

***THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS IN IDENTIFYING LEARNERS
WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN A RURAL FULL-SERVICE
SCHOOL IN KWAZULU-NATAL***

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Israel Lindokuhle Mkhuma** declare that the **Challenges experienced by teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in a rural Full-Service school in kwaZulu-Natal**, 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.

Mkhuma I.L. (Mr.)

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION.

To God the Almighty who raised Lazarus from the dead to life, my life is forever indebted because what is impossible with man is possible with Him.

*“If I Have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants”
by Isaac Newton (1643-1727).*

I wish to thank Mrs Maseko (my supervisor) for her being so patient and supportive to me throughout this tiring yet interesting journey. God bless you!

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The principal, the HoDs and the teachers of the full-service school who dedicated their limited time to assist me to conduct this study. God bless you!

I dedicate this work to all the members of aMaxesibe family especially the following:

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My sisters (Vuyi, Thembelihle & Ntokozo), brothers, nieces, my nephews, aunts and my cousins.

ABSTRACT

Full-service/inclusive schools are new institutions in South Africa which have been established in terms of the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001:22-23) as pilot schools for the rolling out of the Inclusion policy in South Africa. The purpose of this study was to explore the teachers' challenges in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in a rural Full-Service School in KwaZulu-Natal. Teachers in such schools are expected to have skills and knowledge to identify learners and provide support. Most teachers in Full-Service Schools possess qualifications to teach in mainstream schools and depend on the Departmental workshops for the skills needed to identify learners and provide support. The identification of such learners was selected because it is the first step in the process of providing support to learners. Teachers should therefore have skills and knowledge of identifying learners in order to minimise bias, non-identification, over-identification as well as mis-identification. This qualitative study employed a case study design to examine teachers' challenges in identifying learners. Six teachers were selected for interviews and the SIAS documents were studied to confirm the findings from interviews. Inductive methods were used to analyse the data. Recommendations for future research studies were made.

Key concepts: Identification; Over identification; Screening; Identification; Assessment and Support (SIAS) strategy; Barriers to Learning and Development and Learning Support; Full-service school.

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ACCRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS STUDY

DBST District-Based Support Team

DoE Department of Education

EWP6 Education white Paper 6

FSS Full-Service School

HOD Head of Department (Departmental head at school level)

ILST Institutional-Level Support Team

ISP Individual Support Plan

LSA Learner Support Assistant

LSE Learner Support Educator

RTI Response to Intervention

SIAS Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

SNA Support Needs Assessment

SNE Special Needs Education

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The process of identifying learners who experience barriers to learning is a critical step towards the provision of effective support, therefore teachers in Full-Service Schools are expected to possess the knowledge and expertise to do so. However, in my experience as a teacher in a rural Full-Service School in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), I have observed that this is a challenge to many teachers as they may lack knowledge about various learning difficulties and guidance in using the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) strategy that was piloted by the Department of Education (DoE) in 2008. Ntsanwisi (2008:1) argues that this deficiency makes it difficult for teachers to manage diversity in their classrooms.

According to the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001a:24), the inclusive education and training system was to be changed so that learners who experience barriers to learning could be identified early and support given. The DoE further acknowledged that teachers were the primary resources in the accomplishment of the goals to establish inclusive education and training, and their knowledge would be improved and new skills developed. However, in my experience, evidence of such skills and knowledge remains elusive. Other challenges facing the teachers include extra paperwork, shortage of time, lack of knowledge about a wide range of learners' needs, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of quality support from the District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs).

Full-Service Schools (FSS) were created in South Africa as part of a pilot project to implement an inclusion education policy and for the national DoE to work with provinces to investigate ways of raising the capacity of teachers in primary schools for the early identification and support of learners who experience barriers to learning and need learning support (DoE, 2001a:49). Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:48) argues for an asset-based approach to identification, in which assessment is used interchangeably with identification, and purports that when the effective use of this approach is applied the very steps of assessment can become the first steps of learning support. However, the author warns of the danger which the remedial approach to identification holds, as it involves categorising and labelling learners in terms of their impairment or problem area (2005:47).

Recent South African studies have reported various general teachers' challenges in the implementation of the inclusive education policy in various contexts (Gwala 2006; Hays 2009; Khoele 2008; Ladbrook 2009; Mphahlele 2005; York 2008). Ntsanwisi (2008:62) reported specifically on the Foundation Phase in Limpopo, revealing that teachers lacked the necessary training in the skills needed to identify barriers to learning and instead depended on test scores as criteria for identification. The draft national strategy on SIAS (DoE, 2005b:65-66) explained the importance of teacher training for the implementation of inclusive education, with the task of providing ongoing support to school-level teams, colleges, early childhood and adult centres to be entrusted to the DBSTs.

Sideridis, Antoniou and Padelia (2008:199) conducted a study in Greece on how teacher bias influences the identification process and in part leads to over-identification. They argue that "...there is evidence that general and special education teachers often miss characteristics defining disability...". The argument in their study illustrates the need for a standardised instrument that would ensure fairness in the process of identifying learners and remove any doubt.

The definition of what constitutes a learning disability has been debated internationally for many years. In Greece and the United States of America for example, the concept 'dyslexia' is used as an umbrella term to refer to difficulties in dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dysreading and dyspelling as a category (Anastasiou & Polychronopoulou 2009:56). Flack (2005:320) also reported the confusion that surrounds the field of learning disability in South Africa, which can be attributed to lack of consensus on what constitutes a learning disability, as well as inconsistency in the use of this term. For the purpose of this study the terms 'barriers to learning and development,' 'learning disabilities' and 'specific learning disabilities' will be used interchangeably. In my experience as a teacher in one full-service school, I have also observed the problems that surface when a learner is identified by one teacher as experiencing barriers to learning only for the claim to be refuted by another. One explanation is that teachers do not share a common conceptual understanding of what constitutes a learning disability. The national strategy on SIAS, piloted in South Africa in 2008 to standardise the processes of identification, does not provide viable support to the teachers, and the extra paperwork involved in completing the SIAS toolkit and the ambiguity in some sections add to the challenges teachers face.

There is an urgent need for the DoE to intervene and provide practical support to educators in the classrooms, in order to address the mismatch that often happens when educators attempt

to identify learners who experience barriers to learning. Teachers' challenges in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning and development should be addressed so that they can be given support.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

My interest in such identification developed when I joined the team as a teacher in one Full-Service School in KwaZulu-Natal in January 2010. I had an opportunity to make some interesting observations when teachers identified learners at the beginning of the first quarter (January to March). Although my experience was enlightening I was startled by the observations. Some teachers simply wrote down the lists of learners they believed were experiencing barriers, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, with brief explanatory notes which were too general. Some learners were identified because teachers could not perceive their unique learning styles. I also noticed that teachers still made use of the deficit model which calls for a vigorous search of what is wrong within the learner then for it to be attended to (Landsberg et al., 2005:48). My observations revealed a major gap in teachers' understanding of the theoretical framework that underpins the process of identifying learners as well as the paradigm from which the inclusive education policy is grounded.

1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study can be summarised as follows:

- **What challenges do teachers experience when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in a Full-Service School?**

The aim of this case study was thus to explore the challenges which teachers face when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in one Full-Service School in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This case was significant because it provided insight into the challenges that teachers in one Full-Service School in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal face when they identify learners who experience barriers to learning. Although the findings from this study could not be transferred

to other rural Full-Service Schools, those in similar circumstances could learn from them. It may also provide data for policymakers on the effectiveness of the support provided to teachers in Full-Service Schools, especially those in rural settings, where conditions range from lack of human and material resources to the viability of support from the District offices. The findings might also assist the Department of Education to review the provisions and support given to teachers.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted as a qualitative case study in one rural Full-Service School in KwaZulu-Natal, out of the eight currently in the District. The qualitative mode involved face-to-face interaction between the researcher and participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:315) state that qualitative design employs face-to-face data collection techniques from the selected individuals in their natural setting. It was selected because the research question is suggestive of personal interaction between the researcher and the participants during the collection of data. In-depth interviews and the analysis of documents were used.

According to Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen (2006:456-457), case studies can provide rich detailed accounts of a phenomenon through in-depth examination of factors that explain present status and influence change over time. They are appropriate for studying an individual, group, site, class, programme, policy, process, institution, or community because they provide an in-depth description of a specific unit that is either unique or typical. For McMillan and Schumacher (2006:317-318), a qualitative case study may contribute to policy formulation, implementation and modification, and produce rich descriptions and analysis of particular practices, processes and events. Single-site studies are bounded by a natural socio-cultural boundary that involves one person or a group.

The study was based on the assumption that the reality of the teachers' challenges should be constructed by listening to their experiences, emotions and the meaning they attached to the process. This belief is based upon the theory of social constructivism, which according to Kim (2009:2) is founded upon the premise that reality is lying 'out there' to be discovered but is constructed through human activity, and individuals create meaning of their experiences as they interact in the environment in which they live. This theoretical framework was important in this study because it allowed me to interact with the teachers in their own environment and gave them the opportunity to construct the reality of the challenges they were facing. The

interpretation of the findings was carried out in accordance with the meaning the participants assigned to the phenomenon.

1.5.1 The research site

One rural Full-Service School was selected for this study, having an enrolment of about 375 learners from a poverty-stricken community and all exempted from paying school fees. A group of 13 teachers was selected to participate, primarily to relate the challenges they faced in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning, ranging from conceptual understanding of the paradigm from which the inclusion policy is founded to the inclusive approaches that underlie the identification of learners and the SIAS toolkit for identifying learners. Of the population of 13 teachers only one was under-qualified and a novice (less than a year as a teacher), one Foundation Phase teacher had a qualification in Remedial Education, and one Head of Department (HoD) in the Intermediate Phase had recently undertaken a study in Inclusive Education. The teachers depended on the DBST for the skills and knowledge required to identify and support learners who experience barriers to learning. There were two Learner Support Assistants (LSAs) who were employed to work in the school (research site) and one Learner Support Educator (LSE) who was employed to provide support to the teachers in the circuit.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:318) state that the site should be one in which these viewpoints or actions are likely present and can be studied. The nature of the research problem made this school a suitable choice for this study because the challenges which teachers face in identifying learners were prevalent.

1.5.2 Data collection and analysis

The data was collected¹ through interviews and documents analysis, and presented as quotations with fewer descriptions. An inductive method was used to analyse the data. The methods employed for data collection and analysis will be described in greater detail in Chapter Three.

¹ Although 'data' is the Latin plural of datum it is generally treated as an uncountable 'mass' noun and so takes a singular verb (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 2011, Eds. Stevenson & Waite).

1.5.3 Ethical considerations

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:142) it is the responsibility of the researcher to protect the participants from unfair criticism that may arise from participating in the research, whilst Neuman (2006:412) writes that ethical dilemmas can be resolved through the protection of the participants' confidentiality and abstaining from deception or involvement with deviants. Both a form from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education seeking permission to conduct my research and a written request to conduct research to the principal of the school were acknowledged in the affirmative. I asked the participants to complete a consent letter wherein they acknowledged that their participation was voluntary, that they understood the aims of the research and that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they wished, also part of the ethical considerations outlined below.

I explained the purpose of the research to the principal and all the participants before the actual interviews began and gave them the opportunity to ask me questions about any matter pertaining to their participation in the research and its aims. Each interview session was preceded by a brief talk with the participants to confirm that they were ready for the interview (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport 2002:316-317).

I assured the participants that anything discussed during the study would be kept confidential and would not be used for purposes other than this study. The real names of the participants and the name of the school would be and shall be kept anonymous in order to protect their identity from unnecessary criticism or ridicule. The description of the school, the number of learners and the staff was made in estimates in order to distort the precise location of the school in the District or province. The results of the study were communicated to the participants before the study was finalised in order to avoid possible misinterpretation and misuse. Each participant was requested to review the study before it was finalised in order to ensure that my transcriptions were in accordance with what the participants had said during the interviews. I explained that there would be no rewards or payment to them after they had participated in this research, however, I made a commitment to show them the results of the study when finalised.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In this section the key concepts are clarified as they are used and understood in the study.

Full-Service School

The draft national strategy on SIAS (2005:9) describes a Full-Service School as an ordinary school that is specially equipped to address a full range of barriers to learning in an inclusive education setting. In addition to their ordinary learner population they will become accessible to most learners who experience barriers to learning and provide necessary support. In the initial implementation stages these schools will be models of inclusive cultures, policies and practice.

Barriers to learning and development

Barriers to learning in an inclusive education setting refers to those difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site or within the learner himself / herself which prevent both the system and the learner's needs from being met. When based on objective evaluation made by an educational authority, it is ascertained that teaching and learning are hampered when such needs are not met, and educationally sound measures must be applied (DoE, 2005:9).

Institutional-Level Support Team

An Institutional-Level Support Team (ILST) is established by an institution in general further and higher education, as a support mechanism whose primary function is to put in place co-ordinated school learner and educator services. (DoE, 2008:03).

Learning Support

Learning support is about working together with all role-players, including parents and the community, making adaptations to the curriculum, securing peer support, making use of specialist support such as counselling, and making use of the assets which are accessible from the learner's environment to address the barriers he or she experiences (Landsberg et al., 2005:48).

Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)

SIAS is the support strategy in the education system which was designed to overhaul the process of identifying, assessing and providing programmes for all learners who require

additional support in order to enhance their participation and inclusion in education (DoE 2008:1).

1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION

The study is presented in five chapters, briefly discussed below.

Chapter One has provided the background, rationale for the study, research aims, and research design.

Chapter Two is a literature review, presenting what other researchers have explored on the topic both locally and internationally. Models which practitioners employ during identification and some considerations which are pertinent are also explored.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology and methods used to answer the research question. It clarifies the selection of the qualitative research mode and the research design and site selection. Questions of ethics, validity, rigour and trustworthiness are also dealt with.

Chapter Four presents the data collected from the field with brief interpretations to contextualise the study and focus on answering the research question.

Chapter Five provides the findings from the study. The interpretations of the aims of the study, research ethics, conclusions and recommendations are made in this chapter.

1.8 SUMMARY

The content of this chapter has been to orientate the reader of the research problem and the context in which it is founded. The research question was posed and aims of the study outlined. The research design and methodology were briefly described, and key concepts clarified.

The next chapter will review literature on the identification of learners who experience barriers to learning and development, both locally and internationally.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

While the focus of the previous chapter was on the orientation of this study, this chapter will review the latest literature on the challenges which teachers face in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning, and develop the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The challenges discussed in this study are:

- Problems with inclusive education terminology
- Lack of expertise and knowledge about learning difficulties (barriers to learning)
- Negative attitudes
- Overcrowded classrooms
- Lack of resources
- Lack of effective parental involvement

Some background about learning difficulties and possible causes are discussed, followed by various models which have been used and/or are being used by practitioners to identify them.

Mouton (2001:87) suggested that a literature review is about issues, their empirical findings, the instrumentation they have used and their effect on the field of interest. This should assist the researcher to avoid undue duplication of the study and to find clues and suggestions about which direction it should take. For Bowen (2005:210) the literature review creates a bridge between the proposed research project and the existing body of knowledge about the topic under study. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:75) further acknowledge that where a topic is new or little research has been conducted on it, any literature that is related in some essential way to the research problem can be used.

In exploring the challenges teachers face I review more literature from international studies because of the relative shortage of local studies on the topic. The recent local studies that have been carried out, such as Gwala (2008), Khele (2008), Ntsanwisi (2008) and Yorke (2009), are also discussed, because the identification of learners who experience barriers to learning is part of the overall implementation of the inclusive education policy.

Since the idea of Full-Service Schools is still new to the South African education system (DoE, 2005:7), I could not find studies which deal with the teachers' challenges in rural Full-Service Schools, however, I explored the challenges that teachers experience in other countries and discovered that some were not dissimilar to those experienced by teachers in South African rural Full-Service Schools.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2011:297) regard selecting a paradigm as the first distinguishing step in the qualitative process because it indicates the point of view of the researcher about the reality from which observations and reasoning emanate. Maxwell (2008:224) writes that it is important to make explicit which paradigm underpins the proposed study because a clear stance helps guide and justify a researcher's design decisions. I thus selected the constructivist approach because it allowed the participants to explain the reality of the challenges, based on their real experiences and perspectives.

The details of the constructivist paradigm used in this study will be discussed in details in Chapter Three.

2.3 BACKGROUND TO THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION

Karten prefaced her 2007 work with a poem she had written in 2005 (2007: ix), on the theme of inclusion:

*...One thing is for sure
We definitely need some more
Better classroom ideas
And less [sic] teacher fears
More planned strategies
Focusing on abilities
Yes, more inclusion
And less confusion...*

I decided to begin my review of literature with this poem because it captures the essence of the education policy, the philosophy that underpins it, and some of the challenges that teachers face, namely their fears, confusion, lack of parental involvement and most

importantly the value they must attach to the needs of each learner with his/her unique abilities in order to create inclusive classrooms.

Kokot (2006:136) argues that, in practice, school-aged children are still recognised as having learning inefficiencies which may be short-lived or long-lived. Teachers in Full-Service Schools are expected to possess essential knowledge of common disabilities and learning difficulties as well as skills to identify them through assessment processes. However, teachers do not have skills (Ntsanwisi 2008:1) and therefore quality support is not always available for learners, especially those who experience barriers to learning. Westwood (2000:24) also contends that there are many factors that make the identification of learners experiencing barriers difficult, such as definitions and criteria for particular categories of difficulty, and overlapping of learning difficulties.

Vogel (2006:68) suggests the following reasons for the early identification of learners:

- Young learners are still dependant on adults for support, guidance and protection and are flexible for support.
- Their playful nature allows them to tolerate intervention with minimal resistance.
- The gaps in their learning are still not great.
- Support for older learners is usually met with some resistance because they have already developed difficulties associated with poor self-image, which may make them sceptical about simple support measures.

In 2008, the DoE piloted the strategic policy framework for SIAS for all learners who need additional support in order to enhance participation and inclusion. A set of forms are provided with this policy as a protocol to be followed in identifying and addressing barriers to learning (DoE, 2008:1). While screening should be done to all learners entering the institution (school), the identification should be done only after the teachers' observations, classroom assessments, reading of learner's profile, and meeting with the parent (KZN department of Education & MIET Africa, 2009:48). Once learners who experience barriers or are at risk of experiencing barriers have been identified, support should be provided according to the needs of the individual. However, this task of identifying and providing support is currently in the hands of teachers who do not always have the skills and knowledge to do so. Most have minimal or no training, skills or expertise and some just follow their 'beliefs' (Kokot 2006:135). As a teacher in one rural Full-Service School, I have observed several cases of over-identification, misidentification and non-identification in my school.

In Hong Kong, the education department developed a screening tool which class teachers could complete in 10 minutes at the end of the first school year of each learner. This checklist was developed as an instrument to identify learners who experience learning difficulties. The information furnished in it was based on the teachers' daily observations of each learner and no testing was required. The purpose was to have a tool which was not time-consuming but more objective (Leung, Lindsay & Lo, 2007:328).

In South Africa the SIAS also focused on the screening and identification of learners and development to establish a support package to address barriers (DoE, 2008:9). However, this document does not make teachers' work less challenging because it consist of too much paperwork and does not provide practical guidance in some sections. For example, the information requires teachers to use scores from classroom assessment as main learning areas for the learners (DoE, 2008:47), instead of looking at the root of the difficulties. The scores can only reflect the results of the difficulties and not their nature. Teachers in Full-Service Schools are recognised the primary resources in the implementation of inclusive policy and therefore must have skills and knowledge necessary to identify learners and employ multi-level teaching, curriculum enrichment and cooperative learning, as well as dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom (DoE, 2005:18).

2.4 BACKGROUND TO LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Teachers and educators should have some background knowledge of learning difficulties before attempting to identify learners who experience them in order to minimise misidentification, over-identification and non-identification reported by several authors, such as Scruggs and Mastropieri (2002), Sideridis, Antoniou and Padeliadu (2008), Anastasiou and Polychronopoulou (2009), and acknowledged by the DoE in the national strategy on SIAS (2008). The field of learning difficulties is vast, covering such diverse fields as education, health, welfare, social development, psychology, and therapy, and therefore various attempts have been made to establish a common understanding of what constitutes learning difficulties, as well as the appropriate tools to identify learners experiencing them. However, there are some common descriptions of learners who experience learning difficulties (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2006:4):

- Difficulties in academic achievement progress.
- A discrepancy between learning potential and actual learning performance.

- Uneven pattern of development in language, physical development, academic development and perceptual development.
- Learning problems do not stem from environmental disadvantage, mental retardation or emotional disturbance.
- Learning difficulties affect ability to read, write, speak, spell and compute mathematics, as well as reasoning, paying attention, memorising, coordinating, social skills and emotional maturation.
- They have normal intelligence and are sometimes intellectually gifted.
- They have difficulties in some academic areas and none in other areas.
- Their learning difficulties affect their abilities to process incoming information and their abilities to use the information in practical skills such as reading, mathematics and spelling.

There are also myths that have clouded the field of which educational practitioners and teachers should be aware in order to avoid interference with the processes of identification. Such myths and the realities about learning disabilities are outlined in Table 2.1 (below).

Table 2.1: Myths and realities about learning difficulties (LD). Source: Pierangelo and Giuliani (2006:5-6).

MYTHS	REALITY
1. People with LD are not really smart.	About 33% of people identified as experiencing LD are gifted with average and above average intelligence.
2. LD is used as an excuse for someone who is irresponsible, unmotivated, or lazy.	LD are problems which affect the levels of processing information or words in the brain and that includes reading, writing, speaking, and / or listening.
3. LD only affects children and adults outgrow such disorders.	LD cannot be outgrown but instead they can intensify with age and most adults have never been identified with LD. Such disorders can be reliably identified with learners in early years.
4. Dyslexia and learning disabilities is the same thing.	Dyslexia is a type of learning disabilities but since four out five learners identified with LD have also been diagnosed with reading disorders and therefore because most subjects require some reading, dyslexia have

	been carelessly used synonymously with the term learning disabilities.
5. Learning disabilities only affect academic areas and not other areas of life.	In most people, learning disabilities affect more than one area of life which includes organisation, memory, and attention, ability to grasp the main idea, cause-and effect relationships, visual and spatial perception, motor skills, sports and family life. LD learners are creative, resourceful thinkers and they have strengths and talents which unfortunately are not emphasised at school.
6. Adults with LD cannot succeed in higher institutions,	Proper accommodations and support allow LD students to succeed in higher institutions.
7. Children with LD are identified in kindergarten and first grades.	Some learners have some skills to protect their LD until middle, high school and or college. Some LD are not recognisable until later stages of school life.
8. More boys than girls experience learning disabilities.	Research shows that equal numbers of both boys and girls have some form of LD but girls are neither identified nor treated.

Pierangelo and Giuliani (2006:16) suggest warning signs which can be used by practitioners to detect learners who experience or are likely to experience learning difficulties (LD):

- Having trouble learning the alphabet, rhyming words, or matching letters to sounds.
- Making mistakes when reading aloud; repeating and pausing often.
- Failing to understand what she/he is reading.
- Having trouble with spelling.
- Messy handwriting or failing to hold a pen appropriately.
- Struggling to express ideas in writing.
- Late language learning and development, and limited vocabulary.
- Struggling to remember the sounds that letters represent.
- Struggling to understand jokes, comic strips and sarcasm.
- Difficulties in pronouncing words with similar sounds.
- Struggling to organise what she/he want to say in writing or in conversation.
- Inability to follow social rules, such as taking turns in conversation.
- Confusing symbols in maths and misreading numbers.
- Inability to retell a story in order of what happened.

- Lacking direction in terms of where to begin a task and how to proceed from there.

These signs are vital to basic understanding of the general nature of possible learning difficulties, but for the more complex nature, teachers and practitioners should have knowledge and skills to identify learners according to the characteristics of each learning difficulty. For example, more elaborate descriptors are needed when one identifies learners experiencing difficulties in mathematics rather than simply saying ‘confusing symbols and misread numbers’. The value of making elaborate descriptions of the suspected difficulties is that they allow the provision of support to be more precise and effective.

2.5 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

In the preceding paragraphs I have indicated the complex nature of the challenges in the field of LD, but this study did not attempt to cover all areas that should be considered when teachers identify learners who experience barriers to learning. Pierangelo and Giuliani (2006:17) contend that there is still a lack of explicit cause of LD because there is no single attributable cause. One should understand the conditions associated with the LD in order to have a better understanding of the LD. Some theories which pertain to some possible causes of LD are presented in the Table 2.2 (below).

Table 2.2: Explanation of possible causes of LD. Source: Pierangelo and Giuliani (2006:18-32).

Causes of Learning Disabilities	Descriptive Features
1. Genetic links	There is no direct link between link the child’s family history and the disorder in a child but there are reports of LD running through the family. Family environment can also result in child’s disorder.
2. Abnormalities in foetal brain development	Maturation delay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in language skills • Delays in motor skills development • Uneven performance patterns on measures of intellectual development • Visual-motor problems • Incomplete or mixed dominance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-left confusion • Social immaturity • Tendency for a family to show similar symptoms
3. Brain structure and learning disabilities	The brain structure and function of LD person is different from that of a person who does not have LD
4. Measuring the brain and brain function	The brain processes are slower or produce slow accuracy. Phonological processes have been identified as primary difficulties in persons with language and reading difficulties
5. Biological basis for reading disabilities	Brain disruptions make people with dyslexia unable to activate their brain when they have to connect visual areas with language areas
6. Biochemical abnormalities	There is absence or excessive presence of biochemical substances which leads to abnormal electrical activity in the brain. This is caused by endocrine and nutritional problems
7. Complication of pregnancy and births	A child's neurological system can be inflicted during birth or at birth by conditions such as: <i>foetal positioning during delivery, shortage of oxygen (anorexia), the presence of certain chemicals such as drugs and alcohol and or pesticides exposure in the blood of the mother or trauma during or after birth</i>
8. Toxins in the child' environment	The child's exposure in environmental toxins such as lead poisoning and or cadmium can lead to disruption in brain development and processing
9. Severe head injuries	Brain injuries can result in conditions such as: <i>physical disabilities, difficulties with thinking and social, behavioural and emotional problems.</i>
10. Social-environmental causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low socio-economic status • Poor teaching instruction at school

The information contained in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 suggests the critical role of a vigilant teacher who is on the lookout for subtle signs. It is also evident that teachers do need a theoretical background associated with the possible causes of some of the LD.

Also important is the value of parents and the information they can assist with during the process of identification, e.g., the birth history of a child and information about the pregnancy. Sidelining parents has a potential to compromise the quality of support to which a child is entitled. Principals should create platforms on which teachers can meet with their learners' parents and get to know each other, which in turn makes it easier for them to talk freely when support strategies for the learner are developed.

The last aspect is that of collaboration for teachers, wherein matters related to the performance of learners is discussed, combined with the teacher's effort in watching out for those subtle conditions, whether within the school or within the learner. Principals have a responsibility to set aside time for such discussion at school, especially in primary schools in which teachers spend most of their time in the classrooms.

2.6 MODELS OF IDENTIFICATION

Scruggs and Mastropieri (2002:160) contend that there is a crisis surrounding the field of learning disabilities, especially with regard to the issue of identification. Their argument is supported by Flack (2005:325), who claims that most professionals do not practice what they write in the inclusive education documents and this leads to serious confusion in the field. Inclusive education is about creating justice in society and as Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 section 9 (3) makes clear, any form of unfair discrimination is outlawed in South Africa. Matters such as misidentification, over-identification and non-identification are discriminatory practices against learners. The models used in most schools to identify learners who experience barriers to learning should at all levels adhere to the principle of non-discrimination. Although teachers' intuition can be useful when observing learners in the classroom, especially those likely to experience learning difficulties, it is imperative that learners be precisely identified before their names can be entered into the register of identified learners. There is a strong need for a standard tool that would ensure accuracy and consistency in the identification. In this section I explore some models of identification which teachers have been or are using in South Africa and abroad.

2.6.1 IQ-Achievement Discrepancy model

According to this model, a learner who is deemed to be experiencing learning disability is the one who performs poorly in one academic area or more, or whose performance shows a substantial discrepancy between the level of performance expected by parents and teachers without any identifiable disability (Ysseldyke & Algozzin, 2006:7). A team of professionals are designated to look for the discrepancy between academic performance and intellectual ability in the following areas:

- Listening comprehension

- Oral expression
- Written expression
- Basic reading skills
- Reading comprehension
- Mathematical calculation
- Mathematical reasoning

The IQ-Achievement Discrepancy model has always been part of the education and health departments, both internationally and locally, however, with the adoption of the inclusive education policy in 2001 in South Africa, it came under criticism both locally and abroad. In spite of the IQ-Achievement Discrepancy model having been abandoned in South Africa, professionals such as teachers, social workers, speech therapists, health professionals and psychologists continue to hold on to IQ tests for their own security. The only thing that has changed is that they now make use of such tests scores with a conscience (Flack, 2005:325).

Although this model is still strongly criticised, some researchers argue that it can provide valid results when used for the identification of learners who experience barriers to learning, and that is the prime reason psychologists continue to make use of it (Restori, Katz & Lee, 2009:128).

Restori, Kartz and Lee (2009:2-3) describe the four stages used in the IQ-Achievement Discrepancy model:

Stage 1

At this stage the presence of the discrepancy between intellectual/ cognitive ability and academic achievement must be established through the use of measures of intellectual ability and academic achievement testing. The standard scores of both are then compared and if the discrepancy is greater or equal to the standards which are pre determined by the state, then a student is deemed to have met the first part of the identification criteria for learning disability.

Stage 2

The second part involves the identification of psychological processing deficit in areas such as visual, auditory processing and visual-motor integration. Two approaches can be used at this level. One is to analyse the results of the previously administered tests such as Cognitive Abilities Scales (CAS) and/or other tests used. The second approach is to

administer a battery of tests to measure different areas of psychological processing. If the learner obtains a standard score significantly below average on any one of psychological processing areas, that learner is considered to have met the second part of the identification for learning difficulties.

Stage 3

The third part is to examine whether or not the learners should be provided with special needs education services. This decision is taken by the members of the Individual Education Plan (IEP), who base their decision on the results of the previously administered tests.

Stage 4

The last criterion is to determine exclusionary considerations. Psychologists and the members of the IEP have to determine whether the presence of the specific learning disability which was identified in stages one and two is not due to sensory disorder, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, economic disadvantage, linguistic diversity or inadequate instruction. If the presence of LD is due to any one of these conditions the learner is excluded from the category of learners with LD, but, if not, such a learner is placed in the category of learners with LD.

The current debate revolves around whether the model should be abandoned completely or applied with some modifications. The following are some of the arguments against its continued application, especially in inclusive settings:

- It does not clearly describe the magnitude of discrepancy between actual performance and the expected performance (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 2006:9).
- Learners have to wait until they reach the third and fourth grades before a significantly low achievement can be sufficiently measured. They can therefore lose early interventions while teachers are waiting for a significant failure (Restori et al., 2009:132).
- Practitioners and school personnel are inconsistent in the manner in which they apply it. They are often subjective and their decisions are based on perceptions of what they feel are the needs of their learners (Restori et al., 2009:132).
- Learners have to wait until a significantly low achievement can be measured before they have access to the provisions of special needs education. While waiting, such

learners develop long-term problems in academic achievement which could be hard to handle when they are eventually identified as experiencing learning disability (Restori et al., 2009:132).

- Traditionally, intelligence tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale were used to determine whether a student's underachievement in a specific area was expected or unexpected. If a student has scored at an average level in some intelligence tests it is expected that he or she would score at an average level in academic tasks. Alternatively, if a student scores at an average level on some intelligence tests and shows a significantly low performance in academic tasks then that is unexpected. This logic therefore shows a strong correlation between IQ and academic achievement, and the argument against it is that it is based upon a faulty premise and should therefore not be applied as a measure for identifying learners (Restori et al., 2009:133).
- Unreliability. The model is not reliable for the identification of learners who experience learning difficulties because it does not clearly distinguish the real difference between learning disabilities and low achievement. It also fails to take into consideration issues such as the examinee's characteristics, examiner's characteristics and the situational conditions before, during and after the tests are administered (Restori et al., 2009:133-134).

The above argument explains how the IQ-Achievement Discrepancy model has come to the disfavour in the field of inclusive education.

2.6.2 Response to Intervention Model (RTI)

In the following paragraphs I present a simplified description of the Response to Intervention (RTI) as one model for identifying learners who experience learning disabilities. Although there are many proponents and researchers who have presented their papers on the strengths, rationale and weaknesses of the RTI, I have based my simple outline on the work of Fuchs and Fuchs (2006).

The RTI can be viewed as a response to the dilemmas posed by the difficulties experienced by teachers and other professionals with the IQ-Achievement Discrepancy model. A multi-tiered instruction, the RTI involves the minimum of two tiers and a maximum of four. At

each tier, academic progress is monitored as a student moves across it. The intensity of instruction is enhanced in each tier by:

- using more explicit, systematic and teacher-centred instruction
- increasing frequency of instruction
- adding more time for instruction
- creating smaller homogeneous groups
- relying on the instructors with greater expertise. (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006:94)

In this study I discuss only two tiers.

First Tier

The first tier involves the selection of learners at risk of experiencing learning difficulties in the first month of the school year, using the academic results for the previous year, or administering a reading test to all learners in a grade and selecting those who score below the benchmark of the standard measures as learners at risk.

Second Tier

Once learners at risk have been selected in the first tier, their responsiveness in the general education instruction is monitored for about eight weeks. Their progress can be measured either by using a norm-referenced criterion or by comparing their progress with those who have not been selected in tier one. Non-respondents to general education instruction are then provided with more intense instruction in the second tier, either inside or outside the classroom. If some learners still fail to respond to intervention the next tiers should be adopted.

Some keynotes in the RTI are:

- The student's relative performance in the classroom rather than standard measures of a test determines responsiveness.
- Assessment and intervention is personalised.
- Professionals who are skilful and in possession of clinical judgment use their expertise to measure the effectiveness of each intervention activity.
- Evidenced-based interventions are used with fidelity.
- Students do not have to experience a substantive failure before they receive support.

However, the RTI proponents still call for the standard protocol that would define and assess the degree of non-responsiveness to intervention so that the reliability of the RTI can be enhanced (Fuchs & Fuchs 2006:98).

2.6.3 Assets-based Approach

The Assets-based Approach to identification is strongly featured as *enabling factors* in the SIAS strategy (DoE, 2008), but is considered less when the actual identification of learners is conducted by teachers and other professionals working with children. The proponents of this approach, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), regarded it as one of many assessment techniques which drive the practitioners to search for the strengths and assets of individuals, even though the deficiencies are prevalent in them. Assessment technique in this study refers to the actual process of choosing and applying methods and instruments when collecting information about a learner, and involves the use of checklists, error analysis, portfolio assessment, assessment questions, and interviews with the learner, parents and teachers (Bouwer, in Landsberg et al., 2005:57).

The crux of this approach is in its strong focus on a person's capabilities, abilities and gifts, which when they are accessed and utilised positively can empower individuals and make them feel valued, powerful and well connected to those around them (Kretzmann & McKnight, 2001:1). It involves getting learners to find their personal strengths and assets and actualise such attributes in an optimal and self-regulating manner. They feel less intimidated by their barriers and take an active role to progress in spite of them (Bouwer, in Landsberg, 2005:51).

Pertinent to this approach is developing the 'Capacity Inventory,' so that each learner can write a list of his/her strengths and assets from which support strategies can be developed (Kretzmann & McKnight, 2003:1). Teachers should guide learners to mobilise such strengths when faced with barriers in order to reduce their impact during learning and development. Whereas the Deficits Approach to identification searches for the deficits, needs and vulnerabilities in learners, the Assets-based Approach acknowledges that the deficiencies might exist but focus on the personal resources, skills and abilities which can be utilised at best to minimise the impact of barriers and make learners self-reliant . It is problematic that many teachers and other practitioners in education devise their assessment practices on the

disabling factors when passing judgments about learners' failures to participate meaningfully in learning and development and disregard the enabling factors.

Kretzmann and McKnight (2003:1) used the analogy of a glass of water being seen as half full or half empty to illustrate the disempowerment and dependency created by the deficits model, with teachers continuing to search for what learners do not have instead of searching for what they do have, and that can be used as a foundation for empowering them to take an active role in their learning. Bouwer in Landsberg et al. (2005:51) contend that when assessment is based on the Assets-based Approach the very act of assessment can become the first step in learning support, which depends on the identification and understanding of those assets in the learner's context which can be used positively to facilitate meaningful support.

Using the Assets-based Approach in a case study of a learner affected by disability and HIV/AIDS, Ryan (2008) revealed that it raised awareness about the participant's assets. She reported that through partnership, collaboration and consultation she was able to help the learner identify his or her assets, which were: pride; trustworthiness; sensitivity; friendliness; good communication skills; leadership; positive attitude; perseverance; activeness in sports; innovation; ability to plan and solve problems; team spirit; and good organisational skills. The approach could therefore be used to develop confidence and independence, resulting in participants' willingness to mobilise their strengths to delimit their needs (2008:53-54).

In my experience as a teacher in Full-Service School, I have had an opportunity to observe the DBST conducting assessment to the identified learners. On the grounds that some of the identified learners can neither read nor write, the DBST conclude that they would only fit to be confined in the Foundation Phase. Aware of this, they (learners) disturb classes and develop negative attitudes towards the academic activities because they know that the school and departmental authorities devalue their strengths. Employing the Assets-based approach to assessment of such learners would instead draw conclusions that would empower them to understand that they still have other talents and gifts. These they could mobilise to make a meaningful contribution to society and for personal enrichment, enabling them to produce positive outcomes such as empowerment, confidence and independence (2008:66).

2.7 SPECIFIC FEATURES OF A FULL-SERVICE SCHOOL

In this section I start with a definition of a Full-Service School, and follow with discussion of the rationale behind its establishment, expectations of what should be done in it well as the

various challenges which face teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in it. The latter forms the core of this study and will therefore be discussed in full.

2.7.1 Definition of a Full-Service School

Full-service schools are mainstream education institutions that provide quality education to all learners by supplying the full range of learning needs in an equitable manner. They are expected to provide access and achieve equity, quality and social justice in education (DoE, 2001:22, 2005:8, and 2010:7). This definition is not confined to primary schools that were converted to Full-Service Schools but also includes institutions at different levels of the education system such as Early Childhood Development, General Education and Training, Further Education and Training and Higher Education (DoE, 2005:7).

2.7.2 Rationale behind the establishment of Full-Service Schools

Full-service schools were established by converting primary schools, equipping and supporting them to provide for a wide range of learning needs. The support would include physical, material resources as well as professional staff development (DoE, 2001:22).

2.7.3 Expectations of what should be done in Full-Service Schools

The establishment of Full-Service Schools was meant to be the first step in expanding and providing access to support in the implementation of the inclusive education policy in South Africa. They had to be provided with physical, material and human resources suitable for the accommodation of a full range of learning needs (DoE, 2001:30). The DoE acknowledged that they would not have every form of support that each learner required but would have the potential and capacity to provide for such needs. The dynamic nature of the schools would ensure that they became communities in which all the barriers that bar learners from full participation in the curriculum were addressed. Such barriers would be factors from within the learner and the education system (DoE, 2005:10).

Teachers in such schools were deemed to have skills and knowledge necessary to provide support to each other and to maximise the success of all learners within the school in order to nurture the philosophy of inclusion (DoE, 2001:9). The identification of learners who experience or are likely to experience barriers to learning is one crucial task that the teachers

must undertake as an initial step towards the provision of support. The accuracy of the identification should give an overall picture of the learner's strengths and weaknesses which in turn should give direction in terms of the type and quality of support needed.

2.8 THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPALS

According to the Conceptual guidelines for Full service schools (DoE, 2005:17), principals in a Full-Service School are responsible for setting the tone for transformation and that transition should be based on a truly inclusive philosophy by which teachers and learners are supported through skills development, mentoring, material provision and, where necessary, external services. These roles have been revised in the Guidelines for Full-Service/ Inclusive Schools (DoE, 2010:13-14):

- Ensuring that all efforts are made to address school policies, improvement plans, programmes and ethos in an inclusive manner.
- Creating a safe, friendly and welcoming climate for parents, teachers, learners and staff members in an inclusive fashion.
- Creating collaborative approach in school schedules where teachers are allocated time for planning for care and support programmes, allocation of resources, effective use of staff, provision of learner support and services etc.

When setting the tone for truly inclusive cultures within the school, Lorenz (2002:39) advised that an inclusive school should be one in which teachers, learners, parents, staff and visitors feel valued. One strategy recommended by the same writer is building teams at schools to foster collaboration among teachers and making work more manageable. The advantages of team work are as follows:

- Each child can benefit from the expertise of more than one teacher.
- The school can offer a wider curriculum.
- High expectations for each learner are amicably managed instead of compromising standards because of lack of expertise.
- It provides a good example of sharing and collaboration for learners to follow.
- It prevents absolute reliance on one teacher, who might at the time be regarded as an expert in a certain area or subject.

- Learners learn to work independently.
- It reduces stress and enhances self confidence in teachers. (Lorenz, 2002:41).

Although team teaching is such a valuable tool in providing quality support to learners, teams should be used as a platform for sharing ideas rather than as tools for staff segregation. Primary school teachers spend most of their time in their classrooms and do not have sufficient time for sharing ideas. The principals have a responsibility to build and sustain such teams. This responsibility requires, among other things, that principals should (Lorenz, 2002:42):

- provide time for team meetings
- ensure the flexibility of teams
- provide space for meetings, creation and storing resources made by the teams
- provide opportunities for working together, regrouping learners and reorganising learning areas
- appraise and recognise group effort.

If appropriately constituted, the teams should assist teachers to identify learners who experience barriers to learning and provide quality support.

2.9 THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL SUPPORT TEAM (ILST)

The ILST has an important role to play in assisting teachers to identify and support learners, especially those who experience barriers to learning at school. This structure should be viewed as the engine of the implementation of the inclusive education policy. However, when this structure also lacks knowledge and expertise to support teachers in terms of identifying learners and providing equitable support, the mechanism of providing support to learners becomes minimal and ineffective.

2.9.1 Composition of Institutional Level Support Team

According to the Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for Full-service Schools, the ILST should be made up of the School Management Team (SMT), principal and educators (DoE, 2005: 11). However, the KwaZulu-Natal's strategy (KZN Department of Education and Miet

Africa, 2009:16-17) stipulates that since the SMT is legislatively mandated to ensure the proper management and leadership of the school, its members should constitute the ILST. Teachers in post-level one are legislatively mandated to full time involvement in teaching and learning, and learning and assessment activities, and therefore cannot constitute the ILST. In the same document (p.17), the following provisions are made with regard to the constitution of the ILST:

- That the three portfolio committees should be headed by the HoDs with the principal as the chair.
- That where the school has few HoDs, a post-level one teacher or a master teacher can be appointed into the leadership positions of the ILST.
- That when there is a teacher who is keen and suitably skilled, she/he can be made deputy of any one of the portfolio committees of the ILST.

The composition of the ILST can be schematically represented as in the following figure:

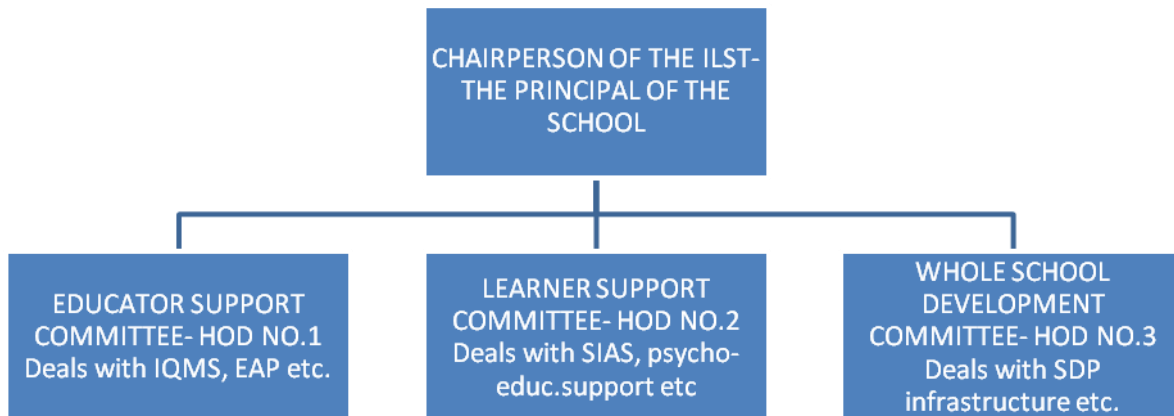


Figure 2.1: The composition of the ILST according to the KZN strategy (KZN DoE & Miet Africa, 2009:16).

Although the focus of this study is on the challenges faced by teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning, the manner in which steering structures such as the ILST

are constituted and managed has a direct impact on the process of identification and support of learners. According to the KZN strategy (KZN DoE and Miet Africa, 2009:16), the ILST is defined as a support structure at school which focuses on the screening, *identification* and support of areas needing development. My specific concern is on the level of expertise and skills for the SMT in terms of the identification of learners to be assigned with the sole mandate of leadership in the three portfolio committees of the ILST as stipulated by this strategy. As a teacher in a Full-Service School in KZN, I have made the following observations with regard to the composition of the ILST:

- The lack of a minimum academic background of the inclusive education policy in the SMT creates challenges for teachers. For example, the HoD who coordinates the Learner Support Committee must have knowledge and skills to assist teachers to identify and support learners. This expertise includes the background of various learning disabilities and various strategies to identify learners other than tests results.
- Most of the District officials who provide workshops to the SMT with regard to the identification and support of learners also show lack of strong academic background of the inclusive education policy and therefore depend on the workshops from the KZN DoE. Some of these officials have a vast experience of Remedial Education and therefore fail to articulate the philosophy upon which the inclusive education policy was founded in practice. As Flack (2005:322-323) noted, even the health professionals fail to articulate the inclusive education policy in their practice and do as they did before it, only with a conscience. Some of these health officials are employed by the DoE and still reach out for the IQ and standardised tests once they have to deal with a learner who experiences barriers to learning (Flack, 2005:323).
- The time spent on the workshops run by the District is also limited. For example, I attended one on the identification of learners in which much information was provided in less than three hours, leaving teachers confused and me with the perception that they skimmed over the issues that affect the identification of learners. Effective support could not therefore be provided to learners at school.

It is my conviction that the question of expertise in the composition of the ILST should be reconsidered by the KZN DoE, because if teachers are appointed to coordinate the activities of the ILST on the bases of their positions at school, there are chances that the provision of

support to teachers who have to identify learners in the classroom will be compromised, thus also impacting on the identification of and support given to the learners.

Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:66) suggest another model of the composition of the ILST which is based on the practice of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). In this model the size and composition of the ILST reflects the needs of the school and number of teachers available. They suggest the following composition:

- A learning support teacher, competent, innovative and possessing good collaborative skills.
- A learning area teacher, who refers learners who have been identified to the ILST.
- A scribe, who keeps the records of meetings.
- An elected teacher, competent in a learning area in which support needs to be given, e.g., mathematics or reading.
- The principal, who can participate on a part-time basis. The role, as described in the Guidelines for Full-Service/ Inclusive Schools (DoE, 2010:13-14), is manifold as the steering of all inclusive practices and the sole person accountable for what happens at school.
- A member of the school assessment team, who ensures that accommodation in assessment is maintained.
- Any co-opted member who might not be a member of staff but has expertise needed by the school in order to provide support according to the needs of the learner.
- The parent of a child, able to provide valuable information about his or her strengths, preferences and needs, as well as support at home.
- A learner, especially in senior grades.

This composition is not prescriptive but some critical members, such as the class teacher and a teacher competent in a particular learning area, and the nature of the role of chairperson of the ILST, should be reviewed by the DoE.

2.10 TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN IDENTIFICATION

Teachers are confronted by a number of challenges in identification of learners who experience barriers to learning.

2.10.1 Inclusive education terminology

The Inclusive Education Policy is an international agenda which requires that the effective implementation in a South African context be viewed in both local and international contexts. Terminology is one area in inclusive education that poses difficulties to teachers and related practitioners, not only in South Africa but also worldwide. Teachers should have a clear definition of what constitutes learning difficulties before they identify learners in the classroom. In South Africa, according to the Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for District-Based Support Teams (DoE, 2005:49), the following terminology was declared unacceptable in inclusive settings:

- Learners with 'special' education needs
- Learners with barriers to learning
- Remedial
- the deaf, the blind, the physically disabled, the mentally retarded
- SMH-Severely Mentally Handicapped
- Slow learners
- Sufferers.

This terminology was replaced by the following terminology which was declared acceptable in inclusive settings:

- Learners who experience barriers to learning
- describe the barrier rather than the person, e.g., deafness, blindness, visual impairment
- People first terminology: people who are blind, children with hearing loss
- People with HIV/AIDS
- People with intellectual disability, Down's syndrome, autism, physical disability, mental illness

- Wheelchair users.

Although the terminology would be changed, South Africa would retain the internationally acceptable terminology such as ‘disability’ and ‘impairment’ to refer to those learners whose barriers to learning and development emanate from organic/ medical causes (DoE, 2001:12). Another issue is that some officials still make use of the terminology that has been declared unacceptable even in workshops e.g., ‘slow learners.’ This issue indirectly sends a message to teachers that when they identify learners they should look for ‘slow learners,’ which is in disagreement with the principles of the inclusive education policy that all learners can learn and all need support (DoE, 2001:6). Kokot (2006:136) noted that in South Africa the terms *learning difficulties* or *learning problems* are used to refer to learners who experience learning inefficiencies which may last for a short time and be overcome without the assistance from a teacher or a therapist, whereas those learners who are identified as experiencing moderate to severe barriers which are not related to extrinsic causes are referred to as *learning disabled*.

The controversy around the Inclusive Education terminology has also been reported by some international researchers, especially with regard to the operational meaning of the terms such as ‘*learning disabilities*’ or ‘*learning difficulties*’ or ‘*specific learning disabilities*’. To a lay person these terms refer to the same conditions that prevent learners from making full participation at school. Practitioners argue that the clarity of what constitutes a learning disability is pivotal because it makes it possible for teachers to design programmes that are tailor-made to address that specific difficulty (Flack, 2005:321; Guerin & Male, 2006:2; Kavale, 2010:553; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002:156).

Guerin and Male (2006:2) suggest that although many studies have been conducted around this confusing terminology, each only leads to new procedures of identifying learners and not to any consensus as to what constitutes a learning disability. They argue, for example, that such conflicting views make it difficult to identify poor reading from inappropriate reading instruction and this leads to the alarmingly high rates of learners being identified as dyslectic. Sideridis, Antoniou and Padeliadu (2008:206) confirm that there is evidence that both general and special education teachers often miss essential characteristics that define what constitutes learning disability and that lead to the over-identification of learners.

Another controversial matter is the inability to distinguish between underachievement and learning disability as well as the coexistence of conditions in a child (Guerin & Male 2006:3).

When more than one condition exists in a child, teachers in most instances provide support for only one and neglect the less prominent condition, thus limiting the opportunities of success in the child.

The DoE (2001:18) provided a list of categories of barriers which could prevent learners from accessing the curriculum meaningfully, including the following:

- Physically, mentally, sensory, neurological developmentally, psycho-social disturbances, differences in intellectual abilities, socio-economic deprivations (intrinsic barriers).
- Extrinsic barriers include a wide variety of conditions that bar the learner from making meaningful participation in the learning experiences which include:
 - Negative attitudes to and stereotyping differences.
 - An inflexible curriculum
 - Language(s) which is(are) not appropriate to address learners' learning needs
 - Inappropriate communication
 - Inaccessible and unsafe built environments
 - Inappropriate and inadequate support services
 - Inadequate policies and legislations
 - The non-recognition and non-involvement of parents
 - Inadequately and inappropriately trained education managers and educators.

Although this list is useful to teachers, as the last item suggests, training of educators is a barrier, especially in terms of understanding the operational meaning of what constitutes learning difficulties. This understanding is crucial when teachers identify learners who experience barriers to learning in the classroom.

2.10.2 Teachers' bias during the process of identification

Although the SIAS strategy was piloted in 2008 to provide support to teachers, managers, districts and parents in schools, teacher bias during the identification is still prevalent. In my

observation as a teacher I have noted that when the list of learners who have been identified in class by teachers is compiled there are some injustices. For example, one teacher would identify learner A as experiencing barriers in language when other teachers declare that such a learner does not. Teachers still do not have a standard instrument which can assist them in identifying learners, with some preferring to copy the list from other teachers in order to avoid any debate, and because their identification is solely based on their beliefs. The teachers' ineffective instructional methods, lack of experience in teaching the subject and learners' attitudes towards a specific subject or teacher should also be considered when learners are identified. Therefore, some learners are entered into the register of learners who experience barriers to learning because the teacher could not access their strengths. This would have enabled the teachers to inform them of the best learning styles of such learners or about other conditions lying behind their failure to assimilate the learning material.

Sideridis, Antoniou and Padeliadu conducted a study in 2008 in 246 Greek public schools to investigate the variable of teacher bias during the identification of learners with learning disabilities. In Greece, the term 'dyslexia' is used as an umbrella term that refers to difficulties in reading, spelling, writing and handwriting (dysgraphia), and 'specific learning disability' is used to refer to challenges in literacy and numeracy (Anastasiou & Polychronopoulou, 2009:56). Here a learner is defined as experiencing learning disability if his/her performance displays a discrepancy between potential and achievement (Sideridis et al., 2008:206) and it is noteworthy to highlight at this point that the Greek education system has borrowed many practices from the United States education system. The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

- a. Female teachers identified more learners with learning difficulties and behavioural difficulties than male teachers, with a ratio of 2:1 (p.199), that is, for every two learners identified by female teachers, male teachers identified one.
- b. Teachers with a low personal efficacy were more likely to mistakenly refer student for special education service due to lack of practical guidance (p.206).
- c. Boys were over-identified across age level (p.201).
- d. The teachers' experience and level of education accounted for more accuracy, with those with lower levels of education systematically producing inflated ratings during the process of identification (p.199).

The findings from this study was further enriched by another study conducted in Greece, by Anastasiou and Polychronopoulou in 2009, which led to the following conclusions about the teachers' challenges with regard to the identification of learners who experience learning disabilities in the Greek education system:

- a. Teachers and parents are only used as informants during the identification processes (2009:57).
- b. Greece does not have a legal document that specifies identification procedures. This gives both Greece and the USA distortional elements that lead to over-identification of students with specific learning disabilities (2009:66).

Another study, by Scruggs and Mastropieri in 2002, into the reasons for the high rates of identification, drew the following conclusions:

- a. The imprecision of terminology, especially of what constitutes a learning disability, made teachers confuse learners with mental retardation with those who have learning disabilities (2002:156).
- b. The inconsistency in the use of methods to assess the discrepancy between the potential and the achievement by various practitioners produces subjective outcomes (2002: 156).
- c. The inability to distinguish learners who have a generally lower achievement capacity from those who actually have learning disabilities. For example, a poor reader with low achievement needs readers (2002:157).

2.10.3 Lack of expertise about specific learning difficulties

Guerin and Male (2006:4) argue that the lack of qualified special education teachers leads to poor instruction, poor classroom management which is coupled with the lack of knowledge about the learning difficulties experienced by learners and the general decrease of quality instruction. The lack of expertise in most South African teachers is a crucial issue, especially in the rural or disadvantaged African areas, and for a variety of reasons. Most qualified teachers do not always prefer to work in rural areas because of the lack of basic infrastructure such as tarred roads to schools, which makes most rural schools inaccessible during the summer rainy season. Cottages for teachers are usually in poor condition, unsafe or nonexistent. When posts become available in better areas, qualified teachers move away.

These movements leave rural schools with no alternative but to employ temporary under-qualified or unqualified teachers. Although most are diligent, they do not have expertise to provide quality instruction and their challenges become worse when they have to identify learners who experience barriers to learning. Qualified teachers also display similar challenges with regard to the identification of learners and it mostly leads to non-identification, misidentification and over-identification of learners. The lack of expertise in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning is a challenge that faces teachers across the qualification spectrum.

In my interview with the National Director of Inclusive Education, (17 June 2010), he acknowledged that the lack of qualified staff who have expertise in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning is a major challenge, but he indicated that the DoE had created extra posts for Full-Service Schools. Unfortunately, such posts are occupied by either unqualified or under-qualified teachers, which undermines the rationale behind the creation of such additional posts. This challenge remains unresolved. The DoE (2001:19) committed itself to the orientation and training of teachers in Full-Service Schools, with the focus to be on the identification of and addressing barriers to learning, multi-level classroom instruction, cooperative learning, problem-solving and how development of learners' strengths in spite of weaknesses. This task was assigned to the DBSTs, but the training provided by these teams in some Districts of KwaZulu-Natal has been more orientation in nature than intensive. Such training usually last for few hours or two days and teachers have to return to schools to implement it. I personally attended some of these training sessions.

The structure of teacher training in South Africa consisted of programmes or qualifications for general education and qualifications for remedial education. Currently there are few teachers who have undergone formal training qualification in inclusive education. The lack of skills, knowledge and tools to identify learners who experience barriers to learning has a serious negative impact on the provision of effective teaching and support in the classroom. Teachers often depend on their intuition that something is wrong with a certain learner or they make an incorrect identification, which becomes apparent when they differ on whether such a learner requires extra support or not. Other teachers carelessly label learners as 'lazy,' 'naughty' or 'slow,' and further assign any failure to their parents' socio-economic status (Khoele, 2008:64; Ntsanwisi, 2008:1).

The responses to the questionnaire administered by Ntsanwisi (2008:62-63) to verify the skills of teachers with regard to specific learning difficulties showed that they had little

difficulty in identifying barriers such as socio-economic barriers or physical difficulties, but had great in identifying autism, epilepsy, Down's syndrome, neurological problems and intellectual difficulties. Quality support could therefore not be made available. Teachers depend on academic performance as a yardstick to measure the learners' progress, so limited knowledge about learning difficulties poses a threat to identification of those who experience barriers to learning. Some teachers are willing to undergo training in inclusive education but are afraid of demands that the work would impose on them (Mpya, 2007:46).

The lack of a theoretical base for the inclusion policy impacts negatively on the manner in which learners are identified (Ntsanwisi, 2008:1) and makes teachers feel inadequate for the work (Ladbrook, 2009:58). For example, the lack of training in identifying learners' strengths makes it difficult for teachers to focus on them when providing assistance (Ladbrook, 2009:58), so they resort to the identification of learners' weaknesses.

Inclusive education policy was founded upon the philosophy of the socio-ecological model (Bouwer, in Landsberg et al., 2005:50) which purports that the focus of teachers when dealing with barriers to learning must be on the system rather the learner, but teachers adhere to the medical deficit model, which supports exclusion of learners from the class and exclusive assistance by a learning support teacher (Yorke, 2008:4). This perpetual dependence on the medical deficit model continues partly because teachers are failing to conceptualise what is written in the policy documents about inclusion practices, or because they do not have specific knowledge about how to deal with diversity in the classroom (Ladbrook, 2009:57).

2.10.4 General teachers' challenges in inclusive classrooms

Recent studies conducted by local researchers indicate commonality of the challenges that classroom teachers are facing with regard to the assimilation of inclusive practices in their classroom and the identification of learners who experience barriers to learning in particular. Two of these studies were conducted in Gauteng white schools; one independent school (Yorke 2008) and one public school (Ladbrook 2009), whilst two were conducted in African rural and semi-rural schools; one in Mpumalanga (Mpya 2005), Khele in Gauteng (2008), Gwala in KwaZulu-Natal, KwaMashu (2008) and another in Limpopo (Ntsanwisi, 2008). The contexts were not identical but the content led to one similar conclusion: South African teachers have challenges with regard to the implementation of the inclusion policy.

These challenges are experienced by teachers in various provinces across racial lines and in both urban and rural school settings. I summarise these challenges in the paragraphs below, not to capture all the challenges cited by different researchers but only evidence considered pertinent to answering the research question in this study.

2.10.4.1 *Negative attitude towards inclusion*

Teachers are the prime agents of change in societies in which they offer their services and therefore the successful implementation of the inclusion policy rests upon teachers' change of attitude towards it. When the attitudes of teachers are not positive more damage than good may be done. Teachers' negative attitudes can be traced in the following areas:

- When augmentative alternative language has to be used with learners experiencing speech impediments (Mpya, 2007:41)
- Other teachers avoid dealing with diversity in their classrooms according to a philosophy of inclusion in which the focus is on addressing the needs of the learners (Ladbrook, 2009:66; Mpya, 2007:38).

Some teachers develop negative attitude towards inclusion policy because they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to assist them in implementing the policy with confidence (Gwala 2008:103). It would thus be unfair to blame teachers for their reluctance and negative attitude when the challenge is systemic, and it has to be dealt with as such by the DoE.

2.10.4.2 *Overcrowded classrooms*

In the school in which I teach, the lowest number of learners in a classroom is currently 28, a large number of whom to identify the needs and provide instructional support. Most rural schools in general face a similar challenge. Ntsanwisi (2008:40) reported a ratio of between one teacher to 25 and one to 55 learners in the schools that participated in her research in Limpopo. As Khoele (2008:64) writes, paying individual attention to the specific needs of learners becomes difficult in overcrowded classrooms, and adds to teachers' stress.

2.10.4.3 Lack of resources

The study conducted by Gwala (2008:63) revealed that teachers were frustrated with the unavailability of time for planning together and supporting personnel in the provision of training to the staff in inclusive education. The shortage of time for training and planning together has serious implications for the implementation of the policy in the classroom.

According to the Guidelines for Full-Service / Inclusive Schools (DoE, 2010), the words ‘Collaboration’ and ‘Team Work’ are benchmarks in the implementation of inclusive education. In the same document (2010:14) the role the principal is clearly spelled out and includes, among other things:

- Provision of common planning time, crucial for primary school teachers because they spend their day in the classrooms and are unable to share learners’ matters as a team (Ntsanwisi, 2008:42).
- Allocation of time for educators to engage in care and support programmes and ILST activities.
- Allocation of resources where they are needed.

It is my conviction that if teachers teaching the same subject at school in different grades were to be allocated time to engage in discussions about their preliminary observations of learners in their specific grades and share strategies of identifying learners, cases of misidentification, over-identification and non-identification would be reduced. During such time, support programmes can also be developed together. The non-availability of time to plan together is more common in primary schools than in secondary schools.

2.10.4.4 Involvement of parents and caregivers

The process of identifying learners who experience barriers to learning involves a learner, a teacher, the parent of the learner and additional assistance from other stakeholders, such as primary health workers, speech therapists and psychologists. However, the role of parents is often less utilised, partly because teachers do not recognise the crucial need of involving the parents or because the parents do not understand their role in the education of their children. This phenomenon is mostly evident in rural African schools, where most parents are illiterate and only depend on teachers’ opinions about their children. In my experience, parents only

come to school to sign documents which teachers tell them to sign. Teachers continue to be regarded as experts on the learners, whilst parents are merely listeners and signatories.

The South African' Schools Act 84 of 1996, the White Paper 6, 2001, The Conceptual Guidelines for Full service Schools 2005, the Guidelines for Full-Service/Inclusive Schools 2010, the National Strategy on SIAS 2008 all emphasise the pivotal role of both parents or caregivers in the education of children. In South African's rural schools, the unequal power relation between teachers and parents has traditionally determined the status quo. Teachers have considered themselves as experts in their professional role in a manner that has alienated parents from the role of equal partners in the education of their children. This was partly because most rural parents have not been to school and depend solely on the teachers' opinions about their children.

The imbalances of power relations between parents and teachers result in parents becoming defensive or feeling intimidated by the school (DoE, 2005:22). The same document (2005:22) contains suggestions to improve the quality and form of relationship between teachers and families in inclusive schools:

- Parents can bring valuable knowledge and skills to the school.
- Families should be invited to participate in class activities through sharing their knowledge and support in class.
- Families provide important information about their children to school.
- Families should be empowered by the school so that they can support their children at school and home and have a better understanding of their needs, potential and progress.
- Training programmes for parents should be organised by the school.
- Fruitful relations between the school and parents can only be achieved when families feel that their involvement and efforts are valued by the school.

The unfortunate part of the involvement of families is that, according to my observation as a teacher, teachers maintain their traditional role of inviting parents only when their children have been disrespectful in class or to voice their opinions about them. Teachers still create the type of parent who will always depend on the expert opinion of teachers, which means that the relationship is based on dependency rather than on mutual cooperation. Some teachers prefer to 'baby-sit' parents because they are uneducated and know nothing about the best

ways of supporting their children. Even when parents attend school meetings, they do so either because they do not want to be 'in the bad books' of the principal or they have ulterior motives rather than the support of the child. Parents attend school meetings but do not make a full contribution because teachers or principals have inculcated in their minds that their contribution is meaningless. They are uneducated and feel that if they differ with the principal's ideas the education and better treatment of their children at school will be compromised.

Bauer and Shea (2003:33) identify some of the factors that inhibit families' voluntary involvement with schools:

- Schools convey a message that parents who are under-involved at schools have little to contribute at school or do not care about the education of their children.
- Some parents have been unsuccessful and had negative experiences at school and are therefore cautious about becoming involved with another.
- Some parents are hard to reach.

However, it is still the responsibility of teachers to involve families in inclusive schools. Some strategies are suggested by Bauer and Shea (2003:34) from White-Clark and Decker (1996), as follows:

- Teachers should understand that parents are primary educators of learners and show that they understand the importance of the role of parents. The work of teachers would be incomplete without support from parents.
- The ethics of care and concern should form the bases of the relationship between teachers and parents.
- Teachers should demonstrate high expectations from all parents and show that their participation is important and valued.
- Teachers should view parents as partners, collaborators and problem-solvers.
- The expectations, roles and responsibilities of teachers should be communicated to parents.
- Teachers should be willing to address personal concerns and work actively to involve parents.

- Teachers should clearly understand why parents must become involved, and their own role in this involvement.
- Teachers should work on the improvement of parents' involvement by experimenting with new ideas which can improve such involvement.

Although the context of the above writers diverges from a South African rural schooling context, their suggestions are applicable to most schooling settings. A teacher's role is incomplete without equitable partnership with families.

2.11 LEARNING STYLES

I have included this section on Learning Styles in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning because the issue of the acceptance and the accommodation of the learners' differences is the centrepiece of the inclusive and training system in South African inclusive education policy (DoE, 2001:9). Some of the values advocated in this policy include:

- The acknowledgement that all children and youth can learn and need support.
- The acceptance that all learners are different have different learning needs which are equally valued and an ordinary part of human experience.
- Learners should be empowered to develop their individual strengths and be allowed to participate critically in the process of learning.

While the learning style approach is useful in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning it can be more useful when teachers focus more on the learners' strengths than weaknesses in order to provide support. However, higher teacher-learner ratios in rural classrooms can make teachers' work more difficult, because it may not always be easy to all teachers to discover the strengths of individual learners.

The table below shows the eight learning styles as discussed by Giles, Pitre and Womack (26 January 2012). It depicts the way learners' individual needs can be addressed when teachers use the Learning Styles approach in the classroom.

2.3: Table of Learning Styles

Intelligence Area	Strengths	Preferences	Learns best through	Needs (Examples)
1. Verbal / Linguistic	Writing, reading, memorising dates, thinking in words, telling stories	Write, read, tell stories, talk, memorise, work at solving puzzles	Hearing and seeing words, speaking, reading, writing, discussing and debating	Books, tapes, paper diaries, writing tools, dialogue, discussion, debated, stories.
2. Mathematical/ Logical	Math, logic, problem-solving, reasoning, patterns	Question, work with numbers, experiment, solve problems	Working with relationships and patterns, classifying, categorising, working with the abstract	Things to think about and explore, science materials, manipulative, trips to the planetarium and science museum, etc.
3. Visual / Spatial	Maps, reading charts, drawing, mazes, puzzles, imagining things, visualisation	Draw, build, design, create, daydream, look at pictures	Working with pictures and colours, visualising, using the mind's eye, drawing	LEGOs, video, movies, slides, art, imagination games, mazes, puzzles, illustrated book, trips to art museums, etc.
4. Bodily / Kinaesthetic	Athletics, dancing, crafts, using tools, acting	Move around, touch and talk, body language	Touching, moving, knowledge through bodily sensations, processing	Role-play, drama, things to build, movement, sports and physical games, tactile experiences, hands-on learning, etc.
5. Musical	Picking up sounds, remembering melodies, rhythms, singing	Sing, play an instrument, listen to music, hum	Rhythm, singing, melody, listening to music and melodies	Sing-along time, trips to concerts, music playing at home and school, musical instruments, etc.
6. Interpersonal	Leading, organising, understanding people, communicating, resolving conflicts, selling	Talk to people, have friends, join groups	Comparing, relating, sharing, interviewing, cooperating	Friends, group games, social gatherings, community events, clubs, mentors/ apprenticeships, etc.
7. Intrapersonal	Recognising strengths and weaknesses, setting goals, understanding self	Work alone, reflect pursue interests	Working alone, having space, reflecting, doing self-paced projects	Secret places, time alone, self-paced projects, choices, etc.
8. Naturalistic	Understanding nature, making distinctions, identifying flora and fauna	Be involved with nature, make distinctions	Working in nature, exploring living things, learning about plants and natural events	Order, same/different, connections to real life and science issues, patterns

This table is adapted from Giles, Pitre and Womack (Department of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology, 26 January 2012).

Although the table above may not be taken as having all the ingredients that teachers need when they identify learners who experience barriers to learning it is useful in understanding how some learners do learn. Knowing, the learning styles may assist teachers when they design learning support to address specific difficulties.

2.12 CONCLUSION

The study of literature in this chapter has shown that the identification of learners experiencing barriers to learning is still clouded with much uncertainty, which leads to over-identification, misidentification and non-identification.

The controversy around the definition of what the term ‘learning difficulties’ includes or excludes makes the work of teachers more difficult when they have to identify learners who experience barriers to learning (Flack, 2005:321; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002:156). This confusing terminology also leads to a failure to distinguish, for example, between generally poor readers and learners who experience barriers to learning. Teachers’ lack of training, expertise and knowledge about various learning disabilities also accounts for imprecision in the identification of learners who experience barriers to learning (Gwala, 2006:81-83; Ladbrook, 2009:91-91;Ntsanwisi, 2008:62.).

Based on the literature in this study, it is clear that teachers in Full-Service Schools experience challenges in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on the discussion of the methodology used to collect data on the challenges which teachers face in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in a rural Full-Service School in KwaZulu-Natal. It begins with the details of the research paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology. The purpose of the study, research method, research design, research site, sampling, data collection strategies, data analysis, rigour and trustworthiness and the research ethics are also discussed.

3.2 CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:297) noted that the first step which distinguishes qualitative studies from other modes of inquiry is the constructivist paradigm and indicates the point of view of the researcher is to explicitly explain the paradigm from which the study was framed. Plack describes (2005:228) the constructivist paradigm as one which seeks to understand human behaviour in terms of people's intentions, values, attitudes and beliefs. I selected this paradigm in the study because it allowed me to understand the challenges which teachers face in identifying learners as described by the teachers in their own way. I have organised my discussion of the constructivist paradigm into four subsections: ontology, epistemology, methodology and product, in the following paragraphs:

3.2.1 Ontology

Kim (2010:5) describes 'ontology' as a set of beliefs about what exists or what is real. Constructivists assume that there is no absolute reality and that although multiple realities exist they are unique because they are constructed by the individuals who experience their own world and use their own unique lenses to describe their points of view (Hatch, 2002:15). In this case study I have selected this paradigm because of my assumption that the reality of the challenges experienced by the teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning can be understood only when I interview them and study the documents they are

using to identify such learners. The interviews in this study were used as a platform on which teachers could share and construct knowledge about their challenges.

3.2.2 Epistemology

While Kim (2010:5) describes epistemology as a set of beliefs about knowing, Hatch (2002:15) explains knowledge as a human construction where the researcher and the participant are joined together in the process of co-construction of understandings, and therefore the researcher cannot be distant and objective during this process. In this study, the participants were allowed to construct knowledge about the reality of their challenges when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning, but the type of question guide I used during the interviews and probing questions was based on my experiences as a teacher in a rural Full-Service School. Therefore, I not only was a total listener during the interviews and document analysis but also joined with the participants in the construction of knowledge. However, my participation was also limited in the sense that the essence of the study was to capture the participants' views and not mine.

3.2.3 Methodology

Hatch (2002:15) purports that researchers spend extended time interviewing and observing the participants in their natural setting in order to capture the reconstructions participants use to make meaning of their world. Based on Hatch's opinion I spent two days in the research site interviewing the participants and analysing the documents which they used.

3.2.4 Products

Hatch (2002:15-16) maintains that knowledge produced within the constructivist paradigm is usually presented in the form of case studies or rich narratives which describe the interpretations constructed during the research process. Such knowledge should include enough contextual details and representation of the voices of the participants to enable the readers to place themselves in the shoes of the participants and make judgment of the quality of the findings of the study. In Chapter Four, the data collected is presented as narratives or rich description of the case under study. The voices of the participants have been presented

using mostly their verbatim accounts. Presenting the participants in verbatim is a strategy in qualitative studies to ensure the trustworthiness and rigour of the findings of the study.

3.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The DoE acknowledges that teachers in the classroom are the primary resources in the achievement of the goals of inclusion and therefore their skills and knowledge should be improved through the assessment of their needs and provision of ongoing support (DoE 2001:18). It is against this background and my experience that I have become interested in investigating the challenges faced by classroom teachers when identifying learners who experience or are likely to experience barriers to learning and development in a Full-Service School.

The main research question was narrowed down to the following:

- What challenges do teachers experience when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning?

3.4 RESEARCH METHOD

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:314) describe qualitative research as a mode of inquiry in which a researcher collects data in a face-to-face situation by interacting with the people selected as participants in the research, and describes the phenomenon under study according to the collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions in order to improve educational practice.

In this study I selected the qualitative research mode of inquiry because the nature of the research problem requires data to be collected through face-to-face interaction with teachers in one rural Full-Service School. During the interaction, teachers were asked to describe the challenges they face when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in the school.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

I selected a case study as a design because I wanted to conduct an in-depth study of a single unit (one rural Full-Service School) and investigate the teachers' experiences (their challenges) with regard to the identification of learners who experience barriers to learning (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2006:46). For McMillan and Schumacher (2006:317), in case studies, a researcher investigates in-depth small and distinct groups in a face-to-face situation, and this group should be bounded by a natural socio-cultural boundary. In this case study the boundary was one rural Full-Service School as a natural setting for the teachers.

The case study design was employed to explain the challenges experienced by teachers when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in one rural Full-Service School (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont 2011:321-322). Although the findings cannot be transferred to the teachers' challenges in other rural Full-Service Schools, the DoE can learn from them and make interventions that would relieve teachers from such challenges.

The primary aim in selecting this design was to find the rich description of the teachers' experiences in one school in their natural setting and not to transfer the results of the study. However, this study is available to policymakers looking to make improvements to the manner in which learners who experience barriers to learning are identified and supported in Full-Service Schools.

3.6 RESEARCH SITE

The school in which the research was conducted is situated in a rural northern area of KwaZulu-Natal. It has electricity, running water and is next to a tarred road that leads to the main but small underdeveloped town. There are neither computers for the learners or teachers nor cottages for the teachers. As a result, local teachers stay in their homes and the principal and other teachers stay in the nearby small town and commute to school daily. This school is one Full-Service School among eight in this District. It has an enrolment of 375 learners from diverse social backgrounds. Few of these learners' parents are working or have a stable income. Some learners survive by social grants and/or pension provision from their grandparents. It is not uncommon to find some of these learners going to school in bare feet. There are 11 teachers and two learner support assistants in the school. None of these teachers have a qualification in inclusive education policy but all depend on workshops provided by the District-Based Support Teams.

I developed a special interest in rural Full-Service Schools because I grew up in a rural area and am also a teacher in one of these eight Full-Service Schools in the District. I have observed and experienced some of the general challenges that teachers experience in rural Full-Service Schools when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning.

3.7 SAMPLING

De Vos et al. (2011:223-224) describe a sample as comprising elements or a subset which is selected from the population and used for the actual study. The selection of a sample is solely based on the judgment of the researcher, which is the reason this sampling strategy is also known as judgmental sampling (De Vos et al., 2011:392). Purposeful sampling is important if a researcher wants to use a few cases in order to gain many insights about a specific topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:319).

Purposive sampling was used to select nine participants from the population of 13 teachers. During the actual interviews I decided to include the chairperson of the ILST, but four teachers made a sudden withdrawal from participation, leaving six participants in total. Since there are a variety of purposeful sampling strategies, depending on the case under study, I selected the maximum variation sampling. This also allowed me to select the sample which had the potential to give maximum differences of perceptions about the topic under study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:320).

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:321) argue that the size of the sample in qualitative studies is dynamic, ad hoc and phasic rather than static, and therefore can range between 1 to 40 or more participants. The composition of my actual sample was:

- The chairperson of the ILST
- Three HoDs taken from the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases. Each Phase was represented by one HoD.
- Two teachers from the Foundation Phase.

The participants who withdrew were two teachers from the Intermediate Phase and two teachers from the Senior Phase. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:322) suggest that the size of the sample can also be determined by difficulty in finding informants.

My participants were all qualified to teach in the General Education and Training (GET) band, with the exception of one Foundation teacher who was under-qualified but who had

one year's experience as teacher. One HoD from the Foundation Phase has specialised in Remedial Education and another HoD enrolled for the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), specialising in Inclusive Education at university.

This selection was not meant to represent categories of teachers at school but I wanted to illuminate different aspects of challenges that teachers experience when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning. I had to believe that the experienced teacher had received some training by the DBST and their challenges had to be dissimilar to those of novice teachers. The HoDs were selected because their duty was to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place in the classroom, and that included the identification and support of those learners who experience barriers to learning. The chairperson of the ILST was selected because of his role, which according to the Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for Full-Service Schools (DoE, 2005:17) was to set the tone for the process of transformation, deal with challenges and make decisions based on the philosophy of inclusion. Therefore, he had to be aware of the challenges that teachers face when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 340) are of the opinion that qualitative research largely depends on the use of multi-method strategies to either corroborate the data collected from a single strategy or to confirm data within a single strategy. Two data collection strategies were used to corroborate and also to confirm within a single strategy, e.g., different participants who occupy different positions at school were interviewed at different times. The interviews were used as the primary data collection strategy and corroborated with SIAS document analysis to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings of this study.

3.8.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used, also called 'formal' because the researcher remains in charge and comes to the interview with a set of questions (question guide) designed to lead the interviews whilst also leaving the questions open. This type of interview allows for probing questions to be asked on the areas which arise during the interviews, and so illuminate informants' experiences or let them expound on the subject (Hatch, 2002:94). The interviews were conducted in the office of the principal to ensure privacy and minimise the

chances of disturbance. There was no fixed seating arrangement, and each participant was allowed to sit where she/he felt comfortable. The interviews were conducted in three stages: the first one was with the chairperson of the ILST, who was also the principal of the school; the next was with the three HoDs from the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases; the third with the two teachers from the Foundation Phase. Each interview took one hour, from 13pm to 14pm. The questions were similar but also specific to the participants, according to their positions and experience at school.

Interviewing the participants separately also helped me to corroborate the data, thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings. My aim was to get to the root of the teachers' challenges and elicit their feelings regarding the research topic (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:351). The interviews were conducted in English but the participants were allowed the freedom of switching to IsiZulu whenever they wished to clarify some critical points. The participants were all first language speakers of Isizulu and English was their first additional language. However, they decided to use English during the interviews, except in one instance. I personally interpreted the section spoken in Isizulu and confirmed with the teachers concerned that my interpretation had captured what they said during the interview.

A tape recorder was used to record each interview using a high quality sound Dictaphone in order to limit the possibility of mishearing due to inaudibility during transcription. Confirming with the participants after transcription also helped to increase the trustworthiness of the data collected.

3.8.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is one of the data collection strategies used in qualitative studies but often neglected (De Vos et al., 2011:376). Described by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:356) as a non-interactive strategy, it involves little or no reciprocity between the researcher and the participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:356) distinguish three types of documents analysis: personal documents, official documents and objects.

In my informal discussion with some of the staff members I discovered that the teachers had some informal personal journals which they used before completing the official documents as set in the SIAS documents (2008). I therefore decided to study such journals before studying the SIAS documents. Teachers use these documents to record their observations of each

learner in class, during sports and break times. My interest was to learn what they record when they identify learners and their challenges in the process of identification.

The second documents studied were the checklists which contained the number of learners identified per month and per school term. These contained the statistics of learners identified by teachers in each month and in term one (January to March 2011). The last documents were the SIAS forms for identification provided in the SIAS toolkit (DoE 2008). Studying these enabled me to corroborate the data from the interviews about teachers' challenges in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is inductive in nature and involves a process of organising data into categories and finding patterns which are coded systemically. The findings are presented in a narrative form (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:364).

I started organising my key words before conducting the actual interviews and analysing documents in order to avoid a situation in which I would be stuck with one thousand pages of transcriptions which I could not analyse effectively (Kavale & Brinkmann 2009:190). These key words would be used as starting point for the preliminary data analysis.

I observed each process, analysed and reported all the proceedings of the interviews, bearing in mind the purpose of the study, in order avoid pitfalls, diverting the focus and accumulating unnecessary data (De Vos et al., 2011:403).

De Vos et al. (2011:403-404) suggest steps that researchers can follow in data analysis, but these authors advise that such steps are not prescriptive or rigid, depending on an individual researcher. I therefore used some in my analysis of data:

- My first plan was to ensure that the Dictaphone I was going to use in recording interviews was in good condition and could capture the data clearly.
- I started making my preliminary data analysis immediately after my first interviews in order to find categories that emerged from the data.
- The data was collected in three stages: the interview with the chairperson of the ILST; the interviews with the three HoDs; and the interviews with the two teachers. The data collected in each stage was kept in separate cassettes and marked clearly by a permanent marker.

- I started listening to the cassettes several times then made transcriptions. My critical friend also listened to the cassettes and read the transcriptions. I also checked the accuracy of the transcriptions with the interviewees. I read my reflex notes and made further notes to check the extent of my subjectivity.
- My next step was to generate categories from the data collected. Each category was given a code.
- I then interpreted the data in order to find the similarities and dissimilarities. My interpretation was based on the constructivist paradigm, which allowed me to narrate my story according to how participants viewed the reality of their challenges.
- I listened to the cassettes, then read my field notes and transcriptions to check if there were any gaps in my analysis of data or possible misinterpretations.
- My last step was to present the data. I used the participants' own words (quotations) to present with fewer inferences. My aim was to present the study as a projection of the experiences of the participants rather than my own perceptions.

The final data analysis was presented as narrative story told by the interviewees and reconstructed in a manner the reader could understand.

3.10 RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Neuman (2006:194) acknowledges that although most researchers agree on the basic principles of reliability and validity, qualitative researchers rarely employ these terms because they are closely associated with quantitative measurements. The idea of using terms which are pertinent to qualitative studies is further explored by authors such as Shenton (2004) and Bowen (2005). Shenton (2004:63) advocates Guba's strategy as one way which qualitative researchers employ to address rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative studies and to distance them from the positivist paradigm.

Since I have used a qualitative mode of enquiry in this case study I discuss the four strategies employed to ensure vigour and trustworthiness of the whole study in this section.

3.10.1 Credibility

Bowen (2005:215) describes credibility as the confidence which one can have in the findings of the study. I started by observing the challenges experienced by teachers when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in the Full-Service School where I was working. My next step was to read about such challenges from local and international literature and then familiarising myself with the teachers. I spent one day with them to establish a good rapport and to lay a foundation for the data collection. I was careful not to spend too much time with the participants during my first day before the actual interviews, because as Shenton (2004:65) advised there are side effects such as the distortion of professional judgment, and some participants may withdraw from participating. When the teachers from Intermediate and Senior Phases made a sudden withdrawal I suspected that my preliminary visit could have made them suspicious that I was going to judge their work.

Triangulation is employed to augment the credibility of the findings. It is the use of several methods of data collection which can then be used to cross-check the accuracy of the data. For Shenton (2004:66), the strength of triangulation lies in enabling viewpoints of individuals to be verified against others, and a richer picture constructed. During the interviews I started by interviewing the chairperson of the ILST alone, proceeded to the three HoDs and then the two teachers. This strategy gave me the opportunity to corroborate data from the chairperson with that from the HoDs and the two teachers. Interviewing the chairperson alone and the HoDs and the two teachers separately gave each participant a chance to express their ideas and describe their challenges without fear (Shenton, 2004:66). At the end of the interviews I had a rich description of the teachers' challenges from a wide range of informants, with some disagreements and agreements about such challenges in one rural Full-Service School.

Since the university assigned me to a supervisor I have worked closely by emailing each section completed for comments, requesting advice when I experienced difficulties. I also arranged for face-to-face visits to discuss the progress of the research and presented it at the 2nd Annual Education Students Research Conference in Pretoria (UNISA) for scrutiny and recommendations. Member checks are a strategy used to verify if the participants' words convey what they actually intended to during the interviews, and can be done on the spot or at end of the data collection (Shenton, 2004:68). After making transcriptions I gave the participants an opportunity to read them to ensure that what they told me during the interviews had been accurately captured. Shenton (2004:69) writes that making a thick description of the phenomenon helps give the reader an insight into the actual situation and

context in which the study was conducted. I made a complete description of the research site (the school), teachers, learners and the conditions under which the school is operating.

Low-inference descriptors from the participants are almost literal and the terms used are those used and understood by them (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:325). In Chapter Four, the descriptions of the participants' ideas are mostly presented in quotations from the recorder and my field notes. This was done to reduce my inference and present descriptions which capture the exact meaning which the participants assigned to the phenomenon.

3.10.2 Transferability

In quantitative studies, researchers use the terms 'external validity' or 'generalisability' to refer to the extent to which the results one study can be used as knowledge to explain other situations and populations (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:8). While Shenton (2002:69-70) argues that qualitative studies are usually conducted in small environments with a limited number of participants, and therefore their results cannot be used to explain other cases, this author also suggest that sufficient descriptions of the context and the participants under study can enable the reader to compare the phenomenon described in the study with their situations. It is against this background that I have made an extensive description of the rural Full-Service School and the participants under study. The results cannot be used to explain the challenges of teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in all rural Full-Service Schools but they can be read and understood in the context of this particular school and comparisons can be made with the situations in others in a similar context.

3.10.3 Dependability

Neuman (2006:196) describes reliability as meaning dependability or consistency. Dependability can be addressed in a qualitative study by ensuring that the processes are reported in detail to enable future researchers to repeat it, and allowing the readers to develop a thorough understanding of the methods used and their effectiveness (Shenton 2004:71).

In this study, I addressed dependability by describing the research design, the research site, population, sample selection, data collection strategies and methods of data analysis. I also

described my role as the researcher in the research field and acknowledged the influence that my employment as a teacher in a rural Full-Service School could have on the study.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Shenton (2004:72) describes confirmability as relating to the steps taken by the researcher to ensure that the results of the study are the experiences of the informants rather than the characteristics of the researcher. The bias of the researcher is thus reduced. Although the study was conducted in a rural Full-Service School other than the one in which I worked, it was imperative for me as the researcher to ensure confirmability as a strategy to reduce my bias in the results of this study. I therefore employed the following steps to ensure my influence was under check in this study:

- **Reflexivity** - McMillan and Schumacher (2006:327) explain reflexivity as a strategy to rigorously scrutinise oneself as a researcher throughout the study in order to acknowledge bias or minimise it. This strategy was used to establish confirmability of the research results. In order to monitor my bias, I wrote my reflex notes before the interviews and immediately after each interview to report my actions and those of the participants. These notes helped me when I was writing my tentative interpretations of the data collected (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:350).
- **Details of methodological issues** - In this chapter I have provided a detailed description of how I collected the data through the interviews and analysed the documents so that the reader can determine how far can the results can be accepted as credible (Shenton 2004:72).
- **Acknowledging my views** - I have clearly stated my views as ‘my observations’ in this study so that the participants’ views are not confused with mine.

3.11 RESEARCH ETHICS

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:142), the ethics in research refer to the beliefs of what should be considered right or wrong, proper or improper, and good or bad. However, the question of what is right or wrong in research remains a source of contention in some research conditions (De Vos et al. 2011:114; McMillan & Schumacher 2006: 142). In spite of such disagreements about what is ethical or unethical when one conducts research,

researchers still have legal and ethical responsibilities to protect the rights of the participants, especially because qualitative research deals with human beings.

3.11.1 Access and Acceptance

Gaining access and acceptance is imperative because qualitative studies require some level of active involvement and collaboration between the researcher and the participants (Hatch, 2002:65). My first task was therefore to establish a sound relationship with the principal of the school (my research site) and the participants. Although I could not meet all the teachers who were likely to be informative about my research topic I ensured that I established a good relationship with every member of the staff, from the gate security to the grounds staff. This would ensure that I had access and would lay a good platform for the research. I was fortunate because I knew some of the staff members, including the principal.

3.11.2 Informed consent

My next step was to get permission to conduct the research from the principal of the school and each participant. Neuman (2006:135) advises that it is not enough to get permission but the participants should be made aware of their rights and make an informed decision about taking part in the research. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:142) warn that people should not be coerced to participate in a research.

In securing informed consent, I telephoned the principal of the school in which the research was to be conducted and arranged for the meeting with him in order to get permission to conduct my research and explain the details before any formal agreement could be entered into. This meeting also gave the principal an opportunity to ask me about my study. This meeting was followed by a formal letter in which I formally requested permission to conduct research. Each participant had an opportunity to read my letter of request and the details of my research, and all agreed to participate.

When I have received the permission from the principal (Appendix B), I completed an application form and sent it to the KwaZulu-Natal provincial Department of Education to request permission to conduct my research. My letters of request contained information about the purpose of my research, how data would be collected as well as the benefits of such a study to the school and the DoE (Appendix A).

3.11.3 Voluntary participation and deception

Neuman (2006:135) and McMillan and Schumacher (2006:142) caution researchers against forcing anyone to participate in the research. Honesty is therefore imperative in this regard and to address this issue I disclosed the full purpose of my research to the principal in person and in letter of request, and to some of the participants whose cellular telephone numbers I obtained. I allowed them to ask me questions about anything which was not clear to them about my research. Disclosing the information about the purpose of my research was done so that the participants could decide whether they really wished to participate or not. I informed them that while their participation was voluntary they also had a right to withdraw at any stage if they felt the need to do so.

I also designed an informed consent form for each participant to complete and sign before the data was collected (Appendix C). The participants read these and asked me for clarification about any matter in them. The consent form was meant for legal protection of both the participants and the researcher on voluntary participation, privacy and other ethical issues.

3.11.4 Privacy

Hatch (2002:65) writes that when qualitative studies are conducted the researchers ask the participants to trust them to the extent that they feel comfortable to share what goes on behind the scenes of their everyday lives. Although this study was not about the private lives of the participants I had an obligation to protect the information they shared with me. I employed the following strategies to protect the privacy of my participants.

3.11.4.1 Anonymity

Anonymity means that the real names of the participants remain nameless in the study for the public (Neuman 2006:139). During my pre-interviews discussion with the participants, I ensured to them that their names and that of their school would not be mentioned in the study. Although, I provided a full description of their school I ensured that my description was vague in certain places. I did not want my participants to be interrogated about anything they had revealed to me during the data collection. I advised them not to use their names during

the interviews, instead referring to teacher no.1, HoD nos.1, 2 and 3. I also promised to destroy all recording of interviews once the study had been completed.

3.11.4.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality avoids presenting information that may be linked to certain names of the participants. The researcher withholds the names of such participants and keeps them secret from the public (Neuman, 2006:139). Since the data was collected by Dictaphone, it was easy to link information to each of the participants, but I made a commitment not to disclose such information to the public, with the names of specific participants attached to it. Further, I promised the participants that the information given to me would not be used for any other purpose other than this study, without their prior permission.

3.11.5 Misinterpretation and misrepresentation of data

My research report used the language which the participants used during the interviews. This was done to ensure that my interpretation of the data concurred with the actual experiences of the participants and reduced my subjectivity (Yulirahmawati, 2008). When I had completed data collection and analysis, I returned to the participants to ask if what they had told me during the interviews was still in line with my interpretations. I wanted to avoid any form of misrepresentation of the data and protect the participants' experiences from my subjectivity.

3.11.6 Beneficence

My research did not involve any promise of cash payment to the participants for participation, but I realised that they had invested in such a close relationship with me and entrusted me with their sensitive information (Hatch, 2002:67). In return for their efforts in helping me to complete my research, I decided to:

- let them make copies of inclusive education documents which I had brought with me to the site and they did not have at school.
- Let them share the results of my research when the study had been completed.
- Invite me at any time to their school when they needed assistance with regard to the implementation of inclusive education.

- Let them have my telephone number so that they could contact me in case they needed inclusive education documents.

3.12 CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study was conducted from a constructivist theoretical perspective which permits the participants to construct reality based on their lived experiences. In this context, teachers in a rural Full-Service School had the opportunity to describe their challenges with regard to the identification of learners who experience or have a potential to experience barriers to learning and development.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The presentation of data in qualitative case studies should make use of the participants' actual language in order to qualify for evidenced-based enquiry. The data in this chapter is framed within the participants' naturalistic context and comprises the rich descriptions of the participants' challenges with less analysis and interpretation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 380-382), presented as a narrative text. Quotations from what the participants said during the interviews are used to validate my descriptions, extracted from the transcriptions which are included as Appendix in this study.

Although I had some simple categories in my interview guide I did not impose my tentative categories on the participants. I allowed the categories to emerge naturally from the data, during and after it was collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:364), and reviewed each category to find relationships and develop the themes presented below. The themes that appeared more frequently are presented in the first paragraphs and those that appeared the least are presented at the end of this presentation.

4.2 LACK OF EFFECTIVE TRAINING

The participants revealed that the kind of training provided by the DBST was not effective in addressing their challenges with regard to the implementation of the inclusive policy or identification of learners who experience barriers to learning:

"I remember the training but it was not clear because the whole thick manual was done in few hours." (Teacher 1).

"I wish there can be more and be patient with us and train us for a long time." (HoD 2).

Asked about the duration of BDST training session, the responses were:

"It was one day from eleven a.m. to thirteen p.m." (Teacher 1).

“Sometimes you think that you have understood but when you have to apply what you learnt from the training, you find that you have a problem and you need more training.” (HoD 2).

HoD 3 also revealed that the HoDs had once missed a training session conducted in their school because they were in another meeting. This statement confirmed the chairperson’s account that he also missed one training session because he was committed to an IEC meeting.

HoD 2 complained that, *“...the DBST come here and give us a brief training and they quickly come and say now complete these forms we want them on the eighth of this month. That’s frustrating really. Sometimes you want to do it perfectly but fail and you can feel the failure because you want to be perfect.”*

The above revelations shows that although the teachers stated that training sessions were conducted for a very short time they also failed to attend them because of other commitments at the school.

The teachers also revealed that there was no training which focused on the identification of learners who experience barriers to learning, only on the completion of SIAS forms during identification of learners.

HoD 3 also disclosed that she and the teachers in the Senior Phase did not identify learners because the DBST told them they should be identified by teachers in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases: *“In Senior Phase we do not identify any learner because the DBST told us that this thing is for Foundation and Intermediate Phases. I use my strategies but I do not follow the SIAS procedures like completing the forms. We were told that the forms are not for Senior Phase. So I do not complete any form.”*

Teachers were frustrated because of this lack of quality training and the pressures that the Department put on them in terms of forms to be completed without proper guidance. The temptation to present falsified reports about the identification processes was great and the victim of this condition would be the child contending with barriers to learning.

4.3 STAGNATION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL SUPPORT TEAM

The ILST is the vehicle that must drive the implementation of the inclusive education policy and therefore the lack of the capacity of this important vehicle to steer the implementation leads to the inability of the implementation processes in the school. The six participants

constituted the majority of the members of the ILST but the data revealed that this team was virtually ineffective. The following challenges facing the ILST were reported by the participants:

“We haven’t met to get feedback from the other portfolio committees of what is happening ... I’m not sure as yet about how do they (teachers) identify such learners but my understanding from what I get from the LSAs is that teachers are reluctant somehow to identify learners. (Chairperson and principal of the school).

HoD 3 told me that: *“The chairperson is aware that the portfolio committees are not all active. The only committee that is working is the Learner Support Portfolio Committee because there are some problems which the educators refer to this committee.”*

The ILST is the body that should address the challenges that teachers face in the implementation of the policy, and are also a resource. This structure also facilitates assistance either from the DBST or from other stakeholders who may have expertise in specific areas. This is the body that should meet regularly to review strategies about what is working in terms of providing quality support to learners. Its inability to operate is therefore a matter of grave concern.

4.4 TEACHERS’ APPROACH TO IDENTIFICATION

The process of identifying learners who experience barriers to learning should be in line with a philosophy of inclusive education that purports that the barriers can be within the system and that accommodation of individual learner’s styles should be considered instead of trying to find out what is wrong with the learner. The shift from a deficit model that permitted specialist educators to find out what was wrong with the learner and either fix it or, if it could not be fixed, exclude the learner from the normal community of learners, and the normal system, meant that an inclusive approach to identification should also accommodate individual differences.

The participants displayed some signs of lacking the sound theoretical background of the philosophy that underpins the process of identification of learners. The data indicates that teachers at the research site still used the deficit model and/or intuition to identify learners who experience barriers to learning.

Asked about how they identified learners, they responded as follows:

“You look at his exercise book when he writes and see that he has got the tendency of making mistakes when copying from the board and that’s where you start and ask some questions such as, ‘can you see clearly on the board?’ or ‘why have you made this mistake?’ and you take that learner and sit him/her in the front rows of the classroom.” (HoD 2).

HoD 1 said: *“I read my learners a short passage and let them retell what I have read them. Those who fail, I identify them as having barriers in listening skills. In speaking, those who are stammering I identify them. When it comes to writing, I give them a short text to write down and then observe their handwriting and I identify those who are failing to write or to copy.”*

Teacher 1 reported: *“When I admit a learner from grade one; I give him/her a short test to test the phonics. Those who fail to articulate the sounds and vowels; I identify them as in need of help.”*

Teacher 1 further disclosed her concern: *“There is another problem: Some learners are gifted but they do not perform well.”*

When I asked this teacher what they did with learners who were so gifted but did not perform well, she said: *“It’s difficult to say but we think he/she has got something wrong. We have one learner who has been in my class since last year ziyaduma nje (seriously confused) because even vowels give him problems. Some have dropped out from school because things were not working at school.”*

The last teacher’s comment clearly displays that teachers are still committed to finding what is wrong within the child and fixing it. If they cannot explain what is wrong within the child, the matter comes to a standstill, and that has resulted in some learners dropping out from school because the school system fails to make use of their strengths or work out support for their individual needs.

The approach which teachers were using tends to focus on categorising learners into groups of those who cope and those who do not. Consideration of learners’ innate learning styles is overlooked. Teachers employ this approach because they lack quality training in which their needs as teachers would be considered and addressed. At this point one should also question both the expertise of the trainers and the quality of the training programmes designed for teachers in Full-Service Schools.

4.5 SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT TOOLKIT AND SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

As indicated in Chapter One, in 2008, the DoE piloted the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), which contains various toolkits for teachers to use when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning. This strategy attempts to set the protocol which should be followed when teachers identify learners (2008:1). However, teachers in this study reported difficulties with regard to the forms in this document, in particular lack of training and some misconceptions:

- The forms give them extra work.
- They did not know how to complete some sections, especially on pages 50-53.
- The training provided by the DBST was not enough and the DBST was aware that they were experiencing difficulties in this regard.

One teacher told me:

“I wish that when I complete these forms someone from the District should be with me to give me guidance because when the District people have gone things become difficult”.

HoD 2 defended the failure of teachers to identify learners by saying that, *“...educators are not running away from identifying learners but the work is too much for them; they have to complete SNA1 and SNA2 and then design ISPs for the identified learners. That’s too much for them. That’s why when you ask them for the names of learners they have identified they say, ‘I have none’.”*

HoD 2 also complained: *“We need someone to come and help us with the completion of these SIAS forms. We hoped that the appointment of the LSEs (Learner Support Educators) would relieve us from these forms because they would complete them but when the LSE came in, it became clear that they were not going to do this work”.*

The frustration of these teachers about the SIAS forms was also visible in their faces as they were talking to me. The prospect of developing negative attitude towards the whole policy of inclusion was not very far from them. Their key need was quality support.

When I asked the teachers to give me an estimation of the number of learners they identified each month, the following interesting misconceptions emerged:

HoD 3 from the Senior Phase told me that the District told them that the SIAS forms were for Foundation and Intermediate Phases only, and therefore the Senior Phase teachers did not identify any learner. Even if they did they do not complete the forms but just use their own techniques, which I was not fortunate enough to discover.

The second misconception was that in the Intermediate Phase teachers used to identify about ten learners per month but the District advised them against identifying such large numbers. Therefore they now identify around two learners. This confession was made by HoD 2.

Such misconceptions are a threat to the welfare of the learners, especially those who need more support, and the chances of seeing the number of learners who leave school early are great.

4.6 LACK OF TIME FOR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Teachers raised concern about time constraints. Their perceptions were that the paperwork involved in the SIAS toolkit gave them an extra load, so they could not identify learners with fairness. This made some teachers avoid the process of identifying learners and so having to design an Individual Support Plan for each. There was not enough time to do so:

“Another problem is that we do not always have time to meet. I wish that our working hours can be reduced in a week so that we can get time for these forms (SIAS toolkit).” (HoD 2).

HoD 3 said: *“We break at fifteen p.m. and we can’t sit down for the meeting, serious.”*

HoD 2 reported: *“...educators do not runaway from identifying learners but the work is too much for them; they have to complete SNA One and SNA Two and then design the ISP for the identified learners. That’s too much for them. That’s why when you ask them (teachers) for the names of the learners they have identified they say ‘I have none’.”*

The implication here is that learners’ needs are compromised and they cannot be identified or supported because teachers do not have the time or expertise to design their support programmes. They cannot receive quality support because there is no time for teachers to sit down as a team to design strategies that can best serve the needs of the learners. The lack of time also impacts on the work of the Learner Support Assistants (LSAs), who should receive programmes from teachers. If there are no support programmes they cannot do anything.

When I asked the chairperson of the ILST if he was aware of teachers’ difficulties with regard to the identification of learners he confided that: *“... I haven’t received any report but*

the only information I have is the information from the LSAs that they are having problems getting the ISPs from the educators. The educators maybe having problems in drawing the ISPs for the LSAs to work with and so they (educators) are not willing to identify learners in order to avoid drawing up the ISPs...

4.7 MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE ROLES AMONG MEMBERS OF THE ILST

The data indicates a lack of training of the ILST in terms of each member's role and responsibilities in the ILST. According to KwaZulu-Natal strategy of 2010, the ILST must be composed of three subcommittees: Whole School Development Portfolio Committee; Teacher Development Portfolio Committee; and Learner Support Portfolio Committee. The chairperson of the ILST is the principal of the institution (school) by virtue of being the principal and the other subcommittees are headed by HoDs by virtue of being the HoDs. The loophole in this strategy is that HoDs already have much administrative paperwork to deal with and have to teach. Departmental meetings and school-based meetings also consume their limited time.

The teachers indicated that they did not know the duties and responsibilities of each of these sub-committees:

“Yea, I will say what I told the DBST that it looks like there is shift of duties and responsibilities in that most of the duties of the ILST are supposed to be done by me because I am the chairperson. I want the DBST to clarify the duties of each one of the three portfolio committees of the ILST and the duties of the ILST because they (he later confirmed that it is one HoD) shift the duties to the principal whereas the principal should have a less duty load.” (Chairperson of the ILST).

HoD 3 said: *“Another thing is that I am the chairperson of the Educator Development Committee within the ILST but I don't know about the things that we should discuss with the educators. There was a meeting but I didn't attend. We were busy as HoDs about something and I do have the document that talks about educators in my file but when I read it I don't find the things I should do with educators. The only thing I found is the IQMS. I don't know what to do with the educator stress or how to deal with such matters.”*

This HoD finally made this request to me: *“Can you find us something that deals with the responsibilities of the Educator Development Committee and the Whole School Development Committee?”*

I realised that these teachers were willing to work but lacked the guidance and support needed to address their specific needs as teachers in a Full-Service School. The role conflict has the detrimental element on the implementation of the policy and can create unnecessary havoc in the school.

4.8 OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS

I had prepared the matter of overcrowded classrooms in my interview guide from my experience as a teacher in rural schools but during my interview with the chairperson of the ILST it emerged in a different manner. One of the studies which I had consulted before the interviews had given me a clue that some teachers were unable to identify learners because of the huge numbers of learners in their classrooms (Ntsanwisi, 2008).

This emerged when the chairperson of the ILST was telling me about the disturbance of the work of the LSAs, because there was a construction of a new school building and therefore learners were packed in the school resource centre and learning was temporarily disturbed. However, when I further enquired about the normal numbers of learners in the classrooms, he indicated that the numbers were above the learner-teacher ratio stipulated by the DoE. The classroom with the lowest number of learners was 39, while the highest number had 57.

It is important to stress here that even during the interview with the teachers there was no explicit mention of overcrowded classrooms as a challenge that prevents teachers from identifying learners who experience barriers to learning.

4.9 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The participants reported good cooperation with parents, telling me that they invited parents and informed them about any difficulties noticed in their children, and also received information they needed about their children. They also told me about an incident in which a parent was invited to school but did not come on the pretence that her child was very clever at home. This denial case was unusual because most parents worked cooperatively with teachers in matters that involved their children.

Teachers spoke about cooperation with parents as follows:

“We advise the learners’ parents about what is happening with his/her child and they give background information about the child.” (Teacher no 1.)

“We once had one parent who, after we had written a letter to invite her to school to discuss the condition of her child, responded by saying ‘my child is not stupid, she s clever at home’ but most parent do come when we invite them to school. We sit down with them and discuss about the condition of the child.” (HOD no. 2)

However, the role of parents is still undervalued by teachers, who still hold the role of being experts about the child while parents listen and sign whatever documents they are told to.

4.10 COLLABORATION WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

A holistic identification of a child should include some information from the ECD, in which most children today begin their educational life. Teachers’ collaboration with such institutions is vital because they can get valuable information about the child to supplement that from parents. It helps to construct a total picture of the child and depict both the strengths and weaknesses.

Asked to describe their collaboration with the ECD services, Foundation Phase Teacher 1 said:

“There is one near us (ECD) and we do talk to them to get the information about our learners. We also get information about our learners’ skills in extracurricular activities e.g., that so and so is a good runner.”

4.11 LACK OF COLLABORATION AMONG EDUCATORS

The word ‘educator’ in this paragraph is used to include teachers who practically teach in the class, the principal, Learner Support Assistants (LSA), the Learner Support Educators (LSE) and the District-Based Support Team (DBST). This distinction is important because throughout the interviews the participants were using the word to refer to the teachers who practically teach the learner in class.

The data suggests that the lack of collaboration is another challenge that inhibits teachers when identifying learners in this school. The lack of collaboration was not directly reported to me but I was able to see it in the following areas during the data collection:

- The LSAs appeared to lean more towards the chairperson of the ILST for support in their work than to the coordinator of the Learner Support Portfolio committee. This was evident during my interview with the chairperson who reported to me the frustration of the LSAs when teachers were reluctant to draw up the ISPs. I could foresee that such reports have a potential to spoil the work relations between teachers and the LSAs and compromise the support for the learner.
- The inability of the ILST to meet could also be attributed to lack of collaboration among the teachers, and there is evidence the teachers in the Foundation Phase do meet twice in a quarter. This also suggests that this lack of collaboration is stronger in the Intermediate and Senior Phases. Other evidence suggests that teachers in the Foundation Phase do support each other during teaching, as reported by the inexperienced teacher (Teacher 1) who said that the experienced teacher in her Phase would “...*come to my class and show me how to teach*”.
- The misunderstanding about the roles between the chairperson of the ILST and one HoD also suggests lack of collaboration.
- The Learner Support Educator should be the person who has the expertise to give support to the teachers in different schools within a circuit or a ward. The reports of teachers’ frustrations about the SIAS forms should have been well addressed by the LSE before teachers develop negative attitudes against the forms or the inclusive policy as such.
- Although it was evident that the DBST did visit the school for support, the viability of such support can be questioned. If the teachers and the DBST were really transparent to each other the difficulties in terms of identification of learners and the completion of SIAS forms would not have been so great.
- Lastly, the sudden withdrawal of the teachers from participating in the interview in this study was evidence of a lack of collaboration, because the HoDs and the principal became aware that teachers in the Intermediate and Senior Phases would not participate in the interviews during the last minute when I was waiting for them.

4.12 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

An integral part of the process of identifying learners who experience barriers to learning, documents include teachers' observation journals, diaries, collage and departmental documents. The DoE supplied the Full-Service Schools with the National Strategy for SIAS (2008) as a protocol to be followed by teachers when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning. My first focus was on whether teachers had any challenges when using this document. Secondly, I wanted to analyse any other documents such as diaries, journals or notes in which teachers made their initial observations of the child before completing the SIAS forms.

It was imperative for me to study the documents after the interviews in order to corroborate the data collected during the interviews and triangulate the findings. For example, teachers had told me that they were experiencing challenges when completing the SIAS forms. I therefore had to study the documents in order to find out the nature of such difficulties they told me they were having. The few copies of the documents I managed to get hold of are attached as Appendix C.

I discovered that after teachers had identified learners they completed a Support Needs Assessment (SNA) Learner Pack (2008) for each learner who had been identified. I therefore had to focus my analysis on the sections in this document in which teachers reported having experienced difficulties.

Section 1.4 (page 12): SNA parent's understanding of the child

In this section, a teacher made comments about the wishes of the learner's parent, lack of income for the family, inability of the child's grandmother to provide for the school needs of the child. Critical information about the strengths of the child as observed by the parent is not included. Teachers could not understand the concept of the 'strengths of the child'. Information about the interests and the dislikes of the child is not included. There are also learning habits which can differ from one person to another which must be included in this section.

The information about the strengths of the child is vital because teachers should begin their support from the interests of the child in order to accommodate such interest in support programmes which they design for the child. If the interests of the child are not

accommodated in support programmes, such programmes will only increase the frustration of the child, which might develop into negative attitudes about school.

Section 2.1 (page 13): Barriers to learning and development: Learning

A general statement such as, “Assessed learner and found that he is lacking phonic development” can be confusing, especially when one has to design support for the child. It is likely that teachers can be confused about this section because the guiding instructions for this section refer to the assessment *of* learning instead of assessment *for* learning (Bouwer, in Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005:46). Assessment for learning refers to assessment with one’s mind set on support rather on passing judgment about the child. Policymakers should at least be alert to these subtle distinctions in inclusive settings.

Section 2.1 (page 14): Communication

The statement, “Can speak freely but shows feelings of not staying with his mother” shows a lack of understanding of the information envisaged in this section. Since an inclusive approach to identification should focus on the strengths of the child, the information in this section should show the communication modes which best suit the child, so that learning support can be channelled along such modes. Therefore, saying a child can speak ‘freely’ is too general and ambiguous if one sets one mind on support while assessing the child.

Section 2.1 (page 14): Behavioural and social competence

The information provided by the teacher in this section matches the guidelines provided by the Department for this section. However, the guidelines direct teachers to identify learners in terms of their weaknesses instead of looking for the strengths. The result of this approach is having groups of learners founded on weaknesses, which befits the deficit model of identification from which inclusive education is shifting. Teachers in the inclusive model should be guided to identify strengths in learners that would serve as a base for designing quality support.

Section 2.1 (page 17-18): Classroom and school

These sections were not completed due to lack of proper guidance and difficulty in completing the forms.

Section 2.1 (page 19): Summary of barriers to learning

i) Barriers.

The teacher wrote, “*The learner confuses letters b and d, cannot read and write IsiZulu*”. This section should be a summary of the barriers indicated in the previous parts of this section but instead new information about confusing letters was introduced.

ii) Enabling Factors.

This section was not completed due to lack of clear guidance. Teachers in this section should have been making a summary of the learner’s strengths which can be used to minimise or remove barriers to learning. If the learner’s strengths are spelt out clearly and in precise terms the provision of support becomes easier.

Two things are clear about the nature of challenges that the teachers experience in Sections 1 and 2 of the SNA learner Pack:

1. Guidelines lean more on the deficit model of identification which encourages teachers to judge learners in terms of their weaknesses.
2. Teachers also fail to understand the requirements of some specific sections in the SIAS forms and simply write general or ambiguous statements to submit to the officials.

4.12.1 Individual Support Plan (ISP)

In the preceding paragraphs the chairperson of the ILST reported the allegations that some teachers avoid identifying learner partly because they avoid designing the Individual Support Plans (ISP). These allegations were confirmed by the HoDs and the reasons given by them were that teachers did not have a direction about how to design the ISPs. I therefore requested samples of the few ISPs available.

The teachers’ difficulties were evident in the following sections of the ISPs from the Support Needs Assessment, Learner Pack (DoE, 2008: 22-24):

Page 22. Action to be taken to address the Learner’s Additional Support Needs

In the column for the Whole School Intervention, teachers simply wrote: *Learning*. This information is misleading because teachers should have given a summary of how the whole school can be adjusted in order to accommodate the additional support needs of the learner. The columns that follow this column also give the learner’s weakness(s) where targets, strategies and achievement criteria had to be written.

The column about the Educator training was completed well except in the column for the achievement criteria where they wrote: *Teaching properly* as the criterion, instead of describing how the effect of the proposed workshop would be measured.

Page 23. Learner Support to be given

This section showed real challenges, and it is evident that teachers have a clear understanding of curriculum differentiation as an additional support strategy. They were therefore unable to provide the appropriate information in this section except in the last column for the person responsible, where at least they wrote: *educator and LSA* instead of the name of the person responsible the implementation of the ISP.

Page 23-24. Consultation with parent/caregivers

This section begins at the end of page 23 and continues on page 24. When I studied how the teachers completed this section it was evident that guidance was also needed. In the first column on page 23, teachers had to furnish the information about the parent's role during the implementation of the ISP, but they wrote: *meeting*, and in the same column where the page continues, *interviewing par*. Such confusion can be explained in terms of lack of guidance. During the interviews with the teachers I discovered that the role of parents was to provide background information about the child and some explanation about the barriers which the child was battling with. The role of parents as support members when the ISP is implemented was overlooked by teachers and the parents accepted such a role as informers about the child and nothing more. This area needs close attention for the benefit of the child. Parents are not empowered to assist the child.

4.12.2 School-Generated Forms

I also discovered that teachers in this school had designed their tools for identification and planning for support. However, the teachers told me that they were not using these forms anymore because the DBST discouraged them from using them and the Department had supplied the Full-Service Schools with the SIAS toolkit.

4.12.3 Teachers' observation journals

Few teachers showed me their observation journals. The value of such journals lies in the teacher being able to record any interesting observations about each learner as personal records. Weaknesses and strengths of learners can be recorded and consistency as well as inconsistencies of a learner's progress noted in them for use when the official identification documents are completed.

The few journals I was able to see showed that teachers simply wrote a single sentence or two to explain the weaknesses of a learner. There was no mention of learners' strengths or abilities. Sentences such as, "This learner cannot read or write" were common.

4.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented the data with more emphasis on the rich descriptions provided by the participants with regard to the challenges they faced when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in their school. I have made interpretations in some sections to illuminate the content as well as the context of the experiences of the teachers in the research site.

The next chapter will present the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE EMPERICAL STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative case study was an investigation of the challenges faced by teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in one rural Full-Service School in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings address the main aim which was to explore the challenges experienced by teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:364) contend that qualitative data analysis employs inductive analysis which enables the themes to emerge naturally from the data rather than being imposed prior collection. In this case study, the following themes emerged:

- Lack of effective training of teachers
- Stagnation of the ILST
- Role conflict within the ILST
- Lack of collaboration among educators
- Teachers' approach to identification
- Challenges to the SIAS toolkit
- Challenges to designing the ISP
- Lack of time
- Overcrowded classrooms.

In this chapter, I discuss each of these themes in relation to the literature, and assess their impact on the manner in which learners who experience barriers to learning are identified in one rural Full-Service School. Although this study is about the challenges teachers experience in identifying learners who experience barriers in the classroom, some of these emanate from the manner in which Full-Service Schools are managed and the way the District personnel facilitate overall support to the Full-Service Schools. According to

Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:18), teachers are the primary resource in the implementation of the goals of the inclusive education policy and therefore the District personnel have a responsibility to improve the skills and knowledge of teachers.

5.2 LACK OF EFFECTIVE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

This study revealed that at the heart of the teachers' challenges in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning lies the lack of effective training of teachers. In my analysis of the data, this lack of training can be attributed to two main factors. The first is that most teachers were not trained in inclusive education at colleges and universities, while the second is that the training offered by the District officials does not address the teachers' challenges. The first was confirmed during my interview with National Director of Inclusive Education (17 June, 2010), who acknowledged that most South African teachers do not have an academic background of inclusive education and therefore depend on the departmental workshops for training.

During the interviews one HoD commented that the teachers wanted to be perfect in identifying learners but they did not know how to do it. She further suggested that it would be better if the training could last for at least a year. Another teacher revealed that, in training she had attended, just two hours was allocated for examination of a thick document. The matter of the duration of teachers' workshop by the department of education therefore requires attention.

The lack of effective training has been reported by various South African researchers in different school contexts (Gwala, 2005:81; Khoele, 2008:64; Ladbrook, 2008:91; Ntsanwisi, 2008:62). These researchers describe the lack of training of teachers in different aspects:

- Lack of sustained training (Gwala, 2005:81).
- Lack of relevant and appropriate training (Ladbrook, 2009:96)
- Lack of training and capacity to deal with learners who experience barriers to learning (Khoele, 2008:64)
- Lack of knowledge about the barriers such as neurological disabilities, epilepsy, Down's syndrome, autism, intellectual disabilities (Hays, 2009:50; Ntsanwisi, 2008:62;).

The lack of teachers who are qualified in inclusive education has also been reported by Guerin and Male (2006:4) as preventing quality learning and teaching (See Chapter Two). The identification of learners who experience barriers to learning is a crucial component in the provision of learning because it enables them to fine-tune their teaching in accordance with the needs of learners.

The task of providing training and support is the responsibility of the District-Based Support Teams (DoE, 2005:26), and the DoE acknowledges that the training of teachers and ongoing in-service training is a crucial step in developing Full-Service Schools. This training should be accompanied by regular assessment of the types and content of capacity building, however, the extent of the negative impact of this lack of training was evident in this study. Teachers in the Senior Phase were not identifying learners because the District officials told them that the SIAS forms were for the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. Secondly, teachers in the Intermediate Phase were no longer identifying learners because they did not know how to design the Individual Support Plans (ISPs) for the identified learners.

The stagnation of the ILST, role conflict within the ILST members and the challenges with regard to the SIAS toolkit are all linked to lack of effective training. The main impact of this lack of training is that the provision of quality learning which should identify and address the barriers to learning is compromised. In order to attain inclusive goals in inclusive schools, the DoE recognised that teachers are the primary resources and therefore there was a need to improve their skills and knowledge and to develop new ones. It was further acknowledged that the needs of teachers should be assessed continuously through developmental appraisal and structured programmes (DoE, 2001:18).

5.3 THE STAGNATION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL SUPPORT TEAM

The principal of the school and the members of the School Management Team (SMT) in my research site acknowledged that the ILST had not met since its establishment, but reasons for this were not clear. According to Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:29), schools would establish ILSTs to support learning and teaching processes by identifying and addressing learner, educator and institutional level needs. Landsberg et al. (2005:66-67) write that a school, whether a special school as a resource centre, a full-service or an ordinary school, should establish an SBST to be responsible for the provision of support to teachers. One of

the main tasks of this team should be to provide in-service training to teachers in the identification, assessment and support of learners who experience barriers to learning.

Although the non-sitting of the ILST could be attributed to various causes, according to the Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for Full-service Schools (DoE, 2005:17), it is the responsibility of the principal to set the tone for the transformation processes, and ensure that decisions are made, challenges met and the inclusion processes supported. In KwaZulu-Natal, the ILST comprises the principal and SMT, with the principal remaining as chairperson (KZN Department of Education and MIET Africa 2009, handout, 16:1). The details of the composition of the ILST according to the KZN strategy have been discussed in Chapter Two of this study. It is, therefore the duty of the principal to ensure that the ILST holds the meetings.

The KZN strategy (KZN DoE and MIET Africa 2009 handout, 17:2) also suggests that the ILST must meet at least once a month, with the following matters discussed:

- Summary of the committees' activities
- Seeking of out-of-institution interventions
- Action and monitor support, including areas where support is needed from another portfolio committee.

The crucial role of the principal has also been prescribed in the Guidelines for Full-service and Inclusive Schools (DoE, 2010:13-14), among the many tasks outlined in which are included:

- To ensure that all efforts to address school policies, improvement plans, programmes and ethos are developed in a manner that reflects inclusive practices.
- To take the lead in ensuring that there are additional support programmes for teaching and learning specially to reach out to learners who experience barriers to learning.

As mentioned above, the reasons for the non-sitting of the ILST were not clear, but according to this document the principal is accountable for the workings of the ILST.

The non-sitting of the ILST has a detrimental effect on the identification and support of learners who experience barriers to learning because this is the structure which together with the DBST must assist teachers in identification and support. It is also the structure which must address teachers' challenges in terms of identification and support. The DSBT should

have been aware of this challenge and intervened on time. Therefore, the collaboration between the DSBT and ILST requires further investigation.

5.4 MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLES WITHIN THE INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL SUPPORT TEAM

The misunderstanding among the members of the ILST was also evident in this study.

The principal complained that one HoD was shifting her role to the principal and one HoD also complained that she did not know what to do as a coordinator of the Educator Development Committee of the ILST.

According to the KwaZulu-Natal strategy, the SMT should form the ILST because they are the legislatively mandated structure whose function is to ensure the proper management and leadership of the school while post-level one teachers are legislatively allocated full-time involvement in teaching, learning and assessment activities within the school (KZN Department of Education and MIET Africa 2009 handout, 16:1).

The findings indicate that the members of the ILST were not trained in terms of their duties as members or perhaps the training they received was ineffective. For example, the chairperson complained that one HoD was shifting her duties to him, whilst on the other hand the HoD in charge of the Educator Support Committee complained that she did not know what to do because the information she had in the file only referred to Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS) so she did not know what to do. Another HoD indicated that the only committee that was working was the Learner Support Committee, and that only partially.

The data in this study was collected in May 2011. The KwaZulu-Natal strategy document which deals with the roles of the members of the ILST became available to the teachers during workshops in March 2012. I also attended another workshop which dealt with the roles of the members of the ILST in another District in KZN in May 2012 and received my copy of this document.

5.5 LACK OF COLLABORATION AMONG TEACHERS

The evidence in this study also suggests that the teachers at the research site also failed to collaborate. For example, the non-sitting of the ILST and the sudden withdrawal of

Intermediate Phase teachers from participation showed that they did not always have clear lines of communication. There was also evidence that teachers in the Foundation Phase work together well, which was clear when one novice teacher revealed that the experienced teachers in this Phase assisted her to plan her lesson and teach in class. This Phase also revealed that they regularly met to discuss matters related to their Phase. The strong feature of non-collaboration was more apparent in the Intermediate Phase, with its HoD being unaware that her teachers would not participate in the study until the last minute.

Literature suggests that collaboration and team teaching are crucial in inclusive schools because they provide a good example of sharing and collaboration for learners to follow, also to reduce teachers' work stress (Lorenz, 2002:41).

The Guidelines for Full-service Schools and Inclusive schools (DoE, 2010) further suggests that the relationship between educators and between educators and the school management should be based on mutual respect and characterised by strong co-operative relationships.

5.6 TEACHERS' APPROACH TO IDENTIFICATION

The participants showed that their focus on identification was primarily on the learner who was not doing well. One teacher commented that in Foundation Phase she read a short story to her learners and asked them to retell the story. Those who failed to retell were identified as experiencing listening difficulties. Another teacher said that she observed when her learners wrote and on noticing one learner had made mistakes asked, "*Why have you made this mistake?*" Another teacher commented that at times she did not know how to identify learners but observed that something was wrong with the learner and identified that learner.

Two things are possible with regard to these teachers' challenges in identifying learners. One is that they have not received good guidance. Secondly, their focus was on what was wrong within the child. This approach falls under the medical model, in which the remedial specialist would focus diagnosis and fix it or rectify (Bouwer, in Landsberg et al., 2005:48). The same writer further suggests (p.50) that teachers should draw on various theoretical stances, such as the bio-ecological model of development, the assets-based approach, principles of dynamic assessment, and accommodation and the knowledge of the specific learning areas where the barriers to learning prevail.

Kavale (2005:554) noted that when teachers use the discrepancy model in identifying learners, the challenge is that a learner who exhibits discrepancy in academic level and

another who does not display this discrepancy may both show the same level of low achievement and that would mean that both learners have functional academic impairment. Kevale's argument has been backed up by many academics who consider the IQ-Achievement Discrepancy model as failing to address teachers' challenges in the identification of learners (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 2006:9; Restori et al., 2009:132).

5.7 TEACHERS' CHALLENGES WITH REGARD TO THE SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT TOOLKIT

The participants believed that their challenges with regard to the SIAS toolkit were linked to the lack of training from the DSBT. They complained that the SIAS forms took a long time to complete and that there were sections which always challenged them because they lacked guidance on how to complete them.

Specific pages in the SIAS document (DoE, 2008) indicative of their serious challenges are:

- Pages 50-53. Here teachers failed to describe the positive influences which have the potential to assist the identified learners to deal with the barriers as well as the enabling factors. Guidance was needed.
- Page 12, section 1.4 – Lack of guidance was reported.
- Page 13 section 2.1 – Teachers simply wrote general statements such as, “Assessed the learner and find that she lacked phonic development.” Such general statements which do not specify which phonemes give trouble to the learner do not give any idea about the kind of support which should be designed to assist the learner.
- Page 14 section 2.1: Communication. Teachers could not provide information with regard to the learner's preferred modes of communication and the people the child preferred to communicate with.
- Pages 17-18 were not covered at all because teachers did not know how to complete this section.
- Page 19: The summary also challenged teachers. This was evident because new information about the learners' difficulties was given instead of making a summary of the information provided in the previous sections.

The teachers' challenges with the SIAS document could be attributed to lack of training as they reported during the interviews, but their lack of collaboration and the stagnation of the ILST could be responsible for this challenge.

5.8 CHALLENGES IN DESIGNING THE INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT PLAN

According to the KwaZulu-Natal strategy (KZN Department of Education and MIET Africa 2009:3, handout 59) the ISP is a comprehensive plan of care and support based on the results from a needs assessment and is the final step in the SIAS process which is critical in ensuring effective teaching and learning for learners in need of care.

Westwood (2001:3) is of the opinion that the only useful purpose of assessing the learner is to enable teachers to design their instructional methods and the curriculum in a manner that will increase the possibilities of success for the learner. This opinion is in line with the SIAS strategy which aims at screening and identifying learners and establishing support to address the barriers (DoE, 2008:9). The ISP should therefore be designed as a way of providing additional learner needs *after* the teacher has observed the learner, conducted classroom assessments, read the learner's profile, and screened and conducted learner and parent interviews (DoE, 2008:23).

The participants explained that, because of their challenge in designing the ISP, some teachers were reluctant to identify learners because they did not have guidance in terms of this matter. This reluctance to identify learners was reported by the principal as well as the HoD of the Intermediate Phase. In the Senior Phase, the HoD reported that they were not identifying learners because the DBST told them that the SIAS forms were only for the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. Another HoD stated that when they started to identify learners they used to identify many, but the DBST told them that they should identify few learners to enter into the monthly reports. The same HoD also complained about the amount of paperwork teachers had to complete for the ISP, and cited it as a reason some teachers were reluctant to identify learners.

When I studied the form for the ISP from the SIAS document (DoE 2008:55-59), I noted that at the bottom of page 55 a note which clarifies that the ISP is a school-based intervention planned by the class educator with inputs from the learning support educator or counsellor/social auxiliary worker, parent and learner. This implies that the completion of the ISP is not the responsibility of the class teacher alone.

Landsberg (in Landsberg et al., 2005:67) has written that the support to learners who experience barriers to learning should employ a team approach that involves the class teachers at the centre of the team. One of the responsibilities of the ILST is to establish the ISP teams in each Phase to coordinate Individual Support Plans planning (DoE, 2010:22). It is therefore clear that the task of developing the ISP is not that of the class teachers alone but the class teachers are at the centre of the team that develops the ISP.

According to the KZN Department of Education and MIET Africa (2009:1, handout 59), five steps have to be followed when an ISP is developed:

1. Get detailed information from all sources (observation book, talks with other teachers, interviews with a learner or a parent, various assessments, learners profile, specialists' reports and support needs assessment 1 and 2).
2. List the type of support you need.
3. Develop a **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time conscious** ISP (SMART).
4. Involve all relevant role players in the strategy.
5. Review and revise at regular intervals.

The collection of useful information before the support programme (ISP) could be developed has also been noted by Westwood (2001:3), who further suggested four critical questions which should be addressed during the process of developing the support programme:

1. What can the student already do unaided: skills, knowledge and strategies?
2. What can the student do with little guidance?
3. Are there any important gaps in the student's prior learning?
4. What does the student need to be taught next in order to make progress?

Although Westwoods' four critical questions are important the answers can only lead to the development of a support programme which focuses on the academic learning at the expense of other important competencies which a learner may master without assistance, e.g., sporting activities, interpersonal skills, and artwork. The ISP should be developed to address the needs of a learner, therefore with different types of ISP considered, e.g., one which addresses the psycho-social barriers such as poverty and bullying (KZN Department of Education and MIET Africa 200:1, handout 57).

5.9 LACK OF TIME

The participants revealed lack of time as another challenge, explaining that because of the excessive paperwork involved in the completion of SIAS forms it would be better if there was time set aside for this work, especially because they could not remain after school to complete it. However, as argued in the previous paragraph, the ISP is not the responsibility of the class teacher alone and therefore time for school teams to develop the ISP must be allocated.

The shortage of time for team planning in inclusive schools was reported by Gwala (2006:105) and Khoele (2008:64). According to the DoE (2010:14), the principal should use a collaborative approach to create schedules which support inclusive activities. These activities should include:

- Provision of common planning time
- Time allocation for educators to engage in support and care programmes
- Effective use of all staff.

It is therefore imperative that teams at school are given time for planning programmes and to discuss strategies which can enhance the manner in which learners are identified and supported at school level.

5.10 OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS

The principal of the school in the research site indicated that the numbers of learners in each classroom ranged between 39 and 57, a finding that concurs with Ntsanwisi' study (2008:43). The large numbers are detrimental to the process of identifying learners who experience barriers to learners. For example, teachers may not always be able to observe each learner on time and provide support. Some learners are shy and inhibitive and therefore their needs may not be identified until very late, when the barriers have become a permanent part of their life or when they have dropped out of school.

5.11 LIMITATION OF THIS STUDY

This study was limited in the following ways:

- The District in which this study was conducted has eight Full-Service Schools. Since it was conducted in only one the findings cannot be transferred to the challenges of teachers in the seven others nor portrayed as representing the teachers' challenges in the province of KZN.
- The research site consisted of a population of 13 teachers. Six teachers participated in the research but in this sample those from the Intermediate Phase made a sudden withdrawal from participation and their challenges were reported by their HoD. However, the voices from these teachers were not heard in this study.
- The third limitation is that the focus of this study was on teachers' challenges in identifying learners in one rural Full-Service School. Teachers in other rural Full-Service Schools of the same District may/may not experience the same challenges as teachers in the research site.

5.12 RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to explore the challenges of teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in one rural Full-Service School in KZN. The participants (teachers) reported a number of challenges which they experienced in identifying learners. The findings show that most of these stemmed from their lack of training and therefore I suggest that:

- Further research be conducted on the quality of teachers' development workshops which are organised by the District-Based Support Teams be investigated in future studies.
- The strategies to improve the support the Institutional-Level Support Teams be researched and enhanced.
- A study involving all eight schools in the district as a comparative study.

5.13 CONCLUSION

According to the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996:14), education is a basic human right. In the same document, section 9 (3) disallows unfair discrimination of the citizen in any form. It is against this background that the issues of misidentification, non-identification and over-identification of learners who experience barriers to learning become unlawful.

This study has shown that teachers not only experience challenges in the implementation of the inclusive education policy in South Africa but they also experience specific challenges in terms of the manner in which learners who experience barriers to learning are identified. Although, the District-Based Support Teams have been established to provide support to teachers but teachers are still experiencing challenges in identifying learners.

The teachers' challenges in identifying learners who experience barriers have a major block in the provision of support which would address the needs of the learners and the detrimental effect in the provision.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Permission to conduct research from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Appendix B

Letter of request to the principal of the school.

P.O. Box 06

KwaNxamalala

3825

25 February 2011

Dear Sir

Re: **REQUEST TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL.**

I wish to request for the permission to conduct an educational research in your school for my Masters' programme in May 2011.

I am a student at the University of South Africa, student no. **07225792** and my specialisation is Inclusive Education at Masters Level. I have decided to conduct my research in a full-service school in rural areas because teachers in such areas are neglected in most activities especially when researches are conducted which leave them as the recipients of the generalisations from some researches done in contexts which are by far diverse from what is happening in rural schools.

The topic approved by the University for my Research is: **The challenges experienced by teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in one rural full-service school in KwaZulu-Natal.** The focus of this research is to explore the challenges that teachers face when identifying learners who experience barriers to learning. I will need to interview and study the documents for the HoDs from Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases and the chairperson of the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST) together and the second turn will be for six teachers: two teachers from each Phase. Each Phase should have one qualified with at least three years experience as a teacher in this school and one either under qualified or temporary with at least eight months experience as a teacher in this school. Ideally, gender should be considered during the selection of these teachers.

I hope we will find this research beneficial to the school and the policy makers.

Regards,

I.L.Mkhuma

0737551627

APPENDIX C. Informed Consent.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I (full names), _____ hereby wish to

declare that my participation in this study is voluntary and I have neither been coerced nor promised any gifts by the researcher in order to participate in this research. The researcher has clarified to me the purpose of this research and that I have a right to withdraw from participation at any time if I no longer wish to participate.

The topic of this study is: *The challenges experienced by teachers in identifying learners who experience barriers to learning in a rural full-service school in KwaZulu-Natal* and the researcher are: *Israel Lindokuhle Mkhuma.*

I, further acknowledge that the findings from this study will be used for this study only and my name will be kept anonymous in this study.

Signature place date

Transcriptions of the data collected at the research site.

1. Interviews with the chairperson of the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST).

Researcher: What do you do exactly when you identify learners who experience barriers to learning at the beginning of the year?

Respondent: We haven't met as the ILST to get the feedback from the other portfolio committees of what is happening, which is what the District-Based Support Team told us that we need to have such meetings and capture the minutes as a proof that we do meet but unfortunately we haven't had such meetings.

I'm not sure as yet about how do they identify such learners but my understanding from what I get from the Learner Support Assistants (LSA) is that teachers are reluctant somehow to identify learners.

Researcher: Do you think the teachers understand how should they identify such learners?

Respondent: I'm not sure if they do because during the training I did not attend the training because I had to attend IEC training and was therefore not part of the training but the educators were there and they were trained although I'm sure whether they were properly trained or not.

Researcher: Have you received any reports of teachers' difficulties with regard to the identification of learners?

Respondent: Mmh, as we haven't met with the different portfolio committees, I haven't received any report but the only information I have is the information from the LSA they (LSA) are having problems getting the ISPs (Individual support Plans) from the educators. The educators maybe are having problems in drawing up the ISP for the LSAs to work with and so they (educators) not willing to identify learners in order to avoid drawing up the ISPs. That is the situation at the moment.

Researcher: Ok! Do you mean that learners have not been identified at the moment?

Respondent: Learners have been identified but I'm not sure whether they have been identified appropriately.

Researcher: So there is a list?

Respondent: There is a list because at the end of each month we are supposed to have a list of those learners who have been identified. Yea! And if we have the new ones we have to put them in the list for particular month but in some months we do not have any identified learners.

Researcher: I can see. So how do you provide support to the identified learners?

Respondent: Mmm Support by whom?

Researcher: Support from teachers such as specific support to address their needs.

Respondent: From whom? That is my question. From me?

Researcher: From teachers.

Respondent: Oh, the learners. Mmm, I think some educators do cooperate except certain individuals who are not cooperating and that is giving the problems to the LSAs because they (LSAs) end up having nothing to do because they do have any learner to support because of these educators.

Researcher: I can see. How possible is it that you provide me with the estimation of the number of learners who have been identified from the beginning of the year up to now (May).

Respondent: That would be difficult because this identification is supposed to be on monthly basis where we add the new ones or write nil if there are no new ones. I will have to check the reports.

Researcher: So, the LSAs are currently not working?

Respondent: I cannot say they are not working but they are not working properly as it is expected and another thing is that the constructors of the new school buildings demolished the old classrooms before they could complete the building and therefore the resource centre where the LSAs normally do their work is currently accommodating learners whose classrooms were demolished.

Researcher: Do you mean that the classrooms are currently overcrowded?

Respondent: Yes, the learners are overcrowded in the resource centre. Others are facing this side and others that side in one room.

Researcher: Oh! Like in the old style?

Respondent: Mmm!

Researcher: Some teachers claim that they fail to identify learners because of the huge numbers in the classes they teach. Could you tell me about the condition in your school?

Respondent: Yea, according to the ratio, learners are above the ratio in each class. The class with the less number has got 39 learners and the highest number is 57.

Researcher: Are there any other reason that prevents teachers from identifying learners because you told me that they were trained?

Respondent: I think that this question will be answered by the educators as to where be their challenges.

Researcher: Are there any other issue that you wish to share as the chairperson of the ILST?

Respondent: Yea, I will say what I told the DBST that it looks like there is a shift of duties and responsibilities in that most of the duties of the ILST are supposed to be done by me because I am the chairperson. I wanted the DBST to clarify the duties if each one of the three portfolio committee of the ILST and the duties of the ILST as exactly because they shift their duties to the principal whereas the principal should have a less duty load.

Researcher: Yes, but who are ‘they’?

Respondent: Some of the HoDs (Heads Of Departments) or let me say one HoD is trying not the whole work but some of the work which is supposed to be done by her portfolio committee but she wants to shift that to the principal. I did report that to the DBST.

Researcher: Have you received any training with regard to the duties of the chairperson of the ILST?

Respondent: Mmmm (pause) Although I cannot say that I do remember but I should think the duty of the ILST chair is to oversee the whole thing as these other portfolio committees are supposed to report to me and I must be able to see how possible is it for me to assist them or maybe we need assistance from the circuit level support or report to the DBST. But the problem as I have said is that we have not met and they haven’t given me any report.

Researcher: Do you mean that the roles are not clear to the ILST?

Respondent: Are not properly clarified.

Researcher: How possible is it that the coordinators of the three portfolio committees do not understand their duties?

Respondent: There is a possibility because if the roles can be clarified then we will know who should do what and they will be no shifting of duties and responsibilities.

Researcher: And work could be done more effectively.

Researcher: If there is nothing more that you wish to share, let me thank you so much for your time, patience and assistance.

Respondent: You are welcome.

Transcript of the interviews between the Researcher and the Heads Of Departments (HoDs) from the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases.

These HoDs are also the coordinators of the three portfolio committees of the Institutional Level Support Team: Whole School development Portfolio Committee (HoD no.3); Learner Support Portfolio Committee (HoD no.2) and Teacher Development (HoD no.1). I have decided to use the numbers for the sake of anonymity in the following manner: HoD no.1- refers to the Foundation Phase HoD, HoD no.2 refers to the HoD for the Intermediate Phase and HoD no.3 refers to the HoD for the Senior Phase.

This group interview was conducted in the office of the principal at school for privacy and less disturbance and took an hour.

Researcher: Thank you much for allowing me to have this interview with you. I have learnt that in each month you identify learners who experience barriers to learning. What exactly do you do when you identify such learners?

HoD no3: Maybe when you are teaching a certain learning area and you find that a certain learner does not cope and that is where you start to identify that learner using the relevant forms such as the SIAS (National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support. Department of Education 2008) forms.

Researcher: When you say a learner does not cope, what do you mean?

HoD no.3: When he/she have got a problem in reading or writing then you find that that learner has got a barrier.

Researcher: What kind of a problem?

HoD no.1: Maybe he can't read properly like failing to pronounce the words correctly. Maybe its reading and writing. He can't write properly.

HoD no.2: We identify learners during teaching and learning. Sometimes you find that a learner fails to copy from the book to the exercise book then we identify that learner as having problems with his eye sight and making the errors of spelling. He also fails to copy from the chalkboard to his exercise book.

Researcher: What kind of expertise that you have in identifying learners who are short-sighted?

HoD no.2: As I have said. You look at his exercise book when he writes and see that he has got a tendency of making mistakes when copying from the board and you that's where you start and ask

some questions such as “can you see clearly on the board?”. “Why have you made this mistake?” And so you take that learner and sit him/her in the front rows of the classroom. S you take it from there and see if it is the sight problem or not because it can happen that it’s not the sight problem.

Researcher: What do you do if after being seated in the front desks, the spelling errors continue?

HoD no.2: That is why I said that it may happen that it’s not the sight problem.

HoD no.1: I read my learners short passages and let them repeat what I have read them. Those who fail, I identify them as having barriers in listening skills. In speaking, those who are stammering I also identify them. When it comes to writing, I give them a short text to write down and then observe their handwriting and I identify those who are failing to write or to copy.

Researcher: Do you mean that when a learner has been listening to the text you were reading for him/her and fail to repeat what you have read...

HoDno.1: (Intervenes to correct her previous statement) cannot retell what I have read.

Researcher: So you use your suspicions to say that it could be hard of hearing?

HoDno.1: Yes.

HoDno.2: Maybe.

HoDno.1: Then if she/he fails to copy something from the chalkboard that tells me that some thing is wrong with sight.

Researcher: In the Intermediate Phase do you also use suspicion to predict sight difficulties when learners fail to copy from the chalkboard?

HoD no.2: I cannot say suspicions but at the end of the day you prepare a short exercise that will help you to identify the problem of the day and not just suspicions.

Researcher: What kind exercise do you prepare?

HoDno.2: Like I’ve said that when you think a learner has a sight problem that I invite that learner to come closer to the chalkboard so that I can determine whether it is sight problem or not. I can also put a sheet of paper on the board and ask him/her to read.

HoDno.1: I’m teaching grade 2. When I admit a learner from grade one, I give him/her a short test, to test the phonics. Those who fail to articulate the sounds and vowels; I identify them as in need of help.

Researcher: Do you have any training with regard to the identification of learners who experience barriers to learning and guidelines.

HoD no.1, 2 & 3: Yes we do.

Researcher: Could you share with me your experiences about any challenges that you are experiencing in this regard?

HoD no.2: Yes we do have. Some you think that you have understood but when you have to apply what learnt from the training, you find that you have a problem and you more training.

HoD no.1&3: (Confirm what HoD n.2 is saying) Yes. Mmmm.

Researcher: Where exactly do you experience challenges?

HoD no2: Im talking about the guidelines. Sometimes you think that you are happy and you can deal with the problems when they come but when you have to be practical, you feel that you still need more training.

Researcher: Which areas where you think you need that more training on?

HoD no1: The completion of the forms in the SIAS document for the identified learners. (The other two HoDs nod their heads to show their support).

Researcher: Did you undergo any training with regard to the completion of these forms?

Response: The three HoDs show with their heads that they were trained.

HoDno3: But as we are saying that, you think that you have heard during the training but when you have to do the forms practically, it becomes difficult.

HoDno2: I wish that when I complete these forms maybe someone from the District should be with me to give me guidance. Because when the District people have gone, things become difficult.

Researcher: How do find it when you sit down together as HoDs and deal with these forms?

HoD no3: Ey, that is difficult.

HoDno2: Oh no! Sometimes... (Interruption: They all burst into laughter).

Researcher: How far have you made the DBST aware of this challenge?

HoDno3: Yes and they do come and we tell them about our problems and they give us support but we forget.

HoD no2: I wish there can be more...and be patient with us and train us for a long time.

Researcher: How long does a normal training take in terms of hours, days or weeks?

HoD no3: It was for one day to from 11am to 13pm.

Researcher: So have said you have challenges in completing the SIAS forms. Are there any other documents that you are using during the process of identification? Documents such as observation journal or diaries.

HoDs: They chorused they consent that they do have such documents.

Researcher: As HoDs, what kind of challenges that your teachers experience when identifying learners?

HoDno.3: Some avoid identification all.

HoDno1: In my Phase, they do identify learners.

Researcher: In which Phase do they avoid it most?

HoD no2: I wouldn't say they run away from identification but they do identify the learners but sometimes they are not eager because they feel that they are already loaded with work and that is the additional work and not that they are running away from doing it.

Researcher: Can you confirm that teachers were trained in this aspect?

HoDno2: Yes they were trained but as I have said before that sometimes you think that you have sufficient knowledge but when you have to do it practically, you struggle.

Researcher: Could you tell the estimations of learners whom you have identify as a school from January up to May?

HoDno1: In our Phase we identify four or two learners in a month.

HoDno2: In Intermediate Phase we used to identify many learners, about ten and that made paper work to be more difficult and the DBST advised us that we shouldn't identify so many learners; at least two would be enough.

HoDno3: In Senior Phase we do not identify any learner because the DBST told us that this thing is for Foundation and Intermediate Phases. I also want to add on what HoDno2 that educators do not runaway from identifying learners but the work is too much for them; they have to complete SNA1, and SNA2 and then design ISP for the identified learners. That's too much for them. That's why when you ask them for the names of learners they have identify they say "I have none".

We need some to come and help us with the completion pf these SIAS forms. We hoped that the appointment of LSE (Learner Support Educator) would relieve us from these forms because they would complete them but when the LSE come it became clear that they were not going to do this work.

Researcher: (to HoDno.3) You told me that the DBST told you that you mustn't identify learners in your Phase. What do you do then when you suspect that a learner in your Phase is experiencing some difficulties?

HoD no.3: I use some strategies but I do not follow the SIAS procedures like completing the forms.

Researcher: But you identify such learners its only the forms that you do not complete.

HoD no.3: We were told that the forms are not for Senior Phase. So I do not complete any form. So because we do have learners who experience barriers to learning, I do help such learners using my own techniques.

Researcher: Do you have any training from either Inclusive education Policy or from remedial education?

HoDno3: No I don't.

Researcher: So you just put together what you think can work as your own techniques?

HoDno3: Yes.

Researcher: How do you find the cooperation of your learners' parents during identification and support?

HoDno1: We advice the learner's parent about what is happening with his/her child and they give background information about the child.

HoDno2: We once had one parent who, after we had written her a letter to invite her to school so discuss the condition of her child, responded by saying "my child is not stupid, she is clever at home" but most parent do come when we invite them to school. We sit down with them and discuss about the condition of the child.

Researcher: Which categories of barriers to learning do identify?

HoDno2: Reading, writing, speaking, behavioural and others.

Researcher: I have read one report that claim that in KwaZulu-Natal, almost in each day at least one child is born with Autism (Interruption from the HoDs, autism, what is autism but I proceeded with my question and promised to give them some background about it after the interview). Have you received any training from the DBST about specific barriers especially those that affect the brain?

HoDs: (Still in confusion about autism) No maybe they are still coming with it, commented HoDno3.

Researcher: Is there anyone in this school who have done some private studies in Inclusive education or Remedial education? Maybe that can help the school.

HoDno1: I do have some training in Remedial Education but not in Inclusive Education.

HoDno2: I am currently doing ACE with UNISA and specialising in Inclusive Education.

Researcher: That is good to hear. How do you think your private study can assist your school?

HoDno2: Yea I think my study can assist the school especially when I complete. But I have just started.

Researcher: What is the general attitude of teachers about the Inclusive Education in your school?

HoDno2: Its positive but you see when the going gets tough....I wish that training could last at least for one year like when we doing our teacher training because the DBST come

here and give us a brief training and they quickly come and say now complete these forms we want them on the 8th of this month. That's frustrating really. Sometimes you want to do it perfectly but you and you can feel the failure because you want to be perfect

Researcher: I there any other issue which is related to the identification of learners that you feel we should share?

HoDno3: The problem that we have is about the completion of the SIAS forms.

HoDno1: We also do not meet regularly as to discuss barriers as committees of the ILST. We should sit down and discuss the problems.

Researcher: How do you think you can resolve this matter?

HoDno1: You should help us.

HoDno2: Another problem is that we do not always have time to meet. I wish that our working hours can be reduced in a week so that we can get time for these forms.

HoDno3: We break at 15pm at school and we can't sit down for the meeting, serious.

HoDno3: Another thing is that I am the chairperson of the Educator Support Committee within the ILST but I don't know what the things that we should discuss as educators are.

Researcher: Have you as the members of the ILST received any training about your roles and responsibilities?

HoD no3: There was a meeting but unfortunately I didn't attend. We were busy as HoDs about something and I do have a document that talks about educators in my file but when I read it through I don't find the things I should do with educators. The only thing I found is IQMS. I don't know what to do with the educator stress or how to deal with such matters.

Researcher: Do you mean that you are currently doing nothing to support teachers?

HoDno3: Really Im doing nothing. I don't know what to do.

Researcher: How is the chairperson of the ILST responding to your lack of direction?

HoDno3: The chairperson is aware that the portfolio committees are not all active. The only committee that is working is the Learner Support Portfolio Committee because there are some problems which the educators refer to this committee. Can you find us something that deals about the responsibilities of the Educator Support Committee and the Whole School development Committee?

Researcher: (In response, I gave these HoDs my copy of The Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for full-service schools 2008 so that they could make their copy while waiting for their supply from the department). Let me thank you so much for your time and support.

Transcriptions of the group interviews with the teachers the teachers of the Foundation Phase.

This interview was originally set for six teachers: two teachers from each Phase but for some reasons teachers from Intermediate and Senior Phases eventually decided to abstain from participation in the research. For ethical considerations, I will refer to the participants as teacher 1 and teacher 2.

This interview was conducted in the office of the principal and it took 1hour.

Researcher: Thank for your willingness to support me in this research. Could you please explain to how do you identify learners who experience barriers to learning in your Phase?

Teacher 1: We follow the instructions that appear in the checklist.

Researcher: Can you tell me more about such instructions?

Teacher 1: The checklist about vision and other health difficulties.

Researcher: Besides the health difficulties, which other difficulties do you identify?

Teacher 1: We have discovered that some of them have no care givers or parents; some do not have access to the social grants.

Researcher: How do assist those who do not have access to social grants?

Teacher 1: We talk to the social workers and help them to get birth certificates and apply for the grants.

Researcher: Do you have a specific social worker who is working directly with your learners?

Teacher 1: Yes. So the social worker helps these children in many ways.

Researcher: Which other areas in your learners' life do you identify barriers?

Teacher 1: Some learners cannot read or write and we identify them.

Researcher: What exactly do mean when you say they neither read nor write?

Teacher 2: Maybe the learner cannot write because he/she needs guided hand writing where he/she has to write on the dotted lines under the guidance of the teacher.

We sit down together in Phase with some of the educators and make charts to help those learners who can't write.

Researcher: How do you differentiate a barrier that is within the learner and the one that is from the teacher e.g. ineffective instruction?

Teacher 1: We are all open. We are working as a team. I don't know but when there is a problem, I approach another educator and we discuss the challenge together.

Researcher: (To teacher 2) As an inexperienced teacher, how can you describe the assistance you get from other teacher?

Teacher 2: At times they come to my class and teach show me how to teach.

Researcher: Could now tell me about the documents that you use when you identify learners?

Teacher1: All learners have profiles and those who have been identified have their own pack which we use specifically for them.

Researcher: When using the SIAS toolkit for identification, are there any specific sections where you experience difficulties?

(I had provided myself with a copy of the SIAS document (2008) and paged through the document with to let them show me the sections where have difficulty. The teachers pointed from page 50 up to page 53, saying they have challenges when they have to complete these pages).

Teacher1: The District gave us some sample to look at but sometimes it's not easy but we are doing it.

Researcher: As teachers in the Foundation Phase, how do you work with Early Childhood Development services where you learners attend pre-classes?

Teacher1: There is one near us and we do talk to them to get the information about our learners. We also get information about our learners' skills in extracurricular activities e.g. that maybe so and so is a good runner etc.

There is another problem: some learners are so gifted but they do not perform well.

Researcher: What do you do with such learners?

Teacher 1: We don't know.

Researcher: Oh! That is sad. Could you tell me , how do you deal with learners who attend classes excellently but just what has been learnt the day before?

Teacher 1: It's difficult to say but we think that he/she has got something wrong. We have one learner who has been in my class since last but ziyaduma nje (meaning: seriously confused) because even vowels give him problems. Some have dropped out because things were not working at school.

Researcher: Have you received any training about how should learners be identified at school?

(The teachers said NO training)

Researcher: Could you describe your attitude towards Inclusive Education and specifically the identification of learners?

Teacher 2: Inclusive Education is an interesting thing but its difficult to especially the forms gives us a lot of work.

Researcher: How do you find the cooperation with your learners' parents?

Teacher 1: It is good because when we invite them to school to discuss issues about their children, they do come. It happened only once that a parent was trying to dent that her child has got some difficulties but we dealt with that. But most parents assist us with the information we need about their children.

Researcher: How often do you as teachers in your Phase sit down and discuss the challenges you have in Inclusive Education?

Teacher 1: We do have meetings in our Phase at least twice quarterly.

Researcher: If someone were to give you support in the identification of learners, what kind of support do you think you would want most?

Teacher 1: We need teaching aids and things such as First Aid kits. Yes.

Researcher: How can you describe the training that was provided to you by the DBST?

Teacher 1: I remember one training but it was not clear because the whole thick manual was done in few hours.

Researcher: Was there any follow-up by the DBST after that?

Teacher 1: The lady who was training us told us that she was waiting for the approval of her transfer. We got it that she was transferred and there was no more training.

Researcher: Have you raised the matter with the DBST?

Teacher 1: Yes and they came here (school) once or twice and they gave us the sample of the SIAS forms to help us filling the forms when we identify learners.

Researcher: That should be painful. Do you have any other thing that you would like us to share about the identification of learners?

Teacher 1: No.

Teacher 2: Nothing.

Researcher: Thank you so much for your support throughout this interview.