

**PERCEPTION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
ON IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

BY

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ABSTRACT

It was the aim of this study to gain information concerning the perception of learners with special needs on the implementation of inclusive education.

Due to misconceptions about the implementation of inclusive education the researcher thought it necessary to conduct a research on what the views of learners with special needs are about inclusive education. To reach the aim mentioned above learners with special needs were randomly selected from two schools (which implement special needs) from the Bloemfontein and Mangaung area in the Free State. The participants in the research conducted were from grade 8 and grade 9.

A quantitative approach was applied by means of distributing questionnaires to the learners. To support or reject the findings a qualitative approach was applied by means of interviews.

The findings from the interviews supported the findings of the questionnaires, which implies that few participants were clear on the meaning and implementation of inclusive education, others were ignorant on the topic and showed signs of fear and insecurity. Most of the participants however were very positive about the implementation of inclusive education

From the findings mentioned it became apparent that orientation amongst all learners is to be done in order to understand inclusive education and those barriers, which are a hindrance in the implementation of inclusive education, should be removed.

The researcher is of the opinion that the implementation of inclusive education could therefore acknowledge and support individuals and ensure quality education for all learners irrespective of their differences, race, gender, age, class and ability.

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DEDICATION

To my late beloved parents and brother, Tamsanqa, Tandiwe, Nqabisile Jama.

My other siblings: Nontsikelelo Mlamleli and Phakamile.

DECLARATION

I, **LIZIWE AGNES MOADIRA**, sincerely and solemnly declare that this dissertation is my original and independent work and has never been submitted to any university or Faculty for the degree purpose.



L.A. MOADIRA

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in the White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:20), inclusive education is one part of the broader challenge of building a culture of learning and teaching where quality education becomes a reality.

The White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:20) further states that inclusive education is about recognizing and respecting the differences between all learners, and building on the similarities. The White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:20) also focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs.

The Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 1994:IX) proclaims that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are:

... the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all, more over, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system.

From the proclamation of UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural organisation) it is thus clear that quality education for all is an absolute necessity, as also indicated in the report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (1997), also titled “ Quality Education For All”.

Oliver (1996:87) suggests that schools must change in order to accommodate learners with special needs. This means that the school should become a welcoming environment, that there should be no questioning of a learner's rights to be there, and that organizational changes are part of an acceptance and understanding of the fact that the purpose of schools is to educate all learners, not merely those who meet an increasingly narrowing band of selection criteria.

As indicated in the Education White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:9) learners with disabilities experience great difficulty in gaining access to education. Very few special schools exist, and they are limited to admitting learners according to rigidly applied categories. Learners who experience learning difficulties because of severe poverty, do not qualify for educational support. The categorization system only allows learners with organic medical disabilities access to support programmes.

Even though the implementation of inclusive education is still behind and negotiable due to the disadvantages of segregating learners it should be implemented with immediate effect to the benefit of all.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In inclusive education the perception of learners with special needs are being investigated to determine the success or failure of the system.

Under South Africa's apartheid system, as stated by Potts, Armstrong and Masterton (1995:178), special education services were offered on a racially-segregated basis, which complicated the problem of distributing the already limited human and physical resources. Although special services for learners with disabilities in South Africa have the same objectives as the education for learners without special needs, hardly any communication exists between these departments. Because of fragmentation and lack of co-ordination, differences have emerged among the departments of education regarding terminology and clarification of categories of special education.

Potts *et al.* (1995:180) furthermore comment that significant changes in South Africa can be realised through the removal of the apartheid system. This system is responsible for the present unequal educational system of the country. It is evident that the arduous task of reconstructing this educational system can succeed when performed by a government and people committed to equal education for all in South Africa.

Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booysen (1996:7) furthermore comment that a new way of thinking about specialised education has led to the policy of inclusion. The shift from mainstream to inclusion signals a dramatic philosophical change. It is a belief in the inherent right of all to participate meaningfully in society.

This practice of educating learners with disabilities, together with their non-disabled peers, means that learning communities that appreciate and respond to the diverse needs of its members are being created. This calls for a new attitude among both educators and learners.

The NCSNET and NCESS Report (1997:15) states that negative and discriminatory attitudes among educators, parents and learners are to be addressed before the implementation of inclusion. Barriers such as inflexible curricula, sign language and inaccessible buildings are hindrances towards the implementation of inclusion. If these could be removed, inclusive education could be implemented.

According to Westwood (1997:30), self-management is crucial for inclusion. The non-possession of self-management skills by a learner with a disability or a learning problem seems to be one of the most important reasons for contributing to the failure of successful inclusion of such a learner in a regular classroom. It is essential that learners with special needs, whether placed in a special setting or in the regular classroom, should be helped to develop adequate levels of independence regarding their work, habits, self-control, social skills and readiness for basic academic learning.

Steps to be taken in the implementation of inclusive education, as according to Beveridge (1993:114), are the involvement of the parents of learners with special needs in their education. Unless these parents are seen as equal partners in the educational process, the purpose of inclusive education would be frustrated.

According to the NCSNET and NCESS Report (1997:146), all learners with special needs are to be recognised as human beings and to be given the respect they deserve. Negative attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education would have to be changed to positive attitudes. For example, schools for “normal” learners will now accommodate the LSEN (Learners with Special Needs), as long as these schools are in the neighbourhood of the learner with special needs.

Barriers which are presently a hindrance to the implementation of inclusive education can thus be removed if the community, parents, educators and learners are well aware and informed concerning the implementation of inclusive education in the schools. This could be done through communication, the media and educators attending in-service training. In the last place, educators (and those learners without special needs) should be orientated regarding learners with special needs and about inclusive schools.

From the above discussion, the following questions arise, namely:

- What are the views of different learners with special needs concerning inclusive education?

- What is the current situation regarding inclusive education in the South African schools, and especially in the Bloemfontein Mangaung area?
- Which obstacles currently prevent the effective implementation of inclusive education?

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this research is to investigate how learners with special needs perceive inclusive education, and how inclusive education can be implemented to overcome the negative perceptions concerning inclusive education. To achieve these goals, the following specific objectives will be dealt with:

- To explore the views of different learners with special needs.
- To investigate inclusive education and the implication thereof in education.
- To investigate obstacles that might prevent the smooth implementation of inclusive education.
- To make recommendations that would assist in improving the quality of the implementation of inclusive education.

1.4 DEMARCATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study fits into the study field of inclusive education, for the following reasons:

- The study is to investigate how learners with special needs perceive inclusion.
- How can inclusive education be successfully implemented?

The empirical investigation was demarcated geographically. The respondents participating in the research were from the Bloemfontein and Mangaung area. The two schools selected taught learners with special needs. The age of learners from the above-mentioned schools ranged from 12-18 years and are from grade 8 and 9.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The limitations of the investigation would be when the results did not meet the criteria of validity and reliability (see 4.7.1 and 4.7.2).

Keeves (1988:197) stated that, in order to avoid results with no validity, the researcher should be concerned with confirming the true value or believability of the findings that he/she has established.

Another limitation would be if the researcher did not concentrate on knowing and understanding participants, because in qualitative research, measurement is not a goal, but rather knowing and understanding.

1.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Learners with special needs from two schools from the Bloemfontein and Mangaung area were selected as the target population. Educators from these schools selected the learners with special needs randomly to be the sample (see 4.3).

At least 30 participants have been recruited by means of an invitation to participate. The sampling procedure was a non-probability selection where participants, who were readily available of their own volition, have been used. Twenty learners completed a questionnaire (see 4.4.2). From the participants, a further selection of 10 learners was randomly made with whom in-depth interviews (see 4.4.3) were conducted with regard to the content of the completed questionnaires so that a qualitative dimension could be added to the research.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

Literature and empirical studies have been selected for this study. Information needed in empirical studies in education is usually being dealt with by means of a quantitative and a qualitative approach. In this study, both approaches were applied.

1.7.1 Empirical study

As mentioned, traditionally both the quantitative and qualitative research studies are conducted in education. The most obvious distinction to the reader is the form in which the data will be presented. The quantitative approach will more specifically refer to results gained from numbers which were collected by means of a questionnaire (see 4.4.2). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:193), the qualitative research method describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. The researcher has applied an interactive qualitative research method (see 4.2.1). Interactive qualitative research is a means of inquiry in which the researcher collects data in a face-to-face situation by interviewing selected persons (see 4.4.1) to support or reject the findings from the quantitative research.

In order to achieve the goals of this study, the researcher therefore had to focus on learners with special needs about how they perceived inclusive education and how it could be implemented.

1.7.2 Literature study

To reach the aims of the study, a thorough literature study was conducted by using both relevant primary and secondary resources. The primary sources on inclusive education were selected from relevant books, government documents, journals, hand-outs, newspapers and dictionaries. Especially government documents were referred to because

the documents contain valuable documentation concerning inclusive education and the implementation thereof.

In the literature study, the researcher concentrated on the following aspects:

- What is an inclusive school?
- Differences between mainstream /integration and segregation.
- Disadvantages of segregating learners.

As far as the title is concerned, the researcher selected the following items (see 1.8):

- Perceptions
- Implementation
- Inclusive education
- Mainstream.

1.8 ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS

For the sake of clarity, it is essential that certain relevant concepts used in the study should be clearly defined. Below are definitions of some of the concepts which have been used extensively in this research.

1.8.1 Inclusive education

This term refers to a broad philosophical position in relation to the educational rights of all children. In South Africa, inclusive education relates to the Bill of Rights which protects all children from discrimination, including not only those with special needs. Inclusive education commits us to creating access to and provision of education appropriate to the needs of all children, whatever their origin, background or circumstances (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana 1997:20)

1.8.2 Mainstream

The term refers to a specific option within a policy of inclusion. Mainstreaming refers to the inclusion of the child with special needs, if possible and practicable, in the normal, mainstream school's classroom and curriculum. It assumes that the resources exist to meet the child's special needs in this context (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana 1997:20).

1.8.3 Perceptions

The concept is derived from the Latin word "percepto", which means "act of faculty of perceiving", or "intuitive recognition as cause" as mentioned by Sykes (1976:810). According to Silverman (1982:16), perception is the process by which we perceive the world in which we live in. He further avers that, in social psychology, the object of perception is a person who is capable of responding as a subject, implying that the

relationship between perceiver and the perceived is a dynamic activity and that the variables involved in social perceptions are extremely complex. The reciprocity experiences is the fundamental mode of organising experience. In a teaching-learning situation it is the basis of elemental thrust and the opening of reality to the learner as stated by Kruger and Adams (1988:61-62); as well as Engelbrecht, Yssel, Griessel & Verster (1982:4-6) and Pearson (1989:68).

1.8.4 Implementation

According to the Cambridge dictionary, implementation is to put a plan or a system into operation. The term "implementation" thus refers to how inclusive education could be put into practice, as stated by the NCSNET and NCESS Report (1997:46), namely that all learners - irrespective of their disabilities - are to be accommodated in the neighbouring schools they wish to attend.

1.9 COURSE OF THE STUDY

Chapter one reveals the orientation of the study, which states the problem to be researched and the most suitable method on how to solve the problem. Reasons for diversity in the learner population are suggested on how the learners with special needs perceive inclusion. The method of research is also stated.

Chapter two clarifies aspects such as inclusive education, mainstreaming and segregation in schools. Chapter three, on the other hand, focuses on how inclusive education can be implemented to be successful in an educational context. In the penultimate chapter the research methods and data analyses were used to enable the researcher to reach the specific outcomes which were explained. The last chapter reveals the findings and conclusions from the research. The researcher also makes the necessary recommendations on how to change the attitudes of learners towards the implementation of inclusive education.

CHAPTER 2

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, MAINSTREAMING AND SEGREGATION IN SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter places the focus on inclusive education, the difference between mainstreaming and inclusion as well the disadvantages of segregating learners. Inclusive education and inclusion are terms that will stay part of the educational context. These terms refer to the extent to which a school or community welcomes every person as a fully inclusive member of the group, valuing these members for the contributions which they can make.

Inclusion, as referred to by Clough and Corbett (2000:7), is a process. Inclusive education, however, is not merely about providing access to mainstream schools for pupils who have previously been excluded from it. Inclusion is the closing down of an unacceptable system of segregated provision and the dumping of pupils in an unchanged mainstream system. Clough and Corbett (2000:8) further comment by saying that inclusion is about education for all. Existing schools, in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching expectations and styles of leadership roles will have to change to meet the requirements of an inclusive school. Inclusive education is about the participation of all learners and the removal of any form of an exclusionary practice.

2.2 INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING

2.2.1 What is an inclusive school?

To seek answers for the question above, the following authors describe inclusion as follows:

Winzer (1998:230) states that inclusion within an international and national context is a complex and controversial issue in education. Inclusion in practice is a difficult concept to define, which results in an often considerable debate about what the real meaning is.

Falvey, Givner and Kimm (1995:8) claim inclusion to be a philosophy that embraces the democratic values of liberty, equality and civil rights, which recognises and accommodates diversity and thereby respecting the rights of all. An inclusive school supports the notion that living and learning together is a better way that benefits everyone, not only learners who are disabled.

Clough (1998:84) supports the above-mentioned author's view that inclusive schooling is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end, namely that of establishing an inclusive society. Inclusivity places the welfare of **all** citizens at the centre of consideration. Inclusion seeks to engage with the question of belonging and solidarity and simultaneously recognising the importance of political differences. Issues concerning diversity are thus to be viewed in dignified and enabling ways.

As stated by Booth and Ainscow (1998:21), inclusion is seen as the core to a wider reform of an education system as a whole in an attempt to create a more effective and just society.

Kauffman and Hallahan (1995:330) strongly support the idea that inclusion is the result of a major shift in the historic beliefs and practices of educational communities regarding the provision of services to learners and youth with disabilities. Kauffman and Hallahan (1995:330) furthermore state that inclusion means learners with disabilities are educated in heterogeneous, age-appropriate, natural and student-centred classrooms, schools and community environments for the purpose of preparing them for full participation in a diverse and integrated society. The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical locations and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendships and interactions in all aspects of education and community life.

According to Westwood (1997:3), research is in the beginning phase to determine which school and classroom practices result in the most effective inclusive education situations. It seems, however, that the following are required if learners with significant learning or adjustment problems are to be successfully included in the regular classroom and with the appropriate access to the general curriculum, namely leadership roles, a school policy, change in attitudes, commitment, a support network, adequate resources, a close liaison with parents and curriculum change can contribute to a more effective inclusive school.

Kauffman and Hallahan (1995:331) highlight the following factors, which support some of the ideas of Westwood, namely to ensure that inclusive education provides benefits for all learners.

Inclusive schools prepare all learners regardless of their learning disabilities in order to assist them to be developed as future citizens in a diverse society. Learners with special needs in particular will benefit if:

- there are opportunities for friendship and a true sense of belonging;
- there is a natural availability of role models;
- there is the necessary facilitation of language communication skills; and
- appropriate development of skills.

Jenkinson (1997:140), on the other hand, suggests that inclusive schooling implies that all learners, no matter how severe or intense their disability, should be accommodated in a regular class in their neighbourhood school - the school they would have attended if they did not have a disability.

Freiberg (1995:7) suggests the following to ensure that the move towards inclusion goes more smoothly:

It will take time for inclusion to be fully implemented, therefore it is vital that regular meetings should be scheduled. The school principal is to support his or her staff

members by encouraging them to do everything they could in this regard. Support should also be provided by members of the community, parents, and educators as well as learners.

Inclusion is about attitudes, for mostly negative attitudes towards different learners manifest in the labeling of learners with disabilities. Educators are to focus on learners' abilities, not their disabilities. Educators, learners and parents should be flexible and ready to accept change. In order to accept this change and to utilise it, the people involved have to do what is best and should not always be concerned with following the rules. Educators are advised to address logistical problems such as scheduling, and broader issues such as assessment, when they arise. Lastly, educators are to visit and draw on the experiences of other schools in which learners with disabilities have already been included in classrooms. What do people really mean by inclusion? Inclusion can be defined as a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners. Furthermore, inclusion means that the numbers of learners with and without disabilities who are educated in classes, are proportional to the local population.

Inclusive education will exist if educational experiences are designed to enhance individually determined life outcomes for learners, and thus seeking to establish an individualised balance between the academic or functional and social or personal aspects of schooling. All these will take place if we, as different stakeholders, indulge ourselves in a systematic change. To be able to really understand inclusion, the focus should be placed on the difference between mainstream, integration and inclusion.

2.2.2 Difference between mainstream or integration and inclusion.

According to the literature, it seems that the terms “mainstreaming” and “inclusion” are often used interchangeably, but in fact they represent two quite distinct concepts. To classify this confusion, the following define mainstreaming:

Salend (1990:10) defines mainstreaming as the carefully planned monitored placement of learners with disabilities into regular education classrooms for the majority of their academic and social educational programme.

Salend (1990:11) also claims that the academic programme within a regular education classroom should adapt to address the instructional needs of learners in the mainstream. The social programme should be designed in such a way that the learner in the mainstream is assimilated into the social climate of the class and accepted by non-handicapped peers. While the learners' academic and social programme lies with the regular classroom educator, mainstreaming is a dynamic, ongoing sharing of information between regular and special educators, auxiliary support personnel and parents.

Lewis and Doorlag (1983:3) refer to mainstream as the way to help a particular category of marginalised learners to fit into the existing system. Thus in mainstreaming is the process of placing learners into ordinary schools, from which they had previously been excluded on condition that they could be able to meet the requirements of the existing

curriculum. The emphasis is therefore on how the learner can fit into the existing school structure and cope with the existing curriculum.

Choate (1993:12) furthermore indicates that mainstreaming is the inclusion of learners with special needs in the general education process. This means that learners with physical, learning, emotional, mental and sensory needs are taught in the same classes as learners without disabilities.

Choate (1993:12) alerts us to the fact that mainstreaming is both a concept and a process. Conceptually, mainstreaming is a commitment in educating learners with special needs in the same programmes as learners without special needs. Procedurally, mainstreaming is the placement of learners with handicaps in the least restrictive environment in which his or her unique needs could be met.

From a conceptual and procedural point of view, mainstreaming is much more than the physical integration of learners with and without handicaps. Mainstreaming is therefore the planning for and the implementation procedures for the effective integration of learners with handicaps in a meaningful and educationally appropriate manner.

Kauffman and Hallahan (1994:265), however, are of the opinion that mainstreaming and inclusion refer to more or less the same thing. They place the emphasis on social integration, which will prepare learners to become well-adjusted, contributing members of society.

As mentioned before (see 2), if learners are being exposed to the existing curriculum, which will help to empower them to develop and possess different skills, these skills could assist the learners in their future lives. It is underlined by the Education White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:17) that mainstreaming is about getting learners to “fit into” a particular kind of system or to integrate them into the existing system:

- Mainstreaming is about giving some learners extra support so that learners could “fit in” or be integrated into the “normal” classroom routine, where learners can be assessed by specialists who diagnose and prescribe technical interventions, such as placement of learners in programmes.
- Mainstreaming refers to the inclusion of special learners in the general educational process, where learners spend any part of the school day with regular class peers.

This implies that, in a typical mainstreaming programme, learners with special needs in regular classrooms participate in institutional and social activities side by side with their classmates. Often these learners will receive “additional instruction” outside the regular classroom from a special educator, such as a resource teacher.

Kauffman and Hallahan (1994:204) reflect that the mainstreaming of learners with special needs into the mainstream education differs according to the needs of the individual. The amount of time in which learners with special needs participate in regular

class activities varies from learner to learner. For some learners, mainstreaming means fulltime permanent placement, for others mainstreaming occurs only for a few minutes per day. The question to focus on, however, is: how does mainstreaming and inclusion differ?

Inclusive education, as underlined by the Education White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:16), is about:

- accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way; that all learners have different learning needs, which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience;
- enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners;
- acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether with regard to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status;
- changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curriculum and the environment to meet the needs of all learners;
- maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning;
- empowering learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to critically participate in the process of learning.

Kruger and Adams (1998:234) support the notion that inclusion implies providing for all learners, regardless of differences within the educational programme of the ordinary school. The emphasis is on how schools can change to meet the needs of all learners.

Clark, Dyson, Millward and Skidmore (1997:88-89) relate that in 1994 representatives of 88 national governments and 25 international organisations concerned with education, met in Salamanca under the auspices of UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and the Spanish Government. The statement which they adopted, set out the rationale for inclusive education in the clearest possible terms and is worth quoting:

“Both UNESCO and the Spanish Government believe and proclaim that:

- those learners with special educational needs must have access to regular schools who should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs;
- regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive societies and achieving education for all, moreover, inclusive schools provide an effective education to the majority of learners and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational system”.

According to Ainscow (1999:218), the notion of inclusion is defined as a process of increasing the participation of learners and reducing their exclusion from cultures,

curriculum and communities of their local schools. This process is implemented while bearing in mind that education involves many processes that occur outside the school. Mainstreaming, therefore, focuses on the overcoming of barriers, adaptation of support systems, success for all learners (see pages 12-13). Inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the rights of learners to education, diversity, specific characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. To be able to address the needs of specific learners, it is necessary to look into segregation.

2.3 SEGREGATION

2.3.1 Segregation of learners

From the earliest times, segregation is portrayed as the manner in which learners with disabilities has been treated, thereby giving an indication of the attitudes and social customs which existed at that particular time in history. To support this statement, Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996:05) state that in primitive communities, for example, where the basic struggle was to survive, children with severe disabilities were either exterminated or abandoned.

After the arrival of Christ, as indicated by Du Toit (1991:115), a new dispensation dawned for the handicapped, as Christian communities started to establish asylums as places of refuge for the disabled and rejected. Although this practice continued through the middle-ages, it was accompanied by much ignorance and superstition, with the result that disabled people were rejected, ridiculed, maltreated or even honoured depending on the particular beliefs of the people of that time. Events such as the Renaissance, the

Reformation and the French Revolution heralded a more sober-minded and scientific approach to the treatment of persons with disabilities. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hosted a number of prisoners in the field of specialised education.

Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996:6) claim that it was only towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries that educationists became involved in the education of the disabled. Initially, the interest was mainly in the education of the blind, the deaf and the mentally handicapped children. The aim of education was therefore to remove or alleviate the particular deficiencies of these learners. Specialised education in this era was characterised by predominantly clinical or medical perspectives.

According to the Education White Paper 5 (DoE 2000:4), learners who experienced learning difficulties because of severe socio-economic conditions did not qualify for educational support. The categorisation system only allowed those learners with organic medical disabilities access to support programmes.

It is argued by Jenkinson (1997:51) that the segregation of some learners through placement in specialised learning contexts led to isolation from their peers and other members of their communities.

As noted by Justice Warren in the 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* decision, separateness in education can generate a feeling of inferiority as to [children's] status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. This sense of inferiority affects the motivation of the child to learn [and] has a

tendency to retard educational and mental development (Stainback & Stainback (1996:493).

2.3.2 Segregation in state schools

During the time of “apartheid”, special schools were organised according to two segregating criteria, namely race and disability. In accordance with the “apartheid policy” on education, the White Paper 5 (DoE 2000:4) states that schools that accommodated White disabled learners were extremely well resourced, whilst the few schools for Black disabled learners were systematically under-resourced. Learners with disabilities experienced great difficulty in gaining access to education. A few special schools existed and they were limited to admitting learners according to rigidly applied categories.

During the apartheid system, according to Skuy and Partington (1990:149-150), special education services were offered on racially segregated basis, which further complicated the problem of distributing the already limited human and physical resources.

Jenkinson (1996:51) indicated that a common criticism of segregated special education was the curriculum and method of instruction in these settings, which were based on relatively low expectations of learners. These low expectations of learners can lead to an outcome that is less than the optimal for the learner. Unrealistic expectations could, however, occur by either over-estimating or under-estimating the learner’s potential.

According to Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996:11-12), an attempt to close the gap in the above-mentioned situation with regard to special needs education in South Africa towards the end of the “apartheid era” could be summarised as follows:

A fragmented specialised education system, based on ethnicity and discrimination on the basis of race and colour, was to be removed. In its place, a system of education and training with which all South African people can identify because it will be serving their needs and interests has to be built. Such a system must be founded on equity and non-discrimination; it must respect diversity, honour learning and strive for excellency. This system must be owned and cared for by the communities and stakeholders it serves, and it must use all the resources available in the most effective manner possible. Inadequate trained teachers, especially in black schools have to be sent for better training to improve their qualifications and to have adequate knowledge and understanding on how to deal with learners with special needs when these learners are accommodated at the so-called “normal schools”.

The researcher views the ending of segregation in education as a human rights' issue, which belongs within equal opportunity policies. Segregation in education, because of a disability or a learning difficulty, is a contravention of human rights, as is segregation because of race, gender, religion and so on. One advantage of getting rid of segregation would be that learners with disabilities will gain confidence, self-respect and will be active participants in their society, since they will be having equal rights just like anybody.

According to Potts *et al.* (1995:182), the following are ways to address the issue:

- Make limited resources available to all and distribute resources more equitable throughout the education system.
- More schools are to be developed in order to accommodate all learners irrespective of their categories. Another priority is that of better training of educators to equip them with necessary knowledge.
- There should be a unified educational system with a single curriculum for all learners, while getting rid of the fragmented specialised education system which was in practice during the ‘apartheid era’.
- All stakeholders are to develop a well-articulated education policy that will reflect and represent the needs of all South African people. This policy can be developed through the implementation of democracy ideals such as equal representation of all racial groups at all levels of education.

2.3.3 Segregation of parents

Concerns have also been raised that the separation of parents of every young children (in order to attend specialised centres of learning which are far away from the learner’s home) undermines family cohesion and the learner’s sense of belonging to his or her community (Jenkinson, 1997:52). The distances between home and school have contributed to the non-involvement of parents in the specialised centres of learning.

O'Connell (1999:21) states that an equally important contributing factor to oppression and alienation, was the lack of participation by Black parents in the policy development process. Other criticisms directed at a segregated specialised learning context, were also noted and addressed by the Department of Education (DoE 1997:25). These criticisms are referred to as:

- Negative effects of large institutions in contrast to smaller, localised units of learning.
- Scaling down of the general curriculum leading to restricted career choices.
- Over-emphasis of a medical-deficit approach in the provision of special education.
- Over-spending on specialist intervention.
- Lack of facilities in rural and disadvantaged areas.
- The fact that these centres only provide for a small percentage of learners with “special needs” compared to the thousands of learners who are totally excluded.

Segregation, therefore, could be seen as a hindrance to education because of the following reasons: extreme disparities between specialised education provision in urban and rural areas; unequal access to specialised education (free and compulsory education was mandatory for Whites, Coloureds and Indians but not for Africans); categorisation of learners, categorised by using various terminology in the departments. The human rights

of the learners had thus not been respected. Parents of learners with special needs had not been involved in any deliberations concerning their children.

2.4 CONCLUSION

From the discussion in this chapter, it becomes clear that the rationale for introducing inclusive education in South Africa is to give concrete meaning to the idea of equality in education. This includes equal access to educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual and emotional disabilities (see 2.2.2). However, these objectives and recommendations cannot be achieved in the absence of adequately trained teachers in all spheres of special education (see 5.3.2), and this is but one issue that should be addressed.

Mainstreaming and inclusion focus on different aspects but have a common goal, namely that of educating learners who have disabilities together with those who are non-disabled. The main reason why inclusion has been implemented has become very clear: the inherent right of all persons to participate meaningfully in society. For learners to be included in the mainstream it is emphasised that existing school structures and curriculum changes should be a priority as well as social integration, which will prepare learners with special needs to become well adjusted, contributing members of society. The removal in the education system can also be addressed as a human rights issue, which belongs within equal opportunity policies. The removal thereof can thus only bring confidence and self respect to learners with special needs.

CHAPTER 3

IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reveals aspects concerning the implementation of inclusive education and the perception of learners with special needs concerning inclusion.

According to the NSCNET and NCESS Report (1997:15), it becomes apparent that barriers such as negative attitudes displayed by educators and the so-called non-disabled learners should be addressed.

Implementation, according to Westwood (1997:3), is to fulfil an engagement or contract that has been entered into. Different authors refer to the following as ingredients that could result in a positive environment (see 3.1.1).

Nielsen (1997:7) supports this idea and also refers to aspects (see 3.1) that will promote the idea of an inclusive environment. The following are aspects that are conducive to a positive learning environment for inclusive education.

3.1.1 Aspects to promote a positive inclusive environment

3.1.1.1 *Leadership and training*

Westwood (1997:17) claims that there should be strong leadership on the part of the school principal. Staff should be trained on a regular basis for professional development, which would lead to the development of an overall school policy to support inclusion. Both learners and educators should display a positive attitude towards learners with disabilities. The staff should commit themselves to work collaboratively and to share problems, responsibilities and expertise by having adequate recording in terms of materials and personnel. The personnel should strive to link with outside agencies and services for the development of support networks, as well as close liaison with parents. In order for leadership and training to be complete, there should also be planning and management.

3.1.2 Implementing and planning

Paul, Turnbull and Cruickshank (1997:130-131) are of the opinion that there are no magic tricks in developing and implementing a sound inclusive programme in a school. The basic principles are those of good planning and management. They refer to the part of the planning and implementation, namely knowing where you are; knowing where you want to go; having a plan for getting there; having a plan for determining when, and (when you get there); and having an efficient and effective system of communication.

STEP 1

During the implementation one should ask the question: where you are or where do you stand? The staff and the parents' local education agency and/or administration could indicate how the mentioned parties feel and what they believe about inclusion.

STEP 2

The implementation of step two will guide and judge everything which must be done. It is critical in this step that goals should be developed, understood and supported by parents, educators and professional education supportive staff.

STEP 3

Step three reveals a good plan. The plan should include the purpose and goals, and specify the operational objectives. Step three is a step towards ensuring the success of the programme. The objectives should be specified. This part of the plan would indicate progress towards the reaching of goals.

STEP 4

A good evaluation of the steps implemented is important and will be done during this step. The evaluation needs to provide information about how well the programmes have

been implemented and the objectives been reached. This is an accountability mechanism and should therefore involve all those accountable for the success of the programme, which include the educators, professionals, supportive staff and parents. The evaluation should provide the administrator with the data needed to make the best decisions.

STEP 5

The last step refers to the effective and efficient communication system that should be in place. Communication is always important. To make inclusion work and to facilitate it, needs careful attention. Parents, educators, professional supportive staff and the school administration must be effectively and efficiently linked in order to provide the ongoing support and guidance that the programme requires.

Against the background of the five steps mentioned, authors highlighted it that the gathering of views from staff, administrators and parents on the implementation of inclusion is of importance and a necessity. Clear guidelines on how to develop goals are to be provided. The authors furthermore mention that the plan should be put into operation with a clear assessment formula.

The evaluation process should indicate the level of progress and how to correct mistakes in time. An effective and efficient communication system is essential so as to facilitate the involvement of all stakeholders.

3.1.3 Strategies

Stephens, Blackhurst and Magliocca (1988:85) state that in order for the implementation of inclusive education to be successful, strategies should be implemented by educators. Stephens *et al.* (1988) specifically refer to the strategies that will enable:

- educators to acquire, adapt and develop instructional materials necessary to achieve learning goals, which could be obtained by selecting and using a variety of individualized teaching methods to instruct all learners within their levels of capacity;
- educators should make use of the assistance of volunteers to supplement classroom activities; and
- the special education resource staff and the talents of parents in supporting the activities of the school are of utmost importance.

3.1.4 Environment

As stated by Paul *et al.* (1997:140), implementation of inclusive education needs a responsive environment. Educators must design significant dimensions of their classrooms to be responsive to the diverse needs of all learners. More focus should be on implementing a curriculum which caters for all learners. This curriculum responds to the totality of a learner's functioning pattern by placing equal emphasis on learning and cognitive experiences.

Knockblock (1983:250-251) supports this idea of environment by commenting that educators who are successful at mainstream provide a conducive atmosphere. These educators avoid the embarrassment of learners in front of their peers and relate to each learner on a personal level.

Effective educators try to build successful experiences for each learner, accept genuine effort and build upon it rather than pointing out weaknesses of the learners. Educators also conduct discussions in the classroom that deal with relationships. Educators show genuine acceptance of special learners while avoiding situations where their abilities might be spotlighted.

According to Nielsen (1997:7), the educational environment has a tremendous impact on learners with disabilities as well as on learners without disabilities. In the process of including learners with disabilities in the regular classroom, the educator must convey positive feelings and a caring attitude towards the learners. Creating a positive and comfortable environment is essential if the educational experience is to be successful and rewarding for all learners.

Beveridge (1993:96) strongly supports this idea by saying that a positive educator-learner relationship is fundamental to effective classroom management, because any strategy that an educator might employ, will be more successful in a climate of mutual respect. A positive learning environment, in which all learners feel that they are valued members of

a mutually supportive class group, is fundamentally associated with the quality of relationship within the classroom.

Dyson and Millward (2000:12) claim that one of the aims for implementing inclusive education is a commitment to develop a school which is caring and people-centered, with a learning environment in which everyone pursues excellence. To secure effective learning, the environment should be safe and physically accessible to all.

The following authors, namely Lewis (1993:49), Ashman and Convey (1989), Stainback and Stainback (1990; 1992), Lewis (1991) and Beveridge (1993) in Gross (1993) have identified important features in a positive learning environments for learners with special needs, which include:

- A differentiated curriculum, which makes it possible for the learner with special needs to participate (for example, planning parallel activities at varying levels of difficulty).
- A variation of teaching methods, for example listening to taped instructions or recording answers on audiotape instead of writing responses.
- Appropriate recognition of, and praise for success.
- Encouragement of co-operation between learners.
- The development of learners' self-monitoring and self-evaluation.
- Fostering of learners' independence and autonomy in learning.
- Effective use of resources.

- A problem-solving approach to teaching, so that learners with special needs are seen as a stimulus, not an impediment, to educator development.

In other words, the researcher can draw the conclusion that aspects mentioned (3.1.1. – 3.1.4) could be successfully implemented if an environment for responsive learning is created which focuses on aspects such as:

- The curriculum.
- Classroom atmosphere.
- Structuring of successful experiences.
- Group discussions.
- Setting objectives.
- Applying different teaching strategies.
- A problem solving approach.
- Learners who regulate their learning.

3.1.5 Roles of educators and other parties involved

According to Westwood (1999:191–192), educators and school administrators need to have a positive attitude towards the notion of inclusive schooling. A willingness to accept the challenge of adapting classroom practices and reviewing school structures is essential.

All educators and supportive staff should be involved in developing the policy, which includes the set of beliefs that guides the schools inclusive practices, together with a commitment to implement such practices.

All interested parties need to be involved in preparing for inclusion and in the ongoing monitoring of its effectiveness. Support networks need to be identified for the learner with special needs and also for educators with exceptional learners in their classes.

How do learners perceive implementation of inclusive education? All aspects mentioned will be of no use if the environment is not responsive to inclusive education. So lastly to ensure the effective and successful implementation of inclusion, it should be structured in such a way that it is responsive to inclusive education.

3.2 HOW LEARNERS PERCEIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSION

3.2.1 Learners' perception

The aim of this study is to research how learners with special needs perceive inclusive education, and how inclusive education could be implemented (see 1.3).

From research done by themselves, Bryan and Bryan (1982:226-228) reveal that learners have the perception that they tend to be either rejected or ignored by their peers. Learners have a relatively low self-esteem. Academic failure and a relatively low intelligence certainly may contribute to a low social esteem.

Learners tend to believe that others or events external to themselves can cause their successes, while attributing their failures to a lack of ability. Relatively poorer academic achievement may contribute to their rejection by educators, peers and even parents.

Studies of social comprehension and social thinking suggest that the learning of the disabled may cause some difficulty to understand the affective states in of other learners socially complex or ambiguous situations.

Wang, Reynolds and Walberg (1991:185) claim that the specific failures in the adaptation of learners with disabilities directly relate to the damage to self-esteem. In order to restore the self-esteem of disabled learners, a redesigned service and benefit system is necessary to ensure an active role for the disabled learners.

Smith (1999:201) is of the opinion that learners with specific needs often feel disempowered, disenfranchised or silenced in school. To support his statement, the results of the March / April 1999 special issue of remedial and special education reveal that:

All students questioned on consumer perspectives in *special education*, indicated dissatisfaction and *particularly* feelings of not being respected, heard or supported by the educators *in their lives*.

As stated by Wade and Moore (1993:40), learners like helpful, understanding educators who are fair, have a sense of humor and educators who make lessons interesting. Learners with special needs dislike strict, unfair, miserable educators, those who shout, punish, do not explain properly and who reveal lack of understanding or insensitivity.

Learners with special needs blame unreliable, authoritarian, discouraging, moody, unpleasant educators for making their schooling unhappy. This lack of comfortableness in relationships (see 3.1.2) does not assist learning and in some cases may lead to disaffection.

These learners with special needs expect educators to be understanding and patient. Educators should encourage and praise whenever possible. They should listen to their learners and give their learners a chance to speak. Educators should be willing to have statements made against them, to be humble, kind, capable of informality and simply pleasant and above all, should be warm and personal (see 3.1.5).

3.2.2 Educators' perceptions

The NSCNET and NCESS Report (1997:15) states that discriminatory attitudes particularly among educators, parents and other learners, might cause serious barriers to effective learning, and this attitude must be addressed if an inclusive system is to be implemented.

According to these authors Diaz-Greenberg, Thousand, Beckett, Cardelle-Elawar, Nevin & Reese (1999:323) educators' attitudes are especially important and have been noted as being a most critical factor in determining the effectiveness of inclusive education policy (see 3.1.3).

There is a tendency amongs educators to perceive learning-disabled learners as less desirable than non-disabled counterparts. These educators have lower expectations regarding disabled learners than the non-disabled. Educators relate to these learners (disabled) as less co-operative, less attentive and less able to organise themselves.

Lewis (1995:49) states that educators believe that learners with special needs fall well outside the range of differences which the educator in a mainstream school could accommodate. Educators are of the opinion that the ELSEN learn very little, even with special help.

Learners with special needs require constant adult attention. Educators feel that these learners with special needs drain the educator's energy by demanding far more energy than their peers. Educators are furthermore of the opinion that learners with special needs need highly specialized approaches and would be rejected by non - disabled learners.

3.2.3 Parents/family perception

According to Nielsen (1997:11-12), parents sometimes have strong feelings of guilt and might blame themselves for having a child with a disability, or might blame the doctors and other professionals, including educators. It is important for the educator to understand that parents are often just trying to find a reason for their difficult situation.

Parents are keen that their children with learning disabilities should be integrated into the school system. Russel (1994:78), however, implies that parents of learners with special needs need a help-line to support them as parents.

Russel (1994:80) further comments that professionals should be sure of their facts before they talk to parents of ELSEN. Parents of learners with special needs are partners in the care of their children. These parents deserve respect and sensitivity.

From the discussion on the perception of learners with special needs, parents and educators, it became clear that each party involved should therefore contribute to how inclusive education could be implemented.

3.3 EFFECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In 3.2.1 it was stated that there are five steps that should be taken into consideration when inclusive education is implemented. The third step includes the purpose and goals and specifies operational objectives. If this step is implemented, it could be a step towards

ensuring the success of the programme since it will focus on the effects of inclusive education.

According to Stainback and Stainback (1996:31 – 320) a change of attitude towards learners with disabilities could positively develop when appropriate guidance and direction from adults are provided in an inclusive setting. In an inclusive setting learners learn to understand, to respect, to be sensitive and to grow comfortable with individual differences and similarities among their peers.

Another major benefit that could occur as a result of school inclusion, is that it could encourage the recognition of learners with special needs as human beings. The 1982 Report of the Disability Rights Education and Defense found that “regardless of race, class, gender, type of disability or age at its onset, the more time spent in integrated public school classes as learners, the more people achieved educationally and occupationally as adults and the more the attitude changes to possibility”.

Beveridge (1993:92) claims that educators' attitudes towards and expectations of the learner, and the extent to which these are communicated, are fundamentally important. These attitudes could not only influence the way in which individual learners view themselves, but also the way in which they are viewed by their peers. A range of factors affects the attitudes that the educators demonstrate towards learners with special needs. These will include their knowledge, information and understanding of special educational

needs, their confidence in their own professional competence to meet the full range' of those needs, and the quality and availability of any necessary additional support.

Dyson and Millward (2000:112) alert us to the fact that, since these learners have feelings of low self-esteem, it is very important for educators, peers and parents to encourage the learners self-esteem by respecting their emotions, by caring and by being empathetic.

Nielsen (1997:7) claims that there is no doubt that the language one uses in referring to a learner with a disability, could impact negatively towards the learner and could hinder the development of self-esteem. The educator must avoid any language that might have a negative connotation. For example, two very commonly used words are “afflicted” and “unfortunate”.

“Afflicted” has a very negative connotation, because it suggests that the person has been singled out or cursed, and implies that the person with a disability is unlucky or to be pitied. Other words considered inappropriate and to be avoided include *handicapped; crippled; deformed; diseased; burdensome; spastic; incapacitated and disadvantaged.*

According to Wade and Moore (1993:60), research has shown that parents also suffer from the stigmas that are attached to their offspring. Attitudes prevalent in society affect the way parents think about topics such as disability, with the result both children and their parents could find themselves influenced towards a stereotypical viewpoint. In this

way the attitudes and bad behaviour of parents, educators and others affect the self – concepts of learners with disabilities. Parents also have their attitudes shaped by society.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The literature review in chapter three revealed different aspects on the perception of learners with special needs towards inclusive education and how to promote and implement inclusive education. The literature refers to specific strategies that should be implemented to enable educators develop instructional materials and utilize special educational resources to ensure successful implementation. A positive attitude towards learners with special educational needs are crucial if these learners are to feel accepted and part of the school and the wider community, rather than feeling isolated and different. It is therefor mentioned that the structuring of a responsive environment, needs special attention. Educators should practice a conducive atmosphere in their classrooms in order to accommodate the ELSEN. A conducive atmosphere refers to an acceptance of each other, irrespective of the differences learners might have whether it be a physical or learning disability.

The literature also makes it very clear that providing opportunities for a shared curriculum and shared learning experiences, where learners can contribute at their own level and work at an appropriate phase, is essential for fostering positive attitudes.

Since parents have been left out during the education of their children with special needs, it became apparent that parents may also realise the benefits from mainstreaming. The implementation of inclusion gives parents an opportunity to see their child function in a normalized environment. Inclusion, therefore, provides an opportunity to respond to a range of learners, thus challenging educators to develop and use a repertoire of teaching skills to the benefit of all learners.

In the literature it is also recognised that to promote positive attitudes towards learners with special needs the emphasis must be placed on equipping students, who are being trained as educators at universities and colleges, on the necessary skills and awareness of learners with special needs. However, a central concern must also be towards the development of educators who are already in schools and who are increasingly being confronted by a wide range of learning needs.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a qualitative approach as well as a quantitative approach will be implemented in an attempt to describe, intercede and reconstruct the views of the respondents, namely the learners with special needs, on their perception towards the implementation of inclusive education. The chapter also includes the aims of the empirical investigation, and how data collection (by conducting interviews and distributing questionnaires to the learners with special needs) can be used as an attempt to answer the research question (see 1.2).

As a summary, the following are to be expected when the research has been concluded.

- How can existing attitudes be changed towards inclusive education in order that inclusive education should be successful?
- Which means can be implemented to meet the ELSEN?
- What can be done to involve parents of all learners, those with special needs and non-disabled learners, in order that there should be harmony in our schools and that a division between “us” - the “normal” - and “abnormal” learners and the use

of euphemistic categories such as learners with special needs, which obscure such a practice, could be resisted.

4.2 METHODS OF ENQUIRY

In order to understand the phenomenon studied, the researcher decided to conduct the quantitative approach supported by the qualitative approach. A quantitative approach sometimes limits the discovery of essential meaning and components of the study and would not appropriately answer all the questions (Brink 1991:14). In order to avoid restricting the information to the learners, the researcher also had to opt for a qualitative research which comprises of interviews.

4.2.1 Qualitative enquiry

The use of a qualitative research method has become extremely popular in South Africa during the last decade or two, as stated by Babbie and Mouton (2001:xx). For many years, however, qualitative research procedures, associated with large-scale surveys and experiential studies, were the sine quo non in the natural as well as the human and social sciences. Babbie (1992:6) defines qualitative research as the “non-numerical examination and the interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships”.

In-depth investigations were made to determine the perceptions of the learners with special needs towards inclusive education, and how it could be implemented. Tools, such as interviews (see 4.4.1), that indicate even the smallest and non-quantifiable details are being clarified beyond doubt. These interviews were conducted with 10 learners at the two schools selected for the research. Eight questions (see Appendix A) were formulated for this purpose. The main purpose of conducting the qualitative approach therefor was to collect data in a face-to-face situation to analyse the learners' perceptions on the implementation of inclusive education.

4.2.2 Quantitative approach

According to Crossley and Vulliamy (1997:4), the quantitative research method produces numbers as data. Data in most cases are gathered through the use of questionnaires. The quantitative research method, according to Eichelberger (1989:101), is the best technique to be used to gather objective data as in this case how learners with special needs perceive inclusive education.. Nonetheless, Eichelberger (1989:102) also points out that quantitative methods can be subjective in the sense that it ignores the interpretations and concerns of meaning in a situation. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:31) state that the quantitative inquiry method can be either experimental or non-experimental. The non-experimental mode was selected in this research. Data were gathered in the form of a questionnaire. The data that are gathered are usually used to describe characteristics of a certain population (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:304). For the purpose of this

research the information gathered through the quantitative inquiry was used to analyse the context of inclusive education and the implementation of inclusive education.

Since the qualitative enquiry method is not the absolute answer to all the problems to be resolved by the research, Miles and Huberman (1984:23) recommend the interactive implementation of the two approaches to ensure maximal attainment of the desired outcomes.

4.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:169), a population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalise the results of the research. This group is also referred to as the target population or universe. In this research, the researcher has targeted two schools, one in the Mangaung area and the other from the greater Bloemfontein area. Schools selected are schools which are basically teaching learners with special needs.

The sample was drawn from the two schools mentioned above, and the selection was done randomly from the population, namely learners with special needs. Thirty participants were selected to participate. From the 30 participants a further random selection of 10 participants were made with whom in-depth interviews were conducted (see 4.3). The remaining 20 participants completed the questionnaires.

4.3.1 Sampling

“Sampling” means the selection of a sample design that would be suitable for addressing questions raised as a process of research.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:600) describe sampling as the group of subjects from which data is collected. According to Bless and Hingson-Smith (1995:85) there are different types of sampling and the sample is selected with a certain purpose, for example random, non-random cluster sampling, and non-probability sampling. The researcher used the latter one, because this form of sampling – non-probability as stated by McMillan and Schumacher (2001:174) - is the most common type in educational research.

Non-probability sampling uses subjects that happen to be accessible or who might represent certain types of characteristics. For example, this could be a class of students or a group gathered for a meeting.

A non-probability convenience sampling was selected. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:175) describe a convenience sample as a group of subjects selected on the basis of being accessible or expedient. It was convenient to use the group as subjects, namely learners with special needs, from the two schools mentioned earlier.

Advantages of non-probability convenience sampling, as according to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:178), are as follows:

- It is less costly and time-consuming.
- It is easy on administration.
- Usually it assures a high participation rate.
- Generalization to similar subjects is possible.

The disadvantages are as follows:

- It is difficult to generalise to other subjects.
- It is less representative of an identified population.
- Results are dependent on unique characteristics of the sample.
- There is greater likelihood of error due to experimental or subject bias.

The final choice was made to use the above-mentioned methods, despite the weaknesses, because of the availability of subjects and the restricted financial resources of the researcher. For the researcher, the group of learners as respondents was accessible. Because the target population was from her local community, it was less costly and time consuming. The research was conducted directly with the respondents, and therefore there was a high participation rate.

4.4 RESEARCH TOOLS

Two research tools were used throughout the project. They were implemented in the form of interviews and questionnaires set up by the researcher.

4.4.1 Interviews

According to Bless and Hingson-Smith (1994:106), the interview is the first of the direct ways of obtaining information from participants. An interview involves direct personal contact with the participant who is requested to answer questions.

Interviewing is a second but very important method used by qualitative researchers of selected individuals. Interviewing is an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy or to verify or refute the impression the researcher has gained through observation.

According to Johnson (1994:44), successful interviews are usually characterised by the following qualities.

- Consistency through the application of standardized questions stimulates the respondent.
- Interviewees who have very little knowledge of the research in question.

- The interviewer that makes contact with the respondent and briefly explains the purpose of the research inquiry.
- An interviewer's ability to persuade the respondent to participate in the enquiry by being interviewed.
- The interviewer who has the ability to work through an interview schedule, using a standardised language.

According to Borg and Gall (1989:401), a standardised interview has the following characteristics.

- It poses questions in a language that is clear and meaningful to the topic.
- It does not contain leading questions. These questions can only become relevant in cases where they contain deliberate assumptions designed to provoke reactions to the topics.
- The interviewers should talk less than the respondent to ensure maximum collection of the information.

Powney and Walts (1987:40) are of the opinion that interviewees need to trust the person interviewing them. Many people believe that the confidential information collected by an interviewer gives him or her considerable power. Effective and trustful interviewing depends on how the social situation is defined. Whilst trust depends on personality, sometimes it also depends on the story of the interviewer, where he/she seems to be from, and the reasons for asking questions.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994:73) state that researchers begin their field notes by jotting down bits of information they want to recall, such as interesting terms and ideas they have heard or read. These bits of information could then be organized into a kind of narrative of what had been observed, usually approximating a chronological ordering.

Each method has advantages as well as disadvantages. One of the most important aspects of the interview is its flexibility. Another advantage is the control the interviewer has over the order in which questions are being considered. Especially when questions are not very clear, they could be dealt with in the appropriate manner. The main disadvantage of an interview is that it can be more expensive (see 4.2 in the case of researcher) and time consuming than a questionnaire.

The researcher however did not experience any disadvantages when conducting the interviews because of the following:

- The researcher established a rapport with participants through small talk before starting the interview.
- Participants were informed of the purpose of the interview.
- Interviews were tape-recorded and then verbally transcribed.
- Questions asked were in a language that was clear and meaningful to the topic.

4.4.2 Questionnaire

Walliman (2001:236) states that using a questionnaire enables the researcher to organize the questions and receive reply without actually having to talk to every respondent. He further claims, that as a method of data collection, the questionnaire is a very flexible tool, but it must be used carefully in order to fulfil the requirements of a particular piece of research. One of the main features of a questionnaire is its impersonality. Questionnaires can be a relatively economical method in terms of cost and time, soliciting data from a large number of people.

Rea and Richard (1997:101) draw our attention to the fact that questionnaires have a broad appeal, particularly in democratic cultures, because they are being perceived as a reflection of the attitudes, performances and opinions of the very people from whom the society's policy-makers draw their mandate.

Johnson (1994:37) believes that questionnaires could provide the researcher with essential information, because the respondents complete them without being disturbed by anybody. If the questionnaires are to be successful, the designer ought to have the ability to think clearly and to ask plain questions in simple language and in unambiguous terms. The respondent then finds it relevant to his/her knowledge and experience and this could stimulate him/her to answer all the questions without any hesitation.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:257) also argue that accurate and reliable outcomes could be achieved from questionnaires. This argument is based on the anonymity in terms of the respondents. Respondents do not write their names on the questionnaires and this gives them the freedom to express their feelings freely.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:258), questions or statements used in questionnaires must possess the following qualities:

- They must be clear to enable all respondents to interpret them in the same way.
- They should avoid double-barrels, otherwise they might contain more than one idea, thus becoming ambiguous.
- Competent respondents regarding the topic under investigation must be selected to ensure the attainment of reliable and accurate information.
- Relevant questions will address the investigated issues satisfactorily.
- Questions should be short and simple, otherwise the respondents might be unwilling to try and understand them.
- Negative items could easily be misinterpreted.
- Biased items might encourage particular responses at the expense of others.

Most of the items in the questionnaire were structured. However, respondents had the opportunity to reflect on their own perspectives in open-ended questions where they could comment on certain issues (see Appendix A).

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:461) define qualitative data analysis as a primarily inductive process of organizing the data into categories (in this case according to the questions asked during the interviews) and identifying patterns or relationships among categories. The analysis of data is the process that should follow immediately after the collection of data. The data collected need to be analyzed and interpreted in a way that will classify the facts without adding or reducing anything that has been said or given by the respondents.

According to Hopkins (1980:177), one major function of data processing is organizing qualitative data to facilitate interpretation. The organization of qualitative data may be as complex as providing a structure to interpret large amounts of factual data that cannot be reduced to numbers. Data collection procedures must be chosen and implemented to supply data, which are easily organised.

As mentioned by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:131), there are different methods in data analysis, of which the most common approach is the inductive approach. In the inductive approach, data collected relates to a focus of inquiry and are grouped if they link to form categories. The aim of this approach is to reduce the volume of information in order to be manageable according to the questions from the questionnaire.

The second approach is an inductive approach in which the analysing of data is done by "utilising the data". For example, once all data have been gathered, the next step is to

identify the chunks or units of meaning in the data. This search for meaning' is accomplished by first identifying the smaller units of meaning in the data, which will later serve as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning.

The qualitative research approach, as mentioned by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:120), appears to be the best method a researcher could use to bring the researcher and the respondents into contact with one another. Once the researcher has decided on the type of approach to be used, it becomes easy for the researcher to collect information. The measures applied by the researcher to assess whether the data collected were genuine, valid and reliable were measured against certain criteria as mentioned in 4.6.

4.6 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

To enhance the validity and reliability of data collected at various points in the data collection process, different research techniques had been applied. For instance, the data collected through questionnaires (see 4.4.2) were tested against data collected through interviews (see 4.4.1), and vice versa.

4.6.1 Validity

According to Keeves (1988:323) validity refers to the extent to which an empirical investigation measures what is supposed to be measured; such activity does not take place inside a vacuum. Instead, it occurs within the context of a measurement situation, as described above. Thus it is not the investigation itself that is being validated, but rather

it is the purpose for which the investigation is being used that is submitted to validation procedures. One validates, not a test, but an interpretation of data assessing from a specified procedure.

Validity, as stated by McMillan and Schumacher (2001:401), refers to the degree to which explanation of phenomena matches the realities of the world. The researcher investigated what was supposed to be measured (see 1.3)

The following authors, namely Smaling (1994:83-87), Campbell (1988:72), Goetz and Lecomple (1984:222-228), Miles and Huberman (1984:231-243) and Denzin (1970:201) have identified the following measures that could increase the internal and external validity of qualitative data and by which content and concept validity could be ensured.

- Preparing a comprehensive register of data, notes of relevant actions or events, theoretical and methodological memoranda and categories established to be used during data analysis.
- Establishing member checks, peer debriefing and audit trails to make corrections to categories and concepts formed.
- Guarding against bias and perspectives that the researcher might have regarding the participants, as well as their prejudices that might have influenced their responses.
- Indicating whether the researcher's attitude has changed through exposure to the research.

Logical validity depends on the logic of the research framework and could be attained by the gathering of data which should be continued until new affirmative or contrasting information has been obtained. There are two types of design validity in both quantitative and qualitative research, namely internal and external validity as described by McMillan and Schumacher (2001:186, 193). “Internal validity” refers to the extent to which any extraneous factors could have influenced the research results.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:327) mention 12 possible extraneous factors. In this regard the researcher can report that only four of the twelve extraneous factors mentioned may have influenced the results obtained in some or other way. These include unplanned or extraneous events that might have occurred while respondents were completing the questionnaire (also referred to as *history*), the relatively small sample of respondents that had been selected (*selection*), the problems experienced with the formulation of questions, or the time span required by an (*instrumentation*). Another possible threat that might have influenced the results are aspects such as the race, gender and status of the researcher (*experimenter effects*). Most of these threats to internal validity could, however, not be confirmed at all.

The *external validity* of research refers to the generalisability of the research results to the larger population. In other words, as far as this investigation is concerned, its external validity refers to the extent to which the results and conclusions made could be generalised to schools other than those in the Mangaung area and the Greater Bloemfontein area. In this regard, the researcher can report that only three of the nine possible threats to external validity, as identified by McMillan and Schumacher

(2001:328), could have jeopardised the generalisability of the results. These include the *selection* of subjects, the limitation of the investigation to two schools in the Free State, one in Mangaung area and one from the Greater Bloemfontein (also referred to as *description of variables*) and the time at which the research was done, namely the end of August 2001 when schools were busy preparing learners for the continuous assessment tasks in Outcomes-based Education (time and measurement).

In the light of the afore-mentioned arguments, the researcher can therefore conclude that the research results obtained during this investigation are relatively *valid*, with the most important negative factor limitations as far as its external validity is concerned.

4.6.2 Reliability

As stated by McMillan and Schumacher (2001:401), “reliability” refers to the consistency of measurement – the extent to which the results are similar over different forms of the same instruments of data collection.

According to Smaling (1994:81&82), reliability in quantitative research method is traditionally associated with accuracy, stability, consistency and repeatability of the research. The core meaning of methodological reliability is thus the absence of random errors. The data gathered therefor seems to be reliable if taken into consideration that the same questions were put to the learners as the ones in the questionnaire (repeatability).

4.6.3 Ethical consideration

For legal, ethical reasons, permission from the Free State Department of Education had been applied for and was granted (see Appendix C). The researcher observed the principle that informed consent, for example responses from questionnaire discussions and interviews, was ethical. The information obtained was treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The chapter has embarked on how the research would be conducted to reach the objectives set in chapter 1. The qualitative and quantitative approach of research was identified as the most appropriate method for this research study. Interviews, as well as questionnaires, were used as research tools in search for answers – as explained in the problem statement in 1.2. After the research had been conducted, a complete data analysis was done, as indicated in 4.5. This led to the findings and conclusions be presented in chapter five. The research conducted was found to be reliable and valid after being measured against criteria listed.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects the research that was conducted concerning the implementation of Inclusive Education and how it is perceived by learners with special needs. A literature review was done to gather insights and to build perspectives of learners with special needs towards the implementation of inclusive education which is compared to the data collected by means of the qualitative and quantitative approach.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The focus required a consistent monitoring to ensure perception of learners. This was established through a literature study (see 1.7.2) and the practical application thereof was tested by means of the empirical study (4.2). An empirical study was conducted by collecting data by means of interviews and questionnaires (see 4.4). Data were later interpreted by using the strategy explained in (4.4). The following are the responses from the questionnaires and the interviews. Since the questions for the interviews and the

questionnaires were related, both responses of the interviews and questionnaires will be taken care of under the same question.

5.2.1 Findings regarding the concept inclusive education.

Question 1: What, according to you, does “inclusive education” mean?

Responses from questionnaires:

Of 20 respondents, 12 (60%) understood the meaning of inclusive education and felt positive towards its implementation. The learners with special needs summarised the concept inclusive education as follows: “that it is a type of education where learners with different abilities are included in one mainstream institution.”

Of these 12 respondents, three felt that inclusive education is a good concept in itself, but it would not work equally well at schools, since some learners are underprivileged and buildings in schools, which accommodate non-disabled learners, are inaccessible for the learners with disabilities - especially those who are on wheel-chairs, the blind and deaf.

The respondents voiced out the point of negative attitudes displayed by the so-called ‘normal’ learners towards the learners with disabilities. They indicated that not only learners are behaving in that manner, but even some of the educators and the community members discriminate against learners with special needs.

Another issue mentioned by the respondents was that of transport and the travelling, of long distances by learners with special needs. The learners with special needs leave schools in their neighbourhood to attend special schools, which are categorised to their disabilities. The respondents commented that the money used for transport could assist in purchasing more resources for all learners at an inclusive school.

8 (40%) of the respondents reported that they knew nothing about inclusive education and were not even interested to find out what it is all about.

Responses from the interviews:

Of the 10 respondents, six (60%) were positive about the implementation of inclusive education and contributed by saying that: Inclusive education is about acknowledging, respecting differences in children, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability and HIV status. Inclusive education promotes a single system of education dedicated to ensuring that all learners are empowered. The other four (40%) also indicated that they are not aware of the implementation of inclusive education; all they experience is the negative attitude from the so-called “normal” learners.

According to the data obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews it seems that learners have some knowledge on the implementation of inclusive education. They also have different perceptions of inclusive education. The main concern however is that they experience a negative attitude towards them.

5.2.2 Findings regarding how inclusion can be implemented

Question 2: How can inclusive education be implemented?

Responses from the questionnaires:

12 (60%) respondents believed that, by implementing inclusive education, the quality of education could be improved by trying to accommodate all learners, irrespective of their disabilities in the institutions they wish to study. Inclusive education could therefore combat discrimination and prejudice. There would be equity in terms of the distribution of the educational resources to all racial groups. The new education system, that is inclusive education could, through skills development-produce learners disabled or non-disabled who could actively participate towards the economic development of our country.

8 (40%) of 20 respondents indicated that the implementation of inclusive education would not materialise. They pointed out the following: most of them were on medication and there were nurse aides/teacher aides in their classes. They felt looked after and would rather keep it like this..

Responses from the interviews.

All 10 (100%) of the respondents believed that by implementing inclusive education, the quality of education could be improved by trying to accommodate all learners, irrespective of their disabilities in the institutions they wish to study. The respondents commented that : “it will make them very happy to be like the others”.

According to the data obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews it seems that the majority of the learners were positive towards the implementation of inclusion and how it must be done.

5.2.3 Findings regarding a philosophy of inclusion

Question 3(a): Do you have a philosophy of inclusion for your school?

(b): If so, briefly state the crux of this philosophy.

Responses from the questionnaires:

8 (40%) of the 20 respondents replied positively about the philosophy of inclusion. They responded by saying that inclusive education allows learners with disabilities to be included in schools they wish to be placed in, because every individual has the right to education. Secondly, these learners indicated that by integration with other learners, barriers which are prevailing at the moment could be overcome and they could be recognised as human beings rather than to be discriminated against because of their disabilities.

In response to the last question, the remaining respondents were totally against inclusion and its implementation. They voiced out reasons such as negative attitudes displayed by non-disabled learners and some of the educators towards the learners with special needs. They mentioned barriers such as discrimination and prejudice.

Responses from the interviews:

In response to the second question, one respondents said: “we live together in the community why when it comes to education we are being separated”. Three (30%) responded against the system of segregation of all learners, irrespective of their differences. The rest of the respondents (70%) were also negative about the implementation of inclusive education due to the negative attitudes displayed by other learners and also educators.

According to the data obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews learners perceive a negative attitude towards inclusive education with reference to the different obstacles/barriers that they experience.

5.2.4 Findings regarding how a learner could diplomatically convince his/her principal and educator about inclusion

Question 4: Do you think you could diplomatically convince your principal and educator of the value of inclusion and implementation (if he/she does not support the view)?

Responses from the questionnaires:

12 (60%) respondents believed that they would be able to convince their principal and educator of the value of inclusion. They would be able to compete with other schools in sports and in choral music since they would have a quota for these extra-mural activities. Academically, they would be able to show the non-disabled learners that learners with disabilities have the same level of intelligence as they.

The remaining respondents (40%) were on the negative side. They did not see inclusion as being of any help to them. They had a feeling of fear about moving from the situation they knew to the unfamiliar one.

Responses from the interviews:

5 (50%) of the respondents were positive that they would be able to compete at the same intellectual level as the non-disabled learners. The other 5 (50%) learners showed traces of fear and lack of confidence and commented that: "I don't know how good the other learners are".

According to the data obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews it seems that most of the learners are positive of being accepted in the mainstream. Some however are reluctant to commit themselves totally of being accepted because they are not sure of what is expected of them.

5.2.5 Findings regarding the perception of learners towards inclusion and how it could be implemented in our schools

Question 5(a): How do you perceive inclusion and its implementation?

(b): Do you have possible strategies dealing with it?

(c): Briefly explain what these strategies are.

12 (60%) respondents were positive about inclusion and its implementation, while one participant believed that the Department of Education wants to cure this "illness" of discrimination by implementing inclusive education. Secondly, the learners with

disabilities felt that it would be a way of exercising their rights, as stated in the White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:16), namely that inclusive education is about accepting and respecting the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs, which are equally valued and an ordinary part of our human experience.

The remaining 8 (40%) respondents had a different conception about inclusive education and its implementation. These respondents were concerned about the buildings in non-disabled schools, which could be inaccessible to the learners with special needs. They voiced out this issue, not knowing that in the White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:33) provision has already been made to meet that problem.

To respond to question 5(b), 12 participants (60%) responded to the question by saying that inclusive education should pay particular attention to improving access to lifelong learning for learners in disadvantaged and rural areas. Secondly, inclusive education must be relevant and meaningful to the lives of all learners, and that it should prepare them for both work and life.

The response to question 5(c) was as follows: “different learning needs which may arise because of negative attitudes, inaccessible and unsafe building environments, an inflexible curriculum”. If these could be removed, the implementation of inclusive education could be a success.

Responses from the interviews:

6 (60%) respondents were positive about inclusion and its implementation and indicated that: “it feels good to be the same as the others”. The learners with disabilities felt that it is their right to be treated the same as all the other learners.

The other 4 (40%) respondents, had a different conception about inclusive education and its implementation. These respondents like the ones from the questionnaire, were concerned about the buildings, etc., in non-disabled schools, which could be inaccessible to the learners with special needs and also expressed their fears of not being accepted.

To respond to question 5(b), all the participants responded to the question by saying that inclusive education should pay particular attention to improving access to lifelong learning for all learners. These learners also felt that inclusive education must be relevant and meaningful to the lives of all learners, and that it should prepare them for both work and life.

The response to question 5(c) was as follows: If barriers can be removed the implementation of inclusive education could be a success and run smoothly.

According to the data obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews it seems that the majority of the learners are positive towards inclusive education. The learners with special needs also feel that it is their right. One can thus conclude by saying that “uncertainty of what is expected” and “lack of knowledge” on the above mentioned

topics bring learners to perceive a negative attitude towards inclusive education and the implementation thereof.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FINDINGS

The objectives of this investigation were formulated as follows :

- Explore views of different learners.
- Investigate inclusive education and the implication for education.
- Investigate obstacles that might prevent the smooth implementation of inclusive education.
- Make recommendations that would assist in improving the quality of the implementation.

From the research conducted and data gathered in 5.2, the objectives had been achieved in the following way:

From Paragraph 3.2.1 on the literature study, it became clear that learners have the perception that they tend to be either rejected or ignored. The empirical study conducted in 5.2.5 confirmed the fact that learners have different perceptions concerning inclusive education. Answers from the respondents, for example, were that inclusive education should pay attention to the exercising of their rights as human beings. It should also

prepare learners for work and life, being relevant and meaningful, which confirms the way they feel about inclusive education.

In the literature study (2.2.1), the meaning of inclusive education has been investigated. Inclusive education refers to a wider reform of the education system in an attempt to create a more effective system responsible for learners' diversities, and to ensure that all learners have the best positive opportunities to learn. The empirical study in 5.2.2. found that the concept "inclusive education" is not known by most of the learners; therefore it needs time to be introduced and accepted by all.

Paragraphs 3.1 and 3.1.5 of the literature study identified typical obstacles that might prevent the smooth implementation of inclusive education. The following obstacles/barriers were identified:

- A negative attitude of learners.
- Inaccessible buildings, especially for learners with wheelchairs.
- Inflexible curriculum.
- Inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services.

The empirical study, discussed in 5.2, however confirms that the majority of learners with special needs are ready for inclusive education and its implementation only if the barriers could be addressed. Implementing inclusive education would be to accept the change which has been ushered in 1994 when democracy was introduced in South-Africa. From the literature, according to NSCNET and NCESS Report (1997:16), barriers are to be

overcome by showing positive attitudes towards learners with special needs, buildings, to be accessible and the curriculum to be flexible to all the learners (see 3.1.4).

One of the objectives was to make the necessary recommendations (see 5.4) to change the perceptions of learners with special needs on the implementation of inclusive education.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the researcher aims at making certain recommendations based on the collected data.

5.4.1 Inclusive education

In order that learners could understand clearly what the concept is all about, the attitudes and behaviour of all learners, educators and parents should change (see 3.1). “The goal of inclusion is not to erase differences but to enable all learners to belong with in an educational community that validates and values their individuality” as stated by Stainback *et al.* (1996:489). It is therefore recommended that:

- Educators are to attend in-service training courses that would assist them to understand all about inclusive education.

- The education system needs to be changed if it is to respond to the needs of all learners.
- All centres of learning should be equipped to have the capacity to respond to the diversity in the learner population by providing education that is appropriate to the particular needs of each learner.

5.4.2 In-service training

Teachers need to benefit from additional in-service training (see 3.1.3). As suggested by Stone (1995:51-52), the staff of a school have a right to some in-service training before they are requested to work with a learner with special needs. It is recommended that:

- Educators in mainstream schools that have little or no experience (see 3.1.3) with learners who have physical disabilities or who are visually impaired, have to undergo such training as well as all those that particularly need it.
- Training should be provided by physiotherapists, by local education services for visually impaired people or by staff from a special school which is meeting the needs of the particular learners with special needs. This training should include information and orientation skills.

5.4.3 Funding

Funding should be made available and it is therefore recommended that:

- More funding is to be made available by the National Department of Education in order to have all the necessary resources which might be required by learners with special needs.
- Funding should be available for school buildings to be altered in order to be accessible and safe to those who are blind and those who are on wheel-chairs (see 3.1.5). School buildings should be made accessible for learners with physical disabilities. Lifts and wheel-chair ramps will be needed and toilets might need adapting. These major costs could be done by the local authority, while costs might be needed to be paid to the school. According to White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:33) it is agreed that, together with the Department of Public Works, the Ministry would make a special effort to develop sites of learning that provide buildings and grounds, starting at designated full-service institutions.

5.4.4 Support Services

While support services would still be mainstreamed within the available time to meet the special educational needs, neighbourhood schools should mutually help networks in order to share resources, solve problems and develop a pool of expertise that could be of benefit to all educators and learners. It is therefore recommended that support services should be high on the priority list to assist:

- A teacher network for mutual help that could be extended beyond the school itself. It would be extremely helpful for staff with similar concerns across a number of different schools to be able to contact one another to discuss problems and possible solutions.

- The support services as indicated by Baker and Bovair (1990:99) should:
 - be an unlimited resource developed and produced for the learner with special needs;
 - have access to experienced special school educators;
 - provide, if required, teaching programmes that are designed to meet individual needs;
 - have the opportunity to meet with other mainstream special needs coordinators to exchange and share experiences, problems, common issues and to provide a forum for future progress;
 - have the opportunity to be part of a team planning resources and influencing future resource productions; and
 - be able to meet once in a term with educational psychologists.

According to the White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:28) the support services, together with support teams, will provide the full range of education support services such as professional development in curriculum and assessment to these institution level-support team.

5.4.5 Parents

According to Gascoigne (1996:35), parents are responsible for the special needs of their children and that it should be a continuous process. Parents learn as they go along, find out from books or parent support groups, snatch tips and guidance from some of the professionals they encounter along the way.

The parents see their child in a more holistic way, rarely separating educational therapy, social and health aspects. Recommendations are for:

- Professionals to accept parents for what they are, people who know their children well (Gascoigne 1996:35).
- Educators to accept parents' expertise even if it appears to question their own as professionals.
- Educators that should be willing to listen, not just what is said, but to what is meant, offering parents partnerships.
- Parents were to be motivated to be involved in all aspects of planning and decision-making. Parents are the spokesperson for the child and are able to make valuable contributions when considered as legislature full-fledged team members.
- Information to be openly shared with parents. Information should be realistic and flexible about plans, goals and objectives for the exceptional person, acknowledging not only the priorities and needs of the family, but also financial realities and service limitations.

5.4.6 Environment

As suggested by Stone (1995:136), consultation between policy-makers, town planners, architects and representatives from all the groups of people with disabilities is needed. It is therefore recommended that, with the focus on the environment:

- All schools should have equal access for learners with disabilities. This would require the full support and co-operation of the staff.
- Educators should foster a conducive climate in which expectations are realistically high. Co-operative aspects and non-academic achievements are also given an appropriate emphasis.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The research done in this study was undertaken in order to obtain a comprehensive picture concerning the learner's perception on inclusive education and its implementation. This study is to encourage school systems to educate more special education learners in their neighbourhood schools. "Let's bring services to the children, not children to the services as we do now."

As inclusive education continues to be a hotly debated issue, it is critical that the voices of learners be heard. One way of ensuring that learners have a voice, is to provide them

with opportunities to meet together, to form friendships among themselves, generate allies across groups and learn to take charge of their education and their lives.

Inclusive education seems to have a positive effect on almost everybody, however, there is still a good deal of work that has to be done to get everybody and all stakeholders on track.

The implementation of inclusive education in all the primary schools countrywide implies the operationalization of change, aimed at the improvements in the education system of South Africa. It is trusted that this study would be valuable to the various schools with regard to implementing inclusive education and meeting the needs of learners with special needs when they are being accommodated in the mainstream schools.

The school must become a place of welcome for parents as well as the learners, assisting the learners with special needs in strengthening their abilities to dream, to work for inclusion despite many barriers (see 3.1 and 3.1.5) and to contribute to the making of an inclusive ethos in mainstream schools.

There is a need to educate the community. The following are the fundamental shifts which could be detected in the way in which the task could be conceived:

- Educating communities is a process rather than an event.

- Sustained changes in the public's attitudes and behaviour do not come about as a single event. Instead, they result from a range of initiatives and from a diversity of sources so that members of the public accumulate experiences and knowledge.
- The goal must be to build inclusive communities rather than to give information.
- Educators are to communicate with parents the diagnosis of a disability, or the results of assessments, in a sensitive and constructive manner. Furthermore, educators are to provide information about the disability services available and on facilitating the child's development.
- It will be mostly appreciated if educators could provide emotional support, helping all learners and parents to understand their feeling and reactions towards inclusive education and its implementation.
- Parents and educators need to develop self-awareness in all learners. This could be done by focusing on the qualities, strengths and talents that make them unique.
- If all learners are welcomed in the school and learner differences are recognized and valued, then specific programmes to encourage tolerance without patronizing disabled people would probably be minimal or unnecessary. If given an opportunity, every learner with a disability could contribute to the inclusive school.

It is my wish that this study will brighten the future of both learners with special needs and those without disabilities, by integrating and by accepting each other as they are, not according to their disabilities or performances.

The research project, however, does not claim to have addressed all the problems related to inclusive education. Further in-depth investigations into the topic are thus encouraged. Such investigations would most probably benefit both those who implement as well as those who receive (learners) inclusive education.

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APPENDIX A

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, HOW IS IT IMPLEMENTED AND PERCEPTION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS TOWARDS IT

The National Commission and Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) were appointed by the President and Ministry of Education in 1996. The two groups submitted a joint report in 1997, recommending that the “special education system” and the “ordinary education systems” change to a single education system. The report strongly recommends/urges the concept of INCLUSIVE EDUCATION. To implement inclusion is an absolute necessity, therefore we should like to know how it is being perceived by the learners, educators and parents.

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

In assisting research into the attitude of learners towards such change, please complete the following questionnaire. Your input will be highly appreciated and will be treated with confidentiality.

1. What according to you does inclusive education mean?

2. How can it be implemented?

3.a Do you have a philosophy of inclusion for your school? Only tick one.

YES

NO

3.b If yes, briefly state the crux of this philosophy

3.c If no, briefly state your views against inclusion and its implementation

4.a Do you think you could diplomatically convince your principal and educator of the value of inclusion and its implementation (if he/she does not support this view).

YES

NO

4.b If yes, please explain what argument you would use to motivate.

5.a How do you perceive inclusion and its implementation?

5.b Do you have possible strategies dealing with it?

YES

NO

5.c Briefly explain what these strategies are

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE
THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE SUPPORT!

P.O. BOX 23039
Kagisanong
Bloemfontein
9323
12 August 2002

The Principal

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – INTERVIEWS AND
QUESTIONNAIRES.

In order to complete my studies for the M.Ed degree I need to conduct a research project dealing with Inclusive Education in South Africa. Please may I conduct Interviews with four learners from grade 8 and 9 and distribute questionnaires which can be completed within 30 minutes and which will not disrupt classes.

It would be appreciated if you would grant me permission to do this research in your school.

Yours Faithfully
L.A.Moadira.(Mrs)



Enquiries :Mrs M V Wessels/
Reference no. :16/4/1/21-2002

Tel : (051) 404 8075
Fax : (051) 4048074

2002-07-12

Mrs L A Moadira
P O Box 23039
Kagisanong
9315

Dear Mrs Moadira

REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1. This letter is in reply to your application for the registration of your research project.
2. Research topic: **PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.**
3. Your research project has been registered and you may conduct research in the Free State Department of Education under the following conditions:
 - 3.1 Principals and learners participate voluntarily in the project.
 - 3.2 The names of the learners, schools and principals involved remain confidential.
 - 3.3 The interviews take place outside the normal tuition time of the school.
 - 3.4 You consider making the suggested changes to the questionnaires.
 - 3.5 This letter is shown to all participating persons.
4. You are requested to donate a report on this study to the Free State Department of Education. It will be placed in the Education Library, Bloemfontein.
5. Once your project is complete, we should appreciate it if you would present your findings to the relevant persons in the FS Department of Education. This will increase the possibility of implementing your findings wherever possible.
6. Would you please write a letter **accepting the above conditions**? Address this letter to:

The Head: Education, for attention: CES: IRRISS
Room 1213, C R Swart Building
Private Bag X20565, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9301
7. We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

HEAD: EDUCATION