

**BARRIES TO LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN UMZIMKHULU, KWAZULU-NATAL  
PROVINCE**

**By**

**NOBUNTU HICSONIA TUSWA**

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**SUPERVISOR: Prof. L.D.N. TLALE**

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## DECLARATION

**Student no: 30123968**

I **NOBUNTU HICSONIA TUSWA** declare that this dissertation on Barriers to Learning in the Foundation Phase in UMzimkhulu KwaZulu-Natal Province is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SIGNATURE

(MRS N H TUSWA)

.....

DATE

## **ABSTRACT**

According to White Paper 6, national policy regarding the provision of education in South Africa has changed since 1994 with an emphasis on the accommodation of all learners in one education system. The Department of Education envisaged an education and training system that would promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centers of learning which would enable all learners to participate actively in education alongside their peers. The responsibility of the education system to develop and sustain learning is premised on the recognition that education is a fundamental right which extends equally to all learners.

A complex and dynamic relationship exists between the learner, the centre of learning, the broader education system and the social, political and economic context of which they are all part. These components play a key role in whether or not effective learning and development take place. There are factors that lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, which lead to learning breakdown or which prevent learners from accessing educational provision and have been conceptualized as barriers to learning and development.

The primary aim of this study was to investigate and describe the barriers faced by foundation phase learners in an inclusive classroom and to propose the support needed to address those barriers. A literature review provided the background to an empirical inquiry using a qualitative approach. The design type chosen for this study was phenomenology which requires the researcher to 'bracket' or put aside all prejudgments and collect data on how individuals make sense of a particular experience or situation.

From the population of 17 schools in UMzimkhulu zone, three Junior Secondary schools were purposively chosen as a sample and the target group was foundation phase educators data was collected by means of INTERVIEWS as well as DOCUMENTS and were inductively analysed. FIELD NOTES were taken during interviews and a tape recorder was used. The data was analysed by using a thematic content analysis. The main themes identified in interviews were, among others, support, challenges faced by foundation phase educators, expectations of foundation phase educators, perceptions of inclusive education and challenges of

inclusive education. The conclusion reached is that educators need more information and training about inclusive education.

**Keywords:**

Inclusive Education; Barriers to Learning; Full-service school; Support services; Ecosystemic theory

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late father, Mkeme Moffat Tentu, who travelled from the outskirts of the Eastern Cape to seek employment in Sasolburg for me to get a better education. Through his striving for my education, he then bought me an oxford dictionary when I started my junior secondary education which I think it has been one of my strong weapons for my success.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACE</b>	Advanced Certificate in Education
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>B.Ed Hons</b>	Honours in Bachelor of Education
<b>CEDU</b>	College of Education
<b>DBST</b>	District Based Support Team
<b>DET</b>	Department of Education and Training
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>FDE</b>	Further Diploma in Education
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immune Virus
<b>HOD</b>	Head of Division
<b>LTSM</b>	Learner Teacher Support Material
<b>NCESS</b>	National Committee on Education Support Services
<b>NCSNET</b>	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
<b>NECC</b>	National Education Crisis Committee
<b>OBE</b>	Outcome Based Education
<b>PTD</b>	Primary Teachers Diploma
<b>REC</b>	Research Ethics Committee
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

For many years in South Africa learners with special educational needs were separated from learners who do not display any form of disability (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:5). This resulted in two separate systems of education. Learners who were regarded as 'normal' were accommodated in regular schools and those with specific learning difficulties were accommodated in special schools. A medical model prevailed in the 1900s where learners with a specific disability were singled out and the origin of the difference was looked for within the learner and the professionals supporting this view tended to follow the 'find-what's wrong- and cure-it approach. Diagnosis was made for placement in a specialised environment and, inevitably, categorisation and labelling. The aim was to remove or alleviate the deficiencies from within the child.

In response to the afore-mentioned practices, the then Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal, appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of "special needs and support services" in education and training in South Africa (DoE, 2001:5). In the light of the findings, the joint report of the two bodies recommended that the education and training system should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society (DoE, 2001:5).

Based on the recommendations in the joint report, the Ministry released a consultative Paper - Department of Education Consultative Paper No. 1 on Special Education in 1999. In this a consultative Paper, the Ministry of Education outlined the commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in particular, for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and

training system to accommodate their learning needs.

South African education entered a new era from 1994 when democracy was declared. Associated with this socio-political shift, the importance of values such as equity, non-discrimination, liberty, respect and social justice, which have provided the framework for the Constitution (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:16), was emphasised. Thus inclusive education in South Africa has its origin in the rights perspective informed by liberal, critical and progressive democratic thought (Engelbrecht, 1999:7).

The findings and recommendations contained in the final report of the NCSNET and NCESS were taken seriously and informed the final policy document in inclusive education which is the Education White Paper 6 of 2001. In this document a framework is provided for establishing an inclusive education and training system. South Africa focused on the changes that are necessary for accommodating the full range of learning needs by acknowledging and respecting that all people can learn differently and have different learning needs which are equally valued (Swart et al., 2005:18).

In the White Paper 6 it is clearly stated that educators are the primary resources for achieving the goal of inclusive education which implies that educators will need to refine their knowledge and skills and, where necessary, develop new ones. Educators will therefore require support in the form of staff development, in-service education and training and the opportunity to collaborate with special schools, full service schools and other education support personnel within district support services (DoE, 2001:180).

Training of educators has been a priority for human resource development in the Education White Paper 6 for the better implementation of inclusive education. A knowledge gap has been noticed and has been witnessed by Ladrook (2009:131) that, though educators were expected to implement inclusive education in the classrooms, they faced challenges as they lacked training, resource provision and support from outside the school environment.

## **1.2 RATIONALE**

From the experience of teaching at Mfulamhle Junior Secondary school in Umzimkhulu in the province of KwaZulu-Natal as the Head of Department (HOD) in the Intermediate phase as well as from the experience of being a Senior Education Specialist at the Education Social Support Services section presently, the researcher has realised that there is a need to investigate what really prevent learners from progressing well in the foundation phase. Though Education White Paper 6 outlined that mainstream education priorities will include multi-level classroom instruction so that educators can prepare main lessons with variations that are responsive to individual learner needs, co-operative learning and curriculum enrichment, schools couldn't cope with these changes effectively. Challenges faced by foundation phase learners in the classrooms persisted which has led to the problem statement outlined below.

## **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The responsibility of the education system to develop and sustain learning is premised on the recognition that education is a fundamental right which extends equally to all learners. A complex and dynamic relationship exists between the learner, the centre of learning, the broader education system and the social, political and economic context of which they are all part. These components play a key role in whether effective learning and development takes place. There are factors which lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, which leads to learning breakdown or which prevents learners from accessing educational provision and these factors have been conceptualized as barriers to learning and development (DOE, 2002:130) The range of factors resulting in barriers to learning can be viewed on a dynamic interactive continuum from internal to external system factors. Barriers to learning can be the result of or result in an interaction between multiple systems, as every system is also a reaction (circular causality) (Landsberg & Nel, 2005: 17).

From the above discussions it became evident that the barriers faced by foundation phase learners in the classroom need to be investigated so as to provide the necessary support for both learners and educators in the foundation phase.

## **1.4 AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

Inclusive education in South Africa has its origin in a rights perspective informed by liberal, critical, and progressive democratic rights (Engelbrecht, 1999:7). The majority of learners and specifically learners experiencing barriers to learning were not only discriminated against along racial lines, but also by policy and legislation that separated normal learners in the mainstream from learners identified as having 'special needs' and requiring education in a 'special school'. From this point of view, the education system should be structured and must function in such a way that accommodates the diversity of learners (Landsberg & Nel, 2005:16-17).

The primary aim of this study is to investigate and describe the barriers faced by foundation phase learners in an inclusive classroom and to propose the support needed to address those barriers.

### **1.4.1 The secondary aims of research**

- To examine the understanding of inclusive education by educators in schools and
- To further develop strategies that can be used to assist both educators and learners to overcome barriers to learning.

### **1.4.2 Research questions**

The main research question:

- What are the barriers to learning that are faced by foundation phase learners in an inclusive classroom

The secondary research questions:

- Why do learners in the foundation phase not perform well in their learning?
- What are the possible factors causing their underperformance?
- What support should be provided to schools, educators and learners in the foundation phase so as to address barriers to learning?

The following are the anticipated outcomes for the study:

- Ability of educators to handle inclusive classroom while teaching and learning are taking place.

- For the educators to be able to address diversity in the classroom.
- Elimination of barriers to learning faced by foundation phase learners.

## 1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“A theoretical framework facilitates the dialogue between the literature and research study.” A theoretical framework leads to a specific *conceptual framework*, which can also be described as “an alignment of the key concepts of the study” (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2009: 26).

Various divergent theories have been proposed in an attempt to explain lifespan development and human behaviour. Two of the most popular theories on lifespan development include the ethological theory, which places emphasis on how biology shapes human behavior; and the ecological theory, which perceives the role that the environment plays a part in influencing the growth and development of a person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The study will use the ecological perspective of Bronfenbrenner because it explains the direct and indirect influences on a child’s life by referring to the various levels of environment or context that can have an influence on a person’s development (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:10). The ecological theory was formulated by Urie Bronfenbrenner, who theorized five environmental factors that influence the growth and development of a person. The ecological systems theory perceives lifespan development in the domain of a system of relationships that constitutes one’s environment. The theory has been perceived relevant to the study under investigation as it looks at a child’s development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment (Landsberg et al., 2005:11). The interaction between factors in the child’s maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment and the societal landscape fuels and steers his development. To study a child’s development, we must look not only at the child and his or her immediate environment but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well (Paquette & Ryan, 2001:1).

The five environmental factors that Urie Bronfenbrenner highlighted in the ecological systems theory that affect lifespan development are the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According

to Bronfenbrenner theory, each of the complex layers has an effect on one's lifespan development.

### **The Microsystem**

The microsystem encompasses the environment where the person lives and this system comprises family members, neighborhoods, religious communities, peers, and other entities that the person interacts with directly on a regular basis. The individual usually comes into contact with the microsystem in most instances involving social interactions. In the microsystem, the individual does not only observe things happen, but also plays an instrumental role in the creation and construction of the experiences that they are likely to have. Bronfenbrenner defined the microsystem as "a pattern of interpersonal relationships, roles and activities that a developing individual experiences in a particular face-to-face situation with specific material and physical entities including other people having unique belief systems and temperament and personality traits" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **The Mesosystem**

Penn (2005) perceives the mesosystem as the interactions existing between the microsystems and could comprise of school-related experiences at home and home-related experiences at school. Just like the microsystem, the person does not only observe things that happen but also plays a significant role in the creation of their experiences. The perspectives relating to the notion of the mesosystem have been unchanged, and have not been changed since its original definition by Bronfenbrenner. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the mesosystem encompasses the processes and linkages that occur at least one setting containing the developing individual; examples include the relations between schools and home, and workplace and school. Berk (2000, 23-42) perceives the mesosystem as a system of microsystems. On the other hand, Paquette and Ryan (2001) assert that the mesosystem generates the connections between the various microsystems of the developing individual. According to Penn (2005), the mesosystem comprises relationships that exist between the microsystem of a child and a young person. The most important relations include the relation between school interaction and home, kindergarten and home, and child clinic and home and mother. It is imperative to

assess if the factors that influence socialization have diverging or converging directions, which entails assessing whether the various microsystems support each other, or the individual views them as classing.

### **The Exosystem**

Paquette and Ryan (2001) perceive the exosystem as a system whereby the developing individual play no significant role in the construction of his/her own experiences; however, these experiences impose a direct effect on the microsystems that the person is part of. For instance, when a person loses his job, the job loss has a direct effect on the financial state of the family, which could in turn affect the daily lifestyle and domestic stress levels. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the exosystem comprises of the processes and linkages occurring between at least two settings, one of which does not typically contain the developing individual but the events in it have an effect on the processes taking place on other immediate settings that do not contain the individual.

### **The Macrosystem**

The macrosystem is the outermost level of the ecological systems theory and comprises of cultural values, resources, laws and customs. The manner in which the macrosystem prioritizes the needs of the developing individual usually has an impact on the support that the developing person receives at the inner environment levels. Penn (2005) asserts that society and culture have a significant influence on the macrosystem.

### **The Chronosystem**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory maintains that the environment is not static and does not affect people uniformly; rather, it is dynamic and ever changing. Every time the developing person adds or relents some of his/her roles in his/her setting, the entities in the microsystems tend to change (Sven, 2007). The contextual shifts, sometimes referred as ecological transitions, play an instrumental role during lifespan development; examples include starting education, working, retiring, and becoming a parent. Life changes can either stem from within the developing

individual because they choose, recognize and generate their own experiences and settings, or are imposed externally. How they respond to these ecological transitions depends on various factors such as their intellectual and physical capabilities, age, personality and environmental opportunities (Underdown, 2006).

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.6.1 Research paradigm**

A paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view. It addresses fundamental assumptions such as beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), the relationships between knower and known (epistemology) and assumptions about methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:15). Creswell also added that paradigms serve as lenses or organising principles by which reality is interpreted (2007:48).

In the choice of qualitative research, inquirers make certain assumptions. These assumptions consist of a stance towards the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research rhetoric and the methods used in the process (methodology) (Creswell, 2003:18-20). This study was conducted within the interpretative paradigm which refers to approaches that emphasise the meaningful nature of people's participation in social and cultural life (Creswell, 2009:8). According to Kandel (2007), it relates to a world that is interpreted through the mind.

### **1.6.2 Research approach**

This refers to the procedures used to collect and analyse data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:490). The research method used for this study was qualitative. This method was chosen because the research collected the data through a face-to-face interaction with the selected participants in a natural setting (Schumacher, 2006:311).

The interpretive paradigm was used to conduct this study to contextualise it with a qualitative approach. This means that the research paradigm backs up the research design of the study. A qualitative approach is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants, asks broad or general

questions, collects data consisting largely of words or texts from the participants, and describes, analyses and conducts an inquiry in a subjective manner (Creswell, 2008:46). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:320) claim that qualitative research is an accepted methodology for many important questions and makes significant contributions to both theory and practice.

Creswell (2007:50) describes qualitative research as research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied. Qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand (Creswell, 2007:3). In qualitative research, researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:3). The qualitative approach is fundamentally a descriptive form of research (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:188).

### **1.6.3 Research design**

The research design process in qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions that the inquirers make in deciding to undertake qualitative study. A research design is the plan according to which we obtain participants (subjects) and collect information from them (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:52). Fouche and Delport (2005:265) also added that research design is an option available to qualitative researchers to study certain phenomena according to certain formulae suitable for their specific research goal.

A phenomenological approach will be used in this study with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the barriers faced by foundation phase learners in the classroom. Phenomenology as described by Groenewalt (2004:11) is a capturing of rich descriptions of phenomena and their setting. The approach also aims at understanding and interpreting the meaning that subjects give to their everyday life (Fouche, 2005:270). In phenomenology the researcher identifies the essence of human experience concerning a phenomena as described by participants in a study (Creswell, 2003:15)

#### **1.6.4 Population and sampling**

The population is the full set of cases from which a sample is taken (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:53). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:129) affirm that a population is a group of elements or cases; it can be individuals, objects or events that conform to the specific criteria to which we intend to generalise the results of the research.

The population for this study was Umzimkhulu foundation phase educators selected because they have been regarded as information rich for this study and as participants that would generalise the results of the study.

Sampling is the selection of the research participants from an entire population and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and social processes to observe. In this study a purposive sampling technique was employed because it selects subjects that meet specific requirements of the study and participants were also selected based on the purpose of the study (Kumar, 2005:162). The sample for the study was five foundation phase educators and three foundation phase heads of departments from three selected schools in Umzimkhulu which gives a total of eight participants. A sample for a particular study is chosen as it is likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon under investigation as was the case with the above selected sample for the study. A sample can also specify how participants will be selected in a study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:119).

#### **1.7 DATA COLLECTION**

According to Creswell (2009:178-171) phenomenological data strategy is conducted to interview both individuals and focus groups and do document analysis. Interviews in the interpretive approach are seen as a means of trying to find out how people really feel about or experience particular things and the researcher will therefore try to create an environment of openness and trust within which the interviewee is able to express herself or himself authentically. Interviews as described by Kelly (2010:297) are a more natural form of interacting with people which gives us an opportunity to get to know them and understand how they think and feel. According to Creswell (2012:217) interviews are a process by which a researcher asks participants open ended questions.

The researcher used focus group interviews and semi-structured one-on-one interviews in the research study. Interview schedule was submitted to the College of Education (CEDU) Research Ethics Clearance (REC) committee for examination and approval.

Semi-structured one-one interviews were used to interview foundation phase heads of department because it was hoped they would have information concerning the management issues of the foundation phase and because they also members of the School Based Support Teams. The researcher also used focus group interviews to interview the foundation phase educators because they were regarded as having certain characteristics that relate to the topic of barriers to learning faced by foundation phase learners in the classroom.

Documents such as school policy, admission policy, assessment policy, school vision and mission statements and all-inclusive education policy documents were analysed.

## **1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW**

A literature review as explained by Creswell (2012:80) is defined as a written summary of journal articles, books and other documents that describe the past and the present state of information on the topic of a research study. Barbie (2010:506) alerts the researcher on how to do a literature review by advising that the researcher should organise the search of literature around the key concepts he/she wishes to study.

A literature review involves the process of identifying literature relevant to the topic of research, studying that literature and actually writing the review (Terre Blanche, 2006:31). The purpose of a literature review as outlined by Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 20) is to sharpen and deepen the theoretical framework of the research, familiarise the researcher with the latest developments in the area of research, to identify the gaps in knowledge as well as weaknesses in previous studies and to study advantages and disadvantages of research methods used by others.

## **1.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Greef, 2012:333). It involves preparing the data for analysis,

conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009:183). According to Mouton (1996:168), qualitative data analysis focuses on the following:

Understanding rather than explaining a phenomenon in a particular context or setting; accurately keeping up with the concepts the participants use to describe and understand phenomena; constructing stories and accounts that retain internal meaning and coherence of the phenomenon rather than breaking it into components and conceptualising valid accounts of social life and phenomenon rather than generalising explanations.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:367) describe qualitative data analysis as an inductive process where the researcher organizes data into categories, and identifies patterns and relationships among the categories. Inductive analysis means the researcher starts with specific data and moves from there to general categories and patterns (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:367). Nieuwenhuis (2007c:99) states that a qualitative data analysis is an inductive process that aims to determine how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon. He points out that the researcher should ensure that this process is credible and trustworthy, so that the reader would agree with the emerging reality that is described in the study (Nieuwenhuis 2007c:117).

Data analysis is the process of bringing order and structure to the mass of collected data. Merriam (in Engelbrecht et al., 2003:18) noted that data analysis is the process of making sense out of the information collected, which involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. Creswell (2003:115) identifies the steps of a data analysis model as beginning with the researcher reading all data, breaking down large bodies of the text into smaller meaningful units in the form of sentences or individual words, then perusing it several times to get a sense of what it contains. In the process the researcher writes in the margins, suggesting possible categories or interpretations, then identifies possible categories or themes or sub-themes, and classifies each piece of the data accordingly. Finally, data is integrated and summarised.

The following seven steps as described by Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101) and Creswell (2009: 195) were followed when analysing the data: transcription, reading and re-reading the data to become intimately familiar with the context, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and, finally, the writing of a report.

Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories and themes from the bottom-up by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. It involves the working back and forth between the themes and the database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes (Creswell, 2007:38-39). 5 foundation phase educators and 3 foundation phase head of Department were selected for the study based on the fact that they are able to contribute their information rich, and lived experienced

#### **1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH**

The trustworthiness of the research has been measured against the following questions as outlined by Marshall and Ressnan (in De Vos, 2010:345): How credible are the findings of the study? By what criteria can the findings be judged? Can the findings be transferred to the populations of the study? Can findings be replicated if the study were conducted with the same participants in the same context? Are the findings reflective of the subjects and the inquiry itself or a creation of the researcher's biases or prejudice?

A tape recorder was used to ensure that accurate data were obtained and also interviews were transcribed during the processes to familiarise the researcher with the data.

#### **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Ethical considerations, according to Welman (2005:181), are an important part of the research, especially when it involves human subjects. According to Newman (2006:412) ethical dilemmas can be resolved through the protection of the participants' confidentiality and abstaining from deception or involvement with deviants. A letter asking permission to conduct research in schools was written to the Department of Education after which permission was granted. Ethical behaviour is important in research as in any other field of human activity (Welman, Kruger and

Mitchell, 2005:181) Ethical consideration were observed throughout this project and come into play at three stages of a research project:

- When participants are recruited,
- During the intervention and/or the measurements procedure to which they are subjected, and
- In the release of the results obtained.

Letters to school principals were also written to schools where the researcher outlined the purpose of research and how the research would be conducted.

Participants were invited to take part in the research and confidentiality was outlined and the agreement form was also issued to focus group participants. Participant were furnished with consent forms to sign and return to the researcher. An ethical clearance certificate was granted to the researcher by the ethical clearance committee.

## **1.12 LIMITATIONS**

The researcher used three schools from one circuit in Umzimkhulu. The focus of study was on the foundation phase as the researcher considered that most barriers to learning experienced by learners have more impact in the foundation phase although barriers can have a negative impact in any phase of learning. Even in the foundation phase, the focus was only on grade 1 to grade 3 leaving behind grade R.

## **1.13 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **Learners**

The National Committee on Education Support Services (NCSNET) National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCESS) indicate that the term 'learner' refers to all learners ranging from early education through to adult education, but in this case the term 'learner' will refer to early education (Department of Education, 1997: vii).

### **Foundation phase**

This refers to grades R to 3 and includes learners from five to eight years of age. The foundation phase is a four-year phase, starting with grade R, the reception year.

The most important learning programmes in this phase are Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills (Mudau 2004:2)

## **Barriers**

A barrier is an obstacle or circumstance that keeps people or things apart (Prinsloo, 2005:2).

## **Barriers to learning**

Barriers to learning refer to difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or within the learner him/herself which prevent both the system and the learner needs from being met (Department of Education, 2005:6). According to Visser (2002:9) "... a barrier to learning is something that prevents the learner from benefiting from education." Burden (2000:9) and the Department of Education (2002:130) describe barriers to learning as those factors that lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, which leads to learning breakdown or which prevents learners from accessing educational provisions.

The Department of Education (DOE), (Directorate of Inclusive Education) supplies a comprehensive definition of 'barriers to learning' which refer to all the factors that hamper teaching and learning. These factors include:

- Factors relating to specific individuals, namely to *learners* (their specific learning needs and styles) and *educators* (personal factors as well as teaching approaches and attitudes).
- Different aspects of the curriculum, such as content, language of learning and teaching, organisation and management in the classroom, teaching and assessment methods.
- Unavailability of resources such as learning materials, equipment and time.
- The physical and psychosocial *environment* within which teaching and learning occurs. This refers to physical structures like buildings as well as management styles.
- Conditions relating to the learner's *home environment* including issues such as family dynamics and cultural and socio-economic background.
- Community and social dynamics which either support or hamper the teaching and learning process (Department of Education, 2005: 13, 14).

## **Inclusion**

Inclusion is about including everyone, regardless of ability, gender, language or disability, so that all learners can belong in school and have access to the educational outcomes that schools offer (Swart & Pettipher, 2004:4).

According to Hall (2002:32) "... inclusion is a principle that refers to the right of all learners to feel welcome in a supportive educational context." According to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), inclusion refers to the guiding principle that informs the framework accompanying the statement that schools should accommodate all learners, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.

## **Inclusive education**

Leyden and Miller (in Visser, 2002:10) define inclusive education as "... equal and optimal education of all learners within one school system. All learners are recognized as having diverse needs but are valued for their shared humanity. It is a system where all learners can be educated together and where personal diversity is seen to be enriching." According to the National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET), and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) (1997:11), inclusive education is defined as a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners.

## **Full-service school**

A school that is equipped (with required personnel and material) and supported by the Department of Education to provide for the full range of learning needs among all learners, irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning style and language.

## **1.14 CHAPTER DIVISION**

This dissertation has the following basic outline:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study, comprising the rationale, problem statement, aims of the study, research methodology and definition of terms giving an overall perspective of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review. In this chapter the researcher reviewed the literature on barriers to learning in South Africa and in other countries.

Chapter 3: Research methodology outlines the research methodology that is used, provides the population and sample selection and describes ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation. In this chapter, the researcher describes the findings from the collected data. The data was collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis. Collected data was analysed and findings presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Summary of chapters and summary of research results, recommendations, limitations and final conclusions.

## **1.15 CONCLUSION**

Foundation phase education forms the basis of all learning that is going to take place in the academic development of every human being. Barriers to learning in the foundation phase should be taken into cognisance because if nothing is done to address them (barriers), some learners may not experience the ability of actualizing themselves (learners) in the different avenues of life.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this section, relevant review is reviewed with the aim of providing the context for the research and justification for study. The chapter is structured as follows:

Historical and international perspective on inclusive education, Inclusion in Europe, Inclusion in Zimbabwe, Inclusion in South Africa, Barriers to learning, Types of barriers to learning that the learners encounter, How to overcome these barriers and Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem theory.

#### **2.2 INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

##### **2.2.1 International trends**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations: 1948) asserted that education was a basic human right. This was reaffirmed in 1989 by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that primary education should be made compulsory and available or free to all. The universal right to education and its extension to children, youth, and adults with disabilities was enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNICEF, 2004). Article 23 of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) covers the rights of disabled children and includes their right to education that is responsive to their individuality (United Nations, 2008:8).

In 1990 the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, culminated in the World Declaration on Education for All - Jomtien Declaration. Sponsored by a range of United Nations Organizations as well as the World Bank, the Jomtien Conference placed education on top of the international agenda and was an attempt to halt the decline of basic education which had taken place in the 1980s.

Ministers from 155 governments committed themselves at this conference to the principle of universal access to primary education. The conference made attainable, for the first time in history, the goal of basic education for all. It covered the need for education to meet basic learning needs, the development of society and the importance of education in equipping people to cope with the changes that are inevitable in time. It covered, too, the need for societies to develop and for countries to prosper through lifelong learning. It stressed the importance of the transmission and the enrichment of common cultural and moral values in the provision of identity and worth for both the individual and society. The paper expanded on the concepts of the vision for basic learning; universalizing access and promoting equity; focusing on learning for the development of society; broadening the means and scope of education; enhancing the environment for education as it holds a place in the greater framework of society; and the strengthening of partnerships both in the educational field and society. It provided for the requirements in order to bring about these concepts. Those at the conference made a commitment to achieve the goals set out in the declaration through the agreed Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (UNESCO: 2001). Jomtien marked the emergence of an international consensus that education is the most single important element in the fight against poverty, the empowerment of women, promotion of human rights and democracy, protection of the environment and control of population growth, all significant concerns in respect of sustainable development for the twenty-first century.

The World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO: 1990) focused on social barriers. This included the marginalized and those who were not receiving education, mostly women and girls. This was written against the background of problematic socio-economic factors, e.g., poverty, rapid population growth, war and civil strife, and crime which developing countries face. The participants at the World Conference on Education for All (UNESCO: 1990) reaffirmed the right of all people to education, with a commitment to co-operation between governments and organizations. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs. Education: Access and Quality Education (Salamanca, Spain, 1994) and was stated again at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, 2000).

This idea of inclusion was further supported by the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO: 2004) and proclaimed participation and equality for all.

In 1994 more than three hundred participants representing ninety-two governments and twenty-five international organizations met in Salamanca, Spain, to further the aim of the world conference in Jomtien in 1990 by considering what basic policy changes were needed to promote inclusive education, so that schools can serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs. This was to be effectively achieved by including all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and linguistic conditions: the disabled and gifted; street and working children; those from remote and nomadic populations; children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities; and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (UNESCO, 1994:6). Special efforts to encourage the participation of girls and women with disabilities in educational programmes were to be made (UNESCO, 1994:14).

### **2.2.2. United States**

In the Salamanca Statement, the rights of the child were taken into consideration more than before. The statement said that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs (UNESCO, 1994: viii). This called for adjustment and modification of curricula and teaching methodology in schools around the globe, as education services were to take into account the diversity of all children. It stated that children with special educational needs “must have access to regular schools which with an inclusive orientation would accommodate all children with child centered pedagogy”. This was to be the most effective way of doing away with discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities and building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, this would be cost effective for the entire education system. Governments were called upon to give the highest priority to make the education system and to adopt the principles of inclusion as a matter of law or policy. The Salamanca Statement of Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action (1994) was adopted by the conference.

The Framework for Action outlines new thinking on special needs education and guidelines for action at national, regional and international levels. It proclaims that the fundamental principle of inclusion is that all children must benefit and that all should learn together, where possible, and that ordinary schools should recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, while also having a continuum of support and services to match the needs. Inclusive schools are declared as the “most effective” at building solidarity between children with special needs and their peers. The Salamanca Statement had a powerful impact and influence in stimulating change on national and international levels, even in countries such as the United Kingdom which generally held little interest in international proclamations (Rix, Simmons, Nind & Sheehy, 2005:5). Dyson (1999:37) suggests that the Salamanca Statement maintains a “rights” based focus, overlooking areas that might have been better researched and debated. He argues that it is ambiguous, because it is the outcome of a political process and therefore subject to compromise between fundamentally different discourses. Research in the United Kingdom has revealed that there is a contrast between the ideological position of teachers and classroom practice (Rix et al., 2005:5).

The Salamanca Statement (1994) reaffirmed the purpose of the Jomtien World Conference of Education (1990) with an expanded vision and renewed commitment. The focus of this paper was on those excluded due to socio-economic factors and discrimination. The voices of those who originally sought to bring about inclusion for the disabled and those marginalized through disability had been heard. The world, including the millions who had been excluded from education in previous years as a result of societal circumstances into which they were born, was looking at a greater picture. Those disadvantaged through political, cultural and socio-economic circumstances were given significant attention.

At the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 the progress towards inclusive education in all countries was reviewed. The Dakar Framework is a collective commitment to action. Governments had an obligation to ensure that Education for All (EFA) goals and targets were reached and sustained. The forum laid emphasis on the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, including working children; remote rural dwellers; nomads; ethnic and linguistic minorities; children,

young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs. The task was to discuss a concrete means of action that might take education development forward, and this was done in respect of a number of themes which outlined clear guidelines for all stakeholders and affirmed the proactive role of UNESCO. Education was seen as having a key role in building lasting peace and stability, and generating better standards of living. Equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes would ensure that the learning needs of all people are met.

The goal of the World Education Forum and in turn the Dakar Framework (2000) is to achieve 'education for all' by 2015. This would be achieved when all nations act upon their obligation to establish or reform public education systems so that they are accessible to, and meet the needs of, individuals with disabilities (UNESCO, 2007:1). The goal would be considered achieved when all nations recognize that the universal right to education extends to individuals with disabilities, and when all nations act upon their obligation to establish or reform public education systems that are accessible to, and meet the needs of, these people.

It was an imperative to look back at educational development and change in Africa and to discuss concrete means of action that may take education development forward. Some issues addressed were the aspects of achieving universal completion of primary schooling, with the focus on policy and interventions; achieving gender parity in basic education; and interventions in the education sector to help address realities of HIV/AIDS. Inclusion in Africa was now looked at from an African perspective.

### **2.2.3 Inclusion in Europe**

The history of special education in Europe began in the eighteenth century with the education of deaf children. In 1880, compulsory education was introduced in England and France followed suit in 1882 (Armstrong, 2003:65). This strategic move by authorities formed the foundation for soon to follow policy structures in the provision of special education.

An organised and structured system of special education was born, with the dual intention of relieving ordinary schools of difficult learners and catering for the special needs of these learners. In France, the principles of “liberty, equality and fraternity” which emerged during the French Revolution also emerged in the education system of the time. One of the principles on which state education in France was based was the right to social inclusion, which implies that no child should be excluded from formal education because of religion, nationality or gender. Yet learners were excluded due to disabilities and learning difficulties (Armstrong, 2003:65; Rix et al., 2004:5).

Between 1950 and 1970 there was growth in the economy of Europe and special education thrived in all its facets, rendering care, remediation, medical aid, education, training and control. A slide in the economy after 1970 raised the issue of integration and debate around it continued into the 1980s, especially after the 1981 Education Act was enacted in England and the 1975 *Loi d’Orientation en Faveur des Personnes Handicapees* was passed in France. These laws asserted “the right of access to social integration of all children, young people and adults with physical, sensory or mental disabilities” (Armstrong, 2003:67). The number of special schools in England was reduced although the total number of children placed in these segregated schools did not drop significantly. In France, the 1989 *Loi Jospin* (the Framework Law on Education) stated that it is the right of all children (of whom many were placed in institutions outside the education system) to be allowed to attend ordinary school “as far as possible” (Armstrong, 2003:69; Allan, 2003; Smith & Polloway, 2008).

It is clear from these developments that social attitudes shifted from intolerance to a more caring stance and an overall acceptance that disabled children should be included in ordinary education. But despite the legislation mentioned above (and the human rights principles on which it was founded), there still exists a significant and complex network of special schools and institutions in England and France. The current curriculum and assessment policies in ordinary schools are factors inhibiting the full inclusion of disabled learners and learners with learning problems in mainstream education.

One of the main challenges to a fully inclusive system in France is the separate development of education and practices concerned with health and disability. The Social Affairs Commission report of July 2002 stated that “a quarter of children and young people with a physical disability and 8% of children with a sensory disability do not attend school”. The report also criticized inaccessibility to public transport, buildings, workplaces and schools (Armstrong, 2003:67; Allan, 2003).

Teacher education for inclusion in the European context states that teachers have a key role to play in preparing pupils to take their place in society and in the world of work. It further pointed out that teachers in particular need the skills necessary to perform many duties which include the following:

- Identify the specific needs of each individual learner, and respond to them by deploying a wide range of teaching strategies;
- Support the development of young people into fully autonomous lifelong learners;
- Help young people to acquire the competences listed in the European Reference Framework of Key Competences;
- Work in multicultural settings (including an understanding of the value of diversity, and respect for difference) and
- Work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents and the wider community.

Further to this, in the Conclusions of the European Council on improving the quality of teacher education (15/11/2007), ministers responsible for education agreed amongst other things, that teachers should:

- Possess pedagogical skills as well as specialist knowledge of their subjects;
- Have access to effective early career support programmes at the start of their career;
- Have sufficient incentives throughout their careers to review their learning needs and to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence;
- Be able to teach key competences and to teach effectively in heterogeneous classes;
- Engage in reflective practice and research and

- Be autonomous learners in their own career-long professional development.

Training was not only organised in disability-oriented streams but rather aimed at providing teachers with a wide variety of knowledge and skills that they can apply in various settings and situations (Savolainen, 2009). Strategies of addressing barriers to learning in Europe focussed mainly on educators who are the key implementers of inclusive education in the education in equipping them (educators) with necessary knowledge and skills to deal with barriers to learning.

## **2.3 AFRICAN SITUATION**

### **2.3.1 Inclusion in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe has a well-developed tradition of special needs education based on the special school and integration concepts, the most common integration practices being those that use the resources rooms (e.g. visual impairment), self-contained integration units (e.g. hearing impairment) and special classes with partial integration (e.g. mental disabilities) (Barton & Armstrong, 2007:124).

The special needs education concept is based on the acknowledgement that there are two clearly distinguished groups of students in the school systems: normal students and special students. The normal students require a normal teacher, normal school, normal curricular and normal pedagogy. On the other hand, the special student requires a special teacher, special school, special pedagogy & special curricula. The focus in special education is the child with disabilities and not the system of education (Barton & Armstrong 2007:125-126).

The concept of integration suggests bringing the students with disabilities into the mainstream of the school system so that they learn together with regular students. The focus is on changing the student with disabilities to fit into the mainstream school system and is assisted to adapt to the system by provision of back up support.

### **2.3.2 South African context**

The pre-1994 struggle, "...took place on the national terrain of developed capitalist economy, in which the black majority were subjected to simultaneous exclusion

(racial) and inclusion (as consumers and as workers, or future workers, or the reproducers of cheap labour-power)” (Pieterse & Meintjies, 2004:19). One might question the use of the term ‘inclusion’ used in this statement, since in terms of the definition given for inclusion in this document, a more appropriate term may be ‘integration’. Racial division between black and white people existed in the workplace as well as in working conditions, social life and salaries and wages. Van Donk & Pieterse mentioned that other indicators of the apartheid legacy in 1994 were the discrepancies in respect of income, housing and basic services, health, unemployment and economic control and share of wealth (Pieterse & Meintjies, 2004:39).

In the period 1989-1990, the total expenditure on African education was R1 952 284 000 and on white education R4 392 681 000 (Christie, 1992:144). The discrepancies in education were significant and during the 1980s black education went through a crisis which emerged from the seeds of discontent in the 1950s (Christie, 1992:228). In 1985 there was a state of emergency which, according to the sociologist, Wolpe, was a result of the unstable balance of power in South Africa (Christie, 1992:274).

The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was formed in 1986 and sought to address the boycott by black scholars of schools. The ideas and strategies of People’s Education began to take shape as black scholars worked towards transformation in the Bantu schools through Bantu initiatives. The concept of People’s Education, as a process, was linked to People’s Power. According to Eric Molobi, Executive Director of the NECC, the concept of ‘People’s Power’ was at the heart of the struggle for control over forces, structures and institutions that governed blacks’ lives and led to the struggle for democracy in South Africa (Christie, 1992:279-281). The NECC was banned and People’s Education material was banned from the Department of Education and Training (DET) schools before it was developed (Christie, 1992: 287-290).

Resistance to apartheid education, which taught a different curriculum to blacks from the one which was taught to whites, had, for the most part, less qualified teachers, continued throughout 1988 with over nine hundred schools being affected by boycotts. The DET instituted regulations to provide control of student

demonstrations. In the white schools there was Eurocentric education, which was seen as elitist and which prepared scholars for academic progress or for elitist positions in trade and industry; black education prepared scholars for work as labourers.

At the People's Education workshop held in July 1990, Pallo Jordan of the African National Congress (ANC) made a number of points about the future education system in South Africa. This speech explored the links between a democratic education system and society in future. In equipping individuals to live as equals - nationally and internationally - through the appropriate response to diversity, education can become a vehicle for uplifting the working class and preparing all South Africans to take their place in a productive economy (Christie, 1992:296-297). This speech heralded the introduction of a newly structured education system.

In Johannesburg, South Africa, on 6 December, 1999, President Thabo Mbeki, in his opening speech at the Conference on Education for African Renaissance in the Twenty-first Century, spoke of the 21st century as a truly African century, in which social and economic progress of the African people in a century of durable peace and sustained development in Africa was dependent on the success of the education system (UNESCO: 2007). Though the thinking may be global in terms of what inclusion means, in Africa actions have to be addressed in terms of local circumstances, which include low adult literacy; gender inequality; early school dropout; refugees and internally displaced people; working children; ethnic minorities; those affected by HIV/AIDS; conflict and other emergencies which have spawned an increasing number of orphans and the overcrowding of schools (UNESCO: 2007).

President Mbeki affirmed the values of previous international protocols on education for all in this speech, that education should be the collective responsibility of government, civil society and development partners, at all levels, to create dynamic learning organizations with a clear mission for social, economic and cultural development. The education and training sector should become an integrated system managing knowledge and human resources development. The major areas of focus at this discussion were: access and equity; quality and relevance; and

capacity building and partnerships with the overall aim of an education system providing lifelong learning opportunities to all. The forum dealt with the awareness and the determining of strategies for addressing local needs. In South Africa there were important local responses to the international developments in the field of inclusive education. These included overcoming social differentiation and institutional fragmentation in education.

### **2.3.2.1 Transformation in 1994**

In 1994 South Africa held its first democratic election and the transformation of society commenced formally (Skuy, Youong, Ajam, Fridjhon, & Lomofsky, 2001:2). South Africans looked forward to an egalitarian lifestyle with better living conditions, better education and better opportunities for employment. The new Constitution, Act 108 (DoE, 1996), possibly one of the most supportive state based instruments of transformation the world has ever seen, conveys strong assertions of social, economic and cultural rights (Kharam in Pieterse and Meintjies, 2004:124). Public policy and its outcomes are measured against the Bill of Rights. The continuing goal of South Africa is for a better life. The new government of 1994 had to effect transformation through the creation of a new political order, economic growth, industrial transformation and national unity.

### **2.3.2.2. The period after 1994**

Since 1994 South Africa has experienced the strongest sustained economic growth in its history. The GDP grew by 3.5% per annum from 1994 through to 2006, which coupled with a 1.6% population growth rate has seen the South African income per capita increasing by 1.8% per annum for the same period (South African Reserve Bank, I-Net Bridge, 2007). However, poverty remains widespread as many find themselves in continuing patterns of unemployment. Foreign direct investment is low and the skills shortage has no direct solution. Although redistribution of wealth to the poor and to black people has taken place and economic empowerment has been implemented as government policy, poor households and communities often have difficulty sustaining these newly acquired resources. Long-standing and intractable social problems such as unemployment, unequal income distribution, the HIV/Aids pandemic, endemic violence, political uncertainty and continued social segregation

are problems which affect South Africans. As South Africa moves from a racially segregated population to a democratic one, the population currently continues as a product of history, of differing values and one which holds memories of the struggle for equitable inclusion. Whilst South Africans look towards the future, they hold differing experiences, past and present, all of which impact on the perception of transformation as a process, as it continues today.

### **2.3.2.3. A radical change in education**

Both international and national patterns and trends regarding disability have undergone major shifts which have influenced the movement towards inclusive education in South Africa to a large extent. Von Donk and Pieterse (in Pieterse & Meintjies, 2004:39) state that in South Africa, under the old dispensation, and in particular for those living in rural areas, the rate of illiteracy was highest among the African population, and as much as sixty-one per cent. In 1994 there were significant discrepancies between the pass rate of white and black school leavers. Across the country, learner: teacher ratios showed racial and spatial disparities (Von Donk & Pieterse in Pieterse & Meintjies, 2004:39). With regard to addressing of special needs of learners in education, there were wide disparities. Hartley (1997:3) says that education is always set within the realms of the cultural, academic, economic and political context; never above them but always of them.

As part of the far reaching political, social and economic changes in South Africa aimed at an egalitarian, viable and healthy society, the new political dispensation replaced the previous education policy with a constructivist, Outcomes Based Education (OBE) approach (Skuy et al., 2001:2). Outcomes Based Education emerged from the need to emphasize common citizenship and nationhood. The outcomes based curriculum allows for realization of the values and principles held by the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) founded on a democratic state and common citizenship, holding the values of human dignity, rights and freedom. It sets out a constitutionally based building framework for national and provincial legislative action in the field of education. OBE provides for non-discriminatory basic and adult education for all. It provides a shift from an elite, divided system which contributed towards social inequality to a more open system with more permeable boundaries. It

has a single National Qualifications Framework, with multiple learning pathways and is characterized by the growth of new trans-disciplinary subjects and programmes.

The outcomes based curriculum (Curriculum 2005) was launched in 1997 followed later by a revised version, the National Curriculum Statement. The curriculum, as initially introduced, was not easily received and implemented by educators. Kraak (in Gultig, 2002:156) described it as elaborate, complex and bureaucratic. The Revised National Curriculum is more easily implemented but remains the subject of debate amongst educators who have difficulty understanding a competence based curriculum as they had taught for many years using a curriculum which was systemic and contained regulatory features with discrete subjects and disciplines. The new curriculum is intended to be the vehicle for inclusive education.

In October 1996, the Ministry of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of special needs and support services in education in South Africa. A joint report on the findings of these two bodies was presented to the Minister of Education in November 1997, and the final report was published by the Department of Education in February 1998 for public comment and advice. In the light of these findings, the joint report of the two bodies recommended that the education and training system should promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning that would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society (Department of Education, 2001:5).

Based on these reports, finding and recommendations, Consultative Paper I on Special Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System was released by the Ministry of Education in August 1999 (Department of Education, 2001:5).

All these documents informed the development of Education White Paper 6, which argues for the development of an inclusive education system. This White Paper outlined the Ministry of Education's commitment to the provision of educational opportunities in particular for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out of learning because

of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate their learning needs.

Inclusive education calls for a changed paradigm of thinking in order to accept the changes in education. In South Africa, inclusive education and training is clearly stated as, *inter alia*, education that acknowledges that all children and youth can learn and all children and youth need support. The education structures, systems and methodologies should be enabled to meet the needs of all children. Differences in children whether due to age, gender, ethnics, languages, class, disabilities, HIV/AIDS or other infectious diseases should be acknowledged? Inclusive education acknowledges the role, responsibility and potential for community and family in settings both formal and informal in support of all learners. Attitudes, curriculum, teaching methods and environment should change in order to meet the diversity of learners. Maximizing the participation of all learners in the culture and curriculum of education institutions and the identifying and minimizing of barriers to learning are part of the defining principles of education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001:17).

In the South African education, system the principle is still preached and emphasized to be practiced by most teachers in schools. Some have not yet understood the significance and far reaching effects of global developments which bring about change in education. Other educators have not been empowered to meet the new political initiative for inclusive schools introduced since 1994

## **2.4. BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

### **2.4.1 What are barriers to learning and development?**

Barriers to learning as explained by Visser (2002:9) are those things that prevent the learner from benefiting from education. The Department of Education (2007:130-31) describes them as those factors that lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity or that prevent learners from accessing educational provision.

The NCSNET and NCESS (1997:18) states that learning breakdown and exclusion occur when the learning needs of a learner are not met as a result of barriers to

learning and development. A learning disability may prevent learning from taking place due to the lack of assistive technological devices.

#### **2.4.2. Types of barriers to learning that the learners encounter**

Prinsloo (2001:345) mentioned that there are learners whose education requires additional planning and modification in order to assist them to learn and they are described as those learners who experience barriers to learning.

Some barriers, according to Bothma, Gravett and Swart (2000:201), originate from deficits within the system that may be unable to meet or adapt to the needs of specific learners. Hence the comments of Bothma et al. (2000:201) and Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, and Pettipher (2002:177) when they endorse the fact that "...South Africa has now moved from the learner having to adjust to the demands of the system to a system that needs to be flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs of all the learners as inclusively as possible". According to the Department of Education, "...if the system fails to meet the different needs of a wide range of learners or if a problem arises in any of these components, the learners or education system may be prevented from being able to engage in or sustain an ideal process of learning" (2002:130). For Visser (2002:9), barriers to learning prevent the learner from benefiting from education, and can be located within the learner, the school, or the education system itself (South Africa, 2002:39). This study is based on the external or extrinsic barriers, namely those factors that arise outside the learner but prevent him or her from benefitting from learning. These factors have to do with family and its cultural, social and economic context, the school and education system, and society at large.

##### **2.4.2.1 Socio economic factors**

As effective learning is fundamentally influenced by the availability of educational resources to meet the needs of society, socio-economic disadvantages have had a negative effect on education. Poverty, underdevelopment and lack of basic services are contributors to learning breakdowns. Access to basic services is a great problem where these are sparse or non-existent, or when learners, especially those with disabilities, are unable to reach learning centres due to lack of transport and/or

inferior or even absent roads. Poor living conditions, undernourishment, lack of proper housing and unemployment have a negative impact on all learners. Conditions may arise within the social, economic and political environment in which learners live in dysfunctional families, or even have to suffer sexual and physical abuse, civil war, violence and crime, or chronic illnesses, including HIV/AIDS. Baxen and Breidlid (2004:11) wrote of the social, economic and political factors that are threatening the physical and emotional wellbeing and development of learners with special educational needs. These socio-economic factors are still prevalent in most areas, especially in rural areas of South Africa. It is essential that the connection between the socio- economic conditions and education provision in any society be acknowledged. These factors are unpacked below:

### **Poverty and underdevelopment**

For learners, the most obvious result of poverty often caused by unemployment and other economic inequalities is the inability of the family to meet the basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. Learners from families where no one is working are more likely to drop out from schools and go to work to supplement the family income. Poverty-stricken communities are usually poorly resourced communities with limited educational facilities, overcrowded classroom, inadequately trained staff and inadequate teaching and learning material (Department of Education, 2001:133).

The Department of Education is of the opinion that under-nourishment leads to a lack of concentration and a range of other symptoms and that affects the ability of the learner to engage effectively in the learning process. Learners who go to school without food experience emotional problems which affect learning and development. Therefore, the foundation phase teachers should be informed of intervention strategies that involve stimulation, environment and play to compensate for the previous deprivations regarding reading, spatial development and sensory experiences (Mphahlele, 2005:14).

### **Socio-economic barriers**

There is a relationship between education and the socio-economic conditions in each and every society (Department of Education, 2002:131). The NCSNET/NCESS (1997:12) is of the opinion that “effective learning is fundamentally influenced by the

availability of additional resources to meet the needs of society”.

South Africa, according to the Department of Education (2002:131), is one of countries that lack centres of learning and other facilities which can help to meet the educational needs of the society. Most schools within the researcher’s sampled schools are underdeveloped and lack teaching aids. These conditions are causing barriers to learning and hinder the process of teaching and learning in schools.

This phenomenon reiterates the opinion expressed by Kotele (2000:47) when commenting that South Africa and Lesotho are two countries which still have many limitations that retard the successful inclusive educational system, for instance, the lack of teaching and human resources, lack of funds, lack of support and lack of appropriate transportation. Inadequacies of those resources in our country may be the result of the apartheid policies and practices, which used to discriminate against people on grounds such as disabilities, race and gender. Some rural and many black urban schools are underdeveloped, and lack teaching aids and well qualified educators (Mpya, 2007:35).

#### **Lack of access to basic services**

According to Mudau (2004:50) learners in rural areas are unable to reach the centres of learning because transport facilities are unavailable to them due to roads being poorly developed and maintained making centres of learning inaccessible particularly to those who use wheelchairs.

One of the most significant barriers to learning is the inability of learners to access the educational provision that does exist and their inability to access other services, which contribute to the learning process (Department of Education, 2002:132). According to the NCSNET/NCESS (1997:13), lack of early intervention facilities and services may lead to the learner’s increased impairment and decrease the learner’ capacity to learn.

#### **Lack of financial resources**

Wildeman and Nomdo (2007:11) are of the opinion that the White Paper 6 fails to acknowledge that real resources are needed to implement inclusive education. Schools are under pressure to deliver better infrastructure facilities for their learners and these infrastructures include the buildings, the pedagogic resources as well as the ratio of educator to class size. Engelbrecht (2004:21) stresses that where socio-

economic related factors contribute to a high teacher-learner ration, there are text book and other resource shortages with limited provision for school and district based educational psychologist support.

### **Factors which place learners at risk**

Learning can be hindered due to the social, economic and political environment in which the learner lives and that can have a negative impact on the learner's social and emotional well-being. A child who is either physically or emotionally abused can have a problem to cope in learning and that can result in the learner missing school and eventually dropping out of the system (Department of Education, 2002:134).

Bridgemohan (2002:147) indicates that South Africa has the fastest growing HIV/AIDS epidemic rate of people infected. Children whose parents are infected with HIV/AIDS are being mocked by their peers and that can result in them dropping out of school (Mpya, 2007:37). Some may even drop out of school and seek for jobs so as to support their siblings as they become orphaned due to HIV/AIDS and become heads of their families.

Alcohol and drug abuse affects the nervous system and can interfere with intellectual and thought processes, perception, sensory motor co-ordination and thinking speed can be impaired as well as individual normal functioning (Gouws et al., 2000:173).

### **Inaccessible and unsafe built environment**

A large number of South African learning centres are physically inaccessible to some learners as they were not built to accommodate the physically disabled learners who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices, which specifically need ramps instead of stairs (Department of Education, 2002:140). Mpya stresses that an inclusive classroom should consider the sizes of desks to be used and should have enough space to cater for all learners who use devices so as to accommodate diversity.

#### **2.4.2.2 Negative attitudes and stereotyping of differences**

Baron and Byrne (in Swart et al., 2002:177) describe attitudes as internal representations of various aspects of the social or physical world- representation containing effective reactions to the attitude object and wide range of cognitions

about it (thoughts, beliefs, judgments). Attitude as explained by Mudau (2004:2) is an obstacle or circumstance that keeps people or things apart. The Department of Education (2002:136) indicates that in the past years learners used to be labelled as slow learners or as learners with special educational needs. As a result, they became excluded or placed in a particular learning environment, not because they belonged there but due to the requirements and standards set by the system of the ruling government. Mainstream teachers are of the opinion that they do not possess adequate training skills, time or support networks to ensure quality education for all (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff & Pettipher, 2002:178).

Cook (2004:316) found that educators adjusted expectations for learners “with severe or obvious disabilities, and therefore develop relatively low accountability and concern about the academic and behavioral performance of these students. Lomofsky (Engelbrecht et al., 2003:71) mentions that international research suggests that teachers with little experience of people with disabilities are likely to have negative attitudes to inclusion and findings indicate that experience tends to change attitude.

The report of NCSNET/NCESS says that negative and harmful attitudes towards difference in our society remain a critical barrier to learning and development (1997:15) and these attitudes manifest themselves in different ways which may include labels and discriminatory attitudes. Negative attitudes and labelling may, according to the NCSNET/NCESS (1997:15), be driven by fear from lack of awareness about the particular needs of learners or potential barriers which they face.

The democratic government according to (Mpya, 2007:37) brought about changes in the lives of many South Africans. The education system, social system and judicial system had to change their policies and practices to conform to democracy. The old system used to discriminate against people according to their race, colour, gender, or disability).

### **2.4.2.3. Inflexible curriculum**

If the curriculum is not flexible it can cause problems for learners because it will not meet their diverse needs (Mpya, 2007:39). Barriers to learning arise from different aspects of the curriculum such as: the content, the language or medium of instructions, how the classroom or lecture is organized and managed, the methods and processes used in teaching, the pace of teaching and the time available to complete the curriculum, the learning material and equipment that is used, learner educator ratio and how learning is assessed (Department of Education, 2001:19).

Mudau (2004:55) is of the opinion that the inflexible curriculum is detrimental to the learning and development of learners, the pace at which teaching is facilitated may disadvantage both slow and learners with high levels of ability. The Department of Education (2002:138) states that what is taught or the subject which learners are able to choose may limit the learner's knowledge base or fail to develop the intellectual and emotional capacities of the learner.

The inaccessibility to learning materials and educators who lack in-service training in managing the diverse needs of learners in a classroom can contribute to learning problems. The Department of Education (2002:138) indicates that blind learners are unable to access education if braille facilities and other equipment are unavailable or if skilled personnel to teach Braille and know-how to use the audio equipment are also unavailable.

Assessment processes are often inflexible and designed to assess only particular kinds of knowledge and the aspect of learning such as the amount of information that can be memorized rather than the learner's understanding of the concept involved (Department of Education, 2002:139). Classrooms in Umzimkhulu schools are too big which results in the inability of educators to attend to learners' individual learning needs. Large classes hinder educators' implementation of individual, pair and group teaching methods leaving opportunities only for whole class teaching. This further hampers identification of individual learner problems and learner progression at their own individual pace.

#### **2.4.2.4. Lack of parental recognition and involvement**

The active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning process according to the Department of Education (2002:140) is central to effective learning and development acknowledging them as the primary care-givers of their children and being the central resource to the education system. If parents are not involved in the learning of their children and their participation not facilitated and encouraged, effective learning is threatened and hindered because their children do not receive the necessary support to achieve their goals from the side of their parents. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker, and Engelbrecht (2003:42) state that barriers to learning and development can also be a result of social issues, e.g. parents who are illiterate, have HIV/ AIDS, abuse alcohol, are poor and unemployed and those who are ashamed of their children because of disabilities.

The Department of Education (2002:140) mentioned that if parents and community at large could be well informed about their importance in this course of education, they would be involved and take full responsibility in supporting their children. Engelbrecht et al. (1999:55) pointed that the new policies and legislation in South Africa support the optimal involvement of parents in the education of their children and these policies emphasise that parents should be involved in the process of identifying barriers and means to overcome them. Also parents can play a major role in providing an extra hand where teacher need additional support in the school or classroom.

Many parents in South Africa lack the knowledge and insight of proactive involvement in the education of their children. The White Paper 6 of 2001 states that the active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning process is fundamental to effective learning and development. Parents are a central resource as primary care givers of their children in the education system. Parents are considered partners with teachers and other professionals in ensuring appropriate education for children (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001:462).

#### **2.4.2.5. Disability**

Disability as described by Burden (2000:29) is the social restriction and constraints (barriers) imposed on the person with impairments that will hinder his or her participation. The Department of Education concurs with Burden that, for most learners with disabilities, learning breakdown and exclusion occurs when their particular learning needs are not met as a result of barriers in the learning environment or broader society which handicap the learners and prevent effective learning from taking place and prevent the learner from engaging continuously in structured learning and development. Some learners also experience learning breakdown due to intrinsic, cognitive or learning difficulties in areas such as in acquiring skills in literacy or numeracy or in the organization or management of their own learning.

The Department of Education (2002:141) mentions “that with disabilities, learners impairments are defined as differences in body structures (physical) for instance visual and hearing impairments, and in body function (psychological) such as chronic health conditions, which are manifested as a significant variation from established statistical norms.” Burden (2000:29) also stresses that people should always try to address people with disability by making a reference to the person first, then the disability, for example ‘a person with a disability’ rather than ‘a disabled person’.

#### **2.4.2.6. Inappropriate language and communication**

Other barriers which arise from the curriculum are those resulting from the medium of teaching and learning used in the school where teaching and learning for many learners takes place through a language which is not their first language (Department of Education, 2002:139). Hugo (2008:65) points out that though English can be a medium of instruction in schools, it is also the teacher’s second language which can result in the language of teaching and learning becoming a problem, often causing barriers to learning. A learner, however, whose mother tongue is not English and who receives instruction through the medium of English may struggle with his or her learning in the classroom (Lessing & Mahabeer, 2007:140).

Some learners who are deaf and being placed in the mainstream where teachers do not understand sign language are being disadvantaged in their learning because they have to learn through the so called “signed Xhosa or English” resulting in it causing a barriers in their learning as it is not the proper or the official language. Even learners who are dumb experience many barriers in their learning and they even find themselves being excluded from learning, resulting in them being drop-outs because of the unavailability of the Augmentative and Alternative Communication Strategies in the school (Mpya, 2007:41).

Learners in UMzimkhulu circuit grew up in bilingual contexts. The home language which is Xhosa is their major tool of communication in domains covering interactions, and they use the second language which is English to a minimal extent in situations where important topics are discussed and situations where conversation and linguistic requirements exceed their daily language use.

#### **2.4.2.7 Inadequate policies and legislation**

Some barriers to learning can stem from the government legislation and policy that regulates and directs the education system. This is especially true in cases where such regulations fail to shield learners from discriminatory practices (Department of Education, 1997:16)

Many of the barriers to learning and development discussed above do not merely arise from problems occurring in the education system or in the wider society. It is often policy and legislation governing the education system and regulating the society which directly or indirectly facilitate the existence of such barriers. Where such legislation or policy fails to protect learners from discrimination or perpetuates particular inequalities, it directly contributes to the existence or maintenance of such barriers. For example policy which is inflexible regarding issues such as age limits may prevent learners from being able to enter or continue in the education system, thus leading to exclusion. Similarly, legislation which fails to protect learners from discrimination and fails to provide for minimum standards which accommodate diversity allows for individual practices which may inhibit learner development or lead to provision which is inadequate and inappropriate for the needs which exist.

Despite the best intentions of government, however, the lack of protective legislation and policy hampers the development of an Inclusive Education and training system. The basic centralization of the education system has left a legacy of restrictive centralized control which inhibits change and initiative. Brandon (2006:39) claims that legal responsibility for decisions tends to be located at the highest level and the focus of management remains oriented towards employees complying with rules rather than on ensuring quality service delivery. Nor is there an accurate picture of the number of learners excluded from the school system, including those who have never attended school or who have dropped out. There is no support available for those learners who are outside the system, and existing provision after primary school is inadequate to meet the needs. The provision and the distribution of resources reflect the past inequalities of the apartheid. Brandon (2006:42) argues that learners who have historically faced barriers to learning have had few opportunities for further education at tertiary level.

#### **2.4.2.8 Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support**

Inappropriate support and intervention may be centred on problems in the learner instead of the system where the barrier may possibly exist, and the intervention may actually aggravate the learning breakdown. Inadequate skills and knowledge in educators and support personnel, leads to an inability and fear to deal with a diverse range of learner needs (Department of Education, 1997:16). Particular enabling mechanisms and processes are needed to support diversity and enable the education system, including educators and learners, to minimise, remove and prevent barriers which may exist or arise. Where no provision exists for such services, barriers cannot be overcome and needs cannot be met.

In some contexts, however, inappropriate or inadequate support services may contribute to learning breakdown or exclusion. For example, where the nature of the service is focused on problems in the learner rather than in the system where the barrier may exist - such as poor teaching methods - the intervention may exacerbate the learning breakdown. Similarly, the nature of the intervention may lead to a learner being removed from a learning environment rather than addressing the problems which

may exist in that environment. Learners who may require individualised intervention to address barriers to learning may also not have access to these.

As was discussed earlier, basic services which may support learners and the system to minimise and remove barriers or prevent them from arising are often lacking or limited in poorer communities. This is especially true in rural areas where access to professional assistance is limited or non-existent. Thus the inadequacy or unequal distribution of services which do exist may further disadvantage learners rather than being services which contribute to effective learning.

Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services in the system does not facilitate the development of learners. Another major compounding factor relates to the nature of human resource development of both educators and personnel who provide services to learners. Ahuja (2007:7) explains that lack of awareness, service provision that is fragmented and inappropriate to the context in which it takes place, and fear of dealing with diverse range of needs, all result from inadequate and fragmented development of human resources. For Brandon (2006:44), training tends to be fragmented, uncoordinated, inadequate, unequal and often inappropriate, and training needs of staff at all levels are not being adequately met.

## **2.5. HOW TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

Teachers in the implementation of inclusive education are the key role players. Hay, Smit and Paulsen (2001:214) emphasised that “the effective implementation of inclusive education depends on the high quality of professional preparation of teachers at pre and in-service levels to equip them for and update their knowledge in meeting the needs of a diverse classroom population” Bothma, Gravett and Swart (2000:203) in their research found that teachers have a negative attitude towards inclusion due to the fact that they were not trained to cope with learners who experience barriers to learning and that their schools did not have the facilities or equipment needed by these learners.

In order for teachers to become change agents in the education system, they should be given a sense of ownership and need to own the change through direct

involvement and their views and concerns to be taken into consideration (Nghipondoka, 2001:27). To fulfil the role of educators being change agents, their roles need to be redefined meaning that they are not only imparting knowledge to learners but may also serve as learning support teachers in order to accommodate the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. School based support teams should, therefore, enforce the concept of efficient delivery by collaboratively working hand in hand with teachers to develop intervention strategies for learners who need additional support in classrooms (Campher, 1997:8). It has been pointed out by the Department of Education that educators need to be trained so that their knowledge can be of great value in implementing inclusive education, and collaboration and communication skills will be essential for inclusion to work (Department of Education, 2002:119).

Collaboration refers to the challenge of working together as a team to achieve one's goal. In communities, all stakeholders should collaborate so as to meet the diverse needs of learners in that particular community. Also at district level, all stakeholders should collaborate to form the District Based Support Team and the combination will be determined by the particular needs concerned and the specific resources available in that particular context (Department of Education, 2002:120). Inter-sectoral collaboration works when teams know what is needed, know who to involve in the team, have common understanding on the problem and the challenges faced and also develop team skills so as to work effectively with others (Department of Education, 2002, 122). Collaboration is also important so as to avoid a situation where the different service providers act in fragmented ways, which often results in institutions overwhelmed with uncoordinated services or not receiving services at all as the left hand might not know what is being done by the right hand. Collaboration also includes all aspects of the school based support team process where teachers share and in the end agree on certain ideas (Calitz, 2000:85). Teachers should be encouraged to function collaboratively and have good communication skills in order to meet the barriers faced by learners in their classrooms, hence collaboration is a new experience for many teachers as they are used to work in an isolated manner (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001:35). Collaboration between teachers and school based support teams can be useful in addressing barriers faced by learners as it enables educators to share their expertise, diverse specialised knowledge and skills for the

benefit of all learners (Sethosa, 2001:92). Also, collaboration in schools can help educators to manage diversity.

Consultation is the integral part of helping professions with each one offering a unique perspective to the process (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2002:6). The consultant will use his/her expertise to address the problem experienced by the learners and also to address the teacher's question for instance in the case of a learner who is not fluent in speech, the speech pathologist will intervene (Dettmer et al, 2002:8).

Co-operative learning should also be practiced in classrooms so as to allow learners with a variety of skills and traits to work together. This kind of learning encourages the higher achieving group members to assist learners who are having academic difficulties to understand and perform better (Mpya, 2007:29).

**“If the education system is to promote effective learning and prevent learning breakdown, it is imperative to acknowledge that mechanisms are structured into the system to break down existing barriers. Such mechanisms must develop the capacity of the system to overcome barriers which may arise, prevent barriers from occurring and promote the development of an effective learning and teaching environment” (Department of Education, 2002:141).**

The other important way of addressing barriers arising from the curriculum is to make sure that the process of learning and teaching is flexible enough to accommodate different learning needs and styles. The curriculum should, therefore, be made more flexible across all bands of education so that it is accessible to all learners, irrespective of their learning needs. The District Support Team should assist educators in institutions in creating greater flexibility in their teaching methods and in the assessment of learning by providing illustrative learning programmes, learning support materials and assessment instruments (Department of Education, 2001:20). ”. Differentiated or multi-level instruction should be used in classrooms to allow for different kinds of learning within the same curriculum.

The Department of Education (2002:141) also suggests that in order to overcome barriers to learning and development, there should be initiatives aimed at providing for learners who have been excluded from the system by both the state and non-governmental organizations, innovative practices for recognizing and accommodating diversity, activities that advocate against discrimination and challenge attitudes, processes towards the involvement of learners, parents, educators and community members, training programmes to equip educators to deal with diverse needs, curriculum restructuring, conducive teaching and learning environments as well as economic and political transformation supported by enabling and protective legislation and policy.

To address gaps in current reform and restructuring initiatives, a basic policy shift must occur where teachers should teach effectively, where there should be effective instruction and well managed schools, and barriers to be handled in a comprehensive way which means that there should be an instructional component, an enabling component and a management component (Howard, Taylor & Linda, 1999:300).

Support services should be both institution based and district/provincial based. Education support personnel within the district should be orientated and trained in their new roles of providing support to all teachers. Training should focus on supporting all learners, educators and other staff in the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met. The focus should be on teaching and learning factors, with emphasis on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners, on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs, and on adaptation of and support services available in the classroom (Department of Education, 2002: 241).

Effective partnerships should be established with parents and parent organizations, so that they would be able to participate more actively and meaningfully in the planning and implementation of inclusion activities while simultaneously playing a more active role in the learning and teaching of their own children (Department of Education, 2002:244). Other researchers have also made a contribution on how barriers to learning can be addressed. Mackay (2014: 144) recommended that

parents should cultivate a culture of reading and actively encourage a love for reading in their children. This can be done by regularly reading stories or newspaper articles to children. Mpya (2007: 139) also recommended that to overcome barriers to learning, relevant resources should be provided to schools and be made accessible to all learners. The problem of overcrowded classrooms should also be taken into consideration as it hinders effective learning.

To overcome barriers, the Department of Education (2002:248) stresses that there should be advocacy within inclusive education whereby information on inclusive education can be shared and where public opinion should be influenced through various forms of persuasive communication.

## **2.6 BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOSYSTEMIC THEORY**

The analysis of barriers to learning is complex. Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory assists in unpacking the complexity of the factors that contribute to barriers to education. Bronfenbrenner's theory belongs to the philosophical view that seeks to understand entities in relationships rather than in isolation when conducting research (Huitt, 2003).

The philosophical position of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory is likely to highlight the relationships between and amongst these barriers that are also located on system levels that are in a relationship. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory suggests that at a contextual level there are systems that affect child development, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, exosystem and chronosystem.

The microsystem level entails roles and patterns of activities in structures in this system level as well as the relationship that the child has with people around him or her. This level has a strong influence on behavioural patterns of the child especially during the early stages of the child's development. For example, a child can affect the parent's behaviour and the same can be true for the parent and other people around the child in the family and community.

Mesosystem pertain to interactions between two or more microsystems in which the child plays an active role. The theory further suggests that the type of interactions

between microsystems can either enhance or disturb the development of the child, for example, the working relationship between the child's teacher and the child's parents on educational matters.

Exosystems refer to systems that impact on the development of the child, although the child plays no role in them, e.g. the parent's workplace. For example, the work place ethic of the parents can impact on the child's development.

Macrosystems pertain to the ideological and institutionalised cultures of a particular society that are quite far from the child's active role but have a strong impact on the child's development, for example, the negative effects of gender beliefs on the developing child.

The final system is the chronosystem. Chronosystems pertain to factors that influence the child's development as a result of changes that occur both in the child's environment and within the child, for example, changes in the environment of the child as a result of other external influences and changes in the child's maturational stages as a result of biological processes within the child (Killian, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory emphasises the embeddedness of the developing child at five levels of the environment that are mutually influential. The theory further suggests that there is also a bi-directional interaction between the child and the environment, and his or her environment is further influenced by external forces outside the child's environment. It is these multi-directional, multi-influential interactions that play an important role in the education and development of the child. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory.

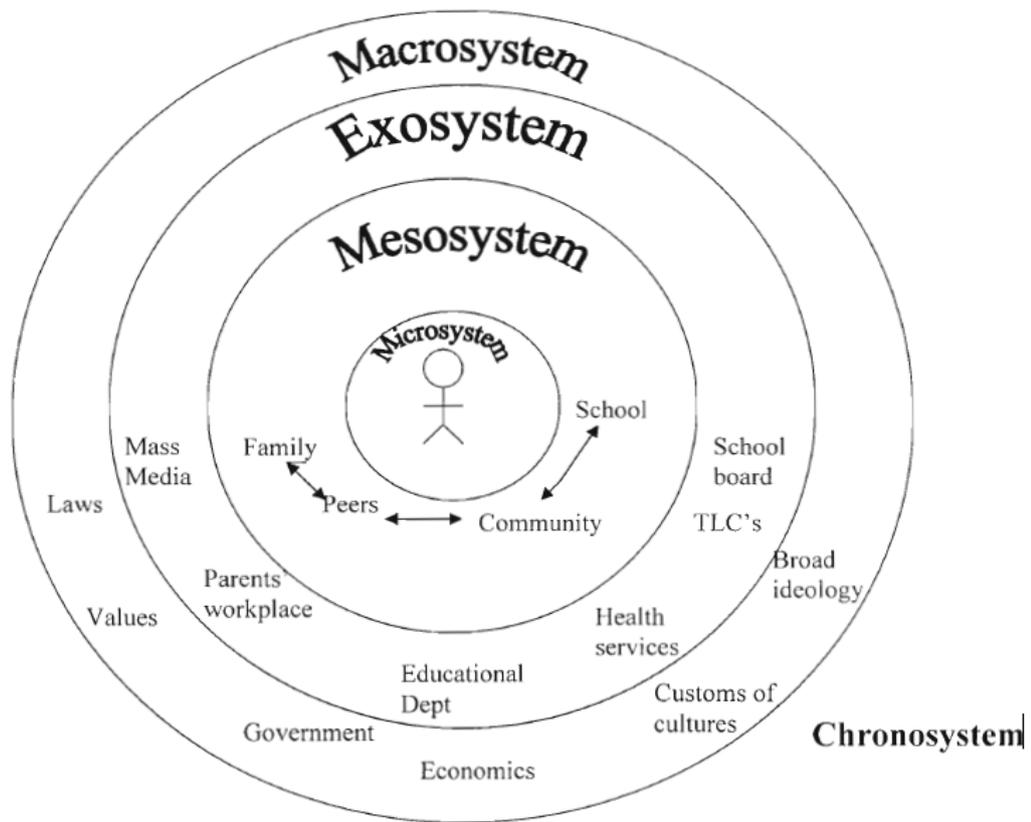


Fig.2. 1 Bronfenbrenner's theory on contextualised child development (Pettigrew & Akhurst, 2002)

## 2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher has dealt with barriers to learning faced by learners in the foundation phase. Also the researcher has dealt with the forms of managing diversity in the classroom and how to overcome these learning barriers. The literature that was reviewed in this chapter formed a foundation for this study in clarifying the barriers to learning that the learners can face in learning and the mechanisms that can be used to overcome those barriers used to address reading difficulties.

Based on the literature that has been discussed above, the researcher came to a conclusion that a study on the barriers to learning faced by foundation phase learners of UMzimkhulu circuit should be investigated hence the next chapter will focus on the design which will clearly illustrate the research methodology.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase were explored through a literature study. In this chapter, the researcher will present the research design, methodology, choice of a paradigm, data collection strategies, ethical considerations, validity and reliability of research and data analysis. Research design according to McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 30) describes the procedures to conduct research, including when, from whom and under what conditions the data will be obtained. Also research design as stated by Leedy and Omrod (2009:9) is a strategy of attacking the research problem by providing the procedures that the researcher will follow, the data that will be collected by the researcher and the analysis that the researcher will conduct. Research methods (methodology) are the systematic and purposeful ways one collects and analyses data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 9).The researcher will therefore provide the procedure of how the data will be collected and analysed.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH METHOD**

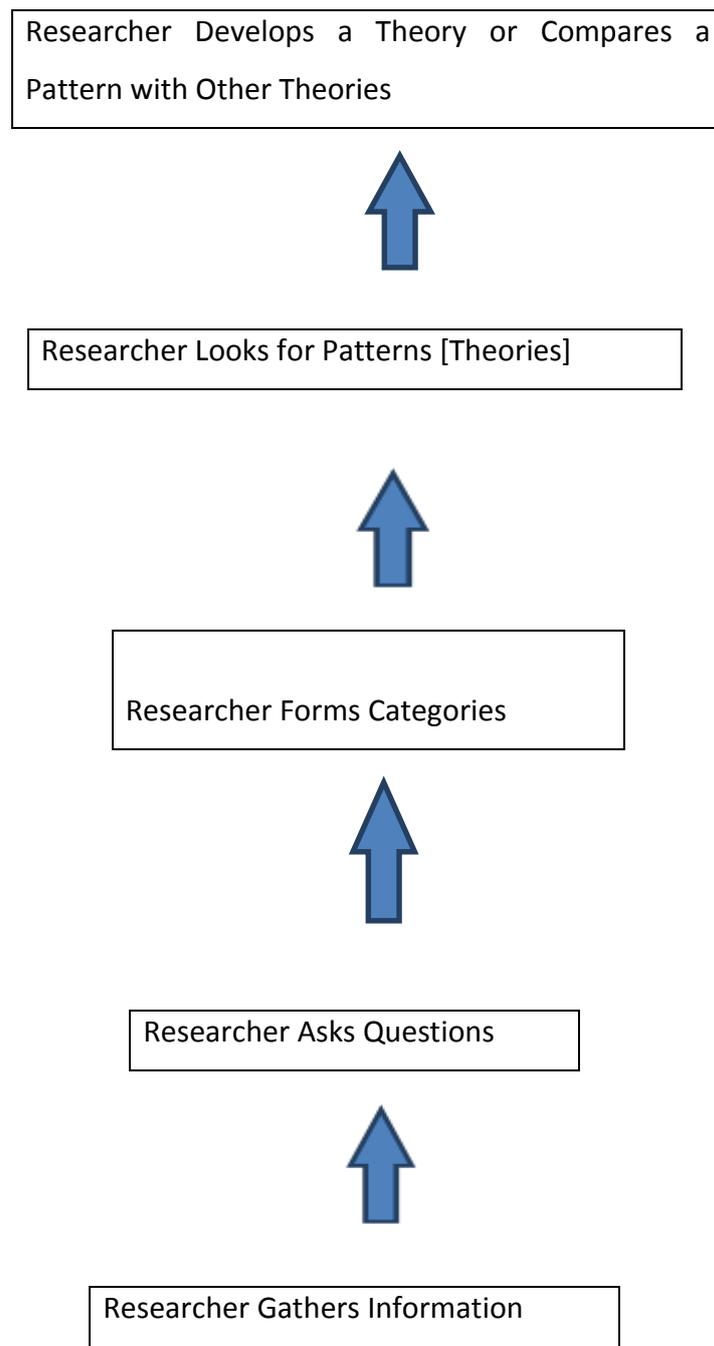
The research method or methodology refers to a design whereby the researcher selects data collection and analysis procedures to investigate a specific research problem (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:10). Therefore, the qualitative research method was used to undertake this research. In this research the researcher described the experience of Foundation Phase educators regarding the barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu. The qualitative research paradigm refers to research that elicits particular accounts of meaning, experience or perception and also produces descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words (Fouché & Delpont, 2006:74).

Creswell states that qualitative research takes place in a natural setting whereby the researcher often goes to the site of the participant to conduct research (2003:181). As qualitative researchers rely on the inductive mode of the scientific method, the major objective of it is exploration or discovery in that the researcher builds

abstractions, concepts, hypotheses and theories from details (Creswell, 1994:145). This means that qualitative researchers generally study a phenomenon in an open-ended way, without prior expectations and they develop hypotheses and theoretical explanations that are based on their interpretations of what they observe (Burke & Larry, 2012:376). Phenomena are interpreted in terms of the meanings people bring to them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 395). Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their world and the meanings they construct; hence the research tools for this study were based on interpretation.

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. In this way the researcher studies things in their natural settings by interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:202). In qualitative research, the researcher does not have any assumptions nor have an influence on the data being collected. The researcher only seeks understanding of different perspectives. Qualitative data is the product of a process of interpretation, the data is produced by the way it is interpreted and used by researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:202). The study undertaken was, therefore, based in the interpretative paradigm.

Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 395). Qualitative research is based on a naturalistic phenomenology philosophy that is viewed as multi-layered, interactive and social experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:323). In qualitative study, the researcher does not begin with a theory to test or verify; instead, consistent with the inductive mode of thinking, a theory may emerge during the data collection and analysis phase (Creswell 1994: 95-96). This has been shown in Figure 3.1 below:



**Figure 3.1** The Inductive Mode of Research in Qualitative Study

Source: Creswell (1994:96)

The qualitative research methodology was chosen because it derives meaning from the research participants' perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:323).

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is the outline, plan or strategy that is used to answer a research question (Burke & Larry, 2012: 296). A research design as described by Babbie and Mouton is a plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends conducting the research (2001:74). The research design involves the entire process of planning and carrying out of a research.

The design type chosen for this study was phenomenology. The selection was made from among five qualitative designs, namely: ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenology and narrative as described by Fouchè and Schurink (2011:312-322). The purpose is to obtain a view into research participants' life world and to understand their personal meanings constructed from their lived experiences (Burke & Larry, 2012:384). A phenomenological study requires that the researcher 'brackets' or puts aside all prejudgments and collects data on how individuals make sense out of a particular experience or situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:36). According to Fouché (2006:270) the researcher should be able to enter the participant's life world and place himself or herself in the shoes of the participant. Creswell (2009:13) maintains that a phenomenological design is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants.

Another purpose of phenomenology is to gain access to an individual's life world and to describe his/her experience of a phenomenon. Phenomenologists point out that to experience something in its purest form a person needs to bracket or suspend any preconceptions or learned feelings that the person has about the phenomenon (Burke & Larry, 2012: 384-385). The approach aims to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives (Fouché, 2006:270). In phenomenology no preconceived notions, expectations or frameworks guide researchers as they analyse data (Creswell, 1994:94).

### **3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Scientific research is conducted from within a specific paradigm or theoretical framework (De Vos, 2004:45 & Henning, 2005:25). A research paradigm is a model

or pattern according to which the social scientist views the objects or research. A paradigm as explained by Guba and Lincoln (1994:107) may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs or metaphysics that deal with the ultimate or first principle. It represents a world view that defines for its holder the nature of the world, the individual's place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. It also dictates the research agenda by defining what problems count as legitimate scientific problems and what constitutes acceptable solutions to the problems (Mouton, 2001:16). Paradigm is also a whole system of thinking including basic assumptions, important questions to be asked or puzzles to be solved, the research techniques to be used and examples of what good scientific research looks like (Neuman, 2006:80-81).

A paradigm operates within a certain dimension and these dimensions are: ontological, epistemological and methodological. In an interpretive paradigm, the ontological dimension acknowledges that internal reality consists of the subjective experiences of individuals and that lived experiences should be taken seriously, while on a constructivist paradigm the ontological dimension accepts that reality is socially constructed through discourse. The epistemological dimension in an interpretive paradigm maintains that understanding is gained through interaction and empathetic listening whereas in the constructivist paradigm it considers that versions are constructed by the observer. The methodological dimension from the interpretive paradigm point of view relies on the subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants whereas in a constructivist paradigm the researcher's methodology is deconstruction and includes analysis of discourse and text (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, and 2006:6). Therefore, the experiences of participants as revealed through focus group and structured interviews were described in this research under the interpretive paradigm. The study follows an interpretive approach, allowing for greater understanding of educators' perceptions of inclusive education and how teaching and learning can be made to address the inclusion of all learners as well as addressing barriers faced by learners in the classroom.

### **3.5 SELECTION OF SAMPLE**

Sampling is the process of drawing a sample from a population. When we sample, we study the characteristics of a subset (called the 'sample') selected from a larger

group (called the 'population') to understand the characteristics of the larger group (Burke & Larry, 2012: 216). Strydom (in De Vos et al., 2011:194) explains that a sample comprises elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or a subset of measurements drawn purposively from a population in which researchers are interested.

The researcher selected a few information rich cases from three different government schools from within a circuit of Umzimkhulu. The researcher decided to use these 3 chosen schools as they would be able to serve as the actual information-rich key informants who have been in the education system for more than 10 years and who were also trained as educators in the then colleges of education in the Eastern Cape. All the three schools are junior secondary schools from the rural areas. The sample participants included educators and the Heads of Departments from the Foundation phase. The researcher chose the Foundation Phase because of the experience and understanding of the context, and because it is regarded as the critical phase for developing the learner holistically and the fact that schooling is effectively laid in the Foundation phase. The research participants were three Foundation Phase HODs and five educators thus giving a total of eight participants. The research focused on grade 1 to grade 3 classes, based on the fact that the teachers in those grades are qualified teachers not practitioners as is the case with grade R. From 2 schools 3 participants were chosen and in the third school 2 participants were chosen because the school had only 2 educators in the Foundation Phase, an HOD and 1 other teacher.

For this study purposeful sampling was used. The power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:401). In purposeful sampling the selection of participants is a key decision point. Vockell and Williams Asher (in Yorke, 2008:59) say that participants are selected to meet particular goals of the researchers such as ensuring heterogeneity or involving key persons in the research sample. Purposeful sampling is a strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:433).

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

Mouton highlighted some methodological criteria that one should follow while doing data collection and these include personal prejudice and biases, systematic and accurate recording of the observations, establishment of trust and rapport with the interviewees and creating optimal conditions in terms of location or setting for the data collection (2001:111).

The researcher selected three schools in the Umzimkhulu circuit as site of study and only three schools were used as a sample. Out of the three schools five educators and three Heads of Department in the foundation phase were purposefully selected to form part of the participants which gave a total of nine participants for the entire study. All the participants had been in the foundation phase for the last ten years and were well qualified in terms of REQV.

Various data collection methods were used so that methodological 'triangulation' would be possible, that is, information received from the various data sources should corroborate and elaborate one another. In De Vos et al. (2005:362), the rationale for triangulation is that it helps ensure the project will be rigorous, credible and justifiable as research. Documents, focus group interviews and semi-structured one-on-one interviews were used as data collection strategies. Document analysis is classified as a secondary source; focus group interviews and semi-structured one-on-one interviews are classified as primary sources in this study (Strydom & Delpont 2013: 377). The study composed of 8 participants in total for the entire study, 5 participants for focus group interviews and 3 participants for semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

#### **3.6.1 Documents**

Creswell (2012:223) states that documents are a valuable source of information in qualitative research. He added that documents represent a good source for text (word) data for qualitative study. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:42) explain documents as records of past events that are written or printed; they may be anecdotal notes, letters, diaries and documents like minutes of meetings, agendas, diaries and official reports. Merriam (in Engelbrecht et al., 2003:17) uses documents

as an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual and physical material relevant to the research study. The researcher therefore analysed and interpreted the facts from the documents so as to get background information on the topic.

During fieldwork, the researcher collected documents including curriculum documents and policy documents on inclusion, departmental circulars, school policy and the school's vision and mission statement.

### **3.6.2 Interviews**

Interviewing as an information collection method is the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research. (Greef, 2006:287). A qualitative interview as defined by Kvale (2009:287) is an attempt to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences and to uncover their lived world. It is important that the researcher has the ability to differentiate between content and process during interviewing. The content refers to what the participant is saying and the process involves reading between the lines of what the participant says and notices how the participant talks and behaves during the interviews (Greef, 2006:291).

Semi-structured one-on-one interview were used in the study when interviewing Heads of Departments in each of the three schools. They are the heads in their phases and are members of the school based support teams in their schools, responsible for identification and addressing barriers to learning faced by learners. The semi-structured one-on-one interview is used in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about perceptions or accounts of a particular topic (Greeff, 2006:296). Semi-structured interviews are specifically suitable where one is particularly interested in the complexities or processes or where an issue is controversial or personal.

Focus groups interviews were used as an interviewing method to interview other foundation phase educators of the three schools. The focus group interview is a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concern, new product, programme or idea by interviewing a purposeful sampled group of people rather than interviewing each person individually (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:455). The focus group interviews are a means of better understanding how people feel or think about an issue, product or service.

Participants in focus groups are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that are related to the topic (Greeff, 2006:299). According to Van Zyl (2002:28) focus group interviews are utilized to obtain data from a small group of participants and the participants must have common interests that are linked to the subject that is being researched.

### **3.7 GAINING ACCESS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

#### **3.7.1 Gaining access**

Before data was collected access was gained by obtaining permission from the Department of Education to gain access. After permission was granted, letters to relevant school were also written. The aim of research and what was expected of them was clearly communicated to them. The way in which the investigation was to be undertaken and the envisaged purpose of the research was set out clearly to the participants. Practical aspects of the research such as data collection methods and recording of data were discussed with the participants in detail (Marshall, 2011; 47-48).

#### **3.7.2 Research ethics**

Ethics in research are principles of right and wrong that a particular group accepts and these principles compel researchers to respect the rights, dignity, privacy and sensitivity of participants. Important matters relating to research ethics include informed consent, the right to privacy, protection of participants from harm - be it physical, psychological or social - and honesty and fully reporting on the research. Researchers in qualitative research need to be sensitive to ethical principles because of their research topic, face-to-face interactive data collection, an emergent design and reciprocity with participants (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001:420).

#### **3.7.3 Informed consent**

Participants must be fully informed about the research and should give consent to participate (Henning, 2005:73). In this research participants were informed verbally and in writing that participation was voluntary. The nature of the study, its aims, possible risks, dangers and obligations that would be involved were also revealed to the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:421). Participants were assured that their privacy and sensitivity was to be protected and they were informed on how the

information they imparted would be used and how their identities would be protected. The manner in which participants were informed of their participation was done to encourage voluntary participation.

#### **3.7.4 The right to privacy**

Participants would be assured that their right to remain anonymous would be respected and pseudonyms were to be used in the research. Privacy was assured to them as the research is highly sensitive (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:422). To protect participants' dignity and identity, the researcher ensured that all the collected research material was kept in a safe place even after the study had terminated (Creswell, 2007:141-142).

#### **3.7.5 Protection from harm**

In protecting participants from harm, be it physical, psychological or social, participants were informed verbally and by means of an agreement, which they were to sign after agreeing that they were to participate in the study, ensuring full protection (Creswell, 2007:141-142 & McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:421). They were even encouraged to indicate when they felt uncomfortable, threatened or embarrassed.

#### **3.7.6 Honesty and fully reporting of research**

Data was reported honestly and fully without changes to possibly satisfy certain predictions or interest groups. Also the researcher made every effort to communicate the practical significance of the research to the community of researchers and practitioners so that inquiry would be encouraged (Creswell, 1993:130).

### **3.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis as defined by Merriman (Engelbrecht et al., 2003:18) is the process of making sense out of data involving consolidation, reduction and interpretation of what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts between inductive and deductive reasoning and between description and interpretation. These meanings or understandings or insights

constitute the findings of a study.

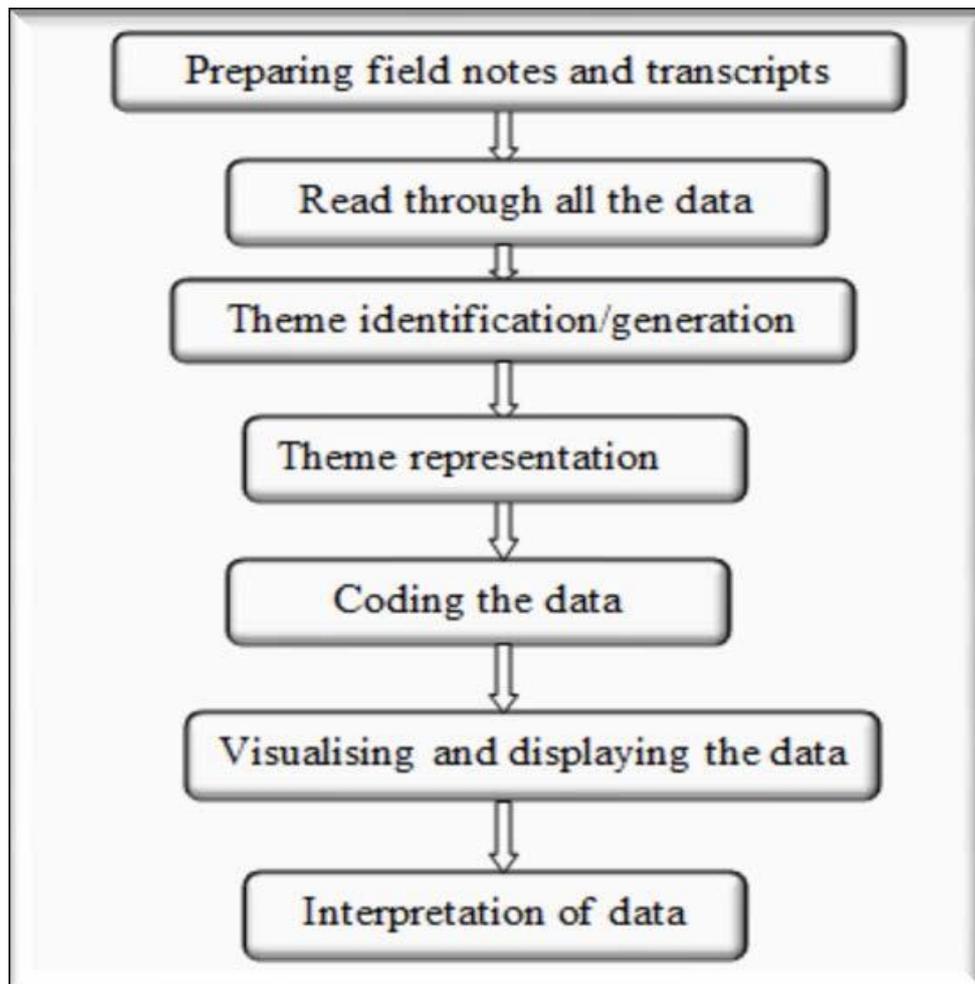
The type of data analysis should match the research paradigm and should also answer the question (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:52). Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns or relationships among the categories, most of which emerge from the data. When analysing data, an analytical style may be structured or emerge as intuitive but what is common is that most qualitative researchers employ an interpretive and subjective style. The systematic process involves selection, categorization, comparisons, synthesis and interpretation to provide explanations of single phenomenon of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:461-462). The constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:135) was used where the researcher first read the data to yield an impressionistic view of recurrent themes or categories generated by the data. Reading and rereading through the data once more (immersion in the data) forced the researcher to become intimately familiar with it (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:158).

Social constructionist methods are qualitative, interpretive and concerned with meaning. Interpretive approaches treat people as though they were the origin of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Social constructionist approaches treat people as though these thoughts, feelings and experiences were the products of the systems that exist at a social level rather than the individual level (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:278).

The researcher aligned herself with Creswell (2009) in analysing data and also combined her analysis with Braun and Clarker (2006: 77-101) to make the seven steps which are outlined in figure 3.2. The researcher used the steps as guidelines when analysing data but did not follow them strictly as some of the steps overlap (Schurink, Fouchè & Devos, and 2011:403). In order for the researcher to be able to analyse the data, the raw field notes were processed by being converted into properly written documents which are intelligible products that can be read, edited for accuracy, commented on and analysed. Raw field notes stimulate the fieldworker to remember and replace things that were said during interviews and are not included in the original notes. Tape recordings were also transcribed, taking into consideration

pauses, word emphasis, mispronunciation and incomplete sentences in the write-ups (Welman,

Kruger & Mitchell, and 2005:211). The researcher read and re-read the data and played the tape recorder many times so as to familiarise herself with the field notes (Creswell, 2009:185; 2007: 61). The following steps were followed to analyse data:



**Figure 3.2: Seven steps of analysis, adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006 & 2011) and Creswell (2009)**

Finally, the data was interpreted in order to work towards the answering of the research question.

### **3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH**

Regarding the validity or soundness of qualitative research, De Vos (2002:351) quotes Marshall and Rossman (1995) as follows “all research must respond to canons that stand as criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be

evaluated". This implies that one has to ask the following questions:

How credible are the particular findings? By what criteria can we judge them?

How transferable and applicable are these findings to another setting or group of people?

How can we be reasonably sure that the findings can be replicated if the study was conducted with the same participants in the same context?

How can we be sure that the findings are reflective of the subjects and inquiry itself, rather than a creation of the researcher's biases or prejudices? (De Vos, 2002:351).

De Vos (2002:351), Guba and Lincoln (1985) refer to questions as establishing the "truth value" of the study, i.e. its applicability, consistency and neutrality. Lincoln and Guba (in De Vos, 2002:351) propose constructs that are more suitable to the qualitative paradigm than the conventional positivist paradigm - internal validity, reliability and objectivity. These four constructs are:

Credibility is suggested as an alternative to internal validity (De Vos, 2002:346). Internal validity, according to Freebody (2003:77), is the extent to which researchers concerned with the same data and constructs would be consistent in matching them. Hoepfl (1997:12) states that the naturalistic researcher assumes the presence of multiple realities and attempt to represent these multiple realities adequately, and credibility becomes the test for this. Validity in qualitative research is dependent on an in-depth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions.

Transferability is an alternative to external validity. Freebody (2003:77) explains that internal validity involves the extent to which independent researchers working in the same or similar context would obtain consistent results. Transferability refers to the degree at which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings.

De Vos (2002:346) notes that transferability or generalization of a qualitative study may be problematic and is seen by traditional canons as a weakness in the approach. However, to counter challenges the researcher may refer to the theoretical framework to demonstrate data collection and analysis strategies.

Dependability is an alternative to reliability. Positivist notions of reliability assume an unchanging universe where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated (De Vos, 2002:346). A qualitative study has a natural setting as its focus; therefore, it has to take into account that “the social world is always being constructed” (De Vos, 2002:346).

Conformability captures the traditional concept of objectivity. In qualitative research the emphasis is on the data and the question to be answered is: Does the data help confirm the general findings and lead to the implications? (De Vos, 2002:347).

### **3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY**

Trustworthiness is obtained through a process of testing the data analysis, findings and conclusions (Nieuwenhuis, 2011: 113). It includes the use of multiple data sources such as interviews and documents, verifying raw data, keeping notes of research decisions taken, using multiple coders, especially when high inter-coder (consistency among different coders) and intra-coder (consistency within single coder) reliability is obtained. It also includes participant or member checks, verifying and validating findings by providing copies of a draft report to the participants, controlling for bias, avoiding generalisation by seeking to understand from participants’ perspective, choosing quotes carefully, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and stating the limitations of the study upfront. Schurink et al. (2011: 420) support the above by outlining various strategies for increasing trustworthiness and credibility, including triangulation, which they defined as the use of multiple sources of data to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the study. Triangulation in this study is evident due to the use of data collected from the literature review, interviews and document analysis. The aforementioned data sources were used to strengthen the study’s usefulness (Schurink et al., 2011: 420).

### **3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Education at the circuit level, as well as from the Ethics Committee of UNISA. Ethical considerations were observed throughout with participants informed of all aspects of the research that might influence willingness to participate, namely, the purpose of

the study, data collection and the feedback of the results.

The researcher, as part of adhering to the ethical issues, applied for permission to conduct the study as follows: Application to conduct research in the three identified schools in the district was asked from the Department of Education in Umzimkhulu (because the study was conducted in schools in Umzimkhulu). Permission was granted. The approval letter is attached as Appendix B. Application to UNISA Ethics committee for ethical clearance was also made before data collection. An ethical clearance certificate is attached as Appendix C. After obtaining the permission from the Department of Education, letters were issued to the principals of identified schools to gain permission (see Appendix D, E and F). Invitation letters to participants were issued and participants were assured that their privacy and sensitivity was to be protected and they were informed on how the information they imparted would be used and how their identities would be protected (see Appendix G). Before the interviews and document analysis, participants were requested to complete consent forms (Appendix H) and focus group confidentiality agreement forms (Appendix I).

### **3.12 CONCLUSION**

Various components of the research methodology and research design have been discussed in depth in this chapter. The data has been collected in various ways. Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive; therefore, in the following chapter, the interpretation and presentation of data will be done.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

The results of the interviews for both educators and Heads of Department for the three schools will be presented and discussed in this chapter. Foundation phase educators and their Heads of Departments were specifically chosen and interviewed due to the fact that they are the people who can really take into cognisance the barriers the learners in their phases experience in their learning. Document analysis was also used to collect data.

#### **4.2. DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS**

All the three schools chosen by the researcher are from the same ward in a particular sub-district, all are quintile 1 schools and government schools. Two schools are situated in the deep rural area of the sub-district and the other is situated in a squatter camp area within the village. Learners from these three schools are Xhosa-Zulu speakers and most of their parents are not working and those who are working (parents), work as domestic workers and the highest standard passed is Standard 8. (presently known as Grade 10) Learners come from homes within the environment.

The researcher interviewed classroom educators from the three different schools in focus group interviews and the HODs were individually interviewed in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The total number of focus group interview participants was five instead of six because in one of the participating schools because two classes were combined and taught by one educator. Three participants in the one-on-one semi-structured interviews were used which gave a sample of eight participants from the three selected schools. All the educators and HODs who were used in this research were black women and all of them were appointed before 1994.

#### **School A**

School A is situated in a deep rural area in the village. The location is amongst the

most poverty-stricken communities in the village. The school is a combined school starting from the Foundation Phase to the Further Education and Training band in grade 12. The school is a mainstream school. It is about 10km away from town where some useful resources can be accessed. The total number of learners in this school is about 830 with about 170 learners in the Foundation Phase. It has a total number of about 22 educators inclusive of one principal, one deputy principal and four Heads of Department of which one of them (Head of Departments) is responsible for the Foundation phase. Most parents are not working; they only depend on the child support grant they get from the government to support their families.

### **School B**

School B has an average number of learners in the Foundation Phase and a very limited number of learners in the Intermediate and Senior Phases. The location of the school is a flat area surrounded by hills and some bushes. It is a very isolated area in so much that only learners from within the area are attending the school. No learners from the nearby locations are attending school and the area does not have a free moving transport to other areas as it is a very isolated area. The place does not have electricity; people from the area only depend on collecting wood from the forest to make fires and use paraffin and candles to have light at night. The school is a Junior Secondary School operating from grade R to grade 9 and is a mainstream school. The total number of learners is about 240 which resulted in small number of teachers being employed hence some grades in the Foundation Phase are combined in one class with one teacher. The school has about seven educators inclusive of the principal and a Foundation phase Head of Department.

### **School C**

This school is situated in squatter camp area, inhabited by people who are from various locations within the district, outside the district, outside the province and even outside the country. As this area is a squatter camp, a lot of shebeens are found in the area and some learners after school help their parents selling alcohol as this is their only source of income. A high rate of cohabitation has also been a concern from the participants. Most parents are working as domestic workers whilst others are hawkers in the nearby village.

The school has a high number of learners with approximately 700 learners of which about 200 are learners in the Foundation Phase.

This school is also a Junior Secondary School with a principal, a deputy principal and three Heads of Department, of which one of them is for the Foundation phase, and nine educators.

#### 4.3 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

The researcher found it imperative to gather information on the background and biography of the participants. This is due to the fact that such information would determine the ability of participants to offer reliable and credible information that would enable the researcher to be able to establish the influence of their biographical data on the study under investigation.

The background areas of concern to the researcher included the following: teaching experience in the career, grades taught, experience in the Foundation phase, age, number of learners in the class, qualifications and gender. The data of this background is summarized below.

**Table 4.1.** Biographical Data of HODs interviewed

HO	Teaching experience in the career	Grades taught	Grade presently teaching	Teaching experience in the Foundation Phase	Age according to age groups	Number of learners in the classroom	Qualifications	Gender
1	25	2	1	20	45-50	40	PTD, ACE, B.Ed.Hons.	Female
2	29	7, 8 and 9	2 and 3	23	45-50	57	PTD, B.Ed.	Female
3	28	5	3	17	45-50	69	PTD, B.Ed. Hons., FDE	Female

**Table 4.2:** Key for interpreting findings from one-on-one semi-structured interviews

Key of abbreviations			
HOD1	:	Head of Department	number one
HOD2	:	Head of Department	number two
HOD 3	:	Head of Department	number three

**Findings in Table 4.1**

Findings in Table 4.1 reveal the following:

Members of SMT lack a qualification or a certificate on inclusive education which clearly indicates that they cannot have an influence on the phases they head for inclusive education buy in. PTD is their key qualification that allows them to teach in the Foundation Phase in a mainstream school. Some classes are combined resulting in overcrowded classrooms that may hinder the educators’ ability to identify learners with learning barriers and that element on its own can be a barrier itself. A high number of years of teaching experience can make them resist change as they have never been exposed to the practice of inclusion in their teaching experience. Lack of specialization in the degrees and diplomas with which they have upgraded themselves might result in them (HODs) being reluctant to accept change as it will be a new policy to them.

**4.4 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

**Table 4.3** Biographical data of educators interviewed

Educator	Teaching experience	Grade taught	Teaching experience in the Foundation phase	Age according to age group	No. of learners in a class	Qualifications	Gender
Educator 1	17	1	17	40 - 45	68	SPTD, ACE, B.Ed. Hons.	Female

Educator 2	25	2	25	45 - 50	60	SPTD, FDE	Female
Educator 3	24	2	24	45 – 50	40	PTD,FDE	Female
Educator 4	28	3	28	50 – 55	45	PTD, B.Ed.	Female
Educator 5	23	1	23	45 – 50	35	SPTD, B.Ed.	Female

**Table 4.4** Key information for interpreting data from focus group interviews

Key of abbreviations		
ED1	:	Educator No 1
ED2	:	Educator No 2
ED3	:	Educator No 3
ED4	:	Educator No 4
ED5	:	Educator No 5

### Findings in Table 4.3

Findings in Table 4.3 reveal the following:

Educators lack a qualification or a certificate on inclusive education which clearly indicates that they may be reluctant to accept change. PTD and SPTD are the key qualification that allows them to teach in the Foundation Phase in a mainstream school. A high number of years of teaching experience can make them resist change as they have never been exposed to the practice of inclusion in their teaching experience. Lack of specialization in the degrees and diplomas with which they have upgraded themselves might result in them being reluctant to accept change as it will be a new policy to them. Have the experience of only teaching in the foundation phase.

#### 4.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The different themes that emerged from this data were used to gain a deeper understanding of barriers to learning faced by foundation phase learners in an inclusive classroom. The different themes that will be discussed by the researcher emerged from the use of multiple methods of data collection which are: semi-structured one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis so as to gain a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 2002: 306). Some of the themes that emerged were confirmed by findings from document analysis.

**Table 4.5** Themes that emerged from the data collection strategies.

<b>Sub-categories</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Lack of support from parents Parents' low level of education Parents not knowing their role in the education of their children in the school.	Lack of parental support	Support
Learners not ready for school Overcrowded classrooms Retention policy Multi-grade teaching Illiterate parents More time needed when teaching an inclusive classroom Educators are to handle learners with different barriers in one classroom Use of different teaching methods Educators to perform	Problems experienced by Foundation Phase educators in inclusive classroom	Challenges of Foundation Phase educators

multiple roles in their teaching		
Training by District Resources from the district Support by DBST	Lack of support from the Department needed by educators to implement inclusive education. Schools not having Education White Paper 6	Support
Employment of remedial educators in schools Small number of learners in classrooms Establishment of a full service school in the circuit Training of Foundation Phase educators DBST to be more visible to schools Parents to be made aware of their role in the education of their children Availability of LTSM for inclusive classrooms	Expectations and needs of Foundations Phase educators	Expectations and needs
Limited understanding of the definition of inclusive education Lack of conceptual understanding	Educators' understanding of inclusive education	Perceptions

The themes that emerged from one-on-one semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews are discussed in the following sections, and are complemented by the findings from document analysis.

#### **4.5.1. Theme 1: Support**

Support as experienced by Foundation Phase Heads of Department in the study can be described under two main categories, and these are: the lack of support from the Department and lack of parental support to implement inclusive education.

##### **a) Lack of parental support**

Parental involvement in the education of their children has been considered as a significant factor in positively impacting children's school success. (Parhar, 2006:1). Mwelil (2009:75) stresses that lack of parental support and negligence in teaching and learning create barriers to learning. Lemmer and Van Wyk are also of the opinion that parental involvement is a prerequisite for improving the culture of teaching and learning in schools. Parental involvement or support in the education of children is very important. Their involvement has also been mentioned by Meier (2003:232) when she pointed that *"... the family is one of the most important influences in a child's life as it provides an emotional and physical environment that constantly surrounds the child and in which exceptional psychological ties exists."* The active involvement of parents and the broader community in the teaching and learning process is central to effective learning and development. Where parents are not given recognition or where their participation is not facilitated and encouraged, effective learning is threatened and hindered (DOE, 2001:140).

The participants mentioned that some of the parents are working and they do not have enough time to see and discuss their children's progress with the educators, as they are always at work and leave their children with either grannies or other siblings. Because of their poor socio-economic background, parents - especially women - leave their children at home and go away to find jobs so as to be able to provide their children with money for a better living. One participant mentioned that some parents do not even respond to invitations from class educators and even those who respond would tell educators that they know nothing about teaching so educators have to do it all (Participant HOD2).

Participants made a mention that parents do not show interest in the education of their children because of their low level of education. One participant mentioned that parents who lack education do not have knowledge of what curriculum entails and what should their children know and achieve so as to progress to the next grade (Participant HOD1). Parents find it more difficult when they have to do homework with their children because the teaching approach is always changing. Participants reported that some parents say they do not know what is expected of them when they have to help their children in their schoolwork, which is why they see no need for attending parent-teacher meetings to discuss their children's progress. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model emphasises that even though children may have many other influences in their development, parental influence is still the most important influence in their development (Woolfolk, 2010:67).

Participant HOD2 mentioned that in her school they do not have parent-teacher meetings to discuss learners' progress except ordinary parent meetings where they discuss all matters pertaining to school governance. She even said that *"... even if we ask for parental support in the education of learners, we always get negative and discouraging responses from some parents, they complain of the fact that they are not teachers, they do not want to be treated as teacher aids as they earn nothing for that, people who get paid at the end of the month should work for that"* (Participant HOD2).

From these discussions it became evident that the involvement of parents in the education of their children is of great importance. Parents serve as primary educators in the development of their children. Their lack of interest and involvement in the education of their children might be one of the contributing factors to the barriers to learning faced by learners in learning.

### **b) Support from the Department of Education**

The findings from the one-on-one interviews indicated that all the participants lacked support from the Department of Education. Under the category of lack of support from the Department of Education the following sub-categories emerged, training by the district, resources from the district and support by the DBST.

All the participants complained of the lack of training which was not enough that they received a long time ago from the Department. One of the participants voiced her

concern, *“I attended a workshop or just an orientation workshop which lasted only about four hours six years ago which I didn’t even understand and there was no follow up after that like a school visit by the Department, we were just told what inclusive education is all about and no further support visit on how far have we gone on the implementation”* (Participant HOD2). As all these three schools are in the same district and in the same ward also attending the same meetings and same workshops, they all agreed that they had attended workshops on inclusive education though duration of the workshops was not enough as they still needed more workshops on inclusive education. *“I cannot even say I was trained on inclusive education; it was just a meeting or an orientation that only took few hours. To my understanding training can at least last for about five days for a start and should then be continuous for at least once a quarter. After that orientation workshop, there were no school support visits by departmental officials to monitor and support us on the implementation of the new policy”* (Participant HOD3). The lack of support in assessing identified learners as having barriers to learning has also been mentioned as a concern by one participant. Participant HOD1 complained that their district seems not to have specialized personnel like psychologists or therapists. She added by mentioning that *“In my school, we forwarded a list of learners which we asked the Department to assess but we were referred to the outside practice and the parents were to pay”*. Participant HOD 3 felt that if the Department could improve its support towards schools, the problems faced by Foundation Phase educators in their inclusive classrooms could be minimised.

Some of the findings from document analysis revealed that assessment policy in all the schools does not cater for learner diversity. The policy does not cater for learners with barriers to learning. The number of formal assessment activities is the same for all learners in the Foundation Phase. For instance, in all the terms there is a prescribed number of assessment activities that the learners should complete, but there is no mention of what will be done should any learner with learning barriers fails to comply with this total number of assessment activities. The findings showed that educators lack information on how to implement inclusivity on assessment policy due to the lack of support.

Lack of support from the department resulted in the 3 selected schools not having lists of School Based Support Team (SBST), minutes of meetings and that clearly

indicated the non-existence of SBSTs in these schools. When these schools were asked if they have a referral system for learners with barriers to learning, their system was not through the School Based Support Team. In all the schools, parents are advised by the class teachers to take their children to the specialists for assessment without any reference from the School Based Support Team.

From the findings of document analysis, vision and mission statements do not talk to learners with learning problems and other challenges. The vision and mission statements in one school talks of aiming at providing quality education for all learners and to foster dedication among educators, but there is no mention of how to cater for learners with barriers to learning. Educators are only encouraged to dedicate themselves to their work and the statement does not mention how they should handle diversity in their classrooms. Also, there is no mention of inclusivity of learning in the classrooms.

The fact that the documents that were analysed by the researcher in the 3 schools do not talk to inclusive education, confirms the statements from participants that they lack training and support from the department. The statements also reflected that teachers are unable to deal with different learning styles in their classrooms because they lack the expertise for handling learner diversity in their classrooms.

Participants also considered that their schools need resources that will really help with the development of their learners' skills and knowledge as the learners in their schools are from poor socio-economic environments. They mentioned that the only Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) they receive are textbooks and some charts that are the same for all learners. There are no specialized textbooks for learners with barriers. The participants showed a concern about the quality of LTSM they use in their classrooms which does not really accommodate all learning abilities and styles. Participant HOD3 highlighted the fact that *"some learners need specialized LTSM that really address their problem, but our education system only supplies us with a standardized LTSM, on the other side not expecting us to use one teaching method when teaching in our classrooms."*

All selected schools did not have the Education White Paper 6 document and one school mentioned that they do have the document and suspect that it has been misplaced as it was last seen some years ago. Participant HOD2 from school B

mentioned further that “... *some other reason why we do not care of its where about is because we do not use it in school*”. Schools didn’t show any clue about the White Paper 6 document in so much that in one of the schools the researcher was shown some hand-outs that have some information on inclusive education which one of the educators got it from a friend. One other school mentioned that as the school they have never seen an Education White Paper 6 document or have even come across that type of a document. The fact that all 3 schools were not in a possession of White Paper 6 served as an indication that the schools lacked support from the department as it is the role of the department to provide schools with the policy documents.

From the concern of the Heads of Department it can be deduced that educators do not receive support from the parents and from the Department and they find it difficult to really implement or practice inclusion in their classrooms. It also became clear that educators should be trained before dealing with diverse learners in their classrooms. Without proper training, support and availability of relevant resources they find it difficult to manage inclusive classrooms.

#### **4.5.2 Theme 2: Expectations and needs**

The theme is about the expectation and needs of Foundation Phase HODs and educators regarding the support they need so as to be able to deal with barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase. The participants felt that they can function well if their schools can employ remedial educators to work with educators in schools (Participant HOD3).

Participant 2 also alluded to the fact that one of her expectations from the government is the implementation of the so called accepted pupil-teacher ratio in schools which has also been mentioned by Navsaria (2011) that overcrowded classrooms in South Africa are a great disadvantage, more especially to learners experiencing barriers to learning. Participant HOD3 even suggested that “... *if pupil-teacher-ratio in the Foundation Phase can be reduced from 1:35 to 1:25 so as to minimize or do away with the knowledge gap the learners seem to have in their learning, things will be better*”.

Participant HOD1 made a mention of the establishment of a full service in the circuit that will really focus on learners with learning difficulties that need mild support: “ *I think things would be much better if in our circuit we can have a centre that will be*

*able to accommodate learners that are not coping well in the mainstream but not the candidates of a special school”,* emphasising the same feelings, as Participant HOD 2 mentioned that *“having an institution to place learners who need moderate support will be an advantage not only to us as educators but also to learners themselves because you will find that some learners need a long term of individual attention in order for them (learners) to be able understand some concepts but because of time constraints and high number of learners in a class, they always remain behind; in all there is a serious need of a full service school within our district or circuit”*. Also the issue of a full service school has also been mentioned in focus group interviews by one participant that she has heard of a Full Service school from her friend who said they have one in her district and has a wish of having one also in her district (Participant ED5). Participant (HOD2) felt that the Department should build more resource centers or special schools in the district.

Participant HOD2 stated clearly that there should be professional development for Heads of Department to equip them with better skills of supporting the educators they supervise in their schools. Participant HOD1 highlighted the fact that there should be a provision of bursaries to both Heads of Departments and educators so as to be able to upgrade themselves more especially in the field of inclusive education as they were only trained for mainstream classroom management: *“...our government should not only come up with new policies to be implemented, but with also plans of equipping people who will be implementing the policy, plans like offering bursaries to educators to study inclusive education because this policy is new to us and if implemented well it can yield very good results”*.

Also emphasis on advocacy meetings on inclusive education in the school communities has been raised as a concern by almost all participants to get buy-in from parents on the need for all children to be at school (Participants HOD1, HOD2 and HOD3)

Foundation Phase educators also mentioned their needs as educators in the Foundation Phase and that complemented the findings from HODs. They mentioned that that in order for them as educators to be able to address barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase, their expectations should also be taken into consideration by the Department of Education. They made a mention that they need to be more

empowered so as to be competent enough in managing inclusive classrooms. Asked about their expectations as educators, the following responses were noted from participants: “... *we need to be equipped with necessary skills and knowledge to handle diversity in the classrooms*” (Participant ED3). Educators even mentioned that too much is expected of them but there is no one willing to show them how to deal with inclusive classrooms: “*when we were trained to be educators in the training colleges, our lecturers used to demonstrate to us how to teach in a classroom; even in inclusive education, we also wish that the same approach be used so that we may have better understanding of the policy*”. Participant ED1 emphasised that “... *we need to observe our facilitators practically teaching an inclusive classroom when conducting workshops rather than only relying on theory they give us*”. Participants admitted that they were trained in inclusive education but the training seemed not enough as they still lack the skills to teach inclusive classes. Even Bothma, Gravett and Swart (2000:204) recommended that, “... *in order for educators to be able to deal with different learner abilities and diverse needs, teachers need in-service education and support*”.

Though participants were enthusiastic about the support they received from the district office, they felt it was not enough as they are not well acquainted with the policy of inclusive education. They expressed the feeling that the district officials should be more visible in their schools and their on-site support visits should be on-going not to be a once off support visit.

All participants accepted that they do have the learner teacher support material in their classrooms, though the materials do not meet all the learners’ needs in the classroom. Participant ED5 added that “... *though we have LTSM in our classrooms, it is not enough as it is just a standard type of material that can be used to learners with same learning abilities and style, it does not cater for learner differences*” .

Participants felt that there should be some workshops or awareness campaigns for parents where they will be made aware of their importance in the education of their children. Participant ED3 voiced that “... *there is something that the government is really missing, there should be parental talks where they (parents) will be equipped on parenting styles and their impact on the education of their children as some parents are not aware of what is expected of them in bringing up their children*”.

Participant ED4 alluded to the fact that “... *some parents are overprotective, negligent and others are too harsh to their children and these attitudes may be detrimental to their children and can have a negative impact on the children’s performance in learning in the classroom*”. The concern has also been witnessed by Woolfolk (2010: 69) that “... *in different parenting styles, children from high control and warm parents are more likely to do well in schools than learners from authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parents*. Participant ED4 mentioned that there should be employment of professional nurses and social workers in schools as it is done in the correctional services, so that learners can be referred within the institution so as to speed up the support that may be needed by the learner.

#### **4.5.3 Theme 3: Challenges faced by Foundation Phase Heads of Department and Educators**

From the above mentioned theme the following categories were mentioned by Heads of Department and formed part of the theme: learners not ready for school, overcrowded classrooms, multi-grade teaching, retention policy, parents who are illiterate, child-headed home families and HODs being class teachers. The educators also mentioned their challenges under the following categories: more time needed when teaching an inclusive class, educators to handle learners with different barriers in the classroom, use of different teaching methods and educators to perform multiple roles in their teaching.

##### **a) Learners not ready for school**

Participant HOD2 when asked of the challenges she face in her phase as the Head of Department responded with a deep sigh before uttering any words. She further explained that “*Some learners are not mature enough to be in the grades they are in, and are unable to take the instructions on how to do some tasks in the classroom and their pace in completing some given tasks is far below than that of their classmates within the same class and that immaturity create more burden over class teachers as they have to accommodate all learners in one classroom*”.

## **b) Overcrowded classrooms**

Participants HOD1 and HOD3 complained and raised their concerns on overcrowded classrooms that always hinder their effective teaching even in normal situations but being worse in a classroom with diverse learners. The Department of Education (2001:56) agrees that smaller classes promote effective teaching whilst larger classes prohibit effective teaching. This has been shown by their statements such as “... *overcrowded classroom takes me a lot of time to notice the barriers that some learners face – class arrangement becomes impossible in an overcrowded classroom*” (Participant HOD3). Participant HOD1 emphasised that classrooms should be reduced and pupil-teacher ratio should be taken into consideration more especially where teachers are expected to implement inclusive policy. She further added that she has been a teacher for a quite number of years, but she has never ever seen effective teaching and learning in an overcrowded classroom, and it's even worse with this inclusive education that the Department of Education is imposing on them as educators and they can only do what they are able to do and not do what is above their ability. From the participants' responses, it became evident that overcrowded classrooms really hinder classroom arrangement so as to ensure effective teaching and learning.

## **c) Multi-grade teaching**

Participant HOD1 pointed out that “... *in my training as an educator, I was never trained to do multi-grade teaching, before the government introduced inclusive education; I think I was coping a bit, but now I feel like leaving the profession because I do not cope and I don't get support from any one*”. She also added that “*two grades is not a child's play, to be specific to my case, some learners in my class have behaviour and concentration problem, it is not easy for me to control them in two classes that I have to handle at the same time. When I have to plan a lesson for multi-grade teaching, I am expected to progress from the lowest grade to the higher grade and find it very hard to design down again activities for learners with learning barriers as I have already started down from the lower grade for the entire class. If I have to accommodate all different learning styles in one class, I have to categorise learners according to their abilities. Really this inclusive education is not easy to implement. If it worked in other countries, it is not compulsory for it to be also*

*effective in South Africa”.*

#### **d) Retention policy**

Participant HOD1 complained of the retention policy: *“... this retention policy does not accommodate all learners as it says a learner should be retained once in a phase meaning that if the learner was retained and still experiences learning difficulties in the next class, he or she is supposed to progress to the next grade irrespective of whether the child is ready to progress to the next class or not. This means adding more load to the next teacher as he or she is expected to offer additional support to that particular learner and this also result in accumulated knowledge gap to learners”.*

#### **e) Parents who are illiterate**

Parents of most learners are unable to read or write. Participant HOD3 mentioned that *“... it is not that all parents are not unwilling to support their children at home with their school work, the problem is that they are illiterate”.* Participant HOD1 alluded to the fact that *“... parents with a low level of education complained of many changes in the education system as their children are being taught in a different way from them (parents) so they really find it challenging when they have to do home works with them (children)”.* One participant revealed that *“the reason why some children struggle in their education is because most learners stay with their grandparents their biological parents are working in big cities so as to support their families financially whilst others just decided to abandon their children and grandparents are expected to take care of grandchildren as their own biological children”* (Participant HOD2).

#### **f) Child-headed home families**

Foundation Phase learners seem to be experiencing a lot of challenges in their lives which also affect their progress in learning. Participants indicated that some learners are staying in child-headed homes without any help or supervision by any adult. Educators find it very difficult to get information on some learners' birth history, background and some important information that might help the teacher in dealing better with learners experiencing barriers to learning .Participant HOD 2 raised a concern that, *“In our community we have a high rate of orphans due to HIV and*

*AIDS and some related illnesses and children being left under the custody of their siblings who are also children themselves, that condition alone is a barrier to learning to some learners”.*

#### **g) HODs being class teachers**

HODs from all the three schools are full time class teachers and that hinders some of their managerial duties. They spend most of their time doing preparations for their teaching, seldom doing management duties. In the words of one of the participants expressing her feelings, Participant HOD2 mentioned that “... *this government does not understand that we are human beings, we are treated as machines, expected to manage our phases and be full time class teachers at the same time*”.

The responses from the Foundation Phase educators also confirmed that educators face challenges in their teaching as it has been the case with the HODs. Educators came up with the other version of challenges of inclusive education but corroborating the ones that were mentioned by the HODs that there are challenges in implementing inclusive education.

#### **h) More time needed when teaching an inclusive class**

All the participants complained about the time they have for teaching inclusive classes which they felt was not enough. Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker and Engelbrecht (1999:21) when talking of time and its compatibility with inclusive education said, “... *the concept of expanded opportunities is a mechanism that is able to meet the needs of diverse learning rates and styles as it deals with different pace at which learners learn*”. Another participant (ED3) emphasized the factor of time by saying that there should be more time allocated for teaching inclusive classes so as to give enough chance to all learners to progress at their own pace and to expand more opportunities for each learner. Participant ED3 complained that they always work under pressure trying to finish up the tasks they are supposed to do at a specific given time, “...*teaching learners with different learning styles is very difficult, imagine you are teaching reading and you have a time frame to finish the reading lesson, you notice that half of the class haven’t mastered the reading lesson, you have to do the lesson again and yet you are expected to have covered a certain number of tasks at a specific given time, that is really unfair to us as educators*”. Participants even felt that in order for them (educators) to be able to design down

their activities to accommodate all different learning styles, 30 minutes which is the duration for each period needs to be extended to at least an hour as 30 minutes does not really allow teachers enough time to dwell much on their activities particularly in an inclusive classroom.

From the participants' concerns it became evident that time allocated for each teaching period is not enough, especially when teaching learners with diverse needs.

### **i) Handling of learners with different barriers in one classroom**

Participants complained of handling learners with different barriers in one class. They said because of the high numbers in their classrooms, they take too long to discover the barriers some learners face in their learning and will just assume that all learners not performing well in the classroom have mental retardation. Educators complained of having to adapt their learning activities in a variety of ways as they have to adapt for learners with different educational needs. One participant (ED2) mentioned that in her class she has a learner with a visual problem who cannot see clearly on the chalkboard and the teacher has to use a bigger font when writing and that bigger font tends to confuse some learners who seem to be hyperactive in the class as they just change their handwriting to the font size used by the teacher for a learner with a visual barrier thinking that the teacher is introducing a different style of handwriting. Participant ED2 added that *"... this inclusive education practice sometimes create disorder and confusion as the teacher has to use different teaching methods in lesson so as to accommodate and address learner differences"*.

Educator 3 felt that teaching all learners in one class can give those who are slow to learn an expanded opportunity to learn from the peers: *"...this can enable them (slow learners) to grasp some themes more easily than they could have if they were segregated from the peers"*. Educator 5 argued that *"... in order for slow learners to be able to progress at their own pace of understanding, they should be placed in their own classroom and have their own teacher with the necessary expertise that will really suite their understanding than to frustrate educators who do not have a clue of teaching learners with learning problems and causing boredom to learners who do not have problems in learning"*.

### **j) Teaching methods**

Participants ED2, ED4 and ED5 complained of the fact that they have to use different teaching methods so as to accommodate the different learning styles. They say that though they try to change their teaching methods, they still battle with the effective implementation of this new approach. They even mentioned that when they have to assess learners, they assess them the same way thus not using different assessing methods. Participants admitted that they have a problem in using different teaching methods to address learner diversity. Two participants (ED1 and ED3) admitted that they use one teaching method for all learners in the classroom irrespective of their differences. One participant (ED4) further said that “... *slow learners always remain behind; I always struggle to close the gap between different types of learners in my class till the end of the year, the reason being unable to use teaching methods that will accommodate all learners at the same time*”. Participants ED2 and ED5 even emphasised the fact that learners with the same level of understanding should be grouped together so as to allow the teachers to use the teaching methods suitable for the whole class.

### **k) Educators to perform multiple roles in their teaching**

Participants complained that, as much as they are aware of the other duties they have to perform, too much is expected of them. They are expected to fully perform other duties outside their scope as educators. Participant ED 4 responding with a soft voice and frowning face: “... *we know the roles that we are expected to also perform as educators but too much is put on our shoulders. When it comes to remuneration, the salary doesn't match the duties we are really doing*”. Educators complained that they have to be full time psychologists, occupational therapists and also remedial educators though they were only trained to be educators. Educators find it more stressful to be educators as they have to perform many duties but get paid for only one job. One participant complained of the fact that sometimes they have to solve social issues trying to address barriers to learning in their classrooms.

#### 4.5.4 Theme 4: Perceptions

##### a) Definition of inclusive education

Responses from participants showed that participants do not have a deep understanding of inclusive education but they have a clue of what is done in inclusive education. Some responses defining inclusive education were:

Accommodation of all learners in a class even the blind learners to be placed in a proper place in the classroom, where all learners with barriers are taught.

Accommodation of all learners and equal treatment to all learners because all learners are the same. Inclusive education is whereby all learners are admitted in one school and learn together.

From their definition of inclusive education, it became clear that according to teachers' understanding of inclusive education, the focus is only on accommodation of learners in a school or a classroom. What is so amazing is that they have a clue of what inclusive education is all about theoretically, but lack the understanding of what it really implies practically, as one of the participants, ED1, said that "*... as far as my understanding of what inclusive education is, I think it is where all learners from the community are given opportunity to learn or to be admitted in the school chosen by parents*".

From the responses of the participants it has been noted that, though educators partly know the meaning of inclusive education, they are not clear of what should be done after learners are accommodated in one classroom, as it is stated in the White Paper 6 (2001:16) that inclusive education and training are accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs which are equally valued, and that all children and youth can learn and need support, and maximizing the participation of all learners in the culture and curriculum of education institutions, and identifying and minimizing of barriers to learning are part of the defining principles of education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001:17). . Reason of not having an understanding on inclusive education can be amongst others the non-possession of inclusive education document which is the White Paper 6 that has been picked up by the researcher when analysis documents in the three schools.

## **b) Lack of conceptual understanding**

Almost all participants showed a shallow understanding of inclusive education. They did not know the primary aim of the implementation of inclusive education other than being a burden and a frustration to them and, on the positive side, as equal education for all. One participant expressed her view that “... *according to my understanding, inclusive education is whereby learners with barriers like learners with poor concentration span are taken into consideration*” (Participant ED3).

Other concept that was mentioned by one of the participants, Participant ED5, was that “*I understand that in inclusive education all learners should learn together but what about the implementers of the policy who are teaching diverse learners. This policy should not only consider learners’ differences, also educators should be considered as also different. This is a two-way street, its learning this side and teaching the other side. It is acknowledged that learners are different from each other but the teacher differences seem to be overlooked*”. Participant ED4 added that “... *inclusive education really is more demanding and frustrating to us; it demands a lot from us as educators in schools.*”

## **4.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the results of the qualitative inquiry were discussed. Semi-structured one-to-one, focus group interviews and document analysis revealed that educators need more information and training on inclusive education. Also they need more skills of teaching diverse learners and knowledge on barriers to learning and how to deal with those barriers in the classroom. Parents also need to be made aware of their importance in the education of their children and be encouraged also to encourage their children to take pride in their school work. Document analysis also revealed that schools do not have inclusive education documents, even White Paper 6. Summary, recommendations, conclusion and limitations of the research results will be made in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe the nature of barriers the Foundation Phase learners experience in their learning with specific reference to Umzimkhulu. Literature on the present barriers to learning, and inclusion in South Africa and in other countries was reviewed in order for the researcher to understand the barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu. The literature reviewed in chapter 2 included what barriers to learning are and what may be the cause of those barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase and that provided a better understanding of the phenomenon in Umzimkhulu district. Also the literature reviewed provided a “strong orientation framework” of what will be studied and how it will be studied (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2006:264).

Chapter 3 described the research methodology and chapter 4 focused on the interpretation of data that was collected through focus group interviews, semi-structured one-on-one interviews and analysis of documents. The chapter contained analysis and discussion of the results in accordance with the aim of research and research questions stated in chapter 1. A summary of findings was presented in chapter 4 and the aim was aligned with the answering of research questions.

Chapter 5 will focus on the description of barriers faced by Foundation Phase learners in the classroom and the possible causes of those barriers in the three sampled schools. Limitations encountered will be discussed and recommendations made.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ACCORDING TO THE EMERGED THEMES**

The literature review has shown the main issues in the field being studied and provided a “strong orienting framework” of what will be studied and how it will be studied” (De Vos et al. 2006:264). It served as a foundation for the study and placed it within the research standards both in South Africa and internationally. Reflections

on the research question and purpose gave a direction to the summary of findings of the research.

The findings were consistent across all sets of data collected and showed that:

Educators lack a deep understanding of inclusive education.

Educators do not fully understand how to handle diverse learners in an inclusive classroom.

Learners in the foundation phase are faced with many challenges in their learning.

Strategies on how to overcome barriers to learning have been highlighted as expectations and needs of foundation phase educators.

In answer to the main question, the qualitative study found that learners in the foundation phase experience many challenges in their learning as described by the Foundation Phase educators in the data collected. The study also showed that educators lack conceptual understanding of inclusive education. Educators even highlighted their expectations in the implementation of inclusive education which they think can serve as part of strategies that can be used to assist both educators and learners to overcome barriers to learning.

A summary of findings is presented below according to the themes that were identified from the data analysis. The three research questions will be examined using the themes that emerged from data collected.

## **Exploration of Research Question One and Two**

**Why do learners in the foundation phase not perform well in their learning?**

**What are the possible factors causing their underperformance?**

The researcher decided to discuss the two research questions simultaneously because they both examine the underperformance of foundation phase learners in the classroom. The researcher used interviews as the main method of data collection for this study. The educator's responses to Question 1, 2, 3 and 7 of the semi-structured one-on-one and focus group interview schedules were used to answer the research question of why do learners in the foundation phase not perform well in

their learning and what are the possible causes of their underperformance. (See section 4.5.1 and 4.5.3 of chapter 4). Although the participants responded by giving different answers of why foundation phase learners not perform well in their learning, all their responses showed that they were aware of the fact that learners do not perform well in the foundation phase. Learners that are not mature enough to be in the grade they are doing has been mentioned by educators as one of the causes of underperformance in the classroom. Multigrade teaching has also been mentioned by educators as a challenge to educators that can have a negative impact to learner's performance in the classroom. Also the fact that educators are not fully supported by the Department of Education can also have a negative impact on learner's performance as educators might not have the necessary skills to handle diverse learners in the classroom. As the biographic data indicated that educators lacked specialisation on inclusive education, that factor also can be a contributing factor to learner's bad performance in the classroom because educators do not have any clue of inclusive education and cannot handle diversity in the classroom.

Another factor that emerged during data analysis also substantiated by the literature review was attitudes. The way participants perceived inclusive education showed that they do not see it as a policy that is going to help learners perform well at their own pace but as a burden that is being imposed to frustrate them. Parents who are unable to support their children with school work has also been mentioned by educators and has been considered as also a cause to learners not performing well. Some children from the three research sites have been noted as staying in child headed homes thus resulting in no school supervision and support to learners.

### **Exploration of Research Question Three**

#### **What support should be provided to schools, educators and learners in the foundation phase so as to address barriers to learning?**

The participants mentioned their views of what support should be provided to schools, educators and learners in the foundation phase so as to address barriers to learning. The participants mentioned that they can be very much pleased if they can get full support and training on inclusive education. Also they mentioned the employment of remedial educators in their schools who will work with educators to

deal with learners experiencing barriers to learning. They also wanted the pupil teacher ratio to be reduced to 1:25. They mentioned that a Full Service school should be established in the circuit so as to give the necessary support to learners in need of mild support. Participants felt that they should be provided with bursaries that will enable them to upgrade their studies, especially in doing inclusive education. They also emphasised that advocacy meetings be done in the school communities.

Participants mentioned as well that the government should build a special school that will have a different focus from the one that already exists. Also a mention of the employment of professional nurses and social workers in schools so as to deal with health related problems to learners as early as possible has also been mentioned. Participants also mentioned something that has not been incorporated in the research question, the issue of workshops to parents on parenting styles and its effect on learner performance which they think can be an answer to the provision of support to schools, learners and educators.

### **5.3 POSSIBLE CAUSES OF BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE IN UMZIMKHULU**

The following aspects have been identified from the data as being the possible causes of barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu:

- Environmental conditions where learners live.
- Poor socio-economic status of parents in turn affecting the children,
- Children not living with their biological parents,
- Lack of support from the Department of Education,
- Lack of parental support and involvement in the education of their children,
- Non-existence of the School Based Support Teams in schools,
- Overcrowded classrooms,
- Lack of conceptual understanding of inclusive education,
- Lack of specialization qualifications on inclusive education,
- Multi-grade teaching,
- Lack of specialized personnel in schools and in the district office,
- Retention policy in place for learner progression,

- HODs in schools having to fully perform double duties of being class-teachers as well as managers of the phases,
- Poverty,
- Attitudes from both parents and educators,
- Inflexible curriculum, and
- Disabilities to some learners.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION FROM FINDINGS**

With regard to support, it is clear that there is little or no support from the Department of Education which has resulted in the non-existence of the School Based Support Teams which are the engine of the implementation of inclusive education in schools. The key function of the SBST of supporting learners and educators by identifying support needed and designing support programmes is not practised which resulted in educators seeing inclusive education as a burden to them (educators).

Some educators are trying to support learners experiencing barriers to learning but they lack the expertise of dealing with diversity in the classroom. They do the least they can do from their own experience and limited knowledge. Educators and Heads of Department need more information and training on inclusive education from the District Based Support Team.

From the findings, a need for more advocacy meetings in school communities has been highlighted as matter of urgency. Priority should be given to training of educators on inclusive education and support should also form part of this turnaround strategy on inclusive education implementation.

From the empirical investigation it became clear that learners in the Foundation Phase are faced with barriers in their learning that are either: systematic, intrinsic or sometimes extrinsic. Lack of workshops for educators appears to have hampered the smooth implementation of inclusive policy in schools. All the workshops that the educators stated they had attended were not satisfactory for most of them. Some barriers like negative attitude of parents towards the education of their children have also emerged from the investigation undertaken.

Despite the pressure that inclusive education puts on educators, it has become evident from the results that it is the only policy in the system that really promotes the education of all learners despite their differences.

From all the data collecting strategies that were used in this research, it became evident that educators were not thoroughly trained on inclusive education; they do only what they are capable of doing without any support from the School Based Teams and District Based Support Team. Awareness of parents was not raised so as to encourage them to take pride in the education of their children. The study further demonstrated weak linkages between the school and the parents or caregivers of the Foundation Phase learners. Bronfenbrenner (1979:77) as a development psychologist referred to the complex interconnection between the child's environment at different levels of the system and how it impacted on the developing child. This confirms the importance of communication between the school and the caregivers to minimise the barriers that the learners might face in their learning as mentioned by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research has shown that from the literature study and analysis of results there are some factors that need to be attended to so as to help and rescue learners in the Foundation Phase to learn effectively and teachers to be able to handle diverse needs of learners in an inclusive classroom. It has also generated some important recommendations which originated from the barriers faced by Foundation Phase learners in Umzimkhulu. The recommendations focus on some of the questions that were asked during interviews. These recommendations include the following:

- In service training for educators should be implemented to capacitate educators more on inclusive education and on what it really does entail.
- Educators need continuous training on how to identify and address barriers faced by learners in their classrooms and this has also been specified by Le Roux and Maila (2004:236) that in-service education and training provides for the continued professional development of education practitioners during their working years.
- District Based Support Teams should establish and capacitate School Based

Support Teams so as to enable them (SBST) to identify and support learners in their schools who are experiencing barriers in their learning. According to White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001-48) the key function of SBSTs is to support all learners and teachers by identifying support needed and designing programmes to address the challenges faced by learners and educators in their teachers and learning.

- Relevant resources to be provided to schools so as to help educators deal with the learners facing barriers to learning.
- The issues of pupil-teacher ratio to be taken into consideration hence most educators from the participating schools seem to be affected by overcrowded classrooms. Overcrowding even limits the educator's ability to arrange the learners in a way that really supports the principle of inclusive education.
- Parents should be made aware of their important services they should render in the education of their children and that their involvement can help their children benefit more in their education.
- Retention policy should be reviewed to accommodate learners who need to be retained more than once in a phase in order to minimize the number of learners experiencing barriers in learning.
- Teachers have to change their attitude on the new policy and try to implement it without referring to it as a policy that is there to frustrate them as educators.
- Schools should start raising awareness by conducting campaigns in the communities to advocate the inclusion policy.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS**

The aim of study was reached though there were some limitations. The findings of the study only represent the Foundation Phase educators and not the Intermediate and Senior Phase educators and the results established might not be a true reflection of the school.

Only the Foundation Phase educators were interviewed as most barriers to learning manifest in the Foundation Phase; parents were also not involved to express their views on the barriers faced by their children in learning though they play a big role in the education of their children as primary educators.

The study involved only three schools out of 16 - in the district which might not give a true picture of what learners really experience in the classrooms in Umzimkhulu.

Observation of learning in the participating schools was not done; the researcher relied only on document analysis as the starting point. Therefore, this study of Barriers to learning faced by Foundation Phase learners in Umzimkhulu KwaZulu-Natal Province needs to be addressed in future research.

As much as this study has used the Bronfenbrenner's theory to understand barriers to learning, there may be limitations in using it as it was developed in a first world context which may result in the underestimation of the true reflections of the characteristics of developing societies.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

The study was undertaken with the aim of finding out the barriers to learning the Foundation Phase learners face in their learning. The goal has been achieved by means of a comprehensive literature review and the interpretation of data collected through interviews and document analysis.

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## APPENDIX A

ENQUIRIES: TUSWA NH

INSTITUTION: UNISA

STUDENT NO: 3012 396 8

CONTACT DETAILS: 0836859593

SUPERVISORS NAME: DR.TLALE LDN

CONTACT DETAILS 0824772197

EMAIL ADRESS:[tlaleldn@unisa.co.za](mailto:tlaleldn@unisa.co.za)

Date: 19 August 2013

To the Circuit Manager

Umzimkhulu circuit

### **Request for permission to conduct research in some of your circuit schools**

I, Tuswa N.H., a UNISA student who is doing Masters (Inclusive Education), hereby request permission to conduct research in some of the schools in your circuit. The title of my study is "Barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu, KwaZulu-Natal. The approximate time that the sessions will take is about one hour for each session. Additional 40 minutes will also be required to analyse some school documents that include inclusive education policy documents, school policy, admission policy, assessment policy, mission statement, vision statement and promotion policy. Your school has been chosen because the researcher considers them representative and informative for the topic being researched. All information obtained will be used for research purpose and will remain confidential. School names will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. Participation in this study is voluntary.

The aim of the study is to investigate and describe the barriers faced by foundation phase learners in an inclusive classroom and to propose the support needed to address those barriers. The study will entail semi structured one – on – one interviews with the Foundation phase Heads of Department, focus group interviews with other foundation phase educators and the analysis of some school documents.

The benefit of this study will be for the advantage of foundation phase learners, teachers, parents, community and government itself, where government will come up with strategies of support to educators to be able to deal with learner diversity in the classroom and to train them broadly on inclusive education. The participants will not be exposed to any form of risk or injury during the time of interviews. The researcher will furnish all schools with the findings from interviews and analysis of documents and there will also be discussions on some helpful and interesting things that have been found out in the study.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

.....

Signature

Tuswa N.H. – student University of South Africa

APPENDIX B



education

Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

ENQUIRIES : N.V. MVINJELWA  
DATE : 22/08/2013

REFERENCE:

**Re: Permission To Conduct Academic Research.**

Topic: Barriers To Learning In Foundation Phase In Umzimkhulu Circuit.

You are granted permission to conduct the Academic research at our schools.

This, we hope will enhance the management of learners with barriers to learning at the entry level of their education.

We appreciate the confidentiality of the information collected from schools.

Yours in service

  
N.V. Mvinjelwa (Circuit Manager)



## Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

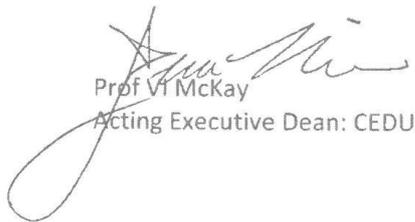
This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**NH Tuswa [30123968]**

For a M Ed study entitled

**Barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu, KwaZulu Natal**

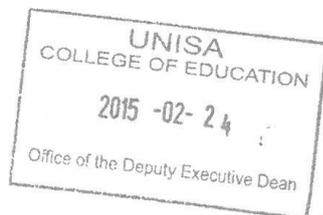
has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue.

  
Prof VJ McKay  
Acting Executive Dean: CEDU

  
Dr M Claassens  
CEDU REC (Chairperson)  
[mcdtc@netactive.co.za](mailto:mcdtc@netactive.co.za)

Reference number: 2015 February /**30123968**/MC

18 February 2015



## APPENDIX D

ENQUIRIES: TUSWA NH

INSTITUTION: UNISA

STUDENT NO: 3012 396 8

CONTACT DETAILS: 0836859593

SUPERVISORS NAME: DR.TLALE LDN

CONTACT DETAILS 0824772197

EMAIL ADRESS:[tlaleldn@unisa.co.za](mailto:tlaleldn@unisa.co.za)

Date: 19 February 2014

The Principal

Vumazonke JSS

UMzimkhulu

### **Request for permission to conduct research at Vumazonke JSS**

Dear Principal

I, Tuswa N.H., a UNISA student who is doing Masters (Inclusive Education) hereby request permission to conduct Focus group interviews with Foundation Phase educators and semi-structured – one-on-one interviews with Foundation Phase Heads OF Department. The title of my study is “Barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu, KwaZulu-Natal”. The approximated time that the sessions will take is about one hour for each session. An additional 40 minutes will also be required to analyse some school documents that include inclusive education policy documents, school policy, admission policy, assessment policy, mission statement, vision statement and promotion policy. Your school has been chosen because the researcher considers it representative and informative for the topic being researched. All information obtained will be used for research purpose and will remain confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. Participation in this study is voluntary. The school has the right to withdraw from participation anytime without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis.

The aim of the study is to investigate and describe the barriers faced by foundation phase learners in an inclusive classroom and to propose the support needed to address those barriers. The study will entail semi structured one – on – one interviews with the Foundation phase Heads of Department, focus group interviews with other foundation phase educators and the analysis of some school documents. The benefit of this study will be for the advantage of Foundation Phase learners, teachers, parents, community and government itself, where government will come up with strategies of support to educators to be able to deal with learner diversity in the classroom and to train them broadly on inclusive education. The participants will not be exposed to any form of risk or injury during the time of interviews. The researcher will furnish all schools with the findings from interviews and analysis of documents and there will also be discussions on some helpful and interesting things that have been found out in the study.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Tuswa NH

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## APPENDIX E

ENQUIRIES: TUSWA NH

INSTITUTION: UNISA

STUDENT NO: 3012 396 8

CONTACT DETAILS: 0836859593

SUPERVISORS NAME: DR.TLALE LDN

CONTACT DETAILS 0824772197

EMAIL ADDRESS:[tlaleldn@unisa.co.za](mailto:tlaleldn@unisa.co.za)

Date: 19 February 2014

The Principal

Mfulamhle JSS

UMzimkhulu

### **Request for permission to conduct research at Vumazonke JSS**

Dear Principal

I, Tuswa NH, a UNISA student who is doing Masters (Inclusive Education), hereby request permission to conduct focus group interviews with Foundation Phase educators and semi-structured one-on-one interviews with Foundation Phase Heads of Department. The title of my study is "Barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu, KwaZulu-Natal". The approximated time that the sessions will take is about one hour for each session. An additional 40 minutes will also be required to analyse some school documents that include inclusive education policy documents, school policy, admission policy, assessment policy, mission statement, vision statement and promotion policy. Your school has been chosen because the researcher considers it representative and informative for the topic being researched. All information obtained will be used for research purpose and will remain confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. Participation in this study is voluntary. The school has the right to withdraw from participation anytime without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis.

The aim of the study is to investigate and describe the barriers faced by foundation phase learners in an inclusive classroom and to propose the support needed to address those barriers. The study will entail semi structured one – on – one interviews with the Foundation Phase Heads of Department, focus group interviews with other foundation phase educators and the analysis of some school documents. The benefit of this study will be for the advantage of Foundation Phase learners, teachers, parents, community and government itself, where government will come up with strategies of support to educators to be able to deal with learner diversity in the classroom and to train them broadly on inclusive education. The participants will not be exposed to any form of risk or injury during the time of interviews. The researcher will furnish all schools with the findings from interviews and analysis of documents and there will also be discussions on some helpful and interesting things that have been found out in the study.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Tuswa NH

.....

## APPENDIX F

ENQUIRIES: TUSWA NH

INSTITUTION: UNISA

STUDENT NO: 3012 396 8

CONTACT DETAILS: 0836859593

SUPERVISORS NAME: DR.TLALE LDN

CONTACT DETAILS 0824772197

EMAIL ADDRESS:[tlaleldn@unisa.co.za](mailto:tlaleldn@unisa.co.za)

Date: 19 February 2014

The Principal

Ntlambamasoka JSS

UMzimkhulu

### **Request for permission to conduct research at Vumazonke JSS**

Dear Principal

I, Tuswa NH, a UNISA student who is doing Masters (Inclusive Education), hereby request permission to conduct focus group interviews with Foundation Phase educators and semi-structured one-on-one interviews with Foundation Phase Heads OF Department. The title of my study is "Barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu, KwaZulu-Natal". The approximate time that the sessions will take is about one hour for each session. An additional 40 minutes will also be required to analyse some school documents that include inclusive education policy documents, school policy, admission policy, assessment policy, mission statement, vision statement and promotion policy. Your school has been chosen because the researcher considers it representative and informative for the topic being researched. All information obtained will be used for research purposes and will remain confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. Participation in this study is voluntary.

The school has the right to withdraw from participation anytime without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis.

The aim of the study is to investigate and describe the barriers faced by foundation phase learners in an inclusive classroom and to propose the support needed to address those barriers. The study will entail semi structured one – on – one interviews with the Foundation phase Heads of Department, focus group interviews with other foundation phase educators and the analysis of some school documents. The benefit of this study will be for the advantage of Foundation Phase learners, teachers, parents, community and government itself, where government will come up with strategies of support to educators to be able to deal with learner diversity in the classroom and to train them broadly on inclusive education. The participants will not be exposed to any form of risk or injury during the time of interviews. The researcher will furnish all schools with the findings from interviews and analysis of documents and there will also be discussions on some helpful and interesting things that have been found out in the study.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Tuswa NH

.....

## APPENDIX G

ENQUIRIES: TUSWA NH

INSTITUTION: UNISA

STUDENT NO: 3012 396 8

CONTACT DETAILS: 0836859593

SUPERVISORS NAME: DR.TLALE LDN

CONTACT DETAILS 0824772197

EMAIL ADRESS:[tlaleldn@unisa.co.za](mailto:tlaleldn@unisa.co.za)

Date: 23 February 2014

Sir/ Madam

This is an invitation to consider participating in a study I, Tuswa NH, am conducting as part of my research as a Masters student entitled "Barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu, KwaZulu-Natal" at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Dr LDN Tlale. Permission for the study has been given by the Department of Education and the school principal. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic.

I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you should agree to take part. The aim of study is to investigate and describe the barriers faced by Foundation Phase learners in an inclusive classroom and to propose the support needed to address those barriers.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 1 hour in length to take place in a mutual agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. All information you provide is considered completely confidential.

Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report.

However, with your permission, anonymous quotation may be used. Data collection during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

I look forward to speaking with you very much and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Tuswa NH

## APPENDIX H

### CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the study of barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu, KwaZulu-Natal in inclusive education. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and add any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (Please print):

Participant's Signature:

Researcher's Name: (Please print)

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX I

### FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ grant consent/assent that the information I share during the group discussions (focus group interviews) may be used by the researcher, Tuswa NH, for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print):

Participant's Signature:

Researcher's Name: (Please print):

Researcher's Signature:

Date

## **APPENDIX J**

### **FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. What is your understanding of inclusive education?
2. What do you see as the challenge of implementing inclusive education in the classroom?
3. List and explain the nature of barriers that you find most challenging amongst learners in your classroom.
4. What support do you receive from school and from the district office so as to overcome barriers faced by learners in your classroom?
5. How has your school made changes to make the environment within your school accessible and safe for all learners?
6. How do you perceive inclusive education?
7. What pressure does an inclusive class put on you as an educator?

## **APPENDIX K**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. What is your understanding of the term 'inclusive education'?
2. What challenges have you experienced in your phases and classrooms when you have to design activities to teach learners with diverse needs?
3. What responses do you usually receive from parents when having parent-teacher meetings where you discuss their children's progress in school?
4. Do you have provision in your school policies for the assistance of learners experiencing barriers to learning?
5. What resources does the school have in order for it (school) to implement the inclusion policy in the school?
6. What training or professional development have you received in order for you to handle learners in an inclusive classroom?
7. List and explain the nature of barriers that you find most challenging among learners in your classroom.
8. What additional support as heads of phases would you like to receive so that you can be able to handle learners with barriers to learn effectively?
9. What pressure does an inclusive class put on you as an educator?
10. What type of support do foundation phase learners receive from other departments like the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development in order for them (learners) to be able to access learning?

## **APPENDIX L**

### **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

#### **TRANSCRIPT OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

R-RESEARCHER

ED1-ED6 – Educator number 1 to Educator number 6

#### **R - What is your understanding on inclusive education?**

**ED3** - Accommodation of all learners in a class even the blind learner to be placed in a proper place in the classroom .Also where learners with poor concentration are taken into consideration and these learners can learn together.

**ED5** Where all learners with barriers are taught.

**ED4** - Accommodation of all learners and equal treatment to all learners because all learners are the same.

**ED2** - Inclusive education is whereby all learners are admitted in one school and learn together

**ED1** - As for my understanding at what inclusive education is, I think it is where all learners from the community are given opportunity to learn or to be admitted in the school chosen by parents

**ED3** - It means education for all learners.

#### **R - What do you see as the challenge of implementing inclusive education in the classroom?**

**ED3** - More time is required for teaching an inclusive classroom so that all learners should have a chance to progress at their own pace. It is not easy to teach learners with different learning styles, imagine teaching a reading lesson and after having exhausted all your teaching strategies you find out that half of the classroom have not understood, you have to do the lesson again moreover you are expected to have covered certain areas of work within a specific period which is not fair to us as educators. A lot is expected of us. We have to perform a lot of duties which I think are outside our scope

**ED1** - A 30 minutes period is not enough when teaching an inclusive classroom as sometimes we have to design down so as to accommodate all learners, I think at least an hour can make a difference. In this 30 minutes also you have to handle learners with different barriers all in one class and even the class you are teaching is very big. Mna shame (Unfortunately for me) I am unable to practice this inclusion, one method for different learning styles does not work for me, I've been trying to do it but failing.

**ED2** - This inclusive education promotes that all learners should be admitted in schools and it is good. Look at my case, I have a case of a learner with visual problem who is able to see a bigger font in the chalkboard whilst other learners who are hyperactive are being confused by this font size as if the teacher is introducing the new type of handwriting. This inclusion of different barriers in one classroom really causes a lot of confusion and disorder because we have to use different teaching methods.

**ED5** - "You see mam, learners with the same level of understand should be grouped together qha ke (that's it) so that educators can use one method that suits them all. Sometimes we have to solve social issues trying to address barriers to learning in the classrooms".

**ED4** - "We know of the roles that we are expected to perform as educators but too much is put on our shoulders ,We are social workers, psychologists but when it comes to remuneration, the salary does not match the duties we are doing".

**R - What additional support as educators would you like to receive in order to teach learners facing barriers to learn effectively?**

**ED3** – To be more equipped with necessary skills and knowledge to handle diversity in the classroom. We want demonstrations on how to teach an inclusive classroom.

**ED1** - Yes demonstrations, we need to observe our facilitators demonstrating what they preach

**ED5** - We were trained on inclusive but training was not enough, we want this training to be practical so demonstration is important. Also we want improved LTSM that talk to diversity in the classroom. - Establishment of a full service school in the

district

**ED2** - Our district officials to be visible in our schools, their on-site visit should not be a once off occasion.

**ED4** - Awareness campaigns and workshops for parents to alert them of their importance in the education of their children.

### **R - How do you perceive inclusive education?**

**ED1** – It is a policy that is giving all children an opportunity to learn and to participate fully in learning

**ED2** – As something that will reduce learner drop-out which has been a result of inflexible curriculum that was not accommodating all learning abilities.

**ED3** – A burden to educators as they have no other option but to implement it with or without skills.

ED4- Time consuming to the teaching time

**ED5** - I see this policy as the only strategy that will give learners of this country an opportunity to learn together but in order for this to happen we should be trained first as the implementers of this policy.

### **R - How has your school made changes to make the environment within your school accessible and safe for all learners?**

All participants reported no changes that the schools have made to make schools accessible and safe for all learners.

## **TRANSCRIPT OF ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS**

R-RESEARCHER

HOD1- HOD3 – Head of Division from school 1 to school 3

### **R - Understanding of the term inclusive education**

**HOD1** - Education of all learners under one roof not differentiation because of race or ability that is all I can say.

**HOD2** - When teaching a class with learners of different abilities, you have to

consider all of them which means the teacher has to prepare for different types of learning abilities.

**HOD3** - Inclusive education is the education that include all learners irrespective of race. Religion, culture, gender, physical ability and mental abilities.

**R - Challenges you experience in your phase and classroom when you have design activities to teach learners with diverse needs**

**HOD1** - Some learners are not mature enough to be in the grades they are in, and are unable to take the instructions on how to do some tasks in the classroom and their pace in completing some given tasks is far below than that of their classmates within the same class and that immaturity create more burden over class teachers as they have to accommodate all learners in one classroom. Slow learners always remain behind, it's hard to close the gap. Reason being that educators are unable to design activities that will accommodate all learners. Also the retention policy that does not accommodate all learners as it says a learner should be retained once in a phase meaning that if the learner was retained and still experiences learning difficulties in the next class, he or she is supposed to progress to the next grade irrespective of whether the child is ready to progress to the next class or not. This means adding more load to the next teacher as he or she is expected to offer additional support to that particular learner and this also result in accumulated knowledge gap to learners. So it is really hard to design activities for this type of learners who seem to have more challenges than we can handle.

**HOD2** - Teaching 2 grades is not a child's play, to be specific to my case, some learners in my class have behaviour and concentration problem, it is not easy for me to control them in 2 classes which I have to handle at the same time. When I have to plan a lesson for multi-grade teaching, I am expected to progress from the lowest grade to the higher grade and find it very hard to design down again activities for learners with learning barriers as I have already started down from the lower grade for the entire class. If I have to accommodate all different learning styles in one class, I have to categorise learners according to their abilities which is not acceptable by the policy. Really this inclusive education is not easy to implement. If it worked in other countries, it is not compulsory for it to be also effective in South

Africa”.

**HOD3** - Overcrowded classroom takes me a lot of time to notice the barriers that some learners face – class arrangement becomes impossible in an overcrowded classroom. Educators find it more difficult when they have to design down some activities because some learners are unable to cope in the class because of learning difficulty, big numbers in classrooms and level of maturity resulting in design down strategy sometimes not effective. Learners not ready for the classes they are in results in non-understanding of the instructions. So as the educator we have a challenge of designing activities for classes of this nature but we try because we cannot just sit and do nothing.

**R - What responses do you usually receive from parents when having parents-teacher meetings?**

**HOD1** - This is not an easy question to answer as some parents are working and they do not have time to meet with educators to discuss children’s performance and most of the children stay with their grannies. Some parents will respond this way: “I know nothing of what is done in schools .I can’t read or write so I can’t help my child. As educators you should do everything yourselves, do not rely on us as parents”.

**HOD2** - When having meeting with parents they use to say that they see themselves unable to supervise their children with school work so they rely on us educators. So it’s a very low percent of parents who are able to do school work with their children.

**HOD3** - Those who are able to help their children with school work, say they do not know what is expected of them and because of that they just prefer to do the schoolwork themselves (parents) on behalf of their children.

**R - Do you have provision in your school policies for the assistance of learners experiencing barriers to learning?**

**HOD1** - Heyi I don’t want to lie nothing in the policy that is written but we sometimes do some remedial classes.

**HOD2** - No there is nothing in the policy but because we are educators and see the situation, we do assist learners in so much that in my school we have bought a

photocopying machine where we make copies of work sheets to be used by learners in extra classes.

**HOD3** - There is nothing written in black and white but ke sometimes we help here and there and we do that to help learners.

**R - What resources does the school have in order for it (school) to implement inclusion policy in the school?**

**HOD1** - No specialised LTSM except the one that is used by all learners in the class

**HOD2** - Nothing specifically for inclusion policy

**HOD3** - There is absolutely nothing, you know what some learners need specialised LTSM that really address their problem, but our education system only supplies us with a standardised LTSM on the other side not expecting us to use one teaching method when teaching in our classrooms

**R - What training or professional development have you receive in order for you to handle learners in an inclusive classroom**

**HOD1** - Seemingly the department does not have specialised personnel like psychologists to help in assessing our learners, schools depend on outside practical only a workshop .I have done inclusive education for my development but there is nothing much from the department , only a workshop.

**HOD2** - I attended a workshop or just an orientation workshop which only took about four hours about six years ago which I didn't understand and there was no follow up after that like a school visit by the department , in fact it was not even a training on inclusive education it was a meeting.

**HOD3** - Nothing that I know of. This is really our area of need, we can be very pleased if we can be trained.

**R - List and explain the nature of barriers that you find most challenging amongst learners in your classroom**

**HOD1** - Big classrooms that we have to teach. Retention policy that doesn't allow learners to be kept for more than a specific period in the phase.

Also parents of some learners are illiterate and cannot support their children in

homework.

**HOD2** - Learners not mature enough resulting in inability to understand some instructions given to the class. Some learners being orphans having no one to support in school work. Illiteracy of some parents resulting in parents being unable to supervise their children's work. Full time teaching of 2 grades in the foundation phase.

**HOD3** - Retention policy, Overcrowded classrooms, Child-headed homes, Admission of some learners not ready for school and illiterate parents or parents with low level of education.

**R - What additional support as Heads of phases would you like to receive so as to be able to handle learners with barriers to learning?**

**HOD1** - Establishment of a full service in the circuit that will really focus on learners with learning difficulties that need mild support. Provision of bursaries to both Heads of Departments and educators so as to be able to upgrade themselves in the field of inclusive education as they were only trained on mainstream classroom management.

**HOD2** - Reduction of teacher – pupil ratio in support of effective inclusive policy implementation. Professional development to Heads of Department to equip them with better skills of supporting the educators they supervise in their schools. Also establishment of more resource or special schools.

**HOD3** - Employment of Remedial educators in schools to work with educators and reduction of pupil teacher ratio from 1: 35 to 1:25

**R - What pressure does an inclusive classroom put on you as an educator?**

**HOD1** - Very stressful situation of teaching learners with different learning styles, it would have been much better if learners with the same learning problem are grouped in one class and be taught by a specialised educator and I teaching just normal learners.

**HOD2** - Too demanding as the educator has to plan one lesson for too different levels of understanding of learners.

**HOD3** - Time consuming to the educator as you have to try to balance things in the classroom.

**R** - **What type of support do foundation phase learners receive from other departments like Department of Health, Department of Social Development to help them (learners) access learning?**

**HOD1** - Department of Health once visited our school to screen learners on minor ailments and even Department of Social Development visited our school and conducted an awareness on child abuse after one learner was raped by her uncle.

**HOD2** - Visit by nurses for immunisation.

**HOD3** - Department of Health doing screening and immunisation.

## APPENDIX M

8 Nahoon Valley Place  
Nahoon Valley  
East London  
5241  
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have edited the following master's thesis using the Windows "Tracking" system to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student to action:

*Barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase in Umzimkhulu, Kwazulu-Natal Province* by NOBUNTU HICSONIA TUSWA, submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education in the subject Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa.

BkCarlson  
Brian Carlson (B.A., M.Ed.)  
Professional Editor

Email: [bcarlson521@gmail.com](mailto:bcarlson521@gmail.com)  
Cell: 0834596647

Disclaimer: Although I have made comments and suggested corrections, the responsibility for the quality of the final document lies with the student in the first instance and not with myself as the editor.

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