with pre-vocational training in activities for daily living, and vocational training which prepares learners for independent life by enabling them to obtain an income-generating job. Instruction in literacy, numeracy and knowledge of the world in general is also important. Instruction in the fundamentals of manual dexterity serves to make vocational programmes effective. The preparation of skilled manpower to meet the needs of a growing and changing economy is a valid objective in these times. The involvement of parents in these projects is commendable. Most of the aspects mentioned above are already in use in South Africa.

### **3.3.3      *Tanzania***

#### **3.3.3.1      *Historical background***

In Tanzania, education for the intellectually disabled, including the mildly intellectually disabled, has only been recently introduced (Tungaraza 1994:216). According to Tungaraza (1994:218), the Policy of Socialism and Self-Reliance encouraged equality among people while discouraging discrimination. The policy of Education and Self-Reliance (ESR) had a profound effect on the plight of the disabled – including the mildly intellectually disabled.

#### **3.3.3.2      *Educational programmes***

In many communities in Tanzania, people with disabilities are “as far as possible integrated in the normal routine of the homestead and community” (Kisanji 1995b:119). It may therefore be speculated that schools also follow the same approach in integrating all individuals – including the mildly intellectually disabled.

Mainstreaming has different meanings for different people. In Tanzania, the term means educating learners with disabilities in regular school settings (Tungaraza 1992:28). According to Tungaraza (1992:28-30), several successes have been achieved. One of these successes in Tanzania is the fact that the citizens of the country have come to believe in the equality of individuals. Mainstreaming is therefore understood in the light of achieving such equality. Another important factor is the fact that mainstreaming enables the parents of disabled learners to interact with those of non-disabled learners. This makes the sharing of information possible during meetings. Finally, mainstreaming has economic benefits in the sense that a number of learners are able to share resources.

As in Kenya, the process of establishment of an Assessment and Resource Centre took place in Tanzania in 1987. Their activities are the same: they provide support for learners that are integrated in ordinary schools (Kisanji 1993:163). This support comes in the form of the provision of learning materials and simplified curricula.

### **3.3.3.3 *Aspects of programmes that might be of use in South Africa***

The policy of education for self-reliance may be useful in the sense that the aim of education for learners, including the mildly intellectually disabled, is to assist them to become self-reliant and independent members of the community. The issue of offering support to learners with special educational needs who are integrated in mainstream schools is worth noting since inclusion without support is tantamount to “mainstreaming by default” or “involuntary mainstreaming” (cf section 1.1) – which may be detrimental to the learners.

### **3.3.4 Lesotho and Botswana**

#### **3.3.4.1 *Historical background***

Very little is written in these two countries on education for learners with special educational needs, except for the fact that education in both countries began as a missionary venture to enable people to read the Bible (Fafunwa & Aisiku 1982:140)

### **3.3.4.2      *Legislation***

The revised National Policy on Education of 1994, was one important step in trying to address issues around education for learners with special educational needs in Botswana. It recommended the integration of learners with disabilities into all levels of education as the best way of accommodating these learners (Obosi 2000:49). The policy also recommended the appointment of an intervention team to form the core of this integration process. Another recommendation had to do with teacher training. Emphasis was put on the fact that all teachers should have elements of special education both in their pre-service and in-service training (Obosi 2000: 50). The only problem is that whereas policy is available, the actual implementation of that policy has lagged behind (Obosi 2000:52).

### **3.3.4.3      *Educational programmes***

The problems that persist in regular education in both these countries are wastage, lack of adequate manpower, lack of needed finance, small scattered schools with poor physical conditions, inadequate curriculum development, high pupil-teacher ratio and unqualified teachers, as outlined by a number of authors (Rose 1973: 212 & 218, Sebina & Kgosidintsi 1981:143-144, Pitso 1977: 49-50 & Fafunwa & Aisiku 1982: 143). It would seem that education for learners who experience barriers to learning and development, including the mildly intellectually disabled would not be provided separately from the mainstream education, but rather, these learners would be included in the ordinary education system not because it is the appropriate system, but due to lack of resources.

## **3.4      SYNTHESIS**

Different countries make different kinds of provision for the disabled. The kind of provision made depends invariably on the economy of the country. Developed countries, with their strong economies, have outstanding programmes for the mildly intellectually disabled learners. Developing countries, with their weaker economies, some of which still look at services for the disabled as luxuries they cannot afford, do not have such well-defined programmes for these learners. It is assumed that since there are so many learners who struggle to find placement in schools (so-called

“normal learners”), it is inevitable that the disabled, including the mildly intellectually disabled, will in most cases find themselves at the end of the queue for assistance.

A number of important issues should be taken into consideration when designing a system for the mildly intellectually disabled in the Republic of South Africa. First of all, the issue of early identification and early intervention is indispensable. It is vitally important to train all mainstream personnel (in-service training programmes) in the skills of effectively managing the education and training of the disabled under the policy of inclusion. *All* personnel need to be trained –not only specialists. Furthermore, in-class support for both learners and educators is indispensable.

If inclusion is to work efficiently and effectively, national legislation must be enacted that encourages and even coerces reluctant stakeholders to cooperate in the inclusion venture. This kind of legislation will encourage uniformity at a provincial level and will create a national culture in which the disabled are valued in the first instance as human beings. Their disablement will be subsidiary to their value as human beings. In South Africa, this step has already been accomplished. Programmes for Reading, Writing and Arithmetic are important in preparing the mildly intellectually disabled learners for life in general. Listening skills enable learners to transfer information orally. Spelling, on the other hand, enables learners to put their thoughts on paper correctly. This is done by using a good and legible handwriting, which is the manifestation of the amount of language acquired. Writing, as a combination of sub-skills, helps to transform ideas into logical information. Mathematics on the other hand is useful in adult life since it is applicable in all areas of life. The Individualised Education Program (IEP) may be an appropriate intervention strategy for mildly intellectually disabled learners.

Programmes for self-help and skills for the development of basic language are important. The use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) may be beneficial for learners who are non-verbal in their approach to learning. Problem-solving teams and integrative support teams may also be helpful.

The development of citizenship skills emphasises development and preparation for life. Such training should be recognised by the awarding of a certificate which indicates what learners have

been trained in these aspects. The training of learners in academic skills, pre-vocational and vocational skills, and activities of daily living enables learners to live independently if they obtain income-generating employment. The chances that mildly intellectually disabled learners will obtain income-generating employment are increased if they have been instructed in literacy, numeracy, knowledge of the world in general, and instruction in the fundamentals of manual dexterity. We may refer to this as *education for self-reliance*.

In the next chapter, a closer look is taken at the educational programmes which were used and continue to be used in certain instances, to accommodate mildly intellectually disabled learners.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES FOR MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED LEARNERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE AND AFTER THE 1994 DEMOCRACY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As with some of the other countries surveyed in chapter three, special education in South Africa developed as a result of missionary enterprise. It was because of this that schools for disabled learners in the past were founded and operated directly by various churches or their missionary departments (Du Toit 1996:8). The Vocational Education and Special Education Act 28 of 1928 was the first legislation to make special education the responsibility of the Union Education Department. This legislation required the department to establish “vocational” and “special” schools for white children (Du Toit 1996:8). Unfortunately, as Du Toit (1996:9) noted, no special provision was made in the legislation for Africans who needed this kind of education. National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI 1992:34) also noted that “the lack of compulsory schooling for African education departments has resulted in an evasion of responsibility for the provision of special education support for those in this category”.

The promulgation of the Special Schools Amendment Act 43 of 1937, was the next step in the unfolding of special education in South Africa. This act compelled all parents of white disabled children to send them to existing schools. This ultimately led to the development of boarding schools for these learners (Du Toit 1991b:56). In 1948, the Special Schools Act 9 of 1948 broadened the scope of special education to authorise medical and mental examinations and various kinds of treatment that were indicated for white disabled children. Both these acts were later superseded by the Education Services Act 41 of 1967 (Du Toit 1991b:57), which enabled the kind of services that were available to white disabled learners.

It is important to note that no mention was made of the mildly intellectually disabled learners until 1971 when this group of white learners were identified as a separate group. According to Transvaal Education Department (TED), Manual for Specialised Education (1985:1) and Du Toit (1991c:311), these learners were provided for in terms of Section 14 of Government Notice No R2029 of 12 November 1971. According to this act, these learners were identified on the basis of the following criteria:

- Scholastic progress
- Achievements in standardised scholastic tests
- Socio-economic background
- Medical information
- Personality structure as determined by means of assessment
- Results of aptitude tests
- Intellectual ability

Furthermore, these learners were in the opinion of the Director of Education, mentally different from the majority of learners in that they:

- “should not attend a normal class in a normal school because they cannot derive sufficient benefit from the usual teaching in the normal provision of education, but who are nevertheless educable;
- are able to derive benefit from a suitable course of education;
- need special teaching in order to facilitate their adaptation to the community” (TED: Manual for Specialised Education 1985:1).

Special education for the MID black learners only began after 1978 when the provisions of the Education and Training Act 90 of 1979 superseded the Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 (Du Toit 1996:58). While the Department of Education and Training (DET) was responsible to provide education for blacks living in “white areas”, the various Departments of Education or Departments of Education and Culture were given responsibility for blacks living in “independent” and “self-governing” states – also known as “homelands” (Barnard & Vos 1980:56). Barnard and Vos

(1980:56) are of the opinion that co-operation between the DET and the different education departments in independent and self-governing states was always maintained and that a large degree of interdependence and co-operation existed between them for as long as they existed. The DET offered assistance to these young and developing departments. One may therefore make the speculation that whatever policies and programmes were in use in the DET (including policies and programmes for the mildly intellectually disabled learners) would invariably be applied in the other (“independent” or “self-governing”) states. According to Barnard and Vos (1980:57-58), the states affected were as follows:

<u>Independent states</u>	<u>Self-governing states</u>
Bophuthatswana	Lebowa
Transkei	Gazankulu
Venda	Kangwane
Ciskei	Kwa-Zulu
	Kwa-Ndebele

While these arrangements prevailed for blacks, the education of Coloureds (including education for mildly intellectually disabled learners) was governed by the Coloured Persons Education Act 47 of 1963 (Barnard & Vos 1980:63; Ruperti 1976:48). Under the system of tripartite government developed by the National Party prior to 1994, the executive branch of government called the Department of Education and Culture, Administration: House of Representatives was made responsible for the implementation of these policies (Van Schalkwyk 1988:81).

Education in the Indian community was governed by the Indian Education Act 61 of 1965 (Barnard & Vos 1980:63; Ruperti 1976:48), and the department that ran their education system prior to 1994 was the Department of Education and Culture, Administration: House of Delegates (Van Schalkwyk 1988:79).

Prior to 1994, the control of the education of Coloureds and Indians (unlike the control of black education) was vested in the relevant section of parliament in the racially divided legislature. This was also the case as far as whites were concerned (Barnard & Vos 1980:70 & 72). One might

therefore assume that whatever programmes were used in the case of white learners, including learners with mild intellectual disability, would also be applied to both Coloured and Indian learners.

One feature of education for white mildly intellectually disabled learners are the special classes that are found in ordinary mainstream schools (cf section 4.2.1 below). In fact, National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI:1992:32) observed that the Departments of Education and Culture for both the House of Delegates and the House of Representatives (Coloureds and Indians) provided for mildly intellectually disabled learners in special classes attached to ordinary schools, as was the case for white learners.

The provisions are discussed separately in the section below owing to the fact that before the 1994 democracy, they differed for the different race groups and existed side by side for each group. Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes-Based Education are also discussed as a new dispensation which sought to transform the education system in South Africa in keeping with political developments that took place in 1994. Some of the aspects discussed in the next section, have already been discussed elsewhere (see section on developed and developing countries 3.2 and 3.3), but it is necessary to look at these aspects from a South African perspective.

#### **4.2 PROVISIONS AND PROGRAMMES FOR FORMERLY WHITE-ONLY MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED LEARNERS**

In South Africa, a white MID learner was classified as "Group I", or the educable/teachable intellectually disabled; such a learner has an IQ of approximately 50 to 75. These learners are able to master academic skills that are offered at both junior and senior primary school levels. They are also able to learn social skills and master work-directed skills so that they can live independently and earn a living as self-sufficient and self-supporting adults (Du Toit 1991c:293). Pieterse (1993: 20) and Nkabinde (1993a:21) noted that most white learners with mild intellectual disability were accommodated either in special classes or special schools.

Before 1994, education services for white learners were administered by The Department of National Education (House of Assembly). Special classes were instituted for learners below the age of twelve and special schools were established for those above the age of twelve (Gwalla-Ogisi 1990:273).

Du Toit (1991c:311-312) provides a brief description of the process of educating mildly intellectually disabled learners and notes that the identification of these learners only took place when the learner started failing at school. Once learners became conspicuously dysfunctional in school, they were assessed by school psychologists who then (if necessary) recommended placement in a special class or special school, depending on the age of the learner. While junior classes were divided into levels I, II and III, senior classes were divided into levels IV to V. As far as the curriculum was concerned, the following academic subjects (with a special an emphasis on the *functional* aspects of these subjects) were taught and continue to be taught in certain instances: English, Afrikaans, Geography, History, Hygiene and Science. Practical and occupational subjects such as bricklaying, panel beating, motor mechanics (repair work) and agriculture for boys, and hairdressing for girls were offered.

#### **4.2.1 Provisions and programmes in the special classes attached to primary schools**

For the purpose of this study, only programmes in special classes which were, and in many instances still are attached to ordinary schools will be discussed since this material is relevant to the junior primary school or foundation phase.

The following are the subjects as taught in these classes:

##### **4.2.1.1 *Mathematics***

Mathematical readiness is taught through concepts of position. By means of such concepts, the learner is assisted to differentiate between lower and higher, first and last, in front of and behind, up and down and, and so on. They are also taught by means of concepts of measurement such as size (as in big or small), length (as in long or short), mass (as in heavy and light), capacity (as in full or empty), and time (as in day or night).

Because mathematics develops thinking and language skills simultaneously, word problems are presented, first verbally and then later in written form. A good example is when a problem is presented as follows: If I have 10 apples and give 4 to my friends, how many do I have left? This translates into  $10 - 4 = \dots$  or  $4 + \dots = 10$  in written form. Concepts such as *greater than* and *less than* are also developed (Transvaal Education Department [TED] Component, Draft Syllabus for Mathematics 1995:1-5).

#### 4.2.1.2 *Handwriting*

Handwriting is important because, except for speech, it is the most common method of communication the people use to record ideas (children in primary school have to learn how to develop their handwriting). Handwriting is rightly referred to as a trans-curricular application of skills because formal handwriting instruction begins with visual-perceptual skills, the handling of writing instruments and correct posture. What follows then is letter formation, number formation and finally functional graded application (TED Component, Draft Syllabus for Handwriting 1995:1-2).

#### 4.2.1.3 *Geography*

Geography is important because the learner acquires a fundamental body of useful geographical knowledge with regard to his or her immediate environment, the province in which he or she lives, his or her country, and continent and the world as a whole. The learner is also taught the significance of phenomena, natural forces and the distribution of life forms and how these influence humankind. This in turn should lead to an understanding of how resources may be judiciously utilised, managed and conserved.

The following skills are imparted to learners:

1. **Enquiry skills** such as observation, perception, definition, description, comprehension, analysis, synthesis and their application in everyday life.
2. **Graphic skills** such as the drawing, the reading and interpretation of maps, graphs and diagrams, and the interpretation of photographs.

3. **Numeracy skills** which are used to represent data.
4. **Communication skills** such as appropriate communication through oral, written, graphic presentation.
5. **Spatial skills** for the determination of location.
6. **Intellectual skills** such as logical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making.
7. **Practical skills** such as modes of construction and the use of scientific and technical equipment.
8. **Social skills** such as participation in group activities and the evaluation of differing opinions (TED Component, Draft Syllabus for Geography 1995:1-3).

#### 4.2.1.4 *Handwork*

It is a well-known fact that creative activities not only give pleasure to the learners, but are also a natural means of stimulating the learning process. Handwork is very important for MID learners because they may be limited with regard to the quality and the quantity of the academic knowledge they can absorb or appreciate. In such circumstances practical work offers an alternative means whereby they can expand their knowledge, expertise, self-mastery and self-esteem – and so enrich their experience as learners. In addition, the learning of certain practical work skills may also enable mildly intellectually disabled learners to maintain themselves in some form of livelihood after they have left school.

Handwork is regarded as vitally important for MID learners for the following reasons.

- It makes the learner aware of beauty and provides learners with opportunities for creative activities.
- It develops co-ordination and motor skills and visual perception.
- It develops good habits such as neatness, a sense of reliability, responsibility and perseverance and the power of discernment and logical thought.
- It encourages creativity through approaches based on problem-solving, exploration and the development of the learner's imagination, resourcefulness, spontaneity, initiative and self-confidence.

- It provides opportunities for the learner to create objects, both as an individual and as a member of a group.
- It provides learners with opportunities to become aware of properties of a variety of materials and tools and also to be aware of elements of art such as form, texture, line, tone and space.
- It cultivates habits of orderly procedure and increases the learner's vocabulary (TED Component, Draft Syllabus for Handwork 1994:1-2).

#### **4.2.1.5      *General science and hygiene***

The main aim of the teaching of the subject is to confront the learners with the awareness of the wonders of nature and thereby leading to reverence to God. The learner is given knowledge with regard to his own body and even wild life, plant life, nutrition and food, seasons and related phenomena, knowledge relating to road safety and the handling of potentially dangerous apparatus (TED Component, Draft Syllabus for General Science and Hygiene 1994:1-3).

#### **4.2.1.6      *Environmental education***

As the learner increasingly develops an awareness of himself or herself and the environment in which he or she lives, he or she is enabled to give structure and meaning to the multi-faceted environment in which he or she finds himself or herself. This growing awareness and knowledge in turn lead to an increased understanding of his or her responsibility towards the environment. The learner becomes sensitive to the interdependence between human beings and nature. The main reason for teaching this subject is to equip the learner with elementary principles of scientific research and entrepreneurship through an understanding of basic economic concepts. Through these means, a learner may develop an appreciation of various ways of life in the past, present and future – both in his or her environment and elsewhere in the country, continent and world (TED Component, Draft Syllabus for Environmental Education 1995:1-3).

#### **4.2.1.7      *English first language***

The main aim in teaching this subject is to promote the ability to communicate confidently and effectively in English and the ability of the learner to understand what other people are saying.

Oral work is the basis of teaching any language. It includes listening and comprehension, followed by reading (both reading aloud and silent reading). The teacher may also read to the learner (TED Component, Draft Syllabus for English First Language 1994:1-4). Note should be taken of the fact that English First Language is taught in English-medium schools, whereas Afrikaans is taught as a first language in Afrikaans-medium schools.

#### **4.2.1.8      *Afrikaans second language***

Afrikaans is one of the official languages in South Africa and it is taught to enable learners to communicate and participate in cultural, academic, economic and occupational spheres. Since mildly intellectually disabled learners are generally from poor socio-economic backgrounds, they are in most cases also language-impaired. Because of this, the teaching of a language has to:

- enable learners to understand the spoken and the written word
- enable learners to present ideas orally and in writing
- enable learners to communicate both in learning and in work situations
- enable learners in a multi-lingual society to communicate in Afrikaans (TED Component, Konsepsillabus vir Afrikaans Tweede Taal 1995:1-7)

Whereas English is taught as second language in Afrikaans-medium schools, Afrikaans is taught as second language in English-medium schools.

#### **4.2.1.9      *Religious instruction***

The main aim of this subject is to give learners a foundation in matters of faith. The learner is guided to love God with all his or her heart, soul and mind. Learners are led to the realisation that God is

a Wonderful and Omnipotent Father and that Jesus, the Son, is the Saviour (TED Education and Culture Services, Programme for Bible Education 1987:2-4). According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the governing body of a school has the right to determine the usage or religious instruction in their school. There are some schools with children who are not Christians or from Christian families. Such children will obviously be accommodated with the teachings of the faith to which they belong in keeping with the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

It is worth noting that programmes for MID learners as implemented in South Africa are the same as those in the United States of America. The only difference is the fact that in South Africa, the focus is on the functional aspects and vocational skills to be obtained by learners. The reasoning behind this being the fact that the learners have to become independent and self-supporting members of the community and this can only happen if they have obtained specific skills to make them employable. As such, even during the foundation phase, preparations are already being made to ensure that once the learners leave the primary schools to go to secondary schools, knowledge can then be added on to the foundation that was laid in the formative years of education.

#### **4.2.2 Remedial assistance**

While remedial centres that operated on a regional basis served a particular number of schools (Skuy & Partington 1990:193), more intensive remedial assistance was offered at the schools themselves. Although such assistance was designed for the learning disabled, a number of mildly intellectually disabled learners also benefited from the services.

Jansen, Calitz, Du Toit, Grobler, Kotze, Lancaster, Orr, Smith and Swanepoel (1992:433) offer an explanation of the actual programme of remedial assistance. All learners are not involved in remedial work all at the same time. Class teachers, who are experienced and who are qualified in remedial education use the principle of differentiation to assist learners who experience problems as and when they need such assistance. This happens while the rest of the class continues with ordinary independent work. Such teachers are able to develop remedial programmes, for individual learners.

Learners who, however, cannot benefit from such programmes are referred to Education Aid Services who have the facilities to offer programmes to assist the learners.

The successes that were achieved using these programmes can be measured by the number of learners who obtained certificates in the different trades and went ahead to become independent and self-supporting members of the community. Some of the provisions continue to exist and learners still benefit from them.

### **4.3 PROVISIONS AND PROGRAMMES FOR FORMERLY BLACK-ONLY MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED LEARNERS**

The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) as quoted by UNICEF (1993a:50) explains that of every hundred children who have special needs, ninety two are black. According to Kriegler and Farman (1996:41), this overrepresentation of blacks in this category of learners may be due to the absence of adaptive and intelligence tests that have been specifically developed and normed for blacks. This hypothesis has also been investigated by Reschly (1990:83), Sigmon (1990:12), Maheady, Towne, Algozzine, Mercer and Ysseldyke (1990:89) and Hocutt, Martin and McKinney (1990:19). They all note that minority groups and blacks who come from very poor backgrounds are over-represented in the mild intellectual disability category.

The three main provisions in existence for assisting the mildly intellectually disabled prior to 1994 were the Panel for the Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance (PIDA), Remedial Adviser System and Level Classes. These provisions were run by the former Departments of Education, in the homelands and in the self-governing states and the Department of Education and Training (DET).

#### **4.3.1 Panel for the Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance (PIDA)**

Nkabinde (1993b:111) and Skuy & Partington (1990:152-153) describe the systems for black mildly intellectually disabled learners as follows. A system of PIDA was instituted. The PIDA teams were made up of selected teachers whose brief it was to provide a forum for special-needs problem-solving (Green, Donald & MacIntosh 1992:270). These teachers were trained to give assistance to

colleagues who had learners with mild intellectual disabilities and learning problems in their classes. Such teachers underwent a year's training, which was, as Macleod (1995:76) notes, inadequate.

The failure of the PIDA was that they were perceived to have been introduced prematurely – without any consideration for the needs and abilities of teachers to fulfil their expected roles and functions in terms of the programme (Skuy & Partington 1990:153). Macleod (1995:76) says that the PIDA collapsed because “it was seen as an evasion of responsibility by the education authorities and as practically unrealistic in an under-resourced and over-stressed teaching situation”.

#### **4.3.2 Remedial adviser system**

Remedial advisers also received a year's training in remedial intervention, and were then attached to a number of schools as consultants. Mildly intellectually disabled learners received assistance (to a limited extent because of overcrowding) either in remedial classes in regular schools or within regular classrooms or through the pull-out system which took place on a part-time basis. Another limiting factor was the fact that one year's training was inadequate and many remedial advisers were overwhelmed with responsibilities beyond the limits of their training.

This system failed because teachers were assigned a role and status far beyond the limited area in which they were trained and qualified. This is evident from the fact that their responsibilities included the following:

- training teachers in the identification of specific learning difficulties and mild intellectual disability,
- lending direct assistance to children who could not be assisted by the Panel for the Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance (PIDA),
- referral to outside agencies where appropriate,
- involving parents and
- paying regular follow-up visits to PIDA panels (Macleod 1995:76; Green 1991:86).

### **4.3.3 Level classes**

Another provision of the Department of Education and Training (DET) used was the so-called Level Classes. DET, The Teacher's Guide for Level Classes: The World of the Mildly Intellectually Handicapped Pupils (s.a:3) defines the learners destined for these classes as those who found difficulty in deriving profit from regular classes, but who had the potential to develop to a certain extent in the academic, social and occupational field. Their IQ was said to range from between 50 and 70. It was also believed that if these learners were to survive in society, they needed to be trained to understand themselves and their limitations and to form relationships with those in the world around them.

These so-called level classes, as were used to be known at the time in the Department of Education and Training, gradually went out of operation because there were too few of them to service the number of schools that existed at the time. It is nevertheless important to examine what was done in this system – despite the fact that it has long since become defunct.

Programmes were divided into junior, middle and senior groups within the special class in the primary school.

- **The junior group**

The focus at this level was on becoming acquainted with basic skills in handwork, arts, and arts and crafts. In reality, true-to-life representation and fine workmanship was not yet expected from learners at this stage since they were still getting to grips with handling the kinds of materials they employed (DET, Teacher's guide for level classes: Handwork, Arts, Arts and Crafts, Skills and Techniques s.a:6).

- **The middle group**

When one compares what was being done in this group with what was being done in the junior group, one realises that almost the same skills were being learned. The only difference was the extent

and range of the skills being taught. While the handling of tools became more important at this stage, learners were also encouraged to be creative and use their own discretion and judgement so that they could develop their self-confidence (DET, Teacher's guide for level classes: Handwork, Arts, Arts and Crafts, Skills and Techniques sa :11).

Only the junior and the middle group programmes will be examined for the purposes of this study because this research focuses on the foundation phase or the junior primary school phase. The junior group is defined as being approximately at the level of grades one and two (formerly Sub-Standard A and B), while the middle group is defined approximately as being at the level of grades three and four (formerly Standards 1 and 2).

#### **4.3.3.1      *Guidance in the special class***

The aim of Guidance as a subject was to educate learners in selected educational, occupational, social and personal topics and skills and so assist them to cope with and solve problems and develop to the limit of their potential (Department of Education and Training (DET), Teacher's guide for level classes: Guidance sa:1). The learner was also trained to be alert and to adopt correct procedures in emergency situations without panicking. In addition, the learners were provided with skills and attitudes which would enable them to fend for themselves in the labour market (DET Teacher's guide for level classes: Guidance s.a:2).

#### **4.3.3.2      *Handwork: art, arts and crafts, skills and techniques***

Handwork was very important because it gave a great deal of joy and satisfaction to learners who, because they were intellectually disabled, needed some kind of supplementary means of enhancing their experience and knowledge. The development of motor abilities also enhanced the prospects that mildly intellectually disabled learners might find future gainful employment. In addition, success in activities of this kind increased the self-confidence and self-respect of these learners (DET, Teacher's guide for level classes: Handwork: Art, Arts and Crafts, Skills and Techniques s.a:1).

#### 4.3.3.3 *Formative subjects*

- **History with Geography included**

The aim of teaching this subject was to awaken in the learner a feeling of national and community loyalty and pride. This was done through developing ideals of honour and obligation and service in the community. Learners were also informed about their position in the family, the institutions in their community, and the maps which described their environment in symbolic form. The aim of this was to present all this information in as *practical* a way as possible so that learners would realise its importance in daily life (DET, Teacher's guide for level classes: Formative subjects, History with Geography included, Science with Hygiene included, Religious Education, sa.:30-32).

- **Science with Hygiene included**

The main aim of this subject was to educate learners about their bodies and rules of basic hygiene and health. Learners were also given information about the following topics: animal life, plant life, seasons, landscape, the sun, moon and stars. Learners were also informed about safety procedures, recreational activities, the value of observation of the natural world and curiosity about natural phenomena such as plants, animals, seasons, weather, and the land in general (DET, Teacher's guide for level classes: Formative subjects, History with Geography included, Science with Hygiene included, Religious Education, sa.:46-47).

- **Religious Education**

The main aim of this subject for Christian learners was to inculcate a knowledge of God as the Creator, Redeemer and Lord. The secondary aim was to lead learners to practise a fruitful and satisfying life of real godliness. In accordance with these ideals, every school day commenced with an assembly and Christian devotions. Bible stories were dramatised as far as possible. Psalms, hymns, and the memorisation of biblical texts was designed to enhance the learner's moral sensibilities. Teachers tried to get learners to understand that a correspondence existed between what was taught in this subject and what actually happened in the community where the learner lived

(DET, Teacher's guide for level classes: Formative subjects, History with Geography included, Science with Hygiene included, Religious Education, sa.:60-66).

#### **4.3.3.4 Languages**

Mother tongue education was regarded as the most important aspect of language teaching. In order to be able to communicate, learners had to be able to understand and use language effectively. They were able to learn new concepts through reading and put their thoughts into words through writing. Oral work was given prominence. What learners were familiar with and had experienced was emphasised by means of discussions, dramas, puppet shows and mimicry. Real-life situations such as shopping were also enacted. Spelling and comprehension tests reinforced written work. The retention of words was reinforced through seeing words, hearing them, feeling them (as in using sandpaper), drawing them in sand or in the air, writing them down, and joining dots to form them. The same principles that we used in mother tongue teaching were used in the teaching of other languages – but mother tongue education always received priority (DET, Teacher's guide for level classes: Languages s.a:61-65).

The programmes discussed above were valuable in the sense that in the absence of any specific programme for MID black learners, they were better than nothing. The fact that they are defunct, point to the fact that they did not achieve what they were set up to achieve. Teachers ended up with responsibilities for which they were never trained, and were thus abandoned.

## **4.4 CURRICULUM 2005 AND OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION (OBE)**

### **4.4.1 Curriculum 2005**

Curriculum 2005 is based on a very specific understanding of how learning takes place and how both the learner and the teacher may perform optimally in the teaching-learning situation. This new way of looking at the three main components of the teaching-learning situation necessarily implies the application of the teaching and learning principles which were discussed earlier (cf sections 2.3.1

and 2.3.2 respectively). What follows is an outline of the components of this kind of education and the principles that are involved:

- **How learning takes place** Learners learn best when they are allowed to do things in a supportive environment, when they discover things for themselves, when they are not afraid of failing and when they are allowed to communicate without fear of criticism or sanction. The following principles are therefore applicable: totality (section 2.3.1.2), reduction of learning matter by tailoring the outcomes for each individual learner (section 2.3.1.4), task analysis (section 2.3.1.5), emphasis (section 2.3.1.6), purposefulness (section 2.3.1.7), demonstration and experimentation (section 2.3.2.6), participation (self-activity) and experience (section 2.3.2.8), concreteness (section 2.3.2.5), fixation in memory (section 2.3.2.2), regularity (section 2.3.2.3) and socialisation (section 2.3.2.10).
- **The learner himself or herself** The fact that every learner is unique means that every learner can succeed. The principles of individuality (section 2.3.1.1), independent activity (section 2.3.2.7), motivation (section 2.3.1.3), experiencing success (section 2.3.2.1) and participation (section 2.3.2.8) apply here.
- **The teachers** In a system such as this, teachers are facilitators who nurture and support the process of learning. The principles of verbalisation (section 2.3.2.4) and methodicalness (section 2.3.2.9) are applicable here. Furthermore, all the other principles mentioned above should be applied by the teacher to enable the learner to learn successfully.

According to Curriculum 2005 (1997b:12), Curriculum 2005 contains the following learning areas in which mildly intellectually disabled learners are also able to participate:

- Language, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematical Literacy Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences
- Human and Social Science
- Natural Sciences
- Technology
- Arts and Culture
- Economic and Management Sciences
- Life Orientation

It is interesting to note that Curriculum 2005 can accommodate the mildly intellectually disabled learners without great difficulty. Such learners are also able to achieve the outcomes in the sense that they are also able to explain, demonstrate and apply what they have learnt. Such methods make learning relevant and help learners to achieve their full potential. Learners are given the opportunity to develop abilities and skills and are assessed on everything they can do. The primary emphasis is on how well learners can demonstrate the skills and knowledge which they have acquired.

The following diagram (Curriculum 2005:1997a:18) outlines the differences between the traditional education system and Curriculum 2005, which is outcomes-based in nature. The diagram clearly shows that the mildly intellectually disabled are also accommodated:

<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Outcomes-based</b>
• Passive learners	• Active learners
• Rote learning	• Critical thinking, reasoning and reflection
• The syllabus is content-based, and is broken down into subjects	• An integration of knowledge. Learning is relevant and is connected to real-life situations
• The learning matter is textbook or worksheet-bound	• Learning is learner centred and the teacher is a facilitator who uses group work and a variety of resources
• The teacher is responsible for learning and motivation depends on the personality of the teacher	• Learners take responsibility for their own learning and they are motivated by constant feedback and affirmation

#### **4.4.2 Outcomes-based education (OBE)**

OBE is an approach to teaching and learning which is outcomes-based instead of content-driven. This approach was implemented in South Africa to facilitate the education system in general and as a useful vehicle for implementing inclusive education (Naicker 1999:21). According to Remedial Teaching Foundation (RTF) (1999a:7), "OBE is a system that is learner centred, based on the understanding that all learners can learn, no matter how small the steps or how slowly they progress".

RTF (1999a:11-12) point out the fact that OBE and inclusive education are inseparable and interrelated when they illustrate that both OBE and inclusive education require that every learner:

- “starts the learning experience from a familiar point, i.e **prior learning** must be established before the next learning step is taken.
- is taught in a way that matches his **learning styles** abilities and special needs.
- is allowed to work at his **own pace**, taking into account any special needs he may have.
- is involved in **setting learning outcomes** and the method of assessing them.
- receives regular **feedback** and guidance on his progress.
- is provided with **conditions and opportunities** in the classroom, the school and the community that enable and encourage him to achieve the outcomes and be successful after he has left the education system”.

What this means is that outcomes are the end result of the process of learning. Macmillan Guide to Outcomes-Based Education (s.a:n.a) states that outcomes are a means to achieving an end in that they are an end result of the process of learning. An outcome can be a cognitive competence such as naming objects or a practical competence such as making a wooden box. Sometimes a combination of competencies occurs, as in drawing a map – a skill that requires both cognitive and practical competencies. One is able to say that outcomes have been achieved when learners are able to explain, demonstrate and apply what they have learned (Macmillan guide to Outcomes Based Education: s.a:n.a).

The following factors are also applicable to OBE:

- **What learning is able to achieve** OBE is designed to develop learners who can communicate, solve problems, work with others, utilise life skills and be confident.
- **Assessment** Assessment has to be an integral part of learning because it helps learners to succeed by providing them with feedback about their knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired. Learners are assessed according to what they are capable of doing and their own potential, progress and abilities. They are *not* measured against other learners in the group (Curriculum 2005 1997a:10).

According to Curriculum 2005 (1997b:33-35), there are two kinds of outcomes, namely critical outcomes and specific outcomes. These outcomes are such that even mildly intellectually disabled learners are able to achieve them. *Critical outcomes* on the one hand express the intended results or outcomes for education and training in a broad sense. These outcomes are generic and cross-curricular and are therefore not restricted to a particular learning context. *Specific outcomes* on the other hand express the results or outcomes in more narrowly defined aspects of education and are therefore linked to the particular context.

Macmillan guide to Outcomes Based Education (s.a:n.a) outlines the differences between the conventional method of teaching and the OBE approach as follows:

<b>Conventional</b>	<b>Outcomes-based</b>
• Defines the subject content to be covered	• Defines the learning outcomes or results to be achieved
• Emphasis is on knowledge	• Emphasis is on applied knowledge
• Emphasis is on the work of the teacher	• Emphasis is on what learners will learn
• Teachers identify learning opportunities	• Learners use learning opportunities
• The focus is on the teacher as an authority	• Focus is on the teacher as class manager
• The learner must complete a prescribed course in a given time, e.g. during a term or a year	• Timing is flexible and is driven by the needs of the learner and prior learning
• Qualification is by passing the examinations	• Qualification is by a range of evidence and assessment including examinations

• **Resources and OBE**

According to the Gauteng Department of Education (1999a:n.a), resources are an important component for effective teaching and learning. Resources are materials that are used in the process

of learning; such resources include charts, posters, chalkboards, flashcards, overhead projectors, books and so on. Since the introduction of this new approach, many schools and many educators have unfortunately been under the impression that they lack resources since they believe the new approach needs new and different resources. In many cases, however, resources are either under-utilised or are locked away in storerooms. In fact, many resources are already present in schools. Teachers simply need to be encouraged to use such resources creatively and innovatively to implement OBE. The Gauteng Department of Education (1999a:n.a) refers to these as *existing resources*, which it defines as those resources that schools have possessed for some time but which were never specifically designed for OBE.

What follows is an indication of how existing resources may still be used in an OBE context for teaching *literacy*, which, according to Gauteng Department of Education (1999a:n.a), involves listening and speaking, reading, spelling and writing and informal creative writing:

Before the advent of OBE, teaching *listening and speaking* involved the rote learning of phrases. With the advent of OBE, language is taught in the context of a story and the learners' experiences may be used to lead the lesson into other learning areas. Before the advent of OBE, *reading* was taught by means of drilling with flashcards. With the advent of OBE, words on flashcards are used in meaningful contexts such as stories or finding the word on the flashcard in a text. Before the advent of OBE, *spelling* was taught by means of word lists that were not embedded in any kind of context and words had to be learned by heart and tested on a weekly basis. With the advent of OBE, words are taught regularly and in context. The word list of commonly used difficult words is built by the learner together with the educator so that the learner can improve his or her speaking and reading and increase his or her vocabulary. Before the advent of OBE, the teaching of *writing* emphasised neatness and correct spelling as a top priority. With the advent of OBE, learners are encouraged to *try* – even if their writing and spelling skills are not yet well developed. As one looks through these activities, one realises that they also accommodate the needs of mildly intellectually disabled learners.

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), in collaboration with the Gauteng Institute for Curriculum Development (GICD), developed a document to provide guidance for the

implementation of Curriculum 2005 in Gauteng province. The document specifically targets Foundation Phase Learning Programmes. The main aim of the document is to provide further guidelines for Foundation Phase teachers, and in that way help them to translate national policy into practice (GDE/GICD Foundation Phase Learning Programmes 1998:i). Even though no provision is made for separate programmes for mildly intellectually disabled learners, this document is of such a nature that it may be used for the education of mildly intellectually disabled learners. Indeed, the Department of Education, Consultative Paper on Special Needs (1999:43) states that *no separate programmes* will be designed for learners with special educational needs, including the mildly intellectually disabled, but that existing programmes should rather be customised so they can be accommodated.

According to the GDE & GICD Foundation phase learning programmes (1998:8), one of the principles of OBE is expanded opportunities for learning. This means that although learners come from different situations and backgrounds, such factors should be taken into consideration and extra support should be given to learners so that they will be in a position to achieve the required outcomes. Furthermore, expanded opportunities for learning mean that learners, including learners with mild intellectual disability, are allowed to develop at their own pace and ultimately achieve worthwhile outcomes in spite of their problems.

#### **4.4.3 Different approaches to the teaching of reading in an OBE classroom**

The three learning programmes at the foundation phase are literacy, numeracy and life skills (GDE & GICD 1998:6). The importance of these learning programmes can never be overemphasised since they are the key to learning in the learner's life. In such a context, the teaching of reading becomes crucial in helping a learner to achieve literacy. The importance of reading lies in the fact that it forms the basis on which all educational efforts are based. Once a learner is able to read, further educational intervention is made possible. Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi (1999:79) support the above statement when they state that "many teachers believe reading problems are the principal cause of school failure". This makes it imperative that emphasis is placed on reading as the foundation for all areas of learning.

While there are a number of valid approaches to the teaching of reading, it is clear that learners learn best from a combination of approaches because the weaknesses of one approach are complemented by the strengths of another (Gauteng Department of Education 1999c:2). The following approaches are outlined in the Gauteng Department of Education (1999c:2-7), Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi(1999:79-83) and RTF (1999a:134-136):

#### **4.4.3.1        *The phonic approach***

The phonic approach emphasises that learners have to become familiar with the correspondence between the sound (auditory stimulus) and the letter or letter combinations (visual stimulus) in a language. Knowledge of this correspondence enable learners to break down (analyse) and build (synthesise) words. Letters and sounds are first taught in isolation and later blended into words, such as c-a-t- = cat

This approach has advantages in that it is unrivalled for effectively teaching initial reading in most languages. It also assists in the teaching of initial spelling patterns in the process of writing. Learners are helped to recognise unfamiliar words by using their phonetic language. The decoding strategy learnt is what enables the learners to read even unfamiliar words. This approach is basic because it may even be used in the absence of good resources for teaching reading quickly. It may also be used for teaching a second language since learners are able to use strategies with which they are familiar in first language reading.

In spite of these advantages, the following limitations are evident. The amount of energy expended on the sounding of words impairs reading fluency to some extent and thus causes inadequate comprehension. Reading series that use a pure phonics approach are in most cases limited in content and vocabulary. For non-phonetic languages, the phonics approach is of limited value, for instance, it does not deal with the irregularities of the English spelling. This approach may hamper the reading development of learners if they are not combined with other approaches and if used exclusively, learners will not be able to use their prior knowledge of language structures to support their efforts to read.

#### **4.4.3.2      *The whole word/sentence/story approach***

The approach is based on the theory that learners recognise words in totality rather than in isolation. In the beginning, pictures are used with flashcards and learning is consolidated when the teacher writes the word. Later on, sentence cards are used to read sentences, match words and break down and build up sentences. The educator tells a story from a reader in order to familiarise learners with the content. The story is recorded on sentence strips, which are then used by learners to build a story. The sentence strips are then further broken into words which learners are able to use to build new sentences. Once the stages are completed, the learners start reading books.

The advantages of the system include the fact that learners are able to build a large working vocabulary, which they can recognise at sight. They can also learn to read in meaningful language units and have their word recognition skills enhanced. Visual aids such as pictures and posters link reading with oral and aural skills in discussions. Reading fluency is promoted and learners are able to use their knowledge of word classes such as nouns and verbs, and as such, they seldom make mistakes when naming such parts of speech during reading.

On the other hand, limitations do exist. Learners lack word analysis and synthesis skills and do not develop a sound knowledge of phonics. It takes time for learners to reach a stage where they are able to access the text. Because this method relies heavily on the use of visual memory, the learner's ability to transfer reading skills to other texts is limited and reliance on visual memory may lead to confusion when it comes to words that are visually similar. Learners tend to be weak at spelling. Flash cards become problematic if fast readers go through them first and slower readers only parrot them without actual reading. Unfortunately, recognising words from shapes does not always happen as we sometimes imagine because most good learners use minimal phonic cues and context in learning how to read.

#### **4.4.3.3      *The language experience approach***

In this approach, the learner's experiences are used to teach reading and writing. The learner talks about his or her pictures or something he or she has heard – or even about his or her personal

experiences. This information is then recorded by the educator, and the learner then reads the information to his peers. These written experiences are then developed into a reading book. The emphasis is on reading for meaning and the relationship between oral language and the printed word.

This approach manifests the following advantages: The learner obtains an understanding of the relationship between listening, speaking, reading and writing right from the onset. The language used is the one the learner already has. Learners are motivated to read because their own experiences lead to better reading comprehension. A variety of reading strategies are quickly learned and the self-image of the learner is improved because he or she is able to make a valuable contribution in the eyes of the educator and his or her peers. This constitutes a valuable supplementary approach in which reading for meaning occurs right from the start. Reading and writing are linked with oral and aural skills through discussion. There is no restriction of vocabulary and content. It is possible to grade the reading matter in accordance with the learner's level of competency.

A number of limitations are noticeable. The initial stages may be time-consuming for the teacher. The success of this approach depends on how organised and creative the educator is. It can thus not be used in isolation. In addition, the attitude of the educator is crucial in that he or she has to be empathetic. It is only suitable for homogenous first language classes and is unsuitable for learners with a lack of experiences and impoverished language development.

#### **4.4.3.4      *The whole language approach***

This approach may be implemented in various ways. Listening, talking, reading and writing may be done within one subject. One topic may be used to link different subjects; studies may be integrated and theme teaching may be used. A number of techniques from different approaches are used to produce a balanced literacy programme. Such a programme includes reading to learners, reading with learners (shared reading), the language experience approach, guided group reading skills such as phonics, sight, vocabulary, independent reading where learners are encouraged to read independently once they are through with shared reading and guided group reading. Although, previously, the proponents of whole language approach opposed the direct teaching of phonics, they are beginning to concede that a knowledge of phonics is necessary for learning to read.

The advantages of this system include the fact that it combines the advantages of the phonics, whole word/sentence/story and language experience approaches. Skills and strategies are taught within the context of the story. Learners quickly learn to read independently and they therefore gain confidence. Learners have a wide range of books and genres from which to choose, in which texts comprise real stories. It is eminently suitable for an OBE approach.

The limitations are minimal. The initial outlay may be expensive, and there is a tendency to neglect the phonics approach. The teacher needs to be well organised and well trained.

#### **4.4.3.5      *The bilingual approach***

This approach is based on the theory that the home language (primary language) may be used to enrich the teaching of reading in an additional language. Experiences are discussed in the learner's primary language. These experiences are then written down by the educator in the primary language, read to the learner, translated into the language of instruction and then read to the learner again. Although discussions still take place in the primary language, an emphasis is placed on the language of instruction at a later stage.

The strengths of this approach include the fact that the learner's expertise in his or her primary language is exploited when learning how to read. The new language may thus be learnt in a meaningful context. The difficulty that learners cannot learn to read a language until they can speak it proficiently, is overcome. The introduction of reading in writing is done in non-threatening manner.

But limitations also exist. Learners are forced to learn to read two languages simultaneously. This approach is time-consuming and can only be applied by teachers who are familiar with the primary language *and* the language of learning and teaching. Its success depends on educators who are committed, organised and enthusiastic. It can only be implemented in classes with homogenous language groups.

Other programmes outlined by RTF (1999b:189-228) have to do with listening, spelling, writing, handwriting, language support and mathematics. These programmes are similar to the ones in use in other parts of the world such as the United States of America (cf 3.2.4). It is therefore, not necessary to outline them in this section.

#### **4.4.4 Co-operative learning**

Co-operative learning is one of the most important strategies employed in an OBE classroom. In co-operative learning, group members share responsibility for helping one another to learn instead of competing against each other. In such a system the emphasis is thus on co-operation within the group (Meese 1994:33; Salend 1990:251). One of the advantages of the system, in the opinion of UNESCO (1993:130), is that learners are encouraged to work collaboratively and support one another in searching for solutions to problems. Salend (1990:251) feels that “co-operative learning is especially worthwhile for heterogenous student populations because it encourages mutual respect and learning among students of various academic abilities, handicapping conditions and racial and ethnic backgrounds”.

According to Ashman (1994:474) and Taylor, Stenberg and Richards (1995:109), such an approach is useful because it develops interdependency and the realisation that the success of the group depends on the co-operation of all participants and because it also develops practices and attitudes which enhance learners’ social and group participation skills. According to UNESCO (1993:130), such a cooperative approach can help learners to become less dependent on their teachers.

Teachers of this method must never lose sight of the fact that if they leave learners on their own, the process might be derailed. Constant monitoring is therefore vitally important. The teacher has to move around the classroom and collect information in the form of questions in order to confirm that all learners have understood what is going on. This process must be followed up with discussions or even writing by individual learners – discussion or writing that describes what they have learned (UNESCO 1993:134). The strategies used frequently include brainstorming, sharing and feedback sessions within and between groups (Ashman 1994:474).

UNESCO (1993:132) suggests that co-operative learning may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Learners in pairs may prepare a joint statement, which they will then present to the larger group for group work.
- Separate materials collected by individuals may be pooled to complete a given task.
- Individual members may be given particular roles (such as, for example, chairperson, recorder, reporter and so on). It is important that such roles be alternated so that each member has an opportunity to perform each role.
- Each member may be asked to complete a draft which could then be completed by the group.
- Groups may be graded and scored on the basis of the aggregate performance of work which is being completed by individuals within a group.

The importance of co-operative learning for MID learners lies in the fact that these learners are given a chance to work with other learners. If any weaknesses exist in their approaches, they are not necessarily exposed as is the case when they are expected to accomplish difficult tasks by themselves. They are thus given an opportunity to learn from others and with others until such time as they gain the confidence to do it all by themselves.

#### **4.4.5 Experiential learning**

Another strategy that is indispensable in an OBE classroom is experiential learning. Experiential learning is a strategy which permits learners to channel the energy, enthusiasm, skills and knowledge which they already have. According to the Gauteng Department of Education (1999b:4), “experiential learning occurs when learners are placed in a situation where they think and interact with, learn in and form part of a created or real life situation”.

According to Mak (1992:51-53), experiential learning follows a number of stages and the analogy of water is used to illustrate the use of what has been learnt:

### **Stage 1: Extensive study**

If one wants to enrich one's knowledge, one has to study extensively. During this stage, collection of knowledge takes place on a large scale and produces a reservoir of knowledge. One produces this reservoir through reflecting on one's own experiences and through observing the experiences of others.

### **Stage 2: Accurate enquiry**

If one wants to confirm one's knowledge, one must make accurate enquiries. An investigation of the relevant body of knowledge produces the kind of knowledge one needs. It is by asking and investigating that one comes to know the unknown. This is the process in which one isolates what one needs to know and in which one disregards what is irrelevant.

### **Stage 3: Careful reflection**

If one needs to examine the knowledge one has, one has to reflect carefully on what one has learned. Analytical thought about the knowledge one has gained enables one to understand it more perfectly. When water flows into a reservoir, it is first stored for a while before it is utilised. The same applies to knowledge.

### **Stage 4: Clear discrimination**

In order to gain useful knowledge, one needs to apply one's powers of discrimination to what one has learned. Classification of components of the body of knowledge enables one to differentiate between right or wrong, good or bad, true or false. This process determines how the knowledge one has gained will be used. Water from the reservoir may be used for different purposes, for example, drinking, sports and so on. In using the knowledge, a decision has to be taken as to which purpose will benefit the public best.

## Stage 5: Ernest practice

If one needs to apply the knowledge, this must be done with great care. Knowledge really only becomes ultimately effective in application. Learning should be available to be applied in practice. Learning is only really valuable if it can be applied in practical situations. A reservoir full of water is useless if it cannot be used.

The part played by the educator in experiential learning is important because the educator as the facilitator, is able to support the learner in “experiencing” the process of learning. Although the learner might learn without the facilitator, the facilitator should be able to make the process much easier by preventing the learner from taking wrong turnings (Mak 1992:53). It might therefore be assumed that it is the task of the facilitator to:

1. speed up the process of leaning
2. guide the learner in the right direction
3. make sure the learner ends up at the right destination

Experiential learning as a process for learning may be illustrated as follows:

1. An *encounter* results from what the learners bring into the learning situation (his or her previous experience).
2. In *dialogue*, learners are given an opportunity to express and report what they have experienced.
3. In *reflection*, learners present their interpretations and discuss the meaning of the activity.
4. In *application*, the encounter is related to real life situations and the knowledge acquired is then applied (Gauteng Department of Education 1999b:5). The Gauteng Department of Education (1999b:18) views experiential learning as a strategy that can successfully be used in concurrently with co-operative learning.

The importance of experiential learning for the MID learner lies in the fact that the experiences that these learners bring into the classroom are utilised to facilitate learning. Learners are given the assurance that their contributions are valuable and this encourages them to exert themselves.

Co-operative learning and experiential learning are some of the most important strategies if an OBE classroom is to be effective. For the purpose of this study, it is important to bear in mind that these aspects are dealt with in the training manual for School Support Teams .

#### **4.4.6 School support teams**

A school support team is a team made up of teachers in a given school. The main purpose of the team is to help other teachers to solve problems and to help the learners who are experiencing difficulties in their learning process (Hall et al 1999:159). The following steps have been identified in this process of problem solving:

- Step 1. The team coordinator states the reason for the meeting.
- Step 2. The referring teacher makes a brief statement about the difficulties experienced by the learner in class.
- Step 3. Uncertainties are eliminated in discussion and the parameters of the problem are also defined.
- Step 4. Possible interventions are generated through a brainstorming session, and suggestions are given as to how the problem may be solved.
- Step 5. The referring teacher selects workable solutions from the suggestions given.
- Step 6. A plan of action which contains various strategies is compiled.
- Step 7. The coordinator thanks the team for their participation and contributions (Hall et al 1999:161-162).

The school support team comprises of teachers who are able to support the MID learner in the regular classroom. These teachers will even advice other educators in the school regarding achievable outcomes for the MID learners in the school.

#### **4.4.7 Parental involvement**

Hegarty (1993:24) is of the opinion that parents of learners with disabilities can play a major role if they are drawn into the process of their child's education. This, as Dean (1996:137) and Tiegerman-Farber and Radziewicz (1998:89) explain, is due to the fact that parents are constantly assessing their children and may therefore contribute information which is not available in other ways to teachers – information which may in fact complement the information that professionals have about their children even if they themselves have no clinical knowledge.

The importance of parental participation is emphasised by Smith et al (1998:469) when they state that parents are key individuals in the socialisation of their children and are thus able to provide positive reinforcement where necessary. Furthermore, the close cooperation between the school and the home leads to consistency about goals and expectations and enables knowledge which has been learned at school to be transferred with the help of parents to the community setting – thus leading to significant developmental gains on the part of the learners (Smith et al 1998:469).

According to Gloeckler and Simpson (1988:91), the “exceptionality of the child with mild handicap is usually not evident at birth and often does not manifest itself visibly”. In most cases, delays in development may go unnoticed in the absence of sibling comparison. Once, however, parents notice that their child is indeed disabled, they may go through various stages such as searching for a cure, and ultimately (if all goes well) total acceptance of the child (Tiegerman-Farber & Radziewicz 1998:163).

It was mentioned elsewhere in this study (see section 1.2.3) that mild intellectual disability is in most cases associated with poor socio-economic conditions. Parental reaction will therefore vary in accordance with the socio-economic conditions of particular families. Cavanach and Ashman (1985:153) explain that parents from the lower socio-economic group place less emphasis on academic achievement. Since they themselves might very well have been mildly intellectually disabled, they often do not entertain high expectations for their children. They are therefore unlikely to be greatly disappointed in their children. In those cases where parents are from a higher socio-

economic group, the disappointment of parents when they receive the news about their child's disability is often grave – whether the disability is severe or mild.

In spite of such reactions, Dean (1996:137) emphasises that parents need to be given the assurance that the school is able to cope with the problems their children present.

The role of parental involvement in the education of learners can never be under-estimated. As a matter of fact, it is almost impossible to educate a learner if the parents are reluctant to be involved. This is the reason why the South African Schools Act is vocal about what is expected of the parent. In fact, throughout the Act, reference is always made to the role of the parent and what happens should the parent fail in his or her duties (Act 84 of 1996).

#### **4.5 SYNTHESIS**

Because of South Africa's historical policy of separate development, different racial groups were accommodated with different programmes to cater for the needs of mildly intellectually disabled learners. Firstly, the programmes for white-only mildly intellectually disabled learners in the junior primary school phase comprised classes that were attached to ordinary primary schools. These special classes, that were prevalent in most of the former provinces are still widely used. Their success may be measured by the fact that some of these learners who were placed in such classes, were successfully readmitted to the mainstream of education.

On the other side of the racial divide, programmes for formerly black-only mildly intellectually disabled comprised The Panel for Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance (PIDA) system, the remedial adviser system and level classes. These three systems failed dismally for a number of reasons. The PIDA system failed to take into consideration the ability of teachers to fulfil their expected roles. The remedial adviser system failed because teachers were given roles and status far beyond their training and qualification. Level classes were only implemented in a relatively small number of schools with the result that it could not be established whether they were successful or not.

OBE, on the other hand, is a new approach, and a new way of looking at how successful learning may take place. Learners are given an opportunity to discover, experience and even learn cooperatively and experientially. Each learner is viewed as an individual who can learn and succeed. The teacher, instead of being the sole source of all knowledge, is now regarded as a facilitator who nurtures and supports the process of learning. The whole process is geared towards achieving the outcomes for all learners – including the mildly intellectually disabled.

OBE is also designed to develop learners in such a way that they can participate actively in their own learning processes. Such learners are able to think critically because they have been taught to use knowledge that is connected to real-life situations. Because OBE learning itself is learner-centred, it enables learners to take responsibility for their own learning. The time during which learners have to complete their tasks is flexible because time frames depend on the needs of the *learner* rather than on the necessity to complete a course. The classical examination is but one method of carrying out OBE assessment. Existing resources may have to be reassessed for suitability in OBE-type education. It is not (in many cases) necessary to acquire new materials for OBE education.

The role to be played by parents in the education of their children is an important one. A close co-operation and collaboration has to exist between the home and the school, to ensure that knowledge is transferred to learners both by the home and by the school.

It is envisaged that this information will form part and parcel of the training manual for School Support Teams.

In the next chapter, the research design used in this study is outlined.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE DESIGN OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the qualitative method of investigation used in this study. It also describes the sampling procedure used. In addition, it discusses in some detail the measuring instruments used in the study, namely the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. The training manual for School Support Teams (SST), another instrument in this study is also discussed. Particular reference is made to the pilot study, and the steps which were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Once the data has been analysed and interpreted, it will be used to support the findings in the literature.

#### **5.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

This study was undertaken with the following aims in mind:

##### **5.2.1 Literature study**

A broad and detailed literature study was undertaken to gain insight into the following concepts, ideas, perceptions, beliefs, facts and hypotheses:

- The concept of the mildly intellectually disabled learner was explored: who he or she is and the characteristics which he or she displays. Mildly intellectually disabled learners have peculiar (idiosyncratic) physical, emotional, social and cognitive characteristics. Their cognitive characteristics in particular impact on their learning. As such they have problems with reading, writing and mathematics.
- Various modes of teaching such learners, as well as learning and teaching principles, strategies and preconditions for educating these learners were examined. The implementation of these

principles is essential if one wishes to create an accessible and enabling environment in which mildly intellectually disabled learners can succeed.

- The role played by parents in the education of these learners was also examined.
- Countries differ in the kind of provision they make for the mildly intellectually disabled learners. While *developed* countries, because of their strong economies, are able to finance elaborate programmes for such learners, *developing* countries have placed these learners at the end of the queue for assistance because of the severe financial constraints under which they labour. The manner in which developed countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) cater for the mildly intellectually disabled in comparison with developing countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Lesotho and Botswana was explored.
- In apartheid South Africa, education administrators designed separate programmes for the mildly intellectually disabled of different racial groups. All these programmes are however currently being aligned so that they will serve all learners with special educational needs.
- Outcomes-Based Education and Curriculum 2005, on the other hand, aim at accommodating all learners.

This information, which was obtained from the literature review will be used to guide the questions in the questionnaire during the empirical study.

### **5.2.2 Empirical study**

An empirical study was undertaken to investigate, assess and analyse ways in which teachers may be supported so that they can assist and sustain mildly intellectually disabled learners in their classrooms in the context of a policy of inclusion.

The questionnaire and the semi-structured interview were designed in this study so that they would fulfil the following aims:

- To establish how mildly intellectually disabled learners are identified and why they are classified as such by teachers.

- To describe the feelings which teachers have when they have to teach these learners and the reasons for these feelings.
- To find out how such learners are assisted once they have been classified as mildly intellectually disabled learners.
- To identify the problems teachers encounter when they educate learners – and whether or not the specific programmes exist which are designed to help them to cope with such problems.
- To establish whether teachers have been trained to cope with mild intellectual disability in learners and what kind of qualifications teachers need to cope with such learners.
- To investigate the impact which the pupil-teacher ratio has on the education of these learners.
- To measure the support given by the school management team (SMT), parents and the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE).
- To gather information regarding teachers' insight into and understanding of what the policy of inclusion implies, so that their capacity might be strengthened to sharpen their skills for inclusion.
- To elucidate the differences between methods used previously in the education of mildly intellectually disabled learners and current Curriculum 2005 and OBE methods.
- To form generalisations and conclusions from the results generated by the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview.
- To prepare the ground for the development of guidelines, in the form of a training manual for School Support Teams (SST) to enable them to accommodate diversity in the classrooms.

On the basis of results from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, a training manual for School Support Teams (SST) will be designed, piloted and refined in order to assist teachers to support the mildly intellectually disabled learners in the ordinary classroom.

### **5.3 METHOD OF INVESTIGATION**

#### **5.3.1 Background**

This study is basically qualitative in nature. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998:7), "the phrase qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data –

people's own written and spoken words and observable behaviour". In this kind of research, the researcher seeks to listen to informants and ultimately build a picture which he or she bases on their ideas, feelings and perceptions (Cresswell 1994:21). In the words of Neuman (1994:316), "the most obvious difference is that qualitative data tend to be in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs rather than numbers". Mouton and Marais (1990:70) are of the opinion that the major assignment of this type of research is to identify the indigenous concepts of respondents. In studies of this kind, results are not necessarily gathered or presented in statistical form (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17). Strauss and Corbin (1990:18) are however of the opinion that qualitative research does lend itself to quantification in that *some kinds* of qualitative data may be presented statistically (in terms of percentages).

Lancy (1993:9) argues that "those who subscribe to the qualitative paradigm conduct their work within a phenomenological framework". Taylor and Bogdan (1998:4) feel that this approach enables researchers to view their respondents as human beings with ideas, feelings and motives rather than as mere sources of information. Such feelings, ideas and motives may yield useful descriptive data.

### **5.3.2 Stages and steps followed during the investigation**

The following is a brief outline of the sequence of events in this particular study:

- As already mentioned, a literature study was conducted to gain insight into factors that play a part in the education of mildly intellectually disabled learners.
- Then, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were piloted at one school in order to enable the researcher to improve the questions if necessary.
- Next, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather information from 70 respondents from 10 different schools.
- On the basis of the results from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews, a training manual for School Support Teams (SST) was designed to help teachers accommodate diversity in their classroom.
- The manual was then piloted in 20 schools in Soshanguve area in District N4. teachers in the said schools were trained using the training manual for SST.

- finally, on the basis of the findings and lessons learnt during the piloting of the manual, refined manual was finalised to be made available to the rest of the schools in the district.

### 5.3.3 Sampling

Neuman (1994:194) defines sampling as “a process of systematically selecting cases for inclusion in a research project”. Such a sample should rather be manageable and cost-effective than working with a pool of all cases (Neuman 1994:194). Seidman (1998:45) cautions that “the range of people and sites from which the people are selected should be fair to the larger population”. According to Mertens (1998:253), researchers sample because in most cases it is impossible to collect data from *every* individual in the setting.

Researchers use discriminate or purposive sampling procedure. This means that they personally choose sites and persons which in their opinion maximise opportunities for verifying relationships between categories (Strauss & Corbin 1990:187 & Lancy 1993:16). Mertens (1998:261) refers to a purposive sample as an “information rich” kind of sample. This kind of sampling is also referred to as *purposeful sampling* (Patton 1990:169), and its utility resides in the fact that information-rich cases are studied in depth in order to illuminate whatever issues are being studied. This is the kind of sampling used in this study.

This study concentrates on the following types of schools:

- Three special school for severely intellectually disabled learners with mildly intellectually disabled learners in certain classes: 24 teachers participated.
- Two farm school: 5 teachers participated.
- One school in an informal settlement: 9 teachers took part.
- Two former Department of Education and Training (Ex-DET) schools with special classes for mildly intellectually disabled learners (schools in the township): 15 teachers participated.,
- Two former Transvaal Education Department (Ex-TED) schools with special classes for mildly intellectually disabled learners: 17 teachers took part.

In all the schools that took part, all teachers in the foundation phase took part in the study. Altogether, 70 teachers participated in the study.

These schools reflect the following variables: urban, rural (farm), township, inner city, township, informal settlement, special class, ordinary class, special schools for severely intellectually disabled, special class for mildly intellectually disabled and ex-Department of Education and Training and ex-Transvaal Education Department.

Mertens (1998:255) warns that every “researcher must also acknowledge that the intended sample might differ from the obtained sample” because of a number of factors such as, for example, the fact that some people might choose not to participate, some might be inaccessible and others might drop out of the study.

To ensure that the sample responds freely, the researcher enters into a contract with regard to the anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of their responses. In terms of this contract, the researcher may never reveal the identities of the respondents (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:44; Seidman 1998:51). Neuman (1994:438) defines anonymity and confidentiality as follows: “anonymity means that the subjects remain anonymous or nameless” and “confidentiality means that the information may have names attached to it, but the researcher holds it in confidence or keeps it secret from the public”. Taylor and Bogdan (1998:96) are of the opinion that if one does not ensure the complete anonymity of the respondents, some respondents may choose to conceal important information and details in order to avoid embarrassment, self-aggrandisement or even legal problems. In this study, the principle of anonymity and confidentiality was adhered to. The participants and their schools are never mentioned by name.

#### **5.3.4 Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument or procedure measures what it is supposed to measure (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh 1990:256; Best & Kahn 1993:208). External validity is the degree to which the findings can be generalised to the population from which the respondents have been drawn, and one aspect of external validity is population validity, which refers to “the degree to which

the sample is representative of the population from which the sample has been drawn” (Borg & Gall 1989:404).

This study may be generalised to a fair extent because the sample used was representative of the population, and because the variables took into account factors such as urban, rural, informal settlement, township, ex-Department of Education and Training, ex-Transvaal Education Department, special school, or ordinary school, special class and ordinary class.

Internal validity, on the other hand, is the degree “to which research findings can be distorted by extraneous variables” (Borg & Gall 1989:405). Borg and Gall (1989:405) refer to factors that may pose a threat to internal validity such as maturation, where changes occur in the subjects during the course of study, and experimental mortality (the loss of subjects during the course of study). They warn that these threats pose more of a problem as the length of study increases.

In this study, maturation may not pose a threat because the duration during which the interviews and the questionnaires were conducted was one month. No significant amount of maturation is expected within a period of one month. As far as mortality is concerned, loss of subjects was only caused by the number of respondents/teachers in certain schools (such as schools that practice multi-grade teaching where one teacher was responsible for three grades in one class). In this particular school, the three expected teachers were not available due to the fact that one educator is responsible for the foundation phase, grades 1, 2 and 3. This does not really constitute loss of subjects in the true sense of the word because the “loss” was not caused by withdrawal but rather by the unavailability of the expected respondents at the school.

The researcher used the following strategies advocated by Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:391-392) to increase internal validity:

- **Using participant language:** Whenever possible, the researcher used the language of the respondents to clarify issues. In case where the participants needed clarification, some of the questions were clarified using their mother tongue.

- **Field research:** The researcher conducted interviews and questionnaires in the respondents' natural settings – that is, at the schools and not in the researcher's office. The researcher visited the individual schools to conduct the study there.
- **Disciplined subjectivity:** The researcher undertook a lot of self-monitoring as she reviewed and questioned all phases of the research. From time to time, throughout the stages and steps of this study (cf 5.3.2), the researcher reflected on the processes.

The following are other issues that affect validity:

**Credibility** is concerned with the extent to which any correspondence might exist between the way in which the respondents perceive their social constructs and the way in which the researcher presents their points of view (Mertens 1998:181). To ensure the credibility of this study, the researcher used peer debriefing: this means that a disinterested peer will help the researcher to confront her values. The researcher also kept an open mind about what she finds.

**Transferability** has to do with the degree to which the results may be generalised to other situations (Mertens 1998:183; Marshall & Rossman 1995:143). To ensure transferability in this study, the researcher provided a sufficient amount of information for the reader to reach his or her own conclusions about the transferability of the study.

**Dependability or generalisability** is concerned with the quality and appropriateness of the enquiry process (Mertens 1998:184). This factor was ensured because the study should make vital contribution to the area of policy development and the transformation of education for mildly intellectually disabled learners. Marshall and Rossman (1995:145) warn that since the social world is always under construction, the concept of replication might be problematic. Kvale (1996:232) defines human beings as different individuals with different contexts of operation. This makes unlimited generalisability problematic. However, this study may be generalised to a fair extent because the sample was representative enough and a whole range of types of schools were involved.

**Confirmability** is concerned with the fact that the data should not be a figment of the researcher's imagination (Mertens 1998:184). According to Marshall and Rossman (1995:145), the general

findings have to be confirmed by the data. This is ensured by the fact that all data can be traced to its source.

### **5.3.5 Reliability**

According to Best and Kahn (1993:208) and Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990:256), reliability is the degree of consistency with which the instrument or procedure measures whatever it is supposed to measure. This means that the measuring instrument, if administered to a different group of respondents, under different circumstances, would lead to the same observations and conclusions (Mouton & Marais 1990:79).

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:81-90), the following factors may affect reliability:

#### **Researcher effects**

- The organisational affiliations of the researcher may lead to responses being biased simply because of the organisation to which he/she belongs.
- The image of the researcher may be that of a stranger, intruder or outsider.
- The distance between the researcher and respondents in terms of race, gender, status may lead to some degree of bias.

#### **Participant effects**

- The guinea-pig effect: Some respondents may experience the feeling that they are objects of experimentation may cause them (even inadvertently) to distort responses (and therefore results).
- Various factors that may cause bias are memory decay, the general decay in the ability to remember events and issues due to length of time that has elapsed between the occurrence of events or issues, the regularity with which the event or issue occurs, the relative importance of the issue, and the accessibility to relevant data relating to the event or issue.

- The omniscience syndrome: This means that respondents appear to believe in their ability to answer all questions.
- Interview saturation: This means that respondents are so used to surveys that they may end up responding mechanically or superficially.
- Role selection: This means that respondents decide what kind of persona they wish to present.
- Level of motivation: This depends on the interest in the topic at hand and the degree of threat posed by the questions.
- Skewed response patterns: This means that respondents may sometimes give answers that make them appear to be well-adjusted and open-minded.

### **Measuring instrument effects**

- This refers to the sequence of items in the measuring instrument, the length of the instrument, the sensitivity of items, leading questions, whether the questions are open or closed and fictitious attitudes.

### **Context effects**

- The context in which the interview/questionnaire is conducted, and whether or not the context is familiar, might affect the respondent's attitude.

Researcher effects, participant effects, measuring instrument effects, and context effects are addressed in this study below. Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:386-388) suggest that it is necessary to make the following factors explicit if one wishes to enhance reliability in design:

- The researcher's role and status: these are identified in this study. Personal and professional experiences that enable the researcher to empathise with the respondents are also mentioned. The very fact that the researcher is employed by the Gauteng Department of Education ensures that she is not an outsider in the study. On the contrary, she is a person who is in a position to contribute meaningfully to the implementation of the policy of inclusion.

- Informant selection: the researcher provided a careful description of the informants and the decision process which she used to select them. The informants were selected on the basis of their involvement in one way or the other in the education of mildly intellectually disabled learners.
- Social context: the researcher has provided a description of the people, the time and the place of the interview. Because teachers are interviewed at their place of work, an environment with which they are intimately familiar, it is assumed they do not feel intimidated. The variety of variables which have been incorporated into this study also enhance the findings: the research examines mildly intellectually disabled learners from the varying perspectives of (for example the MID learner in the regular class, the MID learner in the special class in a regular school, the MID learner in a special school, schools in different settings such as urban, rural, township, informal settlement, farm and inner city).
- Data collection strategies: the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire are discussed in detail.
- Data analysis strategies: the research describes her general strategies for data analysis and interpretation.
- The training manual for school support teams is also discussed in detail.
- Analytical premise: the researcher outlines the conceptual framework that informs the study

Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:389-391) suggest that the following aspects of the research need to be made explicit for the reliability of the data collection to be enhanced:

- Verbatim account: Participants are quoted verbatim.
- Low inference descriptors: The researcher uses concrete and precise descriptions in her elaboration of interviews. Literal terms as used and understood by participants.
- Participant researcher: Participants corroborate what the researcher has recorded.
- Member checking: The researcher confirms meanings with participants.
- Participant review: Participants are asked to review a synthesis of the data obtained from them so that they can modify any misrepresentations of meaning.
- Negative cases and discrepant data: Negative cases or cases that negate emerging patterns are recorded.

It is important to note that the researcher has complied with every one of the above requirements in order to enhance the reliability of the study.

## **5.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

### **5.4.1 Measuring instruments**

#### **5.4.1.1 *Questionnaire***

A questionnaire is used as a **response recording schedule**. The study also assumes that data can be collected through self-report (Marshall & Rossman 1995:96).

The questionnaire is also used as an **interview schedule** or **interview guide** for semi-structured interviews. Neuman (1994:225) defines an interview schedule as follows: “An interview schedule is a set of questions read to the respondent by the interviewer who also records the responses.”

Kvale (1996:129) refers to the interview schedule as an interview guide and explains that “an interview guide indicates topics and their sequence in the interview. The guide can contain just some rough topics to be covered or it can be a detailed sequence of carefully worded questions”. In the case of this study, the questions in the questionnaires were carefully worded so that they could be used in semi-structured interviews. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998:105-106), key topics are explored and probing is used for follow-up and for clarification in an interview guide.

Mertens (1998:323) regards the use of a questionnaire for guiding a research interview as discretionary in qualitative research. In his opinion, it serves the following functions. Firstly, it is used to ensure that the researcher covers all the terrain in the same order for each participant or groups of participants. Secondly, it is used to ensure the scheduling of prompts which are necessary to manufacture distance. Thirdly, it is used to establish direction and scope for the discussion. Finally, it allows the researcher to give all her/his attention to the participant’s testimony.

It needs to be said that for the purpose of this study, the researcher recorded responses from semi-structured interviews using mostly key words. This was due to the issue of anonymity and confidentiality, and the researcher agreed to do without the help of a tape recorder. However, the responses for the questionnaires were recorded using the questionnaires as response recording schedules.

In designing the questionnaires, Neuman (1994:226-230) cautions that the following principles are important in the design of a good questionnaire:

- Avoid jargon, slang and abbreviations. If one uses technical terms (jargon), language particular to a sub-culture (slang) and abbreviations, one is making the assumption that everybody is familiar with the language used. This might not necessarily be the case.
- Avoid ambiguity, confusion and vagueness. The confusion caused by ambiguity causes inconsistencies in how meaning is interpreted by different respondents and in how they answer questions.
- Avoid emotional language and prestige bias. The language used has to be as neutral as possible so that respondents can avoid reacting to irrelevant emotional issues rather than to the question at hand.
- Avoid double-barrelled questions. Two or more questions should not be joined together. Ask questions separately if more than one issue is involved.
- Avoid leading questions. "A leading (loaded) question is one that leads the respondent to choose one response over another by its wording" (Neuman 1994:228). Questions should be framed in such a way that all responses may be regarded as legitimate.
- Avoid asking questions that exceed respondents' capacity to respond. Questions should address what all respondents know if one hopes to obtain good quality responses.
- Avoid false premises. If you start a question with a premise, and for some reason the respondent disagrees with it, this will frustrate the respondent who might not know how to answer.
- Avoid asking questions about future intentions. Questions about what people might do under hypothetical circumstances are poor predictors of behaviour and are therefore unreliable.

- Avoid double negatives. In ordinary language, double negatives are grammatically wrong and are confusing.
- Avoid overlapping and unbalanced response categories. Choices and response categories should do not overlap. Choices must be available for all respondents.

The researcher has taken great care to adhere to all the above principles in her compilation of the questionnaire.

A questionnaire as an instrument of gathering data has both advantages and disadvantages. For the purpose of this study, the following are the advantages of questionnaires – as outlined by (Marshall & Rossman 1995:100-101):

- Data from questionnaires is easy to manipulate and categorise for data analysis.
- A questionnaire is easy to administer and manage.
- A questionnaire is easily quantifiable and amenable to statistical analysis.
- It is easy to establish generalisability with a questionnaire.
- A questionnaire facilitates analysis, validity checks and triangulation.

A questionnaire as an instrument for gathering data has to have both open-ended (open) and closed-ended (closed) questions. Neuman (1994:232) describes these types of questions as follows: “An open-ended (unstructured, free-response) question asks a question ... to which respondents can give any answer. A close-ended (structured, fixed-response) question both asks the question and gives the respondent fixed responses to choose from.”

The advantages for both types of questions, as outlined by Newman (1994:233), namely closed and open, serve the purpose of this study .

**For closed questions, the following are the advantages:**

- They are easier and quicker for respondents to answer.
- The answers of different respondents are easier to compare.

- Answers are easier to code and analyse statistically.
- The response choices can clarify the meaning of the question for respondents.
- Respondents are more likely to answer questions about sensitive topics.
- There are fewer irrelevant and confused answers to questions.
- Less articulate and less literate respondents are not at a disadvantage.
- Replication is easier.

**For open questions, on the other hand, the following are advantages**

- They allow for an unlimited number of possible answers.
- Respondents may answer in detail and can qualify and clarify responses.
- Unanticipated findings can be discovered.
- They permit adequate answers to complex issues.
- They encourage creativity, self-expression and richness of detail.
- They reveal the respondent's logic, thinking processes and frame of reference

The researcher in this study deliberately provided a mixture of closed and open types of questions. By doing this she hoped to minimise the disadvantages of both kinds of questions (Neuman 1994:234). In the case of this study, the questionnaire is used in conjunction with the interview so that the disadvantages which inherent in the questionnaire could be minimised. The questionnaire itself contains both types of questions: open and closed questions. The questionnaire is attached as **Annexure A**.

### **The validity and reliability of questionnaires**

According to Best and Kahn (1993:242), "Basic to the validity of a questionnaire is asking the right questions, phrased in the least ambiguous way." The meaning of terms used in this study are universally understood by the respondents who all deal with learners with special educational needs in their classes. On the other hand, reliability may be enhanced by the second administration of the questionnaire (Best & Kahn 1993:245). In this study, the questionnaire was administered to different groups of respondents in different school settings, thereby enhancing reliability.

#### 5.4.1.2 *Semi-structured interviews*

Interviews are also used to gather data. According to Kvale (1996:1), “The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.” Lancy (1993:17) regards an interview as a conversation. Furthermore, Kvale (1996:6) explains that an interview as a conversation has a specific structure and a specific purpose because “it goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and it becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge”.

For the purpose of this study, interviews, especially semi-structured interviews, have the following advantages as described by Marshall and Rossman (1995:81) and Neuman (1994:245) as follows:

- They have the higher response rate.
- Surroundings and non-verbal responses (body language) may be observed.
- All types of questions may be asked (Neuman 1994:245).
- Large amounts of data are quickly obtained.
- In group interviews, a wide variety of information is gathered across a large number of subjects.
- Immediate follow-up is possible through probes.
- One is able to elicit the meanings that people confer on everyday activities (Marshall & Rossman 1995:81).

This study makes particular use of **semi-structured interviews**. These interviews are conducted in groups. In group interviews, a group of people are brought together and are encouraged to talk about a subject of interest (Lancy 1993:18; Bogdan & Biklen 1998:100). Mertens (1998:321) notes that the advantage with such interviews is that they “can be conducted as part of participant observation”. Another advantage of semi-structured interviews, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1992:97), is the fact that they provide one with an opportunity to obtain comparable data across subjects. Kvale (1996:27) notes that another advantage of the semi-structured interview is that it strikes a balance in that it is neither a highly structured questionnaire nor an open conversation, and that it may be conducted according to an interview guide.

## **The validity and reliability of interviews**

According to Best and Kahn (1993:254), “validity is greater when the interview is based upon a carefully designed structure, thus ensuring that the significant information is elicited”. In this study, the interview guide was used to elicit the desired information. On the other hand, reliability is enhanced by restating the question in a slightly different form at a later stage in the interview (Best & Kahn 1993:254). In this study, questions of importance were repeated in another form to determine if responses given at the end of the interview would match responses at the beginning of the interview.

### **5.4.1.3 *Triangulation***

*Triangulation* refers to the use of multiple methods in the collection of data (Seale 1999:54) in order to compensate for the limitations of each method (Mouton & Marais 1990:91). Triangulation may take place on a number of levels, namely, data triangulation, investigator triangulation and methodological triangulation (Flick 1998:229-230; Patton 1990:466-469).

In this study, a number of sources such as journals, books, theses and documents from the Gauteng Department of Education and the National Department of Education were used (data triangulation). Two colleagues were requested to evaluate the questionnaire (investigator triangulation). A combination of methods was used (methodological triangulation) in the sense that the study began with a literature review, which is both descriptive and comparative in nature. Furthermore, the questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were used. The qualitative analysis was used in those cases where respondents were given an opportunity to elaborate on their responses. In this instance, an open coding was used because analysis was performed phrase by phrase (Strauss & Corbin 1990:72).

The questions were mainly objective in nature, although from time to time respondents were given a chance to give their opinions. It took approximately twenty minutes for an individual respondent to answer the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview took another twenty minutes. A discussion was held after school in which the researcher explained to the group of respondent-teachers, how they were to deal with the questionnaire. At the school situated in the informal

settlement, three teachers were required per grade because of the large learner population in the particular school. Two teachers per grade were required in all the other schools.

The study was undertaken in Pretoria because Pretoria falls under the Gauteng Department of Education (hereinafter referred to as GDE). The questionnaire was administered in four of the North Region Districts, i.e. N1 in Atteridgeville, N2 in Mamelodi, N3 in the inner city centre and N4 in Soshanguve. This was done because a study of all the provinces and even the whole GDE would be massive in nature and would require vast and extensive resources. While such a study would be desirable, financial constraints would make it completely unfeasible. Having said that, it needs to be said that this study covered a wide range of school types, with different variables and dynamics at work, such as rural, urban, special, regular, informal settlement, township and finally, Ex-TED and Ex-DET model. Generalisation for South Africa as a whole was not the object of this research, although the proposed model can be - with a few adaptations - of use in all the schools in the country.

One questionnaire and one interview guide was used for all the teachers of the different schools mentioned above. No questionnaire was administered to the learners themselves because of the nature of their disability. All the responses to the questionnaire were treated with the strictest confidence and the respondents were totally anonymous.

#### **5.4.1.4      *Method of administering the instruments***

The questionnaires were administered and interviews were conducted in the following types of schools:

- Three special schools for severely intellectually disabled learners, each accommodating a number of learners with mild intellectual disability (24 respondents)
- Two farm schools (5 respondents)
- One school in an informal settlement (9 respondents)
- Two schools formerly administered by DET, with a special classes for mildly intellectually disabled learners (in the township) (15 respondents)
- Two schools formerly administered by TED, with a special classes for mildly intellectually disabled learners (in the metropolitan area) (17 respondents)

**TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 70**

- Finally, teachers at twenty schools were trained in the use of the training manual for school support teams during the pilot phase of the study.

#### **5.4.1.5 *Preliminary arrangements***

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:80) advise one to negotiate with the relevant controlling administrators before administering the questionnaire and conducting interviews. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995:69), the researcher should introduce himself/herself in writing and supply details about the background of the study in which individuals are expected to participate. **Annexure B** reproduces the memo which requested permission from the department to conduct the study. **Annexure C** is the letter in which the GDE granted permission for the researcher to go ahead with the study.

#### **5.4.1.6 *Pilot testing the questionnaire***

According to Mertens (1998:117), “pilot testing your questionnaire means that you try it out with a small sample similar to your intended group of respondents”. Pilot testing is done so that one can establish face validity and to improve questions (Cresswell 1994:121). Marshall & Rossman (1995:96) are of the opinion that questions have to be pilot tested on a small group to determine the usefulness and reliability of the instrument before it is administered to a larger group of respondents. When this questionnaire was pilot tested, it became evident that no provision had been made for respondents to comment on issues they felt had been excluded from the study. Provision was then made in the instrument for such a comment. A somewhat vague question about the description of “feelings” was restructured.

#### **5.4.2 *Data analysis and interpretation***

Bogdan and Biklen (1998:157) define data analysis as follows: “Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others.” According to Patton (1990:374), the first task of analysis is description. In description one asks basic questions.

Patton (1990:376) outlines the following strategies for analysing data: *the case analysis*, in which a case study for each group being studied is described, and *the cross-case analysis*, in which answers from different people to common questions are grouped together. In this study, the researcher used both strategies, namely, the case analysis, where the responses were studied and then analysed per school, and the cross-case analysis, where answers were grouped according to commonality of questions and were referred to as “factors”.

The following principles for qualitative data analysis are described by Mertens (1998:350-351):

- Analysis is not a once-off event that takes place at the end of the study. It occurs periodically throughout the study as the researcher seeks to identify similarities, differences, categories, correspondences, concepts and ideas.
- The analysis process is not rigid; it is systematic and comprehensive.
- Reflective activities in the analysis process generate sets of notes that record the process itself. This ensures accountability.
- Once the data has been read as a whole, it is divided into smaller, more meaningful units.
- The data analysis procedure is analytic in nature because segments of data are organised into a system which is derived from the data itself.
- Comparison, which is the main analytic process, is used to build and refine categories, discover patterns and even define similarities.
- The categories are flexible and may be modified as needed as further analysis occurs.
- The research findings have to reflect the respondents’ perceptions and cannot therefore be mechanistic.
- The data analysis process generates a higher-order synthesis which is framed in terms of a descriptive picture, theme or theory.

Data analysis, although not similar to interpretation, is connected to it in that it leads to interpretation. **Interpretation** takes place on the basis of the data that has been sorted, analysed, retrieved and manipulated. According to Neuman (1994:323), coherent meaning and significance is then assigned to the data to make it understandable. Neuman (1994:324) also notes that the meaning assigned begins with the view points of the people being studied – in other words, how they see and define their situation. The data is weaved into discussions and descriptions of particular events, and numerical data only supplements the textual evidence in this kind of study (Neuman 1994:324).

Cresswell (1994:147) alludes to the fact that because “qualitative research is interpretative research”, it is therefore imperative that the researcher be on the lookout for biases, values and judgements (assumptions). Marshall and Rossman (1995:145) offer the following suggestions to balance the bias in interpretation (the researcher has attempted in this study to follow each of these suggestions):

- Ask a research partner to critically question the researcher’s analysis.
- Negative instances should be constantly checked.
- Data has to be checked and rechecked for rival issues.
- The researcher has to practise value-free note-taking.
- The researcher has to follow the guidance of previous researchers when controlling for data quality.
- An audit of the data collection and analytic strategies may be conducted.

All of the above recommendations were implemented in this study because some of the teachers who participated were also asked to review the analysis and decide whether or not the findings reflected their views. Negative instances and rival issues were checked and recorded. A colleague was asked to act as a research partner and evaluate the findings. The notes taken by the researcher were value-free and the works of other researchers were consulted for guidance.

## **5.5 THE TRAINING MANUAL FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS (SST)**

A training manual for SST was designed to assist teachers in supporting learners with special educational needs, with particular reference to the mildly intellectually disabled in the ordinary classroom situation (see **Annexure D**). After the results of the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were analysed, it was necessary to come up with an instrument which could be used to assist teachers in their endeavour to accommodate diversity in their classrooms.

The manual addresses issues relating to reading, writing and mathematics (literacy and numeracy), in the foundation phase, the areas in which most of these learners struggle. This manual was implemented as a pilot study in which teachers from 20 schools in Soshanguve, a township just outside Pretoria were trained. Feedback was received from the teachers who participated in the training, with the view to the implementation of these teaching approaches in the classrooms. On the

basis of the feedback received, it became necessary to review and refine the manual. The refined manual is discussed in detail in chapter seven of this study.

## 5.6 SYNTHESIS

The study is qualitative and uses words and sentences. It is believed that human beings have ideas and feelings, and that they are driven by motives which they are able to express in *words*.

The sampling procedure used is the one of discriminate sampling, in which the researcher chose sites that would yield the desired information. The subjects were anonymous and the information was highly confidential. The sample used in this particular study was a reflection of a number of variables such as urban, rural (farm), township, inner city, township, informal settlement, and ordinary class, ex-DET, ex-TED, special class for mildly intellectually disabled learners, and special school for the severely intellectually disabled.

The questionnaire was used as a response-recording schedule and also as an interview schedule to guide the semi-structured interview. Both types of questions, namely closed and open questions, were used in the questionnaire in order to eliminate the disadvantages associated with both. A semi-structured interview was used to eliminate the disadvantages that go together with a questionnaire as a single method for gathering data. The questionnaire was pilot tested at one school before it was administered on a full scale at ten schools.

Preliminary arrangements were made to obtain permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the study in some of their schools. On the basis of feedback received from the schools, the manual was then refined. The refined instrument is discussed in chapter seven.

A training manual was designed and implemented in 20 schools to help teachers to support mildly intellectually disabled learners. On the basis of feedback received from schools during the implementation of the manual, the instrument was then refined. The refined manual is discussed in chapter 7.

In the next chapter, results are tabulated, analysed, interpreted and their implications are outlined.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION: ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter sets out the results of the empirical investigation by tabulating the data which was obtained from responses to the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews at the various schools included in the sample. A comparison is also made between findings from the literature study and the empirical investigation, and the implications of the findings are set out after the presentation of the analysis and interpretation. The implications are set out in terms of their significance on three levels, namely, the macro level, the meso level and the micro level.

The empirical study confirms those suppositions that the researcher suggested at the beginning of the study. Issues that were identified as crucial in the literature study are reflected very strongly in the empirical study.

#### **6.2 A COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM DIFFERENT SCHOOLS**

The following are acronyms used in this section of the study to facilitate quick references:

CLBT:	Centre of Learning-Based Team
DST:	District Support Team
ESS:	Education Support Services
EAS:	Education Auxiliary Services (used in certain instances interchangeably for ESS)
Ex-DET:	Ex-Department of Education and Training
Ex-TED:	Ex-Transvaal Education Department
GDE:	Gauteng Department of Education
IEP:	Individual Education Plan

LSEN:	Learners with Special Educational Needs
MID:	Mildly intellectually disabled
OBE:	Outcomes-Based Education
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMT:	School Management Team
SST:	School Support Team

What follows below is a comparison of findings from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

While the questionnaire actually comprised thirty one (31) questions, the questions were grouped so that they fitted into eleven (11) categorical factors or themes. The comparative summary below was undertaken on the basis of the eleven (11) factors mentioned above and the various responses obtained from the different schools in the sample.

#### **6.2.1 Factor one: Manifestation of learning difficulties and reasons why the learners were classified as such**

##### **(a) Informal settlement**

The school has 1265 learners. It was mentioned that it was too early in the year to determine if learners are slow or if they will improve with time. There are learners who experience difficulty in trying to transcribe material from the chalkboard to their books, while others are unable to carry out instructions. Learners are said to be deficient in concentration and their language is not clear, while others have been pushed up to the next grade on the grounds that they had become too old for their previous grade. Most learners have difficulties with reading, writing and counting. Some are classified as MID because they fail repeatedly until they drop out of school.

**(b) Farm schools**

Farm school A has 412 learners. In this school, it was mentioned that learners are too slow and are not able to cope - even when they are given the necessary support. It was reported that other learners forget facts quickly, and some are “condoned” because failing more than twice is not allowed. What this means in effect is that these learners have been “condoned” to the next grade even though they have not yet mastered the learning matter or curriculum from their previous grade. Such learners will reach higher grades without knowing how to read and write.

In farm school B, which has 81 learners, learners were said to experience difficulties in communicating. It was also noted that they need time to understand what is being presented to them. These problems might well be explicable in terms of the use of English as a language of learning and teaching for children who are not native speakers of English.

**(c) Special schools**

In special school A, which has 150 learners, it was mentioned that learners are unable to read, write or do mathematics, while others are not able to copy from the chalkboard. A number of them were referred to a special school because they were making slow progress as learners in an ordinary school. When this happens, it often means that the learner concerned has been erroneously placed at a special school for learners with severe intellectual disability because he/she has not made adequate progress in an ordinary school. It is possible that such learners are MID.

In special school B there are 96 learners. Since most of the responses given were not relevant to the questions asked, the respondents might have misunderstood the question. The responses pointed to the fact that learners are individuals and that they should be treated as such. There are those who will acquire knowledge while others will acquire skills. These are important assertions because learners should not be forced into a mould that does not suit them. Those that are capable of acquiring skills should be given the opportunity to do so. The same principle applies to those who are predisposed towards mastering various kinds of abstract knowledge.

In special school C, which has 131 learners, respondents mentioned the fact that learners exhibit the characteristics of MID and learning disability. The question that one then has to ask is: What is a learner with a learning disability doing in a school for learners with severe intellectual disability? More harm than good is done to these learners in such a school. Respondents also complained that learners have a short attention span and time is wasted when things have to be repeated over and over again. This response reveals that the teachers at this school do not understand the nature of the child with a severe intellectual disability. Learners with severe intellectual disability are characterised by poor attention span, and are only able to remember and store information in their memories if the teacher uses (among other methods) patient rehearsal and repetition. These teachers are clearly not trained or skilled to work with either severely intellectually disabled or the MID learners

**(d) Ex-DET schools**

In ex-DET school A there are 724 learners. Respondents mentioned that learners are manifesting below average performances. Respondents also noted that learners who fail repeatedly migrate from one school to another in order to escape having to repeat grades. The problems which characterise these pupils include difficulties with concentration, an inability to read and write, slow progress, and a lack of interest in school work.

The same problems were noted in ex-DET school B, which has 658 learners. Moving from one school to another in order to escape failure creates more problems than it might solve because when a learner moves to another school, the teachers in the new school will have no idea about the strategies that were implemented in order to assist the learner in his or her previous school. The learner's progress may even be retarded if the new school uses strategies with which the learner is unfamiliar. If the learner had remained at the same school, at least his or her progress could have been monitored and the DST could have been called in to provide assistance.

**(e) Ex-TED schools**

Ex-TED school A has 994 learners. Teachers were not allowed to respond to the interviews but could only answer the questionnaire. The principal only permitted the researcher to deliver her

questionnaire and then collect it three days later. The principal's excuse for not being cooperative was that the teachers were so busy that they would not have time for interviews. The principal said that teachers needed to go home and rest after school and not be bogged down with interviews.

It was mentioned in the questionnaires that grade one learners were still busy with perceptual programmes and that it was therefore difficult to say whether learners were immature or whether they would not cope adequately with learning in the future. It was mentioned that the problems were experienced mainly by learners from townships, because they did not have a proper background, and as such, they had developed backlogs in their development. This emphasises the poor socio-economic conditions in which these learners have grown up. Most of the learners from townships do not have the necessary language skills for learning in English. This language barrier (the use of language that is different from the home language of the learners) is regarded as a crucial problem and a cause of communication problems and deficiencies.

When the researcher contacted the ex-TED school B with 605 learners over the telephone, she was given permission to conduct the interviews, but when she arrived at the school, she was told to pick up the questionnaires the following day. Teachers were not allowed to participate in the interviews; they were only allowed to answer the questionnaire.

Answers to the questionnaire revealed that the language of teaching and learning is different from the home language of learners and that learners therefore make little or no progress because they do not understand English at all. This implies that the children first need to be *taught* English if they are to be successfully educated in English.

### **6.2.2 Factor two: ways in which learners are assisted**

#### **(a) Informal settlement**

It was reported that learners who cannot read and write are allowed to respond orally, and others are allowed to progress at their own pace while others are given extra work to do at home. Another response indicated that these learners need to be referred to a remedial class in which there is no

overcrowding. The problem with giving extra work to a learner who is experiencing learning difficulties is that this learner is likely to be overwhelmed and therefore not do the work at all. It is also not realistic to talk about “referral to a remedial class” when such facilities simply do not exist. Teachers should rather use what is currently available to them to help these learners.

**(b) Farm schools**

The respondent in farm school A noted that learners are given work that is commensurate with their abilities since no special schools exist in the area. Those who failed to benefit from the help that is given to them ultimately fail and drop out of the education system to work on farms.

The respondent at farm school B noted that there were no specific ways of helping the learners and that although the teacher uses OBE, this may not be sufficient for assisting the MID.

**(c) Special schools**

In special school A, it is the Head of Department who provides assistance. In addition, lessons are planned in accordance with OBE principles and learners are given training in life skills.

In special school B, a system of peer tutoring is used. This means that weaker learners are assisted by stronger ones.

In special school C, teachers often hold conferences after school to discuss how they may provide assistance to particular learners who are experiencing difficulties. In these conferences, the problems of providing life skills for learners with intellectual disability feature very prominently. While it is taken for granted that teachers at such schools have the necessary skills for providing such assistance, they in fact reported that they do not have such skills because they have not been trained in them.

**(d) Ex-DET schools**

In ex-DET school A, the assistance that learners need is determined from examining their scholastic performance. Appropriate teaching aids are used. The MID learners are assisted during flexi-time. It was also mentioned that learners are unique and the MID learners can be assisted to develop their maximum potential if teachers are prepared to sacrifice their spare time.

In ex-DET school B, the learner is given work that suits his/her level of development because there are no specific programmes for the MID learners. The issue of skills for these learners is regarded as an important matter in this school.

**(e) Ex-TED schools**

In ex-TED school A, the staff holds discussions with parents so that they can identify ways to help learners. They also use language programmes to assist learners. Teachers are prevented by big classes and a lack of time from helping them as much as they would like to. Language programmes in these contexts are vitally important.

In ex-TED school B, individual attention and remedial work is provided. If no progress is made, the learner is referred to an LSEN class where the LSEN teacher takes charge of the intervention programme. LSEN teachers are crucially important because they can guide learners through specifically designed programmes. Such teachers have been specifically trained to assist such learners.

**6.2.3 Factor three: the teacher's feelings when teaching MID learners and the reasons for these feelings**

In the school in the informal settlement, no response was given to this question.

In farm school B, the teacher experiences feelings of frustration because she does not know how to assist LSEN and the MID learners in the context of multi-grade teaching. The teacher has no specific

skills in multi-grade teaching and she feels that the first graders need to be given more attention so that they don't fail in the future. Assistance from ESS is also not forthcoming. This finding suggests that teachers in such schools need assistance to deal with multi-grade classrooms.

In special schools, the respondents feel that they are not able to help the MID learners adequately because of their lack of skills in dealing with MID. The respondents mentioned that they feel frustrated because although the MID learners are supposed to be better than those with severe intellectual disability, they find that the MID learners cannot read, write or do mathematics.

In the ex-DET school A, teachers feel pity for these learners because, although they will be the parents of tomorrow, they are not competent in any specific skills.

In ex-DET school B, teachers are concerned that the MID learners are likely to reach the stage of being over-aged before they have acquired any marketable skills.

The ex-TED schools did not respond to this question.

#### **6.2.4 Factor four: necessary training and qualifications needed for teaching the MID learners**

##### **(a) Informal settlement**

Although teachers have attended remedial courses, what they learned in these courses is inadequate for dealing with the problems which they encounter. This suggests that all teachers need a much more intensive programme of training to be able to cope with the MID learners. The respondents also noted that the training for CLBT which is being offered by the particular district office in which the school is situated should be more thorough, in-depth and focused so that teachers who have been trained will be competent to assist learners in their classes. Respondents believe that an adequate training would equip teachers with strategies, methods and programmes for assisting the MID learners.

**(b) Farm schools**

In farm school A, one teacher has completed a remedial course but this teacher is not being utilised as a remedial teacher because the time for remediation is limited. This suggests that if such a teacher could be relieved of other teaching duties, he or she would be able to concentrate on remediation.

No teacher in farm school B has any training in remedial work. Because of this, no professional assistance can be given to the MID learners.

**(c) Special schools**

In special school A, teachers are not trained to deal with the MID learners. While they are trained to deal with the severely intellectually disabled, they do have MID learners in their classes. Teachers, however, have taken the initiative to educate themselves as far as possible by reading books on the MID.

In special school B, in-service training is given in remedial work and teachers keep abreast of development on LSEN matters.

In special school C, no teacher has any formal training on how to cope with the MID learners. It is only experience itself that exposes them to such learners. Since teachers in the special schools take the initiative to learn about the MID, one might realistically expect them to welcome training in educating the MID learners.

**(d) Ex-DET schools**

Teachers at the ex-DET school A received training on remediation while they had level classes attached to their school. These classes have since been abolished.

Teachers at the ex-DET school B have received no training at all in educating the MID learners.

Even though teachers in both ex-DET schools are untrained, they are confronted on a daily basis with the MID learners. If these teachers are properly trained, they will be able to make a positive contribution to assisting these learners.

**(e) Ex-TED schools**

In the ex-TED schools A and B, only the so-called LSEN teachers have been trained to help LSEN and the MID learners. It is not surprising therefore that once learners with difficulties are identified, such learners are referred to the LSEN class for assistance and remediation.

With regard to the qualifications that are needed to teach the MID learners, the responses were the same in all the schools. Respondents from all schools were of the opinion that qualifications needed to be supported by experience. Even though teachers might have the best qualifications in the world, they will not be able to assist LSEN and the MID learners without proper experience. It is a truism that a diploma in special education needs to be supplemented with adequate hands-on experience.

**6.2.5 Factor five: Problems encountered in teaching MID learners and the ways in which these problems are overcome**

**(a) Informal settlement**

The problem mentioned by respondents was that because OBE involves so much work, teachers do not have enough time to give attention to individual learners. Since teachers perennially complain about their workloads, it is hardly surprising that they also complain about OBE. Another problem which the respondents identified is that teachers are not trained in the different methods that they have to use to reach all learners.

**(b) Farm schools**

The respondents in farm school A mentioned that because teachers have no skills and apparatus, they are unable to meet the demands of the curriculum. They receive a little help from the CLBT. This suggests that teachers cannot be expected to cover the whole curriculum in a given time while

simultaneously accommodating LSEN and the MID learners by working with them on an individual basis. In addition, the absence of resources such as libraries makes it difficult for teachers to instil a love for reading in learners.

The teachers in farm school B do multi-grade teaching. The foundation phase, and grades 1, 2 and 3, are all taught by one teacher. The only respondent was therefore the teacher for the foundation phase. The respondent felt that they have always practised inclusion at the school because no facilities are available for dealing with LSEN. In addition, she mentioned the fact that each teacher is responsible for more than one grade. She believes that if one considers the diversity that is present in *one* class of first graders, it becomes easy to imagine the diversity that will be present when three grades are combined in one.

In farm school B, the respondents stated that these learners have to be sent to a special school in which teachers are specially trained. Since such schools unfortunately do not exist at all in rural areas, it is imperative that teachers attempt to help such learners in whatever way they can while they wait to be transferred to such schools. The referral to a special school usually never materialises. Assistance can be sought from the DST.

### **(c) Special schools**

The respondents in special school A felt that the problems related to distractibility, short attention span and reversals, and they sought solutions by involving parents in the problem-solving process.

In special school B, the respondents felt that the problems of learners were attributable to their deprived family backgrounds. They felt that problems could be overcome if the learners were allowed to learn how to use concrete objects and if they could be assisted with rehearsal strategies.

In special school C, the respondents felt that problems were solved by means of group work, individualisation and the exercise of patience when dealing with the MID learners. The strategies which the respondents mentioned (strategies such as the use of concrete materials, rehearsal, group work and individualisation) are valuable for educating the MID learners.

**(d) Ex-DET schools**

A problem of sexual and physical abuse of learners was evident in the ex-DET school A. It was mentioned that the MID learners are prone to sexual abuse because of their poor social skills and low intellectual capacity. This means that teachers have to receive training on how to counsel learners who are being abused and give guidance to the MID learners on how to avoid being sexually abused. Training on the prevention of child abuse in general is needed.

Learners are reported to start school without being ready. The issue of school readiness is a controversial one because learners are expected to start school in the year in which they turn seven - even if a learner only turns seven at the end of the year. As may be expected, learners who turn seven at the end of the year may not necessarily be as school ready as those who turn seven at the beginning of the year. The argument of the Department of Education is that keeping a learner for an extra year at home or at a pre-school will not necessarily make a learner more school ready, but rather, programmes to help such learners should be implemented when these learners are already in school. Because this is policy, it has to be implemented. One teacher mentioned hard work and prayer as ways of overcoming problems for the MID learners.

In the ex-DET school B, respondents mentioned lack of training as a problem. In this school, special classes for mildly intellectually disabled learners have been abolished and unfortunately the school is still labelled by the community as a school for “crazy” learners. The respondents felt that the presence of such learners in the classes retards the progress of others. Teachers are then unable to complete the curriculum and are also unable to write profiles for learners. These learners desperately need individual attention and it is impossible to give it because teachers are generally pressured by the principal to complete their work, while principals in turn are pressured by the district officials. There is thus no time to give that individual attention which such learners desperately need. This problem is exacerbated by the large classes which teachers have to deal with. Teachers at this particular school seem discouraged, hopeless and reluctant to help learners who struggle with school work. Such an attitude denies these learners their opportunity to learn.

**(e) Ex-TED schools**

In the ex-TED school A, respondents mentioned that time is not available to help LSEN and the MID learners. The problem of using second language as language of teaching and learning was mentioned. These problems are solved by holding afternoon classes, doing remedial work and by using different approaches. Respondents believe that OBE lends itself to the improvement of language skills.

In the ex-TED school B, respondents mentioned prayer as an interventionist strategy in addition to individualisation and group work.

When asked what specific programmes were needed, teachers indicated that they use individualisation and group work. Other teachers also use a combination of the two methods and alternate them as they need to. Peer tutoring (stronger learners assisting weaker ones) is also used from time to time. This is helpful because it has been established that some learners learn more effectively from their peers than from adults.

In general, a lower pupil-teacher ratio is seen as a factor that affects efforts to help these learners because large classes make it impossible to assist LSEN and the MID learners. Respondents also mentioned that no specific programmes are available for LSEN and the MID learners, and that was the reason why special schools had adapted their existing programmes to assist LSEN and the MID learners.

**6.2.6 Factor six: support from the SMT**

A general feeling exists in all the schools that the SMT does not provide necessary support because they themselves do not know how to deal with LSEN and because they also lack skills and knowledge about how to deal with these learners. Respondents in the informal settlement branded the SMT as non-caring because they sit in their offices and it is the teacher alone who faces the problem of LSEN and the MID learners in the classes.

In the farm school B the SMT is not supportive because the principal himself is faced with a multi-grade classroom in which he does not know how to help three different grades in one class, let alone LSEN and the MID learners. The SMT does not give the necessary support to teachers simply because the principal, who is the sole member of the SMT also teaches two grades in one class. After school, the principal concentrates mostly on office work.

In the special schools, the SMT is responsible for giving in-service training on LSEN. Feedback sessions are also held in which problems of the learners who struggle in the classes are discussed. In special school C the SMT is criticised for discouraging others and not being consistent in following the correct procedures.

In ex-TED schools, it is LSEN teachers who give support to learners and teachers, and not the SMT.

#### **6.2.7 Factor seven: support from the parents**

##### **(a) Informal settlement**

It was reported that parents are uninvolved because they do not know how to read and write. Poverty was mentioned as a reason for non-involvement.

##### **(b) Farm schools**

Respondents in both farm schools mentioned that because parents are farm labourers, they are difficult to contact. The respondents are worried by the fact that there are parents who do not show up if they are contacted because they have to work - even during weekends. The teachers accused parents of not showing any interest in their children's work. Respondents in farm school A reported that farm owners assisted children with their homework because their parents cannot read or write.

##### **(c) Special schools**

Respondents in the special schools mentioned that some learners stay with grandparents, who may even be too old to come to the school even if they are summoned. Parents are reported to deny the

fact that their children are intellectually disabled. Perhaps this explains why learners are sent away to stay with old grandparents: their absence prevents parents from being stigmatised. The issue of illiteracy was also important for the parents of learners at special schools in the sense that some of the parents to these learners are illiterate.

One respondent came out strongly against parents who use illiteracy as an excuse for not being involved. She mentioned that there are several ways in which parents can be involved without having to read and write.

The involvement of the School Governing Body (SGB) was identified at special school B as a strategy that might work. Respondents believed that the SGB could approach the parents and invite them to participate in activities in the school. Life skills and preparation for jobs were identified as an important factor in the education of these learners.

**(d) Ex-DET schools**

Respondents mentioned that the Black communities do not have the culture of getting involved in the schools. One mentioned, “our society does not know about parent involvement”. This suggests that Black parents are not necessarily empowered about issues of parental involvement and the role they can play in the education of their children.

**(e) Ex-TED schools**

The issue of illiteracy was also important in the ex-TED schools. Respondents felt that if parents were not sufficiently literate, they would invariably not be able to get involved in helping their children with their schoolwork.

## **6.2.8 Factor eight: support from the GDE**

### **(a) Informal settlement**

Respondents mentioned that the GDE support is restricted to learner profiles and OBE training. Respondents also mentioned that specialists should be brought in to give practical demonstrations of how learners should be assisted. It is doubtful if specialists will ever be able to do this in the light of the variety of problems that learners manifest. Teachers receive general training in order to be able to design assistance for learners. Thus, even if specialists were able to give practical demonstrations of what needed to be done, the teacher would still need to devise individual programmes for other learners in need. There is no single available formula for rendering assistance because all learners are individuals and have unique needs.

### **(b) Farm schools**

Respondents in farm school A had only recently heard about the existence of ESS. The GDE is not involved because it is too far from them.

In farm school B, they are still waiting for the ESS to assist them. The respondents felt that a special teacher should be sent to them at least three times a week to help with LSEN and the MID learners. This kind of arrangement might not work in the foreseeable future because of the financial constraints of the GDE. It is futile for teachers to wait for such services because the learners' valuable time is being wasted while they wait.

### **(c) Special schools**

Respondents in the special schools feel that the GDE supported them by providing OBE training. A general feeling exists among respondents that the GDE is only interested in regular schools and not in special schools. Respondents are under the impression that the GDE pretends that LSEN do not exist - and that their budgets are being cut instead of increased.

**(d) Ex-DET schools**

Respondents mentioned that the GDE is not involved because they lack cars and manpower. Another problem is that ESS is not available. It was suggested that the GDE should send professionals for class visits so that they could assist with learning materials and also give practical demonstrations on how to assist the MID learners. If teachers are not innovative enough to develop their own teaching materials, this is indeed a sad state of affairs.

**(e) Ex-TED schools**

In the ex-TED schools, the ESS assesses learners from time to time and these learners are then placed in relevant classes and schools on the basis of these assessments. If the ESS is able to do assessments in ex-TED schools, such services should be extended to ex-DET and farm schools. Problems which respondents mentioned included the fact that the GDE is not involved because of lack of funds and staff. Respondents were of the opinion that GDE officials should be sent to classes at schools so that they could see for themselves the seriousness of problems in the schools. Unfortunately, the job description of ESS officials does not permit them to give classes. Their work is rather intended to help *teachers* cope with learners who experience learning difficulties in their classes.

**6.2.9 Factor nine: understanding of inclusion and skills needed to deal with problems of inclusion in the classroom**

The responses with regard to this factor were similar in that most respondents understood inclusion to mean placement of learners in their neighbourhood schools - irrespective of disability and with relevant support in place.

When asked about inclusion, the respondents at both farm schools did not know what it was all about until it was explained to them. For one respondent from farm school B and one from special school C, *inclusion* means the closing down of special schools because the GDE is opposed to special schools on financial grounds.

Teachers at both farm schools mentioned the fact that there has always been inclusion at their school since facilities for the MID learners are non-existent. Because no learner has ever been referred to a special school, they have no choice but to “include” all learners.

One respondent from special school A remarked that inclusion is a blessing in disguise since no learners will henceforth be excluded, but also pointed out that the necessary infrastructure has to be put in place to facilitate inclusion. Respondents felt that the advantage of inclusion is that it gives learners independence and confidence and allows them to become part of the community and stop being labelled.

One respondent at the ex-DET school A sees inclusion as meaning that all learners attend one school but that there are different classes for the disabled. This in fact does not mean inclusion at all.

Respondents warned that parents should be informed at parent evenings so that they could be prepared for the reality of inclusion. They also felt that discussions should be held with learners so that they would be enabled to accept MID learners and so that volunteers could be found, volunteers to help these learners, especially during the first few weeks of the “inclusion” process.

#### **6.2.10 Factor ten: OBE methods and MID learners in the classroom.**

This question asked if the respondents were aware of the differences in methods used previously to accommodate the needs of the MID learners and the special methods used in OBE to accommodate the MID learner. The majority of the respondents made no reference to the methods that were previously used for teaching the MID learners - probably because they are unfamiliar with those methods. The following responses were obtained from respondents with regard to OBE methods:

##### **(a) Informal settlement**

Respondents mentioned that whereas the old methods were teacher-centred, OBE is learner-centred. With OBE, learners are divided into groups so that they can work at the level of their abilities whereas before learners were all kept together and taught according to one method. Respondents said

that OBE accommodates all learners and that learners with MID are not sent to special schools. They also said that OBE also facilitates early identification.

**(b) Farm schools**

In addition to what was mentioned by respondents in the informal settlement, respondents in these schools mentioned that OBE allows learners to progress at their own pace and that it permits advanced learners to continue to work at their own accelerated pace under the supervision of the teacher.

**(c) Special schools**

Respondents in special schools reported that they have used the OBE approach over the years and, because of this, OBE is not something new to them: it is only the terminology, they said, that had changed. Respondents said that OBE discourages rote learning. They noted that OBE tailors the system to suit the learner and not the learner to suit the system. The concept of themes, as they were used in the past, are replaced in the OBE system by phase organisers. OBE now allows learners to cope whereas in the past they would have been labelled as “stupid”. OBE encourages assessment because learners are assessed in terms of what they know rather than what they do not know.

Respondents also mentioned that the issue of OBE has to be addressed before any attempt can be made to talk about inclusion. Respondents said that if most teachers understood what OBE really meant, there would be no need to refer learners. It was mentioned that if OBE was taken seriously and interpreted properly it could be used to rescue learners who had been marginalised. If the strong points of such learners are identified, they can be assisted despite their weaknesses. They believe that teachers should acquaint themselves with new developments in the field of education for the MID learners.

The respondents felt that most MID learners are being neglected and that not all teachers are “familiar” with OBE. There was a feeling that teachers, especially at special schools had never taken OBE seriously because it was initially thought that OBE would not have to be applied in special

schools. These special schools already adapt existing OBE materials to accommodate the needs of LSEN and the MID learners in their schools.

**(d) Ex-DET schools**

Respondents felt that OBE did not allow learners to be stigmatised because they all work together on projects. OBE encourages creativity in learners. OBE regards a learner as unique and therefore caters for individuality. OBE encourages learners to perform practical operations - and it is not easy to forget something that one has performed in practice.

**(e) Ex-TED schools**

Respondents in ex-TED schools also acknowledged the fact that special schools had been using OBE methods all along. OBE, they said, focuses on learners and not on examinations, and that learners are allowed to work at their own pace and level.

**6.2.11 Factor eleven: suggestions for improvements of the process of inclusion**

**(a) Informal settlement**

Respondents suggested that teachers should receive special training that would enable them to deal with the MID learners, that the GDE should consider employing remedial teachers, that the pupil-teacher ratio should be reduced, that medical staff and psychologists should be employed to assist staff, and that teachers should accept the MID learners in their classrooms.

**(b) Farm schools**

In farm school A, respondents suggested that learners should be taught skills so that when they leave school, they would be able to cope with the world. They also felt that those who do not succeed academically should be encouraged to excel in sports and other skills.

Respondents in farm school B suggested that training in multi-grade teaching should be provided and that if this were not possible, the MID learners should be referred to special schools. One respondent also suggested that the policy of inclusion be reversed.

**(c) Special schools**

Respondents in special school A suggested that a greater input was needed from the GDE in the form of funding, equipment, and relevant programmes for LSEN and that the department should take responsibility for reducing the pupil-teacher ratio. Respondents felt that the GDE needed to adapt programmes for LSEN and that information on inclusion should be made more widely available. They felt that schools should not be left to use their own initiative and discretion in accommodating LSEN. They also felt that the policy of inclusion should be supported by well-trained teachers and that the ESS should be actively involved in the township schools and that the services of therapists should be made available. They felt that teachers had to stop labelling LSEN because they could not guide ordinary learners if they themselves label such learners. Learners should receive training in vocational skills and career education, training that would enable them to earn a living.

Respondents in special school B suggested that teachers needed to be trained on how to adapt to new policies such as inclusion, assessment, OBE and promotion for LSEN. They mentioned that not all teachers are familiar with OBE because if they had been, there would be no need to refer the MID learners to special schools. Inspectors should not make generalisations about teachers not doing their work because teachers are really dedicated, and that it is only in exceptional cases where teachers do not do their work. Programmes are to be made relevant for LSEN and the MID learners.

Respondents in special school C noted that if they were taught appropriate skills, LSEN could earn money once they had left school. If proper programmes were used, it would be possible for the LSEN and the MID learners to join the mainstream of education. They also believe that over-age MID learners should be accommodated in training centres and workshops, where they will learn skills and trade.

**(d) Ex-DET schools**

Respondents in ex-DET school A suggested that the ignorance of educators should be alleviated and that black schools should be given first preference when it came to staffing, equipment and facilities because they had been historically disadvantaged. If the MID learners do not acquire skills, they will be left behind and will not be able to participate in an economy that subscribe to globalisation. The curriculum should be made relevant for the MID learners and support should be given from ESS.

Respondents in the ex-DET school B suggested that special classes be established to cater for these learners and that the GDE should pay attention to teachers' needs.

**(e) Ex-TED schools**

Respondents in ex-TED school A suggested that support and furniture be supplied and that the GDE should have a better understanding of problems at the school level. Therapy should be provided for LSEN who cannot afford to obtain therapy privately. They felt that the language proficiency problem needed to be addressed and that interpreters needed to be made available for learners who do not understand English.

Respondents in the ex-TED school B suggested that all teachers should receive training in understanding of coping with the MID learners. They felt that LSEN should be kept in an LSEN class with a trained teacher for a specified period until their problems had been alleviated before they were returned to ordinary classes. They mentioned that inclusion can only be implemented to a certain extent and not all learners can be included. One respondent needed clarity as to what the role of the traditional LSEN teacher in the inclusion situation would be.

### **6.3 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

It needs to be mentioned at the outset that some of the responses in the questionnaires were also reflected in the semi-structured interviews. This may point to the fact that the respondents felt very strongly about the matters that were addressed. Since some of the responses were irrelevant, the

researcher concluded that their irrelevance was either due to incomprehension on the part of respondents, deficiencies in answering skills or problems with understanding of English as a medium of communication, especially in the township schools. Since the questions themselves were clear and straightforward and if problems of incomprehension were indeed caused by one or more of the factors mentioned above, this would point to a need to revamp the whole teacher education system. If teachers themselves have so many problems of a kind mentioned above, one can imagine the type of learners that these teachers will produce.

The fact that two ex-TED school principals refused to allow their staff to answer questions, was a matter for deep concern. At this time of transition, where solutions are being sought to the myriad of problems that face the education fraternity, it is surprising to find that some principals are unwilling to allow their teachers to participate in a venture which promises to supply answers to some of the problems facing schools - especially since this research deals with the policy of inclusive education, which everybody is trying to understand.

Teachers' and indeed principals' attitudes towards MID learners determine the type of assistance such teachers are prepared to offer the learners. If teachers regard assistance to MID learners as a waste of time, it goes without saying that less effort will be put in supporting the MID learners.

Most respondents stated that learners who are not sufficiently able to cope are identified once they begin to fail at their schools or simply because they make slow progress in their school work. In the ex-TED schools, such learners are referred to the so-called LSEN class for further intervention on an individual basis. In the ex-DET schools, nothing of that sort exists. As such the learners are then left to continue with other ordinary learners until they drop out due to inability to achieve success. Teachers in these schools feel less confident in their ability to accommodate diversity in their classrooms. This may be due to the fact that they have not received any specific training on the issue of diversity.

Another most prominent problem identified in the ex-TED schools is the language problem, where the learner's home language is different from the language of teaching and learning. This suggests

that appropriate language programmes are necessary if these learners are to catch up with other learners in their grades.

Another prominent problem that MID learners experience is with regard to the traditional three Rs, namely, reading, writing and mathematics. These are numeracy and literacy in OBE terms. It seems that appropriate programmes (such as the ones used in the USA that improve the teaching of listening skills, spelling, reading, handwriting and mathematics) may be able to address these problems because most learners struggle with these aspects of learning.

It would also be helpful to review the programmes that have been in use, and are still in use in some cases in the ex-TED schools, so that their continued use, with or without modification (whichever is applicable) can be reviewed. This needs to be done because the main reason why learners fail until they drop out is that the education system fails to assist them successfully by intervening at the appropriate time and fails to address their special needs.

A comment was also made to the effect that the learners who struggle are those who have been pushed through successive grades despite the fact that they have not managed to complete the work of previous grades successfully or adequately. Policy dictates that learners may not be allowed to be retained in one phase for more than two years in a row. In other words, learners are not allowed to repeat more than twice in one phase. The problem with this policy is that such learners will at some stage reach the ceiling of their capabilities and then be compelled to drop out because they will be over the prescribed age limit. These learners are those who drop out of the system without having acquired marketable skills. This problem is especially prevalent in schools where teachers have no choice but to include everybody, even in cases where this means “mainstreaming by default”. For such learners, appropriate programmes to prepare them for the job market and vocational programmes would go a long way to address the problem.

In trying to assist these learners, some respondents use either group work or individualisation or a combination of the two. Unfortunately, most of the respondents, especially in the ex-DET schools, do not have any form of training which enables them to assist mildly intellectually disabled learners in the correct way. Although some learners are assisted during flexi-time, most teachers are not sure

if they are assisting them properly. The ex-TED schools have what is referred to as the “LSEN teacher”, whose main duty it is to come up with programmes for the alleviation and/or remediation of learning difficulties.

Peer tutoring (which means that the more capable learners assist the weaker ones in the classroom) is also used as a strategy. After they had mentioned the above methods, some respondents highlighted the fact that overcrowding is one of the most important factors militating against individualisation and group work. In most cases, large classes are seen as obstacles that prevent teachers from providing learners with individual attention. A number of respondents feel that a diploma in special education has to be coupled with knowledge about mildly intellectually disabled learners if the assistance programmes are to work.

Most respondents feel that the SMT are not supportive because they themselves are disempowered and ignorant (“Some of them simply sit in their offices”). In addition, there are so many learners who are in need of assistance that the teachers are simply unable to cope with their needs. In one particular farm school, this situation is exacerbated by the fact - that in addition to office work, the principal also has to teach a multi-grade class. Because of this the principal has no time to give assistance to the teachers. This suggests that SMT themselves need to be educated about the needs of LSEN and the whole inclusion process. The whole question around multi-grade teaching also has to be investigated and teachers need to be assisted in their efforts to deal with diversity within multi-grade classrooms. One may think of this as an example of diversity within diversity.

The reason for the non-involvement of parents is that most of them are illiterate. One respondent viewed this illiteracy factor as an “excuse” which permitted parents to run away from their responsibilities because in her view, there are many ways in which parents can get involved even though they may not be able to read and write. Parents and grandparents may be involved in food gardens. Later on, they may participate in activities such as greeting learners and teachers at the gate in the morning. This will work especially well in schools where the culture of teaching and learning has broken down completely and where teachers and learners alike will be embarrassed if when arriving late, they find a parent already at the gate!

Respondents also mentioned that some parents are in a denial stage about the disability of their child and that they have not come to terms with a situation. Such parents find it difficult to accept their child's condition as LSEN or MID and some are still so emotionally upset that they find it difficult to get involved. The role played by parent-support groups could be crucial in helping such parents and grandparents to come to terms with their childrens' disabilities. Listening to other parents whose children have been through the same experiences can be both cathartic and healing for parents who are in denial.

The reasons why the GDE does not provide sufficient support range from their non-involvement range from a lack of staff and the fact that the GDE seems to be opposed to special schools for financial reasons. A number of respondents however feel that the GDE is doing enough to train teachers in the methods of OBE. Some respondents feel that a week's training is not enough for a programme as sophisticated and complicated as OBE. The fact that one of the most confusing aspects of OBE, namely, its terminology, is being reviewed seems to suggest that the respondents may be correct in their statements. Some feel that the involvement of the GDE in training teachers in CLBT should be more thorough, with an emphasis on support in the classroom and on how to deal with mildly intellectually disabled learners in the classrooms. Some respondents felt that the GDE pretends that such learners do not exist.

For most respondents, inclusion means the placement of learners with special needs and learning difficulties in neighbourhood schools, which have the necessary support systems in place. For a few, inclusion means closing down special schools. While others understand what inclusion means and support it, it seems that this process can only be facilitated by a well-trained teaching corps.

Some respondents mentioned that they assist learners who experience learning difficulties in the afternoon and even during their holidays. This is a great sacrifice that some teachers are making for the sake of their learners. Two respondents added that prayer is an important way of helping learners with difficulties. The importance of prayer for these teachers and learners may be explained in terms the fact that prayer gives them spiritual support and spiritual security and confidence because they believe in the benign intervention and power of the "Superior Being".

No understanding or knowledge about the policy of inclusion was evident in the farm schools. It was only after researcher had explained to the respondents what the concept meant that they had any idea about what inclusion means. This suggests that a lot of information on inclusion still needs to be disseminated, especially to people who live in rural communities. The advocacy campaign should target such communities.

Inclusion advocacy, as a strategy already identified by the Consultative Paper no. 1 on Special Educational Needs, could also play an important role in allaying those fears that exist, in clarifying how the process is envisaged, how the actual implementation will affect the teachers on the ground and how their roles and functions will be transformed. Individualisation could be achieved in the actual inclusion setting if teachers with a remedial background are utilised to draw up intervention programmes for individual learners in need of such programmes.

A number of differences between the methods previously used and the methods used in OBE were emphasised by respondents. Some of the differences include the fact that OBE is learner centred, that it encourages group work, that learners are able to progress at their own pace, that it discourages rote learning, that it encourages creativity, and that it focuses on what the learner *is* able to do and not on what he/she is *unable* to do. Respondents also mentioned that OBE means that the system has to accommodate all learners and that learners do not have to accommodate the system. These characteristics of OBE suggest that OBE is a system that is able to accommodate mildly intellectually disabled learners if teachers know exactly what they have to do. Because the teachers who participated were unfamiliar with the methods previously used for the MID, they were not able to comment on these methods.

While the special schools which participated have always adapted the OBE material to suit the needs of their learners, they feel that it is really the duty of the GDE to adapt the material. These respondents mentioned that as far as they are concerned, OBE is nothing new because they have always operated according to these principles and accommodated diversity within the intellectually disabled communities of learners in their schools. There is also a feeling at the special schools that most teachers in the mainstream schools are not yet familiar with OBE because if that was the case, there would not be as many referrals to special schools as there still are.

Issues about teacher training emerged very strongly in this study. Most respondents feel that the GDE needs to educate teachers, both on the pre-service and in-service levels, with their new policies that deal with the education of learners who experience learning difficulties, and especially with inclusion as a policy. Some respondents felt strongly that the GDE has to come up with practical demonstrations of solutions to problems that occur in the classrooms. Respondents also mentioned that in the first term, the foundation phase teachers are engaged most of the time in perceptual programmes so that they can prepare learners and make them ready for the process of learning.

#### **6.4 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

The findings from the empirical investigation are in agreement with the findings from the literature study. These findings have implications on the macro, the meso and the micro levels of the South African education system. One should note however that because all the implications are interrelated, they should be examined holistically and not in isolation from one another.

Some of the implications discussed in this section, are articulated in departmental policy documents such as the Consultative Paper no. 1 on Special Needs Education, but the fact that they were mentioned by respondents, it may mean that some of the documents have not reached these respondents and this then points to the need to highlight the issues once again. Reference to these issues does not mean that the researcher chooses to ignore the existence of legislative policies, but, rather, that the implementation of these policies need to be followed up to make sure that indeed the concerned parties are aware of them, in order to be able to implement them.

The following discussion is focuses on the most important decisions and actions to be taken on macro, meso and micro levels as highlighted by this empirical research:

##### **6.4.1 The macro level**

The macro level is the level at which policy decisions about education are made. Such decisions pertain to educational policy and legislation and any other matters that relate to education. In South

Africa, this is the *provincial* level of decision-making. What follows are some of the points that need to be examined at this level.

#### **6.4.1.1        *Staffing***

It is clear that the high teacher-learner ratio, with accompanying factors such as overcrowding, militate against the success of any attempts to accommodate LSEN as well as the mildly intellectually disabled in ordinary schools. The GDE has to revisit the whole question of staff provisioning. It is clear that most of the MID are accommodated in ordinary schools, and that the teachers who have to assist them do not have the skills to help them adequately. This is in fact a policy of “mainstreaming by default”.

The GDE should consider the alternative of using *volunteers* such as parents and grandparents, who work as housewives, to help teachers in the classrooms, as a way of alleviating teacher shortages. Such volunteers may be given responsibilities such as taking care of food gardens and greeting learners at the gate in the morning. The presence of such parents may be used to check and moderate the behaviour of both learners and teachers, especially where a *culture of teaching and learning services* (COLTS) is non-existent. Such volunteers may also be asked to help with both teaching and non-teaching tasks. These volunteers would of course have to receive some kind of training and education about LSEN and the MID learners. The GDE also needs to clarify issues that relate to the role of the EAS in the schools. The rural farm schools also need to be adequately serviced by the EAS because, at the moment, these schools are not receiving the help they need. A strong and committed EAS could ensure that all the schools are adequately serviced

#### **6.4.1.2        *Teacher education***

The success of inclusion as a policy for accommodating LSEN and the MID learners depends on the *training* of students teachers (pre-set) in the principles of this policy, and the *re-training* of teachers who are already in the service of the department (in-set) so that they will know how to encourage and enhance diversity in their classrooms. The training of SST and CLBT needs to be more focussed and thorough for teachers who have had no experience at all with LSEN. These teachers need to be

educated in specific strategies on how to deal with learners who experience difficulties with reading, writing and mathematics.

One approach that can be used is the so-called On-Site-Assistance method whereby EAS staff visit individual schools and give them whatever assistance they need in the school. A few afternoons of training is simply not sufficient for teachers to appreciate a concept as sophisticated and vital as inclusion. Teachers need to be properly and thoroughly informed about what inclusion means. The attitudes of teachers also need to be examined. Those teachers who will succeed with the MID learners are those who believe in their ability to assist these learners and who also believe in the ability of these learners to reach their maximum potential.

#### 6.4.1.3 *The curriculum*

The curriculum needs to be *customised* so that LSEN and the MID learners can access it. This does not mean that these learners need separate programmes. It simply means that existing programmes need to be adapted in such a way that they are suitable for learners with special needs. Some special schools are already adapting the curriculum in their schools. This suggests that curricula differ from school to school. For the sake of uniformity, the customisation of the curriculum needs to be carried out by a central authority under the guidance and supervision of curriculum experts. This will also ensure that the same standards will be maintained in all schools. The role to be played by LSEN teachers in this customisation process cannot be overemphasised. Because these teachers have specific skills in teaching LSEN, their contribution will be valuable.

The application of OBE for LSEN should be clarified and not be left up to teachers to improvise when accommodating LSEN. Because OBE is learner-centred, the MID learners can be identified early, and learners will be able to progress at their own pace. Because OBE discourages rote learning, it is a system that accommodates the needs of the learner. Finally, OBE learners are assessed on the knowledge they have acquired and *not* on what they do not know. All these features of OBE are accommodative of LSEN and the MID learners, but, it must be made explicitly clear to teachers how to use OBE to accommodate all learners.

It is true that the needs of learners differ from one area to area. A learner who lives in a rural area will not have the same needs as a learner from an urban area. Thus, the customisation of programmes should take into consideration the different circumstances and community needs of the context in which the learner will ultimately function. For instance, it would be an expensive mistake to furnish learners with skills in technology when such technology is not available in their area or if the learner intends to remain in that community for the rest of his/her adult life.

This invariably means that methods of assessment also need to be adapted to accommodate LSEN. Assessment modifications may include some of the following: simplification of questions for LSEN and the MID, giving clear instructions so that they will know exactly what is expected of them, a reduction in the scope of work which will be assessed, the reading out of questions (especially for those who struggle with reading), the removal of time limits so that learners do not have to be anxious about finishing on time, oral exams for those learners with dyslexia and, finally, partnerships with parents in those cases where learners will participate in home tests.

A major consideration when considering assessment for LSEN and the MID is the Special Examination Concessions. In terms of this facility, a number of concessions are made to LSEN - depending on the type of difficulty that they experience. Because such concessions are relatively unknown in township schools, learners are left to fail - not because they have not mastered the learning material, but because the assessment procedures are not suited to them, and because regular assessment procedures measure what these learners do *not* know.

Programmes previously used for LSEN and the MID for reading, writing and mathematics in the ex-TED schools should be reviewed so that decisions can be made about their continued use (with or without modifications). These programmes were used successfully in the past and learners were given the chance to join their age cohorts once remediation and the successful solution of problems had taken place. In addition, the programmes are still used extensively in the ex-TED schools in any case.

These programmes may be used in combination with other programmes from other countries - programmes such as the Reading Recovery Program from New Zealand, where learners receive

daily individualised reading lessons. The programmes used for teaching reading, writing and mathematics, that are used in the USA might also prove to be suitable. Individualised lessons and programmes of this kind target the specific area in which the learners struggle (mathematics, for example). Specific approaches to help such learners can then be used to alleviate problems.

#### **6.4.1.4      *Programmes for over-aged learners***

The GDE needs to look into vocational training for learners who are too old to be allowed to continue remaining in school, but who are also LSEN and MID. Preparation for life, and particularly for a life of work, is crucial for LSEN. On-the-job training should form an integral part of the programme for over-aged learners. If these measures are not instituted, learners of this kind will automatically drop out of schools, while those on farms will join their parents in the fields and thus the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation will continue. Those who do not find work on farms will drop out and roam the streets in the townships and elsewhere. If such learners have some kind of vocational training, they will be less dependent on hand-outs for survival. Companies employing such LSEN and the MID learners should receive incentives in a form of tax rebates and concessions.

#### **6.4.1.5      *Multi-grade teaching***

The issue of multi-grade teaching will have to be addressed in detail. While LSEN and the MID learners have to be included, to include them in a class that has three grades will be impossible unless teachers are trained in realistic programmes of intervention and know exactly how to provide assistance for these learners. Proper guidelines as to how instruction should take place in the classroom will have to be worked out, and teachers will have to be trained in these methods.

One programme that may be used for these purposes is multi-level instruction, where one lesson is varied within one class to accommodate different levels of cognitive development. Such a method may be used to accommodate different grades. The degree of difficulty of lessons involved may be increased for each grade as and when needed.

#### **6.4.1.6      *Finances***

The policy of inclusion can never be regarded as a money-saving option on the macro level if it is to be successful. The GDE will need to obtain the necessary financial assistance for those institutions that include LSEN and the MID learners, even if this means involving the business community and other stakeholders with an interest in education. Intervention programmes to facilitate inclusion will have to be supported with resources - and such resources include finance. Cognisance needs to be taken of the fact that not all learners can be included. There will always be those that will need a high degree of care and the wishes of the parents should always be considered when placing such learners.

#### **6.4.1.7      *Information campaign***

The GDE will have to embark on an information campaign to inform stakeholders - especially parents - about what inclusion means. Some parents worry that inclusion will mean a lowering of standards if LSEN are accommodated, while other parents are concerned that their children will be ridiculed. Parents of ordinary learners have to be informed about inclusion, and assurances will have to be given about how standards will be maintained. Parents of LSEN will have to be assured that their children will be accepted in the new environment of inclusion.

Teachers who are worried because they believe that accommodating LSEN will waste a lot of the time of other learners will need to be assured that teachers will be in a position to cope with these learners in a way that does not adversely affect the others. Ordinary learners, among whom there is still ridicule of those who seem to be different, also need to be sensitised to the acceptance of LSEN and the MID learners.

This implies that even if policies are put on paper, information has not as yet reached some of the people at grass-root level, the implementation level at the schools, especially the rural communities.

#### **6.4.1.8      *Language programmes***

It is apparent that most learners, including LSEN and the MID, receive instruction in a language that is different from their home language. Special language programmes will be needed to help these learners to improve their language skills. Such programmes should be used to enhance the language skills of those who struggle because of language problems. It is obvious that learners first have to master the language before they are in a position to grasp the learning content. Such programmes will ensure that learners will be able to access the curriculum despite the fact that they are using a second language.

#### **6.4.1.9      *Programmes for SMT***

There is a clear indication that SMT in most schools are not supportive of LSEN or the MID learners. There might be a number of reasons for this state of affairs. Perhaps members of the SMT are ignorant about issues relating to LSEN. Programmes for helping the SMT to assist teachers have to be instituted. Only an informed SMT is able to render assistance to LSEN. The SMT should also receive whatever training is received by the SST so that the SMT becomes part of the problem-solving team. If this is not done, some SMT members may begin to think that assistance to LSEN and the MID learners is a waste of time.

#### **6.4.1.10     *Programmes for perceptual development***

The researcher has encountered, during the course of her work, learners in the foundation phase, and even in grades 4 and 5 who are unable to read and write. The problem identified in some learners is that they have poor perceptual skills. This seems to suggest that the GDE needs to introduce specific programmes that enrich perceptual skills, especially at the beginning of the foundation phase. Numerous learners from deprived, poor socio-economic backgrounds start school with a tremendous handicap - apart from the fact they have never been in any kind of pre-school.

Such learners experience difficulties because their perceptual skills have never been appropriately exercised. Some of them still have poorly developed gross motor and fine motor skills. Occupational

therapists play a crucial role in perceptual programmes. To attempt to instruct this kind of learner in the alphabet before they have acquired appropriate perceptual skills is the total waste of time and money. Perceptual programmes are essential to prepare such learners in basic skills such as reading. It is possible that compulsory education during “Reception” year may alleviate this problem.

The question of retention comes into the picture here because some learners are moved on to the next grade before they have mastered the programmes for grade one. These children will eventually end up in grade 4 and 5 but still be illiterate and innumerate. Intervention at this stage becomes difficult because the problems are already deeply entrenched. This is the kind of learner who will ultimately drop out because the system will have failed him/ her. The same perceptual programmes can be used to prepare learners for the process of learning so that they avoid failure in the future.

#### **6.4.2 The meso level**

The meso level is responsible for the implementation of policy which is devised at the macro level. In South Africa, the meso level is the district office level. One may expect to encounter differences even within the same province (such as Gauteng,) because of the differences in needs of the environments which different district offices serve.

##### **6.4.2.1 *OBE training***

While it is a fact that most teachers have received OBE training, not all of them are familiar with the ways in which OBE may be used to accommodate LSEN and the MID learners. All teachers need to be acquainted with using OBE in the inclusion context so that they can accommodate LSEN. Once all teachers are trained in OBE, there will not be a need to refer so many learners to special schools. The EAS have to come up with examples of the practical implementation of OBE, especially in the inclusion setting. The use of strategies such as experiential learning and co-operative learning need to be emphasised.

In addition, it is vitally important that teachers in the Foundation Phase be supported because it is the best level where most LSEN will be identified. Intervention should then take place immediately

because, if identification and intervention do not happen at this stage, the problems will become more and more aggravated and will eventually become difficult to remediate later in the child's life.

#### **6.4.2.2      *The role of the District Support Team (DST) in training SST***

The DST is part and parcel of the EAS in the district office. The DST is made up of EAS officials in district offices who deal with support, and such personnel should respond promptly to the call for assistance from teachers in accommodating LSEN and the MID learners. These officials need to work closely with teachers at schools so that they can support LSEN. Appropriate intervention programmes should be drawn up in collaboration with parents, SST, and teachers. Practical solutions to learning problems in the classes would be appropriate.

**The *training of SST* by the DST should involve the following:**

- Teachers should be familiarised with the characteristics of LSEN and the MID learners so that they can identify them in good time. The problems that these learners have are problems with poor attention, poor memory, slow rate of learning, low level of learning, high rate of forgetting, poor recall, problems with the transfer of information, problems with abstract and incidental learning, problems with learning set (systematic methods of arriving at solutions to problems) and discrimination. These learners will invariably also have problems with reading, writing and mathematics.
- An exposition of the teaching principles should follow. At this stage, teachers will be shown that these learners may be helped in spite of their problems.
- In the next stage, teachers need to be educated in specific approaches for dealing with problems in reading, writing and mathematics, since these are the three main areas in which most learners struggle. Some of the approaches to be used are the following:
  - **For reading:** whole language approach, language experience approach, phonics approach, sight word approach and bilingual approach.
  - **For writing:** teaching them about pre-writing skills such as brainstorming ideas on a given topic, using vocabulary lists, using personal collages that utilise pictures

collected by learners and which are then used in teaching writing, grammar and the mechanics of writing. In the teaching of editing skills, spelling is taught by using the same approaches that are used for teaching reading.

- **For mathematics:** teaching them manipulatives, computation skills, estimation and place value.
  
- Thereafter teachers should be taught how to deal with emotional and behavioural disorders in those cases where these problems have developed as a result of failure and repetition of classes. They need to know how such learners may be assisted.
- The next stage is to expose teachers to the theories of multiple intelligences and learning styles, including left-brain and right-brain personalities. Teachers should be told that if they understand these theories, they will be able to structure teaching programmes in such a way that all types of learners are accommodated.
- Finally, teachers should be coached on how to draw up the IEP for LSEN and the MID learners. The IEP is a programme used predominantly in the USA to create individualised intervention strategies for learners with learning difficulties.

Such training can be accomplished if EAS does not distance themselves from problems at schools. For learners who need a high level of care, proper referrals to relevant facilities can be made by the EAS because it is not all learners who will be included. It is important that the EAS is involved in the process of identification, because if the EAS is not involved, many schools will end up with learners who actually do not belong in those schools. In cases where learners are referred to special schools for learners with severe intellectual disability, and it is discovered later that the learner's problem is basically that of unstable home circumstances, it is better to keep such a learner in an ordinary school where intervention may yield positive results.

#### **6.4.2.3      *The role of networking in addressing learning difficulties***

The EAS should encourage networking among schools and other stakeholders with an interest in education so that services and resources for LSEN and the MID can be obtained. Schools that

already have teachers with a background in the alleviation and remediation of learning difficulties should assist those schools without such human resources.

Partnerships should be encouraged with service providers in the community such as hospitals, clinics, social workers, police services. A venture like this should be characterised by interdepartmental collaboration because the learner is not only the responsibility of the department of education. Thus hospitals have to be involved in helping sickly learners; social workers may be involved in obtaining grants for poor learners; the police services have a role to play in helping abused learners. Therapists such as occupational therapists, speech therapists and psychologists may be called upon to assist - especially in those cases where parents are able to use their medical aid schemes to access such services. All these measures are necessary because the DST is in most cases short-staffed and has to deal with more than a hundred schools in one district. If these service providers in the community are utilised, learners might not have to wait for attention from the DST.

Schools with resources like libraries and laboratories may even consider “adopting” schools in previously disadvantaged communities, where such facilities do not exist up to this day. The fact that teachers mention lack of resources as a problem, and that the “adoption” of schools has been recognised as a policy, means that the issue has not been properly followed up. This is another way in which networks may be established. In addition, learner exchange programmes whereby learners visit schools with facilities in order to obtain experience in various learning processes, may be instituted. The twinning of a well-resourced school with a non-resourced school is another option in which the sharing of resources may be encouraged. Schools may even exchange the programmes which they use for LSEN and the MID learners, especially in schools where these programmes have been customised to suit such learners.

#### **6.4.2.4      *The involvement of stakeholders***

This is closely related to the network strategy mentioned above. What is needed is a strategy that involves parents, the community from which the learner comes, peers, and non-governmental organisations. The involvement of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) is also important. Partnerships with business should be encouraged - especially in rural areas where facilities for LSEN

and MID are scarce. There should also be a shift away from rhetoric about getting organisations such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involved to the *actual involvement* of such organisations.

#### **6.4.2.5      *Information campaign***

Advocacy at the meso level is closer to the schools than advocacy at the macro level, and is therefore invaluable. Advocacy at this level will inform schools about the kinds of services that are available from the district office and how the actual inclusion of LSEN and the MID learners may be facilitated. This kind of information sharing will enable schools to access the services needed for intervention. This is evident from the fact that farm schools know nothing about the details of inclusion, and such advocacy must therefore target even rural communities where inclusion is a relatively unknown phenomenon.

#### **6.4.2.6      *Alleviation and remediation of learning difficulties by LSEN teachers***

The role that will be played by teachers with remedial backgrounds or the so-called LSEN teacher should be clarified. It should be made clear that they still have a role to play in designing IEP for learners who experience learning difficulties. Such teachers may even be relieved of other teaching duties so that they can give more time to remediation. Specific attention should be paid to remediation within an inclusion setting, where OBE is used to achieve specific outcomes for all learners.

#### **6.4.3    The micro level**

This level concerns the teacher's task in the classroom. The teachers, by using appropriate approaches, methods and strategies, may assist the learner to access the learning material and the curriculum.

#### **6.4.3.1      *The application of teaching principles***

A number of teaching principles, if applied correctly by the teacher, may enable LSEN and the MID learners to master the curriculum in their own time and manner. These principles include the following:

- Every learner is an individual and should be taught as such. The uniqueness of every learner should be taken into consideration.
- Instruction has to be given in a total context (not in isolated pockets) so that learners are enabled to transfer information from one situation to the next.
- Many learners (and specifically the MID learners) need to be motivated from outside since their intrinsic motivation is poor. The subject matter has to be reduced and all confusing and unnecessary details have to be omitted.
- Learning material has to be divided into component parts so that learners will be able to grasp and master information in a way that makes sense to them.
- Emphasis has to be placed on *what must be learned* (relevant and necessary material) because such learners are easily distracted by irrelevant material.
- Instruction has to be purposeful, planned and aimed at imparting skills and knowledge.

#### **6.4.3.2      *The application of learning principles***

Appropriate learning principles will ensure that the learners learn effectively and these have to be applied. The learning principles referred to are the following:

- Learners have to experience success for themselves so that they can be encouraged to learn further.
- The learning material has to be fixated in their memories through the process of repetition and rehearsal.
- Activities have to be *scheduled* (routine) and not be haphazard because learners feel threatened and insecure when they don't know what's going to happen next.
- Actions have to be verbalised and words need to be used as a medium of thought.

- Matter has to be presented in a concrete way so that it can be seen and touched. Abstract presentation is of no use to such learners (in the beginning, at least).
- These learners learn better through demonstration and experimentation because they are led towards finding solutions when they physically get down to doing things.
- If they are encouraged to learn independently, their self-confidence will be increased.
- They must all participate actively and experience the learning material individually.
- For learners of this kind, learning must always proceed from the known to the unknown, from the easy to the difficult, and so on.
- These learners have to be socialised through situations where they can observe appropriate behaviour by peers.

#### **6.4.3.3      *Teaching strategies***

The use of specific methods and strategies such as individualisation or group work and a combination of both should be encouraged. It is a well known fact that some learners learn certain learning material much more effectively from their peers than from adults. Because of this, peer tutoring (where the weaker learners are assisted by the stronger ones) should be encouraged as a learning strategy. Cooperative learning and experiential learning should be further explored and made applicable to LSEN and the MID learners. The foundation phase teachers should make use of perceptual programmes to develop gross and fine motor skills in learners before any attempt is made to teach them how to read.

#### **6.4.3.4      *Parent involvement***

It is apparent that most parents are not involved in the education of their children. This means that the schools have to come up with innovative ways of involving parents. For parents to be effectively involved, they do not necessary have to know how to read and write. (Some schools attribute a lack of parental involvement to illiteracy.) Schools should organise parent evenings to share information about inclusion with parents. Parents may be invited to volunteer to help in the classrooms and grandparents may be invited to tell stories to the young ones. Parents may also cook cultural food and sell them at schools, thereby raising funds for the school. Teachers have to be particularly careful

not to patronise parents because if they do, parents will eventually resist all strategies to get them involved. The ultimate aim of parental involvement is to get parents to support programmes that are designed to assist their children in schools.

#### **6.4.3.5        *The role of conferencing***

The role of conferencing around learners that experience learning difficulties is a good way to start conceptualising how the teachers might go about helping learners. The SST should be of assistance in this regard. The SMT should initiate programmes to assist teachers to deal with LSEN. The assistance of the EAS may be sought in cases where the schools are not sure of the procedure.

Teachers are primarily responsible for helping learners in their classes: If the learner cannot be helped at the classroom level, the phase teachers are called together to brainstorm suggestions for how the learner can be helped. This depends on the particular grade where the learner is. If the learner is in grade two, the foundation phase teachers will be called together. Once the efforts of the phase teachers prove unsuccessful, the SST is called together to draw up an IEP for the learner. For this purpose a number of teaching strategies for helping with reading, writing and mathematics are used. If the learner cannot be helped even by the SST, the DST comes into the picture to suggest further possible interventions.

#### **6.4.3.6        *The customisation of learning materials***

Most of the special and specialised schools already adapt the curriculum to accommodate LSEN and the MID learners. Such a service should be expanded to also assist ordinary schools. This should be done from central agency, in a common forum, and not in unrelated fragmentary efforts in which the schools themselves are involved in the process. This will help to ensure uniformity. Once the material is customised, the assessment procedures should also be customised. Schools should release their LSEN teachers to participate in this venture.

#### **6.4.3.7        *Acquaintance with LSEN issues***

Teachers should take the initiative to empower themselves by reading more about LSEN and the MID learners and ways in which these learners should be assisted. In the last analysis, it is the

teacher's responsibility to assist LSEN. Once teachers know what LSEN is about, teachers will be less likely to label and stigmatise LSEN. These learners then stand a better chance of being accepted. Once accepted, teachers will be able to assist these learners to reach their maximum potential.

## 6.5 SYNTHESIS

The findings from the literature study correlate with findings from the empirical investigation. A number of implications may be deduced from these findings. On the macro level, certain policy decisions have to be taken in order to give direction and clarity and also to encourage uniformity. Issues with regard to staffing, curriculum and teacher training have to be attended to. Programmes for language, over-aged learners and multi-grade teaching have to be addressed.

On the meso level, issues with regard to implementation of policy have to be ironed out. Although differences may occur, such differences will only be due to differences of needs on the ground. The use of OBE to accommodate LSEN and the MID learners needs attention. The issue of networking and sharing of resources should be looked into so that learners may receive equal opportunities. The most important issue of SST training needs immediate attention because the success of intervention programmes depends on how well the SST is able to address problems in schools.

The micro level on the other hand deals with the assistance offered to the learner as he or she tries to master the curriculum. This assistance has to be given by the teacher. The utilisation of teaching and learning principles to accommodate these learners is crucial. Strategies such as co-operative learning and experiential learning need to be emphasised. The role of parents in supporting whatever programmes already exist in their schools, can never be over-emphasised. The sharing of skills and expertise during conferencing on LSEN and MID learners is important. At the micro level, the ability and the willingness and of the school support teams in supporting the learners who experience learning difficulties is important.

The next chapter deals with the initial design, the refinement and the implementation of the manual for training school support teams.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRAINING MANUAL FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS (SST)**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

An extensive literature study was undertaken to investigate the characteristics of mildly intellectually disabled learners and how these characteristics interfere with their learning. An explanation was given of the learning principles and the teaching principles, which may be employed to successfully counter these characteristics, thereby enabling such learners to learn in spite of these characteristics. Furthermore, programmes for accommodating these learners in developed and in developing countries were looked into. Programmes that are currently in use in South Africa, including programmes that were formerly used for whites and blacks separately, were also studied. The current Curriculum 2005 as encapsulated in Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was outlined. An empirical study was then undertaken.

Mildly intellectually disabled (MID) learners fail repeatedly and in certain instances drop out of school because the system of education does not sufficiently provide for their specific educational needs. In conducting this research, the researcher attempted to give prominence to the problems and needs of the mildly intellectually disabled learners, and the fact that their teachers can be assisted to support them towards successful learning, despite their difficulties.

As part of the study, a manual was designed to assist School Support Teams (SST) in their efforts to support LSEN, with particular reference to mildly intellectually disabled learners. The manual was then implemented as a pilot study. Feedback was received from the schools and a number of teachers expressed relief that henceforth, they would know how to accommodate these learners in their classrooms, especially with regard to literacy and numeracy. Teachers also stated that during the training they realised and understood for the first time the different roles of the School Support Team and the School Assessment Team (SAT).

Concerns were raised to the effect that it would be wise to train all the staff members in the school, and not only the SST. It was reasoned that all teachers have to deal with these learners at some point or other and therefore giving capacity to the SST only was ineffective. Another concern was the fact that the spectrum of the manual is too broad to be covered in one morning session, that is from 8:00 to 11:00. The teachers believed that time constraints should not be allowed to interfere with the important background knowledge and skills training that was provided during the presentation of the manual.

## **7.2 THE INITIAL DESIGN, PILOTING AND REFINEMENT OF THE MANUAL FOR TRAINING SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS**

After the questionnaires were administered, and the interviews conducted during an empirical study, it was clear that most teachers were in the dark with regard to how to support learners who struggle in their classes.

The following are some of the pertinent issues that came to the fore during the analysis of findings from the empirical study:

- It was clear that some respondents had no idea of the policy of inclusion.
- Most learners experience problems with regard to reading, writing and mathematics.
- Group work and individualisation are used to a certain extent by teachers.
- In certain instances, parents are not supportive of the efforts of the schools to assist learners.

It is important to note that these issues were also identified as important in the literature study as well.

A needs analysis was initially conducted to determine in which areas teachers needed assistance. This analysis included interviews with specialists in the field of special needs education, as well as with those in the field of curriculum development. Both types of specialists echoed the same sentiment regarding the support the learners ought to receive from teachers. It also became clear that the educators themselves needed to be assisted in their endeavours to support these learners.

In interviews with the above specialists, it became clear that there is a definite gap between lessons and activities in the classrooms and what happens in the life world of the learner. In most cases, the activities are restricted to school hours and are far removed from what happens in the everyday life of the learner and the impression is given to the learner that what happens at school is unrelated to what happens in his/her life world, thus establishing a gap between the two areas in the life of the learner. The difficulty with this is the fact that once this gap has been established, some learners, especially the mildly intellectually disabled will struggle to bridge it. This makes it imperative that the gap be prevented from occurring in the first place.

It was found that most learners, with particular reference to the mildly intellectually disabled, struggled with **literacy, numeracy and life skills**. This is evidenced by the fact that some learners do not reach the outcomes as set out by the teachers. The importance of OBE lies the fact that outcomes for learners may be set at different levels and each learner will then achieve the outcomes as they mature. Thus, the manual targeted these specific areas.

In the manual, the researcher tries to address each of the issues mentioned above. This is the reason why in the introduction, the policy of inclusion is dealt with. Furthermore, a discussion of outcomes, the roles of the educator, experiential and co-operative methods in OBE are also discussed. The next section deals with the manifestation of problems with regard to reading, writing and mathematics and the strategies that teachers can use in trying to help these learners. A discussion of the assessment policy is necessitated by the fact that there has to be an assessment of the extent to which the outcomes have been reached. Finally the Individual Education Plan (IEP), explains how teachers can help learners on an individual basis.

The manual was then pilot tested, for a period of three months, in 20 schools in the Soshanguve area, which is in District N4. The initial manual is attached as **Annexure D**. These schools are basically those schools which were traditionally under the auspices of the ex-DET. Although the researcher's study concentrated mainly on the MID learner, the manual was drawn in such a way that it will be of assistance to most teachers. The underlying principle of the manual is the fact that mild disability affects one or more of the following categories of learners, namely, those with behaviour problems,

those with emotional problems, those with learning disability and those with mild intellectual disability.

The training was done at each one of the said schools on separate days. As such, each SST had a chance to do some introspection, as to how they were addressing special needs in their particular school, and together with the SST, the researcher helped them to look into new ways in which these learners may be assisted. All the SSTs were taken through the manual item by item and at the end of the presentation, they were then given an opportunity to ask question where they needed clarity.

During the presentation of the section on characteristics, learning principles and teaching principles, most teachers confessed that they were able to identify specific learners in their classrooms who exhibited these characteristics and were able to identify specific principles that would enhance the process of learning for these learners.

While teachers in certain schools explained that they have never heard about the teaching strategies for reading, writing and mathematics, teachers in other schools explained that although they have heard about these strategies, they never made an attempt to use them.

With regard to the multiple intelligences, learning styles and analytical (left) and global (right) brain personalities, it became clear that a simple discussion of the preferences without relating to how they are going to be used in the classroom situation was a futile exercise. As such, the manual had to be reworked immediately to include an aspect on how learners who exhibited the different preferences could be helped. Only the first two schools missed out on this section, due to the fact that it was only after they were trained that the researcher became aware of the need to include the section on assistance, given the different preferences. In the final manual, this section is referred to as the learning preferences.

The presentation on the section for assessment, revealed the fact that it was necessary to include a section on special examination concessions. It was explained that while the concession are available for matriculants, nothing stops them from being utilised for the learners at primary school level. The advantage of early introduction of special examination concessions is the fact that a history is then

established, so that the learner is not accused of taking advantage of the system if the need is identified only at later in life. In this way, MID learners will also benefit from such an arrangement. The teachers were amazed that these concession have always been available, even up to matriculation and they were never aware of their existence.

The issue was triggered by discussion around the section of the manual where suggestions for learner support are given. Teachers were worried that awarding a certificate for a learner who used a special concession such as amanuensis was tantamount to no certificate at all. It was then highlighted that these learners are disadvantaged due to their particular disability, and if it can be established, by other means how much they know, let it be, because one is interested in how much learners know rather than how much they do not know.

Concerning the section on collaboration among teachers, the main problem came with regard to the drawing of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Thus in the final manual, the researcher had to elaborate on the specifics about the IEP and even give a fictitious learner with fictitious problems to indicate precisely how the SST can go about in trying to draw up such a plan.

At the end of the session, teachers were given an opportunity to fill in a session evaluation form and ask questions and most concerns centred around the following issues:

- How can the over-aged learner, who starts bullying others be assisted?
- The retention policy, which prohibits learners from being retained more than twice in a phase, causes problems. Questions arose around those learners who are pushed to the next grade and yet have not mastered work in the previous grade.
- Parents who are perceived to be disinterested in their children's education due to their non-involvement and non-commitment cause many problems. In one particular school one teacher was verbally abused for calling the parent to the school in order to discuss the learner's problems.
- The issue of overcrowding in the classrooms was given as a reason why teachers are unable to assist those who seem to be slower than others.

- The teachers suggested that the introduction of remedial classes, where the teacher would only be responsible for learners with learning difficulties, should be considered.
- Teachers talked about the lack of understanding as to how to draw up an Individual Education Plan.
- Teachers also referred to the fact that the session was too short and the information to be grasped was too much. They suggested that training of this nature should take place over a period of a week.

Some of the issues of concern, which were raised by the SST during the training, are similar to the ones that were identified through the responses to the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The researcher then visited 10 of the schools where the SST were trained using the initial SST manual, to do a follow up and also to see how the educators, particularly the SST were doing since the training. Discussions were held with the members of the SST who were trained. These teachers complained that parents are still reluctant to get involved in the education of their children. Teachers invite parents to school to discuss the problems learners experience and parents do not show up. Teachers explained that they find it difficult to work together with social workers, especially in cases where learners are poor and do not even have proper school uniform and some report to the teachers that there is no food at home. Teachers believe that social workers are in a position to do home visits to see how the Department of Welfare can be of assistance to such families.

The teachers stated that it would have been helpful if all the teachers were trained, not only the SST, because all teachers are faced with such kind of learners and should be able to accommodate them in their classes. They explained that it is not always easy to cascade information to somebody else. The SST is not confident that they would be able to give the information to the rest of the educators in the school, in the same way the information was presented by the researcher. Another concern is that although the manual showed them how to deal with problems in reading, writing and mathematics, little time is available to assist those who need such assistance, since OBE involves a lot of work, the classes are overcrowded, and the SST is overloaded because in addition to working with learners who experience learning problems, they also have their own classes to take care of. Another thorny issue, according to the teachers is the issue of over-aged learners, for example a 15

year old learner, who is still in grade 5 or 6 and does not know how to read and write. These are the learners who are seen as disruptive and who cause discipline problems in the classes

The overall comment by SST is that the manual is helpful, in that the manifestations make the teachers aware of what to look out for. Furthermore, the strategies enable teachers to intervene in order to help the learners.

The comments from the different SSTs were then used to improve the manual, so that the final instrument or manual included all that was needed.

### **7.3 THE FINALISED MANUAL FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS**

This manual will be reproduced and distributed for use by SST training facilitators in the various District offices, thus the format followed throughout the manual. In addition, the different phases are discussed below, so that it will not be necessary to explain the phases in the manual itself. Each phase of the manual starts off with an outcome, detailing what teachers will be able to do at the end of each phase.

**It is proposed that the manual be implemented in the nine phases as follows:**

- Phase 1: Background to the policy of inclusive education: in this phase, a background is given as to the way in which the policy of inclusive education evolved in South Africa after the Salamanca Statement of 1994. An explanation is also given to the effect that most countries put an emphasis on **support** for teachers.
- Phase 2: Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes Based Education: these two concepts are explained as necessitated by the need to transform the education system in South Africa, in keeping with developments internationally and after the 1994 democracy. Co-operative learning and experiential learning are discussed as the two main strategies to be used in an OBE classroom. The change in the education system made it necessary for the role of the educator to change as well.
- Phase 3: Learning difficulties experienced by learners: characteristics of learners with mild disability, including those with behaviour problems, those with emotional problems,

those with learning disability and those with mild intellectual disability are explained. It is explained that even if these learners exhibit these characteristics, certain teaching and learning principles can be applied in the classroom situation to maximise their learning.

- Phase 4: Planning learning activities for the three learning programmes in the Foundation Phase: In this phase, an exposition of the different manifestations of problems in language, that is listening and speaking, problems in Limited English Proficiency, reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, mathematics, and problems in lifeskills is given. Once the teachers are aware of the manifestations, a discussion of the different strategies for assistance is then given.
- Phase 5: Emotional and/or behavioural problems of MID learners: Learners with MID may develop emotional and behavioural problems owing to their inability to achieve success. As they repeat classes, they become older than other children in the classroom and may begin to bully other learners to shift the attention of the teachers away from their learning difficulties. Ways of assisting these learners are also discussed.
- Phase 6: Learning preferences of MID learners: In this phase, the theories of multiple intelligences, learning styles and left and right brain personalities are outlined. Emphasis is placed on the fact that although the starting point is the learner's strongest learning preference, teachers should work towards training learners to use other preferences as well. Once teachers are familiar with the different preferences learners use, they are then guided into the different ways of accommodating learners.
- Phase 7: The assessment policy: A discussion of the assessment policy is necessitated by the fact that at the end, it is imperative for the teacher to assess the extent to which learners have reached the outcomes as set out for them. Once areas of weaknesses and strengths are identified, it then becomes possible to plan intervention.
- Phase 8: Collaboration among teachers: collaboration and working in are necessary ingredients for the policy of inclusive education to succeed. The different steps in the process of intervention are also discussed.
- Phase 9: The Individual Education Plan: teachers are shown how to draw up an IEP. A fictitious learner, with fictitious problems is used to indicate to the SST how the process of the IEP unfolds.

# THE TRAINING MANUAL FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS

## LIST OF CONTENTS

- Phase 1: Background to the policy of inclusive education;
- Phase 2: Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes Based Education;
- Phase 3: Learning difficulties experienced by the mildly intellectually disabled (MID) learners;
- Phase 4: Planning learning activities for the three learning programmes in the Foundation Phase;
- Phase 5: Emotional and/or behavioural problems of MID learners;
- Phase 6: Learning preferences of MID learners;
- Phase 7: The assessment policy;
- Phase 8: Collaboration among teachers;
- Phase 9: The Individual Education Plan.

### **Outcome**

**The overriding outcome is that at the end of the training, using this SST manual, teachers should experience a paradigm shift with regard to learners with mild intellectual disability. Teachers should change their attitudes towards these learners, to the extent that they believe in the ability of these learners to reach their full potential despite their problems. Finally, teachers should be able to demonstrate their ability to support the MID learners in the ordinary classroom.**

## PHASE 1: BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY OF INCLUSION

### Outcome

**At the end of this phase, the teachers should demonstrate their knowledge of the policy of inclusive education and how this policy evolved in South Africa. They should also display their knowledge of prominent features regarding how the MID learners are supported in other countries.**

### Step 1: Introduction

The term **inclusion or inclusive education**, means different things for different people. Inclusion, in simple terms, means the acceptance and accommodation of a learner with special educational needs (LSEN) in the neighbourhood school, the school to which the learner would be admitted in the absence of a disability. Inclusion is about accommodating a diversity of learner needs in the schools.

The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), Chapter 3 Section 12 (4) makes it the responsibility of the MEC to make places available for LSEN in ordinary schools and also to make **support** available as may be needed by such learners.

The SST training facilitator will explain how the policy evolved in South Africa, after the 1994 Salamanca conference in Spain. A commission was appointed to look into the whole question of special needs in the country. The commission came up with recommendations in 1997, the Green Paper was circulated for public comments in 1999, and finally the White Paper was prepared in 2000. The White Paper had not been published by the time this manual was prepared, but copies were given to District Offices for their perusal, in order to familiarise them with what is likely to be accepted as policy for special needs.

The white paper propagates for the establishment of SSTs, whose main responsibility will be to put in place a properly co-ordinated support system in their respective schools.

**Step 2: Prominent features in other countries**

During this step, it is explained that most countries emphasise **support** for both educators and learners in their approach:

- Canada**      Problem-solving teams: teachers helping teachers.  
Multi-level instruction: using one lesson at different levels of intellectual development amongst learners.
- Australia**    Integrative support teams: teams helping teachers and learners.  
Shift from pull-out programmes to in-class support.
- New Zealand** Methods and Resource teacher: teachers helping teachers and learners to implement programmes for LSEN.  
Consulting teacher: teachers supporting teachers by sharing skills, development of problem-solving.  
Reading Recovery Programme: individualised reading lessons for learners.
- Africa**        Critics of inclusion insist that limited resources should be spent mainly on the able-bodied who are able to contribute economically. Mainstream dumping occurs due to lack of resources. The disabled almost always find themselves at the end of the queue for assistance in most African countries, since some of them are still struggling with universal primary education.
- Kenya**        Ensuring life in the community.  
Animal husbandry & poultry farming.
- Nigeria**      Emphasis on the three R's.
- Tanzania**     Education for self-reliance.

**PHASE 2: CURRICULUM 2005 AND OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION(OBE)**

**Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should display an understanding of the basic principles of Curriculum 2005, OBE and the seven roles of the educator. They should demonstrate the ability to use these principles in the classroom and to apply them also to the MID learners.**

## **Step 1: Background**

In this phase, Curriculum 2005 and OBE are outlined. Most of the educators will have undergone OBE training and therefore it is not necessary to go into details. It is, however, a fact that many teachers especially those in the far off rural areas are not knowledgeable about the content or application of the OBE principles.

Curriculum 2005 was necessitated by the need to transform the education system, in keeping with the transformation of the South African society in general. This Curriculum is made up of eight learning areas, namely:

- Language, Literacy and Communication
- Human and Social Sciences
- Technology
- Mathematical literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences
- Natural Sciences
- Arts and Culture
- Economic and Management Sciences
- Life Orientation.

OBE, is the approach to teaching and learning which is driven by outcomes rather than by content. OBE makes provision for the unique needs of all learners in that it is based on the belief that learners are able to achieve outcomes set out for them at the beginning of an activity. The outcomes are, therefore, the learning results and competencies learners demonstrate at the end of a learning experience. The outcomes may be set in the long-term, as in a period of a year, or in the short-term, as in a period of a week. Such outcomes will of necessity differ from learner to learner, since they are formulated keeping in mind what each learner is able to accomplish in each learning area.

OBE is an approach to education which is learner-centred and it builds on the notion that all learners need to, and can, achieve their full potential, but recognises the fact that this may not necessarily

happen in the same way or within the same period of time for all learners. Assessment in OBE focuses on the achievement of specific outcomes. Learner achievement is therefore credited despite:

- the pathway that might have been taken;
- the rate at which it might have taken place.

This approach begins to accommodate LSEN in that it does not matter when and how the outcomes are accomplished; what matters is the fact that ultimately they are reached.

## **Step 2: Critical outcomes and specific outcomes**

During this step, an overview of the outcomes is given. It is explained to the teachers that the outcomes are such that all learners can achieve them. Outcomes for learners with mild intellectual disability will be different from those of the rest of the class in the sense that such outcomes should be within reach for such learners.

The **critical outcomes** are explained as generic and cross-curricular outcomes. These express the intended results of education and training in a broad sense. The critical outcomes are cross-field and are therefore underpinned by transformational mechanisms and relate to the political, social, economic and judicial spheres of life. They are working principles, and although they are not restricted to any specific learning context, they inform the formulation of specific outcomes in the different learning areas.

The following are the seven critical outcomes:

- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/ or written presentations;
- Identify and solve problems using creative and critical thinking;
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- Work effectively with others in a group;
- Collect/analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;

- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others;
- Understand that the world is a set of related systems. This means that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

On the other hand, the **specific outcomes** are context-specific, in that they are formulated within the context in which they are to be demonstrated. They describe the competence which learners should be able to demonstrate in specific contexts and particular learning areas. All in all, there are sixty six specific outcomes. Only the specific outcomes relating to Languages, Literature and Communication (LLC) and Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences (MLMMS) will be outlined here because they apply directly to the three learning programmes of the foundation phase, namely literacy, numeracy and life skills:

The specific outcomes for Languages, Literature and Communication (LLC):

- Make and negotiate meaning and understanding;
- Show critical awareness of language usage;
- Respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts;
- Access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations;
- Understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context;
- Use language for learning;
- Use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

Specific outcomes for Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences (MLMMS):

- Demonstrate an understanding about ways of working with numbers;
- Manipulate number patterns in different ways;
- Demonstrate understanding of the historical development of mathematics in various social and cultural contexts;

- Critically analyse how mathematical relationships are used in social, political and economic relations;
- Measure with competence and confidence in a variety of contexts;
- Use data from various contexts to make informed judgements;
- Describe and represent experiences with shape, space, time and motion, using all available senses;
- Analyse natural forms, cultural products and processes as representations of shape, space and time;
- Use mathematical language to communicate mathematical ideas, concepts, generalisations and thought processes;
- Use various logical processes to formulate, test and justify conjectures.

A discussion of the critical and specific outcomes is necessitated by the fact that these outcomes can also be achieved by MID learners, although not to the same extent as other learners in the classroom. In any case, such learners are able to achieve the outcomes to the best of their abilities, and should not be disadvantaged simply because they have not achieved the outcomes to the level of other learners in the classroom. OBE does allow for the tailoring of the outcomes to suit the learners they are meant for.

### **Step 3: Co-operative learning**

Co-operative learning is one of the most important strategies employed in an OBE classroom. In co-operative learning, group members share responsibility for helping one another to learn instead of competing against each other. In such a system the emphasis is thus on cooperation within the group. The advantages of the system includes the following:

- Learners are encouraged to work collaboratively and support one another in searching for solutions to immediate problems.

- Co-operative learning is worthwhile for heterogenous student populations because it encourages mutual respect and learning among students of various academic abilities, disabling conditions and racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- Co-operative learning may also be used to integrate learners with exceptional needs such as MID learners, those who have just moved in from another country, those whose parents are in the army, those whose parents are travellers, and so on.
- Such an approach is useful because it develops interdependency and the realization that the success of the group depends on the cooperation of all participants.
- It also develops practices and attitudes which enhance learners' social and group participation skills.
- A co-operative approach can help learners to become less dependent on their teachers.

Teachers of this method must never lose sight of the fact that if they leave learners on their own, the process might be derailed. Constant monitoring is therefore vitally important. The teacher has to move around the classroom and collect information in the form of questions in order to confirm that all learners have understood what is going on. This process must be followed up with discussions or even writing by individual learners – discussion or writing that describes what they have learned. The strategies used frequently include brainstorming, sharing and feedback sessions within and between groups .

Co-operative learning may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Learners in pairs may prepare a joint statement, which they will then present to the larger group for group work.
- Separate materials collected by individuals may be pooled to complete a given task.
- Individual members may be given particular roles (such as, for example, chairperson, recorder, reporter and so on). It is important that such roles be alternated so that each member has an opportunity to perform each role.
- Each member may be asked to complete a draft which could then be completed by the group.

- Groups may be graded and scored on the basis of the aggregate performance of work which is being completed by individuals within a group.

#### **Step 4:        Experiential learning**

Another strategy that is indispensable in an OBE classroom is experiential learning. Experiential learning is a strategy which permits learners to channel the energy, enthusiasm, skills and knowledge which they already have. Experiential learning occurs when learners are placed in a situation where they think and interact with, learn in and form part of a created or real life situation.

Experiential learning follows a number of stages:

#### **Stage 1:        Extensive study**

If one wants to enrich one's knowledge, one has to study extensively. During this stage, collection of knowledge takes place on a large scale and produces a reservoir of knowledge. One produces this reservoir through reflecting on one's own experiences and through observing the experiences of others.

#### **Stage 2:        Accurate enquiry**

If one wants to confirm one's knowledge, one must make accurate inquiries. An investigation of the relevant body of knowledge produces the kind of knowledge one needs. It is by asking and investigating that one comes to know the unknown. This is the process in which one isolates what one needs to know and in which one disregards what is irrelevant.

**Stage 3: Careful reflection**

If one needs to examine the knowledge one has, one has to reflect carefully on what one has learned. Analytical thought about the knowledge which one has gained enables one to understand it more perfectly.

**Stage 4: Clear discrimination**

In order to gain useful knowledge, one best to apply one's powers of discrimination to what one has learned. Classification of components of the body of knowledge enables one to differentiate between right or wrong, good or bad, true or false. This process determines how the knowledge one has gained will be used.

**Stage 5: Ernest practice**

If one needs to apply the knowledge, this must be done with great care. Knowledge really only becomes ultimately effective in application. Learning should be available to be applied in practice. Learning is only really valuable if it can be applied in practical situations. A reservoir full of water is useless if it cannot be used.

The educator is the facilitator in the process of learning and is an essential role player in this process of experiential learning. Although the learner might learn without the facilitator, facilitator should be able to make the process much easier prevent the learner from taking wrong turnings. It might therefore be assumed that it is the task of the facilitator to:

- speed up the process of leaning
- guide the learner in the right direction
- make sure the learner ends up at the right destination

Experiential learning as a process for learning may be explained in terms of:

- An *encounter* results from what the learners bring into the learning situation (his or her previous experience).
- In *dialogue*, learners are given an opportunity to express and report what they have experienced.
- In *reflection*, learners present their interpretations and discuss the meaning of the activity.
- In *application*, the encounter is related to real life situations and the knowledge acquired is then applied. Experiential learning is a strategy that can successfully be used in cooperative learning.

### **Step 5: The roles of the educator**

In this step, it is explained that the role of the educator has changed with the introduction of OBE. One of the critical factors in OBE is the fact that learning is learner-centred and the educator is basically a facilitator, who guides the process of learning. Learners take responsibility for their own learning and are not necessarily dependent on the educator for learning to take place. The educator does not, however relinquish the responsibility for educating learners, it is only the role that changes.

- The educator as **facilitator**: the role of the educator as facilitator means that the educator is much more than the transmitter of knowledge. The teacher is the leader, administrator and manager in the classroom.
- The educator as **assessor** (enquirer): the teacher has to be able to instill in the learners an ability to critically assess themselves what they have to learn in order to elevate their knowledge and skills to complex levels.
- The educator as **moral steward** (learning mediator): the teacher has to believe in the ability of all learners in his/her class to reach their full potential. Teachers should be people with values so that they are able to transfer these values to learners.
- The educator as **mediator of knowledge**: the teacher should be a person with thorough knowledge of his or her subject field. From such a foundation, educators will be able to support the learners in their care, keeping in mind the diverse needs of such learners.

- The educator as **philosopher**: the educator should be able to carry out his/ her philosophy of professional commitment and be able to accept responsibility and accountability. Such an educator will be in a position to undertake research and take initiative for the growth of both the learners and him-or herself.
- The educator as **bridger**: this relates to the ability to introduce a sense of community, where a sense of respect and responsibility will be inculcated in the learners.
- The educator as **changemaker**: the educator has to be in a position to bring about change in order to shape the world in which he or she works. Such an educator, even if he or she was not in possession of various skills, will be open to learn from others in order to effect these changes.

### PHASE 3: LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

#### Outcome

**At the end of this phase, the teachers should be able to identify learning difficulties experienced by learners with mild intellectual disability. The teachers should be able to apply the different teaching and learning principles to assist these learners.**

#### Step 1: Background

This step comprises an exposition of the different characteristics that teachers must look out for in trying to identify these learners.

For example, in most cases the visually impaired, the hearing impaired and the physically disabled are able to cope with the ordinary curriculum as long as Braille, Sign Language and other assistive devices are made available. For those with mild intellectual disability, intervention needs to target the areas in which they struggle the most. For the purpose of this study, the mildly intellectually disabled learner is the one most targeted, but it must, however, be pointed out that other mildly disabled learners are also able to benefit from this programme.

It needs to be explained to the teachers that mildly intellectually disabled learners may also present with emotional and behaviour problems.

### **Step 2: Manifestations of learning difficulties**

In this step, teachers are familiarised with the manifestations of learning difficulties. It is explained that the mildly intellectually disabled learner will experience one or more of the following problems:

- Problems of attention: Lack of attention, inability to maintain attention.
- Problems with memory: Deficits in memory, manifested in their inability to recall.
- Rate of learning: Learn at a slower rate than their counterparts.
- Level of learning: Inability to reach the same level of learning as others.
- Rate of forgetting: Forget easily.
- Transfer of information: Inability to use information in new but similar situations, the inability to use skills and concepts learned in specific settings in other unrelated settings.
- Concrete versus abstract learning: Prefer concrete level of operation.
- Incidental learning: Inability to learn from information in the periphery.
- Discrimination: Inability to locate relevant information.

### **Step 3: Learning principles**

It is further explained that having identified the manifestations does not mean that these learners are hopeless but that for them to learn successfully, a number of learning principles are to be taken into consideration by the teacher:

- Experiencing success: Experiences of failure lead to expectancy of failure. Allow them to succeed. Success breeds success.
- Fixation in memory: Through meaningful repetition, facts are fixated in memory.
- Regularity: Routine leads to security.
- Verbalisation: Using words all the time.

- **Concreteness:** To be seen, heard and touched.
- **Demonstration and experimentation:** Leading learners to finding solutions through demonstration and experiments.
- **Independent activity:** Learners work independently. This increases self-confidence.
- **Participation and experience:** Participates actively. Involvement.
- **Methodical procedures:** Proceeding from the known to the unknown and from easy to difficult.
- **Socialisation:** Interaction with others.

#### **Step 4: Teaching principles**

On the other hand, a number of teaching principles have to be applied by the teacher him/herself:

- **Individualisation:** Educational outcomes to be in keeping with the individuality of the learner (IEP).
- **Totality:** Matter to be presented as a meaningful whole. Relationships between things and facts. Integration of facts and details.
- **Motivation:** These learners have poor intrinsic motivation and depend on motivation from outside (extrinsic). They need encouragement in the form of praise, privileges, etc.
- **Reduction of subject matter:** Reduce to basics, tailoring outcomes to suit learners.
- **Task analysis:** Broad matter divided into component parts. Later matter is woven together to bring sense into it.
- **Emphasis:** Enables them to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant.
- **Purposefulness:** Not only keeping the learner busy. What is to be achieved has to be planned.

#### **PHASE 4: PLANNING LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN THE THREE LEARNING PROGRAMMES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

##### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should demonstrate usable knowledge and understanding of the general problems experienced by MID learners with regard to language, listening, speaking, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, mathematics and life skills. Teachers should demonstrate the ability to apply the different approaches to assist these learners.**

##### **Step 1: Background**

During this step, it is explained that some learners will invariably also experience problems in one or more of the following areas of academics:

- Literacy: language, listening, speaking, reading; writing; spelling; handwriting;
- Numeracy or mathematics;
- Life skills.

In each of the learning programmes, the following steps are followed:

**First**, the manifestations of learning difficulties in each area are discussed.

**Second**, strategies and in certain instances approaches are indicated as to how to assist the learners in the light of the manifestations.

##### **Step 2: Language**

Language is the communication of thoughts and ideas through symbols. Language is inextricably linked to culture because language is in fact acquired through culture. Language is also linked

to intellectual abilities and since the MID learners have poor cognitive abilities, it follows that they will be characterised by a delay in language development.

▪ **Signs of possible language problems**

MID learners may present with some of the following problems:

- Some learners create the impression that they do not hear what is said. This is due to the fact that they do not understand what is said.
- Their level of language usage is lower when compared to that of other learners.
- Some still use baby talk.
- Some are extremely quiet, as if they are shy, but are afraid of engaging in discussions due to the fact that their language is poor. As such, even if they try they are easily silenced by the talkative ones.
- Some refuse to speak, preferring to use 'yes' or 'no' answers.
- Some struggle to finish a sentence once they try to start to speak.
- Some forget what they want to say even as they speak.
- Some have to sit for long periods just thinking about what they want to say.
- They have a limited and concrete vocabulary, and as such are characterised by concrete conversations, even at a stage where it is expected that they should have acquired abstract vocabulary.
- They construct very short sentences, and some sentences may even be incorrect.
- When they listen, they understand only concrete information.
- They tend to attach little meaning to indirect information, which in most cases they do not understand.

▪ **Assisting learners to develop listening skills**

- Give them opportunities to listen to stories and talks on radio and tape.
- Give them instructions to follow, for example: go outside to the nearest tap, wash your hands, take out your lunchbox, bless your food and eat.

- Parents may be asked to donate old telephones which should be used for participation in telephone conversations.
  - Give them opportunities to give informal speeches and tell stories in turns, while others listen.
  - Allow them to do role-play, puppet plays and dramatisation; questions should be asked at the end of the play to see if they have been listening.
- **Assisting learners to develop speaking skills**
- Relating and adding to the topic under discussion in cases where their sentences are short and simple.
  - Ask them to add descriptive words to their accounts. Ask additional questions to encourage them to enrich their accounts.
  - For the shy learners, avoid asking questions which will only elicit 'yes' or 'no' answers like "Did you?" "Will he?" etc. Rather, ask questions to elicit explanations like "Why did he?" "Who were?" .
  - Give them daily opportunities to extend their vocabulary using pictures, stories, outings and conversations.
  - The drilling of words can be done with an emphasis on meaning, where rhymes, songs and dramatisation are used.
  - The use of baby talk should be discouraged but without ridicule and humiliation.

**Step 3: Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**

South African schools are filled with learners for whom English is not the primary language. These learners include learners from previously disadvantaged communities, MID learners and more recently, immigrant learners. Educators need to have an awareness of how a second language is acquired so as to enable them to give appropriate support to learners with LEP.

- **Learners go through a number of stages in the acquisition of a second language:**

**Pre-production stage:** This is the silent stage, and it may last up to several months. During this stage, the learner is dependent upon modelling, visual aids, and context clues to obtain and convey meaning. During this stage, the learner listens and develops an understanding of language before beginning to speak. Lessons should focus on listening comprehension and also on building the learner's receptive vocabulary.

**Early production stage:** During this stage, learners begin to speak, using words, short sentences and phrases. Learning activities should focus on motivating learners to produce vocabulary they already understand.

**Speech emergence stage:** This is the stage during which learners start speaking in longer phrases and even complete sentences. Lessons should be such that higher levels of language usage are encouraged and learners are able to expand their receptive vocabulary.

**Intermediate fluency stage:** Learners reach this stage when they are able to engage in conversations and produce full sentences. At this stage, lessons must challenge them to produce responses requiring critical thinking skills and complex sentence structures.

- **Common problems when using English as a second language**

MID learners may present with some of the following problems:

- Learners have a limited vocabulary.
- They have problems with the past tense, with the suffix –ed being added to all verbs in the past tense. For example, using the past tense of the word “seek”, some learners will say “seeked” instead of “sought”.
- They have problems with degrees of comparison: “beautiful, more beautiful, most beautiful”.
- They translate word for word from their primary language to English.

- They struggle with pronunciation.
- They use words wrongly, for example, “there is many water in the sea”.
- They never know when to use the ‘s’ in the third person singular e.g “they walks”.

▪ **Strategies for teaching learners with Limited English Proficiency**

- Use visual and graphic representations.
- Use a great deal of body language and gestures.
- Use relevant maps, posters, pictures and their own productions in the classroom.
- Do not teach vocabulary in isolation.
- Build on the learner’s prior experience.
- Increase wait-time for learners to respond to any question.
- Provide opportunities to work in partners, mixing learners who have LEP with fluent ones.
- Assign a buddy to a learner with LEP to help them whenever additional assistance is needed to understand directions and provide peer tutoring.
- Create a comfortable, anxiety-free environment that encourages risk-taking, an environment where they can make mistakes without being ridiculed.
- Teach and model learning strategies.
- Provide opportunities for classroom interaction.
- Slow down speech and repeat as needed, speak naturally but slowly.
- Paraphrase or simplify the language used.
- Use fewer idioms and pronouns.
- Modify language to be more comprehensible for the proficiency level of the learner.
- Use fewer multi-syllabic words.
- Provide opportunities for hands-on, active learning.
- Provide background information to increase comprehensible input and comprehension.
- Draw illustrations and pictures to define.
- Provide opportunities to respond to questions and verbalise without ridicule.
- Listen patiently and attentively to learners.
- Assess learning style and utilise multiple intelligences and present lessons using approaches that best reflect their learning preferences.

- Teach through relevant, familiar topics.
- Focus on communication, meaning and comprehension.
- Teach key words and vocabulary in context.
- Check frequently for understanding.
- Celebrate learners' efforts and successes.
- Facilitate learning through games, because learners may acquire rules and vocabulary in context.
- Provide a stimulating and supportive environment.
- Avoid correcting errors of pronunciation, structure and vocabulary and accept responses without comments.
- Concentrate on their interests, values and culture to make learning personally and socially oriented.
- Involve them actively in the process of learning for it to be meaningful and functional.
- Give them relevant tasks to perform.
- English must be used in a meaningful context.
- Learning tasks should be appropriate to the level of development of learners.
- Comments during evaluation must be positive and constructive.
- Compliments may be used to build the learner's self-image.
- Utilise drama, puppet shows, role-play, pantomime, themes, listening to literature and interpretive drama.
- Give learners opportunities to listen to English and to speak.
- Provide them with opportunities to read poems aloud.
- Dramatise songs, which they must perform in English.
- Involve them in dialogues and portraying characters.
- Illustrate simple stories with pictures.
- Use code switching, by using the learner's home language at intervals if they seem not to understand what is being said in English. This is to be used carefully so that the lesson does not degenerate into home language instruction, where learners do not have a chance to learn English.

## **Step 4: Reading**

### ▪ **Indications of reading difficulties**

The following are some of the difficulties MID learners experience:

- They do not know letter-sound correlations.
- They recognise only a few sight words.
- Omission of words is a common problem.
- Insertion of words is also problematic.
- They add or omit parts of words.
- They replace one word with another, reading words that are not in the text.
- They cannot give an account of what they read.
- They manifest signs of reading anxiety such as fidgeting with pages, clearing throat all the time etc.
- Some repeat words that have been read already.
- They reverse words by reading them backwards.
- They prefer to be silent when unable to read a word.
- Reading word by word, including monotonous reading.
- Their phrasing may be incorrect.
- Their speech are characterised by unusually long pauses between words.

### ▪ **Approaches to reading**

**Bottom-up approach:** In this approach, the printed matter is the focal point of reading. Learners are expected to read words in the text. They learn how words are decoded and this is done through sight words, word analysis and word synthesis.

**Top-down approach:** In this approach, comprehension is the focal point of the process of reading. It is based on the premise that readers and learners can read the text and understand the meaning.

**The interactive approach:** This is a combination of the two approaches discussed above. Decoding and comprehension take place simultaneously. Learners recognise the word (decode) and understand the content of the text (comprehension).

**Phonetic approach:** This approach emphasises the teaching of letter sounds and letter sound groups and the blending of these sounds into meaningful words. Learners are taught vowel sounds and associations to help them recall those sounds. They learn sound associations for vowels and letter combinations. In this way, unknown words may be broken into syllables or segments and be put together again.

**Sight word or whole word approach:** Learners are taught to identify certain words as a whole unit at an automatic level. High frequency words and non-phonetic words are generally taught in this way. Frequent drill, repetition and practice (preferably in the form of a game) help to lock the words in the memory bank for instant recognition. Drill is done with an emphasis on meaning and understanding.

**Whole language approach:** The learner's language experiences inside and outside of the school are used to increase their reading skills. Emphasis is placed on reading for meaning.

**Language experience approach:** Learners read words they have dictated to the teacher and watch the teacher write the story. The teacher then reads the story to the learner. The teacher and the learner then read chorally, together at the same time. This approach emphasises the use of key words drawn directly from sentences the learners created and dictated.

**Bilingual approach:** The learner's home language is used to explain concepts and words to be learned in another language, e.g. a second language. This only works in situations where the home language of learners is similar.

**Eclectic approach:** This approach uses a combination of the approaches mentioned above. Two or more approaches are used simultaneously, depending on the needs of the learner.

**Fernald's multi-sensory approach:** (also known as the VAKTI approach). The learners simultaneously rely on their visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile and imaginary senses.

**V-Visual,** the learner sees the word;

**A-Auditory,** the learner pronounces the word;

**K-Kinesthetic,** the learner writes the word in the air (involving the whole body);

**T-Tactile,** the learner traces the word with his/her finger or writes the word in his/her hand;

**I-Imagination,** the learner imagines the word in his/her mind.

**Daily word lists approach:** Learners receive word lists on a daily basis. The order of the words in the lists is reshuffled. Once the list is mastered, a new list is given. This approach is really helpful if the words are related to the life world of the learner. Such lists may even be given on Saturdays, where lists relating to sports are given, and Sundays, when words relating to the church service and worship are given.

#### ▪ **Oral reading strategies**

**Choral reading:** Everyone in the class reads together at the same time. The teacher first models the reading to the whole class, and thereafter the class reads along with the teacher. One paragraph may be read by girls, the next by boys, and so on.

**Cloze reading:** The teacher reads the material but leaves out key words. These words are then filled in orally by the learners.

**Popcorn reading:** One person starts reading and at the end of the paragraph calls out "popcorn" and the name of the person who has to continue reading.

**Mirror (echo) reading:** The teacher reads a paragraph or a sentence and the learners reread that paragraph. The process of rereading passages the learners have heard before, increases fluency and comprehension. Rereading can be done in pairs, in small groups, to adults such as teachers and volunteers and into the tape recorder.

**Switch seat reading:** The teacher reads while seated in her chair and learners follow in their books. Once the teacher is finished, she switches seats with another learner who will begin reading from where the teacher left off.

**Shared quotations:** The teacher reads everything except within quotations marks. Whenever something is written within quotations marks, the learners read it.

**Dialogue reading:** Learners are assigned characters and read the parts relating to the said character.

**Buddy/partner reading:** Learners read orally in pairs, taking turns and alternating paragraphs and pages. They could also read in unison. This becomes effective if learners share books, because while the one learner is reading and pointing to the words, the other one may follow along while awaiting his/her chance. The teacher may give questions to be answered for an assignment and the learners may even discuss the answers.

#### ▪ **Reading Recovery Programme**

The Reading Recovery Program in New Zealand was developed for the purpose of assisting poor readers, namely those who may be attending to and using a narrow range of strategies and applying their knowledge in rigid ways (as is known to be the case with the mildly intellectually disabled learners). Furthermore, the Reading Recovery Program is an early intervention programme, which is meant for learners who experience difficulties – especially during first grade and during their first year of instruction in reading. These learners receive individualised daily lessons by a specially trained teacher.

This programme, begins by teaching students the following strategies :

- Early strategies of operating on print, e.g. reading from left to right, reading word by word
- Self-monitoring, e.g. reading and watching if what one is reading makes sense
- Cross -checking, e.g. checking information that learners bring into the text

- Searching for cues and searching for meaning
- Self-correction and the correcting of one's own errors

The programme is individualised by:

- *roaming around*. The teacher and the learner explore what the learner already knows.
- *the lesson framework*. Each learner rereads several familiar stories.
- *staff development*. When teachers learn something new, they implement it in their teaching.
- *something extra*. The programme is not an end in itself; it has to be used in conjunction with other classroom activities.

The basic theoretical assumptions of the Reading Recovery Program are as follows:

- Reading is an “in the head” process; learners use information from cues, world knowledge, visual and letter sound, storybook experience.
- Reading and writing are reciprocal processes; the connection between reading and writing is important if one is to become literate.
- If learners learn to read by reading during every reading lesson, they are likely to read and write more effectively.
- School literacy instruction influences learners' conception of reading; learners who may be reacting rigidly to reading might be convinced that reading is only what instruction implies.
- It is productive to intervene early; learners do not need to “mature” into reading – as was initially believed.
- Knowledgeable and sensitive teachers are the key. Teachers themselves evaluate their own assumptions and are also critiqued by their peers from time to time.

A typical reading recovery lesson includes the following components:

- The reading of familiar stories: the learner rereads familiar books.

- Taking a running record of text reading; the teacher as a neutral observer records the learner's progress.
- Working with letters (plastic letters are used in the beginning).
- Writing a message or story with the assistance of the teacher. The learner writes a sentence or two every day.
- Reading a new book. A new book is introduced and the teacher and the learner talk about the pictures in the book.

The promise of Reading Recovery for children with special educational needs including MID learners and for their teachers is that it will

- raise their self esteem
- induce curricular change
- improve the quality of mainstream provision.

Its promise for school organisation and funding is that it will

- reduce the diversity of literacy abilities within a class, thus making mainstream provision simpler
- reduce the cost, stress and difficulty of later remediation by its early input, before failure has become ingrained.

## **Step 5: Writing**

### **Written expression**

The task of writing, namely deciding what to write about and how to express those ideas, is a struggle for most people. This is even more so with learners experiencing learning difficulties. These learners need to be assisted to generate ideas, organise their thoughts and plan before writing.

▪ **The following are pre-writing techniques**

- **Brainstorm:** Collecting whatever comes to mind about a particular topic. This can be done as a group or in pairs.
- **Quick write:** Learners write down everything related to the topic at hand, not worrying about spelling neatness, and so on.  
Writing topics: Lists of commonly used ideas related to particular topics such as myself, my home, my school etc. These lists may be added to throughout the year.
- **Personal collage writing folder:** Students make a personal folder using pictures collected from magazines, newspapers, travel brochures, etc.
- **Writing prompts:** A poem, a picture or a song may be used to prompt writing.
- **Vocabulary lists:** Lists of words related to a given topic.
- **Telling personal stories:** Ask them to remember the time they were sick, something funny that happened etc.

These learners also need to be assisted with regard to **grammar, structure and mechanics** of writing. The following are some of the ways in which it may be done:

- Learners are taught parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc.
- Learners have to listen to passages being read and identify certain parts of speech.
- Learners are taught the rules for capitalisation and punctuation (with examples).
- Learners are taught abbreviations.
- Learners are taught combinations of sentences and sentence expansion.
- Learners are taught the structure of a paragraph by the use of **the hamburger graphic**: the top bun represents the topic; the patty represents the flesh; the lettuce, the tomato and the onion represents the details that add flavour and interest, and finally, the bottom bun represents closure.

Editing skills are indispensable and the following are some suggestions:

- Learners are taught the skill of proof reading and editing by using transparencies of unedited work that has to be edited in class.
- Learners are encouraged to circle words that they suspect to have been misspelled.
- Learners are taught to self-talk while revising their writing by asking questions such as “Does everything make sense?”
- Peer editing is used (learners editing each other’s work in pairs or in groups).
- Teacher-learner writing conferences are conducted, where the teacher gives feedback and learners reflect on their own work. Learners then work on improving their skills.
- Learners are given more time to practise the skill of writing in class where immediate feedback can be provided.

Written expression is made up of the following stages:

- **The prewriting stage**, which entails oral receptive and expressive language, motivation to write and legible handwriting.
- **The writing stage**, which entails being able to write sentences and responding accurately to essays and test questions.
- **The post writing stage**, which entails editing and revising for grammar skills, organisation and content.

The following are substages for the second stage, which is the actual writing process:

- **The rehearsal (prewriting) stage**, in which learners think of what they are to write about. For this they depend on their interest and experiences to develop the topic.
- **The drafting (writing) stage**, in which ideas are put on paper. They rehearse materials orally and also model the teacher’s writing activities.
- **The revision (rewriting) stage**, in which the learners refine what has been written in order to enhance the content. They also correct poor mechanisms at this stage.
- **The editing (proof reading) stage**, in which final corrections are made – including corrections of spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- **The publishing (recopying) stage**, in which the final document is produced.

### ▪ **Assisting with written work**

- Make time for teaching written work, by giving motivation and guidance for writing.
- Create a relaxed and social atmosphere where class matters may be written about.
- Other academic subjects may be integrated with writing.
- Make them aware of the stages in writing, where information is first collected in the pre-writing stage, where writing takes place in the writing stage, and where the text is evaluated in the post-writing stage.
- Give more time to practise the skill of writing in class, where immediate feedback will be provided.

### **Step 6: Spelling**

Most of these learners struggle with spelling and their assignments are then incomprehensible.

### ▪ **Manifestations of spelling difficulties**

The following are some of the difficulties MID learners experience:

- They have difficulties with vowel and vowel combinations.
- They are unsure of consonant combinations.
- They cannot remember the visual image of words.
- They cannot determine the elements in words, and thus omit or insert words, or get the letter sequence wrong.
- They reverse word
- They tend to spell phonetically, which is in most cases influenced by poor pronunciation.
- They are unable to remember simple spelling rules.

### ▪ **Approaches to the teaching of spelling**

- Cognitive approaches: The teacher spells the word, writes it down and after pronouncing it discusses the meaning. Learners then complete the spelling grid.

- Test-study-test approaches: Learners receive a pretest list of words, which they study. They are tested on the list and continue to practice the words they misspell.
- Corrected test methods: Learners correct their own spelling mistakes with the help of the teacher.
- Rule governed approach: Learners are taught the basic spelling rules, with a view to applying them to the spelling of unfamiliar words.
- Word study technique: This technique is made up of five steps:

- Step 1: learners verbalise the word;  
 Step 2: learners write and say the word;  
 Step 3: learners compare the written word to the model;  
 Step 4: learners trace and say the word;  
 Step 5: learners write the word from memory.

▪ **Patterns of the English language**

Learners may practice learning the basic patterns of the English language by reading and writing words such as the following:

**Phonetically regular words:** Short vowel words (best, plant, rich, check, trust)

Long vowel words (plate, dime, cute, whole)

Vowel diagraphs (chain, dream, sweet, groan)

**Multi-syllabic words with Prefixes:** unhappy, unable

**Suffixes:** slowly, wisely

**Word family/rhyming patterns:** thank, blank, crank, thick, trick, stick, right, night delight,  
 bright, cold, bold, scold

**Focussing on patterns as beginning blends/clusters:** drive, drop, drink, dry

**High frequency words and commonly misspelled words:** because, write, quick, naughty, quiet, quite, right

### **Teacher-directed spelling techniques**

- Words may be introduced and learners asked to look at the configuration, for the little word within the word and are given mnemonic clues that may be used for remembering the spelling of the word. The syllables are then written in a coloured pen and the meaning discussed and used within an appropriate context.
- A group of Spelling Experts (learners skilled in spelling) are assigned as peer tutors. During writing periods, these learners may help poor spellers. The Spelling Experts may also check spelling tests before marks are recorded.
- Instead of automatically telling the correct spelling to the learner when asked, the teacher may encourage learners to use self-help strategies to look up the word. It is also advisable for learners to ask peers. Learners who are bogged down with spelling may be allowed to write troublesome words on a piece of paper.
- Learners may develop their own personal lists, e.g. word banks for those words they need to practice regularly. These words may be selected from the learner's misspelled words. The word banks have to be updated regularly as learners learn new words.
- Learners may be taught to look for patterns in words by teaching them word families.
- Additional phonetic training may be provided for poor spellers, in the form of letter-sound associations. This helps to remind them what the word looks like in print. Some learners are able to decode, read adequately and identify sight words, but if they can't recall the print, they may lack strategies for spelling.
- While reading written work by learners, the teacher may only indicate in the margin a check mark. The learner should then find his/her misspelled word and then self-correct it if at all possible.
- Some learners rely on their senses to learn to spell. It is not possible in the beginning to determine the learner's strongest sense, but with time it can be established and that sense utilised to assist him/her with spelling. For instance, with the visual learner, one could begin with the whole word, dividing it up, and bringing in associations. With the auditory learner, the starting point could be the phonetic analysis of the word and the emphasis

could shift to the visual image of the word. Learners should be led to utilise all the senses in learning how to spell, and later on the preferred mode can be utilised increasingly.

- Cognitive input may be utilised to help the learner remember spelling rules.
- Word rhythms may be used during syllabification, while learners clap to the different syllables in the word or may use rhymes and games.
- Encourage them to edit their work.
- Memory aids, mnemonic techniques, may be used together with repetition to fix connections between letters or syllables.
- Teach spelling rules, at the same time making learners aware of the fact that there is much consistency in the spelling system, in that a rule for suffix and prefix may be applied to another similar word.
- Learners may look in the mirror to see the different pronunciation of words.
- Compile personal dictionaries, using high frequency words which learners often misspell.

#### **Step 7: Handwriting**

Many MID learners struggle with good handwriting and their assignments are then unattractive.

##### **▪ Manifestations of handwriting difficulties**

- They may have poor physical posture, for example leaning against the edge of the table.
- Their writing speed may be uneven, slow or quick.
- Their pencil grip may either be too firm or too loose.
- They may tire easily when writing.
- Their letter size may be uneven.
- Letters may either float between the lines or project above the lines.
- Their standard of handwriting may vary from day to day.
- Their spacing between letters and words may be inconsistent.
- Their handwriting may be shaky or uncertain.

## ■ **Helping with neatness and legibility**

- Explain that studies have indicated that teachers tend to give learners the benefit of the doubt if their work is neat. This is due to the fact that legibility and neatness reflects one's attitude towards one's work and makes a lasting impression.
- Avoid pressurising learners about their speed of writing.  
Set realistic, mutually agreed-upon expectations of neatness.
- Change the pencil type if the learner writes too heavily or too lightly.
- Teach them to use their index finger between words for spacing (finger spacing).
- Provide learners with strips of alphabets, both cursive and manuscript, for reference.
- Provide a clipboard for those who are unable to anchor paper and let it slide around.
- Encourage them to use sharpened pencils.
- Use writing warm-ups, like stretching and wiggling fingers (with a rhyme or a song if possible).
- Allow them to practise by tracing sandpaper letters or eggshell letters.
- Allow them to practise by writing on sand or carpet (tactile-kinesthetic technique).
- Provide prompts for letter formation and directionality by placing dots to indicate where to begin and arrows to indicate the direction.
- Practice can be given through trace and copy activities.
- Encourage appropriate sitting, posture and anchoring of paper.
- Alternate size of paper lines, paper size, shape, texture and colour.
- Allow them to use transparencies, the chalkboard and the whiteboard.
- Set an example by evaluating your own handwriting.

Some learners with mild intellectual disability have problems with *reversal* of letters. The following are suggestions to overcome this problem:

- The learners have to verbalise letters before writing them down.
- The learners may be given mnemonic clues to help them to remember the letters.
- Manuscript alphabets may be posted at learners' desks. They may refer to them before attempting to write.

- Separate instruction may be given with frequently reversed letters.
- Visual clues may be built into the letter as a prompt and the clue may be slowly faded.

### **Step 8: Mathematics**

Learners need to meet certain **prerequisites** if they are to be able to start with formal mathematics:

**Content level:** they need to have mastered basic addition and subtraction.

**Education level:** they must be able to relate objects to mathematical calculations, and to relate mathematical concepts to practical situations.

**Development level:** they must have reached a certain level of intellectual maturity.

**Emotional level:** learners need to have reached a certain level of emotional maturity so as to possess the will and the motivation to work on mathematical concepts.

**Contextual level:** learners need to be aware of contexts where mathematical concepts can be applied.

▪ **The following cognitive abilities are necessary:**

**Classification:** grouping of objects according to common characteristics.

**Ordering and sequencing:** arrangement of objects, events and processes according to size etc.

**Relationship between units:** counting to a certain number, saying which number is the biggest etc.

**Temporal awareness:** which enables them to follow instructions in the correct order.

**One-to-one correspondence:** to master the principles of addition and subtraction.

**Spatial relations:** pointing at the object at the back, front, bottom, top etc.

**Conservation of shape:** sameness of mass even in different shapes.

**Conservation of liquid:** amount of liquid the same if transferred from a tall glass into a wide glass.

**Conservation of length:** the length of a rope remains the same even when twisted.

**Conservation of number:** the basic characteristics of the number of objects remain the same no matter how they are arranged.

▪ **Basic concepts to be taught in mathematics:**

**Recognising and writing numbers:** learners must be allowed to copy numbers in their correct sequence.

**Series:** learners should be given a series of objects to count. This can be done by writing numbers next to pictures in a series.

**Simple addition:** learners should guide themselves to solve concepts by verbalising the process.

**Counting:** learners may count from 1 up to 50 or 100, in a meaningful context.

**More or less:** these concepts may be explained in terms of place values of hundreds, tens and units.

**Ordinal numbers:** learners should understand the concepts of first, second etc.

**Addition:** learners are shown regrouping and transfer.

**Counting coins:** learners are taught to recognise coins and to add their value.

**Time:** learners have to know how to count in fives up to 60 to be able to read the time.

**Simple word problems:** learners are taught to relate word problems to the concrete world.

**Multiplication:** learners are taught the repetitiveness of multiplication.

**Simple division:** learners are taught to state the dividend before the divider.

**Difficult calculations:** once learners have mastered to multiply one-digit numbers, they may move on to two-digit and three-digit numbers.

**Space:** for those who struggle with space, let them use graph paper to write numbers in each block.

**Practice:** enough time has to be given for learners to practise the various skills.

**Basic number facts:** Such as one to one correspondence, length, weight.

**Classification:** Sorting objects on the basis of one or more common properties, eg colour, shape, size, texture, design.

**Numeration:** Understanding numbers and their manipulations, understanding the value and meaning of numbers.

**Basic facts and operations:** Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

**Essential concepts and skills:** Decimals and fractions.

**Functional maths:** Money, measurement and time.

**Word problems:** Maths presented in words.

**Place value:** Understanding grouping by ones, tens and hundreds. This can be explained using concrete objects in hundreds, tens and units:

Numerals	Hundreds	Tens	Ones
234	2	3	4
675	6	7	5
29	0	2	9
36	0	3	6

▪ **Manifestations of mathematical difficulties**

MID learners may present with some of the following problems:

- Avoidance of mathematics or anxiety if mathematics has to be done.
- Confusion, not knowing where to begin.
- Working very slowly and counting using fingers.
- They do not understand basic mathematical facts.
- They experience difficulties with place value.
- They are unable to do mathematical calculations with fractions and decimals.
- They have difficulties executing mathematical operations using specific steps, for example steps in long division.
- They are unable to do word sums.
- They are unable to understand the concepts of time and money.
- They have problems sorting objects according to their characteristics.
- They cannot estimate numerical quantity.
- Most of them find it difficult to count further than 20.
- They count very slowly because they have to pause to think which number is next.
- They find it difficult to count further from a given number.

- They have difficulty counting in multiples such as two, three etc.
- Most cannot count backwards from 10.
- They do not understand numerical values.
- They cannot distinguish computational signs such as +, -, etc.
- They do not understand the concept of tens and units.
- They depend too much on the concrete aids to work out answers.
- They do not understand mass and weight.

▪ **Assisting with mathematics**

- In teaching mathematics, the most important thing is to relate learning matter to everyday life experiences
- Avoid negative remarks about incorrect problem-solving methods and incorrect answers given by learners.
- Show sympathy and patience, for instance by acknowledging that certain aspects of mathematics are difficult but also giving the assurance that you believe they can manage it.
- Teachers should make a point of marking not only the answer, but also the computation steps to determine where the mistake originated.
- Tell learners beforehand which aspects they will be assessed on.
- Prepare them on how to answer questions in a test.
- Give them feedback immediately while the work is still fresh in their memories.
- Bring in an element of success, where learners who struggle will be able to write tests successfully.
- Announce the results in such a way that those who experience difficulties will not be embarrassed or shamed.
- Write positive comments on the test paper and avoid over-emphasising the importance of correct answers.
- Learners may be given an opportunity to re-write the same test at a later stage.
- Set outcomes that are realistic for learners, outcomes that are achievable by the learners. The demands should not exceed the learner's abilities.

- An enthusiastic teacher will instill enthusiasm in the learners.
- Make sure learners have mastered the basic factual knowledge such as mathematical concepts to enable them to understand mathematics.
- Limit the amount of new information to be conveyed in a given period.
- Emphasise aspects that should receive special attention.
- New information should be related to information that is familiar.
- Once learners have mastered smaller units, they are ready to master larger units.
- Provide opportunity for repetition to ensure that the information is secure in the learner's memory. Practical exercises should be the order of the day
- Provide different types of manipulatives to help them to visualise the work.
- Allow and encourage them to use calculators to check their answers and work out sums again if their answers are incorrect.
- Allow them extra time during tests so that they are not rushed and thereby make careless mistakes.
- Encourage them to solve problems on graph paper by using squares.
- Allow them to write on notebook paper held with lines running vertically rather than horizontally, especially for those who experience problems with regard to aligning the numbers.
- Reduce the number of problems assigned.
- Reduce the amount of copying to be done by photocopying pages.
- Highlight processing signs with a coloured pen for those who are inattentive to a change in operational signs on a page.
- Provide large spaces for work during tests.
- Provide sample problems with steps clearly indicated.
- Provide a multiplication table for those who struggle with tables.
- When testing long division, where the problems involve using several digits and regrouping, sums should be those numbers that learners are familiar with, e.g. 2s, 5s and 10s.
- For those who have not mastered the multiplication facts, mnemonic devices may be used. Rap songs, rhymes and songs may also be used.

**Step 9: Life skills**

**Outcome**

**At the end of this step, teachers should demonstrate the ability to assist the mildly intellectually disabled learners in gaining the necessary life skills: Most of these learners come from poor socio-economic backgrounds with associated problems of alcohol and/or substance abuse and the inability to form harmonious and lasting relationships and teachers should demonstrate the ability to assist such learners.**

▪ **Manifestations of problems with life skills**

MID learners may present with the following problems:

- Socially, these learners may be immature when compared to other learners.
- They may prefer to play with younger children, who do not pose a threat for them.
- They may be emotionally labile.
- They have problems determining what is acceptable and what is not in social situations.
- They are characterised by an external locus of control and helplessness.
- They are unable to deal with frustrating and astonishing situations.
- Due to previous experiences of failure, they may expect to fail and not be eager to engage in the process of learning.
- They may be plagued by outer-directedness and dependence on others for solutions to problems.
- Since perceptual development is related to cognitive development it follows that they may have perceptual problems.

▪ **Assisting learners with life skills**

- Socially, learners should be engaged in social interaction, where communication is emphasised.

- Physically, emphasis should be placed on caring for oneself and becoming independent.
- Emotionally, they should be encouraged to share their feelings, learn to take responsibility and be given skills in conflict-resolution.
- Intellectually, emphasis should be placed on improving memory skills, problem-solving skills and critical thinking.
- Creatively, they should be encouraged to use their imagination and learn to appreciate beauty.
- Spiritually, they should be assisted in the knowledge of the Almighty, in developing positive attitudes and in developing good values.

## **PHASE 5: EMOTIONAL AND/OR BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES**

### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should be able to display their knowledge of emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by learners, with particular reference to those with mild intellectual disability and should also demonstrate the ability to utilise their knowledge to assist these learners.**

### **Step 1: Background**

In this step, it is explained that mildly intellectually disabled learners may also present with emotional and behavioural problems. This happens especially in situations where they have to repeat grades, where they are forced to attend with learners younger than they are, leading to poor self-esteem.

### **Definition**

A definition of what constitutes emotional and behavioural problems is illusive in the sense that a common definition, which is all encompassing, is made impossible by the fact that different

practitioners look at these difficulties from different angles. What is clear though, is the fact that such behaviours are in most cases excessive, deviant, chronic, and occur over a period of time.

Learners with emotional and/or behavioural problems exhibit one or more of the following characteristics, which affect their performance:

- Inability to learn, which cannot be explained in terms of intellectual, sensory or health factors.
- Inability to build and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers.
- Inappropriate types of behaviour and feelings, under normal circumstances.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears, associated with personal or school problems.

## **Step 2: Characteristics**

**Externalising** emotional or behavioural problems is exemplified in:

- Acting out, aggression and non-compliant behaviour.
- Destructiveness, temper outbursts, fighting, verbal threats, arguing, loudness, swearing, refusal to follow directions.
- Anti-social behaviour such as stealing, lying, setting fires, gang membership, alcohol and substance abuse.
- Juvenile delinquency.

**Internalising** emotional and behaviour problems is exemplified in:

- Obsessions or repetitive, persistent and intrusive impulses, images and thoughts.
- Phobias or excessive and uncontrollable fears.
- Compulsions or repetitive and stereotypical behaviour such as washing and re-checking.

- Social withdrawal as seen in inability to interact with others, declining to take part in activities, failing to show feelings, avoiding eye contact, staring blankly.
- Depression and anxiety.

**Step 3: Possible causes**

**Bio-medical factors**

- Inherited inclination to be nervous.
- Health problems.

**Home and family factors**

- Unstable and insecure homes.
- Parental conflict.
- Divorced, single parents, step parents.
- Child neglect, incest and child abuse.
- Poverty.
- Lack of support from outside the family.

**School factors**

- Too strict and unreasonable demands to conform.
- Unsympathetic attitudes towards individual differences/insensitivity towards learner's individuality.
- Inconsistent behaviour management.
- Instruction on non-functional and irrelevant skills.
- Teachers who criticise, ridicule and belittle learners.
- Rejection by peers.
- Inappropriate curricula.
- Failure to achieve success.

- Demands that are too high for learners to reach/inappropriate expectations for learners.
- Undesirable model of conduct at school (eg by teachers).

### **Environmental factors**

- Perpetual violence and crime.
- Trauma that causes mental scars.
- Rape, murder, violent death of family members and friends, and factors such as arson.
- Youth gangs who carry guns, knives and axes to terrorise teachers and peers.

### **Step 4: Assisting learners with emotional and behaviour problems**

#### **■ What do learners need?**

- A structured, positive classroom that is welcoming and inclusive.
- A teacher who is a good role model, someone who is firm, fair and in charge.
- To feel safe and comfortable in the classroom environment, knowing that they will be treated with respect and dignity, where they will not be criticised, embarrassed or humiliated in front of their peers.
- To feel confident that teachers care about their needs.
- A chance to voice their feelings.
- To feel that they have choices and are involved in the decision-making process.
- Instructional materials that motivate and engage their interest.

#### **■ What should schools and teachers do?**

- Unconditionally accept the learner.
- Determine reason for child's behaviour before making judgements.
- Continue to be interested in the "difficult" learners even if they try to shock you.
- Manage class effectively through established routines.
- Learners must know what they can and what they cannot do.

- Give feedback by acknowledging and reinforcing good behaviour.
- Remain calm even if the learner screams. This will enable them to talk to you in future. Shouting back can only compound the problem.
- Establish reasonable rules, procedures and guidelines and explain the rationale for these rules.
- Have clear, fair and logical consequences for misbehaviour and enforce these consistently
- Make rules external by using pictures and photos to depict them.
- Use modelling, practice and review.
- Follow through in a timely manner.
- Give the learners opportunities to participate in determining consequences and rewards.
- Establish positive but firm relationships with learners. It is possible to be firm, but still to smile and communicate with learners.
- Maintain positive and high expectations.
- Model respectful language, tone of voice and body language.
- Focus on prevention of problems, early identification and early intervention.
- Try not to respond out of anger.
- Document any inappropriate behaviour and the intervention strategies applied.
- Involve parents right from the start, by inviting them and developing action plans with them.
- Use counselling and intervention when behaviour problems first occur.
- Provide counselling and guidance sessions on aspects like peer pressure, conflict resolution, etc.
- Use peer guidance together with teacher coaching/mentoring, where teachers may even “adopt” learners.
- Use peer mediation to settle conflicts.
- Devise a well-thought-out whole school discipline plan and consistently implement it.
- Policies and rules must be unambiguous and be clearly communicated to learners.
- Make the school environment more learner-centred. It should reflect learners’ interests and pride.

■ **Improving academic skills**

- Establish clear outcomes and expectations, setting aims and goals as to how well the learner should perform.
- Provide multiple opportunities for learners to respond actively during lessons.
- Monitor a learner's progress.
- Provide instructional feedback.
- Continually evaluate progress and understanding.
- Specifically identify skills to be learned.
- Measure current performance of the skill.
- Make changes in instruction when needed, based on learner performance.
- Utilise cross-age and class wide peer tutoring.
- Use cooperative learning.
- Use experiential learning.
- Time trials, giving the learners an opportunity to perform skills as many times as possible and as frequently as possible to ensure mastery.
- Use guided notes, using teacher prepared hand-outs to guide learners through a presentation, using asteriks, underlining, bold.
- Make use of choral responding, where the class responds in unison.
- During assessments give them pre-printed response cards on which they must supply answers.

■ **Improving social skills**

- Give them opportunities to spend time in close physical contact, as in games.
- Show them how to act in a friendly manner towards each other.
- Give them opportunities to share instructional materials.

## PHASE 6: LEARNING PREFERENCES

### Outcome

**At the end of this phase, teachers should have gained an understanding of the theories of multiple intelligences, learning styles and analytical (left brain) and global (right brain) personalities, and demonstrate the ability to use these theories to structure the learning process so as to accommodate all kinds of learners.**

### Step 1: Background

During this step, it is explained that learning preferences are the modes or channels of learning learners prefer to use. While the starting point has to be the learner's strongest mode, learners should also be encouraged to utilise other available modes and channels. It is important to note that these preferences are also evident in MID learners, albeit at a lower level as compared to other learners in the classroom. Thus MID learners should also be encouraged to use these learning preferences.

### Step 2: Multiple intelligences

This theory suggests that people use at least seven different intellectual capacities. These intelligences are autonomous, each with a unique and distinctive way of thinking. Every person possesses a combination of these intelligences, in varying degrees, and the blending and the combination differ from individual to individual. This fact needs to be taken into consideration when planning for instruction, because learners benefit the most if the mode in which they excel, is utilised efficiently.

<b>The verbal-linguistic learner:</b>	word smart
<b>The logical-mathematical learner:</b>	number smart
<b>The visual-spatial learner:</b>	art smart

**The bodily-kinesthetic learner:** body smart  
**The musical-rhythmic learner:** music smart  
**The interpersonal learner:** people smart  
**The intrapersonal learner:** self smart

Intelligence	Characteristics	Assistance
Verbal-linguistic	Thinks in words, appropriate verbal expressive words.	Allow them to read and create as in poems and stories, allow them to participate in word games, debates, formal speaking, allow them to do written assignments, allow them to see, hear and say words.
Logical-mathematical	Thinks abstractly, conceptually and analytically.	Allow them to experiment and participate in problem solving, allow them to work with numbers and mathematical formulas and operations, allow them to learn through categorising and classifying.
Visual-spatial	Thinks in images and pictures, enjoys designing.	Allow them to draw, paint and designing, allow them to complete jigsaw puzzles, allow them to read maps, allow them to use colour to highlight where necessary.
Bodily-kinesthetic	Communicates through body language and posture, enjoys physical movement, easily bored when not actively involved.	Allow them to move and touch things (use hands), allow them to role-play and mimic others, allow them to demonstrate and participate in physical games.
Musical-rhythmic	Sensitive to sounds in the environment, may study better in a background of music.	Whenever possible, allow them to sing rhymes to remember days of the week, months etc. This is especially useful in the lower grades.
Interpersonal	Learns through interaction with others, sensitive to feelings of others, can draw others into discussions, good in sharing, comparing and relating.	Allow them co-operative situations, allow them leadership in groups, allow them to participate in conflict resolution and intervention.
Intrapersonal	Inwardly motivated, highly intuitive, strong willed and confident, likes to work alone.	Allow them to work independently on projects and assignments.

### Step 3: Learning Styles

Learning styles are biologically and developmentally imposed characteristics that make learners predisposed towards different modalities of information processing. Such characteristics refer to the modality or channel (hearing, seeing, touching, doing) the learner prefers to use. Teachers may help learners more effectively if they take a closer look at the functioning of learners, their strengths and preferences, and plan the learning process in a way that will utilise the learner's most preferred mode of learning.

<b>Auditory</b>	<b>Visual</b>	<b>Tactile-kinesthetic</b>
They learn through verbal instruction, radio and TV.	They learn through seeing, watching and observation.	They learn through doing, touching and direct involvement.
They remember through the use of language and self-talk.	They learn to read by recognition of patterns in words.	They are physical in nature, and need to handle projects and activities
They are verbal and memorise easily.	They are organised in their approach to tasks.	They respond to tapping and clapping during activities.
They remember when information is reinforced through melodies and rhythms.	They remember through pictures and images accompanied by verbal presentations.	Information to be tied to motion.
<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Assistance</b>
Provide opportunities for listening.	Use colour and highlighting. Writing within boxes helps a lot.	Provide opportunities for participation in acting out, role play and crafts.
Involve them in discussions – both small and large groups.	Write information for them as reference, provide pictures and models.	Allow them to trace with their fingers on carpet, sand paper and other textures.
Allow them auditory input to hold their attention and to give meaning (without distracting others).	Allow them to underline, circle, highlight and make notes for themselves.	Allow them to listen to recitations - while walking.

**Step 4: Analytical (left) and Global (right) brain personalities**

The starting point should be the utilisation of the learner's strong point, with gradual emphasis being placed on the development of the non-dominant aspects.

<b>Analytical (left) brain</b>	<b>Global (right) brain</b>
Learn through sequential processing.	Utilise holistic thinking.
Work from parts to whole (detail to whole).	Process information simultaneously (whole to detail).
Are logical.	See resemblance and analogies.
Are time conscious.	Are not very time conscious.
Are rational.	Are intuitive and fantasy oriented.
Like to plan ahead.	Are artistic and creative and they improvise.
Need to follow steps in a process.	Have several projects going at once.
Tend to need quiet to concentrate.	Tend to need background noise or music to concentrate.
Pay attention to a series of facts that build up a concept.	Grasp large concepts and then tackle details.
Process information linearly.	Need to discuss the relevance and make connection (work back from estimated answer).
Are reflective.	Find clustering and mind mapping helpful.
Verbal thinking and memory.	Images and spatial orientation.
Language detail (semantics).	Comprehension (emotion).
Routine and structure oriented.	Impulsive and people oriented.
Are realistic.	Are day dreamers.
Life is serious.	Life is fun.
Use a single method.	Use a variety of methods.

<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Assistance</b>
Show them the steps to follow in a process.	Allow them to be creative.
Allow them to write out or say it orally.	Give them a number of projects to work on, but supervise them.
Give them security through routine.	Allow them to do mind mapping.
Use the method they understand the most.	Use a variety of methods.
Approach the learning material with seriousness.	Learning should be fun.
Allow them to see the logic in the learning matter.	Allow them to see connections.
Give them enough time for planning.	Allow them to think on their feet.

## **PHASE 7 THE ASSESSMENT POLICY**

<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p><b>At the end of this phase, teachers should display an understanding of the assessment policy and be able to assess learners according to guidelines set out by the Department of Education. They should demonstrate the ability to use assessment in such a way that the mildly intellectually disabled learners are not disadvantaged.</b></p>
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In this phase, the assessment policy, together with all its ramifications, is outlined to the teachers.

### **Step 1: Background**

According to the Gauteng Department of Education, Circular 12 of 1999, School Assessment Teams (SATs) have to be established in all the schools. These teams are to work closely with the District Assessment Team whenever learners are to be assessed.

It is also necessary during this step, to differentiate between the School Assessment Team (SAT) and the School Support Team (SST) even though the SST will be discussed in detail later (see step 8 of this phase).

## **Step 2: Assessment**

Before trying to analyse the roles and functions of the SST in the SATs, it is important that the concept of **assessment** be clarified. Assessment refers to the process of identifying, gathering, and interpreting data about the learner's knowledge, skills and attitudes, as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning.

This is done in the following steps:

- Generating and collecting evidence of achievement.
- Evaluating this evidence against the outcomes.
- Recording the evidence of this evaluation.
- Using this information to assist the learner's development and improve the process of teaching and learning.

## **Step 3: Principles that underpin effective assessment**

- The purpose of the assessment is made explicit.
- The criterion-referenced rather than the norm-referenced approach is used.
- Assessment is authentic, continuous and varied.
- Assessment is an integral part of the process of learning.
- Assessment is objective, accurate, valid, fair, manageable and time-efficient.
- Assessment gathers information not only from academic aspects, but also from skills and attitudes.
- Techniques are appropriate for what needs to be assessed, as well as for the age and level of development for each learner
- Assessment is free of bias, and sensitive to gender, race, abilities and cultural background.

- Assessment results are communicated clearly, on time, accurately and meaningfully.
- Assessment links progression to the achievement of specific outcomes.
- Assessment is used to identify areas where learners need support and intervention.

#### **Step 4: The why, the who, the what and the how, of assessment**

##### **Why assessment?**

Assessment is a tool which gives the educator guidance as to:

- What can this learner do that I as the educator can build on, to help the learner learn more?
- Where does the learner have difficulty and therefore need extra help?
- What would the learner be able to do with a little bit of extra help?
- Should I teach the learner differently?
- Where am I going wrong as a teacher?

**The main reason for assessment is therefore to identify areas of difficulty, with a view to designing intervention programmes for LSEN.**

##### **Who does the assessment?**

Teachers have the overall responsibility to assess the progress learners are making. They are the people who set up outcomes for learners. They are also able to tell if learners have accomplished outcomes - through informal observations, even on the playground. In addition, peer assessment may prove to be a valuable alternative. Parents may also be utilised to assess their own children.

##### **What is assessed?**

The basis for assessment is the *specific outcomes* which are rooted in the *critical outcomes*. The main focus of assessment is the progress the learners are making in achieving the outcomes.

Learners who are not progressing well are to be informed of the areas where they need to exert themselves and must be supported by the teacher in reaching the required criteria.

The following are generally assessed:

- The learner's interests.
- The learner's strong points.
- Academic strengths and needs and areas of difficulty.
- Social and communication skills.
- Fine and gross motor skills.
- Self-management skills.
- Skills for daily living.

**How is assessment done?**

- Observations: Planned and unplanned.
- Questions and answers: How do you feel? What is difficult?
- Class work.
- Projects.
- Products and models made by the learner.
- Performance: Movement, oral, carrying out instructions, etc.
- Self assessment.
- Peer assessment.
- Parent assessment.
- Portfolios.

**Step 5:       Types of assessment**

**Baseline assessment :** This type of assessment takes place at the beginning of a new set of activities and is meant to ascertain what the learner already knows with regard to the activity at hand.

**Diagnostic assessment:** It is used to identify the nature and cause of a learning difficulty, in order to facilitate the drawing up of an appropriate remedial assistance and guidance programme.

**Formative assessment (also called developmental assessment):** This takes place throughout the year. It is designed to monitor support on a continuous basis. It is built into the learning activities and gives guidance through constant feedback.

**Summative assessment (also called judgmental assessment):** It takes place at the end of a learning period, a specified period (level of specified knowledge) or at the end of the phase. It is selective, controlling and is meant for grading. It encompasses a series of assessment activities, resulting in an overall report on the performance of a learner.

**Systemic assessment:** This takes place when a system is being evaluated, e.g. assessment of OBE implementation in the foundation phase. Teachers generally participate by filling in questionnaires as to the effectiveness of the system. In most cases it is undertaken by the district and head office or by any interested parties, to identify loopholes in order to give suggestions for improvement.

#### **Step 6:            Suggestions for learner support**

##### **▪            Support in general**

Once the areas of difficulty have been identified, what follows?

- Individual remedial teaching by the educator after school, for example on reading, spelling, handwriting and mathematics.
- Individual learning support from the remedial educator (if available), who works closely with the classroom educator.
- Support should be given in order to build confidence.
- Trying out the different teaching approaches which may be needed by individual learners as indicated by the achievement or non-achievement of the outcomes during assessment.

- Trying out different kinds of assessment of the curriculum, such as multiple choice questions, short questions, yes or no questions, matching of items in columns, filling in the missing words and so on.
- Supporting such learners during exams and tests, namely through:
  - The use of a dictionary and open book tests.
  - Giving then easier questions.
  - Giving clear sequential instructions.
  - Reducing the amount of work to be covered in a test (scope).
  - Removing the time limit.
  - Conducting tests in a quiet room.
  - Conducting oral exams for some, for example, those with dyslexia.
  - Giving home tests for those that are anxious during exams (partnerships with parents).
  - Reading questions to learners before allowing them to write.
  - Breaking complex sentences into simple ones.
  - Giving opportunities for the LSEN teacher to help during tests.

▪ **Support through Special Examination Concessions**

Although special examination concessions are particularly meant for learners in Grade 12 (Matric), nothing stops learners from accessing these concessions (at whatever grade) if it can be proved that it is in the best interest of the learners to award such concessions. In certain cases, the earlier the learners are exposed to these concessions, the better so as to familiarise them with the procedures. This is to avoid a situation where the concessions end up being a hindrance rather than being of assistance to the learners. The reasoning behind concessions is the system is interested in how much learners know, and not so much on how learners can be trapped to see how much they do not know. As such, it makes sense that if certain learners can show how much they know, using alternative methods of assessment, why not assist such learners, especially those that are already at a disadvantage, owing to their disabilities and difficulties. Care should

however, be taken of the fact that each learner's needs are to be considered individually. There can therefore not be a situation where there is a blanket allocation of concessions.

**The following are some of the problems for which special examination concessions are awarded:**

- **Problems with numbers and numerical concepts (Dyscalculia):**

Examples of these are problems with algebra, as in sequencing, and problems in geometry, which is influenced by spatial problems. These are mathematical problems that are linked to problems in language in particular and reading. Such problems cannot be remediated by didactical intervention.

- **Reading, writing and spelling problems (Dyslexia):**

This problem related to the learner's inability to read, write and spell correctly. Dyslexia has got nothing to do with learners who have problems with a second language. Reading problems include profound problems regarding the tempo at which reading takes place. Such learners read slowly due to the decoding, word recognition and other disabilities that are a barrier to the learner. Spelling problems present themselves where it is sometimes impossible to decipher what the learner is writing due to severe spelling problems. Writing problems refer to handwriting and problems with written expression where the learner has difficulties conveying the knowledge by means of writing.

- **Visual impairment:**

Learners with visual impairment are significantly disadvantaged because reading an ordinary print is problematic, even with the help of spectacles and contact lenses.

- **Auditory impairment:**

These learners are unable to access information delivered orally, and as such they have language difficulties arising from restricted auditory input. Such learners have significant problems acquiring spoken and written language.

- **Attention Deficit Disorder:**

The learner has insufficient attention span, is impulsive and has a limited ability to concentrate. This may be linked to hyperactivity.

- **Epilepsy:**

Some learners may develop epileptic seizures especially during stressful times such as examinations.

- **Tourette syndrome:**

This is also called the “tic disorder”, where the learner has uncontrollable tics such as winking, shaking of the head or limbs, nodding and so on.

- **Hospitalisation:**

Some learners may be hospitalized due to an accident.

- **Bereavement:**

Some learners may be disturbed by the sudden death of a close family member, parent, sibling and so on.

- **Physical disability:**

Learners with a physical disability may manifest problems such as low muscle tone, muscular dystrophy, congenital absence of limbs

**The following are some of the available special examination concessions:**

- **Extra time:** It is granted for learners who work at a slow pace owing to motor or planning problems, where information processing occurs very slowly, for learners who work through the medium of a tape aid, for learners using amanuensis and transcription.
- **Amanuensis (Scribe):** It is generally granted for learners with dyslexia, dysgraphia (problems with writing and severe spelling problems. In this procedure, the scribe reads the questions to the learner, and writes down the answers verbatim as dictated by the learner.
- **Transcription:** It is granted where sentence construction is a severe problem and where the learner has severe planning problems. The candidate sits along side the staff member who will be doing the transcription, and reads out his/her work to the scribe especially in cases where it cannot be deciphered. However, sentence construction and content remains as intended by the candidate.
- **Tape-aid:** It is granted for learners with severe reading problems, where the content may be lost due to misunderstanding of questions and therefore answers that do not make sense. They receive a tape recording of the questions to which they respond in writing.
- **Braille:** It is provided for learners who are blind.
- **Enlarged text:** It is provided for learners with visual impairments and are partially sighted.
- **Oral examination:** This assessment takes place through question-and-answer method, where questions are answered orally.
- **Reading to the candidate:** for learners with poor reading skills, this method is used.
- **Use of typewriter:** An electric typewriter is used for learners with visual impairments or for those with severe physical disability or when the handwriting of the learner will significantly disadvantage the evaluation of his/her answers.

- Use of computer: Learners who use a computer (and sometimes a voice synthesiser) to learn, can also use it during assessments, the hard drive has to be clear of any material
- Alternative questions: In cases where the questions are inaccessible to the candidate due to disability, they may be substituted by alternative questions of the same standard.
- Subjects credit: This is granted for deaf learners, where they may be given a credit in one language.
- Hospitalisation, trauma and imprisonment: The concession in this regard pertains to ad hoc arrangements that may need to be made if the learner is unavailable on the day of exams.

Special examination concessions do not necessarily mean the learners' certificates are of an inferior quality because the examinations are made easy for them. The aim is to remove obstacles rather than to make examinations easy.

**The following information is important before concessions can be granted:**

- A history of the learner reflecting barriers that affect the learner during assessment.
- A history of concessions granted in previous grades.
- Relevant recent reports from school principal, SST, present educators, professionals like doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists.
- Information as to whether or not the Education Support Services from the District office were involved in the identification of such learners.
- The nature and onset of the disability or barrier.
- The learner's usual work methods.
- The type of assessment to be undertaken together with the nature of the subject to be assessed
- The type of concession to be granted.

**Step 7: The role of the School Support Team (SST) in the School Assessment Team (SAT)**

Seeing that SATs are constituted by Circular 12 of 1999, and that the SSTs are constituted by the White Paper on special needs, the two are separate bodies, performing separate functions. However, the role of the SST is that of supporting learners as identified by the SAT using GDE 450 forms. The actual role of SSTs in the SATs is the contribution they have to make with regard to learners who have to be retained at the end of the academic year. The SST, with the assistance of the class teachers, would have identified such learners in order to design an intervention programme. If the learner has not succeeded in achieving the desired outcomes, even after intervention, the SST will have to recommend for the learner to be retained, and even suggest future intervention strategies to help the learner achieve these outcomes. The SST also has to supply intervention programmes for those learners who proceed to the next grade, but need support.

#### **PHASE 8: COLLABORATION AMONG TEACHERS**

<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p><b>At the end of this phase, teachers should demonstrate an understanding of the process of collaboration amongst teachers: they should be able to use the different steps in the problem-solving and intervention process.</b></p>
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##### **Step 1: Background**

It has been recognised that the practicalities of the actual inclusion of LSEN in the ordinary classroom have been left to fall on the shoulders of the teachers. This means that it has become the responsibility of the teacher to adapt classrooms in order to accommodate diversity. It is for this reason that teachers need concrete advice on handling the difficult situations they are faced with on a daily basis. If intervention is not made available, the teacher is left with no choice but to resort to trial and error methods and strategies, which in turn leads to frustration on the part of the teacher.

## **Step 2: Collaboration**

Many classroom teachers feel that they are not adequately trained to meet the challenges presented by learners in their classrooms. The development of collaboration among teachers can be a useful approach in addressing diversity in the classroom. Collaboration enables teachers to share their expertise, (their diverse and specialised knowledge and skills) for the benefit of all learners. Collaboration of necessity implies teamwork. The collaborative team has the power to bring change to the curriculum and the learning and educational environment. The power of this team lies in its capacity to merge unique skills and talents in problem-solving.

## **Step 3: What is a team?**

**A team is a group of people who**

- Possess particular expertise, skills, knowledge and experience.
- Have the responsibility for making decisions.
- Work towards a common goal and vision.
- Meet together to communicate, collaborate and consolidate knowledge.

**The following conditions are necessary for collaboration to thrive:**

- Participation must be voluntary.
- Commitment to a shared vision.
- Recognition that all members' opinions are valuable, and making use of the unique talents and abilities of all teachers.
- Encourage individual freedom of expression and accept differences, needs, concerns and expectations.
- The educational needs of the teachers must be met through effective capacity building, to enable them to understand their new role in the education of learners, including LSEN.
- Teachers must be made to understand that many of the processes, practices and strategies that are already in existence, have the potential to address diversity within the classrooms.

- Teachers, both in the mainstream and in special schools, must become familiar with the concepts of collaboration and cooperation to allow them to participate and work together as team members.
- The new roles of the special and mainstream school teachers have to be negotiated. Therefore, teachers have to begin to share information amongst each other in a concerted way for the benefit of learners and in the interest of quality education.
- Time has to be set aside in order to allow for the implementation of collaboration.

### **Benefits of working in teams**

- People learn to support and trust one another and information is shared instead of keeping it to oneself.
- Resources, special talents, skills and strengths are shared instead of hoarded.
- Pitfalls that threaten people who work in isolation are avoided.
- The morale is higher when people work together.
- Everyone wants the team to succeed and therefore excellence is the result.

In an effort to assist teachers in previously disadvantaged schools, Professor A.C. Boucher of the Department of Orthopedagogics at the University of Pretoria, in collaboration with an MEd student, developed an instrument called the *At-Risk Disk*, to help teacher-teams with the differential identification of intellectual and specific learning disabilities in regular schools. She firmly believes that for teacher-teams to be able to render effective support it is essential that educators understand the nature, degree and context of each learner's difficulty.

### **Step 4: School support teams**

During this step, it is explained that the school support teams are constituted by the White Paper on Special Needs (2000), and are made up of teachers whose focus and function is to develop and empower colleagues in:

- Identification of learning difficulties.

- **Intervention strategies:** assisting the learner who is identified as having leaning difficulties.
- **Preventative strategies:** preventing learning difficulties from occurring (if at all possible).

It should also be mentioned that the SST is at liberty to co-opt any stake-holders. For example psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and so on, depending on the needs of the particular learner.

#### **Step 5: Steps in the problem-solving and intervention process**

**What next?** This is the most pertinent question on the teacher's mind. Once the learner has been identified as a learner who experiences learning difficulties, the following steps should be followed in trying to intervene:

- The **first step** in intervention is for the class teacher to try to assist the learner with simple things, such as reduction of the subject matter a particular learner is to deal with. All the initiatives taken by the said teacher should be recorded and may include some of the approaches listed above. This record forms the basis of support for the learners at class level.
- The **second step** involves teachers at phase level. The phase representative may convene a meeting of phase educators, where the phase team will recommend additional and alternative intervention strategies together with the referring class teacher. The teacher will then implement the suggested strategies. In cases where the intervention has worked, it might not be necessary to refer further. In a case where the suggestions do not work, the teacher enlists the assistance of the SST. It is at this stage that the teacher must to indicate the type of problem experienced by the learner and the intervention strategies that were tried (See form SST1 in annexure D).
- The **third step** involves the School Support Team (SST). This forum, including all relevant stakeholders such as psychologists, social workers, nurses (who are invited if there is a particular need they will serve) and the parents of the specific learner, discuss

the intervention and make further recommendations to be implemented by the teacher concerned. This step also involves preparation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) by the SST (see SST 2 form in annexure D). The IEP is a written statement that describes the intervention programme and other related services designed to meet the needs of learners who experience learning difficulties. Other specialists such as speech and occupational therapists may also be involved in drawing up the IEP or they may just supply programmes for therapy if needed. In cases where such services are not available, the SST may enlist the assistance of the DST (if the need exists to do so). Once the IEP or SST 2 is in place, the educator uses SST 3 to report on the progress made by the learner (The SST 3 form is also in annexure D).

- The **fourth step** involves the District Support Team (DST). This step is considered only if all other steps of intervention have proved to be unsuccessful. The learner should be referred to the DST by means of a referral form (available from the Education Auxiliary Services (EAS) of the Gauteng Education Department). The DST and the SST will work out an action plan to take the process forward. Where necessary, the DST will take the process forward independently of the SST.

## **PHASE 9: THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)**

### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, the teachers should demonstrate the ability to draw up an effective and efficient Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every individual learner with mild intellectual disability. They should also display the ability to use the IEP for intervention purposes.**

### **Step 1: What is the IEP?**

An IEP is a written statement describing the intervention programme and related services specifically designed to meet the needs of the learner with learning difficulties, including the

MID learner. Such a plan spells out an extensive programme of individualised instruction designed to eliminate or compensate for the obstacles and barriers to learning which stem from a learner's difficulties.

An IEP will, therefore, differ from learner to learner, depending on the specific needs to be targeted by the programme.

**Step 2: An IEP should include the following:**

- A statement of the learner's present level of educational performance. This will indicate the strengths the learner possesses, i.e. what the learner can do, as well as the skills mastered in order to build on these strengths. It also indicates the weaknesses and the skills not mastered, in order to give more attention to those areas.
- A list of annual outcomes the learner is expected to achieve. This is a statement of what the teacher predicts the learner will be able to achieve.
- For each annual outcome, a set of short-term instructional outcomes, written in measurable terms. This is an indication of steps towards reaching the annual outcomes. They are sequential and relevant to the outcomes.
- Specific services required by the learner are also identified, for instance speech therapy, occupational therapy, and so on.
- A description of the extent to which the learner will participate in the mainstream education programme is also specified.
- The date for the initiation of the IEP, as well as the date for termination of the plan, is stated. This is due to the fact that the life span of an IEP is not more than a year.
- Assessment procedures and schedules for determining progress towards achieving outcomes are outlined. This is a statement of the extent to which outcomes have been reached, what has been learned and how well it has been learned.

**Step 3: An example of an IEP**

Below is an example of an IEP applied to a fictitious learner, with fictitious problems. It should be noted that this is an **exaggerated case** to show how the different stake-holders can play a part in assisting this particular learner.

<b>Name of learner:</b>	Abel Mokoena
<b>Grade:</b>	Two
<b>Date of birth:</b>	22 June 1990 (10 years old)
<b>Address:</b>	2181 Block G Mandela Village
<b>Description of problem:</b>	The learner lives in an informal settlement and comes from a family with a poor socio-economic background. His father has recently lost his job and his mother has always been a housewife. Neither of the parents was educated beyond the level of grade four. Abel demonstrates problems with literacy and numeracy (he is very weak in numeracy) and seems unable to form positive relationships with peers and teachers. He bullies others, which may point to emotional and/ or psychological problems. He suffers from regular epileptic attacks and experiences problems with stuttering. His handwriting is poor due to poor fine motor development. On a number of occasions, he was molested by his uncle. He is reportedly involved in satanism. He is ten years old and is still in grade two, when he should be in grade four.

**Date of plan:**

22 June 2001

<b>Related services needed</b>	<b>Beginning date</b>	<b>End date</b>	<b>Agency/ person responsible</b>
Remedial teaching in numeracy and literacy	30.08.01	30.11.01	Class teacher
Psychological services and counselling	30.08.01	30.11.01	Psychologist to do counselling with the learner, related to molestation
Speech therapy	30.08.01	30.11.01	Speech therapist to work on stuttering or supply a suitable programme
Occupational therapy	30.08.01	30.11.01	Occupational therapist to work on fine-motor skills or supply a suitable programme
Nursing services	30.08.01	30.11.01	Treatment for epileptic seizures
Social Work services	30.08.01	30.11.01	Social worker to look into application for a grant for the family
Police services (CPU)	30.08.01	30.11.01	The police to help the family to press charges against the uncle
Church leaders (Pastors)	30.08.01	30.11.01	Pastor to do spiritual counselling with the learner

**Present placement:** Grade 2

**Proposed placement:** Withdrawal during numeracy periods because he is weak in this area.

**Justification for placement:** He cannot be helped in the classroom

**Present level of performance, including strengths and weaknesses:** Very weak in subtraction, but not so bad in addition.

**Teaching methods and strategies proposed:** Using a method of concrete experience (experiential learning) such as manipulatives to teach the concept of subtraction. Using play as a strategy where marbles are used for subtraction.

**Extent of participation in ordinary class activities:** Although the learner needs to be withdrawn from numeracy activities, he can participate in all other activities such as literacy and life skills.

**Assessment criteria:** The learner will be assessed on a weekly or monthly basis using practical activities to determine the extent to which outcomes have been reached..

**Programme for intervention**

Depending on the difficulties experienced by the learner, the IEP may look more or less as follows:

<b>Area of need</b>	<b>Long term Outcomes</b>	<b>Short term outcomes</b>	<b>Services needed to meet the outcomes</b>	<b>Review comments</b>
Numeracy	Addition	Sums up to 100	Resource room (although most schools do not have properly furnished resource rooms, any room may be used for this purpose, e.g library)	Subtraction to receive priority
	Subtraction	Minus up to 10		
Literacy	Phonics	Teaching phonics	Programme from SST	Reading and spelling to receive priority.
	Sight words	me, you, he, she	Programme from SST	
	Spelling	Daily spelling lists	Programme from SST	
	Comprehension	Reading for meaning	Programme from SST	
Lifeskills	Social skills in forming positive relationships	Interaction, communication		Group skills have to be emphasised
	Emotional skills	Sharing with others how one feels		Conflict resolution will receive attention

#### **Step 4: The IEP team**

The IEP team is a collection of the people that participated in the drawing up of the plan. The SST is in a position to draw up such a plan on their own, but in certain instances, it might be necessary to involve other stake-holders. A specialist like an occupational therapist (OT) can supply a programme of therapy to be used by the parents and the school. In such a case, the OT will have participated in the IEP and will therefore sign in the table indicated below. Thus the IEP team will depend on the particular needs of the learner and the kind of intervention needed for such a learner.

<b>Team member</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Signature</b>
<b>1. Mrs E. Mokoena</b>	<b>Mother</b>	
<b>2. Mr B. Mokoena</b>	<b>Father</b>	
<b>3. Miss C. Seemane</b>	<b>Psychologist</b>	
<b>4. Mrs V. Thema</b>	<b>Occupational therapist</b>	
<b>5. Mr G. Seromo</b>	<b>Social worker</b>	
<b>6. Pastor M. Dlamini</b>	<b>Pastor</b>	
<b>7. Mrs F. Mabowa</b>	<b>Class teacher</b>	
<b>8. Miss E. Mnguni</b>	<b>SST member</b>	
<b>9. Mrs T. Maahlo</b>	<b>SST member</b>	
<b>10. Miss L. Lukhele</b>	<b>SST member</b>	
<b>11. Mr T. Moroka</b>	<b>SST member</b>	
<b>12. Mr C. Gaerobe</b>	<b>SST member</b>	

#### **Step 5: The role of the parents in the IEP**

The role to be played by the parents in the education of a child can never be underestimated. This is especially so with learners who experience learning difficulties including the MID learner. The parents have to be involved at all stages of the planning of the IEP for the learner. They have to be involved immediately after the problem is identified by the classroom teacher. Furthermore, the SST also has to involve the parents whenever interventions are planned. There is therefore no way in which the parents can be excluded from such a crucial stage as the planning of the IEP. This will help the monitoring that has to take place at home and also with follow up discussions. The parents may report on what they have observed at home. Parents may

also make the child aware of counting and subtraction in daily life, as they send the child to the shops for example.

One way of involving and utilising parents in the school is by getting them to become volunteers. Extra help may be more readily obtainable from parents who are occupied with home management than those who are in full-time employment.

Parents may be asked to assist in the following areas:

#### Teaching tasks

- Tutoring
- Telling stories
- Playing instructional games
- Helping with the selection of library books
- Preparation of speeches with learners
- Sharing hobbies with learners
- Demonstration of weaving and sewing
- Helping underachieving learners
- Assisting with handwriting

#### Non-teaching tasks

- Preparing the bulletin board
- Repairing of equipment
- Selecting materials for resource rooms
- Checking attendance registers
- Preparing worksheets
- Collecting recycling materials
- Making games
- Coordinating volunteers

- Furnishing refreshments
- Furnishing dress-up clothes and costumes
- Making art aprons
- Washing aprons

The teacher and the volunteer have the following responsibilities towards each other:

#### Teachers' responsibility to volunteers

- Teachers must make volunteers feel welcome.
- They must explain class routine, rules and regulations.
- They must introduce volunteers to resources in the school.
- They must describe their expectations from the participation of volunteers.
- They must give recognition and reinforcement.
- Issues to be clarified must be attended when classes are not in session.
- They must appreciate, respect and encourage the participation of volunteers.

#### Volunteers' responsibility to teachers

- The volunteers must be dependable and punctual.
- Privileged information is to be kept confidential and not to be discussed outside of the school.
- They must plan responsibilities for class in cooperation with teachers and not take over from the teacher.
- They must cooperate with staff and welcome their supervision
- They must be ready to learn.
- They must enjoy themselves.
- They must be fair, consistent and organised.

Furthermore, parents may be involved in the following ways:

- Parents, grandparents and caregivers who do not work may be invited to tell stories to young children. This could be treated as part of oral culture.
- Sharing stories from different cultures is a good way of exposing children to other cultures and helping them to develop a pride in their own culture, as well as tolerance and understanding of other cultures.
- Parents, grandparents and caregivers may be invited to tell children about special holidays and ceremonies practised in different cultures.
- Introducing different traditional food may also be used to teach children about different cultures. Different traditional foods may be brought to the school to show to the children and raise funds at the same time.
- Parents and grandparents may be interviewed. In this way they can be drawn out to tell interesting stories about their families. This may encourage children to draw up family trees.
- Parents and grandparents from different areas, provinces and countries may be invited to tell children about their specific area, province or country of origin. In this way children will learn about geography.
- Parents and grandparents may be invited to listen to children reading.

#### **7.4 THE AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN MET**

The aims of this investigation were met to a large extent as will be outlined in the table below:

<b>AIMS</b>	<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE AIMS WERE MET</b>
1. GENERAL AIMS	
1.1 To determine the characteristics of MID learners and how these characteristics interfere with their learning.	It was established that these learners have problems with a number of aspects, namely: memory, attention, rate of learning, level of learning, rate of forgetting, recall, transfer of information, abstract learning, incidental learning, learning set, and discrimination. These

	<p>problems interfere with their learning in the sense that they have poor memory and as such forget easily what was taught to them. They are easily distracted and therefore are unable to focus their attention in a specific learning matter, to mention but a few.</p>
<p>1.2 To investigate the situation with regard to the mildly intellectually disabled learners in other countries: developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America (USA) and developing countries such as Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania.</p>	<p>Different countries have different programmes that emphasise different aspects in the learning process:</p> <p>In Australia, there is a definite shift from the pull-out programmes to provision of in-class support, where learners and teachers are given support in the classrooms.</p> <p>In New Zealand, the Reading Recovery Programme targets reading as the basis of learning. Learners are given personalised and individualised reading lessons on a daily basis.</p> <p>In Canada, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is used, for learners with limited verbal skills. In addition, the Methods and Resource teachers (M&amp;R teachers) help teachers to generate alternatives for helping LSEN.</p> <p>In the USA, emphasis is on the three Rs, namely reading, writing and mathematics. The IEP is used extensively to individualise instruction for it to meet the particular needs of LSEN.</p> <p>In Nigeria, preparation for life receives attention. Use is made of the fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics.</p> <p>In Kenya, training in pre-vocational skills accompanies training in academic skills. Equal opportunities are provided for all learners and emphasis is placed on the production of skilled manpower.</p> <p>In Tanzania, education for self-reliance receives prominence. Learners are encouraged to become self-reliant and independent members of the community, because they are given vocational skills.</p>
<p>1.3 To study programmes that were used in</p>	<p>In the formerly whites only programmes,</p>

<p>South Africa over the years in assisting mildly intellectually disabled learners, in the formerly white-only and in the formerly black-only programmes.</p>	<p>special classes attached to ordinary schools accommodated them, remedial assistance was offered at remedial centres. The special classes are still in use in most ex-TED schools. Some special schools do have MID learners in their midst and teachers are not trained to deal with them specifically. In the formerly blacks only programmes, level classes, Panel for Identification, Diagnosis and Assistance and the Remedial Adviser systems were used. These programmes failed and were simply abandoned in many schools because these programmes were introduced prematurely, without consideration of the ability of teachers to fulfil their expected roles and functions.</p>
<p>1.4 To evaluate the role to be played by Curriculum 2005, together with Outcomes Based Education (OBE), in assisting the mildly intellectually disabled learners within an inclusive setting.</p>	<p>Co-operative learning and experiential learning were found to be the cornerstones of OBE. With regard to the MID, these two approaches can be used to effectively engage them in the process of learning.</p>
<p>1.5 To outline the role to be played by parents in assisting their children to learn.</p>	<p>It was established that parents are natural educators who lay the foundation even before formal education begins. They may be used as volunteers, to fulfil both teaching and non-teaching functions.</p>
<p>1.6 To explain the <i>learning</i> principles that make it easy for these learners to learn and for them to be assisted despite their problems.</p>	<p>It was found that a number of learning principles, if used carefully, may encourage them to learn, namely: experiencing success, fixation in memory, concreteness, regularity, verbalisation, demonstration and experimentation, independent activity, participation (self-activity) and experience, methodicalness in proceeding from the known to the unknown, from the easy to the difficult, and socialisation.</p>
<p>1.7 To outline the <i>teaching</i> principles that enable teachers to assist these learners effectively and thereby creating a supportive environment to enable these learners to learn.</p>	<p>In the same vein, the following teaching principles enable the teacher to create an environment conducive to learning, namely: individualisation, totality, motivation, reduction of subject matter, task analysis, emphasis and purposefulness.</p>

2. SPECIFIC AIMS	
2.1 To determine how learners are classified as mildly intellectually disabled.	These learners are identified when they fail repeatedly. In addition, such learners struggle with areas of learning such as reading, writing and mathematics.
2.2 To investigate how these learners are assisted once they are classified as such, and the feelings teachers have in teaching these learners.	Some teachers assist them during flexi-time and after school. Some teachers are unqualified to deal with them since they have not had any form of training in dealing with MID. They feel insecure and unable to deal with the problem.
2.3 To study how the teachers' training influences their ability to assist these learners.	Although training is provided for the SST and CLBT, a general feeling exists that this sort of training is not enough, considering the problems facing teachers in this regard. It was suggested that it should be thorough and should concentrate on the actual assistance in the classrooms.
2.4 To investigate the problems encountered in teaching them and how these problems are overcome.	Different teachers use different methods such as individualisation and group work or a combination of the two; otherwise, trial and error is used for MID. Large learner numbers make it impossible for teachers to help these learners. Teachers are not trained to "include" these learners and as such they remain as passengers.
2.5 To investigate the qualifications needed to deal with these learners, what learner-teacher ratio is necessary and what programmes are needed.	It is generally believed that a diploma in special education (as was offered by the then Department of Education and Training, for in-service training) should of necessity be accompanied by a sound knowledge of these learners. Large classes are seen as a factor that makes assistance impossible. Another factor is the fact that the learning materials have to be adapted to suit LSEN.
2.6 To find out if teachers receive any support from the SMT.	In certain instances, the SMT does not give support because its members need to be empowered themselves. Some managers are responsible for multi-grade teaching which leaves them with no time to assist the teachers.
2.7 To find out if teachers receive any support from the parents.	Most parents are not supportive due to the fact that they are illiterate and preoccupied

	by the struggle to survive.
2.8 To find out if teachers receive adequate support from the GDE.	The training given by the GDE in OBE and for SST is seen as inadequate.
2.9 To investigate what teachers understand by the term inclusion and what would strengthen their skills for inclusion.	Placement in neighbourhood schools with support available where needed. Thorough training with regard to LSEN in general is viewed as invaluable for inclusion to succeed.
2.10 To determine if there is a difference between the methods previously used for teaching the mildly intellectually disabled and the methods used for OBE.	Previously MID learners would have been left to drift along without them understanding what was going on in the class. Such learners would be stigmatised and labelled. They would automatically fail, until they drop out of school. In the EXTED school, however, such learners would be referred to LSEN classes. OBE is seen as a learner-centred approach in which all learners are accommodated, learners progress at their own pace, and those who experience difficulties are identified early. It encourages concrete learning, while rote learning is discouraged. With OBE it is the system that must be flexible in order to suit all learners. Finally, assessment in OBE means that learners are assessed on what they know, understand and can do and not on what they do not know.
2.11 To investigate if teachers have any suggestions to improve the situation for these learners.	Most suggestions have to do with the facts that training has to be practical, focussing on actual classroom activities, that more funds need to be made available; a lower teacher-pupil ratio, adaptation of learning material and the teaching of specific skills are also suggested.
2.12 To design and develop guidelines to assist teachers to support MID, in the form of a training manual.	A preliminary manual to assist teachers to support mildly intellectually disabled learners was designed and implemented as a pilot study in some 20 schools. After feedback from participating teachers, the manual was refined. The final programme is presented in this study.

## **7.5 SYNTHESIS**

The aims of the investigation were met to a large extent. The phenomenon of mild intellectual disability was outlined. A description of the characteristics of the mildly intellectually disabled was given, together with ways in which these learners may be supported in the light of those characteristics. The way in which these learners are accommodated in developed and in developing countries was explained. Programmes, which have been in operation in South Africa to accommodate these learners were studied. Curriculum 2005 and OBE were also studied.

The manual for school support teams was then designed to assist teachers to support LSEN, with specific focus on the mildly intellectually disabled learners. The manual was the culmination of a number of processes, namely the questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews, interviews with departmental specialists on the curriculum and in the field of special needs education. The manual was first implemented as a pilot study in 20 schools in District N4 in Soshanguve, a township just outside Pretoria. Feedback was received from the teachers who were trained to use the manual. It was then refined and is presented in this study.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **8.1 SYNOPSIS**

The state of education for the mildly intellectually disabled learners, especially in the previously disadvantaged communities, is such that it needs to be radically transformed and redesigned. This is necessary if one accepts that the policy of inclusion is here to stay. There has to be a definite way in which these learners are supported once they manifest with learning difficulties.

A joint effort is needed from all the interested parties, including parents, the school management teams, the Department of Education, the teachers and the community as a whole. The most important task of the joint effort will be the formulation and formalisation of partnerships between the interested parties.

It is important to note that for the policy of inclusion to succeed, there is a need for teachers to be assisted in their efforts to accommodate learners with mild disabilities, including those with mild intellectual disability. The manual for training School Support Teams (SST) is a valuable instrument with which to assist teachers in their efforts to accommodate diversity in their classrooms. The manual resulted from a process of going through the literature to investigate trends in developed and developing countries. The questionnaires and semi-structures interviews were then designed in order to solicit information from teachers as to how they may be assisted.

The initial manual was then designed and piloted in 20 schools in Soshanguve, after a needs analysis was conducted. Each of the SSTs in the schools was trained, using the manual. After the training, the participants evaluated the session by filling in an evaluation form. In addition, teachers were given a chance to ask questions, the answers to which were discussed at the end of the session. The researcher later visited 10 of the 20 schools where the SSTs were trained to find out how they were doing since the training. The comments from the evaluation forms together with the comments

during the follow-up visits were then used to fill in the gaps that existed in the *initial manual*. The finalised manual will have to be given to facilitators from district offices, who will then use it in the process of training SSTs in their different district offices.

## 8.2 A COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY AND THE LITERATURE STUDY

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Findings from empirical investigation</b>	<b>Findings from literature study</b>
<b>Factor 1: Manifestations of learning difficulties and reasons why the learners were classified as such.</b>	The MID learners struggle with language, speaking, listening, reading writing, handwriting, mathematics and transcription. Some struggle because they have to repeat grades. Others migrate from school to school to avoid grade repetition. Some have problems because the language of learning and teaching is different from their home language. Some may be immature.	Most of these learners cannot read, write and do mathematics. They are also characterised as the “six-hour retarded children” because their problems are only apparent during school hours. They are characterised by some of the following traits: poor memory, poor attention, slow rate of learning, low level of learning, high rate of forgetting, poor recall, inability to transfer information from one situation to the other, poor learning set and poor discrimination.
<b>Factor 2: Ways in which these learners are assisted.</b>	Most teachers use individualisation, group work and a combination of these methods if they have to. They also use peer tutoring. Some learners are referred to the LSEN class. Learners are given work that suits them. They are given training in life skills.	Specific strategies and approaches are available to help these learners with reading, writing and mathematics. Co-operative learning and experiential learning may also be used. Furthermore, <i>teaching principles and learning principles</i> may be utilised to assist these learners.
<b>Factor 3: Teacher’s feelings when teaching MID learners and reasons for</b>	Most teachers experience feelings of frustration because they are unable to assist these learners and they do not have the skills to do so. Some feel pity for these learners when they become over-aged and still do not have any	Feelings of inadequacy may be due to lack of knowledge about the MID learners. Teachers lack the skills and necessary information to implement the new policy of inclusion.

<b>these feelings.</b>	skills to earn a living on their own. Feeling of frustration also arise when these learners fail to reach their full potential.	
<b>Factor 4: Necessary training and qualifications needed for teaching MID learners.</b>	Most teachers are not trained to deal with the MID learners. Some teachers take the initiative by reading about the MID learners so that they can equip and empower themselves to assist these learners. Most teachers mention the fact that qualifications do not necessarily make one a good teacher and that one needs experience as well. They felt that all teachers should be given a background in remedial education, and that a thorough training in Centre of Learning Based Team methods might be helpful. Teachers take the initiative to keep abreast of developments in special needs education.	There is a need to familiarise teachers with the policy of inclusion so that it will be possible for them to accommodate diversity in their classes.
<b>Factor 5: The problems encountered in teaching MID learners and the ways in which these problems are overcome.</b>	Teachers complain that OBE is too much work. Another major problem exists in schools where multi-grade teaching is practised and teachers do not have the skills to help these learners. Some learners are from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Some MID learners are sexually abused because the perpetrators take advantage of the fact that they intellectually disabled. Large classes make it impossible for teachers to give individual attention to learners. In addition to reading writing and mathematics, these learners have problems that relate to school readiness.	Teacher attitudes have an important role to play in the education of the MID learners in the sense that such teachers have to <i>believe in</i> the ability of these learners to reach their potential. Programmes for reading writing and mathematics may be used. Teachers support each other and share skills and expertise on how to help these learners.
<b>Factor 6: Support from the SMT.</b>	School management teams are not supportive of teachers who attempt to assist the MID learners because they themselves are ignorant about how such learners can be supported.	The Department of Education has a responsibility to support learners and educators and to help the SMT to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.
<b>Factor 7:</b>	Most parents are not involved because	However elaborate the pro-

<b>Support from parents.</b>	they are unable to read and write. Farm labourers work even during weekends. This leaves them with no time to come to school if they are called upon to do so. Some learners stay with their grandparents, who are too old or equipped to become involved in school activities.	grammes conceived by schools, they will be ineffective if they are not supported by parents. Parents are responsible for laying the foundations of education. The extent in success of learning at school will depend on the information and attitudes that the child has gathered at home.
<b>Factor 8: Support from GDE.</b>	GDE support has to extend beyond OBE training. The GDE has to provide teachers with <i>practical</i> demonstrations on how to assist LSEN and the MID learners. The EAS is not supportive enough. The GDE is not supportive because officials pretend that LSEN and the MID learners do not exist.	GDE gives support through OBE training. The EAS also does referrals and gives assistance to SST.
<b>Factor 9: Understanding of inclusion and the skills needed to deal with problems of inclusion in the classroom.</b>	All schools should be in a position to accommodate all learners, whether they are disabled or not. In some schools, inclusion has always existed because no learners have ever been referred to special schools. These are schools which have no choice but to include everybody.	Inclusion is about accommodating diversity in all schools. Support has to be made available for the "included" learners, as well as for their teachers.
<b>Factor 10: OBE methods and MID learners in the classroom.</b>	Because OBE is well suited for teaching those who struggle with language, it may be used to accommodate all learners. OBE is learner-centred and different methods have to be utilised. OBE facilitates early identification and learners are able to progress at their own pace. OBE discourages rote learning and the system has to suit the learner and not the other way round. OBE encourages creativity and learners are regarded as unique individuals.	Outcomes are such that they can be designed for individual learners. This allows learners to achieve these outcomes at their own pace. Both specific and critical outcomes are achievable by MID learners.
<b>Factor 11: Suggestions for improvement of the process of inclusion.</b>	Teachers need to be trained so that they understand the MID learners and their needs and teachers need to be familiarised with the policy of inclusion. Therapy needs to be made available for learners who cannot	Training and re-training of teachers, together with thorough training of school support teams are key elements for inclusion to work.

	<p>afford therapy from private practitioners. In classes where learners do not understand English, interpreters have to be made available to assist teachers. Learners need to be equipped with vocational skills so that they will be able to earn a living. Teachers have to receive training in multi-grade teaching. OBE has to be utilised to meet the needs of MID learners.</p>	
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### 8.3 THE TRAINING MANUAL FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS

The manual for training school support teams came about as an attempt to assist the teachers to support learners with special educational needs, and especially those who are mildly intellectually disabled. Outcomes to guide the process of implementation are suggested for each phase. The manual illustrates the phases and steps, and these are summarized below:

<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p><b>The overriding outcome is that at the end of the training, using this SST manual, teachers should experience a paradigm shift with regard to learners with mild intellectual disability. Teachers should change their attitudes towards these learners to the extent that they believe in the ability of these learners to reach their full potential despite their problems. Finally, they should be able to demonstrate their ability to support the mildly intellectually disabled learners in the ordinary classrooms.</b></p>
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## **PHASE 1: BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY OF INCLUSION**

### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, the teachers should demonstrate their knowledge on the policy of inclusion and how this policy evolved in South Africa. They should also display their knowledge of prominent features in other countries.**

Step 1: Introduction and developments since 1994.

Step 2: Prominent features in other countries-especially with regard to *support*.

## **PHASE 2: CURRICULUM 2005 AND OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION**

### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should display an understanding of the basic principles of Curriculum 2005, OBE and the seven roles of the educator. They should demonstrate the ability to use these principles in the classroom.**

Step 1: Introduction and the eight learning areas.

Step 2: Specific and critical outcomes.

Step 3: Co-operative learning.

Step 4: Experiential learning.

Step 5: The roles of the educator.

### **PHASE 3: LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

#### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, the teachers should be able to identify learning difficulties experienced by learners with mild intellectual disability. The teachers should be able to apply the different teaching and learning principles to assist these learners.**

- Step 1: Introduction and characteristics to look out for.
- Step 2: Manifestations of learning difficulties in general.
- Step 3: Learning principles.
- Step 4: Teaching principles.

### **PHASE 4: PLANNING LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN THE THREE LEARNING PROGRAMMES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

#### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should demonstrate a workable degree of knowledge and understanding of the general problems experienced by learners with regard to language, listening, speaking, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, mathematics and life skills. Teachers should demonstrate the ability to apply the different approaches to assist these learners.**

- Step 1: Introduction and areas of academics in which these learners struggle the most
- Step 2: Language: A discussion of signs of possible language problems
  - Assisting with listening skills
  - Assisting with speaking skills
- Step 3: Limited English Proficiency (LEP):
  - Stages in the acquisition of a second language
  - Common problems in English as a second language

### Strategies for teaching learners with LEP

- Step 4:      Reading:      Indications of reading difficulties  
                                 Approaches to reading  
                                 Oral reading strategies  
                                 Reading Recovery Programme
- Step 5:      Writing:      Pre-writing techniques  
                                 Assisting with written work
- Step 6:      Spelling:      Manifestations of spelling difficulties  
                                 Approaches to teaching spelling  
                                 Patterns of the English language  
                                 Teacher-directed spelling techniques
- Step 7:      Handwriting:      Manifestations of handwriting difficulties  
                                 Helping with neatness and legibility
- Step 8:      Mathematics:      Prerequisites for mathematics  
                                 Cognitive abilities necessary for mathematics  
                                 Basic concepts to be taught in mathematics  
                                 Manifestations of mathematical difficulties  
                                 Assisting with mathematics
- Step 9:      Life skills      Manifestations of problems with life skills  
                                 Assisting learners with life skills

### PHASE 5:      EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

#### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should be able to display their knowledge of emotional and behavioural problems experienced by learners, with particular reference to those with mild intellectual disability and should also demonstrate the ability to utilise the knowledge to assist these learners.**

- Step 1:      Introduction and definition of emotional and behavioural problems
- Step 2:      Characteristics of learners with emotional and behavioural problems

- Step 3: Possible causes
- Step 4: Assisting learners with emotional and behavioural problems

#### **PHASE 6: LEARNING PREFERENCES**

##### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should have gained an understanding of the theories of multiple intelligences, learning styles and analytical (left-brain) and global (right-brain) personalities, and demonstrate the ability to use these theories to structure the learning process to accommodate all kinds of learners.**

- Step 1: Introduction to learning preferences
- Step 2: Multiple intelligences
- Step 3: Learning styles
- Step 4: Analytical (left) and global (right) brain personalities

#### **PHASE 7: ASSESSMENT POLICY**

##### **Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should display an understanding of the assessment policy and be able to assess learners according to guidelines set out by the Department of Education. They should also demonstrate the ability to use assessment in such a way that the mildly intellectually disabled learners are not disadvantaged.**

- Step 1: Introduction and background to assessment policy
- Step 2: Assessment
- Step 3: Principles that underpin effective assessment

- Step 4: The why, who, what and how of assessment
- Step 5: Types of assessment
- Step 6: Suggestions for learner support
  - Support in general
  - Support through Special Examination Concessions
- Step 7: The role of the School Support Team (SST) in the School Assessment Team (SAT)

**PHASE 8: COLLABORATION AMONG TEACHERS**

**Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, teachers should demonstrate an understanding of the process of collaboration amongst teachers: they should be able to use the different steps in the problem-solving and intervention process.**

- Step 1: Introduction and background to collaboration
- Step 2: Collaboration
- Step 3: What is a team?
- Step 4: School Support Teams (SST)
- Step 5: Steps in the problem-solving and intervention process

**PHASE 9: THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)**

**Outcome**

**At the end of this phase, the teachers should demonstrate their ability to draw up an effective and efficient Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every individual learner with mild intellectual disability. They should also display the ability to use the IEP for intervention purposes.**

- Step 1: What is the IEP?
- Step 2: What should be included in the IEP?
- Step 3: An example of an IEP

Step 4: The IEP team.

Step 5: The role of the parent in the IEP

## **8.4 CONCLUSIONS OF THIS STUDY**

### **8.4.1 Conclusions from the literature study**

The literature study investigated the characteristics of learners with mild intellectual disability and how these affect their processes of learning. The literature study points out that despite their problems, these learners can be assisted by using appropriate teaching and learning principles that are designed to alleviate and counteract such characteristics. The utilisation of specific approaches to teaching reading, writing and mathematics are also useful in helping the mildly intellectually disabled learners to reach their potential.

It is interesting to note that the literature study revealed that in developed countries, the emphasis is on “support” for both learners and teachers in the inclusion situation. In addition, these learners are given instruction in the three R’s, namely, reading writing and mathematics.

Indications are that OBE, if used appropriately, may be useful in accommodating LSEN, including learners with mild intellectual disability. This is due to the fact that OBE permits learners the opportunities to progress at their own pace because OBE is learner-centred and it discourages rote learning. With OBE the system has to suit the learner and not the other way around. Furthermore, assessment in OBE aims at identifying what the learners know and are capable of doing. It does not focus on trying to find out what they do not know.

### **8.4.2 Conclusions from the empirical investigation**

The empirical study found that teachers demonstrate an almost total lack of skills and knowledge on how to assist learners who struggle in the classrooms. Thus, they need to be thoroughly trained in the practical application of OBE in general and in accommodating mildly intellectually disabled learners in the inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, the SST also need to be trained to assist teachers

in their intervention endeavours as they support learners with mild intellectual disability in the inclusive classrooms. It is very clear that the success of the policy of inclusion will depend on the extent to which teachers have been trained and re-trained to accommodate diversity in their classrooms. For this purpose, the SST, if trained properly, can become a powerful instrument for this policy.

The findings from the empirical study that there is little parental involvement confirms the literature study findings. Parents may be intimidated by the fact that teachers are professionals who may be more knowledgeable than they are with regard to disability. This seems to point to the fact that working towards an acceptable relationship with parents requires the teacher to be sensitive towards the needs of parents. Teachers have to avoid even a hint of any patronizing or arrogant attitudes and approaches that would antagonise parents.

A needs analysis conducted at a number of schools revealed that most learners struggle in the areas of numeracy, literacy and life skills. The initial drafting of the manual was an attempt to design an instrument that had to be used in the training of school support teams. The manual was then pilot tested and the feedback received from teachers who participated in the training was that it was a useful instrument for supporting LSEN, with particular reference to the MID learners in the ordinary schools.

## **8.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The main limitation of this study is the fact that it was conducted only in the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and that it was further scaled down to the Northern Region of the GDE. It was restricted to a section of the GDE in Pretoria, namely Districts N1, N2, N3 and N4. It was not possible to cover all the districts in the Gauteng Department of Education because of practical and financial constraints. In addition, the study is only conducted in schools that use English as a language of learning and teaching.

However, the representation of different types of schools, with a number of variables at work, serves to strengthen the findings of this study.

Notwithstanding this limitation, the researcher is convinced that the empirical research has achieved its goals. The problems which the study uncovered with regard to the inability of teachers to help the mildly intellectually disabled is a general problem that occurs throughout South Africa as a whole, and, as such, the results of the findings may be generalised to a reasonable extent.

Furthermore, even if the study was limited to four Districts in Gauteng Province, the training manual for school support teams can be used for training teachers throughout the province and in the country as a whole. This is due to the fact that problems teachers experience in supporting the mildly intellectually disabled learners are common to most classrooms in the country.

## **8.6 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

During the feedback session when the manual was discussed, it was discovered, when going through the evaluation sheets, that some educators struggle with the *spelling* of English. Future research should be directed towards designing a spelling programme that helps teachers as well as learners with effective acquisition of English as second language. If teachers struggle with something as basic and important as spelling, it will be difficult for them to teach English as second language to the learners.

Since it is also inevitable that many will struggle with mathematics, it is necessary that the same programme should also help teachers to improve their mathematical skills. This will of necessity cover the learning programmes for the foundation phase, namely, numeracy and literacy.

## **8.7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1:**

**Teacher training in general:** Attention needs to be paid to the training of school support teams since they have to play a pivotal role in assisting teachers to support LSEN, with particular reference to the MID learners. For this purpose, it is recommended that the manual be utilized because it has already been tested and has yielded positive results in the 20 schools where it was tested.

To strengthen teacher training, both pre-service and in-service training of teachers has to be re-evaluated. Deficiencies in knowledge and skills on the part of teachers is evidently widespread. The training on a pre-service level has to include the policy of inclusion so that student-teachers are familiar with the policy *even before* they assume duty as teachers. On an in-service level, there is evidence that some of the teachers who have been in the employment of Education Departments are not familiar with the policy. Training on this level should aim to make such teachers effective and efficient educators who are geared towards the implementation of the policy of inclusion.

Furthermore, training in OBE is essential. It is evident that teachers have been exposed to OBE, but that most of them are not familiar with ways and means of using OBE to reach and teach all learners. Because the belief still exists that LSEN cannot be taught using the OBE approach, teachers talk about referring these learners to special schools where teachers are “specifically trained to teach LSEN”. If they have such an attitude, teachers have missed the whole point about inclusion. Teachers should be made to understand that the advantage of OBE is the fact that *all learners are catered for*.

The manual presented in this study is a user-friendly document which can be used by SST training facilitators in the district offices to train school support teams to assist learners who experience learning difficulties. A series of workshops to familiarise SST with the use of the manual will be an important step towards successful support of MID learners in inclusive settings.

#### **Recommendation 2:**

**Programmes for training SST:** The success with which LSEN, with special reference to the MID learners, will be handled at school level depends on the extent to which the SST has been trained to support them. The DST has to be instrumental in training SST for this function.

The training programme for SST should include the following:

- First of all, teachers have to be familiarised with the characteristics of LSEN, with special reference to the MID learners. This will serve to identify them so that intervention can be planned.
- Secondly, teachers have to know the teaching principles and learning principles to be applied in teaching these learners.
- Manifestations of learning problems have to be outlined so that teachers are aware of the kind of problems that these learners experience.
- Then specific strategies and approaches to be employed to assist with reading, spelling, handwriting, listening, speaking, writing, mathematics and life skills have to be explored.
- Following that, the theories of multiple intelligences and learning styles, and left- and right-brain personalities have to be explored. These theories are important because once teachers are aware of the different modalities that learners use in learning, they are able to structure their lessons to accommodate all learners.
- Some of these learners are at risk of developing emotional and behaviour problems because of the fact that they fail repeatedly. This makes it essential that there be a section on emotional and behavioural problems so that teachers can be on the look out and able to intervene should there be a need to do so.
- Assessment is an integral part of the process of teaching and learning. Teachers therefore have to be familiarised with ways of assessing LSEN, with particular reference to the MID learners without putting these learners at a disadvantage.
- Collaboration and teamwork is an important element of support. Collaboration enables teachers to share skills and expertise.
- All teachers should be in a position to draw up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for all learners who experience learning difficulties so that they can give personalised support to such learners.

### **Recommendation 3:**

**Staffing:** *Overcrowding* has been identified as one of the most important factors working against the success of inclusion. In addition to the many problems posed by large classes, teachers are faced with the type of learner who poses challenges even to the most innovative and creative of teachers.

Most teachers have little knowledge, let alone the skills, about how to assist these learners. If MID learners find their way into such classes, we might as well promote the idea of “mainstreaming by default”.

As an interim measure, the GDE should consider the employment of teacher-assistants. Given the financial constraints under which the GDE operates, their salaries need not be too high. They will, however, relieve the shortage in that if, for argument sake, the teacher has 40 learners and they are divided into four groups of ten each, the teacher will be responsible for the overall programme of the class, while the assistant will take care of the supervision of groups while the teacher attends to those learners experiencing difficulties.

The idea of making use of parents as volunteers is an excellent one. Parents and grandparents can be very useful if they were used to relate stories and help with reading, especially in the lower grades. Such parents may also be requested to assist with the preparation of teaching aids, collecting recycling materials, making art aprons, and so on. Parents may help with food gardens and may be used to welcome learners at the school gates in the morning. They can also be used to monitor the punctuality and presence of both learners and teachers where such problems are prevalent.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

**The role of the EAS:** The role of the EAS, especially personnel that deal with guidance, is to assist MID learners towards making sensible career choices. These learners ultimately have to take their rightful places in the communities where they live. They should also become independent, self-sufficient and self-supporting members of the community who earn a living by generating money for themselves. They can only do this if they are properly guided in their career choice.

Despite their difficulties, MID learners should be able to take their place in an economy which participates in the global community. If these learners are given practical and vocational skills, they will be able to participate as equal partners in the world.

The EAS should also try to place MID learners in jobs. It is a well known fact that competition is high, even among the non-disabled community. That the MID learners should compete on the same level seems to be unfair. That such learners who have been disadvantaged by their disabilities are expected to compete for jobs in an open labour market is discriminatory. This implies that certain jobs have to be reserved exclusively for them and that companies that participate in a scheme to make jobs available for the MID learners should receive incentives in a form of tax concessions.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

**Parental involvement:** The importance of the role of parents in the education of children is a well documented factor and part of this involvement was dealt with under recommendation two on staffing. Whatever elaborate programmes are conceived by the school will be in vain if they are not supported by parents. Parent cooperation has to be solicited because as the natural educators of their children, they sometimes have information about their children which the schools do not necessarily have. The schools will need this type of information if they are to intervene successfully with these learners. Parents are the first socialization agents for children and their efforts have to be recognized and built upon by the schools. Thus it is necessary that a strong relationship be maintained between the school and parents, and that parents be enlightened about the important role they can play in the education of their children. Parental choice and parental participation is mandated by the South African Schools Act and parents should be encouraged to embrace this responsibility.

#### **Recommendation 6:**

**Language programmes:** It is imperative, in the light of the fact that the majority of learners receive instruction in a language different from their home language, that appropriate language enrichment programmes be put in place to enable learners to access the curriculum despite their language difficulties. For the MID learners, this problem is compounded by the fact that they have problems with regard to language in general, in addition to problems in intellectual functioning. It is also imperative that teachers be multilingual. This means that in addition to English, a teacher should at least know one black language (preferably the predominant black language in that area where the school is situated). This will enable all teachers to give instruction without having to use other

learners as interpreters, as is commonly done at such schools (some learners resent being used as interpreters). In the meantime, teachers facing such learners in their classrooms will have to continue to seek the support of other learners as interpreters.

Speech therapists may be requested to draw up language enrichment programmes to assist these teachers. Such programmes should be drawn up on a provincial basis in order to ensure uniformity. Another alternative is to make use of the *bilingual approach* in the teaching of language. This approach will succeed in cases where the teacher is familiar with the primary language of the learner, where the matter to be learned is first discussed in the primary language and then translated into the language being learned. Later on, emphasis will be placed on the language being learned rather than the primary language of the learner.

In addition to language programmes, the value of perceptual programmes can never be overemphasized. These programmes, which may be designed by occupational therapists, may be useful for preparing learners for the three Rs of reading, writing and mathematics. It is almost impossible to start teaching learners to read before they have mastered left and right, up and down, figure-ground and so on. Such perceptual programmes should be used to help learners with the acquisition of gross motor and fine motor skills, in preparation for the three Rs.

#### **Recommendation 7:**

**Vocational programmes and on the job training:** Specific programmes to prepare the MID learners for the job market should be instituted. The training of these learners should take into consideration the available jobs in the market. This suggests that the job market should inform education authorities of the kind of jobs available for these learners so that the training of these learners could be made to fit with the needs of the community that employ others. It is futile to train learners in skills \_ only to find at the end of the day that they will not find employment. The last part of the training should in fact be an internship so that they can be familiarized with the job situation itself.

## **Recommendation 8:**

**The role of networking:** The sharing of resources, both human and physical, should be formalised. The fact that there are still schools without resources means that this issue still needs to be re-visited. It cannot be left to the discretion of schools to share resources only if they want to. The “adoption” of schools from previously disadvantaged backgrounds or the “twinning” of schools should be mandated by the GDE if learners are to be given an equal opportunity. Partnerships with other departments such as health and welfare and police services have to be formalised because, at the moment, some schools struggle to get hold of social workers (to name but one example) if they need their assistance.

## **8.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Inclusion as a policy for addressing barriers to learning and development South Africa is here to stay. The success of this policy depends to a large extent on well-trained teachers and teachers who are in a position to accommodate diversity within the ordinary classrooms. The teachers should receive adequate support from the SST in the schools. The DST should in turn give support to the SST in order to complete this chain of support. Failure by either the SST or the DST to give support to the teachers will of necessity precipitate “mainstreaming by default”.

This research gave special prominence to the problems and needs of *mildly intellectually disabled learners* and how their teachers may be assisted to support them. These are the learners who have through the years filtered through the education system and fallen through the cracks because of the inability of the teachers to accommodate them in ordinary classrooms. Inclusion as a policy for accommodating learners with barriers to learning and development is a new phenomenon, for which teachers need to be re-trained. This research contributes policy ideas that need to be taken into consideration for these learners to be successfully accommodated in the ideals of inclusion, and thereby doing away with “mainstreaming by default”.

In conclusion, it must be stated that the success of the process of inclusion depends on the training of the SST. The manual as outlined in this study is a user-friendly instrument, which can be utilised to assist the teachers to support learners with special educational needs, with particular reference to learners with mild intellectual disability.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

### NOTE WELL

This is not a test and there are therefore no right or wrong answers. Further, this exercise is anonymous and as such, names of schools and persons will not be recorded. All responses will be treated with confidentiality and will be used for the purpose of the research on assisting teachers of mildly intellectually disabled learners in the light of the policy of inclusion only.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Answer by crossing out **one** alphabet within the box;
  2. If you have alternative information to give, you are at liberty to use the "other" or "D" alternative, in which case you are able to specify your response in the appropriate line.
- 
1. **Do you have any learners in your class that you feel are generally not sufficiently able to cope with learning?**

Yes	A
No	B
Not sure	C
Other	D

Please specify.....

.....

**2. If yes in 1 above, how would you classify such learners?**

Specifically learning disabled	A
Mildly intellectually disabled	B
Slow learners	C
Other	D

Please specify.....  
.....

**3. What made you regard the learner as you did above?**

Failure and repetition of classes	A
Report by specialist e.g. psychologist	B
Slow progress	C
Other	D

Please specify.....  
.....

**4. As you have this type of learner in your class, how do you assist him/ her to cope?**

Ignore him/her	A
Keep him/her busy with relevant programs	B
Negotiate for admission at a special school	C
Other	D

**Please Specify**.....

.....

**5. How would you describe your feelings when teaching this type of learner?**

Satisfaction/fulfillment	A
Disappointment/frustration	B
Uncertainty/concern	C
Other	D

**Please specify**.....

.....

**6. What is the reason for the feeling as described in 5 above?**

.....

.....

**7. Do have any training that is related to mild intellectual disability?**

Trained	A
Untrained	B
In-Service training	C
Other	D

Please specify.....  
.....

**8. Do you encounter any other problems in teaching these learners?**

Yes	A
No	B

**9. If yes, please state them**

.....  
.....  
.....

**10. How do you overcome problems?**

.....

.....

.....

**11. What qualification do you think one needs to deal with the mildly intellectually disabled?**

Diploma in special education	A
Ordinary teacher's diploma	B
Knowledge of the intellectually disabled	C
Other	D

**Please specify**.....

.....

**12. What programs are in use at your particular school?**

Special programs for the mentally disabled	A
Assistance from specialists	B
Ordinary programs for ordinary schools	C
Other	D

**Please specify**.....

**13. With pupil-learner ratio as it is in your school, how do you cope with the mentally disabled in your class?**

Use more of group work	A
Use individualization	B
Ignore them	C
Other	D

Please specify.....  
.....

**14. Do you receive support from the School Management Team (SMT) in your endeavour to assist the mildly intellectually disabled learners?**

Yes	A
No	B

**15. If yes, what kind of support is it?**  
.....  
.....

**16. If no, why do you think the SMT is not giving support?**  
.....  
.....

**17. If no, what kind of support do you expect from your SMT?**

.....  
.....

**18. Do you attempt to involve parents of these learners in the assistance programmes?**

Yes	A
No	B

**19. If yes, what are your successes?**

.....  
.....

**20. If no, why do you think parents are not getting involved?**

.....  
.....

**21. If no, what kind of support would you expect from the parents?**

.....  
.....

**22. Do you receive support from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE)?**

Yes	A
No	B

**23. If yes, what kind of support is it?**

.....  
.....

**24. If no, why do you think the GDE is not giving support?**

.....  
.....

**25. If no, what kind of support do you expect from the GDE?**

.....  
.....

**26. In your opinion, what best describes "inclusion"?**

Lack of discrimination on the basis of disability	A
All learners including the disabled in their neighborhood school with relevant support in place	B
Abolition of all special schools	C
Other	D

**Please specify**.....

**27. Is there a difference in the methods used previously in the education of the mildly intellectually disabled from the methods used on Outcomes-Based Education? Explain briefly**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**28. What in your opinion would strengthen your skills for inclusion in your school?**

Training and retraining of teachers	A
Lower pupil-teacher ratio	B
Funding	C
Other	D

**Please specify** .....

.....

.....

.....

**29. Are you happy with the present situation regarding the teaching of the mildly intellectually disabled in your school?**

Yes	A
No	B

**30. Give suggestions for improvement**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**31. What would you like to see changed**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**32. Any additional information which according to your view has not been covered by this questionnaire should be listed here under**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**MEMORANDUM<sup>1</sup>**

**TO : THOMAS MATHIBA: HEAD: RESEARCH UNIT**

**FROM : MOSIMA FRANCISCA SETHOSA: LSEN UNIT**

**DATE : 02 NOVEMBER 1999**

**TOPIC : REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT QUESTIONNAIRE AT CERTAIN  
GDE SCHOOLS**

---

**1. PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

I am presently in the employ of the GDE, Head office, in the LSEN Unit. My salary reference number is 10793305. My student number is 630-967-4 and I am studying for a D. Ed at Unisa. The reason for this memo is to obtain permission to administer a questionnaire at a number of schools in the North Region. The schools have been purposely selected in Pretoria, due to the fact that the area is close to my place of residence. This will enable me to cut the costs while travelling around to administer the questionnaires.

**A letter from my promoter Dr E. Prinsloo is attached. She may be reached at the following Unisa Number (012) 429 4897.**

**2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

One of my findings during my M. Ed studies was the fact that most black mildly intellectually disabled learners find placement in ordinary schools (Sethosa 1991:17). This could be referred to as mainstreaming, because disabled children find placement in the mainstream of education. If one looks closely, this is not true mainstreaming since it is casual in nature. This is what is referred to by Donald in Mazurek and Winzer (ed) (1994:14) as 'mainstreaming by default', because it results from sheer lack of services. This disadvantage can however be turned into an advantage if teachers are assisted to help the learners to attain their highest potential.

---

<sup>1</sup> This was the original and initial memorandum that was submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) requesting permission to conduct questionnaires at some of their schools. However, as the study progressed and as a result of certain insights the researcher gained, the programme for the empirical study was changed to include other critical aspects that were not apparent at the beginning of the study. The GDE was duly notified of the changes alluded to above.

Even at the time when their white counterparts received education in segregated settings, the black mildly intellectually handicapped learners have always found themselves in a predicament. As was mentioned earlier, their placement was casual in nature, and their teachers were not specifically trained to help them achieve their best according to their potentialities.

This study will concentrate on the Junior primary school phase because it is during this period that teachers discover that there might be something wrong with the child (Gulliford, R. in Costello, P.J.M 1988:83). It is during this period of make or break that the learner needs assistance.

In South Africa, owing to the initial policies of apartheid, education, including education for the disabled has not developed to the same extent for the different racial groups (Sethosa 1991:15, UNICEF 1993:69). The African National Congress, when it took power in 1994, advocated the principle of human rights including the rights for the disabled. With it came the demand for inclusive education (Reconstruction and Development Programme 1994:60).

The appointment of a National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and a NCSNET) National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) in 1996 was a milestone in the development of Special Education in South Africa (NCSNET & NCESS Report 1997). This culminated in the Consultative Paper No 1, which was signed by Minister Asmal on the 30th of August 1999 (Consultative paper no 1: 1999).

### **3. THE USEFULNESS OF THE STUDY FOR THE GDE**

The Department of Education, in its attempt to keep up with developments internationally, and with developments locally as a result of the recommendations of the Commission, has called for the inclusion of disabled learners into public ordinary schools. The policy of inclusion as suggested has many advantages provided that teachers know how to assist the learners in their attempt to make the best out of their limited potentialities, and this is the point at which this study comes into the picture, to give guidelines according to which teachers of mildly intellectually disabled learners can be assisted to deal with these learners in their classrooms.

The study is within my line function in the GDE, and it will serve to inform policy initiatives regarding inclusion. It will also inform the type of training that needs to be put in place as recommended by the Consultative Paper. This is due to the fact that the Consultative Paper (1999:68, 74) refers to capacity building within the existing special schools, special classes and district offices with the view to preparing the way for inclusion as the focal point during phase one (1999 to 2000) of the process of "phasing in" of the policy of inclusion.

### **4. WHAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE ENTAILS**

A questionnaire will be administered at schools. Questions will mainly be objective in nature, although from time to time teachers will be given a chance to give their opinions. It

will take approximately 15 minutes for an individual teacher to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire will be administered in the following types of schools:

- Two special schools for severely intellectually disabled learners with a number of learners with mild intellectual disability;
- Two farm schools;
- Two schools in an informal settlement;
- Two schools formerly administered by DET with special classes for mildly intellectually disabled learners and ordinary classes for ordinary grade learners;
- Two schools formerly administered by TED with special classes for mildly intellectually disabled learners and ordinary classes for ordinary grade learners;

**NB:** Schools formerly administered by the House of Representatives (HOR) and the House of Delegates (HOD) are not included for the simple reason that their programmes were the same as those that were used by the TED. All the responses to the questionnaire will be treated with the strictest confidence. The respondents will be anonymous and therefore names of persons and schools will not be recorded.

**The questionnaire will tap on the following areas:**

1. Number of children in the class;
2. Number of children suspected or having been diagnosed as mildly Intellectually disabled;
3. How the pupils were assessed before being diagnosed as disabled;
4. Availability of assistance by parents, GDE;
5. Problems experienced in the education of such children;
6. The nature of the curriculum that is in use;
7. Awareness about legislation on inclusion;
8. Availability of parent involvement;

A discussion will be held after school to explain to the group of teachers who will be responding on how to answer the questionnaire. Two teachers per standard/ grade, specifically grades 1, 2 and 3 will be required, and thus it will work out to six teachers per school and ultimately 72 teachers will be involved. The questionnaire will only be

administered in three of the North Region Districts that in N2 in Mamelodi, N3 in Atteridgeville and N4 in the City centre.

Thus the study is limited to Pretoria only. This is due to the fact that the types of schools mentioned above are also found in that area, bearing in mind the accessibility of the area to the researcher in that she reside in Pretoria. Another reason for limiting the study to Pretoria only is that a study of the phenomenon in the GDE as a whole would constitute a massive study, requiring extensive resources, which the researcher does not have at her disposal. It is the researcher's view that the study would still be representative enough for the results to be generalised to other settings.

The study will involve no financial cost for the Department or the school. A list of schools that will be involved is attached together with a sample of the questionnaire. Letters will also be sent to the headmasters of the schools. Only teachers and not pupils will be involved in the study.

## **5. CHAPTER DIVISION**

**Topic: Assisting teachers of mildly intellectually disabled learners in the junior primary school phase in accordance with the policy of inclusion.**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Introductory orientation to the study:**

Statement of problem, definition of concepts such as inclusive education, primary school phase, mildly intellectually disabled learners is done in this chapter. Purpose, method and field of study are also outlined.

### **Chapter 2**

#### **The phenomenon: mild intellectual disability:**

The characteristics of these learners, (social, physical and cognitive) are outlined. developing countries will be looked into.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Educational programmes for mildly intellectually disabled learners in the Republic of South Africa before and after the new dispensation:**

Programmes for the different racial groups are examined, including Curriculum 2005 and OBE.

## **Chapter 4**

**Educational programmes for the mildly intellectually disabled learners in developed and in developing countries are examined:**

Developed countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and USA are examined to find out how these learners are provided for educationally. Programmes in developing countries such as Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania are also examined.

## **Chapter 5**

**Empirical research: Questionnaires are administered and results are tabulated.**

## **Chapter 6**

**Guidelines for assisting teachers are suggested on the basis of both the theory (literature study) and survey results (questionnaire).**

## **Chapter 7**

**Summary, conclusions and recommendations.**

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Faculty of Education  
Department of Educational Studies

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Departement Opvoedkundestudies

## PROPOSED DEd STUDY MRS M F SETHOSA

Mrs Sethosa is busy with her doctoral studies in education at Unisa. In order to complete a very relevant research project it is necessary for her to interview a number of teachers in different schools in the Gauteng area. The purpose and extent as well as the aim of these interviews is explained in detail in her accompanying memorandum.

We shall appreciate it very much if you will render her the necessary permission to complete the research as requested. The findings of this research project will be of invaluable help in the establishment of an effective education system for children with special educational needs.

Yours sincerely

.....  
**DR E PRINSLOO**

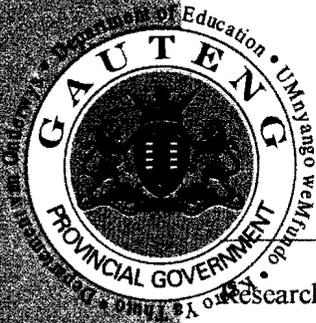
Promoter

18 October 1999

P.O. BOX 7710  
JOHANNESBURG  
2000

111 COMMISSIONER STREET.  
JOHANNESBURG  
2000

Tel: (011) 355 - 0555 Fax: (011) 355 - 0670



Researchers Particulars

Ms. Sethosa M.F.

Institution: Unisa

Student No: 6309674

Date: 10 January 2000

Dear Sethosa M.F.

***Request to conduct a study***

**Topic: Assisting teachers of mildly intellectually disabled learners in the Junior primary phase in accordance with the policy of inclusion.**

**Approval is hereby granted that you may conduct a study / administer a questionnaire to Gauteng schools. Approval is with effect from 7 February 2000**

**District(s) where the study shall be conducted: N1, N2, N3 and N4.**

***Permission is subject to the following conditions:***

1. The District Director concerned is to be informed that you have received permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct your research in the specified GDE school/ district / region.
2. Please show this letter to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) as proof that you have received the Department's consent to carry out the research.
3. A letter / document which sets out a brief summary of your intended research should please be made available to the principal of the school concerned.
4. Please obtain the goodwill and co-operation of the principal, chairperson of the SGB, learners and educators involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will receive no special benefit from the Department, while those who prefer not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
5. You must conduct your research after school, and the normal school programme should be interrupted as little as possible. The principal must be consulted as to the times when you may carry out your research.

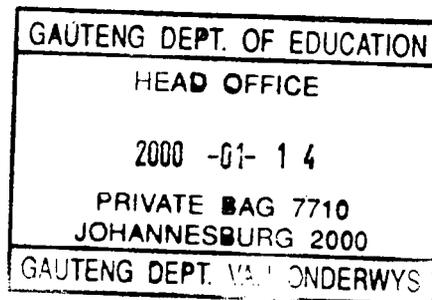
6. The names of the school, learners and educators may not appear in your dissertation without their consent.
7. Please supply the Department via the Research Unit with a bound copy of the report. You may also be requested to give a short presentation on your findings
8. Please supply the Director in whose district the school (s) is/are located with a brief summary of your findings.
9. You must obtain the consent of parents to involve their children in your research. This is the researchers responsibility.

The Department wishes you well with this project and looks forward to hearing from you in due course.

Regards



Lekhotla Mafisa  
Research Unit.



**DISTRICT N4**

**TRAINING MANUAL  
FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT  
TEAMS**

**LIST OF CONTENTS**

- SECTION 1: BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY OF INCLUSION**
- SECTION 2: ASSISTING TEACHERS TO SUPPORT LSEN IN THE  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**
- SECTION 3: THE ASSESSMENT POLICY**
- SECTION 4: COLLABORATION AMONG TEACHERS**

## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY OF INCLUSION

### 1.1 Introduction

The term **inclusion** means different things for different people. Inclusion, in simple terms, means the accommodation of a learner with special educational needs (LSEN) in the neighbourhood school, the school at which the learner would be admitted in the absence of a disability. Inclusion is about accommodating a diversity of learner needs in the schools.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) Chapter 3 Section 12 (4) makes it the responsibility of the MEC to make places available for LSEN in ordinary schools and also make **support** available as may be needed by such learners.

### 1.2 Background in RSA

- 1994 Salamanca conference in Spain (RSA became a signatory at a later stage).
- 1996 Commission appointed.
- 1997 Recommendations.
- 1999 Green paper.
- 2000 Draft white paper.

### 1.3 Prominent features in other countries

Most countries emphasize **support** for both educators and learners

<b>Canada</b>	Problem-solving teams Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC). Multi-level instruction
<b>Australia</b>	Integrative support teams Shift from pull-out programmes to in-class support
<b>New Zealand</b>	Reading recovery programme. Methods and Resource teacher: teacher helping teachers and learners to implement programmes for LSEN. Consulting teacher: teacher supporting teachers by sharing skills, development of problem-solving.
<b>Africa</b>	Critics of inclusion insists that limited resources should be spent on the able-bodied who are able to contribute economically. Mainstream dumping occurs due to lack of resources. The disabled almost always find themselves at the end of the queue for assistance in most of the African countries, since some of them are still struggling with universal primary education.

<b>Kenya</b>	Ensuring life in the community. Animal husbandry & poultry farming.
<b>Nigeria</b>	Emphasis on the three R's.
<b>Tanzania</b>	Education for self-reliance.

## **SECTION 2: ASSISTING TEACHERS TO SUPPORT LSEN IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In most cases the visually impaired, the hearing impaired and the physically disabled are able to cope with the ordinary curriculum for as long as Braille, sign language and other assistive devices are made available. For those with mild intellectual disability, intervention needs to target the areas in which they struggle the most.

The most affected learner is the mildly disabled learner, namely:

- The behaviour disordered.
- The learning disabled.
- The mildly intellectually disabled.
- The emotionally disabled.

### **2.2 Learning difficulties**

#### **2.2.1 Characteristics**

These are learners who will experience one or more of the following problems:

- Problems of attention: Lack of attention, inability to maintain attention.
- Problems with memory: Deficits in memory manifests in their inability to recall.
- Rate of learning: Learn at a slower rate compared to counterparts.
- Level of learning: Inability to reach the same level as others.
- Rate of forgetting: Forget easily.
- Transfer of information: Inability to use information in new but similar situations, the inability to use skills and concepts learned in specific settings in other unrelated settings.
- Concrete versus Abstract learning: Prefer concrete level of operation.
- Incidental learning: Inability to learn from information in the periphery.
- Discrimination: Inability to locate relevant information.

### **2.2.2 Learning principles**

For these learners to learn successfully, a number of learning principles are to be taken into consideration by the teacher:

- Experiencing success: Experiences of failure lead to expectancy of failure. Allow them to succeed. Success breeds success.
- Fixation in memory: Through repetition, facts are fixated in memory.
- Regularity: Routine leads to security.
- Verbalization: Using words all the time.
- Concreteness: To be seen, heard and touched.
- Demonstration and experimentation: Leading learners to finding solutions through demonstration and experiments.
- Independent activity: Learners work independently. This increases self-confidence.
- Participation and experience: Participates actively. Involvement.
- Methodical procedures: Proceeding from the known to the unknown and easy to difficult.
- Socialization: Interaction with others.

### **2.2.3 Teaching principles**

On the other hand, a number of teaching principles have to be applied by the teacher him/her self:

- Individualization: Educational goals to be in keeping with the individuality of the learner (IEP).
- Totality: Matter to be presented as a meaningful whole. Relationships between things and facts. Integration of facts and details.
- Motivation: They have poor intrinsic motivation and depend on motivation from outside (extrinsic). Needs encouragement in the form of praise, privileges, etc.
- Reduction of subject matter: Reduce to basics.
- Task analysis: Broad matter divided into component parts. Later matter is weaved together to bring sense into it.
- Emphasis: Enables them to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant.
- Purposefulness: Not only keep the learner busy. What is to be achieved has to be planned.

### **2.2.4 Areas of focus**

These learners will invariably also experience problems in one or more of the following areas of academics:

- Literacy: Reading; Writing; Spelling; Handwriting
- Numeracy or Mathematics.

## 2.2.4.1 Reading

### APPROACHES TO READING

**Phonetic approach:** This approach emphasizes the teaching of letter sound and letter sound groups and the blending of these sounds into meaningful words. Learners are taught vowel sound and associations to help them recall those sounds. They learn sound associations for vowels and letter combinations. In this way, unknown words may be broken into syllables or segments and be put together again.

**Sight word of whole word approach:** Learners are taught to identify certain words as a whole unit at an automatic level. High frequency words and non-phonetic words are generally taught in this way. Frequent drill, repetition and practice (preferably in the form of a game) help to lock the words in the memory bank for instant recognition. Drill is done with an emphasis on meaning and understanding.

**Whole language approach:** The learner's language experiences inside and outside of the school are used to increase their reading skills. Emphasis is placed on reading for meaning.

**Language experience approach:** Learners read words they have dictated to the teacher and watch the teacher write the story. The teacher then reads the story to the learner. The teacher and the learner then read chorally, together at the same time. This approach emphasizes the use of key words drawn directly from sentences the learners created and dictated.

**Bilingual approach:** The learner's home language is used to explain concepts and words to be learned in another language e.g. 2<sup>nd</sup> language. This only works in situations where the home language of learners is similar.

**Eclectic approach:** This approach uses a combination of approaches mentioned above. Two or more approaches are used simultaneously, depending on the needs of the learner.

**Fernald's multi-sensory approach:** (also known as the VAKTI approach). The learners simultaneously rely on their visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile and imaginary senses.

V-visual, the learner sees the word;

A- Auditory, the learners pronounces the word;

K- Kinesthetic, he learner writes the word in the air (involving the whole body);

T- Tactile, the learner traces the word with his/her finger or writes the word in his/her hand

I- Imagination, the learner imagines the word in his/her mind

**Daily word lists approach:** Learners receive word lists on a daily basis. The order of the words in the lists is reshuffled. Once the list is mastered, a new list is given. This approach is really helpful if the words are related to the life world of the learner. Such list may even be given on Saturdays, where lists relating to sports are given, and Sundays, when words relating to church service and worship are given.

## ORAL READING STRATEGIES

**Choral reading:** Everyone in the class reads together at the same time. The teacher first models the reading to the whole class and thereafter, the class reads along with the teacher. One paragraph may be read by girls, the next by boys, and so on.

**Cloze reading:** The teacher reads the material but leaves out key words. These words are then filled in orally by the learners.

**Popcorn reading:** One person starts reading and at the end of the paragraph calls out “popcorn” and the name of the person who has to continue reading.

**Mirror (echo) reading:** The teacher reads a paragraph or a sentence and the learners reread that paragraph. The process of rereading passages the learners have heard before, increases fluency and comprehension. Rereading can be done in pairs, in small groups, to adults such as teachers and volunteers and into the tape recorder.

**Switch seat reading:** The teacher reads while seated in her chair and learners follow in their books. Once the teacher is finished, she switches seats with another learner who will begin reading from where the teacher left off.

**Shared quotations:** The teacher reads everything except within quotations. Whenever something is written within quotations, the learners read it.

**Dialogue reading:** Learners are assigned characters and read the parts relating to the said character.

**Buddy/ partner reading:** Learners read orally in pairs, taking turns and alternating paragraphs and pages. They could also read in unison. This becomes effective if learners share books, because while the one learner is reading and pointing to the words, the other one may follow along while awaiting his/her chance. The teacher may give questions to be answered for an assignment and the learners may even discuss the answers.

### 2.2.4.2 Writing

#### WRITTEN EXPRESSION

The task of writing, namely deciding what to write about and how to express those ideas, is a struggle for most people. This is even more so with learners experiencing learning difficulties. These learners need to be assisted to generate ideas, organize their thoughts and plan before writing.

## **THE FOLLOWING ARE PRE-WRITING TECHNIQUES**

- **Brainstorm:** Collecting whatever comes to mind about a particular topic. This can be done as a group or in pairs.
- **Quick write:** Learners write down everything related to the topic at hand, not worrying about spelling neatness, and so on.
- **Writing topics:** Lists of commonly used ideas related to particular topics such as restaurants, camps, sports, etc. These lists may be added on throughout the year.
- **Personal collage writing folder:** Students make a personal folder using pictures collected from magazines, newspapers, travel brochures, etc.
- **Reference books:** Reference books can be handed out on topics such as vehicles, deserts, horses, mammals, etc.
- **Writing prompts:** A poem, a picture or a song may be used to prompt writing;
- **Vocabulary lists:** Lists of words related to a given topic.
- **Self-talk:** Learners to talk to themselves while writing, for example: “Who am I writing for? What will interest the reader?” etc.
- **Telling personal stories:** Ask them to remember the time they were sick, something funny that happened.

## **HELPING WITH GRAMMAR, STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS**

- Learners have to be taught parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, etc.
- Learners have to listen to passages being read and identify certain parts of speech.
- Provide models for capitalization rules and punctuation rules.
- Teach them abbreviations.
- Teach combination of sentences and sentence expansion.
- Teach the structure of a paragraph e.g. using a hamburger graphic: the top bun represents the topic; the patty represents the flesh; the lettuce, the tomato and the onion represents the details that add flavour and interest, and finally, the bottom bun represents closure.

## **HELPING WITH EDITING SKILLS**

- Teach learners the skill of proofreading and editing, using transparencies of unedited work to be edited in class.
- Encourage them to circle words they suspect have been misspelled.
- Teach them to self-talk while revising their writing e.g. “Does everything make sense?”
- Use peer editing: learners editing each other’s work in pairs or in groups.
- Conduct teacher-learner writing conferences where teacher gives feedback and learners reflect on their own work. The learners then work on improving the skills.
- Give more time to practice the skill of writing in class, where immediate feedback will be provided.

## SUMMARY OF STAGES IN THE PROCESS OF WRITING

- Planning stage: The purpose of the writing process is determined, ideas are generated and grouped.
- Drafting stage: The plan is transformed into sentences, paragraphs.
- Editing: Additions and deletions from the original text, corrections.
- Final document: The completed document is produced, feedback given.

### 2.2.4.3 Spelling

#### APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF SPELLING

- Cognitive approaches: The teacher spells the word, writes it down and after pronouncing it discusses the meaning. Learners then complete the spelling grid.
- Test-study-test approaches: Learners receive a pretest list of words, which they study. They are tested on the list and continue to practice the words they misspell.
- Corrected test methods: Learners correct their own spelling mistakes with the help of the teacher.

#### PATTERNS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Learners may practice learning the basic patterns of the English language by reading and writing words such as the following:

**Phonetically regular words:** Short vowel words (best, plant, rich, check, trust)  
Long vowel words (plate, dime, cute, whole)  
Vowel diagraphs (chain, dream, sweat, groan)

**Multi-syllable words with** Prefixes: unhappy, unable, recondition, reassign,  
Suffixes: slowly, wisely, imagination, discussion,  
attractive

**Word family/rhyming patterns:** thank, blank, crank, thick, trick, stick, quick, right,  
night, delight, bright, cold, bold, scold

**Focusing on patterns as beginning blends/clusters:** drive, dropped, drink, dry,  
squeeze, square, squint,  
thrive, through, thrifty,

**High frequency words and commonly misspelled words**

## **TEACHER-DIRECTED SPELLING TECHNIQUES**

- Words may be introduced and learners asked to look at the configuration, little word within the word and mnemonic clues that may be used for remembering the spelling of the word. The syllables are then written in coloured pen and the meaning discussed and used within a context.
- A group of Spelling Experts (learners skilled in spelling) are assigned as peer tutors. During writing periods, these learners may help poor spellers (who spend time being frustrated by looking up words in dictionaries). The Spelling Experts may also check spelling tests before marks are recorded.
- Resources such as dictionaries, a list of commonly used words and electronic spell-checkers (if available) should be made readily accessible in the classroom.
- Instead of automatically telling the correct spelling to the learner when asked, the teacher may encourage learners to use self-help strategies to look up the word. It is also advisable for learners to ask from peers. Learners who are bogged down with spelling may be allowed to write troublesome words on a piece of paper.
- Commercial games such as Scrabble may be used and extra/ bonus points allocated for correct spelling.
- Learners may develop their own personal lists e.g. word banks for those words they need to practice regularly. These words may be selected from the learner's misspelled words. The word banks have to be updated regularly as learners learn new words.
- Learners may be taught to look for patterns in words by teaching word families.
- Additional phonetic training may be provided for poor spellers, in the form of letter-sound association. This helps to remind them what the word looks like in print. Some learners are able to decode, read adequately and identify sight words, but if they can't recall the print, they may lack strategies for spelling.
- While reading written work by learners, the teacher may just indicate in the margin the check mark. The learner should then find his/her misspelled word and then to self-correct if at all possible.
- Learners may be encouraged to draft on rough paper and to underline or write "sp" above the word they suspect could be misspelled. This helps them to self-monitor and then to check the spelling of the said words.

### **2.2.4.4 Handwriting**

Many learners struggle with good handwriting and their assignments are then unattractive.

#### **HELPING WITH NEATNESS AND LEGIBILITY**

- Use real life situations such as job applications, to stress the need for legible writing.
- Explain that studies have indicated that teachers tend to give learners the benefit of doubt if their work is neat. This is due to the fact that legibility and neatness reflects one's attitude towards one's work and makes lasting impressions.
- Avoid pressurizing learners on speed of writing.

- Set realistic, mutually agreed-upon expectations on neatness.
- Change the pencil type if the learner writes too heavily or too lightly.
- Teach them to use their index finger between word for spacing (finger spacing).
- Provide learners with strips of alphabets, both cursive and manuscript, for reference.
- Provide clipboard for those who are unable to anchor paper and lets it slide around.
- Encourage them to use sharpened pencils.
- Use writing warm-ups, like stretching and wiggling fingers (with a rhyme or a song if possible):
- Allow them to practice by tracing sandpaper letters or eggshell letters.
- Allow them to practice by writing on sand or carpet (tactile-kinesthetic technique).
- Provide prompts for letter formation and directionality by placing dots to indicate where to begin and arrows to indicate the direction.
- Practice can be given through trace and copy activities.
- Encourage appropriate sitting, posture and anchoring of paper.
- Alternate size of paper lines, paper size, shape, texture and colour.
- Allow them to use transparencies, the chalkboard and the whiteboard.

### 2.2.4.5 Mathematics

#### INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES FOR MATHEMATICS

- Basic number facts: Such as one to one correspondence, length, weight.
- Classification: Sorting objects on the basis of one or more common properties eg colour, shape, size, texture, design.
- Numeration: Understanding numbers and their manipulations, understanding the value and meaning of numbers.
- Basic facts and operations: Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
- Essential concepts and skills: Decimals and fractions
- Functional maths: Money, measurement and time.
- Word problems: Maths presented in words.
- Place value: Understanding grouping by ones, tens, hundreds, thousands

Numerals	Thousands	Hundreds	Tens	Ones
2434	2	4	3	4
6579	6	5	7	9
345	0	3	4	5
67	0	0	6	7

#### MODIFICATIONS FOR LEARNERS WHO STRUGGLE WITH MATHEMATICS

- Provide different types of manipulatives to help them to visualize the work.
- Allow and encourage them to use calculators.
- Allow them extra time during tests so that they are not rushed and thereby make careless mistakes.
- Encourage them to solve problems on graph paper by using squares.

- Allow them to write on notebook paper held with lines running vertically rather than horizontally, especially for those who experience problems with regard to aligning the numbers.
- Reduce the number of problems assigned.
- Reduce the amount of copying to be done by photocopying pages.
- High light processing signs with coloured pen for those who are inattentive to change of operational signs on a page.
- Provide large spaces for work during tests.
- Provide sample problems with steps clearly indicated.
- Provide multiplication table for those who struggle with tables.
- When testing long division, where the problems involve using several digits and regrouping, sums should be those numbers that learners are familiar with e.g. 2's, 5's and 10's.
- For those who have not mastered the multiplication facts, mnemonic devices may be used. Rap songs, rhymes and songs may also be used.

## **2.3 Emotional and/or behavioural disorders**

**2.3.1 Definition:** a definition of what constitutes emotional and behavioural disorders is illusive in the sense that a common definition, which is all encompassing, is made impossible by the fact that different practitioners look at it from different angles. What is clear though, is the fact that such behaviours are in most cases excessive, deviant, chronic, and occur over a period of time.

Learners with emotional and/or behavioural disorders exhibit one or more of the following characteristics, which affect their performance:

- Inability to learn, which cannot be explained in terms of intellectual, sensory or health factors.
- Inability to build and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers.
- Inappropriate types of behaviour and feelings, under normal circumstances.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears, associated with personal or school problems.

### **2.3.2 Characteristics**

**Externalizing** emotional or behavioural problems is exemplified in:

- Acting out, aggression and non-compliant behaviour.
- Destructiveness, temper outbursts, fighting, verbal threats, arguing, loudness, swearing, refusal to follow directions.
- Anti-social behaviour such as stealing, lying, setting fires, gang membership, alcohol and substance abuse.
- Juvenile delinquency.

**Internalizing** emotional and behaviour problems is exemplified in:

- Obsessions or repetitive, persistent and intrusive impulses, images and thoughts.;
- Phobias or excessive and uncontrollable fears.
- Compulsions or repetitive and stereotypical behaviour such as washing and re-checking.
- Social withdrawal as seen in inability to interact with others, declining to take part in activities, failing to show feelings, avoiding eye contact, staring blankly.
- Depression and anxiety.

### **2.3.3 Possible causes**

#### **Bio-medical factors**

- Inherited inclination to be nervous.
- Health problems.

#### **Home and family factors**

- Unstable and insecure homes.
- Parental conflict.
- Divorced, single parents, step parents.
- Child neglect, incest and child abuse.
- Poverty
- Lack of support from outside the family.

#### **School factors**

- Too strict and unreasonable demands to conform.
- Unsympathetic attitudes towards individual differences/ insensitivity towards learner's individuality.
- Inconsistent behaviour management.
- Instruction on non-functional and irrelevant skills.

- Teachers who criticize, ridicule and belittle learners.
- Rejection by peers.
- Inappropriate curricula.
- Failure to achieve success.
- Demands that are too high for learners to reach/ inappropriate expectations for learners.
- Undesirable model of school conduct.

### **Environmental factors**

- Perpetual violence and crime.
- Trauma that causes mental scars.
- Rape, murder, violent death of family members and friends and arson.
- Youth gangs who carry guns, knives and axes to terrorize teachers and peers.

## **2.3.4 Assisting learners with emotional and behaviour problems**

### **2.3.4.1 What do learners need?**

- A structured, positive classroom that is welcoming and inclusive.
- A teacher who is a good role model, someone who is firm, fair and in charge.
- To feel safe and comfortable in the classroom environment, knowing that they will be treated with respect and dignity, where they will not be criticized, embarrassed or humiliated in front of peers.
- To feel confident that teachers care about their needs.
- A chance to voice their feelings.
- To feel that they have choices and are involved in the decision-making process.
- Instructional materials that motivate and engage their interest.

### **2.3.4.2 What should schools and teachers do?**

- Unconditional acceptance of the learner.
- Determine reason for child's behaviour before making judgements.
- Continue to be interested in the "difficult" learners even if they try to shock you.
- Manage class effectively through established routine.
- Learners must know what they can and what they cannot do.
- Give feedback by acknowledging and reinforcing good behaviour.
- Remain calm even if the learner screams. This will enable them to talk to you in future. Shouting back can only compound the problem.
- Establish reasonable rules, procedures and guidelines.
- Explain rationale for rules and procedures.
- Have clear, fair and logical consequences for misbehaviour and enforce it consistently
- Make rules external by using pictures and photos to depict them.
- Use modelling, practice and review.

- Provide structure and routine.
- Follow through in a timely manner.
- Allow learners to participate in determining consequences and rewards.
- Establish positive but firm relationships with learners. It is possible to be firm, but still to smile and communicate with learners.
- Maintain positive and high expectations.
- Model respectful language, tone of voice and body language.
- Focus on prevention of problems, early identification and early intervention.
- Try not to respond out of anger.
- Document inappropriate behaviour and intervention strategies applied.
- Involve parents right from the start, by inviting them and developing action plans with them.
- Use counselling and intervention when behaviour problems first occur.
- Provide counselling and guidance sessions on aspects like peer pressure, conflict resolution, etc.
- Use peer guidance together with teacher coaching/ mentoring where teachers may even “adopt” learners.
- Use peer mediation to settle conflicts.
- Devise a well thought out whole school discipline plan and consistently implement it.
- Policies and rules must be unambiguous and be clearly communicated to learners.
- Make the school environment more learner-centred. It should reflect learner interests and pride.

### **2.3.4.3 Improving academic skills**

- Preparation of an IEP.
- Establishing clear goals and expectations.
- Providing multiple opportunities for learners to respond actively during lessons.
- Monitoring learner’s progress.
- Providing instructional feedback.
- Continually evaluating progress and understanding.
- Specifically identifying skills to be learned.
- Measuring current performance on the skill.
- Setting aims and goals as to how well the learner will perform.
- Making changes in instruction when needed, based on learner performance.
- Cross-age and class wide peer tutoring.
- Cooperative learning.
- Experiential learning.
- Time trials, giving the learners an opportunity to perform skills as many times as possible and as frequent as possible to ensure mastery.
- Guided notes, using teacher prepared hand-outs to guide learners through a presentation, using asteriks, underlining, bold.
- Choral responding, where the class responds in unison.
- Writing on pre-printed response cards.

#### **2.3.4.4 Improving social skills**

- Allow learners to spend time in close physical contact, as in games.
- Allow them to act in a friendly manner towards each other.
- Allow them to share instructional materials.

#### **2.4 Multiple Intelligences**

This theory suggests that people use at least seven different intellectual capacities. These intelligences are autonomous, each with a unique and distinctive way of thinking. Every person possesses a combination of these intelligences, in varying degrees, and the blending and the combination differ from individual to individual. This needs to be taken into consideration when planning for instruction, because learners benefit the most if the mode in which they excel, is utilized efficiently.

- The verbal-linguistic learner:** word smart  
**The logical-mathematical learner:** number smart  
**The visual-spatial learner:** art smart  
**The bodily-kinesthetic learner:** body smart  
**The musical-rhythmic learner:** music smart  
**The interpersonal learner:** people smart  
**The intrapersonal learner:** self smart

<b>Intelligence</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Assistance</b>
Verbal-linguistic	Thinks in words, good verbal expressive words,	Allow them to read and create as in poems and stories, allow them to participate in word games, debates, formal speaking, allow them to do written assignments, allow them to see, hear and say words.
Logical-mathematical	Thinks abstractly, conceptually and analytically	Allow them to experiment and participate in problem solving, allow them to work with numbers and mathematical formulas and operations, allow them to learn through categorizing and classifying.
Visual-spatial	Thinks in images and pictures, enjoys designing.	Allow them to draw, paint and designing, allow them to complete jigsaw puzzles, allow them to read maps, allow them to use colour to highlight where necessary.
Bodily-kinesthetic	Communicates through body language and posture, enjoys physical movement, easily bored when not actively involved.	Allow them to move and touch things (use hands), allow them to role-play and mimic others, allow them to demonstrate and participate in physical games.
Musical-rhythmic	Sensitive to sounds in the environment, may study better in a background of music,	Whenever possible, allow them to sing rhymes to remember days of the week, months etc. It is especially useful in the lower grades.
Interpersonal	Learns through interaction with others, sensitive to feelings of others, can draw others into discussions, good in sharing, comparing and relating.	Allow them co-operative situations, allow them leadership in groups, allow them to participate in conflict resolution and intervention.
Intrapersonal	Inwardly motivated, highly intuitive, strong willed and confident, likes to work alone.	Allow them to work independently on projects and assignments.

## 2.5 Learning Styles

Learning styles are biologically and developmentally imposed characteristics that make learners predisposed towards different modalities of information processing.

This refers to the modality or channel (hearing, seeing, touching, doing) the learner prefers to use. Teachers may help learners if they take a closer look at the functioning of learners, their strengths and preferences and plan the learning process in a way that will utilize the learner's most preferred mode of learning.

### LEARNING STYLES

<b>Auditory</b>	<b>Visual</b>	<b>Tactile-kinesthetic</b>
Learn through verbal instruction, lecture, radio and TV.	Learn through seeing, watching and observation.	Learn through doing, touching and direct involvement.
Remember through the use of language and self-talk.	They learn to read by recognition of patterns in words.	They are physical in nature, and need to handle projects and activities.
They are verbal and memorize easily.	They are organized in their approach to tasks.	They respond to tapping and clapping during activities.
Remembers when information is reinforced through melodies and beats.	Remembers through pictures and images accompanied by verbal presentations.	Information to be tied to motion.
<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Assistance</b>
Provide opportunities for listening.	Colour and highlighting. Writing within boxes helps a lot.	Provide opportunities for participation in laboratories, acting out, crafts and computers.
Involve them in discussions – both small and large groups.	Write information for them as reference.	Allow them to trace with their fingers on carpet, sand paper and other textures.
Allow them auditory input to hold their attention and to give meaning (without distracting others).	Allow them to underline, circle, highlight and make notes for themselves.	Allow them to listen to recitations - while walking.
	Provide pictures, maps, films and models.	

## 2.6 Analytical (left) and Global (right) brain personalities

Analytical (left) brain	Global (right) brain
Learn through sequential processing.	Utilize holistic thinking.
Work from parts to whole (detail to whole).	Process information simultaneously (whole to detail).
Are logical.	See resemblance and analogies.
Are time conscious.	Are not very time conscious.
Are rational.	Are intuitive and fantasy oriented.
Like to plan ahead.	Are artistic and creative and they improvise.
Need to follow steps in a process.	Have several projects going at once.
Tend to need quiet to concentrate.	Tend to need background noise or music to concentrate.
Pay attention to a series of facts that build up a concept.	Grasps large concepts and then tackle details.
Process information linearly.	Need to discuss the relevance and make connection (work back from estimated answer).
Are reflective.	Find clustering and mind mapping helpful.
Verbal thinking and memory.	Images and spatial orientation.
Language detail (semantics).	Comprehension (emotion).
Routine and structure oriented.	Impulsive and people oriented.
Are realistic.	Are day dreamers.
Life is serious.	Life is fun.
Use a single method.	Use a variety of methods.

## SECTION 3: THE ASSESSMENT POLICY

### 3.1 Introduction

According to Circular 12 of 1999, SATs have to be established in all the schools. These teams are to work closely with the District Assessment Team whenever learners are to be assessed.

### 3.2 Background

At the Jomtien Conference held in 1994, member countries committed themselves to giving Quality Education For All in the respective education systems. South Africa became a member only 2 years ago (approximately in 1998) when Professor Bengu signed the declaration. A follow up conference was held early 2000, to follow up developments in the various countries.

Three reports were submitted to the conference, namely:

- A report on the monitoring of learner achievement in South Africa: The monitoring of literacy and numeracy in the country.
- A country report: Details the status with regard to educator qualification, gross learner enrolment, and net learner enrolment and implications with regard to drop out.
- The GDE report: Details the status of Gauteng as a province. The report indicates that learners in GDE are still losing out, because despite the fact that Gauteng has the most qualified educators as compared to other provinces, there is still a high drop out rate in the province. This is attributed to the following:
  - Educational background of parents
  - Access to media
  - Teaching methods
  - Learner assessment
  - Loss of teaching time
  - Low morale of teachers
  - Level of teaching skill

The reports offer the following challenges:

- How are we going to improve teacher capacity?
- How are we going to improve learner achievement?

### 3.3 Assessment

Before trying to analyze the roles and functions of the SST IN the SATs, it is important that the concept **assessment** be clarified. According to Government Gazette dated 23 December 1998, on Assessment policy in General Education and Training Band (GET) Grades R to 9 and ABET, "Assessment is the process of identifying, gathering, and interpreting information about the learner's achievement, as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning".

This is done in the following steps:

1. Generating and collecting evidence of achievement.
2. Evaluating this evidence against outcomes.
3. Recording the evidence of this evaluation.
4. Using this information to assist the learner's development and improve the process of teaching and learning.

### **3.3.1 Outcomes Based Education (OBE)**

OBE is an approach to education which is learner-centred and it builds on the notion that all learners need to and can achieve their full potential, but recognizes the fact that this may not necessarily happen in the same way or within the same period for all learners.

Assessment in OBE focuses on the achievement of specific outcomes. Learner achievement is therefore credited despite:

- the pathway that might have been taken
- the rate at which it might have taken place.

This begins to accommodate LSEN in that it does not matter when and how the outcomes were accomplished, but what matters is the fact that ultimately they were reached.

### **3.3.2 Principles that underpin effective assessment**

- The purpose of the assessment is made explicit.
- The criterion-referenced rather than the norm-referenced approach is used.
- Assessment is authentic, continuous and varied.
- Assessment is an integral part of the process of learning.
- Assessment is objective, accurate, valid, fair, manageable and time-efficient.
- Assessment gathers information not only from academic aspects, but also from skills and attitudes.
- Techniques are appropriate for what needs to be assessed, as well as the age and level of development for each learner.
- Assessment is free of bias, and sensitive to gender, race, abilities and cultural background.
- Assessment results are communicated clearly, on time, accurately and meaningfully.
- Assessment links progression to the achievement of specific outcomes.
- Assessment is used to identify areas where learners need support and intervention.

### **3.3.3 Why assessment?**

Assessment is a tool which gives the educator guidance as to:

- What can this learner do that I as the educator can build on to help the learner learn more?
- Where does the learner have difficulty and therefore need extra help?
- What might the learner be able to do with a little bit of extra help?
- Must I teach the learner differently?
- Where am I going wrong as a teacher?

**The main reason for assessment is therefore to identify areas of difficulty with the view to designing intervention programmes for LSEN.**

### **3.3.4 Who does the assessment?**

Teachers have the overall responsibility to assess the progress learners are making. They are the people who set up outcomes for learners. They are also able to tell if learners have accomplished outcomes - through informal observations, even on the playground. In addition, peer assessment may prove to be a valuable alternative. Parents may also be utilized to assess their own children.

### **3.3.5 What is assessed?**

The basis for assessment is the specific outcomes which are rooted in the critical outcomes. The main focus of assessment is the progress the learners are making in achieving the outcomes. Learners who are not progressing well are to be informed of the areas where they need to exert themselves and must be supported by the teacher to reach the required criteria.

The following are generally assessed:

- The learner's interests.
- The learner's strong points.
- Academic strengths and needs and areas of difficulty.
- Social and communication skills.
- Fine and gross motor skills.
- Self-management skills.
- Skills for daily living.

### **3.3.6 How is assessment done?**

- Observations: Planned and unplanned.
- Question and answers: How do you feel? What is difficult?
- Class work.
- Projects.
- Journals.
- Products done by the learner.
- Performance: Movement, oral, carrying out instructions, etc.
- Assignments.
- Self assessment.
- Peer assessment.
- Parent assessment.
- Portfolios.

### 3.3.7 Types of assessment

**Baseline assessment :** Takes place at the beginning of a new set of activities and it is meant to find out what the learner already knows with regard to the activity at hand.

**Diagnostic assessment:** It is used to identify the nature and cause of a learning difficulty in order to facilitate the drawing up of an appropriate remedial assistance and guidance programme.

**Formative assessment (also called developmental assessment):** Takes place throughout the year. It is designed to monitor support on a continuous basis. It is built into the learning activities and it gives guidance through constant feedback.

**Summative assessment (also called judgmental assessment):** Takes place at the end of learning period, specified period (level of specified knowledge) or at the end of the phase. It is selective, controlling and is meant for grading. It encompasses a series of assessment activities resulting in an overall report on the performance of a learner.

**Systemic assessment:** Takes place when a system is being evaluated e.g. assessment of OBE implementation in the foundation phase. Teachers generally participate by filling in questionnaires as to the effectiveness of the system. In most cases it is undertaken by district and head office or by any interested parties to identify loopholes in order to give suggestions for improvement.

### 3.3.8 Suggestions for learner support

Once the areas of difficulty have been identified, what follows?

- Individual remedial teaching by the educator after school, for example on reading, spelling, handwriting and mathematics.
- Individual learning support from the remedial educator (if available) who works closely with the classroom educator.
- Support in order to build confidence.
- Trying out different teaching approaches.
- Trying out different kinds of assessment of the curriculum.
- Supporting such learners during exams and tests, namely through:
  - The use of a dictionary and open book tests.
  - Easier questions.
  - Giving clear sequential instructions.
  - Reduction of work to be covered in a test (scope).
  - Remove time limit.
  - Conduct tests in quiet room.
  - Oral exams for some.
  - Home tests (partnerships with parents).
  - Read questions to learners before allowing them to write.
  - Break complex sentences into simple ones.
  - Allow help from the LSEN teacher during tests.

## **SECTION 4: COLLABORATION AMONG TEACHERS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

It has been recognized that the practicalities of the actual inclusion of LSEN in the ordinary classroom has been left to fall on the shoulders of the teachers. This means that it has become the responsibility of the teacher to adapt classrooms in order to accommodate diversity. It is for this reason that teachers need concrete advice on handling the difficult situations they are faced with on a daily basis. If intervention is not made available, the teacher is left with no choice but to resort to trial and error methods and strategies which in turn leads to frustration on the part of the teacher.

### **4.2 Collaboration**

Many classroom teachers feel that they are not adequately trained to meet the challenges presented by learners in their classrooms. The development of collaboration among teachers can be a useful approach in addressing diversity in the classrooms. Collaboration enables teachers to share their expertise, diverse and specialised knowledge and skills for the benefit of all learners. Collaboration of necessity implies teamwork. The collaborative team has the power to bring change to the curriculum and the learning and educational environment. The power of this team lies in their capacity to merge unique skills and talents in problem-solving.

#### **A team is group of people who:**

- Possesses particular expertise, skills, knowledge and experience.
- Have the responsibility for making decisions.
- Work towards a common goal and vision.
- Meet together to communicate, collaborate and consolidate knowledge.

#### **The following conditions are necessary for collaboration to thrive:**

- Participation must be voluntary.
- Commitment to a shared vision.
- Recognition that all members' opinions are valuable, and making use of unique talents and abilities of all teachers.
- Encourage individual freedom of expression and accept differences, needs, concerns and expectations.
- The educational needs of the teachers must be met through effective capacity building to enable them to understand their new role in the education of learners, including LSEN.
- Teachers must be made to understand that many of the processes, practices and strategies that are already in existence, have the potential to address diversity within the classrooms.

- Teachers, both in the mainstream and in special schools, must become familiar with the concepts of collaboration and cooperation to allow them to participate and work together as team members.
- New role of the special and mainstream school teachers have to be negotiated. Therefore, teachers have to begin to share information amongst each other in a concerted way for the benefit of learners and in the interest of quality education.
- Time has to be set aside in order to allow for the implementation of collaboration.

### 4.3 School support teams

School support teams are made up of teachers whose focus and function is to develop and empower colleagues in:

- Identification of learning difficulties.
- Intervention strategies: Assisting the learner identified as having leaning difficulties.
- Preventative strategies: Preventing learning difficulties from occurring (if at all possible).

#### **Benefits of working in teams:**

- People learn to support and trust one another and information is shared instead of keeping it to one's self.
- Resources, special talents, skills and strengths are shared instead of hoarded.
- Pitfalls that threaten people who work in isolation are avoided.
- The morale is higher when people work together.
- Everyone wants the team to succeed and therefore excellence is the result.

#### **Members of the team:**

- The referring teacher.
- The guidance teacher and /or the remedial teacher who could also coordinate/facilitate.
- The problem-solving team: Depending on the problem at hand e.g. speech therapist if the learner presents with language problems; psychologist if behaviour problems are apparent, and so on.
- The parent is an important component of the team.
- An ordinary teacher who could also be a recorder.

### 4.4 Steps in the problem-solving and intervention process

**What next?** : This is the most pertinent question on the teacher's mind. Once the learner has been identified as a learner who experiences learning difficulties, the following steps should be followed in trying to intervene:

1. The **first step** in intervention is for the register teacher to try to assist the learner with simple things, such as reduction of the subject matter a particular learner is to deal with. All the initiatives taken by the said teacher should be recorded and may include

some of the approaches listed above. This record forms the basis of support for the learners at class level.

2. The **second step** involves teachers at phase level. The phase representative may convene a meeting of phase educators, where the phase team will recommend additional and alternative intervention strategies together with the referring class teacher. The teacher will then implement the suggested strategies. In cases where the intervention has worked, it might not be necessary to refer further. In case the suggestions do not work, the teacher enlists the assistance of the SST. It is at this stage that the teacher has to indicate the type of problem experienced by the learner and the intervention strategies that were tried (See form SST 1).
3. The **third step** involves the School Support Team (SST). This forum, including all relevant stakeholders such as social workers, nurses and parents discuss the intervention and make further recommendations to be implemented by the teacher concerned. This step also involves preparation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) by the SST. The IEP is a written statement that describes the special education services and other related services designed to meet the needs of learners who experience learning difficulties. Other specialists such as speech and occupational therapists may also be involved in drawing up the IEP. In cases where such services are not available, the SST may enlist the assistance of the DST (if the need exists to do so).
4. The **fourth step** involves the District Support Team (DST). This step is considered only if all other steps of intervention have proved to be unsuccessful. The learner should be referred to the DST by means of a referral form (available from the Auxiliary Unit). The DST and the SST will work out an action plan to take the process forward. Where necessary, the DST will take the process forward independent of the SST.

## **4.5 An Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

### **4.5.1 What is an IEP?**

An IEP is a written statement describing the special education and related services specifically designed to meet the needs of the learner with disabilities. Such a plan spells out an extensive programme of individualized instruction designed to eliminate or compensate for the obstacles to learning stemming from a learner's disability.

### **4.5.2 An IEP should include the following:**

- A statement of the learner's present level of educational performance. This will indicate the strengths the learners possess, what the learner can do, as well as the skills mastered in order to build on these strengths. It also indicates the weaknesses and the skills not mastered, in order to give more attention in those areas.
- A list of annual goals the learner is expected to achieve. This is a statement of what the teacher predicts the learner will do.

- For each annual goal, a set of short-term instructional objectives, written in measurable terms. This is an indication of steps towards reaching the annual goals. They are sequential and relevant to the goal.
- Specific services required by the learner are also identified, for instance speech therapy, occupational therapy, and so on.
- A description of the extent to which the learner will participate in the mainstream education programme is also specified.
- The date for the initiation of the IEP, as well as the date for termination of the plan is stated. This is due to the fact that the life span of an IEP is not more than a year.
- Evaluation procedures and schedules for determining progress towards achieving goals are outlined. This is a statement of the extent to which goals have been reached, what has been learned and how well has it been learned.

#### 4.5.3 An example of an IEP

Name of learner: .....

Grade: .....

Date of birth: .....

Address: .....

Date of plan: .....

Related services needed	Beginning date	End date	Agency/ person responsible
Remedial teaching			
Psychological services and counselling			
Speech therapy			
Occupational therapy			
Nursing services			
Social Work services			
Police services (CPU)			
Church leaders (Pastors)			

Present placement: .....

Proposed placement: .....

Justification for placement: .....

.....

Present level of performance: .....

(including strengths .....

and weaknesses) .....

.....

Teaching strategies proposed: .....

.....

Extent of participation in ordinary class activities: .....

.....

.....

Evaluation criteria: .....

.....

.....

### PROGRAMME FOR INTERVENTION

Depending on the difficulties experienced by the learner, the IEP may look more or less as follows:

Area of need	Long term goal	Short term objectives	Services needed to meet the goals	Review comments
Mathematics	Addition	Sums up to 10	Resource room	
	Subtraction	Minus up to 10		
Reading	Phonics		Programme from SST	
	Sight words		Programme from SST	
Writing	Spelling		Programme from SST	
	Comprehension		Programme from SST	

#### 4.5.4 The IEP team

The team that participated in the drawing up of the plan needs to indicate in the table below their position e.g. teacher, nurse etc.

Team member	Position	Signature
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

#### 4.5.5 The role of the parent in the IEP

The role to be played by the parent in the education of a child can never be underestimated. This is especially so with learners who experience learning difficulties. The parent has to be involved at all stages of the planning of the IEP for the learner. They have to be involved immediately after the problem is identified by the classroom teacher. Furthermore, the SST also has to involve the parent whenever interventions are planned. There is therefore no way in which the parent can be excluded at such a crucial stage as the planning of the IEP. This will help the monitoring that has to take place at home and also with follow up discussions. The parent may report on what he/she has observed at home.

#### 4.5.6 Reportage

The classroom teacher needs to report on a regular basis to the SST regarding the progress the learner is making. This will serve to inform further intervention strategies. Form SST 3 may be used for this purpose.

#### 4.6 The role of the SST in the SAT

Seeing that SATs are constituted by Circular 12 of 1999, we can only talk about the role of the SST in the SAT and not the other way round.

The actual role of SSTs in the SATs is the contribution they have to make with regard to learners who have to be retained at the end of the academic year. The SST, with the assistance of the register teachers would have identified such learners in order to design an intervention programme. If the learner has not succeeded in achieving the desired outcomes, even after intervention, the SST will have to recommend for the learner to be retained, (form GDE 450) and even suggest future intervention strategies to help the learner achieve the outcomes. The SST also has to supply intervention programmes for those learners who proceed to the next grade, but needs support.

# FORMS TO BE USED

- SST 1: Referral to the SST**
- SST 2: The IEP**
- SST 3: Report to the SST**

**Referral to the SST**

Name of learner: .....  
Grade: .....  
Date of birth: .....  
Class teacher: .....  
Date of referral: .....

Brief background history: .....  
.....  
.....

Description of the difficulty as seen by the teacher: .....  
.....  
.....

Assistance undertaken by the teacher: .....  
.....  
.....

Outcome: .....  
.....  
.....

Assistance recommended by the phase teachers: .....  
.....  
.....

Outcome: .....  
.....  
.....

**The Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

Name of learner: .....

Grade: .....

Date of birth: .....

Address: .....

.....

Date of plan: .....

Related services needed	Beginning date	End date	Agency/ person responsible
Remedial teaching			
Psychological services and counselling			
Speech therapy			
Occupational therapy			
Nursing services			
Social Work services			
Police services (CPU)			
Church leaders (Pastors)			

Present placement: .....

Proposed placement: .....

Justification for placement: .....

.....

Present level of performance (including strengths and weaknesses):.....

.....

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Teaching strategies proposed: .....

Extent of participation in ordinary class activities: .....

Evaluation criteria: .....

**Programme for intervention**

Area of need	Long term goal	Short term objectives	Services needed to meet the goals	Review comments
Mathematics				
Reading				
Writing				

**The IEP team**

Team member	Position	Signature
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		

**Report on the progress of the learner since the implementation of the IEP**

Name of learner: .....  
Grade: .....  
Date of birth: .....  
Class teacher: .....  
Date of report: .....

General impressions by the teacher: .....  
.....  
.....

Improvements in reading: .....  
.....  
.....

Improvements in writing: .....  
.....  
.....

Improvements in mathematics: .....  
.....  
.....

Other improvements worth mentioning: .....  
.....  
.....  
.....

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