

**THE PRACTICE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
IN THE LUSIKISIKI MEGA – DISTRICT
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
FLAGSTAFF SUB-DISTRICT
(EASTERN CAPE)**

BY

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Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

UNISA

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June 2008

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I declare that:

The practice of inclusive education in the Lusikisiki mega – district with special reference to Flagstaff sub-district (Eastern Cape) is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Ms NG Rodolo

4 August 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor I.A. Coetzer for his professional guidance, support and patience during the research period.

To my husband who was always there throughout as a supporter, helper and protector. To my children and friends for bearing with me during this period. Thank you so much!

Grateful acknowledgement is made to Nonkonyana J.S.S, Diliza J.S.S. and KwaQonda J.S.S. for allowing me to conduct research in their schools.

Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This study reports on the practice of inclusive education in three rural disadvantaged communities within the Eastern Cape. The research focused on the development of inclusive educational practices such as teaching, assessment and support in inclusive education. Recognizing the changing needs in the teaching profession and consequently the changing needs of both in service and pre-service educators, this project was conceived as providing an insight into the response of educators to the challenges of inclusive education and the meanings that these experiences have for educators who have had practical exposure to inclusive education.

The need to acknowledge barriers which have implications for planning, expectations and effectiveness of implementing inclusive education in this specific context is acknowledged. In South Africa direct support service delivery is only to a few advantaged schools and communities. Learners who are economically and environmentally disadvantaged are excluded even though they have an equal right to effective support.

Key words: Inclusive education, Eastern Cape, teaching profession, barriers, South Africa support service delivery, economically and environmentally disadvantaged, effective support.

1. Background information, Problem formulation, Aims and Methodology

1.1 The policy regarding the provision of education in South Africa

The national policy regarding the provision of education in South Africa has changed since 1994 with an emphasis on the accommodation of all learners in one education system. The Department of Education envisaged an education and training system that would promote education for all and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning which would enable all learners to participate actively in education alongside their peers (Department of Education White Paper 06, 2001; Reeves 1994:26).

The Department further aimed at developing and extending the potential of learners in such a way that they would participate as equal members of society from the beginning, contributing to social harmony and stimulating the building of relationships among individuals, groups and nations. This would, it was hoped, promote familiarity and tolerance, reduction of fear, prejudices and rejection. This goal was based on the understanding that pupil's learning difficulties do not always result solely from problems within the young person but can sometimes depend on what or how learning takes place. A school's own practices make a good difference (Department of Education White Paper 06, 2001:10-11; Skidmore 2004:14).

1.2 Inclusive Education

Inclusive schooling refers to changes in a school's organizational structure and teaching practices which are gradually gaining acceptance in European compulsory schools even though learners with significant disabilities are still largely excluded from general schools. This implies that some forms of exclusions are necessary if learners are not receiving enough education from general schools. Inclusive schools need extra resources for the implementation of organizational changes, curricular changes and changes in buildings to enable all learners to access generic educational establishments (Department of Education White Paper 06, 2001:10).

The current interests in inclusive schooling practices go beyond wanting to reduce exclusionary practices and increase inclusive practices for learners with disabilities and have been shown by researchers to help improve schools for all learners (Bjarnason 2003:19-20). Inclusion will end labelling (using terms such as special education and special classes) and will eliminate the necessary support and services required by learners in regular classes (Aefsky 1995:03). Inclusion is a process which recognizes that impairment and disability are common to all and which values the individual as a person, enabling access, equality and achievement. The term refers to a whole school policy where the community accepts and values diversity. It aims at the creation of equality in the classroom by removing barriers to education and using the expertise of the wider support team including Health Services, Social Services, Education and

parents. Inclusion aims at supporting the school and parents to meet the needs of the learner, thus enabling him or her to grow into a confident, independent and valued member of society (Pickles 2004:1-3; Puri & Abraham 2004:25; Cole 2000:141).

Inclusive education is a complex and multi-faceted issue that needs to be planned with meticulous detail. It depends on high-quality professional preparation of educators at pre-and in-service levels to equip them for and update their knowledge in meeting the needs of a diverse classroom population as facilitators of learning, vehicles for change and models for future adults. On this score, educators determine whether or not inclusion succeeds. Large classes, negative attitudes to disability, examination-oriented education systems, a lack of support services, rigid teaching methods, assessment dominated by a medical model, lack of parental involvement and a lack of clear national policies hamper the implementation of inclusive education world wide (Hay, Smith & Paulsen 2001:213; Wood 1984:18; Richardson 2000:7).

1.3 The effect of the policy of inclusion on rural schools in Flagstaff Sub-District

The policy on inclusion has caused serious management problems especially when considering the lack of facilities and resources faced by rural schools even in the post-apartheid era. Inclusive education will not come into being if existing schools systems are not reformed to make them, at the least, disabled-friendly. The current mood is to find what is best for the learner in every given situation. If the main reason for excluding learners in the first place was that regular schools were failing to meet their needs, it makes no sense to bring them back unless changes have been made. Full inclusion of all learners in ordinary schools can only be possible if schools and the education system as a whole are reformed. Schools in rural areas only possess basic facilities. They are mostly understaffed. Qualified educators prefer to work in urban areas: the reason include long distances to reach schools. Proper roads are non-existent in most rural communities and hence there is little public transport. At schools, disabled children experience the inaccessibility of classrooms and of toilets that cannot be used. Some schools have no proper toilets at all. School children are unaware of how to treat learners with disabilities. The disabled learner, therefore, becomes isolated in school. Little by little school life becomes an unhappy experience. The learner thereafter may become a school drop-out at a very early stage (Puri & Abraham 2004:27 and 227; Mail and Guardian February 11:2005).

In this context disability is defined by law as referring to those who are mentally retarded, hearing impaired, deaf, speech impaired, visually impaired, seriously emotionally disturbed, orthopaedically impaired, multi-handicapped or those who exhibit other health impairments; or specific learning disabilities, and because of these impairments; need special educational services including information on HIV and AIDS. It further includes people with hidden impairments such as epilepsy, diabetes,

sickle cell anaemia, children labelled as delicate, people who identify themselves as disfigured and people who are distressed (Cole 2000:142).

In rural areas, diseases like polio and leprosy cause lifelong disabilities among Africans. Some children are epileptic. Others do not receive financial support from the State because some parents do not admit to their children's disabilities; hence the latter are not regarded as mentally impaired. In the Eastern Cape poverty are starkly present in everyday realities and in the speech and activities of people living in rural areas. Some disabled children stay home because of long waiting lists for government-funded self contained special schools. Other children do not go to school because of the difficulties in doing so, are hidden by families or are mainstreamed by default without any recognition of the attention they may need. Quoting from UNESCO (2003:123) the Nelson Mandela Foundation argues that there is a relationship between poverty and disability. Poor nutrition can worsen poor eyesight. Child labour and maltreatment can worsen mental illness, physical and psychological disabilities. Girls are more likely to be deprived of basic necessities because of many household chores expected of them like fetching water from rivers, preparing meals for their families and the like. Schools are not happy or safe havens for many learners. They suffer maltreatment, abuse and discrimination at the hands of both peers and educators. There is a widespread evidence of sexual harassment, frequent beatings by educators and bullying (Goduka & Swedener 1999:145; Nelson Mandela Foundation 2005:25 and 59; Reeves 1994:22 and 60).

Classroom management of learners with disabilities is by itself a serious challenge to any educator in an inclusive classroom. Learners with disabilities need special attention. Education officials at provincial and district offices play an important role in giving school principals and educators backup and support in times of need. However, district officials are known to call educators into workshops at the last minute with no contingency plans being made for learners. When schools make special requests for assistance, the district offices respond negatively and rudely (Reeves 1994:128-129). The same applies to the Lusikisiki Mega-District comprising Flagstaff, Tabankulu and Lusikisiki. There are very few service providers with proper transport to provide support to each school in the district.

The departmental regulation that a learner can only be kept back once in a phase, meaning that a learner cannot be retained more than four years in a phase, shifts the problem from the primary school to the secondary school (Department of Education Drafts Assessment Policy 1998:5). The socio-economic conditions in rural communities and few or no educational qualifications of parents become a barrier to the process of inclusion, leading amongst other things, to neglect at home and inappropriate teaching responses in schools.

This may be one of the reasons why learners proceed to the Further Education and Training level with the same problems, where they become redundant and thereafter drop out of the school system (Lee 1992:15-57).

Co-teaching; meaning the pairing of two educators, one being a general educator and the other a special educator, is one of the most powerful developments to come out of the inclusion process. General educators usually command more knowledge of the curriculum and subject areas. Special educators usually possess more expertise in the use of learning strategies to help learners learn ways of breaking down the curriculum and adopting teaching methods. Feedback is given to each other on a regular basis. Some teaching methods work better when there is more than one educator in the classroom e.g. hands-on activities. Classroom assessment is more effective as well. Less loss of valuable instruction time is experienced when one of the co-educators is absent (Mayberry & Lazarus 2002:33-42). In such settings co-operative learning, peer tutoring and community building in the classrooms and schools are more easily achieved. Learners are not separated from their culture, their backgrounds or their parents. Every learner comes from an environment and a family structure that provides different socialization and experiences. Children bring with them cultural scripts modelled on the material of their social environment and rooted in the values, attitudes, expectations and behaviors of their family, culture and community. In this way schools can provide citizens with much knowledge and skills needed to meet the challenges of life and to profit from the opportunities that life presents them. All learners should be ensured the same opportunity to succeed in schools regardless of their country of origin; their English language proficiency; their ethnic background; their socio-economic class and the geographical areas where they live and study (Winzer & Mazurek 2000:252-253; Taylor & Henry 2003:42-44)

1.4 Awareness of the problem

The researcher became aware of the research problem in 2001 when she was posted as a head of division for the intermediate phase at Gcinilifu Junior Secondary School at Flagstaff in the Eastern Cape Province. In most rural communities in the Eastern Cape learners experience diverse needs. Some learners are looked after by their grand parents while their single parents look for jobs elsewhere in the country. Such learners experience emotional disturbances due to the lack of parental love. They usually do not do well in their school work because they do not receive enough support at home. Educators are not empowered enough to effectively assist and understand learners who are experiencing diverse needs and barriers to learning.

An improved quality of education is called for, in terms of better facilities; better trained educators; improved teaching methodology; improved school conditions free of bullying; better motivated learners and improved discipline. This may lessen barriers to learning in rural communities. All possible strategies, e.g. parental involvement, the

lack of which is still a problem in most rural communities, may be employed in order to address or change negative barriers to learning. Socio-economic disturbances e.g. crime, poverty, child abuse, moral decay, HIV/AIDS, racism and unemployment may adversely affect the learning process and learner performances. A positive intervention to enable individuals to deal with challenges and demands of everyday life may be appreciated (Scott 2005:20).

1.5 Problem Formulation

1.5.1 The main problem

Even though the Department of Education White Paper 6 (2001:3,11) specifies that special schools should be strengthened through the provision of education opportunities, particularly for learners experiencing barriers to learning and development or who have dropped out, the manner in which the policy of inclusive is implemented in rural schools leaves much to be desired considering the deficiencies of the previous apartheid education system, e.g. Lack of proper infrastructure, qualified educators and classroom resources. Based on the above discussion, the problem addressed in this research is formulated as follows:-

How can the practice of inclusive education be improved in order to successfully address barriers to learning for disabled learners in rural communities?

1.5.2 Sub-problems

- What are the prevailing conditions in rural schools in the Eastern Cape concerning classroom management in inclusive classrooms?
- How do educators experience inclusivity, with special reference to rural schools in the Flagstaff sub-district?
- How can these findings contribute to the implementation of functional inclusive schools in rural communities?

1.6 The aims of this study

1.6.1 Primary aims

The present research focuses on three primary aims. These are:

- To explain and describe the prevailing conditions in inclusive rural schools within the Eastern Cape, focusing on the Flagstaff sub-district.

- To gain insight into the responses of educators to the challenges of inclusive schools.
- To discover how the practice of inclusive education can be improved in order to cater for rural schools.

1.6.2 *Objectives*

The objectives of this research are:

- To determine the support needed within schools in order to assist educators in inclusive settings.
- To analyze the effects of inclusive education on both educators and learners.

1.7 **Research methodology**

1.7.1 *The use of a qualitative approach to research*

In order to achieve the objectives of this study qualitative research will be employed.

Such a method is one that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Van Wyk 1996:127). In qualitative research the natural setting is used as a direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument in collecting data. Researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products. Data analysis is inductive, implying that data is collected to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Direction comes once one has collected data, after spending time doing so with one's subjects (Bodgan 1992:156; Kawala & Mostert 2004:177).

In qualitative research data gathering techniques such as observations and in-depth interviews and photographs are used. A variety of interconnected methods which will, it is hoped, lead to a deeper perspective on the subject at hand will be deployed. The researcher takes an open-ended approach where little is predefined (Hughes 2003:viii).

1.7.2 *Research design*

The researcher will make use of focus groups of 3-6 educators in the intermediate phase depending on school enrolments (Hatch 1995:229).

Focus groups are a powerful means of exposing reality and investigating complex behavior and motivation. Such groups are useful in attempting to understand the variety of other's experiences. In focus groups participants are more likely to self-disclose or share personal experiences. They feel relatively empowered and supported in a group situation where they are surrounded by others (De Vos; Strydom; Fouche and Delport 2002:307).

In the case of this study, interviews will be recorded on audiotape and the tapes will later be transcribed for closer examination. In this kind of inquiry; analysis and interpretation of the findings take place simultaneously, implying during and not only after data collection. Later, interviews may be modified to include new questions as suggested by informants previously interviewed. The primary aim is to understand and describe how educators involved in focus groups experience inclusive settings in their communities from their own frame of reference (Van Wyk 1996:15).

1.8 Chapter division

Chapter one contains the introduction and aims of the study. A brief profile of rural school communities and of the research problem is provided.

In Chapter two, the theoretical background to the study is outlined. The researcher offers a literature review regarding inclusive education in local rural communities within the Flagstaff sub-district.

Chapter three more fully discusses the methodology used to investigate inclusive schools.

Finally Chapter five encompasses a synopsis of the findings, recommendations, challenges and conclusions arising from the study.

1.9 Summary

In European schools inclusive education has been put into practice and reveals the difficulties encountered by educators in implementing inclusive education. Many South African educators have not been trained in coping with the variety of learners now entering classrooms (Van Staden 2002:23).

It is of the utmost importance that educators should receive in-service education and trained so as to acquire the skills necessary for coping with learners of varying abilities and differing needs. South Africa is still in the transitional stage and is therefore experiencing teething problems (Hay, Smith & Paulsen 2001:213).

Most rural schools are still experiencing the imbalances of the past apartheid era. As a result these will need to reach parity with urban schools. Rural districts generally serve a greater percentage of learners experiencing barriers to learning than do non-rural districts (Goduka & Swadener 1999:145). It is hoped that the current study will benefit the practice of inclusive education not only in the schools studied, but also in other similar localities within South Africa.

CHAPTER 2:

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Most rural and urban schools experience multiple problems facing neighbourhoods like crime and economic devastation, while schools themselves are faced with violence, large class sizes, authoritarian and non-responsive provincial administration officials, hunger and abuse, thus causing inclusive education and whole schooling often to be seen as an unaffordable luxury. Such problems make universities, schools, media and people in poor neighbourhoods to adopt a deficit mentality by which they are conditioned to see these only as problems and deficits rather than strengths and resources within themselves, their schools and communities thus causing extensive barriers to learning (Paulsen 2004:45-66).

Many educators and parents believe that segregating children with disabilities is negative both educationally and morally. They argue that such policies undermine the development of both able and disabled learners by failing to give them a chance to develop the skills and relationships that they need as adults and other children by preventing beneficial contact with the full range of people in their communities (Nind, Rix, Sheehy & Simmons 2003:280).

2.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SA

In South Africa, the right to education is enshrined in the constitution in which learners with special needs have the same rights as their peers (Act 108 of 96; Constitution; 1996). The South African School's Act (South African 1996) also states that learners have the right to be placed in an unrestrictive environment that facilitates respect and acceptance. The consultative paper on Special Education supports the participation of people with disabilities in all daily activities. This paper further elaborates that inclusion is important since it is effective in combating discriminatory attitudes and aims to build an inclusive society. Emphasis is on participation and non-discrimination against the learning process (Dada & Alant 2002:213).

The transition of South Africa from a minority government to a democratic government has created an expectation of the full participation of all its citizens in policy development and the resolution of conflict through the re-apportionment of the balance of power. Through such democratic participation reforms; the government aimed at correcting past errors; one of the greatest errors of the apartheid era was to waste the potential of a large section of the population through racial discrimination and disparities in all aspects of life, including education. During the apartheid era, Black

learners with special education needs had little or no support in their educational programs. Ethnic separation on grounds of race and colour resulted in unequal educational services, financial support aids and/or specially trained personnel. Thousands of learners who experience barriers to learning development or participation could not make any progress in mainstream education and were forced to leave school early (Hall 2002:32).

2.3 WHAT SOUTH AFRICA CAN LEARN FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES REGARDING INCLUSION

The move towards inclusive education will differ in each country depending on the country's needs. The inclusion practices and policies of a developed country cannot necessarily be implemented in a developing country due to their differing educational, social and economic contexts. Education systems can be expected to share their experiences with each other but that does not necessarily imply that these can be generalized to all countries practicing inclusion. When considering the proposed vision, strategies and principles of the South African inclusive education system; it is important to look at international experiences regarding policy development; the role of the community; the benefits and challenges of inclusion for learners. South Africa can learn from the teaching strategies that are currently employed in the existing inclusive education systems. The British education system was the first to implement inclusive education during the 1870's but this had serious implications for implementation such as insufficient desks, too many learners and few educators (Visser 2002:48).

Quoting from Florian (1998:105) Visser maintains that the practical implementation of inclusive policies will not be an easy task. Many educators have their doubts regarding the widespread placement of learners with special needs in mainstream education. Their reservations are mainly due to the fact that issues regarding teaching and learning in inclusive schools remain unaddressed. In South Africa, direct support and service delivery is offered to only a few advantaged schools and communities to the exclusion of environmentally and economically disadvantaged learners who have an equal right to effective support.

2.4 EDUCATOR'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

An educator's attitude is of crucial importance in the teaching and learning situation; it is their attitudes that make learning possible. Educators should look for ways to create an environment that will support children in their development. When educators are nurturing and responsive, young children learn that they are capable. In a caring environment, learners are willing to try new things and experiment. Educators are faced with teaching heterogeneous classes consisting of children who are not handicapped as well as those who are. Their task is made more difficult than that of

special educators who deal only with handicapped learners. If this is the case, one would question as to how they manage to cope with the situation (Isbel & Isbel 2005:14).

Many studies indicate that educator's attitudes towards inclusive education are negative. Such studies include Hoover (1984:34) Mushoriwa (2000:142), Sadek & Sadek (2000:1). The educator's attitude can influence other staff members and learners either positively or negatively. When positively influenced, educators may develop an attitude to working together as a team which will in turn generate collegiality. Learners will also learn co-operatively, irrespective of the barriers experienced by some of them. In a positive atmosphere, the whole school population will realize that each member has a role to play in the school and also in the community. Educators could look for positive strategies which would make inclusion an enjoyable system of education. Approaches like collaborative teaching and co-operative learning should be employed. Changing and managing attitudes by educators is of utmost importance in inclusive education and should enhance capacity building amongst educators (Mudau 2004:98-99).

2.5 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management can be defined as a systematic designing of the classroom environment in order to create conditions in which effective teaching and learning can occur. It is further defined as all activities that support the efficient operations of the classroom and that help establish optimal conditions for learning. Classroom management and organization is an important pre-requisite to instructional aspects of learner's educational programs (Smith; Polloway; Paten & Dowdey 2004:414).

In inclusive schools, classroom organization and management involves a re-thinking or a re-shaping of the traditional ways in which schools operate. It is about adopting a new attitude towards teaching. In terms of the new attitude, the intellectual accomplishments that all learners bring to school are to be valued. The emphasis in teaching is on building on learner's strengths rather than re-mediating their impairments. Every professional working with learners must learn about the individual learner's culture and avoid mistaking cultural differences for impairments. In addition to adopting new attitudes; the curriculum offered to learners needs to be re-shaped. Instruction in the basic skills is to be embedded in the context of more global tasks and issues. During teaching and learning connections are constantly made with learners' out of school experiences and cultures. New instruction strategies apply modern powerful thinking strategies; encourage multiple approaches and solutions, provide scaffolding to enable learners to accomplish complex tasks and make dialogue the central medium for teaching and learning. This means that educators must become knowledgeable about their learner's cultural backgrounds and draw on the strengths of

those cultures thus fostering inquiring schools. The transition is from global to local skills with the focus on conceptualizing the whole task before executing its parts. Classroom management in inclusive schools further suggests a cognitive apprenticeship as an approach in inclusion. It is aimed at teaching a process that expects the user to handle complex tasks and learning through guided experiences in cognitive skills and processes rather than physical ones. The emphasis is on access; if the activity is planned; then everyone must be able to participate in that activity. In inclusive classrooms, learners support and nurture each other's learning (Bauer & Shea 1999:147-149).

2.6 THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS

It takes a courageous, passionate and visionary leader to allow collaboration to happen because when one increases opportunities for genuine collaboration, one decreases centralized authority and power. This implies that leaders need to empower others in the school communities and make sure that empowerment happens. It is in this regard that Gronn (2003:171) is of the opinion that "Transformation in the field of leadership is the notion that a hero figure will turn around poorly performing or under performing organizations". This means that educational leaders have to change their leadership styles.

Administrators should possess a thorough understanding of the role of education in society as a context for their leadership positions. They need to be committed to the goals of education which serve as a basis for the implementation of the policies and decisions, which in turn ensure that learners acquire the knowledge and behaviour that will prepare them for productive and participatory citizenship. Administrators must also possess a thorough understanding of education's role and a realization of their role in school operations. This involves knowledge that society expects the school to provide learners with the general specific knowledge which is important for citizenship. They further must be aware of the critical role they play in the education of learners of all abilities. Educational leadership requires that administrators oversee and validate the selection of the curriculum and provide the personnel practices that will make the implementation of the curriculum productive and cost effective. Educators and their support staff expect the administrators to explicate the goals of the programme; provide them with a curriculum that is consistent with these goals; supervise, evaluate and co-ordinate their activities and provide them with facilities and materials that expedite their contribution (Goldstein 2006:171-172).

2.7 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS

Parental involvement, broadly means several forms of parental participation in education and schools. Parental involvement in a child's education can mean reading

to the child, checking and monitoring homework every night; actively tutoring children at home; limiting television; discussing the child's progress with the educators; modelling desired behaviours (Naidoo 2006:15).

Effective parental involvement is encouraged in inclusive schools. Parents are provided with family support services as well as with the development of educational programs that engage parents as co-learners with their children (Vitello and Mithaung 1998:171).

2.8 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

A barrier to learning is something that prevents the learner from benefiting from education (Visser 2002:09).

2.8.1 Socio-economic conditions

According to Mudau (2004:50) Hall (2003:33); Tom; Thejane and Muthukrishna (2000:36) socio-economic barriers in a community have an effect in educational provision. Lack of access to basic services affects the learning process and leads to learning breakdown or exclusion. In winter some learners, especially in rural schools, arrive late at school because they have to walk long distances in the cold. The most obvious result of poverty is the inability of families to meet basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. Learners in such conditions are often subjected to emotional stress that adversely affects learning and development.

2.8.2 Barriers in the rural communities

Barriers to learning and development in rural communities constitute factors such as poverty and underdevelopment, factors that place learners at risk such as school drop out, abuse, violence or HIV/AIDS, negative and harmful attitudes towards diversity, an inflexible curriculum, language and communication difficulties, in accessible and unsafe environments in-appropriate and in-adequate provision of support services, lack of appropriate legislation and policy, lack of parental recognition and involvement and lack of human resource development strategies (Bothma, Gravett and Swart 2000:202). In addition to the above Sze (2003:1) further suggests the lack of funding, lack of political, financial and social influence, lack of trained special educators, sub-standard school buildings, discipline problems and behaviour management, social and geographical isolation as some of the barriers to effective educational provision in rural communities.

Learning difficulties in South Africa may originate not only from deficits within the learner but also from deficits within the education system. This implies that barriers to

learning may be caused by an education system that is unable to meet or adapt to the needs of the specific learner.

2.8.3 Barriers to effective education provision

Most rural communities are poverty-stricken and characterized by limited educational facilities such as large classes, inadequately trained staff and insufficient teaching and learning materials. Educators possess limited experience of the concept of learners with special needs and hardly any exposure to inclusive education. This results in negative attitudes and the labelling of learners by educators. Researchers like Vitello and Mithaung (1998:171) are in favour of collaboration as the most important contribution that the special education community can make use of for the development of inclusive practices in schools. No one educator can be expected to possess all the expertise required to meet the educational needs of all learners in the classroom. Individual educators must be offered support systems that provide collaborative assistance enabling them to engage in co-operative problem solving; recognizing learners as problem solvers themselves and conceptualizing educators as front-line researchers.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 *QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY*

This chapter provides a discussion of the methodology used to investigate the practice of inclusive education in rural schools in the Flagstaff sub-district in the Eastern Cape. Research methodology is defined as a study of a research process in all its broadness and complexity. The various methods and techniques that are employed; the rationale that underlines the use of such methods; the limitations of each technique; the role of assumptions and presuppositions in selecting methods and techniques; the influence of methodological preference on the types of data analysis employed and the subsequent interpretation of findings (Chaone 2002:201)

A research method is a plan of action which one uses to answer any kind of questions through the use of essential skills; insights and tools. This helps the researcher to decide about the reliability and trustworthiness of the research methods used. Research is a series of steps; techniques; exercises and events that can be applied to every sphere of life to help one understand the world in which he / she lives in (Wysocki 2004:6).

Qualitative research is a philosophical or political perspective that drives a research agenda. It was first used in the 1960's when it was used to describe studies in disciplines other than anthropology. It is a process of conducting naturalistic inquiry – that of being a first hand witness to what is happening in a specific setting (Mc Ewan & Mc Ewan 2003:79-77). The motive behind the use of a qualitative approach in this research is that behavior occurs in a context that needs more complete understanding of the context in which it occurs, in this case the school. Qualitative researchers are not just concerned with describing the way things are but also with gaining insight into how things got to be the way they are, how people feel about the way things are; what they believe, the meaning they attach to various activities and so forth (Gay 1996:13).

3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Bodgan and Biklen (1992:29) explicate the characteristics of qualitative research :

- 3.2.1 Descriptive: The data collected is in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The written results of the research contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation. The data may include interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, video tapes, personal documents, memos and other official records. Qualitative researchers try to analyze the data with all their richness as closely as

possible in the form in which they were recorded or transcribed. The qualitative research approach demands that they would be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial, so that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied (Merriam 1998:6; Eisner 1998:33)

3.2.2 Data analysis is inductive: Researchers do not search for data or evidence to prove a hypothesis they hold before entering the study. The abstractions are built as the particulars that they have gathered and grouped together. Theory development in this way emerges from the bottom up rather than from the top down. As a qualitative researcher plans to develop some kind of theory about what he/she has been studying, the direction he/she will travel comes after collecting data and spending time with the subjects. A qualitative researcher constructs a picture that takes shape as he or she collects and examines the parts. The qualitative researcher plans to use part of the study to learn what the important questions are. He or she does not assume that enough is known to recognize important concerns before undertaking the research (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:32; Schotsak 2002:64; Merriam 1998:6).

3.2.3 Meaning and explanation are of essential concern to the qualitative approach. Researchers using this approach are interested in the way different people make sense of their lives. They are concerned with making sure that they capture perspectives accurately. Some researchers, who use videotapes, show the completed tapes to the participants in order to check their own interpretations with those of the informants. Other researchers may show drafts of articles or interview transcripts to key informants. Others may verbally check out perspectives with subjects. Although there is some controversy over such procedures, they reflect a concern with capturing the people's own way of interpreting significance as accurately as possible. Qualitative researchers set up strategies and procedures to enable them to consider experience from the informant's perspective. The process of doing qualitative research reflects a kind of dialogue or interplay between researchers and their subjects since researchers do not approach their subjects neutrally (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:23; Merriam 1998:6).

The qualitative researcher's goal is to better understand human behavior and experience. They seek to grasp the process by which people construct meaning and describe what those meanings are. They use empirical observation because it is with concrete incidents of human behavior that investigators can think more clearly and deeply about the human condition (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:49; Merriam 1998:6; Eisner 1998:35).

3.2.4 Naturalistic: Qualitative research is naturalistic because researchers go where the action is, like a coffee shop where the students gather after school and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions (Mabuya 2003:50, Mc Ewan & Mc Ewan

2003:51) to principal's meetings to observe first hand how decisions are made in a district and the like.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

The method of data collection is the procedure that a researcher uses to physically obtain research data from research participants (Johnson & Christensen 2004:191). There are various strategies to collect data but not all will be discussed; only those applicable to this study. In this study: intermediate phase educator's focus group interviews is being held; transactions of these interviews and participants observations supplemented by field notes is employed.

3.4 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

One of the methods a researcher uses to collect data from the participants is the interview method. One direct way to find out about a phenomenon is to ask questions from the people involved in the setting. An interview is a data collection strategy in which researchers ask questions from the participants, implying that the participants or interviewees provide data. An interview is an interpersonal encounter. Each person's responses reflect his or her perceptions and interests. Since different people have different perspectives, a reasonably representative picture of the phenomenon's occurrence and absence may emerge and thereby provide a basis for interpretation of the phenomenon (Tuckman 1994:372; Seidman 1998:3).

An interview is a basic mode of inquiry. At the root of in depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experiences of others and the meaning they attach to the experience. Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior thus providing a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. Interviewing allow researchers to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their actions (Seidman 1998:4). To maximize the neutrality of the interview approach and the consistency of one's findings, it is helpful to have an interview schedule to get varying perspectives on the same questions; it helps researchers to ask the same questions to different people. These prepared questions are embodied in the interview schedule (Tuckman 19994:372). There are four different types of interviews. They range from the totally informal conversational type to the highly structured and closed fixed response type. The type chosen will depend on the context of the study and the kinds of questions to be asked. In selecting the questions, one should ask not only about intentions but also about what actually occurs. Based on the answers, further lines of related questions may be asked. These additional questions need not to be pre-planned in a specific form but may emerge from answers to pre-planned questions. In this investigation informal conversational type of interviews will be employed.

In this inquiry the interviewer enters the interview session with a plan to explore a specific topic to ask questions through the use of open-ended questions from the interviewees. The major task is to build upon and explore the participant's responses to those questions. The ultimate goal would be to reconstruct his or her experience within the topic under study (Seidman 1998:7). The topics and questions will be provided by an interview protocol written by the researcher before the interview session. Qualitative interviews are also called in-depth interviews because they can be used to obtain in-depth information about participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivation and feelings about a topic. Qualitative interviewing allows a researcher to enter into the inner world of another person and to gain an understanding of that person's perspective. The interviewer must establish rapport, making it easy for the interviewee to provide information about his/her inner world. The interviewer must listen carefully and collect detailed information. He/she should be armed with prompts to use when greater clarity or depth is needed from the person being interviewed. The interviewer should ask follow up questions that emerge from the qualitative interview. It is important that the researcher establish a good rapport with the interviewee. Interviews must be friendly and the researcher must remain impartial towards the interviewees. If one reacts positively or negatively to the content of the interviewee's statements, the researcher may bias the responses. It is important that the interviewee trusts the research data (Johnson & Christenson 2004:183)

Bodgan & Biklen (1992:97) assert that good interviews produce rich data filled with words that reveal the respondent's perspectives. A good interviewer communicates personal interests and attention to the subject by being attentive, nodding his or her head and using appropriate facial expressions to communicate. The interviewer may ask for clarification when the respondent mentions something that seems unfamiliar using phrases such as "What do you mean?" "I am not sure if I am following you well" "Could you elaborate on that?" etc. Informants need encouragement from the interviewer to elaborate when answering questions.

In-depth interviews are generally audio-recorded and then transcribed. Each word a participant voices reflects his or her consciousness and their thoughts become embodied in their words. By preserving the words of the participants, researchers have their original data to check for accuracy. They can go back to their original sources to demonstrate their original data to check for accuracy. They can go back to their original sources to demonstrate their accountability to the data.

Interviewers can further use tapes to study their interviewing techniques and improve on them. Tape recording assures the participant that there is a record of what they have said. This can give them confidence that their words will be treated responsibly. Some researchers feel that the tape-recorder may inhibit the participants. Others

disagree and argue that the device gets forgotten as the interview progresses (Seidman 1998:97).

3.5 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

In this research focus group interviews will be used as a qualitative research technique. The purpose of focus group interviews is to delve into attitudes and feelings about a particular topic, in this case, the practice of inclusive education in the Flagstaff sub-district in the Eastern Cape. The intent of using focus groups is to encourage the participants in the session to interact with each other such that the quality of the output is enhanced (Greenbaun 2000:3).

A focus group is a type of group interview in which the investigator leads discussion with a small group of individuals to examine in detail how the group members think and feel about a topic being researched. Such groups are a useful strategy or a line of action in a triangulated project. Groups of 4-6 members for mini groups or 6-15 members are used for larger groups recruited on the basis of common characteristics. Such groups are considered as focus groups because the investigator keeps the individuals in a group focused on the topic being discussed. The researcher generates group discussions through the use of open-ended questions and acts as the facilitator of the group process (Johnson & Christensen 2004:185; Berg 2007:144).

Focus group interviews are used to:-

Obtain general background information about a topic of interest.

Generate research hypothesis that can be submitted for further research and testing using more quantitative approaches.

Stimulate new ideas and creative concepts.

Diagnose the potential for problems with a new programme, service or product.

Generate impressions of products, programme, services, institutions or other objects of interest.

Learning how respondents talk about a phenomenon interest, which may facilitate the precise use of quantitative research tools

Interpreting previously obtained qualitative results (Berg 2007:144-145).

3.6 OBSERVATION

Observation is one of the data collection strategies used by qualitative researchers. It involves observing all relevant phenomena and taking extensive field notes without specifying in advance exactly what is to be observed. Qualitative observation is usually done for exploratory purposes. The researcher is the data collection instrument. The researcher will look for anything and everything that is relevant to the

research questions. The researcher records what he/she believes is important in the field notes. This implies that notes are taken by the observer during and after making observations (Johnson & Christensen 2004:191).

The researcher will be aware that his or her presence while observing is unnatural and that there may be certain behaviors intended to influence his or her judgments. This is inevitable. The more observations one makes and the more unobtrusive one remains; the less one is likely to influence what went on before (Tuckman 2004:378).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that one accumulates to increase one's own understanding of such information. This enables one to present what one has discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing and breaking the information gathered into manageable units; synthesizing, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what one will report to others (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:153).

Data analysis begins early in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers alternate between data collection (interviews, observations, focus groups, documents, field notes) and data analysis (creating meaning from raw data). This cyclical process of collecting data: collecting additional data; and so on throughout the research project is called interim analysis (Johnson & Christensen 2004:500). Walliman (2005:313) considers this an interim summary consisting of 10-25 pages.

Interim analysis is used in qualitative research because qualitative researchers usually collect data over an extended period of time, and need to continually learn more and more about what they are studying during this time frame. In other words qualitative researchers use interim analysis to develop a deeper understanding of their research topic and guide each round of data collection. By collecting data more than once, qualitative researchers are able to collect data that help to refine their developing theories and test their inductively generated hypothesis (Johnson & Christensen 2004:500).

3.8 MEMO-ING

A helpful tool for recording ideas generated during data analysis is called memo-ing (writing memos). Memos are reflective notes that the researcher will write to himself / herself about what he/she is learning from data. The content of memos can include notes about anything, including thoughts on emerging concepts; themes or patterns found in data; the need for further collection; a comparison that needs to be made in

the data and virtually anything else (Johnson & Christensen 2004:501; Bodgan & Biklen 1992:159).

3.9 DATA ENTRY AND STORAGE

In order to carefully analyze qualitative data; the researcher will audiotape and transcribe the interview. Transcription is a process of transforming qualitative research data such as audio recordings of interview or field notes written from observations into typed text. It involves transferring data from a less usable to a more usable form (Johnson & Christensen 2004:502).

3.10 VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Validity refers to the accuracy in references that are made on the basis of the outcome measure. An example of a valid measure is one where a prediction made from a score is true (Suter 2006:230). When qualitative researchers refer to research validity, they imply qualitative research that is plausible; credible, trustworthy and therefore defensive. The qualitative researchers will be aware of researcher bias. Researcher bias tends to result from selective observation and selective recording of information and also from allowing one's personal views and perspectives affect how the research is conducted (Johnson & Christensen 2004:503).

The key strategy used to monitor researcher bias is called reflexivity, which in this case means that the researcher will actively engage in critical self-reflection of potential biases and pre-dispositions. Through reflexivity, the researcher will be more self-aware and then monitor and attempt to control her biases (Johnson & Christensen 2004:503).

3.11 RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to the consistency of the outcome measure. A reliable measure will yield the same score if a person is to be tested twice. Reliability addresses the question "Will two researchers independently studying the same setting or subjects come up with the same findings?" In qualitative studies, researchers are concerned with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data. Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study rather than the lateral consistency across different observations (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:48). Two researchers studying a single setting may come up with different data and produce different findings; both studies can be reliable. The reliability of one or both studies would be questionable if they yielded contradictory or incompatible results (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:48).

Reliability is the elimination of causal errors that can influence the results. It can further be viewed as an aspect of methodological objectivity because the pursuit of objectivity includes avoidance of distortion. In addition to eliminating random errors, the qualitative researchers will apply various measures to increase the reliability of the study. External reliability deals with the issue of whether or not independent researchers can replicate in the same or similar settings. If so; will the results be consistent? A few aspects of reliability are discussed below.

3.11.1 Internal Reliability

Internal reliability refers to reliability during the research project. According to Miles & Huberman (1994:231-243) the following measures can contribute to limiting random errors during qualitative research;

- **Triangulation**
 - a) **Method triangulation:** the use of more than one data collection method to gather information (such as interviews, observations, questions and others).
 - b) **Theoretical triangulation:** the use of more than one theoretical perspective to interpret data; and
 - c) **Data triangulation:** the use of two or more kinds of data sources (such as interview data, dossiers; artefacts and literature).
- **Cross-examination (Peer examination)**

A method used to determine whether casual misinterpretations infiltrated the findings of the research. This can be done by comparing the findings with those of other researchers orally or through written work.
- **CONSENSUS**

The way in which consensus regarding the findings is reached through open discussion between the research participants.
- **AUDITING**

The preservation of all information regarding the research, as well as data, survey and notes so that the findings can be verified by independent persons.

3.11.2 External Reliability

External reliability refers to the verifying of the findings of the research, when independent researchers under the same circumstances, using the same participants conduct the same research (Shimahora 1998:87). To increase external reliability, a qualitative report should contain the following:

- A description of aspects such as the status and role of the research participants the researcher had in mind: relevant characteristics of the participants, concepts that were used; theoretical ideas and methods of the research and
- An exposition of the theoretical starting points and arguments underlying the various choices made in research.

The researcher will continue to construct measures which will limit random errors, but at the same time encourage a deeper understanding of the participants reached and of the research process (Niemann, Brazelle, Van Staden, Heyns & De Wet 2000:285).

3.11.3 Reliability of Design

Schumacher & Mc Millan (1993:386-388) refer to reliability of design as follows:

- The researcher's role: the importance of the researcher's work relationship with the participants requires that research studies identify the researchers role and status within the group.
- Social context: social context influences data content and a description should be included of the people, time and place where events or interviews took place.
- Data collection strategies: a precise description must be given of the varieties of observation and interviewing strategies as well as the way in which data was recorded and under what circumstances.
- Data analysis strategies: thorough retrospective accounts must be provided of how data was synthesized; analyzed and interpreted.
- Analytical premise: the conceptual framework must be made explicit; and
- Information selection: the informant must be described as well as the decision processes used in their selection.

3.12 CREDIBILITY

The construct of credibility suggests that the researcher must show that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (Marshall & Rossman 1989:145). Miles and Huberman (1994:278) argue that the description should be context rich and meaningful; the account should be convincing or plausible; the concepts should be systematically related in pursuit of internally coherent findings and also that data presented should be well linked to the categories or prior or emerging theory. This corresponds with the concept of internal validity that other researchers use.

3.13 RESEARCH DESIGN

Design is used in research to refer to the researcher's plan of how to proceed. A strategy a qualitative researcher may use in a study is to proceed as if he/she knows very little about the people and places they will visit. He/she attempts to mentally cleanse their pre-conception. Plans will evolve as the researcher learns about the setting, subjects and other sources of data through direct examination. The qualitative researcher will avoid going into a study with hypothesis to test or specific questions to answer; believing that finding the questions should be one of the products of data collection rather than a plan. The study itself structures the research, not preconceived ideas or any precise research design (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:63).

The researcher will make use of the research design as the product of the planning stage of research. The design is then implemented, the data collected and analyzed and thereafter written down. In a qualitative research design, decisions are made throughout the study, at the end, as well as the beginning. The most intensive period of data analysis usually occurs in the later stages: data analysis is an ongoing part of the research. Decisions about design and analysis may be made together. Some qualitative researchers are more structured. They may prepare interview schedules and stick to them (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:59).

The primary aim of this research is to understand and describe the practice of inclusive education in the Lusikisiki mega-district focusing on Flagstaff sub-district in the Eastern Cape. The research is designed to be explanatory and descriptive. No attempts will be made to establish cause and effect relations under experimental conditions. The research will be conducted over a period of three months and intermediate phase educators will be selected.

3.13.1 Selection of sites and participants

3.13.1.1 Selection of schools

For the purpose of this research, three primary schools in the Lusikisiki mega district will be selected. One of the schools will be Kwa Qonda Junior Secondary School which is a pilot school for inclusive education in the Flagstaff sub-district in the Eastern Cape. The other two schools will be selected by the researcher through purposeful sampling. The aim is to locate information-rich schools which are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about inclusive education under investigation (Johnson & Christensen 2000:180). These schools were purposefully selected because they can provide the kind of information which is topical and is of interest to the researcher. Data collection will be done by means of conducting focus group interviews with educators of the intermediate phase.

This chapter has described the design of the investigation on inclusive schools in rural schools in the Flagstaff sub-district. How qualitative research proceeds is based on theoretical assumptions. That is, meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behavior. Descriptive data is what is important to collect; analysis is best done inductively and on data collection traditions such as participant observation, unstructured interviewing and document analysis. These provide parameters, tools and the general guide of how to proceed (Bodgan & Biklen 1992:58). This chapter has described the design of this investigation. The findings will be presented and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research of this study focused on intermediate phase educators in a rural area within the Flagstaff Sub-District. Intermediate Phase educators were specifically chosen due to the fact that they work intensively with learners of this phase and also know their learners very well despite the large classes and poor working conditions where they work in most cases. This leads to inclusion by default whereby learners are included without receiving the necessary support they need. This situation either intentionally or unintentionally has an impact on the educational system as a whole.

The specific rural area was chosen because all barriers to learning as described in the NCSNET (1997:18) and the Department of Education White Paper 06 (2001:49) do prevail in this area. Such barriers among others are poverty; low socio-economic conditions, teenage pregnancy, risk behaviour, the low educational level and a lack of human resource development.

4.2 PRE-INTERVIEW

In this study, focus group interviews are used to gather data. The participants were initially informed about the nature of the research and what would be required of them. They all felt comfortable to be interviewed at site level. Letters of application for permission to hold focus group interviews were sent to three schools and also to the educational development officers of the circuits in which the schools are located. See appendixes 1-5 for these letters.

4.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher approached three different rural schools. The first school to be interviewed was Nonkonyana J.S.S. The second school to be interviewed was Diliza J.S.S. Both schools fall within the Sigcau Circuit. The last school to interviewed was Kwa-Qondo J.S.S. at Hlwahlwazi Circuit. At Diliza J.S.S. the researcher made a face application after being refused permission to conduct interviews at Sigcau during the last moments. The aim of the interview was to explain and describe the prevailing conditions in inclusive rural schools within the Flagstaff sub-district, to gain insight into responses of educators to the challenges of inclusive schools and also to discover how the practice of inclusive education can be improved in order to cater for rural schools.

**BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF EDUCATORS INTERVIEWED AT NONKONYANA J.S.S.
(SCHOOL A)**

TABLE 1

Educator	Teaching Experience	Grade taught	Teaching Experience in Grade/s	Age	No. of learners in Grade	Qualifications	Gender
1	16 Years	4	8 Years	45	54 Grade 4	STD, FTE	Female
2	6 Years	6	6 Years	34	53 Grade 5A	SPTD	Male
3	39 Years	6	17 Years	59	56 Grade 5B	BA/BED	Female
4	12 Years	5	12 Years	35	78 Grade 6A	SPTD/FDE	Female
5	20 Years	5	5 Years	45	78 Grade 6B	PTB, FFE	Female
6	2 Months	4	2 Months	30	54 Grade 4	NPDE	Female
7	2 Years	4	2 Years	35	54 Grade 4	HDE	Female
8	29 Years	6	5 Years	53	53 Years 5B	BA/Hours	Female
9	14 Years	4	14 Years	38	38 Years 5A	JPD/FDE	Female

- BA - Bachelor of Arts
- BED - Bachelor of Education
- FDE - Further Diploma in Education
- HDE - Higher Diploma in Education
- NPDE - National Primary Diploma in Education
- SPTD - Senior Primary Teacher's Diploma
- STD - Senior Teacher's Diploma
- PTD - Primary Teacher's Diploma
- JPTD - Junior Primary Teacher's Diploma

The table above clearly indicates that most educators have many years of teaching experience, including experience in teaching the intermediate phase learners. One of the educators possess two years in teaching in grade 4 while the other reports two months experience in teaching grade 4. They also teach large classes and all of them possess teaching qualifications.

**BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF EDUCATORS INTERVIEWED AT DILIZA J.S.S.
(SCHOOL B)**

TABLE 2

Educator	Teaching Experience	Grade taught	Teaching Experience in Grade/s	Age	No. of learners in Grade/2	Qualifications	Gender
1	25 Years	4/5/6	17 Years	53	70/62/57	PTD/BED	Female
2	20 Years	4/5/6	6 Years	45	70/62/57	STD/FED	Female
3	17 Years	4/5/6	13 Years	47	70/62/57	PTD/FDE	Female
4	9 Years	4/5/6	3 Years	53	70/62/57	PTD/FED	Female

The numbers in column 6 indicate the number of learners in the phase per grade that is Grade 4, 5 and 6.

**BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF EDUCATORS INTERVIEWED AT KWA-QONDA J.S.S.
(SCHOOL C)**

TABLE 3

Educator	Teaching Experience	Grade/s taught	Teaching Experience in Grade/s	Age	No. of learners in Grade/2	Qualifications	Gender
1	5 Years	4/5	5 Years	39	64/58	PTD	Female
2	2 Years	4/5/6	2 Years	25	64/58/66	HRMD	Male
3	1 Year, 5 Months	5/6	1 Years, 5 Months	34	58/66	PTD	Female

The numbers in column 6 indicate the number of learners in the grade that is, grades 4, 5 and 6. Educator 1 is responsible for grades 4 and 5 while Educator 3 is responsible for grades 5 and 6. Educator 2 is responsible for all grades in the intermediate phase.

HRMD - Human Resource Management Diploma
PTD - Primary Teacher's Diploma

Table 2 indicates that educators report many years of experience in teaching, including experience in teaching intermediate phase learners. Educators in table 3 possess the least experience in both teaching and in teaching in the intermediate phase. One of the educators only possesses a Human Resource Management Diploma but explained that he is improving his qualifications.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

During the interviews fourteen questions were posed to the educators. An analysis of the educator's responses is provided below.

4.4.1 QUESTION 1: As you implement the inclusive policy in your school, what are your joys and expectations?

Participants from school A explained that their joys are that abled and disabled children learn together in regular classrooms, learn to do things together and live together since education is a human rights issue. This is what they will envisage when they leave school. Togetherness enables them to participate together in society from the beginning contributing to social harmony and stimulating the building of relationships among individuals, groups and nations. Barriers are thereby broken down from an early age.

Respondents from all three schools expressed that they expect the government to rebuild schools and provide facilities like ramps and properly built classrooms. To accommodate both abled and disabled learners, parents are expected to be more co-operative by helping learners with homework and assignments.

They further expect parents to respond when requested by educators to come to school in order to discuss problems experienced by learners in the classroom. Participants from school B further expressed the idea of early intervention services that would help educators to redirect learners with severe difficulties who cannot be accommodated in regular classrooms.

4.4.2 What type of resources does your school have to cater for the implementation of the policy of inclusion?

School A had solar electricity which does not work well when the weather is overcast for two to three days or more. They possess three tape recorders, a television set, a duplicating machine and some wall charts. In school B the staff had three tape recorders, a television set, three computers and some wall charts, as well as electricity. In school C electricity was upgraded since it is a pilot school for inclusive education in

the sub-district. They also possess a television set, three tape recorders and wall charts. Some of these are not stored at school due to security reasons.

4.4.3 Does your school policy include a strategy on how learners experiencing barriers to learning can be assisted?

Respondents from all three school explained that they offer remedial classes where they assist learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. There was no indication as to what happens to those who do not cope even after remedial classes. In school C it was reported that there is a remedial educator at site level which is to the advantage of their school. All three schools explained that they have not included the learners who are experiencing barriers to learning and development in their school policies yet, but will review school policies to include all learners by the following year.

4.4.4 What kind of support do you get from the School Management Team?

Participants from all three school maintained that their school management teams encourage them to register for the courses in inclusive education so that they can be on par with the new developments in education in South Africa. They further explained that the school management team assist them in remedial classes.

4.4.5 What type of support do you get from the district support team?

School C's respondents explained that the district support team provides training and support to their school and visits their sites on a regular basis. They are able to identify learners at risk but redirection of learners is still a problem. School A and B expressed that they did not experience the presence of the district support teams. One of the participants further explained that the district support team invites educators to workshops at the beginning of the year and there after makes no follow-up visits to schools to offer support regarding what was performed in the workshops at the beginning of the year. This should be done in order to transform the system as a whole to meet the needs of all learners.

4.4.6 If it so happens that you identify a learner with a learning impairment, how do you go about helping that learner?

Respondents at all three schools reported that they invite the learner's parents to school and share the learner's problems with them. For learners who experience problems with learning, the educators design activities to suit learner's developmental stages and sometimes exchange groups. At Kwa-Qonda J.S.S. they said that they make use of the nearby hospital personnel who help them to identify and diagnose some of the problems they experience with learners.

4.4.7 What learning barriers do you encounter as you practice education in your classroom?

Large class sizes constituted the common barrier among all three rural schools as did unsafe school environments, long distances travelled by the learners to and from schools, parents not willing to admit their children's disabilities, excessive shortage of school furniture especially at Kwa-Qondo J.S.S where learners were using pieces of wood supported by cement blocks for chairs, school grounds and buildings not catering for learners with disabilities and insufficient facilities e.g. Braille to assist blind learners.

4.4.8 How do you deal with the diverse needs of learners in your classroom like learners with multiple disabilities and deaf and mute individuals?

All three groups of participants responded that they advise parents of such learners to apply to schools where they will benefit from the school system since their own schools are not capacitated yet to cater for all these disabilities.

4.4.9 How do you involve parents in their children's education?

Respondents from the three schools answered that they usually hold parent's days at school. On such days parents are asked to look at their children's work. Attendance is not usually good. Quarterly progress reports are issued for each learner. Educators at the three schools expressed that they are not at all happy with the manner in which these reports are received by the learner's parents since they are only satisfied if the learner has done well. In cases where learners did not do well parents do not always care to establish why such learners could not progress to the next grade.

4.4.10 How do the educational needs co-ordinators avail themselves to educators, parents and learners in order to ensure effective assistance and understanding of the needs of learners?

At Kwa-Qonda J.S.S. participants explained that they get visits from the district educational needs co-ordinators but so far there is no aid pertaining to the problems tabled at the district office such as shortages of resources like Braille. Hearing and sight aids and the redirection of learners are still a problem. Respondents from Nonkonyana J.S.S. and Diliza J.S.S. reported that educational needs co-ordinators do not make themselves available in their schools and as such are feeling isolated. They only make use of their experience in the field of education in times of need. They envied the foundation phase educators who are often visited and workshopped by the district office personnel.

4.4.11 How do you render assistance to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development?

All three schools explained that individual assistance to learners experiencing barriers to learning can be a problem. The learner educator ratio is high in all three schools at Kwa-Qondo J.S.S. Educator 1 reported that one learner has a difficulty with eyesight. They advised this particular learner to sit in front of the class so that she can see well. There is no other aid they can offer to this particular learner since they don't have any Braille facilities to help them cope. In the same school educators reported that they also accommodate learners who are both visually and hearing impaired, adding that they encounter difficulties with assisting these learners due to the lack of resources. The educators are not trained in sign languages yet. In this regard they receive help from other learners who interpret for these learners so that there is proper communication in the classroom. Educators 2 and 3 at Kwa-Qondo J.S.S. reported that in order to help those with sight impairments, they usually dictate to them because some of them can write well. They also reported that in the previous year they taught a physically disabled learner who experienced much difficulty with the school buildings and grounds. The educator used to carry him on his back in order to help him. Respondents from three schools commented that most learners with disabilities perform well in extramural activities like sport and music. Like all other learners they feel good when praised and rewarded for good efforts and achievements.

Participants from three schools asserted that they provide extra time for remedial work for learners who do not cope well during the normal contact time. School C noted that they have a special remedial educator in their school. When asked how helpful she is pertaining to the development of learners with disabilities, the response was that she is a member of the disability committee at district level.

4.4.12 How motivated are you to work with learners experiencing barriers to learning and development?

In school C educators are very strongly motivated to work with learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. They are used to attending workshops at district, provincial and national level which empower them for their task. The barrier to their motivation is the lack of facilities and resources to help learners with special needs. Lack of parental involvement in their children's education is also a barrier in the education system as a whole. Educators 1 and 2 in school C commented that it would be better if there was school transport to enable them to reach some parents who do not attend meetings. Another concern was the fact that even if the school identifies learners for further referral, they gain no response either from the district or national level. For them this implies that such learners do not receive much support from the education system.

In schools A and B educators were concerned about their isolation. They felt that it would be much better if they received frequent visits from the district office so that they could voice out their concerns.

4.4.13 How prepared are you to collaborate with other educators in order to understand and assist learners experiencing barriers to learning and development?

All three school's representatives felt that collaborative teaching helps greatly because it provides the opportunities for educators to plan together and share learner's problems with the ultimate aim of providing solutions to the problems through learning from each other. It further helps them to allocate among themselves educators to attend to learners problems according to who feels more capable in attending to a specific learning problem. In the process they share teaching strategies, experiences, knowledge and holds a positive attitude towards learners experiencing barriers to learning and development.

4.4.14 How empowered are you to assist and understand learners experiencing barriers to learning and development?

In schools A and B educators felt that they are not fully empowered to make use of their existing experiences in the field to try and solve problems experienced by learners in the classroom. Educator 4 in school B and educators 2, 4 and 6 in school C expressed that they empower themselves by registering with institutions for higher learning such as the universities of Port Elizabeth (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) and Rhodes. They stated that they gained knowledge and as such feel more empowered to work with learners experiencing barriers in their classroom.

The other educators also agreed that these educators who were studying further also empower themselves with the knowledge they obtained from their tertiary institutions. This, according to them makes inclusive education more successful and strengthens their knowledge.

4.5 DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The above analysis indicates that the policy of inclusion implies a paradigm shift not only for education but for life as a whole. Inclusive schools need to contribute towards building an inclusive society in which all its members are valued, respected and able to fulfil their full potential. This cannot be achieved without the adequate training of educators to identify, assist and understand learners experiencing barriers to learning.

All three schools lack physical and material resources such as Braille facilities, hearing aids, learner friendly school buildings and playgrounds to cater for the needs of the physically and/or visually impaired learners. There is also a lack of referral procedures for learners who do not benefit enough in the mainstream, especially when considering the lack of resources in these rural schools. District support teams need to provide education support services, such as professional development in curriculum and assessment to these rural schools, especially in schools A and B.

The availability and provision of sufficient support resources would lesson the burden of additional educator responsibility and the amount of time required of the educator to address the needs of diverse learners as expressed by educator 2 in school C in Par. 4.4.11.

Parental involvement in rural schools constitutes one of the barriers to the development of learners with special needs in education. Parents are the first educators of their children. Schools expects parents to assist their children at home so as to extend what has been learnt in school. Many parents hold negative attitudes towards school. One of the factors contributing to their attitudes might be their level of education. Educators expect parents to inform them about their children's disabilities from their first day at school, but some parents are reluctant to provide this information. Educator 2 in school C remarked that some parents use the disability grants of their disabled kids yet never take their children to school. Some parents consider disability as a taboo and as such isolate their children in their homes and never allow them to mix with other children.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This study indicates that educators are willing to implement the policy of inclusion but feel inadequately prepared and therefore unable to cope with learners with barriers to learning and development in the classroom. Educators therefore need to be exposed to in-service education and training in order to gain the knowledge, skills and values to help them cope with learner's varying abilities. The policy of inclusive education is not static in South Africa, but keeps on changing. Barriers to learning and development need to be addressed in order to accommodate diversity in the learner population in an integrated system of education.

As indicated in the Education White Paper 6 (2001:47) collaboration with the Provincial Department and involvement of special school educators would strengthen the education support in rural schools. Rural schools have not been reconstructed yet. Educators are often not prepared to change their ways of thinking and doing through various workshops, based on the understanding that education is a process. Mindsets of older educators may not be changed overnight. Constant workshops need to be

conducted in order to help all educators with an attitude change. This is evident because at Kwa-Qondo J.S.S. educator 1 explained that some educators in her area approached her telling her that they will refer learners with barriers to development and learning to their school, since it is a pilot school for inclusion in the Flaggstaff sub-district. This means that educators need to be prepared emotionally and otherwise for inclusion. This would encourage the acceptance of learners with barriers to learning and development by both educators and other learners, promote understanding of the new policy of inclusion and remove anxieties about inclusion. Education support services professionals need to combine efforts and define the aims and objectives of support services. All the members of the school support services should be trained well so that they can provide the necessary support to schools (Fitz & Miller 1995:211).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION LIMITATIONS, CHALLENGES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explain and describe the prevailing conditions in inclusive rural schools within the Eastern Cape, focusing on the Flagstaff sub-district in the Eastern Cape. Like many rural schools within South Africa, the three schools investigated in this study have many needs. They experience financial constraints, inadequate training of educators, few resources and materials, large class sizes, illiterate and uninvolved parents and other challenges that arise from being located in a rural, low socio-economic area.

5.2 DISCUSSION

This research indicates the lack of services of qualified special needs practitioners like psychologists to assist both educators and parents in various roles to be performed in the field of education. Such roles include assessment and planning of instructional periods to assist learners experiencing academic and behavioural problems in the Flagstaff sub-district are disadvantaged compared to a theoretical model whereby serious support services should be available for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Madalane 2005:40).

Educators are the core professionals in the implementation of inclusive education. They need to be empowered in the planning and development of lessons to cater for individual needs in the classroom. Parents must be involved as full partners in the actuality of teaching, that is the curricular, extra-curricular and management tasks of the school.

Apartheid policies have left a legacy of severe disparities with the result that learners of all ages find themselves in a society struggling to meet the most fundamental needs of all its citizens. This is reflected in the inability of poverty stricken families to meet the most fundamental needs such as nutrition and shelter. In the educational context, socio-economical related factors contribute to the high teacher learner ratios, shortage of textbooks and other resources and limited provision for school and district based educational support. South African learners are faced with personal and environmental stressors that put them at risk for emotional, behavioral and academic difficulties. Risks that are common for our school aged population include violence, abuse, undernourishment, HIV/AIDS, ineffective developmental transitions and commercial exploitation. Prevailing difficulties in schools and communities such as trained educators and a lack of positive teaching and learning culture do not create a

welcoming environment for learners and contribute to stressors learners and educators have to cope with. Educational reform since 1994 has made significant attempts to address the imbalances of the past and to bring education in South Africa in line with international standards. Key policy documents and legislation such as the White Paper on Education and Training (2000 d) the White Paper on an Integrated Disability Strategy (Department of National Education 1997 b) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996 b) have articulated the new goals of equity, redress, quality, efficiency and the right of all learners to equal access to the widest possible educational opportunities. A Draft Education White Paper (Department of National Education 2000) builds on previous documents and legislation by placing inclusive education and its focus in addressing barriers to learning and participation at the core of education transformation in South Africa (Engelbrecht & Green 2001:17-21).

5.3 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this research are the environmental conditions in which educators work. The main factors are an overload of work, low morale and lack of motivation of educators. Only three primary schools from the Flagstaff sub-district were studied in this research. Some of the educators displayed little eagerness to participate. One of the schools approached refused the researcher access to their site due to the fact that they were preparing for a farewell function in their school.

5.4 CHALLENGES

This research implies that full inclusion of all learners in an ordinary school can come about only as a result of a reform of not only the school but also the education system as a whole. Inclusion can be made possible by removing physical barriers posed by stairs, doorways, toilets, water faucets and other architectural aspects imperative to accessing facilities in the school. Removing the barriers of the teaching system by providing facilities for accessing resources related to the curriculum through the use of modern technology like computers using specialized software, proper infrastructure like school grounds and buildings since all three schools visited ran short of classrooms. Some of the classrooms available needed to be renovated as it happened with Nonkonyana Junior Secondary School where wooden floors were sinking (Puri & Abraham 2004:5).

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are made with regard to specific interventions in the areas of barriers to learning and development.

- Schools need physical resources like wheelchairs, school transport and some hearing aids for the hard of hearing.
- Schools need to invite parents of learners to schools in order to teach and workshop them to accept their children's disabilities and not to deny it.
- The government must workshop educators thoroughly, make follow up visits and motivate them unlike doing things haphazardly.
- Schools need to be restructured in the form of paving ways for wheelchair users and low toilets for crawlers.
- There should be efficient resources in the form of specialized educators for different types of disabilities.

5.6 CONCLUSION

From this research, it appears that educators in the mainstream are not adequately trained, informed or prepared to deal with learners with special educational needs. It appears that there is a need for information regarding the practical implementation of inclusive education. Educators display mixed feelings about the policy of inclusive education. While some educators display a positive attitude towards the philosophy and underlying principles of inclusion, there is an overwhelming feeling of uncertainty regarding the practical implications of inclusive education. Factors such as the number of learners in the class, academic pressure and the standards of the school determine the amount of time and attention that educators can devote to a learner with special educational needs in the mainstream.

An inclusive educational approach does not necessarily mean that every educator will have all the abilities to train all learners experiencing barriers to learning, development and participation but educators need a support system that co-operation between educators can bring about; a wider utilization of services, experience and knowledge. An appropriate collegial relationship for practical and emotional support is needed where sharing and collaboration are the norm, provide opportunities for educators to share, relax and to respond with empathy and to be sensitive to their needs.

The present political climate in South Africa values community involvement and welcomes initiatives that strive to address the socio-political needs of the society. Education can be a tool for empowerment. This implies a shift to direct the system to capacity building that enables schools and educators to be responsible for learning and to be responsive to diverse and changing learner and community needs, interests and concerns. Inclusive education aims towards communities that welcome multiple perspectives and celebrate differences while meeting the needs of all members with tolerance, understanding and compassion. The education system should aim at strengthening the educator's understanding, beliefs and expectations of inclusive education practices and developing a framework for effective transformation of the nature of education, the curriculum, teaching methods and institutional structures. The change to inclusive education should emerge rather than being imposed and has to focus on issues and concerns most relevant to educators in a supportive and collaborative partnership (Hall 2002:37).

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APPENDIX 1

P.O. Box 476
Flagstaff
4810

2007-09-14

The Principal
Sigcau J.S.S.
Flagstaff

Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Kindly accept my request for permission to conduct research at your school through focus group interviews. The researcher is interested in the intermediate phase educators of your school.

Your school has been chosen because the researcher considers it representative and informative for the topic being researched. The results of this investigation will be mainly for research purposes and strict confidentiality will be observed.

Looking forward to your favourable response to this request. Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

G.N. Rodolo (Miss)

APPENDIX 2

P.O. Box 476
Flagstaff
4810

2007-09-14

The Principal
Nonkonyana J.S.S.
Flagstaff

Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Kindly accept my request for permission to conduct research at your school through focus group interviews. The researcher is interested in the intermediate phase educators of your school.

Your school has been chosen because the researcher considers it representative and informative for the topic being researched. The results of this investigation will be mainly for research purposes and strict confidentiality will be observed.

Looking forward to your favourable response to this request. Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

G.N. Rodolo (Miss)

APPENDIX 3

P.O. Box 476
Flagstaff
4810

2007-09-14

The Principal
Kwa-Qonda J.S.S.
Flagstaff

Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Kindly accept my request for permission to conduct research at your school through focus group interviews. The researcher is interested in the intermediate phase educators of your school.

Your school has been chosen because the researcher considers it representative and informative for the topic being researched. The results of this investigation will be mainly for research purposes and strict confidentiality will be observed.

Looking forward to your favourable response to this request. Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

G.N. Rodolo (Miss)

APPENDIX 4

P.O. Box 476
Flagstaff
4810

2007-09-14

The EDO
Hlwahlwazi Circuit
Department of Education
Lusikisiki

Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Kindly accept my request for permission to conduct research at your school through focus group interviews. The researcher is interested in the intermediate phase educators of your school.

Your school has been chosen because the researcher considers it representative and informative for the topic being researched. The results of this investigation will be mainly for research purposes and strict confidentiality will be observed.

Looking forward to your favourable response to this request. Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

G.N. Rodolo (Miss)

APPENDIX 5

P.O. Box 476
Flagstaff
4810

2007-09-14

The Edo
Sigcau Circuit
Department of Education
Lusikisiki

Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Kindly accept my request for permission to conduct research at your school through focus group interviews. The researcher is interested in the intermediate phase educators of your school.

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Yours sincerely

G.N. Rodolo (Miss)